Chapter 1: Introduction

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to provide the first detailed grammatical description of the Abma (previously referred to as Apma (Grimes, 2000; Lynch and Crowley, 2001)) language, based on its largest dialect, Suru Mwerani. This chapter places Abma within a linguistic, social, and educational context (§1.1) and looks at Abma’s genetic affiliations (§1.2). Section §1.3 looks at the three dialects of Abma and briefly examines the ways in which the other two dialects, Suru Rabwanga and Suru Kavian, are known to differ from the Suru Mwerani dialect. Then §1.4 reviews previously published works that are related to Abma. Finally §1.5 focuses on the current study, describing the way it was carried out and its theoretical assumptions, and providing a brief overview of Abma’s grammar.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Languages of Vanuatu

Vanuatu (see Map 1) is widely recognised for its rich linguistic heritage (Lynch and Crowley, 2001: xii). It is the home of an estimated 81 actively spoken indigenous languages and about 17 moribund languages (Lynch and Crowley, 2001: 4), which are distributed amongst a total population of 208,869 (according to a July 2006 estimate (The World Factbook, 2006)). It is likely, then, that Vanuatu has a higher ratio of languages per capita than any other country in the world.

The majority of the 98-odd languages that are still in existence today have anywhere between several hundred to one or two thousand speakers. Thirteen languages have more than 5,000 speakers, with Lenakel (spoken on Tanna island) topping the list with an estimated 11,500 speakers, (Lynch and Crowley, 2001: 6, 17-19).

1.1.2 Languages of Pentecost

Abma, the focus of the current study, is spoken in the central part of Pentecost Island. It is a relatively large language, with about 7,800 speakers, according to the most recent linguistic survey (Lynch and Crowley, 2001: 66).
Map 2 shows the languages of Pentecost Island, which has a total population of approximately 17,400.\(^1\) It can be seen that Abma is spoken in the central part of the island, between Raga (6,500 speakers) to the north and Sa (2,500 speakers) to the south. Seke is a small language with about 600 speakers (Lynch and Crowley, 2001: 64-67). Sowa is spoken in the southwest corner of the Suru Mwerani-speaking area, around the village of Vanu (Waterfall). In fact the language is moribund, with no native speakers remaining and only a handful of elderly people who still claim to speak it fluently (pers. comm., Andrew Gray, 14\(^{th}\) December 2006).

1.1.3 Social Context

The average citizen of central Pentecost has limited interaction with the rest of the world, or even with neighbouring islands. Inter-island travel by plane is costly, and by boat is time-consuming. Travel within Pentecost is also difficult: there are few roads or vehicles, and those trucks that are in working order are prohibitively expensive. Walking is *de rigeur*, regardless of distance or the muddiness of the track.

As far as communications are concerned, telephones are a rarity and, once again, expensive. Remote villages have two-way radio, which can be used to send and receive messages.

In terms of commerce, kava and copra are grown and brought to the coast for trading, and ships stop at several villages on the west side of the island (at Waterfall, Melsisi and Bwatnabne) a few times per week. Residents of the east coast face more difficulty: their coastline is unprotected and boats only visit there once every one or two months. This means that east coast growers are normally obligated to hand-carry their merchandise for two hours across treacherous mountain terrain before even reaching the main road that leads to the east coast – an arduous task even in the dry season.

The upshot of all this – the difficulty of travel, the poor communication infrastructure, and the limited opportunities for trading – is that the Abma language, especially on the east coast, has suffered relatively little interference from the outside world.

\(^1\) This figure was arrived at by adding up the estimated speaker populations of all the languages on the island. Speaker populations for each language are taken from Lynch and Crowley (2001: 17-19).
Pentecost is not completely free of outside influence, however. Missionaries of different persuasions started arriving in the early 1900s. They have maintained their presence to this day, and their impact on local customs, culture, and language cannot be underestimated.

The east and west coasts of central Pentecost were largely colonised by French Catholic priests who set up a large mission in Melsisi, the major centre of central Pentecost, as well as a church and school at Tsinbwege, on the east coast near Vanrasini. In turn, the Anglicans established a church and school at Bwatnabne, also on the west coast. Other churches of various denominations (Presbyterian, Church of Christ, Assembly of God) later made inroads into Pentecost’s mountainous interior, including major centres at Wutsunmwel and Naruwa. This central region, especially, is quite actively engaged with missionaries from Australian, New Zealander, and North American Pentecostal churches.

1.1.4 Educational Context

Affiliation with a particular church determines one’s language of education: children growing up in Catholic areas receive their tuition in French; elsewhere they are instructed in English. Of course neither of these is the children’s mother tongue, and the difficulty of gaining literacy skills and sitting exams in a foreign language poses special challenges for them. To complicate matters further, Bislama (Vanuatu’s widely-spoken national language) is used in primary schools where students come from various linguistic backgrounds (i.e., in the city), or where the teacher has a different linguistic background from students (i.e., in rural settings).

The Abma language itself does not have a strong tradition of writing. A number of missionaries and interested citizens have taken to transcribing it (see §1.3 below), but in general it has been granted little attention from the educational establishment. This attitude is changing, as the Vanuatu government now understands the value of indigenous literacy, and as speakers become concerned by the way Bislama, English, and French are encroaching upon indigenous languages. As of July 2006 the national parliament was preparing to ratify a “Vanuatu National Language Policy” which, with regard to indigenous languages, resolved “to ensure that indigenous languages are used as the medium of education in schools, at appropriate levels” (Independent", 2006). One school in the Wutsunmwel area is reportedly now teaching literacy in Abma; this is a promising sign (pers. comm., Morrie Tabi, 22.7.04).
1.2 Abma within the Austronesian Language Family

Abma is an Oceanic language whose ancestor is Proto Oceanic. Proto Oceanic stems from Proto Eastern Malayo-Polynesian, which stems from Proto Central/Eastern Malayo-Polynesian, which comes from Proto Malayo-Polynesian, which originated from Proto Austronesian (Lynch et al., 2002: 4).

The information in Figure 1.1 is gleaned from Lynch, Ross, and Crowley (2002), but Vanuatu languages have been subject to a variety of sub-grouping hypotheses (Clark, 1985; Lynch, 2000; Pawley, 1972; Tryon, 1976). Figure 1.1 highlights those branches of the Oceanic language family that specifically relate to Abma’s lineage. Branches relevant to Abma are bolded; then these particular branches are broken down into constituent branches, and so forth:

![Diagram of Oceanic language family]

Abma’s position within the Southern Oceanic sub-grouping is not definitively established, so both the Northern and Central Vanuatu branches are underlined in Figure 1.1. But Abma does concord with most of the criteria required of Central Vanuatu languages, as recently discussed in Lynch (2006: 3): it has a copula verb *bibi ‘be’; it marks plurality in nouns with a third person plural independent pronoun; it has verb-initial consonant mutation (to distinguish non-imperfective/ imperfective forms); and it preposes a velar stop to the Proto Oceanic second person singular independent pronoun, *[i]ko[e]. However, Abma does not prepose a velar stop to the first person singular independent pronoun *inau, which is another identifying characteristic of Central Vanuatu languages.
1.3 Dialects of Abma

As mentioned previously, the three dialects of Abma are Suru Mwerani (SM), Suru Rabwanga (SR) (also referred to as Suru Bo), and Suru Kavian (SK).

1.3.1 Dialect Boundaries

Map 3 sets out the dialect boundaries for SM, SR and SK, as well as the language boundary between Abma and other languages. While every effort was made to make this map as accurate as possible, some dialect information was obtained by word-of-mouth rather than through first-hand visits to the villages concerned (i.e., “What do they speak in such-and-such village?”). Follow-up confirmation of the details provided below is therefore required.

Suru Mwerani is the biggest of the three dialects, spoken by the greatest number of people in Central Pentecost. David Walsh (pers. comm., 4th Feb. 2004) observes that the dialect boundary between SR and SM is where the river reaches the sea at Bwatnabne. Indeed, both SR and SM are spoken in Bwatnabne. The boundary then essentially follows the main road from Bwatnabne to Wutsunmwel, where SR is spoken along this road but SM is spoken to the south of it. The boundary then skirts southeast towards the village of Naruwa. On the east coast, SR is spoken in Sisva and further north, while SM is spoken in Leto and further south. SM stretches as far south as Ranmawat on the west coast, and it encompasses the Vanrasini area on the east coast.

Suru Rabwanga is spoken to the north of the SM area. SR is spoken as far north as Namaram on the west coast, and inland across to Nokonbok on the east coast.

Suru Kavian, the smallest of the three dialects, is spoken to the north of the SR area, including the villages of Namaram, Raton, and Levondo. Its southern boundary with SR runs along the road from Namaram on the west coast to the inland village of Saenawa; villages to the south of this road speak SR, while villages to the north speak SK. This southern boundary then extends across to the east coast, at Nokonbok. SK’s boundary with the Raga language of northern Pentecost starts at Nakapakapa on the west coast. This boundary extends across to the east coast, where the major village of Renbura is a Raga-speaking village.
In major villages that lie near a dialect boundary, usually two or sometimes all three dialects are represented – the dialects can also be mixed. This is the case in places like Namaram, Bwatnabne, Wutsunmwel, and Naruwa. In Bwatnabne, for example, marriage across the river has resulted in dialect mixing between SR and SM (pers. comm., Denison Siaban, 1st August 2003).

Map 3 is a satellite image of the island; clearly it has some steep terrain. Some dialect boundaries can be explained by differences in elevation, i.e., the dialect boundary between SR and SM that runs between Bwatnabne and Wutsunmwel is probably due the fact that a mountain ridge separates them. Other topographical elements are less clear; for example, rivers and roads are not visible.

What is noticeable from looking at a detailed map that shows all the villages (such as the one produced by the Vanuatu Department of Land Surveys) is the way villages of a given dialect tend to cluster together; they are closer to each other than to villages speaking another dialect, even though, in absolute terms, all of the villages are no more than a few kilometres from each other. This is especially evident in the central mountainous area, and on the coastal lowlands to the east, where both SR and SM are spoken.

1.3.2 Linguistic Differences Between Dialects

1.3.2.1 Overview

This thesis describes the Suru Mwerani dialect of Abma. However, preliminary and informal observations suggest that there are correspondences between the three dialects. The notes recorded in this section are incidental; more research is required.

The dialects of Abma occur on a chain or a continuum, with SK, the most northerly dialect, on one end of the continuum and SM, the most southerly dialect, on the other. SR exhibits qualities of both SK and SM. SM and SR are more similar to each other, with SK being the more marked dialect.
It is often claimed that SK speakers can understand SM and SR, but SR and SM speakers have difficulty understanding SK. A few SR and SM speakers have even gone so far as suggesting that SK is a different language.

Surmising from the minimal data gathered from the SK-speaking area, there are noticeable phonetic differences between SK and the other two dialects, but the differences appear to be regular. Also, most but not all of the elicited lexical items are similar across all three dialects. More research is needed into SK for any further assessment to be made.

1.3.2.2 The Data

Differences between the three dialects are instantiated by phonological and lexical variation. It appears that SK is the least innovative dialect and SM the most. There are some notable vocalic and consonantal differences between SK on one end of the continuum, and SM on the other. SK exhibits a CV syllable structure (with exceptions) that has collapsed to some extent in SM. SM has undergone vowel shifting and sound change in non-initial consonants. It has also syncopated vowels in verb and noun roots, resulting in a reduction in the number of syllables in the SM root.

The data is presented in Table 1.1 on the next page, and a more detailed discussion follows. The words are recorded in a broad phonetic transcription since it is unclear if or how the phonological systems of SK and SR differ from that of SM. Syllable boundaries as transcribed here reflect their careful articulation in citation form. Nasals are transcribed the way they are perceived: in syllable-final position, nasals plus [g] are heard as [ŋ]; elsewhere before [ŋ] they are heard as [ŋg]. It is not known whether [ŋ] or [ŋg] are phonemic in SK and SR. While sound correspondences between the dialects are noted, it is not known at this stage whether the correspondences only occur in certain positions in the word. Thus their conditioning environments require further research.

The most obvious differences revealed in Table 1.1 are the significant lexical differences between the three dialects, particularly between SK and the other two. Rows 22 – 25 list these lexical items.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SK</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>[ma.ta.kal]</td>
<td>[me.ta.kal]</td>
<td>[me.ta.kal]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>[ka.dab]</td>
<td>[ke.dab]</td>
<td>[ke.tab]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>[βas]</td>
<td>[βet] ~ [wet]</td>
<td>[βet]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>[b&quot;a.ras]</td>
<td>[b&quot;e. ret]</td>
<td>[b&quot;e. ret]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>[ne.su.gu]</td>
<td>[ni.tsu.&quot;gu]</td>
<td>[ni.tsuk]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>[se.ni]</td>
<td>[si.ni]</td>
<td>[si.ni]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>[βe.ni]</td>
<td>[βi.ni] ~ [wi.ni]</td>
<td>[βi.ni]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>[wa.li.nen]</td>
<td>[wa.lun]</td>
<td>[wa.lun]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>[tam. ri]</td>
<td>[tam. ru]</td>
<td>[tam. ru]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>[kai. ri]</td>
<td>[ka. ru]</td>
<td>[ka. ru]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>[kai.lim]</td>
<td>[ka.lim]</td>
<td>[ka.lim]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>[nai.nip]</td>
<td>[na.nip]</td>
<td>[na.nip]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>[βi.lu.&quot;gu]</td>
<td>[i.li.&quot;gi]</td>
<td>[i.lik]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>[&quot;gi]</td>
<td>[kik]</td>
<td>[kik]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>[le.ma.dam]</td>
<td>[lem.tam]</td>
<td>[lem.tam]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>[me.su]</td>
<td>[-m.tsu:]</td>
<td>[-m.tsu:]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>[ba.ma]</td>
<td>[-b.ma]</td>
<td>[-b.ma]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>[ma:wuk]</td>
<td>[βa.&quot;ga. ren]</td>
<td>[βan. ren]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>[wa.k.a.ta\n]</td>
<td>[wa.taŋ]</td>
<td>[wa.taŋ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>[i.lil.ki.ni]</td>
<td>[i.lil.&quot;gi]</td>
<td>[i.lil.ni]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>[ra.bo.&quot;ga]</td>
<td>[bo.&quot;ga]</td>
<td>[bo.&quot;ga]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>[nam.&quot;e. rik]</td>
<td>[ra.&quot;b.a.&quot;ga]</td>
<td>[m&quot;e. ra.ni]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>[ko.mu.ta\n]</td>
<td>[ko.&quot;βi.&quot;ah]</td>
<td>[ko.&quot;βi.&quot;ah]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>[i.&quot;ga]</td>
<td>[na.na]</td>
<td>[na.na]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>[a.&quot;ga si.si]</td>
<td>[a.&quot;ga]</td>
<td>[a.&quot;ga m&quot;e.ta\n]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>[wa.lu.&quot;gu]</td>
<td>[wa.lu.&quot;gu]</td>
<td>[wa.luk]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>[nat min.se]</td>
<td>[nat mi.ni.te]</td>
<td>[nat min.te]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>[a.si]</td>
<td>[a.tsı]</td>
<td>[a.tsı]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>[na:roŋ]</td>
<td>[na:roŋ]</td>
<td>[na:roŋ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>[bi.la.&quot;ga]</td>
<td>[bi.la.&quot;ga]</td>
<td>[bi.lak]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>[si]</td>
<td>[di] ~ [&quot;di]</td>
<td>[di]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>[ki.&quot;di]</td>
<td>[ki.&quot;di]</td>
<td>[ki.&quot;di]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>[bon.si]</td>
<td>[bo.di]</td>
<td>[bo.di]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>[ra.&quot;gah]</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>[ra.gah]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1: Variation between Suru Kavian, Suru Rabwanga, and Suru Mwerani dialects

The other major points to be taken from Table 1.1 are that vowel shift (§1.3.2.2.1), vowel syncopation and apocope (§1.3.2.2.2), and consonantal sound change (§1.3.2.2.3) have occurred between the SK and SM dialects. SR appears to be much closer to SM than to SK.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.3.2.2.1 Vowel Shift

Just like the famous “Great Vowel Shift” of late Middle English, it seems that the SM and SR dialects have undergone their own kind of vowel shift. The SM and SR dialects have raised SK vowels in the following pattern:

```
  i          u
     \      
      e
     /      
    a
```

Figure 1.2: Vowel shift in Abma

Data to support the information in Figure 1.2 can be found in Table 1.1: the shift from [a] \( \rightarrow \) [e] is illustrated in Rows 1 – 4; and the shift from [e] \( \rightarrow \) [i] is shown in Rows 5 – 7.

In addition to the shift illustrated in Figure 1.2, [ai] in SK has changed to [a] in SR and SM. This is illustrated in Rows 10 – 12 of Table 1.1.

Rows 8 – 10 show words that contain [i] in SK but [u] in SR and SM. Conversely, Rows 13-14 show words that contain [u] in SK but [i] in SR and SM. So what is the direction of change? There is some evidence that SK is in fact the innovator with respect to these high vowels. The POc reconstruction for the word ‘two’ is *rua (Lynch et al., 2002: 72). Since the words for ‘we two’ in Row 9 and ‘two’ in Row 10 would have originated in *rua, and since the SR and SM forms are pronounced with [u] but the SK forms are pronounced with [i], we can assume that the direction of change for this form is [u] \( \rightarrow \) [i] in SK.

On the other hand, the POc reconstruction for the second singular independent pronoun is *[iʃko[e] (Lynch et al., 2002: 67). Since the SR and SM forms for this pronoun are
pronounced with [i], but the SK form is pronounced with [u], then we can assume that the
direction of change for this form is from [i] > [u] in SK.

In both cases of change, whether [u] > [i] for words containing ‘two’ or [i] > [u] for words
containing the second person pronoun, SK is the innovating dialect. However, one exception
to this generalisation can be found in Row 13. The POc form for ‘hair’ is *bulu (Blust, 1978:
140). It seems that the sound has changed from [u] > [i] in SR and SM; thus SM and SR are
the innovating dialects in this case.

It is unclear why the sound change goes in both directions, and why both SK on the one hand
and SR and SM on the other hand seem to have innovated. There is too little data to make any
useful generalisations; more research is required.

\subsection{Vowel Syncopation and Apocope}

Vowel syncopation is a major aspect of SM morphophonemics and will be discussed at some
length in the ensuing chapters, particularly in Chapter 3 (Morphology). SR and SM
syncopation of SK roots is exemplified in Rows 15 – 17 of Table 1.1. Row 18 gives an
example of syncopation between SR and SM.

Rows 19 through 21 also show evidence of SR and SM loss of entire syllables in SK
[wakataŋ] ‘basket’, [ilikini] ‘to know’, and [raboŋa] ‘buff-banded rail’. Also, rows 5, 8, 13,
and 26 show apocope in the final syllable of nouns that are directly possessed by first or third
person singular pronouns.

\subsection{Consonantal Sound Change}

Table 1.2 below is extracted from Table 1.1 except that it is arranged differently to highlight
the kinds of sound changes that have occurred between SK, SR, and SM.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[d] → [t]</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ka.dab]</td>
<td>[ke.dab]</td>
<td>[ke.tab]</td>
<td>‘door’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[le.ma.dam]</td>
<td>[lem.tam]</td>
<td>[lem.tam]</td>
<td>‘your face’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[wa.ka.tan]</td>
<td>[wa.dan]</td>
<td>[wa.tan]</td>
<td>‘basket’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[s] → [ts] before [i] and [u]</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[a.si]</td>
<td>[a.tsi]</td>
<td>[a.ts]</td>
<td>‘someone’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ne.su.gu]</td>
<td>[ni.tsu]</td>
<td>[ni.tsuk]</td>
<td>‘my child’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[me.su]</td>
<td>[-m.tsu:]</td>
<td>[-m.tsu:]</td>
<td>‘to sleep’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[s] → [t] elsewhere</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[f]as</td>
<td>[f]et</td>
<td>[f]et</td>
<td>‘stone’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[b&quot;a.ras]</td>
<td>[b&quot;e.ret]</td>
<td>[b&quot;e.ret]</td>
<td>‘flying fox’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[nat min.se]</td>
<td>[nat mi.ni.te]</td>
<td>[nat mi.ni.te]</td>
<td>‘I finished drinking’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[s]/[ns] → [d]</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[si]</td>
<td>[di] ~ [&quot;di]</td>
<td>[di]</td>
<td>‘to stay’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[bon.si]</td>
<td>[bo.di]</td>
<td>[bo.di]</td>
<td>‘to block’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[&quot;d] → [d]</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ki.&quot;di]</td>
<td>[ki.di]</td>
<td>[ki.di]</td>
<td>‘1PL.INC.IND’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a.&quot;ga si.si]</td>
<td>[a.&quot;ga]</td>
<td>[a.&quot;ga m&quot;e.tak]</td>
<td>‘canoe’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[&quot;g] → [g] word-medially</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ra.&quot;gah]</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>[ra.gah]</td>
<td>‘to be dry’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[&quot;g] → [k] word-finally</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[wa.&quot;lu.&quot;gu]</td>
<td>[wa.lu.&quot;gu]</td>
<td>[wa.luk]</td>
<td>‘my friend’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[bi.&quot;la.&quot;ga]</td>
<td>[bi.la.&quot;ga]</td>
<td>[bi.lak]</td>
<td>‘my property’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[&quot;gu]</td>
<td>[&quot;gi]</td>
<td>[kik]</td>
<td>‘2SG.IND’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[r] → [n]</th>
<th>SK</th>
<th>SR</th>
<th>SM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[na.:ron]</td>
<td>[na.:ron]</td>
<td>[na.:ron]</td>
<td>‘now’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2: Variation between SK, SR, and SM

A couple of extra points should be made about specific sections of Table 1.2. First of all, it should be acknowledged that the pattern where [d] → [t] is not entirely consistent because of one counter-example between SK and SR ([wa.ka.tan] → [wa.dan]). This exception is noted and, like the rest of the data presented here, requires further clarification.

It is likely that ["g] → [k] was part of the same process as ["g] → [g], but then the final vowel of words taking direct possession suffixes was lost (as for ‘my hair’, ‘my friend’, and ‘my property’). Loss of the final vowel resulted in word-final [g], and since Abma lacks a voicing contrast syllable-finally, [g] in this position is realised as [k].

The second-to-last line of Table 1.2 shows ["gu] (SK) → ["gi] (SR) → [kik] (SM) ‘2SG.IND’. This [k]/["g] correspondence between SM and the other two dialects parallels a similar dichotomy between SM and Raga (the language of northern Pentecost) for other pronouns. See Chapter 2 (Phonology) for more details.
The differentiation between SK, SR, and SM is especially interesting since there remains some question about whether Abma belongs to the Northern or Central Vanuatu branch of the Southern Oceanic sub-grouping. This data at least provides a starting point for further study of the relationship between SK and the other two dialects of Abma.

1.4 Previous Research and Publications

Considering its large speaker population relative to other Vanuatu languages (approximately 7,800 speakers), Abma has received surprisingly little research attention (Lynch and Crowley, 2001), with the exception of some work done by Catholic priests.

1.4.1 Dictionaries and Wordlists

Père Tattevin, a Catholic priest who lived in the Melsisi area during the early part of the twentieth century, wrote a number of manuscript dictionaries. “Dictionnaire Français-Melsisi” (1909), is a 38-page manuscript. “Melsisi” here refers to the language spoken in Melsisi village, which is a SM-speaking area. Headwords are given in French, with glosses or brief definitions given in “Melsisi”. The listing only goes through to the letter ‘D’. The original manuscript is located in the archives of the Catholic Diocese at the Bishop’s Office in Sacré Cœur, Port Vila. It is written in pencil and is reasonably readable.

Another manuscript dictionary by Tattevin is the 192-page “Dictionnaire Namaram-Melsisi-Français” (n.d.-a). The first language referred to in the title is spoken in Namaram, which lies in the traditional home of the SR dialect. So in other words, this is a SM-French-SR dictionary.

Tattevin also wrote a “Dictionnaire Français-Melsisi-Ponorol” (n.d.-b). This manuscript is meant to be 206 pages, but a portion of it has obviously been lost as the original document contains only 151 pages and contains only the letters A-P inclusive. Some parts are unreadable due to the age of the paper and the cramped handwriting, as well as being written in different coloured inks. French is listed as the headword, and one-word glosses are offered in Melsisi (Suru Mwerani). Occasionally a third column is filled in with what is presumably Ponorol. Ponorol is an unknown variety, and no village of “Ponorol” can be located on any map of Pentecost. However, according to Père Rodet of the Bishop’s Office at Sacré Cœur
(who has worked in Vanuatu for forty years), Ponorol is the old place-name of a village that is located in the Sa-speaking area of South Pentecost (pers. comm., Père Rodet, 11.7.2006). Also, Tryon (1972: 60) claims that the Sa language is also referred to as Ponorwal.

Also held in the Bishop’s Office is the 173-page “Lexique de la langue de Melsisi” by Douceré (abridged by Tattevin) (n.d.). This manuscript offers one-word “Melsisi” glosses that correspond to French headwords, which are listed alphabetically, A-Z inclusive. The handwriting is small and difficult to decipher.

Jamond (n.d.-a) wrote “Notes de Grammaire et Lexique”, 28 pages, which lists phrases and expressions in Abma with their French translations. Ink has leaked through the page, making reading a challenge.

“Quelque Notes de Grammaire” and “Dictionnaire de Prononciation” is a type-written manuscript by Loubières (1911). It comprises 15 pages of grammatical notes as well as a 98-page French-Abma dictionary of the dialects spoken in Melsisi and Namaram. He observes that the dialects of “Sumwerania” (SM) and “Surapanga” (SR), respectively, are spoken in these two areas, and that speakers of these dialects can understand each other. In contrast, he notes that "Surekavian" (SK), also spoken in Namaram, is closer to the language spoken in Loltong – i.e., the Raga language of North Pentecost.

Abma is also included in an ambitious survey of New Hebrides languages (Tryon, 1976), where 258 common items were elicited from every known language in the country. Based on the information thus compiled, the percentage of cognates between neighbouring languages was determined. According to the survey, Abma shares 52.1%, 59.9%, 53.1%, and 64.6% cognacy with Raga, Seke, Sa, and Sowa, respectively.

In their survey of the kavas of Vanuatu, Lebot and Cabalion (1986) compile sixteen names for various varieties of kava in Abma. In A guide to the common trees of Vanuatu with lists of their traditional uses and ni-Vanuatu names Wheatley (1992) includes 214 names from the Central Pentecost area (where Abma is spoken).

Catriona Malau-Hyslop compiled 435 words from the Suru Mwerani dialect during her visit to Pentecost in 2001, providing the framework for an Abma-English-Bislama dictionary (currently a work-in-progress).
1.4.2 Grammatical Descriptions

Loubières (1911) “Quelques Notes de Grammaire”, comprise 15 typewritten pages of grammatical notes, was already mentioned in §1.4.1 above.

The Bishop’s Office has in its archives a 24-page manuscript grammar of the Suru Mwerani dialect, “Grammaire de Melsisi”, written by Niel (n.d.-c) and copied by Douceré. Points discussed in Niel’s grammar include word classes, verb conjugations, passivisation, and possession. It is written in French; some sections are illegible due to the age of the paper and the quality of the handwriting.

In the Journal de la Société des Océanistes, Haudricourt (1960) includes a 3-page extract from a Marist missionary priest, Père Paul Monnier. Monnier describes direct and indirect possession and even grapples with the associative construction (though he does not term it as such), which challenges linguistic description to this day (see Chapter 5 (Noun Phrases)).

Finally, Walsh (1982) explores the phonological correspondences between Raga (north Pentecost), Abma (central Pentecost), and Mota (Banks Islands). He notes (p2) that Mota was used as a lingua franca with the Melanesian Mission in both the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu between the 1870s and 1950s. Therefore, despite its geographical distance from Pentecost, the language of Mota has a cognacy rate with Raga and Abma that is higher than might be expected. In order to support future research into genetic grouping, Walsh provides detailed listings of the distribution and correspondences between phones and phonemes in the three languages.

1.4.3 Literacy Materials

As with the dictionaries and sketch grammars, most literacy materials in Abma have been penned by Catholic missionaries. The 39-page catechism and prayer book, Dut Katolika Melsisi-Namaram, Nouvelles-Hébrides, Océanie by Niel (1914) was published by the Imprimerie Saint-Jean in Port Vila (now defunct). The original is housed at the Bishop’s Office in Sacré Cœur, Port Vila.


Lynch and Crowley (2001: 66) mention that Père Tattevin transcribed a collection of stories (1929-31), but these stories are actually written in Sa, the language spoken in south Pentecost.

1.4.4 Unknown Languages within the Abma-Speaking Area

In his survey of languages of the New Hebrides, Tryon (1976: 60) refers to a possible additional language spoken in Kassap, which lies within the Abma-speaking area. In all probability, this variety, if it ever existed, has been lost because the village of Kassap falls within the area where SK is presently spoken, and no trace of this language has been found.

1.5 This Study

The research background for the current study is discussed in §1.5.1, then an introductory overview of Abma’s grammar is given in §1.5.2.

1.5.1 Research Background

This study was carried out between February 2003 and November 2006. During this time I made four fieldtrips to Vanuatu. The first was a two-week “reconnaissance mission” in May 2003. This was followed by a three-month research trip made later in the same year to Vanrasini, a remote settlement in east Pentecost. Here I received the hospitality of Denison Siaban, a fieldworker with the Vanuatu Kuljura Senta (VKS), and her family. I worked primarily with Denison at this time, particularly in the first few weeks, because (a) it was
clear that she had strong linguistic intuition and a good understanding of the nature and objective of my work; and (b) I thought it would be more consistent, in the beginning, to work with just one person until I had a grasp of the basic mechanics of the language; and (c) she lived in an ideal location (see below). After a few weeks had passed, I also started working with family members and neighbours in the villages of Sanial and Vanrasini.

Vanrasini provided an ideal location to begin linguistic fieldwork. One of its attractive features is that only the SM dialect (the focus of my study) is spoken there, with no interference from the other dialects of Abma. The other appeal of Vanrasini is its isolation: it is situated on the east coast of Pentecost where relatively few people live. Because of its remoteness, the language spoken there is less influenced by Bislama or other languages, compared to the other SM-speaking areas.

Aside from Vanrasini, I also spent several weeks in Wutsunmwel, a large settlement in the central mountainous region of Pentecost, an area where both the SM and SR dialects are spoken. There I worked primarily with Morrie Tabi (an SM speaker), but also with others who expressed an interest in my project. I also spent three weeks in Port Vila, working with Mireille Kaentoh, an SM speaker from the Melsisi area.

I made another research trip to Vanuatu a year later, during July, August, and September of 2004. Again, I migrated between my three principal teachers in their respective locations, although Denison had by then moved to Vangat, on the west coast of Pentecost near Bwatnabne. During this time I also did a tour of the greater Abma-speaking area, because although the focus of this study is SM, I felt it was important to also have at least a basic impression of all three dialects. I was particularly interested in gaining exposure to SK because it is a smaller, more endangered dialect relative to SM and SR, and also the most linguistically distinctive of the three dialects.

In July of 2006 I made a final two-week fieldtrip to Vanuatu where I did a final data check, working primarily with Denison Siaban again, who had by this time moved to Port Vila.
1.5.1.1 Why the Suru Mwerani Dialect was Chosen

Initially, fate played a strong role in my choice to describe the SM dialect, rather than SR or SK: the Vanuatu Kuljura Senta’s female fieldworker for central Pentecost, Denison, was an SM speaker. But there were also other reasons for me to study this particular dialect: SM is the most widely-spoken and geographically-distributed dialect of Abma, and hence, it was never difficult to find speakers to work with. Furthermore, it is speakers of the SM dialect that live in closest proximity to the airport at Lonorore (on Pentecost) – an important consideration in a place where transport is both expensive and arduous. Finally, the majority of research on Abma to date has been on the SM dialect, and these resources have assisted me in my own research.

1.5.1.2 Methodology and Theory

The principal methodology used for gathering data was to record people in any number of genres: custom stories, instructions, discussion of future plans, hypothetical situations, conversations, even songs (although songs were not included in my analysis due to their sometimes-idiosyncratic use of language). Seventy-one recordings were made of the three dialects, but it was SM that was primarily transcribed and translated into Bislama. The transcription and translation sessions provided the basis for language learning: whilst labouring through a text, issues would inevitably arise regarding Abma’s phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and discourse pragmatics. Direct elicitation was a by-product of this process, then, as questions would arise regarding particular aspects of the texts.

The data gathered has been analysed using what has lately been referred to as “basic linguistic theory” (Dixon, 1997: 128-135; Dryer, to appear). No formalised model is used (e.g., Optimality Theory or Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar); rather, the best aspects of traditional grammar, structuralism, formalised theories (such as generative grammar), and typology are drawn from. In other words, the data is described on its own terms: the description accommodates the data, and not the other way around.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.5.2 Overview of the Grammar

This grammar is presented in a sequential fashion, such that each chapter builds upon information introduced in previous ones. The first three chapters (Introduction, Phonology, and Morphology) use IPA characters exclusively when referring to language data, but the remaining chapters employ the standard orthography that is introduced in Chapter 2 (Phonology).

Abma’s phonemic inventory (Chapter 2) is not atypical for Oceanic languages; it contains labialised stops and nasals and a vowel inventory that is, for the most part, symmetrical. Its syllable structure is (C)V(C), with penultimate-syllable word stress. Consonant clusters are only permitted inter-syllabically; this has a bearing on word-formation processes, as discussed in the chapter on Morphology.

Morphology is covered in Chapter 3. Abma’s verbal morphology is fairly complicated, with regular processes of affixation and cliticisation, root modification to convey aspectual and other grammatical distinctions, bimoraic syllable reduplication, and compounding. Nouns are less complex but nevertheless take affixation and cliticisation, reduplication, and compounding. There are also regular derivational processes that derive nouns and verbs.

Chapter 4 discusses word classes in Abma. The major classes of nouns, verbs, and adjectives can be broken down into a number of functional sub-classes. Adverbs and prepositions constitute two rather large closed classes. The large number of prepositions is atypical for Oceanic languages, and many of these have been grammaticalised from verbs or nouns. There is also a well-developed pronominal system, with a distinction between first person plural inclusive and exclusive, as well as dual.

While the phrase structure rule for noun phrases (Chapter 5) includes a variety of constituents, NPs tend to be structurally simple in actual speech. On the other hand, the possessive and associative constructions within which they may be contained are more complicated on both formal and semantic grounds. Possession can be expressed directly or indirectly, with four different indirect possession classifiers. Association resembles the indirect possession structure, but expresses a non-controlling relationship between two entities.
Verb phrases (Chapter 6) are morphologically much more complicated than noun phrases. They contain many morphological elements: e.g., subject pronouns, aspect/modality markers, negation markers, transitivity marking, and various other grammatical morphemes. The transitive and partitive morphemes interact in particularly complex ways with their morphosyntactic environment. Aspect and modality marking is also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 7 looks at the structure of simple sentences. Basic constituent order is SVO. Predicates in Abma can be either verbal or non-verbal. Abma sentences also code reflexivity, as well as passivisation, which is an uncommon feature of Oceanic languages.

Although internally complex, Serial Verb Constructions (Chapter 8) actually constitute a single clause and therefore constitute simple sentences. They are regularly used to express direction of motion, as well as modal and adverbial meanings. To a lesser extent they express aspect. Using the terminology of Olson (Olson, 1981) and Foley and Van Valin (Foley and Van Valin, 1984), serialisation occurs at both the nuclear and core level in Abma.

Complex sentences (Chapter 9) can be expressed through coordination or clause chains, as well as through adverbial clauses, relative clauses, and complement clauses. Relative clauses in particular are widely used, with NP relativisation occurring far down the Accessibility Hierarchy.

In terms of its discourse structure (Chapter 10), Abma has a tendency to package information within a “topic-comment” structure, wherein old information precedes new information. There is some evidence that Abma has at least some of the characteristics of a topic-prominent language. Abma also exploits “head-tail linkage”, which is a common feature amongst many Vanuatu languages. This occurs when verbs are “chained” together in a series of clauses in order to create discourse cohesion.

Appendix 1 contains a sampling of glossed texts in the language, and Appendix 2 has a listing of all the Abma speakers who contributed to this study, and the texts they narrated.
2 PHONOLOGY

Abma’s phonological system is fairly conventional for an Oceanic language (cf. Lynch et al., 2002: 34-35), having a consonant inventory that is not out of place with other languages in Vanuatu, a (C)V(C) syllable structure, and (usually) penultimate word stress.

This chapter provides an overview of the phonological system, as well as discussing the orthography, morphophonemics, the extent of phonological integration of loan words, and historical and comparative observations on some consonants.

2.1 Phoneme Inventory

Abma’s consonant and vowel inventories are given in Table 2.1 and Table 2.2, respectively:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLACE MANNER</th>
<th>LABIO-VELAR</th>
<th>BILABIAL</th>
<th>ALVEOLAR</th>
<th>VELAR</th>
<th>GLOTTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VOICELESS STOP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRIICATIVE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFFRICATE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLAP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROXIMANT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Consonant Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRONT ROUNDED</th>
<th>FRONT UNROUNDED</th>
<th>CENTRAL</th>
<th>BACK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>y:</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MID</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>e:</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>a:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Vowel Inventory

2.1.1 Consonant Contrasts

Table 2.3 lists minimal pairs for all closely-related consonant phonemes:
Chapter 2: Phonology

| /g/ - /ŋ/ | /go:/ | ‘be full’ | /ŋo:/ | ‘be dirty’ |
| /k/ - /ŋ/ | /ka/: | ‘sea shell’ | /ŋa/: | ‘call out’ |
| /k/ - /g/ | /sika/ | ‘year’ | /siɡa/ | ‘leaf (used as umbrella)’ |
| /ŋ/ - /n/ | /ŋa/: | ‘call out’ | /na/: | ‘now’ |
| /w/ - /β/ | /web/ | ‘be small’ | /βeb/ | ‘say’ |
| /b/ - /d/ | /bobo/ | ‘be worn out’ | /dobo/ | ‘stay’ |
| /b/ - /b”/ | /bo:/ | ‘beach pandanus’ | /b”o:/ | ‘a point’ |
| /b/ - /w/ | /butsu-/ | ‘tree’ | /wutsu-/ | ‘hill’ |
| /β/ - /w/ | /βih/ | ‘Fijian asparagus’ | /wih/ | ‘day after tomorrow’ |
| /b”/ - /w/ | /b”ih/ | ‘be unripe’ | /wih/ | ‘lower s.th. down’ |
| /m/ - /n/ | /ma/: | ‘hunger’ | /na/: | ‘now’ |
| /m/ - /ŋ/ | /ma/: | ‘hunger’ | /ŋa/: | ‘cry out’ |
| /m/ - /m”/ | /mal/ | ‘swamp harrier’ | /m”al/ | ‘reef’ |
| /t/ - /d/ | /to/: | ‘time’ | /do/: | ‘to rattle’ |
| /t/ - /k/ | /to/: | ‘time’ | /ko/: | ‘fence’ |
| /s/ - /t/ | /soro/ | ‘send s.th.’ | /tora/ | ‘white-throated pigeon’ |
| /l/ - /r/ | /ɡili/ | ‘dig’ | /ɡiri/ | ‘sweep’ |
| /tː/ - /tː/ | /tsi/ | ‘sugarcane’ | /ti/ | ‘tea’ |
| /ts/ - /s/ | /tsine-/ | ‘intestines’ | /sine-/ | ‘spine of a leaf’ |
| /w/ - /l/ | /web/ | ‘be small’ | /leb/ | ‘take’ |

Table 2.3: Consonant minimal pairs

Of course, the word /ti/ ‘tea’ is a borrowing from Bislama, but it is the best example that could be found for the /ts/ - /t/ minimal pair. This contrast is a marginal one, and is discussed in more detail in §2.10.3.

2.1.2 Vowel Contrasts

Table 2.4 lists minimal pairs for closely-related vowel phonemes:
Table 2.4: Vowel minimal pairs

| /i/- /i:/  | /diŋi/- | 'a side' | /diŋi/- | 'drops of liquid' |
| /e/- /e:/  | /mwaːbe/ | 'split' | /mwaːbe/ | 'be glad' |
| /a/- /a:/  | /nana/ | 'me' | /nana/ | 'New Guinea rosewood' |
| /o/- /o:/  | /bo/ | 'pig' | /bo/ | 'beach pandanus' |
| /u/- /u:/  | /ru/ | 'leaf' | /ru/ | 'quake' |
| /i/- /e/   | /mis/ | 'tire' | /mes/ | 'be wet' |
| /i/- /a/   | /bi/ | 'and' | /ba/ | COMMENT MARKER |
| /e/- /a/   | /deb/ | 'be rotten' | /dab/ | 'be white' |
| /u/- /o/   | /bu/ | 'knife' | /bo/ | 'pig' |
| /u/- /y:/   | /mu:/ | 'hole' | /my:/ | 'be rough', 'grow', 'wild cane' |

2.2 Description of Phonemes: Consonants

The syllable structure of words is discussed in §2.5 below, but at this stage it is important to be aware that consonant clusters within a single syllable are not possible. On the other hand, word-medial clusters do occur, but the consecutive consonants belong to different syllables.

2.2.1 Voiceless Stops

Voiceless stops are usually aspirated before vowels, and unreleased before consonants and word-finally.

2.2.1.1 Voiceless Alveolar Stop /t/

/t/ → [tʰ] ~ [t] before vowels
[ˈt] elsewhere

['tʰep.ma] ‘came’
['mwaːt’.bo] ‘lie down’
[ˈqt] ‘place’

[wə,tʰaŋ] ‘basket’
[te] ‘perfective (PFV) marker’
2.2.1.2 Voiceless Velar Stop /k/

\[ /k/ \rightarrow [k^h] \sim [k^x] \sim [k] \text{ before vowels} \]
\[ [k] \sim [k^h] \sim [k^x] \text{ elsewhere} \]

The phoneme /k/ is usually aspirated before vowels, but sometimes slightly fricated, and occasionally unaspirated:

\['m^x\at.k^h.a] \text{ ‘hang’} \quad \text{[l\text{.}k^x\text{q}] ‘garden’}\]
\[,]\text{[k\text{.}u\text{.}\text{'an}] ‘second’}\

Before consonants and word-finally, /k/ is unreleased, but sometimes a slight aspiration can be heard, or occasionally there is even fricativisation:

\['m^x\text{q}\.m^x\text{q}] \text{ ‘to clean’} \quad \text{[m^o\text{‘e}.s\text{q}^h] ‘he climbs’}\
\[,t\text{e}.n^o k^x] \text{ ‘it’s finished’} \quad \text{[b\text{a}k^x] ‘bag’}\

2.2.2 Voiced Stops

With the exception of /b/, voiced stops normally occur in onset position only and therefore have little variation in their pronunciation.

2.2.2.1 Voiced Bilabial Stop /b/

\[ /b/ \rightarrow [p^h] \sim [p^h] \text{ syllable-finally} \]
\[ [b] \text{ elsewhere} \]

\[,]\text{[b\text{u}n] ‘night’} \quad \text{[k\text{a}.b\text{a}] ‘firewood’}\

In word-medial and word-final positions, [p] sometimes has an audible release, but usually not:
Chapter 2: Phonology

2.2.2.2 Labialised Voiced Bilabial Stop /bʰ/

/bʰ/ → [bʰ]

[bʰɛt] ‘dance’

This sound does not occur word- or syllable-finally.

2.2.2.3 Voiced Alveolar Stop /d/

/d/ → [d]

[dɔ.ni] ‘want’

[kj̞.di] ‘1PL.INC.IND’

For some speakers in the western section of the SM speaking area, [d] ~ [ɗ]:

[m̓RIEND] ~ [m̓RIEND] ‘he stays’

[k̞.da] ~ [k̞.da] ‘our edibles’

This sound does not occur word- or syllable-finally.

2.2.2.4 Voiced Velar Stop /g/

/g/ → [g]

[ge.ma] ‘1PL.EXC.IND’

[ba ga] ‘banyan tree’
This sound does not occur word- or syllable-finally.

2.2.3 Nasals

2.2.3.1 Bilabial Nasal /m/

/m/ \(\rightarrow\) [m]

['mj.ni] 'with'  ['aq'.ma] 'something'

[qam] '3SG.IP'FV'

2.2.3.2 Labialised Bilabial Nasal /m'w'/

/m'w'/ \(\rightarrow\) [m']

The labialisation in this nasal is most audible before front vowels, and weaker (but still audible) before back vowels.

[m'w'q.'rj.ni] 'today'  [tq.'gap'.m'w'a] 'bad'

[m'w'q.'sət:sə] 'he sends a message to s.o.'

Labialised nasals are not realised syllable-finally. However, when suffixes such as -an 'nominaliser (NMZR)' are attached to some words ending in the bilabial nasal [m], underlying labialisation becomes apparent:

[u'm] 'work (n.)' \(\rightarrow\) [u.'m'\(\text{\textasciitilde}\)an] 'work (v.)'

[ka.'ljm] 'five' \(\rightarrow\) [,ka.li.'m'\(\text{\textasciitilde}\)an] 'fifth'

\footnote{For phonotactic reasons, /m'w/' is considered a phoneme rather than a consonant cluster. Phonotactics are explored in detail in §2.5.}
Chapter 2: Phonology

2.2.3.3 Alveolar Nasal /n/

/n/ → [n]

[ˈnuː.ɾuː] ‘the two of them’ [hj.'næk] ‘meal’

[kən] ‘his food’

2.2.3.4 Velar Nasal /ŋ/

/ŋ/ → [ŋ]

[ŋiː] ‘remove leaves from a tree’ [ˈʃuː.ʙuŋ] ‘morning’

2.2.4 Fricatives

2.2.4.1 Voiced Bilabial Fricative /β/

/β/ → [β]

[βaːn] ‘go’ [haː.ˈβiːn] ‘woman’

/β/ does not occur word- or syllable-finally.

2.2.4.2 Voiceless Alveolar Fricative /s/

/s/ → [s]

[sa.ˈdɔk] ‘sit down’ [ruːs] ‘move’
2.2.4.3 Voiceless Glottal Fricative /h/

\[ /h/ \rightarrow [\text{h}] \]

\[ [\text{h}q.'\text{an}] \text{‘her husband’} \quad [,\text{bu}.\text{ti}.\text{hi}] \text{‘find’} \]
\[ [\text{b}jh] \text{‘think’} \]

2.2.5 Affricates

2.2.5.1 Voiceless Alveolar Affricate /ts/

\[ /\text{ts}/ \rightarrow [\text{ts}] \sim [\text{tʃ}] \text{ before } /i/ \]
\[ [\text{tʃ}] \text{ before } /u/ \]

\[ [\text{tʃ} \text{si}] \text{‘person’} \quad [\text{tʃi}] \text{‘sugarcane’} \]
\[ [\text{m}^\text{w}.\text{am}.\text{tʃi}] \text{‘sleep’} \quad [\text{tʃi}.\text{bʊŋ}] \text{‘morning’} \]

This phoneme is a marginal one, and its distribution is limited to positions before /i/ and /u/. (See §2.10.3 for further discussion.)

2.2.6 Flaps

2.2.6.1 Voiced Alveolar Flap /ɾ/

\[ /\text{ɾ}/ \rightarrow [\text{ɾ}] \]

\[ [\text{m}^\text{w}.\text{q}.\text{rʊp}] \text{‘he runs’} \quad [\text{gq}.\text{rʊ}] \text{‘run’} \]
\[ [\text{tʃam.ru}] \text{‘3DU.IPFW’} \]

This phoneme does not occur word- or syllable-finally.
Chapter 2: Phonology

2.2.7 Approximants

2.2.7.1 Voiced Labio-Velar Approximant /w/

/w/ → [w]

[wep'] ‘be small’

[wqi'] ‘outside’

This phoneme does not occur word- or syllable-finally.

2.2.7.2 Voiced Alveolar Approximant /l/

/l/ → [l] before front vowels

[h] elsewhere

[ləli] ‘do’

[kətsi] ‘three’

[təkəli] ‘pudding’

[təkəli] ‘strong’

[βəli] ‘his house’

[me.țan] ‘go back’

2.3 Description of Phonemes: Vowels

2.3.1 Front Vowels

2.3.1.1 Short High Front Unrounded /i/

/i/ → [i] before consonants

[i] elsewhere

This is a very high vowel – the [i] that is produced before consonants is only slightly lower than the cardinal vowel [i] that is articulated elsewhere:
2.3.1.2 Short Mid Front Unrounded /e/

\[ /e/ \rightarrow [\varepsilon] \text{ before consonants} \\
[\varepsilon] \text{ elsewhere} \]

[’b’\varepsilon.ɲɛs] ‘pandanus leaf’  \[’ɡɛ.mɑ] ‘1PL.EXC.IND’

[b’ɛp] ‘go down’  \[b’ɑ.ɬɛh] ‘one’

[,]l.ɪj.’be] ‘sometime’

There is general speaker variation, with some speakers producing a higher, tenser /e/ across the board than others do.

2.3.2 Central Vowels

2.3.2.1 Short Low Central /a/

\[ /a/ \rightarrow [\alpha] \text{ before consonants} \\
[\alpha] \text{ elsewhere} \]

[’rɑt’.rʊ] ‘3DU.PFY’  \[bɪ.’ɬɑm] ‘your property’

[’ɡɪ.tɑ] ‘see’  \[’ɑp’.mɑ] ‘something’

2.3.3 Back Vowels

2.3.3.1 Short Mid Back /o/

\[ /o/ \rightarrow [\varepsilon] \sim [\varepsilon] \]
Chapter 2: Phonology

There is free variation in the way /o/ is articulated: generally /o/ is not quite as high as the cardinal vowel [o], and some speakers produce a more lax, less rounded /o/:

['sɔŋŋɔ] ‘dirt’
[dɔpˈtʰɔp] ‘talk’
[tʰɛŋɔk] ‘finish’

2.3.3.2 Short High Back /u/

/u/ → [u]

This vowel is produced high and rounded, almost as high as the cardinal vowel /u/:

['ŋu.ʁu] ‘the two of them’
['sʊ.ʁu] ‘chief’
[ɡUK] ‘cook’
[bu] ‘knife’

2.3.4 Long Vowels

There exist five long vowels in Abma: /aː/, /eː/, /iː/, /oː/, /uː/. These share the same phonetic qualities as their short vowel counterparts, with the exception of length:

['nɑŋŋɔŋ] ‘now’
[naː] ‘now’
[maŋtʰɛːtɛ] ‘chicken’
[le.ˈleː] ‘the inside of them’
[ʃos.ŋi] ‘these bananas’
[bʰiŋŋi] ‘birds’
[le.ˈkoː] ‘garden’
[ˈnɔŋŋu] ‘3DU.POSS’
[mʊs] ‘it rains’
[tɛtˈkʊ] ‘it is dry’
2.3.4.1 High Front Rounded /y:/

/y:/ $\rightarrow$ [y]:

[βy:k] ‘a long time’

[m:y:] ‘be rough’

The existence of this sound is marginal to Abma’s otherwise symmetrical vowel inventory. It is distinctively high and rounded, and it is known to contrast with /u:/ only after labial sounds.

A separate /y/ phoneme (outside of an otherwise predictable symmetrical system) is also found in Nahavaq (Dimock, 2006).

2.4 Orthography

Table 2.5 lists all IPA characters which represent the phonemes of the language, and their orthographic representation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Orthography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/a/</td>
<td>a</td>
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<td>/a:/</td>
<td>aa</td>
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<td>/b/</td>
<td>b</td>
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<tr>
<td>/b:/</td>
<td>bw</td>
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<td>/e/</td>
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<td>/e:/</td>
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<td>/i:/</td>
<td>ii</td>
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<td>/l/</td>
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<td>/m/</td>
<td>m</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5: IPA characters and their orthographic equivalents

Although there is not a strong tradition of writing in Abma, the language has been recorded from time to time by native speakers and foreign missionaries alike. As will be discussed below, Table 2.5 reflects general orthographic usage, but with a few exceptions.
The major criticism of this orthography is of course that it contains several digraphs. However, these are probably preferable to diacritics because: (a) there is already a history of using digraphs when writing in Abma; (b) while Francophone writers would be familiar with diacritic marking, Anglophone writers would not; and (c) both Anglophone and Francophone writers would already be familiar with digraphs from writing these languages (e.g., *chaise* ‘chair’ in French).

One phoneme that deserves special mention is /ts/. In coastal areas, and generally where the SM dialect is spoken, /ts/ is often realised as [ts] before /i/ (see §2.2.5.1). In non-coastal areas, and generally where SR and SK is spoken more widely, /ts/ before /i/ is often realised as [tf]. Speakers who produce [ts] prefer to write ‘ts’, but speakers who use [tf] choose to write ‘j’. ‘J’ has the advantage of being just a single letter, but Francophone SM speakers are opposed to writing ‘j’, as they associate this letter with French [3]. In this study, /ts/ is written with the digraph ‘ts’, as this reflects the pronunciation of more SM speakers, the dialect upon which this study is based. Ultimately, a single writing system for all three dialects of Abma would be ideal.2

### 2.5 Phonotactics

This section looks at syllable structure (§2.5.1), consonant clusters (§2.5.2), and vowel sequences (§2.5.2.3).

#### 2.5.1 Syllable Structure

Consonantal onsets and codas are optional; therefore the minimal syllable consists of just a single vowel. Abma syllable structure is reflected in the following formula:

$$\sigma \rightarrow (C) \ V \ (C)$$

The combinatorial possibilities are therefore as follows:

---

2 This information was originally provided by Catriona Malau-Hyslop (pers. comm., Feb. 2003) and confirmed by my own fieldwork.
Chapter 2: Phonology

V /i/ ‘PREP’
CV /ni/ ‘3SG.OBJ’
VC /on/ ‘beach’
CVC /βan/ ‘go’

Most of the above syllable types can combine together to form a word. Consonant clusters within a single syllable are not possible (with the exception of borrowings such as /sam.bloŋ/ ‘rose apple’, /smat/ ‘smart’, and /swi.tem/ ‘make sweet’). However, word-medial clusters do occur as long as the consecutive consonants belong to different syllables. Some examples are given below of words composed of various syllable types. Impossible types are asterisked, then explained below:

V + CV /a.tsi/ ‘person’
V + VC /i.ah/ ‘fall down’
V + CVC /a.lak/ ‘spring, source’
CV + CV /ba.ga/ ‘whale’
CV + VC /βa.ut/ ‘come out’
CV + CVC /ba.sal/ ‘too bad!’
VC + CV /ih.go/ ‘when, if’
VC + VC ***
VC + CVC /il.βet/ ‘frizzy hair’
CVC + CV /βeh.wu:/ ‘talk’
CVC + VC ***
CVC + CVC /kab.tsin/ ‘vegetable’

The examples /atsi/ ‘person’ and /alak/ ‘spring’ demonstrate that whenever possible, words preserve the basic CV structure over a VC structure. (That is, they are syllabified as /a.tsi/ and /a.lak/ rather than */ats.i/ or */al.ak/.)

For this reason, a VC + VC syllable combination (asterisked above) cannot occur; the coda of the first syllable would instead be reinterpreted as the onset of the next, resulting in a V + CVC structure. Similarly, a CVC + VC combination (also asterisked) would be re-interpreted as having a CV + CVC structure.
2.5.2 Consonants

Consonants are considered in terms of their syllable position, as well as how they co-occur with each other.\(^3\) To facilitate the reader’s task, this information is presented in two ways. First, Table 2.6 presents consonant clusters that only occur intra-morphemically, and only within indigenous (non-borrowed) words:

<table>
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<th>t</th>
<th>k</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>b(^w)</th>
<th>d</th>
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</table>

+ clusters that are supported within morphemes

Table 2.6: Intra-morphemic consonant clusters

Table 2.7 expands upon this, listing consonant clusters that can occur both within and between morphemes, including in borrowed words:

---

\(^3\) It is preferable to examine consonants within the syllable as opposed to within the word, because syllable structure and syllable constraints are easier to define than word structure and word constraints. (§2.5.1 deals with syllable structure, and Chapter 3 (Morphology) deals with the treatment of words.)
In light of the information just presented, some generalisations can be made about the phonotactic structure of Abma. Onsets and codas are considered first, then consonant clusters are examined.

2.5.2.1 Onsets

All consonant phonemes, including /b\textsuperscript{w}/, may occur in syllable onset position.

The labialised stop /b\textsuperscript{w}/ occurs only in morpheme-initial position. Also, the labial sounds /b/, /b\textsuperscript{w}/, and /w/ often occur at a morpheme boundary in onset position; this is probably due to the fact that there is reduplication of many verb roots beginning with these sounds.
2.5.2.2 Codas

There are many more constraints regarding the types of consonants that may fill coda position of the syllable.

The first major observation is that the voicing feature of stops is neutralised in coda position. Voiced stops are devoiced (with one exception for /g/). The consonant /b/ occurs syllable-finally, but here it is produced as [p], a voiceless sound (see §2.2.2.1).

The [±continuant] contrast in the labialised phonemes /mʷ/, /bʷ/, /β/ and /w/ is neutralised in coda position; these are instead realised as the bilabial sounds [m] and [p]. For example, contrast the phonetic realisations of /mʷ/ in onset versus coda position: [u.mʷan] ‘work (n.)’ versus [um] ‘work (v.)’; likewise for /β/: [ra.βa] ‘pull (TR)’ versus [rap] ‘pull (INTR)’.

Finally, /w/ in /tob.to.wan/ ‘speech’ is realised as [p] in coda position: [dop.top] ‘to talk’.

The alveolar flap /r/ and the affricate /ts/ do not occur in coda position. The latter will be discussed in §2.10.3, as it has a very limited distribution, in general.

Therefore, the sounds that do typically occur in coda position are devoiced stops, non-labialised nasals and fricatives, and the lateral /l/.

2.5.2.3 Consonant Clusters

Table 2.7 reveals some restrictions on consonant cluster combinations. One generally observable pattern in Abma is its aversion to clustering sounds that share the same manner of articulation, at least at the intra-morphemic level. General observations are made below, where “C1” refers to the first consonant in the cluster, and “C2” refers to the second.

---

4 The phoneme /g/ occurs before /l/ in one known word, /waglɪ/ ‘peel’.
5 There is conflicting advice in the literature about whether nasals should be [±continuant] or [-continuant] (Crowley et al., 1995: 58). In this study, nasals are considered to be [-continuant], along with stops, flaps, and affricates. Vowels, fricatives, laterals, and the approximant /w/ are [+continuant].
6 The phoneme /l/ is referred to as belonging to the class of laterals or, more broadly, to the class of approximants.
Voicing-neutralised stops in C1 position generally do not precede voiced stops intramorphemically, but they do co-occur with voiceless stops and most other consonant phonemes. In C2 position, stops are similarly versatile and can occur after nasals, fricatives, and laterals (as well as other stops).

With a single exception (which is /mn/), nasals do not co-occur with other nasals unless there is a morpheme boundary between C1 and C2. The single nasal-nasal combination, /mn/, is in every case attributable to a historical process of vowel syncopation in the verb root – this process has already been briefly referred to in the last chapter, and will be explored in more depth in Chapter 3 (Morphology). Nasals can also precede stops, fricatives, the affricate /ts/, and approximants. In C2 position, nasals may follow stops, fricatives, and laterals.

The bilabial nasal /m/ does not precede other labial sounds, with the exception of /mb/. The single word with a labial /mb/ cluster, /membel/ ‘rest’, has an allomorph, /mebe/. This suggests that the /mb/ cluster actually harkens back to an earlier time when prenasalised /mb/ was a part of Abma’s consonant inventory.

The velar nasal /ŋ/ precedes most sounds at the inter-morphemic level only, although it does precede fricatives and approximants intra-morphemically, as well as the stop /k/.

With a couple of exceptions (/s/ + /β/ and /h/ + /β/), fricatives generally do not precede other fricatives but they do co-occur with stops, nasals, and laterals, whether in C1 or C2 position.

Laterals precede all classes of sounds except other approximants. The exception is /lw/, but this cluster occurs inter-morphemically rather than intra-morphemically. In C2 position, laterals again may follow all classes of sounds except for its own class of approximants, as well as the affricate /ts/.
2.5.3 Vowel Sequences and Diphthongs

Both short and long vowels combine to form a wide range of vowel sequences; the first vowel in a sequence is abbreviated as ‘VW1’, the second vowel in a sequence is ‘VW2’, and the third vowel in a sequence is ‘VW3’.

Following Hyslop (2001: 38), Table 2.8 presents examples of the different combinatorial possibilities for vowel sequences in Abma. Sequences across morpheme boundaries are indicated by an affix ‘-’ or clitic ‘=’ marker:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECOND VOWEL</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>o</th>
<th>u</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIRST VOWEL</td>
<td>/ii/ 'yes'</td>
<td>/jie/ 'just'</td>
<td>/bariak/ ‘not want’ /isni=ah/ ‘these bananas’</td>
<td>/sarion/ 'blackfin barracuda’</td>
<td>/βali-uru/ 'the house of the two of them’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>/reiai/ 'be careful’</td>
<td>/ne-es/ 'CONN-smoke’</td>
<td>/meme-an/ 'stinginess’</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>/leut/ ‘thing’ /ne-uhl/ ‘CONN-shout’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>/ain/ ‘something’ /vet na=ih/ ‘that stone there’</td>
<td>/nae/ ‘now’ /kae-k/ ‘my rope’</td>
<td>/βαi̯atla-an/ ‘thanks’</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>/gau/ ‘grow’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>/dokoI/ ‘be sufficient’</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>/loah/ ‘devil’</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>/gumui/ ‘become’ /gasi-i/ ‘spit’</td>
<td>/mabonsue/ (female custom name)</td>
<td>/karu-an/ ‘second’ /boŋbuа/ ‘s.o. stupid’</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>/mu=us/ ‘it’s raining’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.8: Possible vowel sequences

Vowel sequences occur both within words and across morpheme boundaries. Most combinations can occur, although in general /o/ appears to be less cooperative about co-occurring with other vowels. There are also sequences involving long vowels: /iːa/, /eɯ/, /aːi/, /aːe/, /auː/, /uː/, /uaː/, and probably others.
Sequences of the same vowel are not possible intra-morphemically. The sole exception to this is /iih/ ‘yes’, which is uttered with a glottal stop: [iʔ.'jh]. Inter-morphemically, identical vowels can occur in sequence; they are realised phonetically as lengthened vowels, as in /βaβatla:n/ ‘thanks’ and /mu:s/ ‘it’s raining’.

2.5.3.1 Phonemic Status

Consecutive vowels are phonemically vowel sequences, and not diphthongs. This conclusion was reached after putting two speakers (one SM and one SR) through two phonological tests. The speakers were literate females; both had completed a Year 12 education. In Vanuatu society, where a substantial percentage of children terminate their schooling at Year 6, a Year 12 education is considered to be a great achievement.

The first task required speakers to reverse the order of phonemes in a list of 45 words. Each word was read out to the speaker (i.e., speakers could not read the list themselves), and they were asked to reverse the ordering of the sounds in each word as they heard them. Their responses were recorded and transcribed as the test progressed.

In words containing consecutive vowels, the order of the vowels was reversed 100% of the time by both speakers. For example, when confronted with the word /kau/ ‘big’, both speakers offered not /auk/, but /uak/. This would suggest that speakers perceive the word as having one consonant and two vowel phonemes, as opposed to one consonant phoneme and one diphthongised vowel phoneme.

The SM speaker was then asked to play a different “word game” with monosyllabic and disyllabic words, where she was asked to remove the last sound of each word she heard. Again, the words were read out to the speaker; she did not read them herself.

For words ending in two consecutive vowels, the speaker removed only VW2, leaving VW1 intact. Had she perceived the two vowels as a single diphthongal phoneme, she would have eliminated both vowels. This provides further evidence that consecutive vowels constitute separate phonemes.
Clearly, the exercises described above have their limitations. First of all, only two speakers were involved in the experiments, and both speakers were literate; their knowledge of reading and writing could have affected their responses. Furthermore, both exercises required speakers to produce nonsense words, which may also have influenced the results in unknown ways.

However, other features of the language also suggest that consecutive vowels are phonemically distinct from each other. Reduplication, for example, provides clues about speaker intuition. The verb /bə.ʌt/ ‘come out’ has the reduplicated form of /bə.bə.ʌt/. Were /au/ a diphthong representing a single phoneme, then the expected result would be */bət.ət.ət/ – but this is not the case.

2.5.3.2 Phonetic Realisation

In Abma, vowel-vowel sequences are realised phonetically as falling diphthongs. (Two exceptions to this are explored in §2.5.3.2.1.) Rehg (2007: 120) characterises falling diphthongs in four possible ways. Only two are of relevance here; falling diphthongs can be:

1. a consecutive sequence of two non-identical vowels, wherein VW2 is less sonorant than VW1, or;
2. “/VY/, an underlying unit phoneme that involves gliding articulation from the position of one vowel to that of another” (Rehg, 2007: 120). We are primarily concerned with the first characterisation, but we will also look at the second definition in §2.5.3.2.1. In Table 2.9, phonemic vowel sequences that are instantiated as falling diphthongs are given in broad phonetic transcription:
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Table 2.9: Diphthongs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST VOWEL</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>o</th>
<th>u</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>[rarei] ‘be careful’</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>[dokoi] ‘be sufficient’</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that in all cases in Table 2.9, the second vowel is higher than the first vowel, which means that, acoustically, it has relatively lower sonority (Ladefoged, 1993: 245).

In three-vowel sequences across morpheme boundaries, a diphthong is formed if possible, and diphthongisation is not necessarily faithful to morpheme boundaries. For example, consider /ko ian/ ‘you go away!’. This is a three-vowel sequence, with ko ‘2SG’ constituting its own morpheme – a fact that does not prevent /o/ from forming an alliance with VW2, to the exclusion of VW3. The phonetic realisation of ko ian is thus [khoi.]’, where the first two vowels form a falling diphthong, leaving ‘an’ to cope on its own as the second syllable. Clearly, the forces of phonetics override morphological structure in this case (and many others).

Word stress provides good evidence for the existence of phonetic diphthongs rather than simple vowel sequences. In a word like [ko. bi. ¹] ‘thank you’, there are two consecutive vowel sounds, /i/ + /a/, but primary stress falls on the VW2 only. If /ia/ were a diphthong, then stress on /ah/ alone would not be possible.

Looking at the reverse situation, consider [m’ç. gau] ‘grow’, which takes stress on the final syllable of the word. This is surprising, since words ending in vowels are expected to take stress on the penultimate syllable, not the final syllable. However, if [m’ç. gau] is analysed as
being the diphthongised instantiation of an underlying phonemic form, /m̃e.'ga.u/, then the stress pattern is rectifiable.

2.5.3.2.1 Rising Diphongs [ui] and [ue]

The preceding section discussed falling diphthongs, where VW2 is articulated higher in the mouth and is therefore acoustically less sonorant than VW1. However, there are two words in the corpus that require further discussion as they do not comply with this generalisation. Because there are only two individual words (one of them being a proper name), they are discussed separately herein, but are not included in Table 2.9.

Recall from above that Rehg’s (2007: 120) second characterisations of a falling diphthong was as ‘/V V/’, wherein the off-glide is represented by the superscripted ‘V’. A rising diphthong, then, would be the converse of this: /^V V/, wherein superscripted ‘V’ represents an on-glide to the diphthong. In the Abma word [gamui] ‘become’, high back /u/ functions as an on-glide to high front /i/, resulting in the diphthong /ui/. In terms of their position in a cardinal vowel diagram, neither /u/ nor /i/ is higher than the other – thus in terms of sonority, it is not possible to claim that either vowel is louder than the other. But in the particular case of [gamui] ‘become’, /i/ is the more prominent vowel sound, which the on-glide, /u/, is merely supporting. It can therefore be argued that /ui/ constitutes a rising diphthong in Abma, where VW1 constitutes an on-glide to VW2.

In a similar vein, high back /u/ and mid-high front /e/ diphthongise into /ue/ in the word [mabonsue], which is a female custom name. (There are no other examples in the data of this diphthong.) Since /e/ is a lower vowel than /u/, it has higher sonority, and therefore /ue/ is a rising diphthong, with /u/ functioning as an on-glide.

2.6 Productive Morphophonemic Processes

Numerous morphophonemic processes are at work in the language including vowel lengthening, epenthesis, and initial consonant mutation.

---

7 This word probably derives from /ga=mu−i/ ‘MIN=ADD-be’, but it is used with regularity and [ui] has diphthongised – therefore it has its own entry in the dictionary.
2.6.1 Vowel Lengthening

Identical consecutive vowels occurring across morpheme boundaries can be realised phonetically as a lengthened vowel. For example, if the nominaliser /-an/ is suffixed to a verb root ending in /a/, the phonetic result is a single lengthened vowel:

(1) /baʃatla-an/ → [baʃatla:n]
    thank-NMZ
    ‘thanks’

Vowel lengthening also occurs with passive suffixation (see Chapter 7 (Simple Sentences)) and in cliticisation of demonstrative morphemes to noun stems (see Chapter 4 (Word Classes)).

2.6.2 Epenthesis

Epenthesis involves the addition of a sound segment. In Abma, both consonant and vowel epenthesis can occur.

2.6.2.1 Consonant Epenthesis

Consonant epenthesis occurs across morpheme and word boundaries. The faster the rate of speech, the more likely epenthesis is to occur.

2.6.2.1.1 Across Morphemes

Epenthetic [r] can be inserted across morpheme boundaries (within a single word) when a suffix beginning with a vowel attaches to a root that ends in a vowel. Epenthesis across morphemes occurs when VW2 is not higher than VW1 (hence conditions for diphthongisation are not met) (see §2.5.3.2). It is instantiated in three morphological environments:

• when a noun ending in a vowel is followed by the demonstrative clitic =ah ‘proximal (PROX)’ or =ih ‘distal (DIST)’;
• when a verb ending in a vowel takes the nominalising suffix -an;
• when a verb ending in a vowel takes a transitive suffix, e.g., -a, -i, -o.
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Example (2) shows how juxtaposition of the plural morpheme with the proximal demonstrative can trigger epenthesis:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(2)} & \quad /\text{b}^\text{n}i:\text{hil} \ ni=\text{ah}/ \quad \rightarrow \quad [\text{b}^\text{n}i:\text{hil}.\text{ni:.ra}h] \\
& \quad \text{bird} \quad \text{PL=PROX} \\
& \quad \text{‘these birds’}
\end{align*}
\]

The first vowel must either be higher than the second, as in (2), or at least the same height as the second, as in (3), where the transitive suffix \(-i\) attaches to the intransitive form \(\text{wi:} \) ‘bend, fold’:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(3)} & \quad /\text{wi:.i}/ \quad \rightarrow \quad [\text{wir}] \\
& \quad \text{bend-TR} \\
& \quad \text{‘bend s.th.’}
\end{align*}
\]

As already stated, this process is not entirely regular, as sometimes no epenthetic \([r]\) is uttered, even when the conditions for epenthesis are met. Speech rate (i.e., fast connected speech or slow careful speech) is surely an important factor in this regard.

2.6.2.1.2 Across Words

In connected speech, epenthetic \([r]\) is also inserted between two vowels across word boundaries, usually between a lexical morpheme and a grammatical morpheme. Unlike epenthesis within words, epenthesis across words occurs between two vowels of any quality – that is, \(\text{VW2}\) may be higher than \(\text{VW1}\), unlike epenthesis within words. This is because, when crossing word boundaries, diphthongisation is no longer an option the way it is as the inter-morphemic level. For example, in (4), /\(\text{o}\)/ and /\(i/\) cannot form a diphthong because they are parts of separate words, but they are joined through epenthesis:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(4)} & \quad /\text{ba:wo} \ i-\text{ni}/ \quad \rightarrow \quad [\text{ba:worini}] \\
& \quad \text{‘be first’ PREP-3SG.OBJ} \\
& \quad \text{‘be first of them [the group]’}
\end{align*}
\]

Epenthesis across word boundaries is not a frequent occurrence. Mainly it occurs between verbs and their arguments or adjuncts, as in (4) above.
2.6.2.2 Vowel Epenthesis

Vowel epenthesis occurs when a bound verb root is reduplicated or it takes passive or nominalising suffixation.\(^8\) For example, in (5), epenthetic /e/ (and /i/) are inserted when the bound verb root is nominalised with /-an/ ‘nominaliser (NMZR)’:

(5) /m\^a=sbe:/  \(\rightarrow\) /sbe:-an/  \(\rightarrow\) [seberan]
3SG.IP=FV=be.glad  be.glad-NMZ  ‘He/She is glad.’

When the transitive bound verb -\(\text{-mni}\) ‘drink’ is reduplicated to create an intransitive, it loses its transitive suffix, -\(i\), but then an epenthetic [i] appears in the verb root in order for the reduplication to be possible:

(6) /-mn-i/  \(\rightarrow\) /min~min/
\(\text{drink-TR}\)  \(\text{INTR}\)~\text{drink}
‘drink (TR)’  ‘drink (INTR)’

2.6.3 Initial Consonant Mutation

Initial consonant mutation (i.e., fortition) has a morphological derivational function, making aspectual and nominal/verbal distinctions. It also operates in verb root reduplication.

For example, initial consonant mutation of /\(\beta\)/ distinguishes a non-imperfective verb from an imperfective one in (7):

(7) /\(\beta\)an/  \(\rightarrow\) /ban/
‘go (non-IPFV)’  ‘go (IPFV)’

This area is explored in detail in the Chapter 3 (Morphology).

\(^8\) The term “epenthesis” is used somewhat loosely here: although epenthesis involves the addition of a sound segment, vowel epenthesis in Abma actually occurs when an underlying vowel that harkens back to an older form of the word re-emerges in certain environments. So the epenthetic vowel is not “new”, but instead a revival of an older form. Nevertheless, from a synchronic perspective, the process is epenthetic.
2.6.4 Assimilation

The imperfective morpheme \( m^\text{e} \) is both phonologically and morphologically conditioned. In the third person singular, imperfective \( m^\text{e} \) is phonologically conditioned. Phonological conditioning is discussed here, while morphological conditioning for \( m^\text{e} \) (both third person singular and non-third person singular) is left for Chapter 3 (Morphology).9

Third person singular imperfective \( m^\text{e} \) has allomorphy conditioned by regressive assimilation: vowel quality assimilates to the sound of the following verb root. More specifically:

\[
{\{m^\text{e}\}}(\text{=}) : \quad \emptyset / \text{bilabial consonants} \\
/m^\text{w}i/ = / \text{high front vowels in monosyllabic roots} \\
/m^\text{w}o/ = / \text{high back vowels in monosyllabic roots} \\
/mu/ = / \text{high vowels in non-monosyllabic roots} \\
/m^\text{e}/ = / \text{elsewhere}
\]

For example: \( \emptyset \) bariak ‘not want’, \( m^\text{w}i=sib \) ‘go down’, \( m^\text{w}i=ib \) ‘bear fruit’, \( m^\text{w}o=soni \) ‘put’, \( mu=rus \) ‘move’, \( mu=us \) ‘rain’, \( m^\text{w}a=ililj \) ‘know’, \( m^\text{w}a=ulu \) ‘write’, \( m^\text{e}=ako \) ‘take away’.

2.7 Word Stress

In basic roots, primary stress is normally applied to the penultimate syllable of a word. Secondary stress applies to every alternate syllable to the left of the penultimate syllable:

---

9 Morphological conditioning is discussed in chapter 3, but briefly:
\( \{m^\text{e}\} : \quad \emptyset / \text{free verb roots beginning with bilabial consonants} \\
\{m^\text{e}\}= / \text{free verb roots in the third person singular} \\
/m^\text{w}a/= / \text{bound verb roots} \\
=/m/ / \text{elsewhere}

10 There is one known exception to this: \( mu=uhleli \) ‘ask for s.th.’ is polysyllabic.
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\[
\text{\textipa{ga.ni}}/ \quad \text{‘eat’} \\
\text{\textipa{ba.\texttextipa{tsu.ru}}}/ \quad \text{‘choose’} \\
\text{\textipa{ma.ri\texttextipa{bu.ku}}}/ \quad \text{‘humpback snapper’}
\]

Abma is quantity-sensitive. Long vowels take stress, regardless of their position in the word:

\[
\text{\textipa{ba:ta}}/ \quad \text{‘be tight’} \\
\text{\textipa{e:n\texttextipa{ny}}}/ \quad \text{‘something, someone’} \\
\text{\textipa{m\texttextipa{a.te.te}}}/ \quad \text{‘chicken’} \\
\text{\textipa{ta.kat}}/ \quad \text{‘god’}
\]

Words ending in closed syllables typically receive word-final stress:

\[
\text{\textipa{le.l\texttextipa{kat}}}/ \quad \text{‘be angry’} \\
\text{\textipa{sa.dok}}/ \quad \text{‘sit down’} \\
\text{\textipa{ha.\texttextipa{bin}}}/ \quad \text{‘woman’} \\
\text{\textipa{me.\texttextipa{ram}}}/ \quad \text{‘moonlight’} \\
\text{\textipa{le.leh}}/ \quad \text{‘bathe’} \\
\text{\textipa{na.\texttextipa{jih}}}/ \quad \text{‘when’}
\]

If these long vowels versus closed syllables both occur in a single word, then long vowels take precedence for the purposes of stress assignment:

\[
\text{\textipa{ha.vak}}/ \quad \text{‘child’} \\
\text{\textipa{tsu.bung}}/ \quad \text{‘morning’} \\
\text{\textipa{ne.bik}}/ \quad \text{‘do.IRR’}
\]

Stress marking beyond the basic root word level is a complicated matter and merits a study of its own.
2.8 Intonation

This section looks at the basic intonation patterns of sentences (§2.8.1) and common discourse patterns (§2.8.2).

2.8.1 Sentence Types

Sentence intonation in Abma follows four main patterns, depending upon the type of the utterance. Declarative sentences have a level intonation that drops at the last syllable of the utterance (whether stressed or unstressed), as (8) and (9) illustrate.

(8) /\nat.ba\lel.te\ab.'ma.na/.
na-t=ba lel=te abma=ŋa.
1SG-PFV=NEG.1 do=PART something=NEG.2
‘I didn’t do anything.’ -T2p45/D2T5

(9) /\na.ma\βitsi\no.k\wa.'tan/.
na=ma βits-i no-k watəŋ./
1SG=PRSP weave-TR CL.GE-1SG.POSS basket
‘I weave my basket.’ –T2pp45/D2T5

Information questions adopt the same intonation structure as declarative sentences:

(10) /\kat\min\le\'ab.ma/.
ka=t min le abma?
2PL-PFV drink INSTR what

Alternatively, information questions can have steady intonation throughout the duration of the sentence, until the last syllable, where there is a quick rise and then a sharp fall in intonation:
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(11) /ko ban i.'be'/?
    ko ban i.be?
2SG IPFV.go where
‘Where are you going?’ –Ch.7p7

Polar (‘yes-no’) questions have a similar “rise-dip” intonation beginning with the last syllable of the utterance, whether the last syllable is stressed (as in (12)) or not (as in (13)):

(12) /kom ,gan.i 'b"et/?
    ko=m gan-i b"et?
2SG=IPFV eat-TR taro
‘Are you eating taro?’ –EF2p167

(13) /na.ma 'beb ne.,hu, 'bet ,m"ab.m"ab ,n.a.m"a/?
    na=ma 'beb nehu, 'bet m"ab=m"ab n.a.m"a?
1SG=PRSP say COMP stone INT~be.hot yet
‘I’m saying, are the stones still hot?’ –D23T2

Sometimes the rise-dip occurs in the last **stressed** syllable of the utterance, as in (14):

(14) /bi ,ko beb, ko ban 'na:nonj/?
    bi ko beb, ko ban na:nonj?
and 2SG IPFV.say 2SG IPFV.go now
‘And, you say, you’re going now?’ –D39T8

Alternatively, the final syllable can be subject to a rise in tone, as in (15):

---

11 The word *i.'be* contradicts the rule that stress occurs in the penultimate syllable. A possible explanation may be that *ibe* < *i + be-POSS.PRO*, where *i* is a preposition meaning ‘source (SRC)’, and *be-* a bound noun meaning ‘proximity’. Since Abma was probably originally a CV language, the possessive pronoun suffixed to *be-* would have been of CV structure. Therefore the stress pattern of *be-* would have been penultimate, i.e., *i + 'be-CV*. 

(15) /lok is tet.'he:/?
    lok is te=the:?
pudding banana PFV=uncooked
‘The banana pudding’s not ready?’ –D23T2

Imperative utterances are level until the last syllable, where they drop off sharply:

(16) /ko i.'an!/?
    ko ian!
2SG IMP.go.away
‘Go away!’

(17) /ko 'gan!/?
    ko gan!
2SG IMP.eat
‘Eat!’ –EF2p167

2.8.2 Discourse

In discourse, a single sentence is often many clauses or phrases long, and intonation is exploited to signal the connection that carries over from one clause to the next. Non-final clauses are often marked by a pause and a slight rise in intonation on the final syllable, with the final utterance observing one of the four intonation patterns discussed in §2.8.1 above. In (18), each utterance has a slight rise in intonation on the final syllable and a pause, and the final clause observes the intonation of a declarative clause. The subsequent sentence in the narrative, (19), is just a single phrase, also a declarative.

(18) /ba ,kom ,gi.li ba.'ut/?,
    ba ko=m gil-i baut,
COMM 2SG=IPFV dig-TR come.out
‘Then you dig it out,'
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Ikonl, gi.li, si.ni ba.'ut/,
ko=m gil-i sini baut,
2SG=IPFV dig-TR kava come.out
‘you dig the kava out.

Ibi
Iko=lll ISOlJ.i le Ie, bak Ie.'ko:/',
bi ko=m soŋ-i le bak leko:,
and 2SG=IPFV put-TR LOC bag garden
‘and you put it in a garden bag.

I,at.si.ge le wa.'taŋ/,
atsige le wataŋ,
or LOC basket
‘or in a basket,

I,lo
Ie lab.ma ah kom 'ru.tsu/',
io le abma ah ko=m ruts-u,
or LOC what REL 2SG=IPFV carry-TR
‘or whatever you’re carrying,

Ibi
Iko 'm"ab.ma/,
bi ko m"a=bma,
and 2SG IPFV=come
‘and you come,

Ibi
Iko 'm"ab.ma ne.,sa.go.,ra.ni ben ,ut ah le si.'len/. Ile si."elJ./
bi ko m"a=bma ne-sagora-ni
and 2SG IPFV=come CONN-pile.up-TR
be-n ut=ah le sileŋ.
proximity-3SG.POSS place=PROX LOC water
‘and you come and pile it up near the water.’
(19) /, ben si.'leŋ/.  
be-n  sileŋ.  
proximity-3SG.POSS  water  
‘Near the water.’

2.9 Loan Words

Loan words from Bislama (and thus indirectly from English, French, and other indigenous languages) have crept into the SM-speaking areas of Pentecost. Borrowing occurs less extensively on the east coast due to its relative geographic and social isolation.

A list of attested loan words is included in Table 2.10. Usually the relationship between the borrowing and the English translation is clear. However in a few cases the Bislama (B) equivalent for the borrowing is provided, followed by the English translation.

|[be.’let] | plate | ['mæ.ni] | ‘money’ |
| [be.’re.sin] | ‘prison’ | ['mæ.an.go] | ‘mango’ |
| [bi.’haf] | ‘behalf’ | ['nek.ta] | ‘necktie’ |
| [blen] | ‘plane’ | ['ol.bala] | ‘olfala’ (B) / ‘old man’ |
| [ˈdo.ti] | ‘dirt’ / ‘be dirty’ | [ˌre.’sis.ta.’rem] | ‘register’ |
| [ˈfa.mili] | ‘family’ | [ˌsa.te.’de] / [ˌsa.’re.re] | ‘Saturday’ |
| [ˈka.go] | ‘cargo’ | [si:t] | ‘side’ |
| [ˈka.lib] | ‘calipers’ | [ˌso.san] | ‘saucepan’ |
| [ˌka.li.’ko] | ‘kaliko’ (B) / ‘clothes’ | [ˈsu.’kul] | ‘school’ |
| [ˈka.tom] | ‘custom’ | [ˈswi.tem] | ‘sweeten’ |
| [kat.’bol] | ‘nakatambol’ (B) / ‘dragon plum’ | [ˌʃa.ni:s] | ‘chance’ |
| [kuk] | ‘cook’ | [ʃif] | ‘chief’ |
| [lait] | ‘light’ | [ʃət] | ‘church’ |
| [le.’ti.na] | ‘long dina’ (B) / ‘noon’ | [ˈwel.kam] | ‘welcome’ |
| [ˈma.mi] | ‘mommy’ | [ˈwit.nes] | ‘witness’ |

Table 2.10: Lexical borrowings into Abma
Some words such as sukul ‘school’ are frequently used in the language. Others such as witnes ‘witness’ or resistarem ‘register’ are used only by a limited number of speakers who are heavily oriented towards Bislama.

Stress placement generally follows the example of the loan language, disregarding Abma’s internal word stress rules (see §2.7 above). There are a few exceptions to this: [bo.'tel] ‘bottle’, [ka.'lib] ‘calipers’, [,os.bi.'tal] ‘hospital’ (where positions of primary and secondary stress are reversed from the English word), [re.'sis.ta,.rem] ‘register’, and one of the pronunciations of Saturday ([sa.'re.re]).

Pronunciation of the sounds of some words can vary between speakers. For example bag can be pronounced as either [bak] or [bag]; of course, [bak] would be the more assimilated pronunciation as it takes into account the fact that [g] does not occur syllable-finally. Similarly, the difference between betesin ‘prison’ and bIen ‘plane’ is one of assimilation: betesin takes into account not only Abma’s preference for a CV structure, but also the fact that the allophone [p] cannot occur syllable-initially. Although bIen is spelled with a [b] here, it is widely pronounced as [plen]. This represents a wholesale borrowing of the [p] allophone into an otherwise unacceptable syllable-initial environment. Furthermore, it forms a consonant cluster with /l/ in onset position of the syllable, which violates phonotactic rules – thus a clear example of how lexical borrowing can impact on other aspects of the language, i.e., phonology.

The borrowings m"ani ‘money’ and m"ango ‘mango’ are interesting – why do speakers labialise the Bislama [m] when /m/ is also a phoneme in Abma? This may be due to the fact that /an/ almost always follows /m"/ and not /m/, in Abma. While the corpus contains numerous examples of words beginning with ‘m"an’, there is only one example of a word beginning with ‘man’. Therefore speakers obviously feel that [m"] is a more natural pronunciation than [m] in borrowed words beginning with ‘man’.
Other phonemic adaptations are fairly straightforward: /s/ replaces Bislama /dz/, and /ʃ/ is given no Abma equivalent at all – it is simply borrowed wholesale.

2.10 Historical and Comparative Notes on Consonants

This section contains additional observations about various phonemes and phoneme sets.

2.10.1 On /ɡ/ and /ŋ/

Currently, /ɡ/, and /ŋ/ are separate phonemes, but there is evidence that they were once allophones of a single phoneme, where:

\[
* /_{\text{ɡ}}/ \rightarrow \text{[ɡ] syllable-initially}
\]
\[
\text{[ŋ] syllable-finally}
\]

Synchronic arguments for such an analysis are as follows:

- With few exceptions, /ŋ/ appears in syllable-final position, and /ɡ/ is reserved for syllable-initial position.
- Minimal pairs between /ɡ/ and /ŋ/ are rare.
- The SR and SK dialects of Abma have a prenasalised velar stop [ŋɡ] occurring in onset position which has a correspondence to /ɡ/ in SM. This was demonstrated in Chapter 1 (Introduction).

There are a few exceptions to the above generalisations: /ŋ/ is still found syllable-initially in /ŋa/ ‘negative (NEG.2)’, /ŋusu/- ‘nose’, and /ŋa/- ‘hand’. Presumably, these forms have been retained because, as core lexical items that are integral to one’s being; they have been frequently used and therefore have been less susceptible to change than other forms have been. Alternatively, the initial sound of these words was formerly /ɡ/ but the initial /ɡ/ has elided, or perhaps these words originally had a syllable that has since been dropped.

Further evidence to support the notion of an original */ɡ/ with allophones comes from the response of a native speaker to a word reversal exercise. In a testing environment, Mireille Kaentoh, a literate SM speaker, was read a list of words. For each word she heard, she was asked to orally reverse the order of the phonemes in the word. She reversed phonemes
consistently; for example, [sak] ‘go up’, would be reversed into the nonsense word, [kas], as would be expected, since /k/, /a/, and /s/ are all distinct phonemes in Abma. But when offered the word [bun] ‘night’, she responded not with [jun], but with [gub]: [g] was chosen over [ŋ].

2.10.2 On /k/ and /g/

Although /k/ and /g/ are separate phonemes, their distribution is skewed and appears to be affected by (1) position within the syllable; and (2) word class:

- Position Within the Syllable
  As was mentioned in the section on phonotactics (§2.5.2.2), /k/ can take any position within a syllable while /g/ only appears syllable-initially (with a single known exception). This fact is supported by the phoneme reversal test: when asked to reverse the words /gae/ ‘be elastic’ and /gamui/ ‘become’, Mireille Kaentoh (the SM speaker) produced not [eag] and [iimuj], but [eak] and [iimak]. This is because [k], not [g], is permitted in syllable-final position.

- Word Class
  Verbs almost always begin with /g/; their nominal/adjectival counterparts almost always begin with /k/. For example, compare /get/ ‘lie (v.)’ with /ketan/ ‘lie (n.)’.

These facts alone would suggest that /k/ and /g/ were once allophones of a single phoneme. Further support for this hypothesis is provided by Walsh (1982); this is discussed in the next section.

2.10.2.1 Abma versus Raga

The phonemes /k/ and /g/ are systemically related in Raga object/focus pronouns (Walsh, 1982: 242). (Raga is the language spoken to the north of Abma on Pentecost Island.) Raga /k/ is the initial sound in first person plural exclusive (1PL.EXC) and second person plural (2PL)
pronouns, but not in first person plural inclusive (1PL.INC) pronouns. Interestingly, Abma’s /g/ - /k/ distribution is the mirror image of what is found in Raga. For example, in Abma /g/ is the initial sound in /gema/ ‘1PL.EXC’ and /gimi/ ‘2PL’. In contrast, the first person plural inclusive form is /kidi/.

2.10.3 On /t/ and /ts/

As mentioned in §2.2.5.1, the phoneme /ts/ is a marginal one, having previously been an allophone of /t/, as depicted in the following formula:

\[
* /t/ \rightarrow \begin{cases} \text{[ts]} \text{ before } /i/ \text{ and } /u/ \\ \text{[t]} \text{ elsewhere} \end{cases}
\]

However, borrowings from Bislama have resulted in words where [t] directly precedes [i], such as in ti ‘tea (or any hot drink)’. Since ti has become entrenched in the language, it has formed a minimal pair with tsi ‘sugarcane’. This has resulted in a new /ts/ phoneme.

The contrast is marginal, but there are other near-minimal pairs for /t/ and /ts/ such as /tusu.ku/ ‘history’ ~ /tu.tu/ ‘vocative (VOC)’. Another fact supporting the classification of /ts/ as a separate phoneme is that speakers write it as a distinctive sound – although this may well be a consequence of their exposure to Bislama, which has the /ts/ ~ /tʃ/ phoneme (Crowley, 2004: 11).

Due to its previous incarnation as an allophone of /t/, the new phoneme /ts/ is limited in its distribution, occurring only before /i/ and /u/. This is changing, however: the cardinal number ten, /tesan\text{\text COPY}wul/, is undergoing aphesis and often loses its initial vowel, becoming /tsan\text{\text COPY}wul/.

The result, of course, is that /ts/ precedes the vowel /a/, therefore expanding its phonological “territory”.

Aside from the phonological conditioning of /ts/ described in §2.2.5.1 above, the variation in pronunciation between [ts] and [tʃ] (before /i/) also appears to be loosely affiliated with island
geography and dialect. Those from the coastal areas who speak SM normally say [ʦ], whereas those from the mountainous bush who speak SR are more likely to produce [ʧ]. A single individual can have varying pronunciations of this phoneme, running on a continuum between [ʦ] and [ʧ], with articulation occurring somewhere between the alveolar ridge and the hard palate. This is especially the case for inland-dwelling SM and SR speakers who have regular contact with each other’s dialects, and for speakers who mix SR and SM. In general, those who use exclusively [ʦ] pronunciation are from the coast, and those who use only [ʧ] pronunciation are from the mountains. Age does not appear to be a factor; nor does gender.

2.10.4 Pre-nasalisation of /d/

It is a point of interest that in the neighbouring SR dialect there exists the pre-nasalised stop sound, /nd/ which does not occur in SM. There is residual evidence in SM that /nd/ previously occurred in SM but has been lost. Some speakers, for example, articulate the basic verb /‘mwi.di/ ‘he stays’ as [‘mwi.jin.di].

Further evidence comes from the verb root /sa.’dok/ ‘sit’ (produced as [sa:’dok] in SR). When /sa.’dok/ is reduplicated and nominalised, the result is /san.sa.dok.’an/ ‘sitting (n.)’. Note that the reduplicated form contains an [n] that is not present in the original verb root: presumably this is residual of a former /nd/ phoneme that has been split apart (into a nasal and a stop) in the reduplicated form.
3 MORPHOLOGY

The three primary morphological processes in Abma are affixation, root modification, and reduplication. These are discussed separately for the NP and VP. The VP contains the most complicated morphology, so it is discussed first (§3.1), followed by NP morphology (§3.2). Derivational processes such as those that form nouns from verbs, and vice-versa, are explored in §3.3. Finally, some non-productive morphological and morphophonemic processes are explained from a historical perspective in §3.4.

Because phonology plays an important role in this chapter, all data in Abma is transcribed in phonemic IPA script unless indicated otherwise. The orthographic transcription of the language is then used in Chapters 4 through 10, inclusive.

3.1 Verb and VP Morphology

Verbs in Abma are unique in that they can be either “free” or “bound”; an awareness of how this is instantiated in the language is prerequisite to understanding several other aspects of VP morphology, so this is discussed first (§3.1.1). The determination of word boundaries within the VP is also rather complicated, so §3.1.2 is dedicated to a discussion on this. Section §3.1.3 follows on §3.1.2, describing in detail the morphological characteristics of specific VP elements. Other productive processes involving verb roots include initial consonant mutation (§3.1.3.2) and reduplication (§3.1.5).

3.1.1 Overview: Free Verb Roots vs. Bound Verb Roots

Before the various processes of verb root morphology can be looked at, it is important to first clarify the “free” and “bound” morphological division of Abma verbs. This situation is the result of historical processes which are discussed in §3.4 below. At this point however, we will simply distinguish the two types.

Some verb roots beginning with a bilabial or alveolar stop (/b/, /d/ → /t/), nasal (/m/), fricative (/s/) or lateral (/l/) have lost their erstwhile CV.CV phonemic structure, yielding a -C.CV structure that requires such verb roots to take a vowel prefix. These verb roots, then, have become bound – they cannot occur independently the way other verb roots can. For
example, -bma ‘come’, -mlu ‘leave’ and -sro: ‘send away’ are bound verb roots and must take a prefix; in contrast, buloy ‘not exist’, maluni ‘forget’, and soh ‘shout’ are free.

In their citation form, free verb roots are pronounceable and speakers recognise them as “words”. On the other hand, speakers do not consider bound roots to be “words”. For example, if a speaker is asked to cite a verb that has an underlingly bound root (e.g., What’s the word for ‘come’?), they cite its imperfective form rather than its root form (e.g., mwabma, not -bma). Out of a total of 662 verbs in the corpus, 77 of them are bound, which is about 12% of the total. Table 3.1 lists a few of these roots in their bare and corresponding citation forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOUND VERB ROOT</th>
<th>CITATION FORM WITH IMPERFECTIVE PROCLITIC</th>
<th>GLOSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-bma</td>
<td>m&quot;a=bma</td>
<td>‘come’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-lji</td>
<td>m&quot;a=lji</td>
<td>‘put, leave’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-mtsu:</td>
<td>m&quot;a=mtsu:</td>
<td>‘sleep’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-mse:</td>
<td>m&quot;a=mse:</td>
<td>‘cut’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-sbe:</td>
<td>m&quot;a=sbe:</td>
<td>‘be glad’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-two</td>
<td>m&quot;a=two</td>
<td>‘tell a story’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Bound verb roots and their citation forms

Verbs are normally either free or bound, but not both. However, there is a minority that alternates between the two categories. A few free/bound verb root correspondences are given in Table 3.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FREE VERB ROOT</th>
<th>BOUND VERB ROOT</th>
<th>GLOSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mi.ni</td>
<td>-mni</td>
<td>‘drink’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>li.vi</td>
<td>-li</td>
<td>‘carry, take’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so.lo</td>
<td>-slo</td>
<td>‘sew’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do.bo</td>
<td>-tbo</td>
<td>‘lay down’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Free/Bound verb root alternations

Table 3.2 illustrates how the first vowel in the free roots is missing in the bound roots. However, their underlying existence is revealed through other morphological processes such as reduplication (see §3.1.5.1.1). Evidence suggests that bound verb roots in SM are an innovation away from more conservative dialects of Abma; this is discussed in §3.4.4.
3.1.2 Word Boundaries

Due to its morphophonemic innovation away from the SK and SR dialects, especially with regard to bound verb roots (see §3.4.4 below), the verb complex in the SM dialect presents special challenges in the determination of word boundaries. For example, at first glance it is unclear whether the utterance in (1) should consist of one word or two:

(1) (a) ?ko bma!
    2SG come
    ‘You come!’

(b) ?ko-bma!
    2SG-come
    ‘You come!’

Syntactically it could be two words because ko ‘2SG’ and bma ‘come’ are identifiable morphemes. On the other hand, phonotactic rules do not support consonant clusters within syllables, such as the one found in bma.

Free verb roots also present a challenge in the determination of word boundaries. For example, should the aspect marker te in (2) be attached to the verb root, or not?

(2) (a) ?te gabis.
    3SG.PFV be.good
    ‘It is good.’

(b) ?te=gabis.
    3SG.PFV=be.good
    ‘It is good.’

Dixon and Aikhenvald (2002: 9-16) offer some insight here; they distinguish “phonological words” from “grammatical words”, and list some defining criteria for both. Phonological words may be identified by segmental features such as word-internal syllable structure and word boundary phenomena, prosodic features such as stress assignment, phonological rules which derive surface forms from underlying forms, or any combination of the three (Dixon and Aikhenvald, 2002: 13).

As for syntactic criteria, the grammatical elements in a word should always occur together, they should occur in a fixed order, and they should have a conventionalised meaning (Dixon and Aikhenvald, 2002: 19).

In fact, the grammatical elements of words within the VP do occur in a fixed order, and they do have a conventionalised meaning. However, they only occur together insofar as the phonology permits. That is, it is phonological criteria that are largely responsible for the determination of word boundaries within the VP. Syntactic criteria do not contradict the
phonological criteria, but it is the phonological criteria that are the deciding in factor in what
does and does not constitute a possible word in the SM dialect of Abma.

Another very important consideration when determining word boundaries is the attitude and
intuition of native speakers. This, along with two phonological factors, syllable structure and
word stress, is discussed in the sections below.

3.1.2.1 Syllable Structure

Segmental criteria dictate where word boundaries may occur, at least as far as bound verb
roots are concerned. Segmental criteria ban intra-syllabic consonant clusters. Because of this
constraint, bound verb roots that, in their basic form, begin with a consonant cluster, must
take CV prefixation in order for the cluster to be “broken”. Thus morpheme boundaries and
syllable boundaries often do not coincide in bound verb roots.

Example (3) uses segmental criteria to sort out the word boundary problem presented in (1)
above. Because the verb root bma ‘come’ contains an inadmissible consonant cluster, it must
prefix the subject pronoun ko ‘2SG’ in order to become an allowable word. In (3), the
morpheme boundary (marked by ‘-’) and the syllable boundary (marked by ‘.’) do not coincide:

(3) (a) *ko bma!
     2SG come
     ‘You come!’
(b) ko-b.ma!
     2SG-come
     ‘You come!’

Bound verb roots, then, must combine with another morpheme to form a phonological word.
Other simple examples that illustrate the same point are:

(4) (a) ¹mʷa=m.ni
        3SG.IPFV=drink
        ‘She drinks.’
(b) ¹te=s.lo
    3SG.PFV=sew
    ‘She sewed.’
(c) ba.¹te=b.ma
    3SG.HYP=come
    ‘He should come.’
(d) ³m³a.ne=t.¹bo
    3SG.IRR=lay down
    ‘He will lay down.’
Syllable structure is therefore an important factor in the analysis of bound roots, but what about for free verb roots? This question is addressed below.

3.1.2.2 Word Stress

Recall from Chapter 2 (Phonology) that in basic word roots, stress is normally penultimate. Abma is also quantity-sensitive: long syllables and closed syllables are stressed, regardless of their position in the word.

Even when a root takes affixation, penultimate word stress is usually maintained. Looking back at the inflected bound verb roots in (4) above, three of these four words have penultimate stress. The exception is ʼmʷa.net.ʼbo ‘he will lay down’, which carries stress on the first and third syllables. Why this is so is unclear, but this example highlights the fact that stress is not straightforward in Abma, especially when one ventures an analysis beyond the basic morphemic root. More research is necessary.

With that caveat in mind, we will nevertheless make the assumption that multi-morphemic words should take penultimate stress, with each alternating syllable to the left also stressed. And we would expect that if bound verb roots are subject to normal penultimate stress rules when prefixed (as they are in (4) above), then free verb roots should behave in the same way.

Example (5) below is only a sampling of the numerous permutations of subject pronouns, aspect/modality markers, and other grammatical markers that are available within the verb complex. (VP structure is examined in Chapter 6, and detailed information on the morphological behaviour of VP elements is discussed in §3.1.3.)

(5) (a) ʼna=m ʼdon-i
1SG=IPFV want-TR
‘I want’ –D2T27

(b) ʼmʷan ʼbɛː.tsi
3SG.IRR help
‘she will help’ – D2T27

1 Such an assumption facilitates the analysis of word class boundaries. If this assumption were not made, it would be impossible to rectify the current linguistic analysis with native speaker intuitions about word class boundaries. The next section discusses native speaker intuitions.
(c) 'kaa.mat 'di
1PL.EXC.PFV stay
‘we stayed’ -D2T27

(d) 'ko=t=ba mu=b.'ma=ŋa
2SG=PFV=NEG.1 ADD=come=NEG.2
‘you never came’ -D23T1

If we were to employ syntactic criteria in determining word boundaries, each of the examples in (5) could be considered to be a single word, because their elements occur in a fixed order and they have a conventionalised meaning (see the discussion in §3.1.2 above).

However, the stress patterns of the VPs in (5) suggest that the VP elements cannot be strung together into a single grammatical word if penultimate word stress is to be maintained, with every alternate syllable to the left of the penultimate syllable also being stressed. Instead, elements of the VP must break up into smaller prosodic words. For instance, it would not be possible to analyse the examples in (a) and (b) as single words because there would then be two stressed syllables in a row, which violates the condition that stressed and unstressed syllables should alternate. The solution is to separate the stressed elements into two separate words. If the elements in (c) were analysed as a single word, then stress would fall syllable-finally, which would violate the convention of penultimate stress. And if (d) were analysed as a single word, then it would be difficult to explain the existence of two consecutive unstressed syllables. Separation into separate prosodic words, however, results in a consistent stress pattern for each word.

3.1.2.3 Native Speaker Intuition

Dixon and Aikhenvald (2002) point out the importance of native speaker intuition, and the psychological validity of what speakers determine to be “words” in their language. Native speakers favour a writing system that groups the elements of the verb complex into smaller prosodic words rather than into longer, syntactically-motivated multi-morphemic words. This suggests that they think of the elements in the verb complex in terms of smaller phonological units, rather than as larger syntactic entities.

Native speaker intuition was tested in a simple manner. A couple of Abma texts were transcribed in two different ways: (1) where the words reflected Abma’s syntactic structure (resulting in long multi-morphemic words); and (2) where the words reflected Abma’s
phonological structure (resulting in shorter prosodic words). At least half a dozen (literate) speakers were presented with both texts and asked which one they preferred; all nominated the second option.

Reinforcing this position is the fact that two collections of short stories, written by two different native speaker authors (Buli and Tabi, 1985; Mabonlala, 1986) both employ the prosodic word option.

3.1.2.4 Summary

In the sections above it has been argued that, although the syntactic criteria are valid, word boundaries in Abma are best analysed in terms of phonological criteria. This means that the demands of phonotactics and word stress work around the major elements of the verb complex, which are the subject pronoun and the verb. Other morphemes come between these, attaching to the subject pronoun or to the verb, or to each other. The information in Table 3.3 characterises the way that phonological words are generally formed within the VP, given the constraints on word stress and phonotactics:

- Subject pronouns and free verbs are independent morphemes that optimally stand alone in the VP; however they are able to host clitic morphemes that come between them.
- Subject pronouns are more amenable to affixation than verbs are.
- If more than one clitic comes between the subject pronoun and the verb, then these tend to stick to each other rather than to the subject pronoun, or to the verb.
- Abma words are, optimally, two syllables.

Table 3.3: Criteria for drawing word boundaries in the VP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Subject pronouns and free verbs are independent morphemes that optimally stand alone in the VP; however they are able to host clitic morphemes that come between them.</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abma words are, optimally, two syllables.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is obviously tension between the above criteria.

Phonological considerations can even break up compounded words. For example, the verb -bma 'come' is normally compounded with the verb samul 'go back up', and samulma 'come back up' is listed in the Abma dictionary as a compound word. (See §3.4.1 for more information on compounding.) However, in (6) the form */b/ma ‘come’ is prosodically linked to the negation marker, *ya. The two morphemes cliticise to form a single phonological word, separate from samul:
Sentence (6) illustrates the principle that words are optimally bi-syllabic, and adheres to standard word stress patterns. It also reflects native speaker intuitions about what “words” are (i.e., speakers insist on the word boundaries given in (6)). The input of native speakers was therefore crucial when the criteria listed in Table 3.3 were devised.

3.1.3 Affixation and Cliticisation

This section examines the morphological behaviour of clitics and affixes within the VP. Since VP word boundaries were just discussed in §3.1.2, §3.1.3.1 looks more closely at VP cliticisation and affixation. Clitics and affixes are a major morphological component of the VP, especially in the pre-verbal complex. Section §3.1.3.2 then examines affixation specifically onto the verb root.

The particular morphemes discussed here have well-established meanings/functions, so discussion of their form and behaviour, without prior examination of their function, should not present too much of a problem for the reader. A few morphemes are more “obscure” in meaning/function. For these, the reader is referred to Chapter 6 (Verb Phrase).

3.1.3.1 Affixation/Cliticisation in the Pre- and Post-Verbal Complex

This section provides more detail on cliticisation and affixation in the pre- and post-verbal complex. (The VP head itself consists of a verb plus any affixation; see Chapter 6 (Verb Phrases) for a preview of VP structure.)

Specifically, this section looks at the subject pronoun and the verb (§3.1.3.1.1), aspectual/modal markers (§3.1.3.1.2), other grammatical markers (§3.1.3.1.3) and the connector prefix ne- (§3.1.3.1.4).

3.1.3.1.1 Subject Pronoun and the Verb

As we have already seen, elements that precede the bound verb root will attach directly to this root out of phonotactic necessity. Bound verb roots are not uncommon, but free verb roots are
the norm, and with free verb roots, the subject pronoun constitutes a separate word from the verb. In fact, neither the subject pronoun nor the verb accept cliticisation unless it is necessary. In (7), two morphemes, *t* ‘perfective (PFV)’ and *ru* ‘dual (DU)’ fall between the subject pronoun and the verb. Because consonant clusters within syllables are not permissible, these two morphemes cannot cliticise to each other – therefore they attach to the subject pronoun and the verb. The subject pronoun is underlined:

(7) \[ \text{ra}^=_{t} \quad \text{ru}^=_{mni}. \]

*3PL.*PFV DU=drink

‘The two of them drank it.’

Sentence (8) illustrates a different scenario, where *ba* ‘negative (NEG.1)’ and *mu* ‘additional (ADD)’ cliticise to each other. The subject pronoun, *ta* ‘1PL.INC’, hosts *n*, an irrealis marker:

(8) \[ \text{ta}^=_{n} \quad \text{ba}^=_{mu} \quad \text{hi} \quad \text{go}^=_{ah}^=_{\eta}. \]

*1PL.INC.*IRR NEG.1=ADD hit one=PROX=NEG.2

‘We won’t hit this one any more.’ –T2p35/D2T11

3.1.3.1.2 Aspectual/Modal Markers

The form taken by aspect/modality markers alternates between independent words and proclitic/enclitic forms.

**Imperfective (IPFV) Aspect \( M^e = \)**

\( M^e = \) has a number of phonologically conditioned allomorphs: \( \emptyset, \ M^i =, \ M^o =, \ M^u = \) and \( M^a = \) (see Chapter 2 (Phonology)). \(^2\) \( M^e = \) also has three morphologically conditioned
allomorphs: $\emptyset$, $m^*a=$ and $=m$. Morphological conditioning for the imperfective marker is as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\{m^*e\} & : \quad \emptyset / \quad \text{free verb roots beginning with bilabial consonants} \\
\{m^*e\} & = / \quad \text{free verb roots in the third person singular} \\
/m^*a/= & / \quad \text{bound verb roots} \\
/=m/ & / \quad \text{elsewhere}
\end{align*}
\]

The imperfective morpheme occurs before the verb root, and no other grammatical marker can intervene.\(^3\) (Even though $=m$ is in the form of an enclitic rather than a proclitic, it still precedes the verb.)

Free verb roots beginning with bilabial sounds take a $\emptyset$ allomorph of the imperfective marker, as in (9) below. The imperfective morpheme is $m^*e=$ (or an allomorph of $m^*e=$) with free verb roots in the third person singular, as in (10). (The phonological conditioning factors that determine these forms may be reviewed in Chapter 2 (Phonology)). Also, before bound verb roots the form is $m^*a=$ (as in (10)). Otherwise, the imperfective takes the form of $=m$ (as in (12) and (13)).

(9) \( ra \quad \emptyset=m^*as. \)  
3PL IPFV=live  
'They live.'

(10) \( m^*o=rob. \)  
3SG.IPFV=run  
'He runs.'

(11) \( na \quad m^*a=bma. \)  
1SG IPFV=come  
'I come.'

\(^3\) There are two known exceptions to this: two grammatical elements in the VP, \( gam \) ‘minimiser (MIN)’ and \( mu \) ‘additional (ADD)’, can intervene between the subject pronoun and the verb. There is a historical explanation for this: \( gam \) is grammaticalised from the verb \( gamra \) ‘to just do something’, and \( mu \) is grammaticalised from the verb \( mumui \) ‘be more than’.
Chapter 3: Morphology

(12) na=m gi-ri ut.
    1SG=IPFV sweep-TR place
    ‘I sweep the place.’ —EF1p15

(13) na=m goro m*ate:te.
    1SG=IPFV chase chicken
    ‘I chase the chicken.’ —EF1p113

Notice how, in (12) and (13) above, =/m/ always attaches to the subject pronoun, and never to the verb. (Refer to §3.1.3.1.1 for a review.)

Because the imperfective prefix can be phonologically conditioned to the following verb, in the third person singular it is always attached to the verb rather than preceding it as a separate word, is illustrated in (14). This is unlike other aspect/modality markers in the third person singular, which only attach to the verb if the verb is monosyllabic (as will be seen in the following sections).

(14) m*i=git-a atsi havin.
    IPFV=see-TR person woman
    ‘He sees this woman.’ —D2T35

Also, contrary to the allomorphy explained above, some speakers (particularly older speakers) will occasionally articulate m"a before verbs that are not bound. This is an irregularity. For example, because b"aha ‘hammer’ has an initial bilabial sound, its imperfective marker would be expected to be zero. But the speaker in (15) uses the full morpheme, m"a:

(15) ra=m"a b"ah-a.
    3PL=IPFV hammer-TR
    ‘They hammer it.’ —T1p28
Chapter 3: Morphology

Perfective (PFV) Aspect te, Irrealis (IRR) Modality m"an

These aspectual markers are realised as full words (te, m"an), as proclitics (te=, (m"a)ne=), and as enclitics (=t, =n). The te= and (m"a)ne= allomorphs are attached to verb roots that have only one syllable (as in (16)), that begin with high front vowels (as in (17) and (18)) or that are bound (as in (19)). The enclitics =t and =n are attached to subject pronouns (which precede the verb root), as in (20). Otherwise, these morphemes appear as independent words as in (21) because, unlike imperfective mwe=, they have no phonologically-conditioned allomorphy.

(16) (a) \text{te=di.} \\
\text{3SG.PFV=stay} \\
\text{‘He stayed.’}

(17) (a) \text{na te=ilili}. \\
\text{1SG PFV=know} \\
\text{‘I knew.’}

(18) (a) \text{na te=i ha:la}. \\
\text{1SG PFV=be child} \\
\text{‘I was a child.’}

(19) (a) \text{na te=bma.} \\
\text{1SG PFV=come} \\
\text{‘I came.’ -EF1p127}

(20) (a) \text{na=t git-a.} \\
\text{1SG PFV see-TR} \\
\text{‘I saw it.’}

(21) (a) \text{te git-a.} \\
\text{3SG.PFV see-TR} \\
\text{‘He saw it.’}

Prospective (PRSP) Modality nema

The prospective modality marker nema stands as an independent word in the third person singular. It is a proclitic nema= before bound verb roots, monosyllabic verb roots, or roots
that begin with high vowels. Its allomorph is an enclitic \( =ma \) to non-third person singular subject pronouns that occur before the verb. Sentence (22) shows it functioning as an independent word:

(22) Bi Ø beb **nema** das-i Bulemamkan.
and 3SG IPFV.say PRSP cut-TR B.
‘And he said he would cut [knife] Bulemamkan.’ –T3p34/D2T35

Sentence (23) demonstrates the \( =ma \) allomorph functioning as an enclitic to the first person singular subject pronoun *na*; it also shows the *nema* \( = \) allomorph functioning as a proclitic to the verb root *i* ‘be’, which begins with a high vowel:

(23) abe, **na=ma** gan=te, **nema=i** ka-k
COMM 1SG=PRSP eat=PART 3SG.PRSP=be CL.ED-1SG.POSS

\( \text{tsi si=ah. sugarcane POL=PROX} \)
‘I’m going to eat some, it’s going to be my sugarcane, I think.’ –FN4p5

As with perfective aspect, if *nema* ‘prospective (PRSP)’ occurs with verbs that have more than one syllable, it constitutes a separate word.

**Hypothetical (HYP) Modality ** *bat*

The hypothetical morpheme *bat* ‘hypothetical (HYP)’ may occur as a recognisable full word. It attaches as *bate* \( = \) to bound roots, monosyllabic roots, and roots beginning with high front vowels. Sentence (24) show *bate* \( = \) procliticised to a root beginning with a high front vowel. *Bat* also cliticises to other grammatical morphemes in the verb complex; for example, (25) shows *bat* \( = \) elicitised to the dual marker, \( =ru \):

(24) **bate=i** subu na-a.
3SG.HYP=be chief ASSOC-3PL.POSS
‘He should be their chief.’ –EF2p219

(25) ra **bat=ru** sak na: le ofis noŋ.
3PL.HYP=DU go.up now.1 LOC office now.2
‘The two of them should go up to his office now.’ –T1p34/D2T3
Chapter 3: Morphology

Sentence (26) shows *bat* procliticised to single-syllable verb stem:

(26) bat=βi nana nae.
    3SG.HYP=be 1SG.IND now
    ‘It should be me now.’ - D2T43; T2p63

Sentence (27) shows *bat* encliticised to a subject pronoun:

(27) ka:=:bat huru.
    1PL.INC=HYP teach
    ‘We should teach.’ -D41T11

3.1.3.1.3 Other Grammatical Morphemes in the Verb Complex

There are many other grammatical morphemes in the verb phrase: *ba...ga* ‘negative (NEG)*’, *ba...an* ‘prohibitive (PRHB)*’, *gam* ‘minimiser (MIN)*’, *mu* ‘additional (ADD)*’, *ru* ‘dual (DU)*’, *te* ‘indefinite partitive (PART)*’ and *te* ‘completive (CMP)*. Their functions are not explored here, but in Chapter 6 (Verb Phrase). Here, though, their morphological status as clitics is discussed.

According to Zwicky (1985: 285), “clitics can exhibit a low degree of selection with respect to their hosts, while affixes exhibit a high degree of selection with respect to their stems.” All of the grammatical morphemes in this category are clitics. They do not stand alone as single words, and they can alternate between pro- and enclitic status. They can attach to subject pronouns, verb stems, or to each other. This is in contrast to affixes, which are either prefixes or suffixes but not both, and which only attach to specific classes of words.

Example (28) is a two-sentence extract from a text, and it demonstrates the typical behaviour of grammatical clitics. In the first sentence, =ba ‘negative (NEG.1)’ cliticises to ko=n ‘2SG=IRR’. The partitive and prohibitive clitics in te=an ‘PART=PRHB’ attach to each

---

4 The grammatical morpheme *gam* ‘minimum (MIN)*’ is derived from the verb *gam-ra* ‘to just do something’, which is still in use. However, *gam-ra* has been used with such frequency that it has become grammaticalised, doubling as *gam* ‘minimum (MIN)*’, a grammatical morpheme in the VP. Also, the grammatical morpheme *mu* ‘additional (ADD)*’ is grammaticalised from the verb *mumui* ‘be more than’.

5 The morpheme =an ‘prohibitive (PRHB)*’ can only be an enclitic.
other. Then the second partitive marker *te* is also an enclitic to the verb stem. In the second sentence, *gam* ‘minimiser (MIN)’ elicits to *na=n* ‘1SG-IRR’:

\[(28) \text{kô=n=ba di te=an ne-ban=te dini nana.} \]
\[\text{2SG'=IRR=NEG.I stay PART=PRHB CONN-go=PART ABL 1SG.OBJ} \]
\[‘You must not leave me.’\]

\[\text{igo na=n=gam gab limalen?} \]
\[\text{because 1SG=IRR=MIN do time.after.that} \]
\[‘Because after that, what’ll happen to me?’ – Tl p55/D2T25\]

### 3.1.3.1.4 Connector *ne-*

The grammatical prefix *ne-* ‘connector (CONN)’ is used in clause chains. It always attaches to the bare verb root, whether free or bound. In (29), the verb root is free:

\[(29) \text{kô sak ne-sain-i mWango ihe.} \]
\[\text{2SG go.up CONN-climb-TR mango DIST} \]
\[‘Climb up that mango tree over there.’ – EF1p190\]

### 3.1.3.2 Affixation in the Verb Root

Suffixation within the verb root is limited to intransitive/transitive marking (§3.1.3.2.1) and passive marking (§3.1.3.2.2). A number of syntactic and pragmatic factors determine whether the verb root will accept transitive/intransitive marking. These are summarised in Chapter 6 (Verb Phrases).

### 3.1.3.2.1 Intransitive/Transitive Marking

This section looks specifically at the conjugations of verbs, in particular their intransitive/transitive alternations.\(^6\) The focus here is on simple (non-reduplicated) verb forms, as reduplication to form intransitivity is covered in §3.1.5.2.2.

Some verbs have two intransitive forms: an intransitive indicated by affixation, or lack thereof (discussed below), and a reduplicated intransitive (discussed in §3.1.5.2.2 below and in

---

\(^6\) The formal and functional properties of the different verb sub-types are explored in Chapter 4 (Word Classes).
Chapter 4 (Word Classes)). Reduplicated intransitives are always semantically intransitive. Unsuffixed intransitives are normally semantically intransitive, but sometimes they are simply coded as intransitive in order to accommodate particular syntactic environments. This issue is discussed in detail in Chapter 6 (Verb Phrases).

Types of Transitive/Intransitive Markers

There are eight known classes of verb conjugations for marking intransitivity/transitivity:

- **INTR** → **TR** -/a/
- **INTR** → **TR** -/e/
- **INTR** → **TR** -/i/
- **INTR** → **TR** -/o/
- **INTR** → **TR** -/u/
- **INTR** -/k/ → **TR** -/ni/
- **INTR** → **TR** metathesis
- **INTR** → **TR** -/Ci/

Of the first five classes (where just a single vowel suffix indicates transitivity), the -/i/ ‘transitive (TR)’ suffix is the largest group, with 27 known members, and the -/e/ ‘transitive (TR)’ suffix is the smallest, with only one known member. The class taking -/a/ suffixation numbers fourteen known verbs, the -/o/ class contains six verbs, and the -/u/ class has three verbs.

Members of the first five classes are listed in Table 3.4 through Table 3.8 below. A root-final hyphen indicates a morpheme break between the verb and the affix. (Some transitive suffixes have allomorphs due to [r] epenthesis.) In contrast, root-initial hyphens indicate that a verb root is morphologically bound (see §3.1.1).

Transitivity marking is lexically conditioned across the first five classes. While there is some phonological patterning to the conjugations – for example, many single-syllable verb roots containing /u/ have a transitive marker of -/u/ – this is by no means universal. The patterns are simply patterns, and cannot be claimed to be predictable.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTR FORM</th>
<th>TR FORM</th>
<th>GENERAL GLOSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bus</td>
<td>bus-a</td>
<td>‘shame’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darih</td>
<td>darih-a</td>
<td>‘split’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>git</td>
<td>git-a</td>
<td>‘see’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lib</td>
<td>liw-a</td>
<td>‘capsize’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lum</td>
<td>lum”-a</td>
<td>‘fight’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rab</td>
<td>raß-a</td>
<td>‘pull’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rah</td>
<td>rah-a</td>
<td>‘grate’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>u-ra</td>
<td>‘ask’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βamul</td>
<td>βamul-a</td>
<td>‘do again’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βawo</td>
<td>βawo-ra</td>
<td>‘start’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βil</td>
<td>βil-a</td>
<td>‘light s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa</td>
<td>wa-ra</td>
<td>‘break into pieces’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wah</td>
<td>wah-a</td>
<td>‘stone s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wat</td>
<td>wat-a</td>
<td>‘cut, break’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: INTR → TR -/a/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTR FORM</th>
<th>TR FORM</th>
<th>GENERAL GLOSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gel</td>
<td>gel-e</td>
<td>‘buy’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: INTR → TR -/e/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTR FORM</th>
<th>TR FORM</th>
<th>GENERAL GLOSS</th>
<th>INTR FORM</th>
<th>TR FORM</th>
<th>GENERAL GLOSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b”is</td>
<td>b”is-i</td>
<td>‘splash’</td>
<td>min</td>
<td>-mn-i, min-i</td>
<td>‘drink’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>das</td>
<td>das-i</td>
<td>‘cut’</td>
<td>yi</td>
<td>-η-ri, η-ri</td>
<td>‘remove leaves’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don</td>
<td>don-i</td>
<td>‘want’</td>
<td>rus</td>
<td>rus-i</td>
<td>‘move’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gan</td>
<td>gan-i</td>
<td>‘eat’</td>
<td>sain</td>
<td>sain-i</td>
<td>‘climb’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gasu:</td>
<td>gasu-i</td>
<td>‘spit out’</td>
<td>segelan</td>
<td>segelan-i</td>
<td>‘break’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gen</td>
<td>gen-i</td>
<td>‘be like’</td>
<td>simsim</td>
<td>simsim-i</td>
<td>‘decorate’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gi</td>
<td>gi-ri</td>
<td>‘dig’</td>
<td>son</td>
<td>son-i</td>
<td>‘put’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guk</td>
<td>guk-i</td>
<td>‘cook’</td>
<td>-tka</td>
<td>-tka-i</td>
<td>‘hold, carry’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gat</td>
<td>gats-i</td>
<td>‘bite’</td>
<td>βain</td>
<td>βai-ni</td>
<td>‘shoot’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gil</td>
<td>gil-i</td>
<td>‘dig’</td>
<td>βakun</td>
<td>βakun-i</td>
<td>‘request help’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>las</td>
<td>las-i</td>
<td>‘steal’</td>
<td>βi</td>
<td>βi-ri</td>
<td>‘plait’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lel</td>
<td>lel-i</td>
<td>‘do’</td>
<td>βit</td>
<td>βits-i</td>
<td>‘weave’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lih</td>
<td>lih-i</td>
<td>‘change’</td>
<td>wi:</td>
<td>wi-ri</td>
<td>‘bend’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liγ</td>
<td>-liγ-i, liγ-i</td>
<td>‘put’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6: INTR → TR -/i/
Table 3.7: INTR → TR -/o/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTR FORM</th>
<th>TR FORM</th>
<th>GENERAL GLOSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ak</td>
<td>ak-o</td>
<td>‘collect’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bol</td>
<td>bol-o</td>
<td>‘cover’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lik</td>
<td>lik-o</td>
<td>‘tie’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goo</td>
<td>go-ro</td>
<td>‘walk, chase’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rop</td>
<td>rop-o</td>
<td>‘hear’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βatsu</td>
<td>βatsu-ro</td>
<td>‘plan’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.8: INTR → TR -/u/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTR FORM</th>
<th>TR FORM</th>
<th>GENERAL GLOSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rut</td>
<td>ruts-u</td>
<td>‘carry’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ul</td>
<td>ul-u</td>
<td>‘pull out’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wuh</td>
<td>wuh-u</td>
<td>‘hold’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.9 reveals a sizeable class of 22 known verb roots that take alternating intransitive/transitive affixation: INTR -/k/ → TR -/ni/. (In one case, INTR -/n/ → TR -/ni/).

These are phonologically conditioned: bound verb roots ending in /a/, or free verb roots of two or more syllables ending in /a/, fall into this class.

Table 3.9: INTR -/k/ → TR -/ni/

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTR FORM</th>
<th>TR FORM</th>
<th>GENERAL GLOSS</th>
<th>INTR FORM</th>
<th>TR FORM</th>
<th>GENERAL GLOSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dakra-k</td>
<td>dakra-ni</td>
<td>‘hang’</td>
<td>segela-n</td>
<td>segela-ni</td>
<td>‘break’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diga-k</td>
<td>diga-ni</td>
<td>‘stand’</td>
<td>selka-n</td>
<td>selka-ni</td>
<td>‘carry’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gabara-k</td>
<td>gabara-ni</td>
<td>‘throw out’</td>
<td>sisya-k</td>
<td>sisya-ni</td>
<td>‘fill up’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>galta-k</td>
<td>galta-ni</td>
<td>‘search’</td>
<td>-ska-k</td>
<td>-ska-ni</td>
<td>‘give’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garia-k</td>
<td>garia-ni</td>
<td>‘hate’</td>
<td>sura-k</td>
<td>sura-ni</td>
<td>‘hide’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gasm“a-k</td>
<td>gasm“a-ni</td>
<td>‘spoil’</td>
<td>-tra-k</td>
<td>-tra-ni</td>
<td>‘lift up’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaβa-k</td>
<td>gaβa-ni</td>
<td>‘do badly’</td>
<td>βahta-k</td>
<td>βahta-ni</td>
<td>‘share’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-mta-k</td>
<td>mta-ni</td>
<td>‘be afraid’</td>
<td>βilta-k</td>
<td>βilta-ni</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m“eta-k</td>
<td>m“eta-ni</td>
<td>‘do again’</td>
<td>wesa-k</td>
<td>wesa-ni</td>
<td>‘stand, bump into’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ropata-k</td>
<td>ropata-ni</td>
<td>‘respect’</td>
<td>wula-k</td>
<td>wula-ni</td>
<td>‘put on top’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sagora-k</td>
<td>sagora-ni</td>
<td>‘pile up’</td>
<td>wuka-k</td>
<td>wuka-ni</td>
<td>‘turn’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The three verb roots in Table 3.10 metathesise to indicate an intransitive/transitive alternation. There does appear to be some commonality between the three verbs: all intransitive forms are a single syllable of VC structure, containing a high vowel, and ending in either /h/ or a labial sound. Within a distinctive features framework, /h/ and labial sounds all have in common the [+grave] feature: sounds made at the periphery of the oral cavity (Hyman, 1975: 30-39). There are possibly alternative historical explanations for this sub-class, as well. However, with only three known members, it is not possible to offer a conclusive account of phonological conditioning for this sub-class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTR FORM</th>
<th>TR FORM</th>
<th>GENERAL GLOSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ih</td>
<td>hi</td>
<td>‘hit’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uh</td>
<td>hu</td>
<td>‘call’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ub</td>
<td>wu</td>
<td>‘blow’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.10: INTR → TR metathesis

Finally, there is a small class of four slightly irregular verbs that are suffixed with -/Ci/; the consonant (C) varies. These are shown in Table 3.11. One verb (dey-hi ~ deh-ŋi) metathesises, with no change in meaning (see §3.4.5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTR FORM</th>
<th>TR FORM</th>
<th>GENERAL GLOSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bik</td>
<td>bik-ŋi</td>
<td>‘do’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deŋ</td>
<td>deŋ-hi ~ deh-ŋi</td>
<td>‘cry, cry for’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man</td>
<td>mah-ŋi</td>
<td>‘laugh, laugh at’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>riŋ</td>
<td>rih-ŋi</td>
<td>‘blow’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.11: INTR → TR -/Ci/

Due to encroachment from Bislama -em ‘transitive (TR)’, none of eight sub-classes described above can necessarily be considered to be dominant or productive. Because new lexical borrowings generally come from Bislama, the transitivity marker for Bislama verbs (-em) has also come into currency in Abma, at least for borrowed words: e.g., salem ‘sell’, resistarem ‘register’, and kasem ‘get’. However, there are no known examples of a native Abma verb root taking the transitive marker -em.
Epenthesis in Transitive Marking

For conjugation classes that mark transitivity with a single vowel (i.e., -\(a\), -\(e\), -\(i\), -\(o\), -\(u\)), an epenthetic \(r\) intervenes when the verb root that they are suffixed to also ends in a vowel. For example, \textit{wa/wara} ‘break into pieces’ and \textit{gi/giri} ‘sweep’ are examples of intransitive/transitive alternations that include an epenthetic \(r\). This is not exceptionless, for example, intransitive -\(tka\) ‘hang’ does not undergo epenthesis with transitive suffixation: -\(tka-i\) ‘hold s.th.’.

### 3.1.3.2.2 Passive Marking

The passive marker, -\(an\), is suffixed to the intransitive verb root, regardless of the verb’s conjugation class. For example, -\(an\) may attach to an unsuffixed root, as in (1), or to a root that takes a special intransitive suffix, as in (2), or to a root that is metathesised to indicate intransitivity, as in (3):

\begin{enumerate}
\item (1) \textit{te gan-an na kanleutan.}
\hspace{1cm} 3SG.PFY eat-PASS DEF food
\hspace{1cm} ‘The food was eaten.’ –EF3p34

\item (2) \textit{ha:pak m\text{\textsuperscript{w}an} selka-k-an}
\hspace{1cm} child 3SG.IRR carry-INTR-PASS
\hspace{1cm} ‘The baby will be carried.’ –EF1p152

\item (3) \textit{manuella te ih-an.}
\hspace{1cm} M. 3SG.PFY hit-PASS
\hspace{1cm} ‘Manuella was hit.’ –EF1p151
\end{enumerate}

### 3.1.4 Root Modification

Root modification is observed in a number of Vanuatu languages including Sye (Crowley, 1998), Paamese (Crowley, 1982), Raga (Crowley, 1991), Southeast Ambrym (Lynch et al., 2002), Lewo (Early, 1994), and the other languages of Epi (Tryon, 1986). In Abma, fortition in the verb root is a very productive morphological process, applying without exception in the available lexicon. It makes aspectual distinctions (§3.1.4.1) and flags verb root reduplication (§3.1.4.2).
3.1.4.1 Initial Consonant Mutation

In their underlying form, verb roots do not reflect imperfective aspect. In other words, they are interpreted as having either perfective aspect or prospective/hypothetical/irrealis modality. Fortition of the initial consonant in an underlying non-imperfective verb root creates a derived imperfective form. Only verb roots beginning with /β/ and /w/ trigger this process. Table 3.12 lists the correspondences between underlying consonants (or vowel/consonant combinations) and their fortited counterparts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERLYING SOUND</th>
<th>FORTITED SOUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>β</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa</td>
<td>b&quot;a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we</td>
<td>b&quot;e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wi</td>
<td>b&quot;i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wo</td>
<td>b&quot;o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wu</td>
<td>bu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.12: Consonants involved in consonant mutation: aspect

Examples are given in Table 3.13 of non-imperfective verb roots that undergo initial consonant mutation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERLYING NON-IPFV FORM</th>
<th>ASPECT/MODALITY OF UNDERLYING FORM</th>
<th>DERIVED IPFV FORM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ba:wo</td>
<td>perfective, prospective,</td>
<td>ba:wo</td>
<td>‘start’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hypothetical, irrealis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wata</td>
<td></td>
<td>b&quot;ata</td>
<td>‘break’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wesani</td>
<td></td>
<td>b&quot;esani</td>
<td>‘stand s.th. up’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wih</td>
<td></td>
<td>b&quot;ih</td>
<td>‘lower down’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woswos</td>
<td></td>
<td>b&quot;oswos</td>
<td>‘be straight’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wulki</td>
<td></td>
<td>bulki</td>
<td>‘count’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.13: Fortition of non-imperfective verb roots into imperfective ones

The fact that the non-imperfective (and not the imperfective) form is underlying concurs with the “typological surprise” that Lynch, Ross and Crowley (2002: 44) observe in many central Vanuatu languages, where irrealis is the basic root form, with non-irrealis being derived from that.

---

7 Recall that imperfective marking is O before verb roots beginning with bilabial sounds. Instead, the derived imperfective forms in this table indicate that the verb root is imperfective.
On what basis may it be claimed that the non-imperfective form is the underlying one? How can we be sure that the imperfective is not the underlying form?

The non-imperfective form is posited as the more basic one simply because this alternative offers a "clean" solution, without exceptions. On the other hand, if we were to posit the imperfective form as being underlying, such an explanation would be unwieldy because there would be numerous exceptions to the rules.

For example, in such a scenario, /b/ would lenite to /β/, but the imperfective form verb *bobo* ‘worn out’ would be an exception because its form is invariant, regardless of its aspectual/modal marking – it is always *bobo*, and never *βbobo*. But with our current explanation, /b/ is not subject to a consonant mutation rule and hence the invariant form, *bobo*, does not present a problem.

As a second example, consider the form *b"iri*, which actually represents two lexemes, one of them meaning ‘bend, fold’, and the other meaning ‘be able to’. Were we to claim that /b"i/ lenites to /wi/, this would be unproblematic for the lexeme meaning ‘bend, fold’. However, the latter lexeme meaning ‘be able to’ would be another exception to the rule because this form is invariantly *b"iri*, and it never changes.

But since the non-imperfective is posited as the underlying form then we can have two separate lexemes, *wiri* ‘bend, fold’ and *b"iri* ‘be able to’. Only *wiri* is subject to initial consonant mutation in this case, so there is no need to consider *b"iri* an exception to the rule. The underlying forms also reflect the fact that these are indeed separate lexemes – all in all, a simpler and more elegant explanation.

3.1.4.2 Fortition in Reduplicated Verb Roots

Verb root reduplication is introduced in the next section, but the consonant mutation aspect of reduplication is briefly presented here.
Table 3.14 lists the consonants involved in fortition of reduplicated verb roots:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERLYING SOUND</th>
<th>FORTITED SOUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.14: Consonants involved in consonant mutation: reduplication

If a verb root, beginning with any of the sounds listed in Table 3.14, is reduplicated, the initial sound in the base form of the verb is fortited.

For example, the verb root *gita* ‘look at’ is reduplicated to the left, resulting in *gita-kita* ‘look at one by one’. Note that the base form of *gita-kita* is fortited to /k/.

When *dahkuru* ‘follow’ is reduplicated (from right to left), the result is *dah-tahkuru* ‘follow everywhere’. The initial consonant of the base form, *tahkuru*, has been mutated from /d/ to /t/.

### 3.1.5 Reduplication

Reduplication of verb roots is a very productive process and is mostly regular (§3.1.5.1). It serves a variety of identifiable functions: to indicate intensity, intransitivity, and semantic shift (§3.1.5.2).

#### 3.1.5.1 Reduplicative Forms

**3.1.5.1.1 Regular Reduplicative Forms**

Most reduplication occurs from right to left, i.e., the reduplicated syllable precedes the base syllable in the derived word. (An exception to this is reduplication of bound verb roots; see below.)

Reduplication in Abma is based on morae, as set out in Table 3.15:
Reduplication is bimoraic. That is, either two consecutive light syllables are reduplicated, or one heavy syllable is. A sampling of regularly reduplicated verbs is given in Table 3.16:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASE FORM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>REDUPLICATED FORM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bu.loŋ</td>
<td>‘not exist’</td>
<td>bu.lo–bu.loŋ</td>
<td>‘not exist anywhere’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bus</td>
<td>‘act shy’</td>
<td>bus–bus</td>
<td>‘be shy’ (character trait)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dih.βi</td>
<td>‘weave’</td>
<td>dih–tih.βi</td>
<td>‘weave constantly’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gak</td>
<td>‘fly’</td>
<td>ga–kak</td>
<td>‘fly everywhere’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ro:ya</td>
<td>‘be quiet’</td>
<td>ro–roŋ</td>
<td>‘be very quiet’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>si.ba</td>
<td>‘peel’</td>
<td>si.ba–si.ba</td>
<td>‘peel a lot’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βa,βa</td>
<td>‘carry s.th.’</td>
<td>βa–βa</td>
<td>‘give birth’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>web</td>
<td>‘be small’</td>
<td>we–web</td>
<td>‘be very small’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wuk.gak</td>
<td>‘arrive’</td>
<td>wuk–wuk.gak</td>
<td>‘arrive one at a time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wu:ri</td>
<td>‘squeeze’</td>
<td>wu:–wu:ri</td>
<td>‘squeeze hard’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.16: Verb root reduplication - regular

The reduplicated form ga–kak originally was probably gak–kak, but then the medial consonant was degeminated. Similarly, βa–βab is probably a result of degemination of the labialised medial consonants in βab–βab, and we–web probably derives from web–web. By way of explanation, recall from Chapter 2 (Phonology) that the continuant contrast in labialised phonemes such as /β/, /w/, and /b/ is neutralised syllable-finally. If all three phonemes are thus represented by a labial archiphoneme, /B/, then:

/βab–βab/ → /BaB–BaB/ → (degemination) → /Ba–BaB/ → /βa–βab/  
/web–web/ → /BeB–BeB/ → (degemination) → /Be–BeB/ → /we–web/

Bound Verb Root Reduplication

Bound verb roots also have bimoraic reduplicants, but the operation goes from left to right rather than the other way around. Table 3.17 also illustrates how speakers have reanalysed bound verb roots, treating the initial consonant in the root as part of the aspectual prefix. In
the first entry of the table, for example, the aspectual marker is *te* 'perfective (PFV)' and the bound verb root is *-mkan* 'be sharp'. However, the initial /m/ in *-mkan* is actually shares a syllable with *te*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASE FORM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>REDUPPLICATED FORM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>te</em>-<em>m.kan</em></td>
<td>‘be sharp’</td>
<td><em>te</em>-m.kan~kan</td>
<td>‘be very sharp’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mwa</em>-m.<em>ray</em></td>
<td>‘be lazy’</td>
<td><em>mwa</em>-m.*ray~ray</td>
<td>‘be very lazy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mwa</em>-m.<em>ret</em></td>
<td>‘be worn out’</td>
<td><em>mwa</em>-m.*ret~ret</td>
<td>‘be very worn out’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>te</em>-m.<em>se:</em></td>
<td>‘be cut’</td>
<td><em>te</em>-m.<em>se:</em>~se:*</td>
<td>‘be cut all over the place’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.17: Bound verb root reduplication – left to right

A handful of bound verb roots ending in a vowel tend to epenthesise a vowel into the middle of the verb root (see Chapter 2 (Phonology), then reduplicate this root; again reduplication is bimoraic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASE FORM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>REDUPPLICATED FORM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>-mni</em></td>
<td>‘drink’</td>
<td><em>min~min</em></td>
<td>‘be swallowed up’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>-sla</em></td>
<td>‘dry s.th. out’</td>
<td><em>sal~sal</em></td>
<td>‘dry out’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.18: Bound verb root reduplication – vowel epenthes

### 3.1.5.1.2 Irregular Reduplicative Forms

A small number of partially reduplicated forms do not appear to conform to any regular reduplicative process. Irregular reduplication cannot be predicted and is not productive. Therefore, this information must be recorded in the individual lexical entry for each verb concerned. Table 3.19 gives a sampling of forms that have irregular reduplication:
3.1.5.2 Functions of Reduplication

The functions of verb root reduplication are to indicate intensity (§3.1.5.2.1), intransitivity (§3.1.5.2.2), and semantic shift (§3.1.5.2.3).

3.1.5.2.1 Intensity

The major function of verb root reduplication is to indicate the intensity of an action or event. “Intensity” is instantiated in a number of ways. For instance, the impact that reduplication has on a durative verb is to heighten the effect of the event: e.g., *sil* ‘shine strongly’ \(\rightarrow\) *sil~sil* ‘blaze down with heat’. On the other hand, when a verb with a more punctual aspect is reduplicated, the impact of the action is more distributed, e.g., *wat* ‘break’ \(\rightarrow\) *wat~wat* ‘break into pieces’. Or, reduplication lends a sense of repetition to the event, e.g., *gak* ‘fly’ \(\rightarrow\) *ga~kak* ‘fly everywhere’. In general, reduplication for intensity lends force, distribution, duration, or frequency to the verb stem and makes the verb stem stronger in its assertion. Table 3.20 provides some examples of how reduplication shows intensity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASE FORM (NON-IMPERFECTIVE)</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>REDuplicated FORM (NON-IMPERFECTIVE)</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>al.di.ro</td>
<td>‘visit’</td>
<td>al~al.di.ro</td>
<td>‘visit regularly’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ga.ba.ra.ni</td>
<td>‘throw out’</td>
<td>gab~ka.ba.ra.ni</td>
<td>‘throw out, spread out’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leh.βi</td>
<td>‘wash s.th.’</td>
<td>le~leh</td>
<td>‘wash (INTR)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u.lu</td>
<td>‘write s.th.’</td>
<td>u.lu~ul [u.lul]</td>
<td>‘write’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βam.te</td>
<td>‘kill’</td>
<td>βa~βam.te</td>
<td>‘keep killing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βa.ut</td>
<td>‘come out’</td>
<td>βa~βa.ut</td>
<td>‘come out one after the other’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa.sa</td>
<td>‘wash s.th.’</td>
<td>wa~was</td>
<td>‘wash (INTR)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.19: Verb root reduplication - irregular
Chapter 3: Morphology

### Table 3.20: Reduplication to show intensity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASE FORM (IPFV)</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>REDUPLICATED FORM (IPFV)</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>al.di.ro</td>
<td>‘visit’</td>
<td>al~al.di.ro</td>
<td>‘visit regularly’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βa.ut</td>
<td>‘come out’</td>
<td>βa~βa.ut</td>
<td>‘come out one after the other’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wuk.ŋak</td>
<td>‘arrive’</td>
<td>wuk~wuk.ŋak</td>
<td>‘arrive little by little’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bu.ŋaŋ</td>
<td>‘not exist’</td>
<td>bu.lo~bu.ŋaŋ</td>
<td>‘not exist anywhere’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wu:.ri</td>
<td>‘squeeze’</td>
<td>wu~wu:.ri</td>
<td>‘squeeze hard’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b”al</td>
<td>‘fight’</td>
<td>b”al~b”al</td>
<td>‘continue fighting’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wat</td>
<td>‘break’</td>
<td>wat~wat</td>
<td>‘break into pieces’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wih</td>
<td>‘lower’</td>
<td>wih~wih</td>
<td>‘duck up and down’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dah.ku.ru</td>
<td>‘follow’</td>
<td>dah~tah.ku.ru</td>
<td>‘follow everywhere’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deg</td>
<td>‘cry’</td>
<td>deg~deg</td>
<td>‘cry all the time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ga.ba.ra.ni</td>
<td>‘throw out’</td>
<td>gab~kab.a.ra.ni</td>
<td>‘spread around’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ga.bis</td>
<td>‘good’</td>
<td>gab~kab.is</td>
<td>‘really good’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ras</td>
<td>‘sick’</td>
<td>ras~ras</td>
<td>‘always sick’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sil</td>
<td>‘shine strongly’</td>
<td>sil~sil</td>
<td>‘blaze down’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.1.5.2.2 Intransitivity

Some inherently transitive verbs become intransitive through reduplication and addition of the -k ‘intransitive (INTR)’ suffix. Only a subset of verbs can reduplicate to form the intransitive; thus reduplication is one of the identifying features for this verb type. Table 3.21 gives some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASE FORM (NON-IPFV)</th>
<th>TR MEANING</th>
<th>REDUPLICATED FORM (NON-IPFV)</th>
<th>INTR MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>βe.la.ni</td>
<td>‘disagree, bicker about s.th.’</td>
<td>βe.la~βe.la-k</td>
<td>‘disagree, bicker’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βil.tsi</td>
<td>‘stick to s.th.’</td>
<td>βil~βil.tsi-k</td>
<td>‘be sticky’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bwe:.ta.ni</td>
<td>‘weave s.th.’</td>
<td>bwe~bwe:.ta-k</td>
<td>‘weave’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dak.ri</td>
<td>‘scrape s.th.’</td>
<td>dak~tak.ri-k</td>
<td>‘scratch’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ga.rah.βi</td>
<td>‘straighten s.th.’</td>
<td>ga.rah~ka.rah.βi-k</td>
<td>‘be straight’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>si.ba</td>
<td>‘peel s.th.’</td>
<td>si.ba~si.ba-k</td>
<td>‘peel’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wuh.ki</td>
<td>‘take away s.th.’</td>
<td>wuh~wuh.ki-k</td>
<td>‘take away’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wul.ki</td>
<td>‘read s.th.’</td>
<td>wul~wul.ki-k</td>
<td>‘read’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.21: Reduplication plus -k ‘intransitive (INTR)’ to derive an intransitive
A small number of known verbs derive the intransitive through reduplication and dropping the final syllable off the root. These are listed in Table 3.22:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASE FORM</th>
<th>TR MEANING</th>
<th>REDUPLICATED FORM</th>
<th>INTR MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>leh:vi</td>
<td>‘wash s.th.’</td>
<td>le~leh</td>
<td>‘wash’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-sla</td>
<td>‘dry s.th. out’</td>
<td>sal~sal</td>
<td>‘dry out’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa:sa</td>
<td>‘wash s.th.’</td>
<td>wa~was</td>
<td>‘wash’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.22: Reduplication minus final syllable to derive an intransitive

### 3.1.5.2.3 Semantic Shift

In a few cases, reduplication results in a change in meaning. Table 3.23 provides some known examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASE FORM (NON-IPFV)</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>REDUPLICATED FORM (NON-IPFV)</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wuh</td>
<td>‘hold’</td>
<td>wuh~wuh</td>
<td>‘argue, row’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deb</td>
<td>‘be rotten’</td>
<td>deb~teb</td>
<td>‘change skin’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ga:la:hi</td>
<td>‘lie’</td>
<td>gal~ka:la:hi</td>
<td>‘teach tricks to a dog, joke, lie’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ga:</td>
<td>‘be burned a little bit, but still edible’</td>
<td>ga~ka:</td>
<td>‘be sour’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go:</td>
<td>‘walkabout’</td>
<td>go~ko:</td>
<td>‘race, chase, play tag’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.23: Reduplication resulting in semantic shift

### 3.2 Noun and NP Morphology

Nouns and NPs have a much simpler morphological structure than verbs do. This section explores affixation (§3.2.1) and reduplication (§3.2.2) in nouns and NPs.

#### 3.2.1 Affixation and Cliticisation

Section §3.1.1 introduced the notion of free versus bound verb roots, and in §3.2.1.1 this discussion is carried further. Clitics within the NP are covered in §3.2.1.2.
3.2.1.1 Free Nouns vs. Bound Nouns

There are two broad morphological categories of noun: free and bound. If a noun is free, it is independent and requires no affixation. On the other hand, bound nouns do not stand alone, but require the suffixation of a possessive pronoun. For example, teltel ‘snake’ is free, but walu- ‘friend’ is bound – it requires a possessive pronominal suffix, e.g., -k ‘1SG.POSS’ in walu-k ‘my friend’ or -m ‘2SG.POSS’ in walu-m ‘your friend’. Typically, bound nouns have some sort of necessary and inalienable connection with their possessor that underlies the inherent dependency of their existence, such as familial/friendship ties or body parts. In fact, the notion of “free” versus “bound” provides the basis for a more general distinction between indirect and direct possession constructions. These are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 (Noun Phrases).

Nouns typically fall into either one morphological category or the other, i.e., they are always free or they are always bound. However, a small percentage of common nouns (about 6%) move between the two categories while retaining the same meaning, e.g., b"âna/b"âna- ‘hole’, kab"ala/kab"alî- ‘bed’, vêt/vîtis- ‘stone’.

Example (4) comes from a narrative in which a single lexical item, butsu ‘stump’, is used three times in the sentence:

(4) Ø ban m"e=sadok li butsu,  
3SG.IPVF.go 3SG.IPVF=sit LOC stump

butsu-n kok,  butsu kok.  
stump=3SG.POSS wood stump wood

‘He goes and sits down on a stump, a stump of wood, a wooden stump.’ -T1p15/D2T1

The word butsu ‘stump’ is introduced into the discourse as a free noun. It is then joined with kok ‘wood’ through direct possession morphology. In the third mention of butsu kok the bound morphology is dispensed with.
3.2.1.1 Directly Possessed Nouns vs. General Nouns

The normal suffix for bound noun roots is a possessive pronoun, e.g., -k’1SG.POSS’, -m ‘2SG.POSS’, -n ‘3SG.POSS’, etc. Since these pronouns usually refer to a particular person, their reference is usually construed as being specific. However, there also exists a generalising -kte suffix ‘generaliser (GNZR)’, which expresses the noun root in non-specific terms. Table 3.24 demonstrates how -kte morphology affects the meaning of the noun concerned:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIRECTLY POSSESSED NOUN</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>GENERALISED NOUN</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b’ala-m</td>
<td>‘your clothes’</td>
<td>b’ala-kte</td>
<td>‘clothing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dale-k</td>
<td>‘my message’</td>
<td>dale-kte</td>
<td>‘language’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noko-ma</td>
<td>‘our bodies’</td>
<td>noko-kte</td>
<td>‘body, entity’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.24: Directly possessed nouns vs. general nouns

When used in a sentence, generalised nouns have generic reference. For example, dalekte ‘language’ in (5) refers to the general concept:

(5) na mwa=two dale-kte.
1SG [IPFV=talk language-GNZR]
‘I’m [going to] tell a story about language.’ –T2p54

3.2.1.2 Cliticisation

3.2.1.2.1 Proximal (PROX) =ih, Distal (DIST) =ah

There are a variety of words that function as demonstratives in Abma (see Chapter 4 (Word Classes)), but only two of these are clitics: proximal =ah (or its allomorph, ha) and distal =ih. These are phonologically abbreviated forms of the independent words ahe ‘proximal (PROX)’ and ihe ‘distal (DIST)’, respectively. The clitic demonstratives maintain the same position in the NP as their full-word counterparts – after the NP head and any type 2 adjectives. (Type 1 adjectives occur before the verb in the VP, and type 2 adjectives occur after it. See Chapter 4 (Word Classes) for more detail.) However, unlike full word
demonstratives, clitic demonstratives phonologically attach themselves to the preceding element, be that element the NP head or a type 2 adjective; this behaviour is typical of clitics.

Example (6) illustrates three instances of the proximal =*ah* clitic as it is used by some speakers who prefer its allomorph, =*ha*. In each instance, *ha* ‘proximal (PROX)’ cliticises to the last noun in the NP head. Each full NP in the example is underlined:

(6) le ṭatku-n to:=ha, entorah ka: mʷa=bma
      LOC part-3SG.POSS time=PROX when 2PL IPFV=come
      ne-bilta-k        bʰ=aleh taβlan=ha,      mini
      CONN-IPFV.join-INTR one low.position=PROX with
      haːvak ni:=ha.
child PL=PROX
‘During this particular time when you come join together as one down here. With these children.’ - FN4p127/D41T4

In (7), =*ih* ‘distal (DIST)’ is an enclitic to the type 2 adjective, *go* ‘other’. The full NP is underscored:

(7) sika go=ih, leŋ mʷan=ih.
year other=DIST wind 3SG.IRR=hit
‘Next year, there will be a hurricane.’ [Lit.: ‘Another distant year, the wind will hit.’].
-T2p72

Occasionally the demonstrative cliticises to restricted adverbs. In (8), =*ah* is encliticised to the politeness marker *si*:

(8) abe, na=ma gan=te, nema=i ka-k
      COMM 1SG=PRSP eat=PFV 3SG.PRSP=be CL.ED-1SG.POSS
      tsi si=ah.
      sugarcane POL=PROX
‘I’m going to eat some, it’s going to be my sugarcane, I think.’ –FN4p5
3.2.1.2.2 Articles

The definite marker *na* appears as an independent word within the NP, preceding the noun it modifies. The indefinite partitive marker *te* is a clitic that straddles the boundary between the VP and the NP; the phrase it is a constituent of depends upon sentential context. Its morphological behaviour was explained in §3.1.3.1.3.

3.2.2 Reduplication

Reduplication in the NP has a much less extensive function than it does with verbs. Within the NP, nouns (§3.2.2.1), type 1 adjectives, and type 2 adjectives (§3.2.2.2) can be reduplicated.

3.2.2.1 Reduplication of Nouns

Usually, noun pluralisation is signified by plural *niː*. However, noun root reduplication is an alternative way to indicate that the noun is plural. It is mainly used in storytelling where the speaker reduplicates to heighten the dramatic effect of the narrative. Often, *niː* ‘plural (PL)’ occurs in conjunction with noun root reduplication. This suggests that the reduplicated stem is lexicalised or at least is becoming lexicalised, and that reduplication for pluralisation is losing its productivity.

An alternative analysis would be to regard noun root reduplication and *niː* ‘plural (PL)’ suffixation as semantically not identical. While *niː* ‘plural (PL)’ is a straightforward plural marker, the examples from Table 3.25 below indicate that noun root reduplication has the effect of “scattering” or distributing the noun. There is a sense that the reduplicated nouns (at least for concrete nouns) are sometimes physically reduced in size from their base nouns, and dispersed around a certain area. Reduplicated nouns seem to be more affected or exaggerated than simple pluralised nouns.
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Table 3.25: Reduplication of nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASE FORM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>REDuplicated FORM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ab.ma</td>
<td>‘something’</td>
<td>ab.m[a]~ab.ma ni;</td>
<td>‘many things’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bu.tsu-ka</td>
<td>‘tree’</td>
<td>bu.tsu~bu.tsu-ka ni;</td>
<td>‘many trees’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hu.ral-an</td>
<td>‘a walkabout’</td>
<td>hu.ral~hu.ra.l-an ni;</td>
<td>‘many small walkabouts’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ju.du-ka</td>
<td>‘wood’</td>
<td>ju.du~ju.du-ka ni;</td>
<td>‘lots of wood’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so.yo</td>
<td>‘dirt’</td>
<td>so.yo~so.yo</td>
<td>‘bits and bits of dirt’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa.k.te</td>
<td>‘a thin one’</td>
<td>wak~wa.k.te</td>
<td>‘thin ones’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with the reduplication of verb roots, the reduplication of noun roots is from right to left and generally bimoraic, though with some irregularities. Most of the base forms of the nouns in Table 3.25 are not morphologically simple: the first two syllables of butsu ‘tree’ are reduplicated, then compounded with ka ‘tree (generic)’. The compound noun yuduka is treated similarly. The first two syllables (the root form) of the verb hural ‘walk’ is reduplicated, then nominalised with -an ‘nominaliser (NMZR)’. And while the basic form of wakte ‘a thin one’ is wa ‘piece of a plant’ (before it takes the generalising suffix, -kte), the reduplicated form treats ‘wak’ as a single syllable.

3.2.2.2 Reduplication of Adjectives

Reduplication of adjectives causes their meaning to intensify; this is a reliable outcome. The form of reduplication is usually but not always bimoraic, as can be seen from Table 3.26:

---

8 While butsu-ka ‘tree’ and yudu-ka ‘wood’ can technically be considered compounds, ka ‘tree, root (generic)’ rarely stands alone.
9 This morphological treatment of wa-kte as wa-k.te then accommodates phonotactic restrictions against intra-morphemic consonant clusters.
Chapter 3: Morphology

Table 3.26: Reduplication of adjectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADJECTIVE TYPE</th>
<th>BASE FORM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>REDuplicated FORM</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>type 1 adjective</td>
<td>bi.ri</td>
<td>‘small’</td>
<td>bi.ri~bi.ri</td>
<td>‘very small’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>type 2 adjective</td>
<td>ni.tsu</td>
<td>‘small, child-like’</td>
<td>ni.tsu~tsu</td>
<td>‘very small, very child-like’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>type 2 adjective</td>
<td>wat.ne.de</td>
<td>‘different’</td>
<td>wat~wat.ne.de</td>
<td>‘very different’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the forms given in Table 3.26, other type 2 adjectives can also be reduplicated. These are homonymous with stative verbs, and samples of bound verb root (type 2 adjective) reduplication are given in Table 3.17 above.

3.3 Derivational Morphology

A large number of lexemes from the two largest word classes, nouns and verbs, are able to change their word class through derivational morphology. Affixation (§3.3.1) and root modification (§3.3.2), especially, are very productive processes – reduplication (§3.3.3) less so. Although these processes are examined independently of each other, a change in word class is often the result of a combination of the above processes, e.g., affixation plus root modification, or affixation plus reduplication.

3.3.1 Affixation

Affixation derives nouns from verbs with the -an ‘nominaliser (NMZR)’ suffix, and nouns from adjectives with the -kte ‘generaliser (GNZR)’ suffix. These are both regular and productive morphological processes, and -an suffixation is an especially widely used strategy.

3.3.1.1 Verb → Noun: Nominaliser (NMZR) -an

The nominalising suffix, -an (and allomorphs such as -ran and -en), is used to derive nouns from verbs.10 If the verb is transitive, the transitive suffix is sometimes dropped and replaced by -an, but this is not typical; usually the entire stem (verb plus transitive marker) is suffixed.

---

10 In Table 3.27 the allomorph -ran is the result of an epenthetic [r] breaking up two vowels; the form -en is the result of vowel harmony with the root.
with -an. The motivation for this differential treatment is unclear. Otherwise, for intransitive verbs, -an suffixes to the root. Examples of verb/noun alternations are given in Table 3.27. When verbs have both transitive and intransitive forms, the form that becomes nominalised is shaded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSITIVE ROOT (NON-IPFV)</th>
<th>INTRANSITIVE ROOT (NON-IPFV)</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>DERIVED NOUN</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>don-i</td>
<td>don</td>
<td>‘to want, love’</td>
<td>doni-an</td>
<td>‘love’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO TRANSITIVE FORM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gan-i</td>
<td>gan</td>
<td>‘eat’</td>
<td>kan-an</td>
<td>‘eating’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO TRANSITIVE FORM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hural</td>
<td>hural-an</td>
<td>‘to walk’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lel-i</td>
<td>lel</td>
<td>‘do’</td>
<td>leli-an</td>
<td>‘activities’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO TRANSITIVE FORM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sasa</td>
<td>sasa-an</td>
<td>‘sing’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO TRANSITIVE FORM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-sbe:</td>
<td>sebe-ran</td>
<td>‘be glad’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO INTRANSITIVE FORM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ββββββatla</td>
<td>ββββββatla-an</td>
<td>‘thank’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO TRANSITIVE FORM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βih-ni</td>
<td>βih</td>
<td>‘think’</td>
<td>βihni-an</td>
<td>‘thought’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.27: Verb → Noun with -an ‘nominaliser (NMZR)’

Note that the transitive verb gani ‘eat’ is not only suffixed, but its derived noun also begins with a fortited /k/ – this is discussed in §3.3.2 below. Also, -sbe: ‘be glad’ is a bound verb root whose syncopated vowel becomes “epenthesised” in its nominalised form (see Chapter 2 (Phonology)). Additionally, the verbs sasa:n and ββββββatla:n in Table 3.27 are examples of vowel lengthening due to the nominalising suffix.

3.3.1.2 Verb → Noun: Purpose (PURP) ka-

The prefix ka- marks purpose on a verb root. When this prefix occurs in conjunction with either nominalising or intransitive suffixation onto the verb, the result is a nominalised verb of purpose. In (9) and (10), the verb root takes ka- ‘purpose (PURP)’ prefixation and -an ‘nominaliser (NMZR)’ suffixation:
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(9) ru-n abma? **ka-lub-an** loklok.
leaf-3SG.POSS what PURP-cover-NMZR pudding
‘What’s the leaf for? For covering up pudding [pudding-covering].’ –EF3p29

(10) bo na-n abma? **ka-kan-an**.
pig ASSOC-3SG.POSS what PURP-eat-NMZR
‘What’s the pig for? For eating.’ –EF3p28A

In (11), ka- ‘purpose (PURP)’ attaches to the verb root sawiri ‘grate’, which is reduplicated and takes the intransitive suffix, -k:

(11) go=ah, ba ha-n aha “**ka-sab-sawiri-k**”.
one==PROX COMM name-3SG.POSS APP PURP-INT~grate-INTR
‘This one, its name is “kasabsawirik” [grater].’ –D23T1

The ka- prefix is only encountered about half a dozen times in the entire corpus; it appears to be minimally productive.

3.3.1.3 Type 1 Adjective \(\rightarrow\) Noun: Generaliser (GNZR) \(-kte\)

All known type 1 adjectives end in a vowel, and can be derived into generalised nouns through the \(-kte\) generalising suffix. (Recall that this suffix is also used to turn specific nouns into general ones – see §3.2.1.1.1.) Table 3.28 gives examples of a few nominalised adjectives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE 1 ADJECTIVE</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>GENERALISED NOUN</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>biri</td>
<td>‘small’</td>
<td><strong>biri-kte</strong></td>
<td>‘a small one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boro</td>
<td>‘short’</td>
<td><strong>boro-kte</strong></td>
<td>‘a short one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b“ara</td>
<td>‘big’</td>
<td><strong>b“ara-kte</strong></td>
<td>‘a big one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nitsu</td>
<td>‘small’</td>
<td><strong>nitsu-kte</strong></td>
<td>‘a small one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solo</td>
<td>‘long, tall’</td>
<td><strong>solo-kte</strong></td>
<td>‘a long one’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.28: Type 1 adjective \(\rightarrow\) Noun with \(-kte\) ‘generaliser (GNZR)’
3.3.2 Root Modification

If the initial consonant of a non-imperfective verb is /d/ or /g/, then it can be derived into a noun verb through fortition. This is a productive process. Table 3.29 is a reminder of underlying sounds and their fortited correspondents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNDERLYING SOUND</th>
<th>FORTITED SOUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.29: Consonants involved in consonant mutation: \( V \rightarrow N \)

Table 3.30 gives a sampling of non-imperfective verb \( \rightarrow \) noun alternations through root modification:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERB (NON-IPFV)</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>NOUN</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>da:wu-ni</td>
<td>‘make hot’</td>
<td>tawu-</td>
<td>‘heat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dabmak</td>
<td>‘be like’</td>
<td>tabmak</td>
<td>‘same thing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dayroan</td>
<td>‘pray’</td>
<td>tayroan</td>
<td>‘prayer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dob</td>
<td>‘talk’</td>
<td>tob-tow-an</td>
<td>‘speech’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gabis</td>
<td>‘be good’</td>
<td>kabis-an</td>
<td>‘goodness’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gakan</td>
<td>‘bake’</td>
<td>kakan-an</td>
<td>‘stone oven’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gau</td>
<td>‘grow’</td>
<td>kau</td>
<td>‘big one’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>get</td>
<td>‘lie’</td>
<td>ket-an</td>
<td>‘a lie’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.30: Noun \( \rightarrow \) Non-imperfective verb through initial consonant fortition

Again, we are arguing that fortition rather than lenition drives the direction of derivation. This analysis is based on the fact that some of the nouns in Table 3.30 above not only undergo consonant mutation, but also suffixation of -an ‘nominaliser (NMZR)’. Since some nouns are derived from verbs by means of affixation, then by analogy, that they should also be derived from verbs by means of fortition. To argue that the direction of derivation goes in two ways – \( V \rightarrow N \) through affixation but \( N \rightarrow V \) through lenition – would be counter-intuitive and difficult to justify.
3.3.3 Reduplication

Reduplication of verbs to form nouns rarely manifests as an independent process. On its own, it is not very productive – instead it normally occurs in conjunction with suffixation by -an ‘nominaliser (NMZR)’.

As with other types of reduplication (except bound verb roots), V \(\rightarrow\) N reduplication operates from right to left, with the prereduplicated syllable being the left-most syllable in the base. Again, there is a bimoraic syllable template, though Table 3.31 reveals irregularies with wa~wa.sa-an ‘washing’ (possibly a borrowing from Bislama), rah~rah-an ‘washing’, and βe:-βe.tsi-k-an ‘help’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERB (NON-IPFV)</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>NOUN</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>leh βi</td>
<td>‘wash’</td>
<td>leh~leh.βi-k-an</td>
<td>‘washing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m”ab</td>
<td>‘be hot’</td>
<td>m”ab~m”ab</td>
<td>‘heat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ra ha</td>
<td>‘wash’</td>
<td>rah~rah-an</td>
<td>‘washing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sa.dok</td>
<td>‘sit’</td>
<td>san~sa.dok-an</td>
<td>‘sitting’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βe.tsi</td>
<td>‘to help’</td>
<td>βe:-βe.tsi-k-an</td>
<td>‘help’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>βin βin.go:</td>
<td>‘be jealous’</td>
<td>βin~βin.go:-ran</td>
<td>‘jealousy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa.sa</td>
<td>‘wash’</td>
<td>wa~wa.sa-an</td>
<td>‘washing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wul.ki</td>
<td>‘count’</td>
<td>wul~wul.ki-k-an</td>
<td>‘counting’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.31: Verb \(\rightarrow\) Noun through reduplication

There are a few specific points worth noting about the data in Table 3.31. There are three verbs, lehβi ‘wash’, βe.tsi ‘help’, and wulki ‘read’ that take the intransitive -k suffix before being nominalised. Also, the nasal in the first syllable of the reduplicated form san~sad.ok.an is probably residual of [″d] in the original base form of the word.

3.4 Historical Processes and Explanations

This section provides information not on current morphology, but rather a brief presentation of historical morphological processes that have left their mark on the current language.
3.4.1 Verbal Compounds

Compounds in Abma form when two or more words co-occur frequently enough to establish a single word with phonological unity and a unique meaning.

The most established verb compounds are the directionals; these are covered first (§3.4.1.1), then other verb compounds are discussed (§3.4.1.2).

3.4.1.1 Directional Verbal Compounds

A small core of compounded directional verbs are well-established in the language; the component verbs are phonologically integrated with each other. These are listed in Table 3.32:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V1</th>
<th>V3</th>
<th>COMPOUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sib ‘go down’</td>
<td>-bma ‘come’</td>
<td>sibma ‘come down’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sak ‘go up’</td>
<td>-bma ‘come’</td>
<td>sama ‘come up’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mul ‘return’</td>
<td>mul ‘return’</td>
<td>mulma ‘come back’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sib ‘go down’</td>
<td>submul ‘go back down’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sak ‘go up’</td>
<td>samul ‘go back up’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.32: Directional verbal compounds

3.4.1.2 Other Verbal Compounds

Other verbal compounds are based on verb-verb (§3.4.1.2.1) and verb-noun (§3.4.1.2.2) combinations.

3.4.1.2.1 Verb + Verb

Most verb-verb compounds derive from commonly used serial verb constructions where the first and second verbs have been juxtaposed with enough regularity to form a new word that is phonologically and semantically unitary. Table 3.33 gives examples of some verb-verb compounds:
### Table 3.33: Verb-verb compounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V1</th>
<th>V2</th>
<th>COMPOUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>gak</strong> ‘fly’</td>
<td><strong>bis</strong> ‘(go) until’</td>
<td><strong>gakbis</strong> ‘arrive’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>leli</strong> ‘do’</td>
<td><strong>gatsi</strong> ‘bite’</td>
<td><strong>lelkat</strong> ‘be angry’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>rava</strong> ‘pull, drag’</td>
<td><strong>rusi</strong> ‘move’</td>
<td><strong>rabrusi</strong> ‘shift’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>si:</strong> ‘rummage’</td>
<td><strong>rob</strong> ‘run’</td>
<td><strong>sirob</strong> ‘shift’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>wut</strong> ‘jump’</td>
<td><strong>bis</strong> ‘(go) until’</td>
<td><strong>wutbis</strong> ‘reach’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.4.1.2.2 Verb + Noun

Verb-noun compounds result from juxtaposition of the verb with either a direct object or an adjunct of the sentence. If the verb-noun collocation occurs frequently enough, it becomes lexicalised. Some verb-noun compounds are listed in Table 3.34:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERB</th>
<th>NOUN</th>
<th>COMPOUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>wesak</strong> ‘stand up’</td>
<td><strong>ut</strong> ‘place’</td>
<td><strong>wesaut</strong> ‘tread’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>rogo</strong> ‘hear’</td>
<td><strong>taka:</strong> ‘god’</td>
<td><strong>rogtak</strong> ‘listen respectfully’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>va</strong> ‘go (directional)’</td>
<td><strong>mu:</strong> ‘hole’</td>
<td><strong>vamu:</strong> ‘swallow up’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>va</strong> ‘go (directional)’</td>
<td><strong>wob</strong> ‘outside’</td>
<td><strong>vawob</strong> ‘go outside’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3.34: Verb-noun compounds

### 3.4.2 Nominal Compounds

As with verbal compounds, nominal compounding happens when two or more words are collocated with such frequency that they adopt a unique identity. They are derived from separate lexical items, but the resulting meaning does not necessarily result from the meanings of the composite parts.

Nominal compounds can be constituted of various word classes and phrases: noun-noun (§3.4.2.1), noun-PP (§3.4.2.2), or noun-verb (§3.4.2.3).

### 3.4.2.1 Noun-Noun Compounds

Noun-noun compounding is achieved through juxtaposition of two nouns. Table 3.35 lists some noun-noun compounds:
3.4.2.2 Noun-PP Compounds

Compounds occasionally comprise noun-PP compounds, or simply commonly used PPs that have become lexicalised. These are listed in Table 3.36:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOUN</th>
<th>PREP</th>
<th>NOUN</th>
<th>NOMINALISER</th>
<th>COMPOUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>at ‘person of place’</td>
<td>le ‘LOC’</td>
<td>im ‘house’</td>
<td>-an ‘NMZR’</td>
<td>atleim’an ‘wife’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ru ‘thundering’</td>
<td>βan ‘under’</td>
<td>tan ‘ground’</td>
<td></td>
<td>ruβantan ‘earthquake’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>le ‘LOC’</td>
<td>tsine- ‘gut’</td>
<td></td>
<td>letsine- ‘stomach’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>βan ‘under’</td>
<td>ren ‘day’</td>
<td></td>
<td>βaygren ‘tomorrow’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.36: Noun-PP compounds

3.4.2.3 Noun-Verb Compounds

A few compounds are derived from noun-verb combinations. The first two compounds in Table 3.37 are derived from a subject plus its verb, and the third derives from a verb plus its object:

Table 3.35: Noun-noun compounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOUN PREP NOUN NOMINALISER COMPOUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>at ‘person of place’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>butsuka ‘tree’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>butsuka ‘source’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b’ala ‘shell’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b’an ‘plain mat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hal ‘road’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ili- ‘hair’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ili- ‘hair’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kab ‘crab’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lib&quot;i ‘root’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lib&quot;i ‘root’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This lexeme is now im ‘house’. Word-final labialisation is not permissible in SM. However, there is still evidence of this former labialisation when the noun is suffixed with a nominaliser, as with this example.
Table 3.37: Noun-verb compounds

3.4.3 Affixation of Causative ba-

While Abma now has a morphological causative (leli ‘do’), it clearly once had a productive ba- (causative) prefix, historically derived from the *pa[kא]* causative prefix proposed by Lynch et. al. (2002: 81) for POc. There are many examples of verbs beginning with ba- that have causative semantics – some of them can be morphologically teased apart into their former component morphemes. Table 3.38 lists a few of these:

Table 3.38: Old causative prefix

3.4.4 Syncope

As discussed in §3.1.1 above, verb roots can have either a free or a bound morphological form; some alternate between both forms – a situation that is certainly the result of syncopation of the first syllable in the verb root. This historical process seems to have occurred most extensively in the SM dialect, less so in SR, and apparently not at all in SK. The SK and (to a lesser extent) SR dialects of Abma retain regular, free verb roots, without the morphological complexity that characterises SM verb roots. Bound forms are therefore a SM innovation away from SK and SR. Table 3.39 lists some of the known free verb roots in SK and SR that have bound root correspondences in SM:
### Table 3.39: Free/bound verb root correspondences in SM, SK, and SR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOUND VERB ROOT IN SM</th>
<th>FREE VERB ROOT CORRESPONDENCES IN SK/SR</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-bma</td>
<td>bama</td>
<td>'come'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-mlu</td>
<td>mlu</td>
<td>'leave'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-meses</td>
<td>meses</td>
<td>'be ripe'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-skani</td>
<td>sekani</td>
<td>'carry'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-sra</td>
<td>sara</td>
<td>'share'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-sisrik</td>
<td>sirisrik</td>
<td>'be difficult'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-te</td>
<td>dege:</td>
<td>'be proud'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tni</td>
<td>dini</td>
<td>'roast'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.5 **Metathesis**

Residual signs of metathesis appear in a few verb roots in Abma wherein sounds switch positions within the word. Typically the sounds involved are /h/, a nasal, or a bilabial. This is not a productive process.

Table 3.40 demonstrates that for single-syllable verbs, the metathesis results in a transitivity distinction. For other verbs, there is no change in meaning or function and the forms are in free variation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ih</th>
<th>hi</th>
<th>'hit (INTR)/(TR)'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uh</td>
<td>hu</td>
<td>'call (INTR)/(TR)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ub</td>
<td>wu</td>
<td>'blow (INTR)/(TR)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'deh.hi'</td>
<td>'deh.yi'</td>
<td>'cry for s.th.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'m&quot;ay.ili'</td>
<td>'m&quot;al.yi'</td>
<td>'put s.th.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'bay.hi'</td>
<td>'bah.yi'</td>
<td>'burn s.th.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'bin.hi'</td>
<td>'bih.ni'</td>
<td>'think s.th.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'won.hi'</td>
<td>'woh.ni'</td>
<td>'throw s.th.'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.40: Metathesised verb roots
4 WORD CLASSES

The major word classes are discussed first: these include nouns (§4.1), verbs (§4.2), and adjectives (§4.3). Adverbs (§4.4) and prepositions (§4.5) constitute two rather large closed classes. These are followed by the other minor classes: pronouns (§4.5.2.3), determiners (§4.7), conjunctions (§4.8), numerals (§4.9), possessive classifiers (§4.10), the negative/prohibitive markers (§4.11), aspect and modality markers (§4.12), and vocatives and interjections (§4.13).

4.1 Nouns

Nouns occur as either core arguments of the VP (i.e., subject or direct object), as non-core arguments (i.e., other arguments subcategorised by the verb), or as adjuncts (i.e., temporal phrases, locative phrases, or prepositional phrases designating other non-core roles in the sentence).

Nouns fall into natural sub-classes of temporal nouns, locative nouns, and general nouns. These classes are based upon the syntactic behaviour of the members of each class. Table 4.1 highlights the minimal contrasts between each sub-category of noun:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOUN SUB-CLASSES</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>FREE</th>
<th>BOUND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TEMPORAL NOUNS (§4.1.1)</td>
<td>• Cannot be head of core argument NP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must be head of temporal NP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATIVE NOUNS (§4.1.2)</td>
<td>• Cannot be head of core argument NP</td>
<td>Proper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must be head of locative NP</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENERAL NOUNS (§4.1.3)</td>
<td>• Head of core argument NP</td>
<td>Proper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must follow a preposition in a non-core argument</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Noun sub-classes

Temporal and locative nouns are mainly distinguished by the fact that they occur as adjuncts, and that they are completely unmarked (i.e., no preposition or any other kind of marking). Temporal and locative noun sub-classes in other Oceanic languages exhibit similar behaviour, e.g., Paamese (Crowley, 1982: 60-64) and Anejo (Lynch, 2000a: 42-43).
4.1.1 Temporal Nouns

A temporal noun is the unmarked head of a temporal phrase; it does not permit a preposition, unlike English and many other languages. A temporal noun cannot be head of a core argument NP, and it is inherently adverbial in its semantics.

In (1), the noun *tsuubung* ‘morning’ is the head of a temporal phrase. It follows the transitive verb *leli* ‘do, make’, whose direct object NP is not coded but is implied:

(1) Vaawo na-n abma ah mwan lel-i **tsuubung**.
    first.one ASSOC-3SG.POSS thing REL 3SG.IRR do-TR morning
    ba mwan dumre.
    COMM 3SG.IRR get.up
    ‘The first thing she does in the morning, she gets up.’

Temporal nouns are often the sole constituent of the temporal phrase, but this is not always the case. In (2), *bung* ‘night’ is modified by *bwaleh* ‘one’:

(2) Mwa=tbo **bung** bwaleh.
    3SG.IPFV=stay night one
    ‘It stays for one night.’ -FN4p73/D3T5

Table 4.2 lists all known temporal nouns and a few commonly used NPs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bung</th>
<th>‘night’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kubung</td>
<td>‘significant day’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lego</td>
<td>‘one time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limalen tina</td>
<td>‘after dinner’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mwate</td>
<td>‘a time before’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mwerani</td>
<td>‘today’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanib</td>
<td>‘yesterday’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nawih</td>
<td>‘a few days ago’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noko-</td>
<td>‘metaphorical “body” of time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsuubung</td>
<td>‘morning’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ut</td>
<td>‘time, place’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ut bwarek</td>
<td>‘dusk’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ut revereb</td>
<td>‘dusk’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vangren</td>
<td>‘tomorrow’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whi</td>
<td>‘day after tomorrow’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Temporal nouns
It can be seen from Table 4.2 that there is only one known morphologically bound temporal noun, *noko-* 'metaphorical “body” of time’. The rest are free, requiring no suffixation.

### 4.1.2 Locative Nouns

A locative noun is the head of a locative phrase; it cannot head a core argument NP. It can be proper or common; free or bound. In (3), *Kihib* ‘North Pentecost’ is a proper locative noun functioning as head of the locative phrase:

(3) Kaa=m sib Kihib.
1PL.EXC=IPFV go.down North.Pentecost
‘We’re going down to North Pentecost.’ –T3p46

Other proper locative nouns include *Ihak* ‘South Pentecost’, *Lik* ‘East Pentecost’, and *Hik* ‘West Pentecost’.

In (4), the common locative noun *mere* ‘a high place’ is the sole constituent of the locative phrase:

(4) Na=t sak mere.
1SG=PFV go.up high.place
‘I went up to a high place.’

Table 4.3 lists all known common locative nouns that are morphologically free:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dokah</td>
<td>‘this place’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dokih</td>
<td>‘that place’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lekoo</td>
<td>‘garden’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lolok</td>
<td>‘in the middle’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mere</td>
<td>‘a high place’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sakahe</td>
<td>‘a high position’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sakumre</td>
<td>‘an upward position’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sakut</td>
<td>‘a back position’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suuta</td>
<td>‘a downward position’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tak</td>
<td>‘a back position’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tavan</td>
<td>‘a low position’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ut</td>
<td>‘place, time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wob</td>
<td>‘outside’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Free locative nouns
Locative nouns can also be bound. These are lexemes that are typically translated into English using prepositions. In (5), be- ‘proximity’ takes first person possessive suffixation, yielding bek ‘my proximity’. This constitutes a locative phrase:

(5) Mwi=di be-k.
3SG.IPFV=stay proximity-1SG.POSS
‘He stays with me.’ -T2p7

Table 4.4 contains an exhaustive list of known bound locative nouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>be-</th>
<th>‘proximity’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bili-</td>
<td>‘top’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lele-</td>
<td>‘inside’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>li-</td>
<td>‘location (LOC)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mulga-</td>
<td>‘end’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mwatwe-</td>
<td>‘edge’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mwa-</td>
<td>‘side’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noko-</td>
<td>‘metaphorical “body”’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsuku-</td>
<td>‘a back position’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa-</td>
<td>‘an opening’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Bound locative nouns

A few bound nouns have homonyms that are free morphemes and that function as prepositions. One example of this is the alternation between li- ‘location (LOC)’, a bound noun, and li ‘location (LOC)’, a preposition. Sentence (6) illustrates the usage of both: lin (bolded) is a bound noun; this is followed by li the preposition (bolded), which is part of the prepositional phrase (underlined):

(6) Kidi tarut, ta-Ø mwas li-n.
1PL.INC.IND people 1PL.INC-IPFV live location-3SG.POSS
li tan.
LOC ground
‘Us people (you and me), we live on it [lit.: we live in its location], on the ground.’ -T2p53/D2T43

4.1.3 General Nouns

General nouns are described last because they account for all other nouns besides the ones that can head locative and temporal NPs. They may head a core NP argument of the verb.
They may also appear in non-core arguments and adjuncts, but in these roles they must follow a preposition.

General nouns can be proper or common. Proper general nouns specify particular people or places. In (7), the woman *Mabontare* is the head of the direct object NP *Mabontare nong* ‘this Mabontare (recently mentioned)’. From this example we can see that it is permissible for proper nouns to be followed by a demonstrative.

(7) \[ Ra=m \quad rav-a \quad Mabontare \quad nong \quad mwi=sibma. \]
\[ 3PL=IPFV \quad pull-TR \quad M. \quad PROX \quad IPFV=come.down \]
‘They pull (this) Mabontare down.’

When general nouns (proper or common) occur in non-core arguments or adjuncts, they must follow a preposition. In (8), the proper noun *Sarere* ‘Saturday’ is contained within a prepositional phrase, *le Sarere* ‘on Saturdays’. It is worth emphasising here that even though *Sarere* is temporal in its semantics, it is a general noun in syntactic terms because it requires a preposition:

(8) \[ Kamaat \quad sib \quad Melsisi \quad le \quad \underline{Sarere}. \]
\[ 1PL.EXC.PFY \quad go.down \quad M. \quad TIME \quad Saturday \]
‘We went down to Melsisi on Saturdays.’

Common general nouns constitute the biggest nominal sub-category. As with locative nouns, common general nouns can be free or bound. Bound nouns take possessive pronoun suffixation and they typically specify close familial and friendship relations, body parts, or important items of property. Bound nouns will tolerate premodifiers, as the elicited examples in (9) illustrate. In (a), the bound noun is *kauwa-n* ‘his neck’, and the premodifier is a type 1 adjective, *bwara* ‘big’. In (b), the bound noun is *matsi-k* ‘my body’, and again, the premodifier is *bwara* ‘big’:

(9) (a) \[ Bwara \quad kauwa-n \quad buluk. \]
\[ big \quad neck-3SG.POSS \quad cow \]
‘The cow’s big neck.’ –EF2p150
(b) \[ Bwara \quad mamtsi-k. \]
\[ big \quad body-1SG.POSS \]
‘My big body.’ –EF2p194

However, bound nouns are less tolerant of postmodifiers. In contexts where free nouns would simply take a postmodifier element, bound nouns are often juxtaposed with the element, where the element occurs within a non-verbal predicate. Example (10) illustrates this: the
bound noun *nitsu-n* ‘his children’ is juxtaposed with *karu* ‘two’. In the next clause, the free noun *daalat* ‘teenage girl’ is simply modified by *karu* within a normal NP construction:

(10) Maa tei te gakat bi nitsu-n tei karu, tei daalat karu.
    FOC hunger 3SG.PFV gnaw and child-3SG.POSS FOC two FOC girl two
    ‘Hunger gnawed [there was a famine], and he had two children, two girls.’ - Tlp8/D2T1

In (11), *hotsin Wanwan* ‘Wanwan’s sister’ is the subject NP of the sentence; it is in the form of a possessive construction. The bound noun *hotsin* ‘his sister’ is the head possessed noun, and the man *Wanwan* is the possessor noun. (For more information on possessive constructions, see Chapter 5 (Noun Phrases).)

(11) Tei mwate, ba hotsi-n Wanwan.
    FOC a.time.before COMM sister-3SG.POSS W.
    te sadok Vanmwel.
    3SG.PFV stay V.
    ‘In the old days, Wanwan’s sister stayed in Vanmwel.’ - T2p24/D2T1

In (12), *dini bwara melang* ‘from the big cave’ is a prepositional phrase containing the NP *bwara melang* ‘big cave’. The free general noun *melang* ‘cave’ is the head of this NP, and *bwara* ‘big’ is a modifier:

(12) Mwa=mlu [dini bwara melang].
    3SG.IPFV=leave ABL big cave
    ‘He left the big cave.’

Again, *melang* ‘cave’ in (12) above and *ren* ‘day’ in (13) below both highlight the fact a noun may be locative or temporal in its semantics, but it is still a general noun if it cannot stand alone as head of a locative or temporal NP. (In contrast, *lekoo* ‘garden’ is a temporal noun in (13), as it forms its own locative NP.)

(13) Tei le ren go, bi mwe=sak mweta-k lekoo.
    FOC TIME day other and 3SG.IPFV=go.up do.again-INTR garden
    ‘It was on another day, he goes up again to the garden.’ - T1p52/D2T25

### 4.2 Verbs

Verbs are the head of the verb phrase. They denote states, events, or actions. States involve no change over time; events involve an involuntary change (such as those caused by inanimate
objects), and actions are deliberately initiated by an agent (typically an animate) (Givón, 2001b: 106).

Verbs serve other functions, too. Postural verbs have their own lexical meaning (‘lie down’, ‘sit’, ‘stand’, ‘stay’), but also function as existential markers, and as aspectual markers in type 1 serial verb constructions (SVCs) (Chapter 8). Other verbs indicate modal/adverbial functions in type 2 SVCs (Chapter 8) and aspectual/modal functions in clause chains (Chapter 9).

4.2.1 Syntactic Sub-Categories of Verbs

Verb roots take a minimal amount of affixation. Historically there was a causative *ba-* prefix, but this is now frozen onto the verb root and is not productive. Likewise, there is no applicative suffix in Abma. Valency is affected only by transitivity marking, verb root reduplication, passivisation, and (to a very limited extent) object incorporation.

Table 4.5 shows that verbs are intransitive, ambitransitive, transitive, or the V2 of an SVC. Intransitive types are always intransitive in both form and function. Ambitransitive verbs have an invariant form but they may function either intransitively or transitively. Transitive verbs have a standard transitive form, but some verbs in this category may also formally derive an intransitive. Finally, verbs that function as the second verb (V2) of a type 2 SVC have no transitivity value of their own. Since they operate in conjunction with another verb in the SVC to form a single clause, their transitivity value as “part of a whole” cannot be determined.

Ambitransitive and transitive verbs can also be classified according to whether they are A-type or O-type – this reflects the way that transitivity status interacts with case role assignment. With A-type verbs, the agent is the subject of both transitive and intransitive forms. With O-types, the object patient of the transitive form corresponds to the subject patient of the intransitive.
4.2.1.1 Intransitive Verbs

4.2.1.1.1 Stative/Inchoative

Stative verbs take a patient subject and are typically coded in perfective aspect. Perfective aspect depicts an event in its entirety. It is not concerned with the internal dynamics of an event.

Occasionally, the stative verb is coded in imperfective aspect, and when this occurs, the verb develops an inchoative sense, and its internal temporal constituency is given more attention. The term “inchoative” is used rather loosely here; it refers not necessarily to the inception of an event (cf. Matthews, 1997: 173; Payne, 1997: 95), but to the fact that the event is perceived and talked about as occurring over a period of time.

For example, when *ngalngal* ‘really tough’ is marked perfectly in (14), “toughness” is depicted as a quality of the taro; it is a state. However, when it takes imperfective marking in (15), toughness is not only a characteristic of the taro, but the taro is actually in the “process” of being tough because nobody can break it. In other words, there is a differentiation between permanent relevance and current relevance of the property:
(14) **Bwet ahe ba te ngal-ŋagal.**
*taro this COMM 3SG.PFY INT~tough*
‘This taro is really tough.’ [i.e., “Toughness” is one of its characteristics.] –EF3p46B

(15) **Bwet ahe ba mwe=ŋagal-ŋagal**
*taro this COMM 3SG.IPFY=INT~tough*
‘This taro is really tough.’ [i.e., Everyone is trying to break it but no one is succeeding.]
–EF3p46B

Table 4.6 gives a sampling of stative/inchoative verbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERB</th>
<th>STATIVE MEANING</th>
<th>INCHOATIVE MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>behbeh</td>
<td>‘be soft’</td>
<td>‘being/becoming soft’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dab</td>
<td>‘be white’</td>
<td>‘being/becoming white’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gabis</td>
<td>‘be good’</td>
<td>‘being/becoming good’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gakat</td>
<td>‘be cross’</td>
<td>‘being/becoming cross’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>golkol</td>
<td>‘be sweet’</td>
<td>‘being/becoming sweet’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-mres</td>
<td>‘be heavy’</td>
<td>‘being/becoming heavy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tkol</td>
<td>‘be strong’</td>
<td>‘being/becoming strong’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>web</td>
<td>‘be small’</td>
<td>‘being/becoming small’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Stative/inchoative

### 4.2.1.1.2 Dynamic

**Subject is Initiator**

The majority of dynamic intransitive verbs have a subject that is agent or initiator of the action. Table 4.7 provides a sampling of intransitive actions and events:
A sub-type of dynamic intransitives with initiator subjects is the class of four postural verbs listed in Table 4.8:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>di</td>
<td>'stand, stay'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dok</td>
<td>'stay'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sadok</td>
<td>'sit'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tbo</td>
<td>'lay down'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aside from their basic postural meaning, the four verbs in this category also carry an existential meaning. Existential uses of these verbs are illustrated in (16) through (19):

(16) Ba kik, ha-m mwi=di.
COMM 2SG.IND name-2SG.POSS 3SG.IPFV=stay
‘But you, your name exists.’ [i.e., You have a name.] –T3p23

(17) Bware-m mwo=dok.
pain-2SG.POSS 3SG.IPFV=stay
‘Your sadness stays.’ [i.e., I’m sorry about you, e.g., you’re leaving.] –EF1p157

(18) Tei lego, atsi te sadok,
FOC once person 3SG.PFY sit

  tei ha-n ah Bulemamkan.
  FOC name-3SG.POSS APP B.
‘Once there was a man named Bulemamkan.’ –T3p32
(19) Bate=bma ihgo gel na-n hal-an
   3SG.HYP=come if price ASSOC-3SG.POSS road-3SG.POSS

   bate=tho.
   3SG.HYP=lay.down
   'He’d come if he had the money for the trip.' -EF1p97

Subject is Patient

In a few dynamic intransitive verbs, the subject is a patient of the action or event. Some of these are listed in Table 4.9:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERB</th>
<th>SUBJECT IS INITIATOR</th>
<th>SUBJECT IS PATIENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bwaal</td>
<td>‘lose weight’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dib</td>
<td>‘grow’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mut</td>
<td>‘break’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ruu</td>
<td>‘to quake’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-twak</td>
<td>‘snap’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viah</td>
<td>‘be thanked’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9: Dynamic intransitive/subject is patient

Subject is Initiator or Patient

The subject of this verb sub-type can be either an initiator or a patient of the action or event, as shown in Table 4.10. There are only a few verbs in this category. Note that even when the subject is initiator, it is coded in a syntactically intransitive way, taking a non-core argument as its patient.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERB</th>
<th>SUBJECT IS INITIATOR</th>
<th>SUBJECT IS PATIENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>atrevin</td>
<td>‘punish (s.o.)’</td>
<td>‘be punished’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bwal</td>
<td>‘whip (s.o.)’</td>
<td>‘be whipped’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gab</td>
<td>‘do’</td>
<td>‘happen to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gomonio</td>
<td>‘bless (s.o.)’</td>
<td>‘be blessed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gotoo</td>
<td>‘waste (s.th.)’</td>
<td>‘be wasted’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lak</td>
<td>‘marry (s.o.)’</td>
<td>‘be married’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10: Dynamic intransitive/subject is initiator or patient

As an example, consider the following two sentences: subu nii ‘chiefs’ (underlined) is initiator of the action atrevin ‘punish’ in (20), but atsi dalmwa ahe ‘this boy’ (underlined) is patient of atrevin in (21):
Chapter 4: Word Classes

(20) Subu nii ra=n atrevin i atsi dalmwa ahe.
    chief PL 3PL=IRR punish PREP person boy PROX
    ‘The chiefs will punish this boy.’ –EF1p150

(21) Atsi dalmwa ahe mwan atrevin.
    person boy this 3SG.IRR punish
    ‘This boy will be punished.’ –EF1p150

Even though the subject, subu nii ‘chiefs’, is an initiator or agent in (20), atsi dalmwa ahe ‘this boy’ is part of a prepositional phrase; syntactically it is not a direct object of atrevin ‘punish’. Rather, it is a non-core PP, i atsi dalmwa ahe ‘to this boy’.

4.2.1.2 Ambitransitive Verbs

Ambitransitive verbs have an invariant form which functions either intransitively or transitively. If a direct object is present, then the verb is transitive; otherwise the verb is intransitive. (Ambitransitive verbs contrast with dynamic intransitive verbs whose subject is an initiator or patient (described above) because the latter are never formally transitive.) There are only a small number of ambitransitive verbs and these are sub-divided into A-types and O-types (few though they be).

4.2.1.2.1 A-Type

A-types are characterised by the agent being the subject of both the intransitive and transitive instantiations of the verb. In Abma, there is only one known A-type ambitransitive which is rarei. Intransitively it has the meaning of ‘be careful’, whereas its transitive meaning is to ‘look out for, care for s.th.’. An example of rarei with intransitive usage is given in (22), while (23) illustrates how rarei is used transitively:

(22) Ko-n rarei!
    2SG-IRR be.careful
    ‘Watch out!’ –EF1p143
Notice in (23) that the pronoun *kidi* ‘us’ is in objective case, and that *kidi* and *noda mwasan* ‘our lives’ come directly after the verb *mwerarei*. This position is normal for direct objects, and it proves that *rarei* is functioning transitively in (23).

### 4.2.1.2.2 O-Type

There are only a few known ambitransitive O-types in Abma. In Table 4.11, the patient subject of the intransitive verbs in column 2 are the direct objects of the transitive verbs in column 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERB</th>
<th>INTRANSITIVE MEANING</th>
<th>TRANSITIVE MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>hani</em></td>
<td>‘fall down’</td>
<td>‘knock s.th. down’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>sangi</em></td>
<td>‘be opened’</td>
<td>‘open s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>-sroo</em></td>
<td>‘be lost (sent away)’</td>
<td>‘send s.th.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11: Ambitransitive O-type

Sentences (24) and (25) respectively illustrate the intransitive and transitive instantiations of *-sroo*:

(24) Datsi-n te=git mwi=sib le teh, mother-3SG.POSS 3SG.PFV=look IPFV=go.down LOC sea

bi mwa=sroo le tan bi ban ibe. and 3SG.IPFV=be.lost LOC ground and 3SG.IPFV=go somewhere

‘His mother looked down towards the sea, and she sank into the ground and went someplace [was lost].’ -T2p22/D2T33L44

(25) Datsi-k te=sroo nana baiang. mother-1SG.POSS 3SG.PFV=send 1SG.OBJ IPFV=go.away

‘My mother sent me away.’ –EF1p172
4.2.1.3 Transitive Verbs

4.2.1.3.1 Invariant Transitives

The sub-class of invariantly transitive verbs is a large one. A sampling is provided in Table 4.12:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aldiro</td>
<td>'visit s.o.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daagoro</td>
<td>'block s.o./s.th.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eva</td>
<td>'give birth to/carry s.o.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>galahi</td>
<td>'lie to s.o.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hani</td>
<td>'make s.th.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maluni</td>
<td>'forget s.th.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raatsi</td>
<td>'take s.th. out'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saliwa</td>
<td>'capsise s.th.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tsihi</td>
<td>'swing s.th.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ubtsi</td>
<td>'fetch s.th.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vaaka</td>
<td>'fry s.th.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walu</td>
<td>'answer s.o.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wuuri</td>
<td>'squeeze s.th.'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12: Invariant transitive

While other transitive verbs can be rendered intransitive through reduplication or loss of a transitivity suffix, invariant transitives never change in form.

4.2.1.3.2 Reduplicates to Form Intransitive

These verbs are inherently transitive in semantics and form, but they are rendered intransitive through reduplication and addition of the intransitive suffix, -k. They can be either A-type or O-type.

A-Type

When A-type transitives reduplicate, they become intransitive but they retain an agentive subject. Some of these are listed in Table 4.13:
### Chapter 4: Word Classes

#### TRANSITIVE MEANING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSITIVE</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>INTRANSITIVE</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bweeta-ni</td>
<td>'weave s.th.'</td>
<td>bwee-bweeta-k</td>
<td>'weave'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rihvi</td>
<td>'blow on s.th.'</td>
<td>rih-rihvi-k</td>
<td>'keep blowing'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vahri</td>
<td>'tread on s.th.'</td>
<td>vah-vahri-k</td>
<td>'tread'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vela-ni</td>
<td>'disagree with s.o.'</td>
<td>vela-vela-k</td>
<td>'disagree'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wulki</td>
<td>'read, count s.th.'</td>
<td>wul-wulki-k</td>
<td>'read, count'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Table 4.13: Reduplicated to form intransitive A-type

In Table 4.14, the reduplicated intransitive takes a suffix of -in rather than -k:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSITIVE</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>INTRANSITIVE</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vang-ni</td>
<td>'feed s.o./s.th.'</td>
<td>vang-vang-in</td>
<td>'feed'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Table 4.14: Reduplicated to form intransitive A-type: -in suffix

There are two known verbs that reduplicate to form intransitive, but they carry no intransitive suffix at all. These are listed in Table 4.15:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSITIVE</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>INTRANSITIVE</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ulu</td>
<td>'write s.th.'</td>
<td>ulu-ul [ulul]</td>
<td>'write'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vava</td>
<td>'carry s.th.'</td>
<td>va-vab</td>
<td>'give birth'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Table 4.15: Reduplicated to form intransitive A-type: no suffix

### O-Type

When O-types are reduplicated, the subject of the newly formed intransitive relates to the direct object of the underived transitive. This is shown in Table 4.16:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSITIVE</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>INTRANSITIVE</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>daawu-ni</td>
<td>'make s.th. hot'</td>
<td>daa-taawu-k</td>
<td>'be hot'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garahvi</td>
<td>'straighten'</td>
<td>garah-karahvi-k</td>
<td>'be straight'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gasri</td>
<td>'rub s.th.'</td>
<td>gas-kasri-k</td>
<td>'be rubbed'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-sla</td>
<td>'dry s.th. out'</td>
<td>sal-sal</td>
<td>'dry out'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-sri-ni</td>
<td>'have difficulty with s.th.'</td>
<td>-sri-sri-k</td>
<td>'be difficult'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viltsi</td>
<td>'stick on s.th.'</td>
<td>vil-viltsi-k</td>
<td>'be sticky'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wuhki</td>
<td>'take s.th. away'</td>
<td>wuh-wuhki-k</td>
<td>'be removed'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Table 4.16: Reduplicated to form intransitive O-type
4.2.1.3.3 Loses Suffix to Form Intransitive

The verbs in this sub-class may be formally intransitive or transitive, depending on whether the transitivity suffix is present or absent. (These differ from ambitransitive verbs, because while ambitransitive verbs may be semantically intransitive or transitive, their form never changes.)

A-type

Table 4.17 provides a sampling of intransitive/transitive A-types. The agent of both the intransitive and transitive form is the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTRANSITIVE VERB</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>TRANSITIVE VERB</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>das</td>
<td>‘cut’</td>
<td>das-i</td>
<td>‘cut s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gan</td>
<td>‘eat’</td>
<td>gan-i</td>
<td>‘eat s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>git</td>
<td>‘see’</td>
<td>git-a</td>
<td>‘see s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ih</td>
<td>‘hit’</td>
<td>hi</td>
<td>‘hit s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lel</td>
<td>‘do’</td>
<td>lel-i</td>
<td>‘do s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lih</td>
<td>‘change’</td>
<td>lih-i</td>
<td>‘change s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ling</td>
<td>‘put’</td>
<td>-lng-i/lng-i</td>
<td>‘put s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rong</td>
<td>‘hear’</td>
<td>rong-o</td>
<td>‘hear s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sagora-k</td>
<td>‘pile up’</td>
<td>sagora-ni</td>
<td>‘pile s.th. up’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selka-k</td>
<td>‘carry’</td>
<td>selka-ni</td>
<td>‘carry s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>son</td>
<td>‘put’</td>
<td>song-i</td>
<td>‘put s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vaawo</td>
<td>‘start’</td>
<td>vaawo-ra</td>
<td>‘start s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wat</td>
<td>‘break’</td>
<td>wat-a</td>
<td>‘break s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wuh</td>
<td>‘hold’</td>
<td>wuh-u</td>
<td>‘hold s.th.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.17: Loses suffix to form intransitive A-type

O-type

Only a few transitive/intransitive forms are known to be O-type, wherein the subject patient of the intransitive form corresponds with the object patient of the transitive form. These are listed in Table 4.18:
Chapter 4: Word Classes

Table 4.18: Loses suffix to form intransitive O-type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTRANSITIVE VERB</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>TRANSITIVE VERB</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gasmwa-k</td>
<td>‘be spoiled’</td>
<td>gasmwa-ni</td>
<td>‘spoil s.o./s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lih</td>
<td>‘be changed’</td>
<td>lih-i</td>
<td>‘change s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tka</td>
<td>‘hang’</td>
<td>-tka-i</td>
<td>‘hang s.th.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tra-k</td>
<td>‘be lifted up’</td>
<td>-tra-ni</td>
<td>‘lift s.th. up’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1.4 Second Verb in Type 2 Serial Verb Construction

These verbs constitute a special category, as they only ever appear as the second verb of a type 2 SVC. (A type 2 SVC is one of the three sub-classes of SVC in Abma.) Their form is invariant (with the sole exception of mweta- ‘do again’, which indicates intransitivity/transitivity through suffixation). They do not establish the transitivity value of the SVC; rather, the transitivity of the SVC is determined as a unitary whole. Therefore the second verb of the SVC, considered in isolation, is “neutral” in its transitivity with regard to the larger SVC.

For example, in (26), dihi ‘have ability’ is part of an intransitive SVC (underlined), whereas in (27) it is a constituent of a transitive SVC (also underlined):

(26) Na=m  dobtob ____ dihi.
    1SG=IPFV talk  have.ability
    ‘I talk well.’ -EF2p49

(27) Na=m  leb ____ dihi  no-n  ru-ka.
    1SG=IPFV take  have.ability  CL.GE-3SG.POSS  leaf-tree.generic
    ‘I can take his leaf.’ -EF2p207

Lynch, Ross, and Crowley (2002: 48) propose that verbs which can never occur independently, and which are restricted to second slots, might be better analysed as adverbial constituents within a structurally expanded verb phrase. So why are lexemes like dihi ‘have ability’ analysed as verbs rather than adverbs?

For one reason, many of the lexemes in this category have a clear formal affiliation with verbs. For example, mweta- ‘do again’ shows intransitivity/transitivity marking. Adverbs in Abma do not inflect for transitivity. The verb -mle ‘do slowly’ in this category is
morphologically bound; adverbs are not bound. Yet other lexemes reduplicate; only nouns, verbs, and adjectives can reduplicate.1

Perhaps most importantly, the discontinuous negative morpheme ba...nga treats these lexemes as part of the VP. In Abma, negation encompasses the verb phrase (verb plus direct object) and only the verb phrase. Subject NPs, adverbials, non-core arguments and adjuncts are not included in the VP; they are shifted to the periphery. Negation is therefore a strong diagnostic in determining what does and does not qualify as a verb (or direct object, for that matter).

Serial verb constructions are discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

4.2.1.4.1 Form Unchanged

The verbs listed in Table 4.19 occur only as the second verb of an SVC:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>baata</th>
<th>'be tight'</th>
<th>-mle</th>
<th>'do slowly'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bamte</td>
<td>'die'</td>
<td>mweta-k/mweta-ni</td>
<td>'do again (INTR/TR)'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bilovilos</td>
<td>'be everywhere/be nowhere'</td>
<td>rada</td>
<td>'must do'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bis</td>
<td>'reach'</td>
<td>reerei</td>
<td>'mix'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>botwot</td>
<td>'disperse'</td>
<td>rotvi</td>
<td>'break'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bwiri</td>
<td>'be able/have permission'</td>
<td>sera</td>
<td>'finish'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dihi</td>
<td>'have ability, do well'</td>
<td>seresere</td>
<td>'say aloud'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gololo</td>
<td>'do well'</td>
<td>sige</td>
<td>'follow'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.19: Second verb of serial verb construction

4.2.1.4.2 Reduplicates to Form Intransitive

There is a single known example where the second verb of the SVC may reduplicate to form an independent intransitive verb: when V2 selal 'hide, go the wrong way' reduplicates to become sola-selal 'be lost', the resulting form then functions as an intransitive verb. By way of illustration, contrast (28), where selal 'go the wrong way' functions as V2 of the SVC, and (29), where sola-selal 'be lost' is an intransitive verb:

---

1 As will be seen in the next section, adjectives are historically derived from either nouns or verbs, so from a historical perspective at least, only nouns and verbs reduplicate.
4.3 Adjectives

Givón (1984: 55) claims that adjectives exist on a time-stability continuum between “nouniness” and “verbiness”. While prototypical nouns are static and prototypical verbs are dynamic, adjectives come somewhere between these two extremes – they are less stable than nouns, but more stable than verbs. This is the reason why in many languages, adjectival concepts do not form a dedicated word class, but instead constitute a sub-category of either nouns, verbs, or both.

Givón (1979: 266) and Dixon (1982) place adjectives into conceptual adjectival sub-categories. Dixon’s seven sub-categories are: dimension, colour, value (e.g., ‘good’, ‘bad’), age, human propensity (e.g., ‘cowardly’, ‘clumsy’, ‘dangerous’), physical property (e.g., ‘cold’, ‘hot’, ‘healthy’, ‘blind’), and speed. Dixon and Givón both suggest that word class categorisation of adjectival concepts can vary according to their semantic sub-category. So for example, Dixon claims that if a language contains a dedicated class of adjectives at all, its most likely members are words that convey the “core” concepts of dimension, colour, value, and age. It may also contain words that code concepts of human propensity, physical property, and speed, but these latter three are less central to the adjective class.

Adjectives in Abma fall in line with Givón’s and Dixon’s expectations. They are divided into two formal sub-categories, termed “type 1 adjectives” (§4.3.1) and “type 2 adjectives” (§4.3.2). Type 1 adjectives have their origin in nouns. On the other hand, most type 2 adjectives have originated from stative verbs. In fact, both adjective types also function as nouns or verbs in different environments.

Both type 1 and type 2 adjectives normally only appear in attributive position. In predicate position, they assume the form of the nouns or verbs from which they are derived.
4.3.1 Type 1 Adjectives

Type 1 adjectives comprise the small group that is listed in Table 4.20. These correspond with two of Dixon’s (1982) core semantic categories: dimension and age:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE 1 ADJECTIVE</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>DIXON’S SUB-CATEGORY OF ADJECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>biri</td>
<td>‘little’</td>
<td>dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boro</td>
<td>‘short’</td>
<td>dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buku</td>
<td>‘small’</td>
<td>dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bwalu</td>
<td>‘young’</td>
<td>age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bwaraka</td>
<td>‘big’</td>
<td>dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mali</td>
<td>‘old’</td>
<td>age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mase</td>
<td>‘narrow’</td>
<td>dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngudu</td>
<td>‘short’</td>
<td>dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natsu</td>
<td>‘small’</td>
<td>dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solo</td>
<td>‘long, tall’</td>
<td>dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tora</td>
<td>‘skinny, spindly’</td>
<td>dimension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.20: Type 1 adjectives

As noun modifiers, type 1 adjectives precede the noun they modify. In (30), the type 1 adjectives are *biri* ‘little’ and *natsu* ‘small’; they modify the NP *vini go* ‘another island’:

(30) Biru natsu vini go, tei te=tbo
     little small island other FOC 3SG.PFV=lay.down

be-n.
proximity-3SG.POSS
‘One more small island was nearby.’ –T2p146/D20T26L55

Type 1 adjectives are also distinguished by the fact that they can be nominalised with the -kte generalising suffix, for example: *biri* ‘small’ \(\rightarrow\) *birikte* ‘small one’; *boro* ‘short’ \(\rightarrow\) *borokte* ‘short one’; *bwaraka* ‘big’ \(\rightarrow\) *bwarakte* ‘big one’.

Recall (Chapter 3 (Morphology)) that the application of the -kte generalising suffix is not limited to type 1 adjectives – it is also available to some nouns. For example: *waluk* ‘my friend’ \(\rightarrow\) *walukte* ‘friends (in general)’; *libwi* ‘root’ \(\rightarrow\) *libwikte* ‘roots (in general)’. In fact, type 1 adjectives are mostly derived from nouns (e.g., *biri* ‘small’ < *biri* ‘seed’; *ngudu* ‘short’ < *ngudu* ‘log’; *natsu* ‘small’ < *natsu* ‘child’; etc.).
4.3.1.1 Attributive and Predicative Positions

Type 1 adjectives only occur as attributive adjectives, modifying a noun, as *bwara* ‘big’ modifies *melang* ‘cave’ in (31):

\[(31) \text{Mwa=mlu dini } \underline{\text{bwara}} \text{ melang.} \quad \begin{array}{ll}
\text{3SG.IPFV=leave ABL} & \text{big cave} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘He leaves the big cave.’ – T2p63/D2T43

Type 1 adjectives do not occur in predicate position unless they are first nominalised with the -kte suffix mentioned in §4.3.1 above – in which case they are no longer adjectives, but nouns. In (32) for example, *bwarakte* ‘big one’, the nominalised form of *bwara* ‘big’ occurs within a non-verbal predicate NP:

\[(32) \text{Te=:van, bi } \underline{\text{bwara-kte}.} \quad \begin{array}{ll}
\text{3SG.PFY=go and ABL} & \text{big-NMZR} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘He went, and it was a big one.’ – T3p83

Therefore, underived type 1 adjectives may not function predicatively.

4.3.2 Type 2 Adjectives

The group of type 2 adjectives is much larger than that of type 1 adjectives. Most (not all) are derived from stative verbs. Table 4.21 gives a small sampling of the forty-plus type 2 adjectives and English glosses, and which of Dixon’s semantic sub-categories (discussed in §4.3 above) they fit into. Note that while type 1 adjectives only correspond with the dimension and age categories, type 2 adjectives have matches with every category except for speed. Cardinal numbers (see §4.9.2) also fall into this category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE 2 ADJECTIVE</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>DIXON’S SUB-CATEGORY OF ADJECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>kau</em></td>
<td>‘big’</td>
<td>dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>temamalkes</em></td>
<td>‘green’</td>
<td>colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tegabis</em></td>
<td>‘good’</td>
<td>value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>terabwa</em></td>
<td>‘new’</td>
<td>age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tokol</em></td>
<td>‘strong’</td>
<td>human propensity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>temamandidi</em></td>
<td>‘cold’</td>
<td>physical property</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.21: Type 2 adjectives
While type 1 adjectives precede the head noun, type 2 adjectives follow it, as is shown in (33):

(33) Nutsu-k tewot, ko-bma!
child-1SG.POSS beloved you-come
‘My beloved child, come!’ -T2p22/D2T33L37

There are no instances in the corpus of *tewot* ‘beloved’ functioning as anything other than an adjective. However, many type 2 adjectival forms are homonymous with stative verbs. For example, *temramram* ‘really clear’ is a type 2 adjective in (34), where it modifies the noun *ut* ‘place’; it is marked as such in the interlinear text, with the gloss ‘type 2 adjective (ADJ2)’. But in (35) it is a stative verb, *ra temramram* ‘they are really clear’. Like all verbs, it takes a subject pronoun (*ra* ‘3PL’) and aspeccial marking (perfective (PFV)):

(34) Bi butsu wib n11, mwe=sadok ut te-mram-ram.
and tree pandanus PL 3SG.IPFY=stay place ADJ2-INT-clear
‘And the pandanus trees, they’re in a really clear place.’ –EF2p92/D2T29

(35) Biri n meta m ra=te=mram-ram.
seed-3SG.POSS eye-2SG.POSS 3PL PFY=INT-clear
‘Your pupils are really clear.’ –T2p10

A similar adjectival/verbal pattern applies across the majority of type 2 adjectives.

4.3.2.1 Attributive and Predicative Positions

Examples (34) and (35) above illustrate the fact that, as with type 1 adjectives, type 2 adjectives may occur attributively (after the noun) but not predicatively. When the type 2 adjective occurs in predicate position, it becomes a stative verb, with all the morphosyntactic features of a stative verb.

4.3.2.2 Distinguishing Type 2 Adjectives from Stative Verbs

Type 2 adjectives and stative verbs are formally identical, as examples (34) and (35) above illustrate. What distinguishes them is their morphosyntactic behaviour. This is demonstrated below with three different tests: the relative clause test (§4.3.2.2.1), the negation test (§4.3.2.2.2), and the possessive construction test (§4.3.2.2.3).
4.3.2.2.1 Relative Clause Test

*Te meme* ‘be red’ in (36) and (37) is an example of a stative verb, since it occurs inside a relative clause construction. In contrast, *tememe* ‘red’ in (38) is a type 2 adjective, since it comes directly after the noun it modifies, without any intervening relative clause marker. Finally, (39) is ungrammatical because adjectives do not support subject pronouns:

(36) Ko ska-ni go ah te meme.
2SG give-TR one REL 3SG.PFV be.red
‘Give (me) the one that’s red.’

(37) Ko ska-ni go ah ra=t meme.
2SG give-TR one REL 3PL=PFV be.red
‘Give (me) the ones that are red.’

(38) Ko ska-ni go te-meme.
2SG give-TR one ADJ2-red
‘Give (me) the red one.’

(39) *Ko ska-ni go ra-t meme.
2SG give-TR one 3PL-ADJ2 red
‘Give (me) the red ones.’

4.3.2.2.2 Negation Test

Another way to identify type 2 adjectives is by looking at how they behave in negative constructions. Only the verb plus its direct object can be encompassed by the discontinuous negative morpheme *ba...nga.* In (40), *vini tememe* ‘red island’ is the direct object NP of the verb:

(40) Ko=t ba=ililngi=te vini te-meme=nga?
2SG=PFV NEG.1=know=PART island ADJ2-red=NEG.2
‘You don’t know of a red island?’ –T2p83/D2T45

If *tememe* were a verb within a relative clause and not a type 2 adjective within a NP, then it would not fall within the limits of the discontinuous negative morpheme *ba...nga*. This therefore is evidence that *tememe* ‘red’ is a type 2 adjective and not a verb.

---

2 As mentioned in §4.2.1.4, the second verb of an SVC is also included within the domain of the discontinuous negative morpheme *ba...nga*; however, this sentence does not have an SVC.
4.3.2.2.3 Possessive Construction Test

Type 2 adjectives can occur within a possessive construction, while verbs (stative or otherwise) cannot. Hence (41) is grammatical, because tegabis ‘good’ is a type 2 adjective, but if an attempt is made to make gabis verb-like, as in (42), then the result is ungrammatical:

(41) Bu te-gabis no-n haavak.
    knife ADJ2-good CL.GE-3SG.POSS child
    ‘The child’s good knife.’

(42) *Bu mwe=gabis no-n haavak.
    knife IPFv=be.good CL.GE-3SG.POSS child

4.4 Adverbs

Adverbs serve a modifying function at either the sentential or phrasal level, specifying degree, manner, time, and so forth. Adverbs are of two main types: there is a small group of free adverbs (§4.4.1), but the majority are restricted adverbs (§4.4.2). Neither type is included within the realm of the discontinuous negative morpheme ba...nga when a sentence is negated.

4.4.1 Free Adverbs

Free adverbs are phrase- and sentence-level modifiers. Table 4.22 lists all known free adverbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Free adverbs</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ale</td>
<td>‘then’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baawo</td>
<td>‘first’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mwetak</td>
<td>‘again’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naanong/naa...nong</td>
<td>‘now’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ningamwa [ni.ŋa.ˈm̥a]</td>
<td>‘especially’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ras</td>
<td>‘all the time, always’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tehu</td>
<td>‘afterwards’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.22: Free adverbs

Free adverbs occur clause-initially (in a separate intonation contour), as illustrated by example (43):
(43) **Ras, ba ta=m gan-i bwet.**
always COMM 1PL.INC-1PFV eat-TR 1PL INC-PFY
‘All the time, we eat taro.’ –EF1p19

One adverb, *naanong* ‘now’, also appears in other parts of the sentence. *Naanong* may precede/follow VPs (within the same intonation contour), or precede/follow NPs (within the same intonation contour). In (44), *naanong* follows a NP, at the margin between the NP, *datnin abmabma nii* ‘some of the many many things’, and a relative clause, *ah niah tat, tat iusum* ‘that we, we used’:

(44) Datni-n abm-abma nii **naanong, ah niah ta=t,\(\)**
some-3SG.POSS INT-~thing PL now REL REL 1PL.INC-PFY
\(\)ta=t____ iusum.
1PL.INC-PFY use
‘Some of the many many things now, that we, we used.’ –FN4p115/D39T26

*Naanong* ‘now’ is unique because it is the only adverb with a discontinuous allomorph: *naanong → naa...nong*. *Na...nong* modifies the phrase that it contains. For example, in (45), *ling goro atsi havin* ‘block this woman’ is the VP modified by *naa...nong*:

(45) Tema-n atsi dalmwa, nema van **naa ne-ling goro**
father-3SG.POSS person boy 3SG.PRSP go now CONN-put block
\(\)atsi____ havin **nong, le val-in.**
person woman now LOC house-3SG.POSS
‘The father of this boy, he was going to go block this woman now, in her house.’ –T3p7

### 4.4.2 Restricted Adverbs

Restricted adverbs come after the VP and specifically modify it. A listing of restricted adverbs is given in Table 4.23:
Limited adverbs modify the verb phrases that they follow. The adverbs in (46), (47), and (48) are representative of the behaviour of limited adverbs, in general.

In (46), *nge* ‘just’ modifies *kon das bwiri nguduka* ‘you can cut the wood’:

\begin{align*}
(46) & \text{Ko=}n \text{ das bwiri nguduka } \text{nge daltsi vini=}ah. \\
& 2SG:::=IRR \text{ cut can wood just around village=}this \text{, You can just cut the wood surrounding this village.} -EF2p100/D2T29
\end{align*}

In (47), *lebleb* ‘quickly’ functions as an adverb; note that it occurs outside the realm of the *ba...nga* discontinuous negative morpheme:

\begin{align*}
(47) & \text{Te=}ba \text{ gak=}nga \text{ lebleb.} \\
& 3SG.PFY=NEG.1 \text{ fly=}NEG.2 \text{ quickly} \\
& \text{‘It doesn’t fly quickly.’} -EF2p181A
\end{align*}

In (48), *dobo* ‘for some time’ modifies what is in this instance a long-term activity, *mwegani songosongo* ‘he eats lots of rubbish’:

\begin{align*}
(48) & \text{Mwe=}gan-i \text{ songo–songo } \text{dobo le waka.} \\
& 3SG.IPVF=eat-TR \text{ INT~rubbish for.a.while LOC bush} \\
& \text{‘He eats rubbish for a while in the bush.’} -T2p16/D2T33
\end{align*}

The limited adverbs *naa* ‘now’ and *nong* ‘now’ both obviously originate in the free adverb *naanong* ‘now’. The three share a commonality of meaning, but they tend to be used in subtly different contexts. *Naanong* is more frequently used in immediate situations, where a reference to actual time (i.e., ‘now’) is made. *Naa* and *nong* on the other hand are more likely
to be used to lend a sense of immediacy to a narrative, without necessarily referring to any actual point in time.

Several words included in Table 4.23 also occur after NPs, particularly *ah, bwaleh, mwa, naa, nae, nong, and nge*. In a post-nominal context, these words function not as adverbs but as post-nominal modifiers such as determiners, type 2 adjectives, and numerals. The meanings of these words have some consistency across word classes. For example, *naa* ‘now’ and *nong* ‘now’ the adverbs are clearly related to *naa* ‘proximal (PROX)’ and *nong* ‘proximal (PROX)’ the demonstratives (see §4.7.2). The adverbs convey a sense of immediacy, while the demonstratives convey a sense of conceptual proximity. *Naa* is used frequently as an adverb, while *nong* is much more likely to function as a demonstrative.

Other restricted adverbs listed in Table 4.23 resemble verbs – particularly verbs that may only function as the second verb in an SVC (see §4.2.1.4). For example, restricted adverbs “look like” they can reduplicate (as verbs do) – but the reduplicated form is a frozen root. For example, (49) is grammatical where the adverbial form *buubuu* is used; (50) is ungrammatical because *buu* is not a word:

(49) Ko viah **buubuu**.
   2SG be.thanked very.much
   ‘Thank you very much.’

(50) *Ko viah **buu**.
   2SG be.thanked very.much
   ‘Thank you very much.’

Of course, reduplication is productive in verbs. This is a point of difference between restricted adverbs and verbs that function as V2 of an SVC.

Since restricted adverbs and verbs that function as V2 of an SVC occur in the same position in the sentence – directly following the verb – it is clear that V2s “feed” the class of restricted adverbs. That is, verbs that are restricted to the second slot of the SVC become grammaticalised into restricted adverbs over time.3

3 Unsurprisingly, lexemes undergoing grammaticalisation will display qualities of both their old and new word classes. For example, (47) above has a variant structure wherein *lebleb* ‘quickly’ occurs within the negative brace. In this case the lexeme is actually functioning as a verb (‘do quickly’) rather than an adverb.
4.5 Prepositions

There is a large number of prepositions, which is unusual for Oceanic languages (Lynch et al., 2002: 51). General prepositions are discussed in §4.5.1; then §4.5.2 then focuses on three prepositions that code non-core arguments to the verb.

Prepositions precede a NP within a PP, as depicted in the following formula:

\[ \text{PP} \rightarrow P \ (\text{NP}) \]

For a few prepositions, the NP is optional within the PP. The NP object is not mentioned if it is understood. Omission of an overt object NP is known to occur with \textit{dini} ‘ablative (ABL)’, \textit{mini} ‘with’, \textit{saasari} ‘near’, and \textit{uuru} ‘purpose (PURP), pertaining to’. An example of this type of omission is given in (51), where the unexpressed object of \textit{mini} is \textit{tsibin} ‘his grandmother’. Omission of the prepositional object NP occurs because \textit{tsibin} has been recently mentioned and is probably still considered to be a salient participant:

\[
\text{(51)} \quad \begin{array}{l}
\text{Mwo=dok} \quad \text{mwi=sibma,} \quad \text{bi} \quad \text{Ø} \quad \text{beb} \quad \text{mini} \\
\text{3SG.IPFV=stay} \quad \text{IPFV=come.down} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{3SG} \quad \text{IPFV=say} \quad \text{PREP}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\text{tsibi·n} \quad \text{mwo=dok} \quad \text{mwa=li} \quad \text{dam,} \quad \text{mwi=sibma,} \quad \text{grandparent-3SG.POSS} \quad \text{3SG.IPFV=stay} \quad \text{IPFV=take} \quad \text{yam} \quad \text{IPFV=come.down}
\]

\[
\text{bi} \quad \text{Ø} \quad \text{beb} \quad \text{mini}, \quad \text{“Ko-tngi} \quad \text{dam=ah.”} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{3SG} \quad \text{IPFV=say} \quad \text{PREP} \quad \text{2SG-roast} \quad \text{yam=PROX}
\]

‘He comes back down, and he says to his grandmother – he takes a yam, and he says to [her], “Roast this yam.”’

---Tlp47/D2T25

4.5.1 General Prepositions

General prepositions express physical or metaphorical relationships in space and time. Many are derived from either nouns or verbs. They are listed in alphabetical order in Table 4.24:
### Daltsi ‘Around’

*Daltsi* ‘around’ is derived from the verb *daltsi* ‘go around’, but it is clearly not a verb in (52) because it has no subject pronoun:

\[(52) \text{Ra baawo-ra no-o hural-an naanong,} \]
\[3\text{PL IPFV.start-TR CL.GE-3PL.POSS walk-NMZR now} \]
\[\text{ta=m sib, } \text{daltsi saa.} \]
\[1\text{PL.INC=IPFY go.down around field} \]

‘They’re starting their walk now, we’ll go down, around the field.’ -T3p95

### Dini ‘Ablative (ABL)’

*Dini* marks the following NP as a source, as in (53):

\[(53) \text{Ko=m leb bamul-a no-m bwenges } \text{dini sileng.} \]
\[2\text{SG=IPFV take do.again-TR CL.GE-2SG.POSS pandanus.leaf ABL water} \]

‘You take your pandanus leaves back out of the water.’

If the ablative object NP is well-established, then it can be zero-coded, as in (54):

\[(54) \text{Ko=km leb bamul-a no-m bwenges } \text{dini sileng.} \]
\[2\text{SG=IPFV take do.again-TR CL.GE-2SG.POSS pandanus.leaf ABL water} \]

‘You take your pandanus leaves back out of the water.’

---

**Table 4.24: Prepositions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>daltsi</em></td>
<td>‘around’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>dini</em></td>
<td>‘ablative (ABL)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>duhkuru</em></td>
<td>‘after’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>i</em></td>
<td>‘instrument (INSTR)’, ‘source (SRC)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>le</em></td>
<td>‘time (TIME)’, ‘locative (LOC)’, ‘instrument (INSTR)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>li</em></td>
<td>‘locative (LOC)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>limalen</em></td>
<td>‘after’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mini</em></td>
<td>‘with’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>rei</em></td>
<td>‘with’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>saasari</em></td>
<td>‘near’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>sasviri</em></td>
<td>‘more than’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>uu ~ uuru</em></td>
<td>‘purpose (PURP)’, pertaining to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>vali ~ bali</em></td>
<td>‘in comparison to’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>van</em></td>
<td>‘under’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>vin</em></td>
<td>‘value of (VAL)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following sections, each preposition is briefly described and illustrated.
Chapter 4: Word Classes

4.5.1.3 Duhkuru ‘After’

This derives from the verb *duhkuru* ‘follow’:

(55) **Duhkuru** vehu-ran at mwate…
    after talk-NMZR concept.of.time before
    ‘Following what was said earlier…’ -T3p23

4.5.1.4 *I* ‘Instrument (INSTR)’, Source (SRC)’

*I* marks instrument:

(56) Tei mwate, ba ra=t sab~sawiri-k nge
    FOC before COMM 3PL=PFV INT~grate-INTR just
    i bwala kul
    INSTR shell coconut
    ‘In the old days, they just did their grating with a coconut shell.’

It also marks source or reason:

(57) Atsi haavak te=deng *i* Dolsen.
    person child 3SG.PFY=cry SRC D.
    ‘The baby cried because of Dolsen.’

This preposition can also prefix to third person singular or third person plural object pronouns, e.g., *i-ni* ‘INSTR-3SG.OBJ’ or *i-nii* ‘INSTR-3PL.OBJ’.

4.5.1.5 *Le* ‘Time (TIME)’, ‘Locative (LOC)’, ‘Instrument (INSTR)’

*Le* is the most common preposition. Occasionally it marks an instrument, but more typically it marks time and location, both physical and metaphorical. In (58), *le* codes for time; in (59), it marks location:

---

4 At *mwate*, roughly translated as ‘what was said earlier’, is in apposition to *vehuran* ‘talk’.
(58) Mwan mulma le ren kavih?
3SG.IRR come.back TIME day how.many
‘He’s coming back in how many days?’ -EF1p144

(59) Masen too nong, ba bwihil ah mal
during time this COMM bird APP hawk
ba mwe=sadok le melang.
COMM 3SG.IPFV=sit LOC cave
‘During this time, this hawk stayed inside the cave.’ - D2T43L83-84/T2p61

Table 4.25 provides a sampling of nouns that occur after le. Some nouns are bolded; this is explained in the next section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6.00</th>
<th>6.00</th>
<th>nitsun</th>
<th>child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>lakan</td>
<td>wedding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baket</td>
<td>bucket</td>
<td>nokoke</td>
<td>body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>berasin</td>
<td>prison</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bislama</td>
<td>Bislama</td>
<td>reb</td>
<td>hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bihaf</td>
<td>behalf</td>
<td>ren</td>
<td>day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>butsuka</td>
<td>caves</td>
<td>rowan</td>
<td>race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bwarang</td>
<td>cave</td>
<td>Sande</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>den</td>
<td>freshwater spring</td>
<td>saa</td>
<td>field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gelatngi</td>
<td>nettle tree</td>
<td>seberan</td>
<td>happiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hal</td>
<td>main road</td>
<td>sika</td>
<td>year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ilin</td>
<td>hair</td>
<td>sileng</td>
<td>water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kamel</td>
<td>meeting house</td>
<td>stoa</td>
<td>store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>katraba</td>
<td>forest</td>
<td>Subelakan</td>
<td>(place name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kik</td>
<td>1SG.OBJ</td>
<td>sukul</td>
<td>school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kilas</td>
<td>class</td>
<td>tang</td>
<td>tank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>komal</td>
<td>sweet potato</td>
<td>taon</td>
<td>town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>krismas</td>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td>teh</td>
<td>saltwater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kubungi</td>
<td>significant day</td>
<td>tina</td>
<td>noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kut</td>
<td>the bush</td>
<td>too</td>
<td>time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leut</td>
<td>thing</td>
<td>tsibwang</td>
<td>womb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lebeh</td>
<td>mud</td>
<td>tsintsin</td>
<td>drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>libwin</td>
<td>root</td>
<td>umwan</td>
<td>work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lim</td>
<td>house</td>
<td>val</td>
<td>house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liwon</td>
<td>tooth</td>
<td>valin tangroan</td>
<td>church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marisin</td>
<td>dispensary</td>
<td>vehuran</td>
<td>speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meram</td>
<td>light</td>
<td>vilih</td>
<td>grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mete</td>
<td>funeral</td>
<td>watang</td>
<td>basket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muu</td>
<td>hole</td>
<td>wawan</td>
<td>deep sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mwasan</td>
<td>life</td>
<td>wiken</td>
<td>weekend</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.25: Nouns preceded by le
In (60), *le* indicates the instrument that facilitates the action:

(60) kaa=t min le abma?
2PL-PFV drink INSTR what

4.5.1.6 *Li* ‘Locative (LOC)’

*Li* functions as a typical locative preposition in (61):

(61) Bi, ra=t sib li mwal, bi loah mwa=tkai
and 3PL-PFV go.down LOC reef and devil 3SG.IPFV=take
atsigo.
one.of.them
‘And they go down to the reef, and the devil takes one of them.’ –FN4p142/D20T24

There is a good deal of functional commonality between *le* and *li*, and it is difficult to predict or even explain why either preposition is collocated with a particular noun. There is no apparent phonological conditioning in choice of preposition. The majority of nouns take either *le* or *li* marking, but not both. Conditioning could therefore be assumed to be lexical, except that some nouns accept both *le* and *li* marking. Table 4.26 lists nouns that follow *li*; bolded nouns occur after *le* as well as *li* (see Table 4.25):
**Chapter 4: Word Classes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aelan</th>
<th>island</th>
<th>leut</th>
<th>thing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aga</td>
<td>canoe</td>
<td>libwin</td>
<td>root</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atsi</td>
<td>person</td>
<td>meres</td>
<td>asset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bislama</strong></td>
<td>plane</td>
<td>mwal</td>
<td>reef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blen</td>
<td>pig</td>
<td>mwasan</td>
<td>life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bo</td>
<td>pop music</td>
<td>mwii</td>
<td>left-hand side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bob</td>
<td>point (on land)</td>
<td>nana</td>
<td>1SG.OBJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boen</td>
<td>book</td>
<td>Nombil</td>
<td>(place name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buk</td>
<td>cow</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>(person name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buluk</td>
<td>door stop</td>
<td>ran</td>
<td>branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>butsukab</td>
<td>stump of wood</td>
<td>reb</td>
<td>hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>butsan</td>
<td>tree</td>
<td>ruka</td>
<td>leaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bwalaka</td>
<td>table</td>
<td>sinon</td>
<td>kava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bwalakih</td>
<td>bow and arrow</td>
<td>stalk</td>
<td>style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bwasal</td>
<td>beam</td>
<td>sukul</td>
<td>school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dalekte</td>
<td>language</td>
<td>tan</td>
<td>ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>hal</strong></td>
<td>road</td>
<td>tarak</td>
<td>car</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>im</td>
<td>house</td>
<td>tsukun</td>
<td>back side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaba</td>
<td>fire</td>
<td>uru</td>
<td>earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kabwal</td>
<td>bed</td>
<td>vini</td>
<td>village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>kamel</strong></td>
<td>meeting house</td>
<td>vihnian</td>
<td>knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kasasle</td>
<td>rope</td>
<td>watang</td>
<td>basket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kastom</td>
<td>custom</td>
<td>wuhnin</td>
<td>top</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>laplap</td>
<td>pudding</td>
<td>wulngan teh</td>
<td>horizon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.26: Nouns preceded by *li*

*Le* is the more commonly used preposition. Table 4.25 provides only a sampling of all occurrences of *le*, whereas Table 4.26 is a comprehensive list of all occurrences of *li* in the data. The two tables reveal that *li* marks only location, in contrast to *le*, which marks both time and location. *Li* is more commonly used with people and proper names. Both are used with borrowings, nominalisations, object pronouns, and abstract concepts. *Li* appears to be used more widely in reference to domestic items such as tables, beds, and door stops.

### 4.5.1.7 Limalen ‘After’

*Limalen* ‘after’ is derived from the noun *limalen* ‘the time after’:

(62) Kaa=ma=gam sak naa **limalen** kuran nong.

*IPL.EXC=PRSP=MIN* go.up now **limalen** go.up now after war this

‘We’re just going up now after this war.’ –T2p37/D2T11
Chapter 4: Word Classes

4.5.1.8 *Mini – Min* ‘With’

*Mini* ‘with’ is used to indicate accompaniment:

(63) Io ra=n hural mini no-o beba.
    or 3PL=IRR walk COM CL.GE-3PL.POSS paper

‘Or they’ll walk around with their papers.’ –EF2p64/D41T11

4.5.1.9 *Rei* ‘With’

*Rei* ‘with’ comes from the verb *rei* ‘be included with’, i.e., included within a larger group:

(64) Ko=t sadok rei atsi nii.
    2SG=PFV sit with person PL

‘You stayed with the people.’

4.5.1.10 *Saasari* ‘Near’

An example of *saasari* ‘near’ is given in (65):

(65) Mwa=bma saasari val-in datsi-n.
    3SG.IPFV=come near house-3SG.POSS mother-3SG.POSS

‘She approaches her mother’s house.’ -T2p20; D2T33L29-30

4.5.1.11 *Sasviri* ‘More Than’

This preposition is derived from the verb *sasviri* ‘to catch, to be more than’. It functions as a preposition in comparative/superlative contexts.

In (66), the non-verbal predicate is *hal kau sasviri nom* ‘more quantity than yours’. The PP *sasviri nom* ‘more than yours’ (underlined) occurs within this predicate:

(66) No-k ben hal kau sasviri no-m.
    CL.GE-1SG.POSS pen quantity big.one more.than CL.GE-2SG.POSS

‘My pens are many more than yours.’ –EF1p145
In (67), *sasviri nii sera* ‘more than everyone’ occurs within the larger non-verbal predicate *kau sasviri nii sera* ‘bigger than everyone’:

\[(67) \text{Joelly, } \text{ba kau } \underline{sasviri nii sera} \text{.} \]

J. COMM big.one more.than 3PL.OBJ every

‘Joelly is the biggest of all.’ –EF3p8A

Also see *vali ~ bali* ‘in comparison to’ in §4.5.1.13.

### 4.5.1.12 *Uu ~ Uuru* ‘Purpose (PURP), ‘Pertaining to’

*Uu* marks reason or purpose:

\[(68) \text{Kaa=m ruwu } \underline{\text{uu kakan-an, io loklok,}} \text{.} \]

1PL.EXC=IPFV plant PURP bake-NMZR or pudding

io abma sera.

or thing every

‘We plant for baking, or pudding, or whatever.’

This morpheme also means ‘pertaining to’:

\[(69) \text{Na=n dob mweta-ni. } \underline{\text{Uu tan=ah,}} \text{.} \]

1SG=IRR talk do.again-TR pertaining.to ground=PROX

\underline{\text{Uu bo.}}

pertaining.to pig

‘I’ll talk about something else. about this earth, about pigs.’ [Lit.: ‘I’ll talk again on it.’]–T3p11

### 4.5.1.13 *Vali ~ Bali* ‘In Comparison To’

*Vali ~ bali* ‘in comparison to’ is an alternative to *sasviri* ‘more than’ (see §4.5.1.11).\(^5\) In (70), two chickens are compared for their “skinniness”; the PP is *vali go ihe* ‘in comparison to that one’:

---

5 *Vali* is a complex preposition derived from the verb *va* ‘go’ + *li* ‘locative (LOC)’. The verb *va* is normally used in more abstract contexts than the verb *van* ‘go’; while *van* signifies physical action, *va* conveys more metaphorical motion.
(70) Mwateete ahe ba mu=mu=i tora-kte
chicken PROX COMM 3SG.IPFV=ADD=be skinny-NMZR

vali go ihe.
more than one DIST
‘This chicken is skinnier than that one.’ [Lit.: ‘This chicken, it’s a skinnier one, in comparison to that one.’] –EF3p10

The PP in (71) is bali Jean ‘in comparison to Jean’:

(71) Manuella, ba kau si bali Jean.
M. COMM big.one a.bit more.than J.
‘Manuella’s a bit bigger than Jean.’ [Lit.: Manuella, she’s a bit of a big one, in comparison to Jean.’] –EF3p9

It should be noted that there is no record of vali/bali occurring in natural speech.

4.5.1.14 Van ‘Under’

Van ‘under’ is related to the locative noun tavan ‘a low position’; it marks location underneath:

(72) Igo nae=ah wahwahdil, ba go naanong because this.time=PROX small.stones COMM one now
niah mwi=di tavan, van kakan-an.
REL 3SG.IPFV=stay low.position under bake-NMZR
‘Because now the small stones, the ones that are down under the oven.’
–FN4p104/D23T1

The specialised preposition vanten ‘under’ can only be used in the context of the sky. There is no known morpheme *ten.

(73) Le mehab, vanten bini, mere solsol.
LOC air under sky high.place very
‘In the air, underneath the sky, very high up.’ -T2p77/D2T43L194

4.5.1.15 Vin ‘Value of (VAL)’

Vin ‘value’ indicates that the following NP expresses value or worth:
4.5.2 Prepositions that Code Non-Core Arguments

Abma verbs use transitivity marking to indicate that a verb has a direct object. But the language has no morphology available for specifying a verb’s indirect object. Rather, three prepositional markers (ha (§4.5.2.1), mini (§4.5.2.2) and i (§4.5.2.3),) code indirect objects (typically human) and other non-core arguments of the verb.

It was pointed out in §4.1 that non-core arguments should be distinguished from adjuncts in that adjuncts are optional in the sentence, while non-core arguments are subcategorised by the verb. The sections below give examples of clear-cut cases where the verb is subcategorised for (core and) non-core arguments. However, there are other cases where it is less obvious if a given NP is a non-core argument, or an adjunct, to the verb in question. A syntactic test that can highlight the differences between non-core arguments and adjuncts needs to be devised. This question therefore requires further study.

Notice that two of the prepositions in this subset, i and mini, are also included with the list of general prepositions in §4.5.1 above, where i denotes ‘instrument, source’ and mini denotes ‘with’. Therefore, the forms i and mini are included under both sub-types of preposition.

As will be seen below, the general preposition mini ‘with’ is extended and grammaticalised when coding non-core arguments to the verb. In its latter role, mini indicates physical as well as abstract transference, and its connection with the more lexical function of mini ‘with’ is still apparent. Therefore a polysemous relationship holds between mini the general preposition, and mini as a marker of non-core arguments to the verb.

On the other hand, non-core arguments coded by the grammatical marker i do not necessarily function as sources or instruments in relation to the verb. There is no clear connection...
between these two sub-types of preposition. Therefore the general preposition i ‘instrument, source’ is merely homophonous with i that functions as a grammatical marker of non-core arguments.

The functions of i, mini, and ha are discussed in greater detail below.

4.5.2.1 Ha ‘Preposition (PREP)’

Ha ‘preposition (PREP)’ occurs with basic transfer verbs like -skani ‘give’ and -lngi ‘put’, but also extends to communication verbs including veb ‘say’, get ‘lie’, huru ‘teach’, -mkoo, ‘agree with’, -tkol ‘be tough with’, and sasra ‘show’. In (76), ha signals the indirect object of the verb veb ‘say’:

(76) Tei na=t veb ha gimi nehu bat=vi
FOC 1SG=PFV say PREP 2PL.OBJ COMP 3SG.HYP=be
nana nae.
1SG.IND now
‘I said to you guys that it should be me now.’ - D2T43L104-105; T2p63

4.5.2.2 Mini ‘Preposition (PREP)’

Mini ‘preposition (PREP)’ is commonly used to indicate a physical transfer to its NP indirect object. The transfer can be literal, as with the verb -skani ‘give’ in (77):

(77) Na mwa=skan leut te-golkol mini haavak nii.
1SG 3SG.IPFV=give-TR thing ADJ2-sweet PREP child PL
‘I give sweets to the children.’

However, mini is also frequently used in abstract transference, such as the transference of words, or the transfer of feelings or emotions, e.g., appreciation (as in (78)) or anger (as in (79)):
4.5.2.3 ‘Preposition (PREP)’

While *ha* and *mini* code physical and metaphorical transfer to a non-core argument, *i* codes other non-core arguments in the sentence. For instance, since syntactically intransitive verbs do not take direct objects, *i* ‘preposition (PREP)’ marks any NPs affiliated with these verbs.

The preposition is often used with intransitive verbs whose subject may be either an initiator or a patient (see §4.2.1.1.2). For example, the verb *lak* means either ‘to marry (s.o.)’ (where the subject is an initiator) or ‘to be married’ (where the subject is a patient). Either way, the verb is intransitive.

In (80), intransitive *lak* means ‘to marry (s.o.)’; the recipient of the action (*nana* ‘1SG.OBJ’) is coded as an indirect object with the preposition *i*:

\[
\text{(80) } \text{Kaa=n ba=ru lak=nga i } \text{nana.}
\]

‘You two can’t marry me.’ –T1p13

*i* ‘preposition (PREP)’ also signals indirect objects of transitive verbs. In (81), *nom seesee* ‘your mats’ is the direct object, but *nana* ‘1SG.OBJ’ is the indirect object marked by *i* ‘preposition (PREP)’:

\[
\text{(81) Ko=t sesera no-m seesee i } \text{nana.}
\]

‘You showed your mats to me.’

In Abma, transitive verbs must be immediately followed by their direct object, with no intervening elements. In (82) the adverb *ras* ‘all the time’ intervenes between the transitive
verb *rongo* ‘hear’ and its erstwhile direct object *tobtowan* ‘talk’. The connection between verb and its direct object has therefore been severed. What would have been the direct object is instead coded as a non-core argument using the preposition *i*. The prepositional object is first coded as a pronoun *ni* ‘3SG.OBJ’, then as a full NP *tobtowan* ‘talk’:

(82) Na=m rong-o ras i-ni. i tobtow-an.
    ISG=IPFY hear-TR always PREP-3SG.OBJ PREP talk-NMZ
    ‘I hear all the time about it, about that talk.’

This preposition can also prefix to third person singular or third person plural object pronouns, e.g., *i-ni* ‘PREP-3SG.OBJ’ or *i-nii* ‘PREP-3PL.OBJ’.

### 4.6 Pronouns

Pronouns make reference to a full NP. There are five different kinds of pronouns: subject pronouns (§4.6.1), object/independent pronouns (§4.6.2), possessive pronouns (§4.6.3), interrogative pronouns (§4.6.4), and demonstrative pronouns (§4.6.5).

#### 4.6.1 Subject Pronouns

Subject pronouns are a required element of the VP (see Chapter 6 (Verb Phrases)). Therefore they occur with much greater frequency than other pronoun types. Table 4.27 lists all the subject pronouns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>na</th>
<th>1SG</th>
<th><em>la</em></th>
<th>1PL.INC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ko</td>
<td>2SG</td>
<td><em>karu</em></td>
<td>2PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ø</em></td>
<td>3SG</td>
<td><em>ra</em></td>
<td>3PL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.27: Subject pronouns

Because subject pronouns are required within every VP, they may co-occur in the same clause as the full NP to which they refer. For example, in (83), the subject pronoun *ra* ‘3PL’ co-occurs with the NP *bwihil nii* ‘birds’:

---

6 An alternative analysis would be to classify these as grammatical indexing morphemes, without pronominal status. But they do have pronominal reference of their own, and the alternative analysis generates unmanageable complications when attempting to determine and justify the existence of phonological word boundaries.
In the first and second persons, subject pronouns are the norm and full NPs occur rarely, if ever. Sentence (84) illustrates usage of the first person pronoun, na ‘1SG’:

(84) Naa na=t dob sera nong.
     now.1 1SG=PFV talk finish now.2
     ‘Now I’ve finished talking.’ -T1p6/EF1p14

In the third person, full NPs are more likely to appear, and the singular subject pronoun is zero-marked, as indicated in Table 4.27. However, the allomorphs of third person singular aspect/modality markers carry implicit meaning of the subject pronoun in portmanteau form. (See Chapter 3 (Morphology) for a review of allomorphy in aspect and modality markers.) This is illustrated by (85), where imperfective mwo= and mwe= imply the existence of a third person pronoun:

(85) Sarion=ah mwo=rob, mwe=sak, mwe=sak, mwe=sak,
     S.=PROX 3SG.IPFV=run 3SG.IPFV=go.up 3SG.IPFV=go.up 3SG.IPFV=go.up
           mwe=sak.
     3SG.IPFV=go.up
     ‘This Sarion runs, goes up, up, up, up.’ –D20T12/T3p93

Subject pronouns generally behave in a predictable way, e.g., na ‘1SG’ before the verb root means that the subject is first person singular, ko ‘2SG’ before the verb root indicates that the subject is second person singular, etc.

However, on rare occasions, the subject pronoun kaa, which normally codes 1PL.EXC, encodes 2PL as well as 1PL.EXC, as shown in (86):

(86) Kaa mwa=ililngi.
     1PL.EXC/2PL 1PFV=know
     ‘We (EXC) know.’ OR
     ‘You (PL) know.’

This anomaly occurs about 3% of the time in natural texts narrated by adult, fully fluent speakers, who also speak Bislama fluently. It also arose in elicitation sessions where the speaker was asked to provide verb paradigms. The reason for the collapse of pronominal
distinction is unclear. One explanation may be that speakers were simply in error when using *kaa* to signify the second person plural – especially with regard to the elicitation sessions. Further research is needed.

### 4.6.2 Object/Independent Pronouns

These free-form pronouns function as object NPs (direct object and prepositional object), as subject NPs if the speaker wishes to express pronominal emphasis (as in *Me, I'm going*), or anywhere an independent pronoun is required, such as with a vocative.

Table 4.28 lists all object/independent pronouns. The dual form is also included here. The morpheme *ru* ‘dual (DU)’ is attached to words of various classes, and usually it exhibits clitic-like behaviour. However, in the case of object/independent pronouns, it can be seen that the addition of *ru* affects the vowel quality of the pronominal root. Therefore, it is not considered to be a clitic here, but simply an integrated part of the stem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>DU</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td>---</td>
<td><em>kuduru</em></td>
<td><em>kidi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXC</td>
<td><em>nana</em></td>
<td><em>gemaru</em></td>
<td><em>gema</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>kik</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>ni/nini</em></td>
<td><em>nuuru</em></td>
<td><em>nii</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.28: Object/Independent pronouns

In (87) *ni* ‘3SG.OBJ’ is the indirect object of *ha* ‘preposition (PREP)’. (Refer to §4.5.2.1 for a review of indirect objects.)

(87) Bi Ø beb *ha=ni* nehu ra=m=ru gan-i
and 3SG IPFV.say PREP=3SG.OBJ COMP 3PL=IPFV=DU eat-TR
lōk bwe=t=ah.
pudding taro=this
‘And he said to him that the two of them were going to eat this taro pudding.’ - T2p57/D2T43L50-52

Note that *ni* is not only the object of *ha*, but it is also cliticised to it. This is typical: although *ni* is a free-form, it cliticises to prepositions such as *ha* and *i*. The resulting phonological word, *hani*, adopts the standard penultimate stress pattern of a two-syllable word.

Sentence (88) is an example of *nana* ‘1SG.IND’ functioning as an independent pronoun:
Possessive pronouns represent the possessor NP in direct and indirect possessive constructions, and in associative constructions (see Chapter 5 (Noun Phrases)).

Table 4.29 lists the paradigm of possessive pronouns. Formally, they are bound suffixes, and they vary by person and number:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>DU</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INC</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>-daru</td>
<td>-da</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXC</td>
<td>-k</td>
<td>-maru</td>
<td>-ma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-m</td>
<td>-mru</td>
<td>-mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-n</td>
<td>-ru</td>
<td>[lengthening of stem-final vowel]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.29: Possessive pronouns

Sentence (89) exemplifies the third person singular pronoun in a direct possession construction; sentence (90) is an example of the first person singular pronoun as part of an indirect possession construction:

(89) **Toblni-n.**
    reflection-3SG.POSS
    ‘His reflection.’

(90) **Ma-k sileng.**
    CL.DR-1SG.POSS water
    ‘My water.’

When the stem-final vowel of a possessed element is lengthened, this is an indication that the possessive (possessor) pronoun is third person plural. This holds true for both direct and indirect possession. In (91), the final vowels of **tema-** ‘father’ and **datsi-** ‘mother’ have been lengthened to indicate that these nouns are in a direct possession relationship with a third person plural possessive pronoun. And the final NP in this example, **bilaawawa** ‘their aunties’, illustrates vowel lengthening for indirect possession: the possessive classifier, **bila-**
‘valuable resource (CL.RS)’, has a lengthened final vowel to indicate the presence of a third person plural possessive pronoun.

Note that what is important in indicating a third person plural possessive pronoun is that the stem-final vowel is lengthened – the particular vowel is incidental. In (91), the stem-final vowels are /a/ and /i/, and so these sounds are lengthened:

(91) Ra mwa=li ha tema-a, bi datsi-i,  
    3PL IPFV=give PREP father-3PL.POSS and mother-3PL.POSS  
    bi bila-a wawa,  
    and CL.RS-3PL.POSS auntie  
    ‘They give them to their fathers, and their mothers, and their aunties.’ –T3p5

4.6.4 Interrogative Pronouns

There is a small group of interrogative pronouns in Abma which are listed in Table 4.30:

| abma     | ‘what’     |
| ibe      | ‘where’    |
| itan     | ‘who’      |
| kavih    | ‘how many/how much’ |
| lelnan abma | ‘for what, from what’ |
| nangih   | ‘when’     |
| nehu     | ‘how, why’ |
| nibe     | ‘which one’ |

Table 4.30: Interrogative pronouns

Sentences (92) and (93) illustrate typical usage of the pronouns nangih ‘when’ and ibe ‘where’:

(92) Ko=t sama nangih?  
    2SG=PFV come.up when  
    ‘When did you come up?’ [Lit.: ‘You came up when?’] –EF1p54

(93) Ko veb nehu, ko ban ibe naanong?  
    2SG.IMP say COMP 2SG IPFV.go where now  
    ‘Tell me, where are you going now?’ [Lit.: ‘You say, you are gong where now?’]  
    –EF2p23/D39T8

Question formation is discussed in Chapter 7 (Simple Sentences).
4.6.5 Demonstrative Pronouns

The small cluster of demonstrative pronouns is listed in Table 4.31:

| ahe ~ ah | ‘this one, here’ |
| ihe     | ‘that one, there’ |
| iginan  | ‘there, at that place’ |
| go      | ‘one, other, this’ |

Table 4.31: Demonstrative pronouns

Sentence (94) gives a simple example of ihe ‘there’ functioning as a demonstrative pronoun:

(94) Bi ra mwa=bma ihe.
    and 3PL IPFV=come there
    ‘And they come over there.’ -FN4p45

4.7 Determiners

Determiners in Abma fall into two sub-classes, articles and demonstratives. However, individual members of both sub-classes have functionality that extends beyond the normal behavioural patterns of determiners.

For example, the definite article na is also a grammatical subject marker in certain environments, and the non-specific marker te also has a broader role as a partitive marker.

Similarly, almost all of the demonstratives in Abma (proximal and distal) also function as pronouns or adverbs in the language.

Because the individual lexemes in this category carry heavy functional loads – which extend beyond their task as determiners – the demands of their other roles impact upon their ability to function as “dedicated” grammatical determiners. This is explored below.

4.7.1 Articles

According to Lynch, Ross, and Crowley (2002: 38), the languages of Vanuatu generally do not have articles. However, they exist in Araki, a Vanuatu language, although their usage is
apparently optional (François, 2002: 51). In Abma, articles signal definiteness and non-specificity in nouns.

Articles in Abma immediately precede the nouns they modify. There are two of them; these are listed in Table 4.32:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>na</em></td>
<td>definite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>te</em></td>
<td>non-specific</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.32: Articles

4.7.1.1 *Na* ‘Definite (DEF)’

The lexeme *na* has a couple of functions in the language. First of all, it marks definiteness in a subject NP when an erstwhile active sentence is passivised, and the subject NP moves from pre-verbal position to sentence-final position. (This is also explored in Chapter 7 (Simple Sentences).)

*Na* also marks an NP as being definite when this NP occurs at the end of the sentence, regardless of whether or not it is also the grammatical subject. Sentence (95) is extracted from a text where the speaker has been comparing life in the city with life on the island. Since the NP *ut li vini* ‘place at the island’ occurs at the end of the sentence, and since it has been previously mentioned in the discourse, it takes the definite marker, *na*:

(95) Ani* na* gema, kaa=m di li mwas-an
     but 1PL.EXC=IND 1PL.EXC=IPFV stay LOC live-NMZR

     *na*    ut    li    vini.
     DEF    place    LOC    island

‘But us, we stick to the lifestyle of the island.’ [Lit.: ‘But us, we stay by the lifestyle, place at the island.’] – T1p40/D2T9

Since one of the functions of *na* is to code right-dislocated subjects (that occur outside of their normal position in the sentence), then this article cannot precede NPs that occur in normal subject or direct object position, even if these NPs are definite (because this would defeat the purpose of right-dislocated subject marking in Abma). *Na* can only code definite NPs when they occur outside of the core argument structure of the sentence. This is a limitation to its functionality as a definite marker.
The interaction between definiteness marking and NP position in the sentence is examined further in Chapter 10 (Discourse Structure).

4.7.1.2 *Te* ‘Non-Specific Partitive (PART)’

The partitive marker *te* is a clitic that is frequently instantiated at the VP level and hence it is discussed in depth in Chapter 6 (Verb Phrases). However, one of its roles is as a marker of non-specific NPs, and this function is explored here.

*Te* ‘non-specific partitive (PART)’ normally precedes direct object NPs. It marks the noun as being non-specific in the affirmative, as is the underlined NP in (96), or in the negative, as is the underlined NP in (97):

(96) Bi ra=m=ru beb, "Ta=n mu=ru sak si, and 3PL=IPFV=DU say IPL=IRR ADD=DU go.up POL ‘And the two of them say, “Let’s the two of us go up a little bit more, na bih ta=n mu=ru butihi te=go.”’ 1SG IPFV.think IPL=IRR ADD=DU find PART=other ‘I think we’ll find one more.’” –T1p8/D2T1

(97) Te bado vi=te butsu bwan=nga. 3SG.PFY not.yet weave=PART plain.mat=NEG.2 ‘She hasn’t woven any mats yet.’ –EF2p15

4.7.2 Demonstratives

Demonstratives specify the physical or conceptual deictic position of NPs relative to the speaker. A list of demonstratives is given in Table 4.33:
Table 4.33: Demonstratives

Table 4.33 is split into two smaller boxes. The demonstratives in the top half of the table indicate physical or conceptual proximity or distance, whereas those on the bottom half are restricted to conceptual functions only.

In (98), ahe and ihe indicate physical distance from the speaker: ahe encodes an entity that is near the interlocutors, whereas ihe encodes entities that are far away:

(98) (a) Atsi dalmwa ahe mwi=git-a atsi havin ahe.  
person man PROX 3SG.IPFV=see-TR person woman PROX  
‘This man sees this woman.’ -EF1p3  

(b) Atsi dalmwa ihe mwi=git-a atsi havin ihe.  
person man DIST 3SG.IPFV=see-TR person woman DIST  
‘That man saw that woman.’ -EF1p3  

In contrast, naa, nae, nani and nong are used to refer to entities that should be conceptually salient to the listener: either they have been recently mentioned, or the speaker believes that the listener is already aware of them. In (99), the bolded demonstrative nong ‘proximal (PROX)’, refers to the female and male protagonists of the text, both of whom are assumed to be at the forefront of the listener’s mind:

(99) Bi ra=m sib ra mwa=tka-i, ra mwa=tka-i  
and 3PL=IPFV go.down 3PL IPFV=carry-TR 3PL IPFV=carry-TR  
‘Then they go down, they carry [grab] her, they carry  
atsi havin nong, ah te sadok Vanmwel.  
person woman PROX REL 3SG.PFY stay V.  
‘this woman, who lived in Vanmwel.’  

Ra mwa=tka-i mwe=sama, mwe=sama mwe=lak  
3PL IPFV=carry-TR IPFV=come.up 3SG.IPFV=come.up 3SG.IPFV=marry  
‘They carry her up, she goes up [and] marries
The demonstratives *ahe*, *=ah*, *ihe* and *=ih* also function as pronouns, while *naa*, *nae*, *nani* and *nong* may be adverbs. Therefore the class of demonstratives is not a very cohesive one, and the boundary between word classes can be unclear.

The wavering status of the determiner *ahe* ‘proximal (PROX)’ can be illustrated by the following example, where the VP plus its direct object is negated. As has been mentioned previously, the discontinuous negative morpheme *ba...nga* is expected to negate the entire V + DO construction. In (100), *nguduka ahe* ‘this wood’ (where *ahe* ‘proximal (PROX)’ is the demonstrative modifying *nguduka* ‘wood’) should be treated as a single NP. But this is ungrammatical:

(100) *Ra=t=ba rab=te *nguduka ahe=nga mwi=sibma.

‘They don’t pull any of this wood down.’ –EF3p28

Instead, only *nguduka* ‘wood’ is negated, while the demonstrative *ahe* ‘proximal (PROX)’ is excluded from the confines of negation. In (101), the expected NP (*nguduka ahe*) is bolded and the negative construction (delimiting the V + NP) is underlined:

(101) Ra=t=ba rab=te *nguduka nga=ahe mwi=sibma.

‘They don’t pull any of this wood down.’ –EF3p28

Although *ahe* is not negated along with the rest of the NP in (101), it is still a demonstrative in this sentence because that is the only function it can possibly have. However, its behaviour under the pressure of negation demonstrates that this morpheme is not a “dedicated” demonstrative. Perhaps the unexpected word order is prosodically determined, but if this is the case, more research is required in order to understand the constraints under which this may occur.
4.8 Conjunctions

Conjunctions connect phrases and clauses to each other in a conjunctive, disjunctive, adversative, or subordinating relationship. Table 4.34 lists all the conjunctions by the type of relationship they evoke, and by the constituents (NP, PP, or clause) involved in each relationship. This table was inspired by Hyslop (2001: 424):

Chapter 5 (Noun Phrases) and Chapter 9 (Complex Sentences) explore the relationships that hold between NPs and clauses, respectively. Therefore the conjunction of prepositional phrases only is discussed here.

It is rare for PPs to be conjoined at all, but there is at least evidence of conjunction (as in “a and b”) and disjunction (as in “a or b”).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>CONJUNCTION</th>
<th>NP</th>
<th>PP</th>
<th>CLAUSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONJUNCTIVE</td>
<td>bi ‘and’</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>muuru</em> ‘and, with’</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*ba ‘comment marker (COMM)’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISJUNCTIVE</td>
<td>*atsi ‘or’</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>io ‘or’</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVERSATIVE</td>
<td>*ani ‘but’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*ba ‘comment marker (COMM)’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBORDINATING</td>
<td>*entorah ‘when’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*igo ‘because’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*ihgo “when, if”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*masenah ‘although’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*nehu ‘complementiser (COMP)’, ‘in order that’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*ni *ah ‘relative clause (REL)’, general subordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*teah ‘partitive relative clause (REL)’, general subordinator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*tugoah ‘if, when’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*uugo ‘in order that’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.34: Coordinating and subordinating conjunctions

Sentence (102) demonstrates how the underlined PPs are conjoined by *bi ‘and’* conjunction:
Chapter 4: Word Classes

(102) Ani, ta=m ga=mu dihri le bodel. Bi, le, le bodel.
but 1PL=IPFV MIN=ADD fill.up LOC bottle and LOC LOC bottle

Bi, le balistik.
and LOC plastic
‘But we also just fill it up in a bottle. And in, in a bottle. And in plastic.’
–T2p137/D39T25

Sentence (103) shows the disjunction between the three underlined NPs using atsige ‘or’ and io ‘or’:

(103) Bi ko=m song-i le bak lekoo, atsige le watang.
and 2SG=IPFV put-TR LOC bag garden or LOC basket

io le abma ah ko=m ruts-u.
or LOC something REL 2SG=IPFV carry-TR
‘And you put it in a garden bag, or a basket, or whatever you’re carrying.’
–T2p6/D2T31

4.9 Numerals

Numerals can be sub-categorised according to their function: counting numbers, cardinal numbers, and ordinal numbers. Table 4.35 on the following page provides an overview of these categories.

Hard currency and watches were introduced by foreigners; hence the numerical units of money, time, etc., are normally given in Bislama, not Abma. Numerals in Table 4.35 were elicited, but beyond 1000, there was confusion about the appropriate terminology. This is probably because in traditional culture, there would have been little need to talk about quantities higher than 1000.

4.9.1 Counting Numbers

Counting numbers are simply used in counting; they do not fit in with any syntactic structure.

4.9.2 Cardinal Numbers

It can be seen from Table 4.35 that cardinal numbers are almost identical in form to counting numbers, with the exception of the numbers from six through nineteen, which take the te-
Table 4.35: Numerals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>COUNTING (§4.9.1)</th>
<th>CARDINAL (§4.9.2)</th>
<th>ORDINAL (§4.9.3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>bwaleh</td>
<td>bwaleh</td>
<td>vaawowan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>karu</td>
<td>karu</td>
<td>karuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>katsil</td>
<td>katsil</td>
<td>katsilan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>kavet</td>
<td>kavet</td>
<td>kavetan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>kalim</td>
<td>kalim</td>
<td>kalimwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>labwaleh</td>
<td>telabwaleh</td>
<td>labwalehan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>laviru</td>
<td>laviru</td>
<td>laviruan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>lahtsil</td>
<td>lahtsil</td>
<td>lahtsilan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>labet</td>
<td>labet</td>
<td>labetan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>sangwul</td>
<td>tesangwul</td>
<td>sangwulan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>sangwul vebnan bwaleh</td>
<td>tesangwul vebnan bwaleh</td>
<td>sangwul vebnan bwalehan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>sangwul vebnan karu</td>
<td>tesangwul vebnan karu</td>
<td>sangwul vebnan karuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>ngawul karu</td>
<td>ngawul karu</td>
<td>ngawul karuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>ngawul karu vebnan bwaleh</td>
<td>ngawul karu vebnan bwaleh</td>
<td>ngawul karu vebnan bwalehan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>ngawul karu vebnan karu</td>
<td>ngawul karu vebnan karu</td>
<td>ngawul karu vebnan karuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>ngawul katsil</td>
<td>ngawul katsil</td>
<td>ngawul katsilan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>ngawul katsil vebnan bwaleh</td>
<td>ngawul katsil vebnan bwaleh</td>
<td>ngawul katsilan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>ngawul sangwul</td>
<td>ngawul sangwul</td>
<td>ngawul sangwulan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>ngawul sangwul vebnan bwaleh</td>
<td>ngawul sangwul vebnan bwaleh</td>
<td>ngawul sangwulan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>ngawul sangwul vebnan sangwul</td>
<td>ngawul sangwul vebnan sangwul</td>
<td>ngawul sangwulan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>ngawul sangwul va karu</td>
<td>ngawul sangwul va karu</td>
<td>ngawul sangwulan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201</td>
<td>ngawul sangwul va karu bi bwaleh</td>
<td>ngawul sangwul va karu bi bwaleh</td>
<td>ngawul sangwulan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>ngawul sangwul va sangwul</td>
<td>ngawul sangwul va sangwul</td>
<td>ngawul sangwulan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘type 2 adjective (ADJ2)/perfective (PFV)’ prefix. This prefix reflects their functioning status as stative verbs or type 2 adjectives within the syntax.

Sentence (104) is an example of *te sangwul* ‘be ten’ functioning as a stative verb within a relative clause:
Chapter 4: Word Classes

(104) Atsi mwan ba=bma te=an, ne-ul=te
person 3SG.IRR NEG.1=come PART=PRHB CONN-pull.out=PART
datngi-n ililalai-n. Niah te sangwul.7
some-3SG.POSS feather-3SG.POSS REL PFV be.ten
‘No one must come try to pull out any of his feathers. Where there are ten of them.’
-T1p52/D2T25

In (105), telabtsil ‘eight’ is a type 2 adjective modifying the noun va ‘time’.

(105) Na=m ruwu sini va te-labtsil.
1SG=IPFV plant kava time ADJ2-eight
‘I plant kava eight times.’

4.9.3 Ordinal Numbers

Ordinal numbers take the -an nominalising suffix, and they are instantiated as nouns. In (106), katsilan ‘the third one’ functions as NP head:

(106) Ba, katsil-an mwe=sak.
COMM three-NMZ 3SG.IPFV=go.up
‘The third one goes up.’ -FN467/D39T10

In (107), karuan ‘second one’ shares the NP head with va ‘time’:

(107) Va karu-an mwe=hani noko-n
time two-NMZ 3SG.IPFV=make.fall.down body-3SG.POSS
re-n bo.
forehead-3SG.POSS pig
‘[For] the second time he makes his pig’s head fall down.’ -T1p31/D2T1

4.10 Possessive Classifiers

Classifiers occur within possessive and associative constructions, and they define the type of semantic relationship that holds between the possessed and possessor NPs. The forms taken by the possessive classifiers represent food (ka- ‘CL.ED’), drink (ma- ‘CL.DR’), valuable resources (bila- ‘CL.RS’) and everything else (no- ‘CL.GE’). The classifier identifying the associative construction is na- ‘ASSOC’. See Chapter 5 (Noun Phrases) for more detail.

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7 Atsi ‘person’ takes the converse gloss, ‘no-one’, in negative examples.
4.11 Negative and Prohibitive Markers

4.11.1 Negative Morpheme ba...nga

The negation marker in the VP is *ba...nga*, a discontinuous negative morpheme. *Ba...nga* negates *sawiri* ‘grate’ in (108):

(108) Na=n=ba sawiri=nga i bwala kul.
1SG=IRR=NEG.1 grate=NEG.2 INSTR shell coconut
‘I won’t grate it with a coconut shell.’ –FN4p94/D23T1

*Ba...nga* has a variant, *bado...ngamwa* ‘not yet’. (*Ngamwa* ‘yet’ can also be used in the affirmative, meaning ‘yet’.) Example (109) shows how *bado...ngamwa* works in a sentence:

(109) Ba ihgo nehu mwe=gae, ba ilil na-n
but when say 3SG.IPFV=be.elastic COMM sign ASSOC-3SG.POSS
ah te bado=mnok luhmwi ngamwa.
REL 3SG.PFV not.yet=be.finished be.good not.yet
‘But when it’s elastic, that’s a sign that it’s not ready yet.’–T2p14/D2T31

4.11.2 Prohibitive Marker ba...an

The discontinuous morpheme *ba...an* indicates a prohibition, as shown in (110):

(110) Ko=ba deng=an.
2SG.IMP=NEG.1 cry-PRHB
‘Don’t cry.’ –FN4p1

4.12 Aspect and Modality Markers

Table 4.36 lists the aspectual and modal markers:

| mwe   | ‘imperfective (IPFV)’ aspect |
| te    | ‘perfective (PFV)’ aspect   |
| nema  | ‘prospective (PRSP)’ modality |
| mwan  | ‘irrealis (IRR)’ modality   |
| bat   | ‘hypothetical (HYP)’ modality |

Table 4.36: Aspectual/Modal markers
Aspectual and modal markers are part of the VP and their functions are discussed in Chapter 6 (Verb Phrases).

### 4.13 Vocatives and Interjections

Vocatives and interjections both occur outside of the realm of syntax; they are uttered as isolated but meaningful units of speech.

#### 4.13.1 Vocatives

Vocatives resemble nouns in form, i.e., they can be either free or bound. They are also noun-like in their semantics because they refer to a particular person, and they code the type of relationship that holds between the speaker and this person.

Syntactically, vocatives form a class of their own because they occur as isolated exclamations, usually with the purpose of calling out to someone. Table 4.37 gives a sampling of commonly-used vocatives. The possessive suffix -k '1SG.POSS' is attached to bound nouns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocative</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aloa-k!</td>
<td>'My niece/nephew!'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balika-k!</td>
<td>'My father-in-law!'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babu!</td>
<td>'Grandpa!' / 'Grandma!'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bweebwee!</td>
<td>'Mabon!' [for girls in the Mabon family line]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Datsi-k!</td>
<td>'Mother!'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eenang!</td>
<td>'My husband/wife!' [plus general vocative for capturing someone's attention]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotsi-k!</td>
<td>'My sister/brother!'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiisa-k!</td>
<td>'My sister/brother!'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mabi-k!</td>
<td>'My grandchild!'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matsia-k!</td>
<td>'My uncle!'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taatah!</td>
<td>'Matan!' [for girls in the Matan family line]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tata!</td>
<td>'Father!'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsibi-k!</td>
<td>'My grandparent!'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutu!</td>
<td>[used to summon domesticated animals]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waakin!</td>
<td>'Brother/Sister!'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walu-k!</td>
<td>'Friend!'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wawa!</td>
<td>'Auntie!'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.37: Vocatives
4.13.2 Interjections

Despite being single words, interjections generally express full meanings that are context-dependent. Table 4.38 gives a sampling of interjections. The hyphen in i-ih ‘yes’ represents the glottal stop: [ʔ].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dahl</th>
<th>‘okay’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i-ih</td>
<td>‘yes’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaka</td>
<td>‘forbidden!’ [to children]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nahmu</td>
<td>‘really?!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neeh</td>
<td>‘please’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nonge</td>
<td>‘do it!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>‘oh’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ohoo</td>
<td>‘no’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soloo</td>
<td>‘it’s coming!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tabu</td>
<td>‘no!’ [to children]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tebu</td>
<td>‘no’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tum</td>
<td>‘zing!’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.38: Interjections


5 NOUN PHRASES

Nouns and noun phrases in Abma serve a variety of grammatical functions in the sentence (§5.1). Their structure and morphology is relatively straightforward (§5.2), and they relate to each other at the phrasal level through coordination (§5.3). Possession is a more complex aspect of the NP. Section §5.4 looks at the distinction between direct and indirect possession, and at the associative construction. The associative construction is a special kind of indirect possession that marks a non-controlling relationship between NPs.

5.1 Functions of the Noun Phrase

The NP can function as the subject, direct object, prepositional object, locative or temporal phrase, or predicate of a sentence. It can also appear as an appositive to another NP.

In (1), abma ‘something’ is the subject NP (When used in a negative context, translates as ‘nothing’.)

(1)  
Abma  te=ba  gasmwa=k  te=nga.
   something  3SG.PFY=NEG.1  spoil-INTR  PART=NEG.2
   ‘Nothing [could] hurt him.’ –T2p97/D2T49

In (2), each NP is underlined, and the head is bolded. Masen too go ‘duration of time’ is the object of the preposition le. Mase- ‘duration’ is the head of this NP, and is an example of how possessive constructions function as NPs within the sentence. Bo ‘pig’ is the direct object of the transitive verb leli ‘make’; Malakula is a locative NP:

(2)  
Ba  tei  le  mase-n  too  go.
   COMM  FOC  PREP  duration-3SG.POSS  time  one
   ba  Ø  ban  mwe=lel-i  bo  Malakula.
   COMM  3SG  IPFV.go  3SG.IPFV=do-TR  pig  M.
   ‘One time, he went down to do his pig business in Malakula.’ –T2p95/D2T49L12

Apposition is marked by the appositive marker, niah ‘appositive (APP)’, or by one NP juxtaposed after the other. In the following example, mwerani ‘today’, flagged by niah ‘appositive (APP)’, is in apposition to ren ‘day’. 24 Julae ‘July 24th’ is also in apposition to the previous two NPs:
5.2 Elements of the Noun Phrase

Most NPs involve just a single noun or pronoun. However, the potential exists for much more complicated structures. Ordering of the constituents of the NP is shown in Figure 5.1:

\[
\text{NP} \rightarrow \text{PRO} \quad \text{(ART)} \quad \text{(POSS.CL)} \quad \text{(ADJ1} \ldots \text{ADJ1}_n) \quad \text{HEAD} \quad \text{(PL)} \ldots \\
\ldots \quad \text{(ADJ2} \ldots \text{ADJ2}_n) \quad \text{(POSS.CL)} \quad \text{(POSS.NP)} \quad \text{(DEM)} \quad \text{(PP)} \quad \text{(APP)} \quad \text{(RC)}
\]

Figure 5.1: NP structure

The functions of the elements of the NP are discussed below.

5.2.1 Head

NP heads come from all sub-categories of noun including general, locative, and temporal, as well as proper and common.

NP heads can range from a single noun (§5.2.1.1) to a string of consecutive nouns (§5.2.1.2). Then (§5.2.1.3) elaborates on the previous two sub-categories: it discusses in more detail a handful of nouns that exist on a lexical/grammatical cline, and are therefore more or less likely to occur as a single noun, or within a string of consecutive nouns.

The two nouns that make up a direct possession construction constitute the third major sub-type of NP head, and these are discussed in (§5.2.1.4). The last type of NP head is the possessed noun within an indirect possession construction (§5.2.1.5). While a full account of
possession is delayed until §5.4, §5.2.1.5 below simply introduces the way in which the possessed noun relates to overall NP structure.

5.2.1.1 Single-Noun Head

Single-noun heads consist of just one noun. Sentence (4) is an example of a morphologically simple general noun:

(4) Aga te ba=bma=nga.
    ship 3SG.PFV NEG.1=come=NEG.2
    ‘No ship ever comes.’ –T1p4

In (5), there are four separate NPs (underlined); their single-noun heads are bolded:

(5) Sanial, ba, li boro vini, niah kaa=m di
    S. COMM LOC small village REL 1PL.EXC=IPFV live
    li-n=ah ba butsu-butsu-ka nii.
    location-3SG.POSS=PROX COMM INT~tree-generic.tree PL
    ‘Sanial, in this small village, where we’re living here, there are lots of trees.’
    –EF2p92/D2T29

The first NP, Sanial, consists of a proper noun. Then boro vini ‘small village’ is a prepositional object. The third NP, linah ‘this location’ functions as a locative NP, and finally, butsubutsuka nii ‘lots of trees’ is an example of a morphologically complex (reduplicated) head noun.

5.2.1.2 Multiple-Noun Head

A multiple-noun head comprises one or more nouns. Usually the limit is two, but there exist examples where three nouns in a row are strung together to form the head. In cases of multiple nouns in the head, the generality of scope for each subsequent noun in the string decreases. That is, the same referent is described in increasing detail within the head. A formulaic depiction is: Head $\rightarrow$ N$_1$ N$_2$ ... N$_n$.

The first noun, N$_1$, characterises the general semantic domain of the NP head. This is followed by more specific categorisation, as shown in (6) through (9):
(6) Butsu kul.  
  tree coconut  
  ‘Coconut tree.’

(7) Libwi kul.  
  root coconut  
  ‘Roots of the coconut tree.’

(8) Wa miu.  
  piece wild.cane  
  ‘Piece of wild cane.’

(9) Bwarus tuturan.  
  pawpaw whiteman  
  ‘Carica pawpaw.’

The NP in (10) consists of three nouns in a row (bolded). Clearly, the three nouns become increasingly more specific:

(10) Biri atsi haavak dalmwa bwaleh nge.  
  small person child boy one just  
  ‘Just one small boy.’ -EF1p39

In (11), the multiple-noun NP head consists of *at dokah* ‘people of this place’:

(11) Nana, na=m um tokol te sabwaleh  
  1SG.IND 1SG=IPFV work be.strong 3SG.PFV be.same  
  mini at dokah.  
  PREP person.of.place here  
  ‘Me, I work hard, like everyone else here.’ –EF1p146

*At* ‘person of place’ in (11) above is ambiguously lexical/grammatical in its semantics. In fact, this is not uncommon: while nouns do of course have a lexical function, the first noun of a multiple-noun NP head can sometimes be vague in this way. The next section looks at this issue in more detail.
5.2.1.3 Ambiguous Lexical/Grammatical N₁ Nouns

Figure 5.2 situates some frequently occurring N₁ nouns on a lexical–grammatical cline. The lexical versus grammatical status of these nouns is determined by how frequently they occur as a single noun head, with no modification by other elements, and no morphological derivation. The more grammaticalised nouns are less likely to appear as a single noun head. The further to the right a noun is situated on the cline, the more likely they are to be modified by another noun:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More Lexical ←</th>
<th>butsu ‘tree, source’</th>
<th>ka ‘tree, root (generic)’</th>
<th>ut ‘place’</th>
<th>at ‘person of place/time’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>atsi ‘person’</td>
<td>libwi ‘root’</td>
<td>raka ‘branch’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>wa ‘piece, part, edge’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.2: N₁ of a multiple-noun NP head on a lexical-grammatical cline

A noun like atsi ‘person’ at the left-hand side of Figure 5.2 often appears as single-noun head, with no modification by any other nouns. This is also true of butsu ‘tree, source’ and libwi ‘root’, but to a lesser extent – they are more likely to be followed by a specifying noun, e.g., butsu beta ‘breadfruit tree’. Ka/ra/wa ‘tree, root (generic)/branch/piece, part, edge’ usually co-occur with a more specific modifying noun, e.g., wa miu ‘piece of wild cane’.

They also occur as single-noun heads, but in a morphologically derived form, e.g., ra ‘branch’ takes the generic suffix -ka in reference to a generic branch: raka ‘branch’. Finally, ut ‘place’ and at ‘person of place/time’ are normally followed by more specific modifying nouns.

Ut is followed by locative nouns, often specific place names. At is also followed by locative nouns, but refers to the people of a place rather than the place itself. Alternatively, at is followed by temporal nouns, relating people to a particular point in time. It is probably a shortened form of atsi ‘person’. Both ut and at exhibit classifier properties, but their behaviour is not systematic or predictable enough for them to be regarded as such.

Though often followed by a more specific noun, ut can still occur as the sole constituent of an NP; at cannot. While technically, at does not meet all the requirements for being a noun – i.e., it cannot appear independently as a noun, but requires modification – it has the semantics of a noun, appears in a typical nominal position, and is historically sourced from a noun.
Moreover, its categorical counterpart, *ut* ‘place’, fully conforms to the morphosyntactic requirements for nouns. Therefore *at* may also pass as a noun.

Nevertheless, due to its tenuous status as a noun, *at* can create challenges for NP analysis. For example, in (12), the prepositional object NP is \( [at \ [li \ Nombil]] \) *ni* ‘the people of Nombil’ (underlined): notice that the plural marker *nii* comes at the end of the entire NP, rather than directly after the head, *at* ‘person of place’ (bolded), as would be expected:

(12) Bi, Ø moota i at li Nombil nii, and 3SG.IPFV order PREP person.of.place LOC N PL

Ø beb nehu, ra=ma sama ne-ruwu 3SG IPFV.say COMP 3PL=PRSP come.up CONN-plant

bila-n dam. CL.RS-3SG.POSS yam ‘And he orders the people of Nombil, he says, they must come up and plant his yams.’

Such is the effect of grammaticalising nouns like *at*: occasionally they do not conform with established structures. Therefore (12) does not conform to the phrase structure rule proposed in §5.2 above. Examples like these are normally limited to NPs involving “fringe-dwelling” nouns.

5.2.1.4 Direct Possession Construction in the NP Head

Direct possession (also known as “inalienable possession”) takes the form of a possessed noun suffixed by a possessive pronoun, followed optionally by a possessor NP. A formulaic depiction for this is as follows:

**NP Head \( \rightarrow \) Possessed Noun-Possessive Pronoun \( \rightarrow \) (Possessor NP)**

Examples (13) and (14) demonstrate how the plural marker *nii* ‘PL’ comes directly after the NP head. In (13), the head is *datsi-n atsi* ‘mother of people’, and in (14), the head consists of *datni-n abm–abma* ‘some of these things’:
(13) **Datsi-n atsi** nii ra bwel.
mother-3SG.POSS person PL 3PL IPFV.dance
‘The mothers dance.’ –EF2p171

(14) **Datni-n abm-abma** nii naanong, ah niah ta=t,
some-3SG.POSS INT~thing PL now REL REL 1PL.INC=PFV

\[\text{ta=t iusum.} \]  
1PL.INC=PFV use
‘Some of the many many things now, that we, we used.’ –FN4p115/D39T26

Example (15) illustrates why it is important that the phrase structure rule given above depicts
the possessor as an NP, and not just as a noun: the entire NP head in this example is **datni-n ka-da kabtsin** ‘some of our vegetables’, but within the head, the possessor is **kada kabtsin** ‘our vegetables’. Thus the possessor is not a simple noun, but an NP. The full NP head is then followed by the plural marker, **nii** ‘PL’:

(15) Ba, **datni-n** ka-da kabtsin nii naanong,
COMM some-3SG.POSS CL.ED-I PL.INC.POSS vegetable PL now

\[\text{niah ta=m gan-i.} \]  
REL 1PL.INC=IPFY eat-TR
‘[These are] some our vegetables now, that we eat.’ -D39T26

5.2.1.5 Indirect Possession: Possessum in the NP Head

Sometimes the NP head contains the possessed element (“possessum”) of an indirect
possession construction. Sections §5.4.3 and §5.4.4 detail the various forms that indirect
possession may take, but one consistency across all forms is that the NP head is always
occupied by the possessum.

In (16), the possessed noun is **kabakaba** ‘bat’:

(16) **Na=m** sib leb=te ka-k **kabakaba**.
1SG=IPFV go.down take=PART CL.ED-1SG.POSS bat
‘I’m going down to get some bats [for eating].’ –EF2p23/D39T8

In (17), the possessed noun is **ren** ‘day’, and the possessor NP is **haavak nii** ‘children’:
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(17) Ren=ah mwerani bibi, ren no-n haavak nii, day=PROX today 3SG.IPFV.be day CL.GE-3SG.POSS child PL
ren te-mres.
day ADJ-important
‘This day today is, Children’s Day, an important day.’ –D41T6

5.2.2 Pronoun (PRO)

The pronoun is in complementary distribution to the NP head. Pronoun sub-types that may occur in this slot are independent pronouns, interrogative pronouns, and demonstrative pronouns.

As with the NP head, the pronoun usually occurs either on its own or with just one other element. This is exemplified by (18), where gema ‘1PL.EXC.IND’ is the sole constituent of both the subject NP (the first instantiation of gema) and the direct object NP (the second instantiation of gema). Furthermore, the pronoun nii ‘3PL.IND’ appears first as a direct object NP, then as a subject/topic NP.¹ In all cases the pronouns are sole constituents of the NP:

(18) Ba gema kaa=m don-i nehu kaa=bat huru
COMM 1PL.EXC.IND 1PL.EXC=IPFY want-TR COMM 1PL.EXC=HYP teach
nii, ba nii, ba ra=m don-i ra=bat
3PL.OBJ COMM 3PL.IND COMM 3PL=IPFY want-TR 3PL=HYP
huru gema.
teach 1PL.EXC.OBJ
‘We want to teach them, but they, they want to teach us.’ –EF2p76/D41T11

Sentence (19) shows the numeral katsil ‘three’ (technically a type 2 adjective) following the independent pronoun nii ‘3PL.IND’ in the underlined NP:

(19) Nii katsil, ra=m sib tavan le teh.
3PL.IND three 3PL=IPFV go.down low.position LOC sea
‘The three of them, they go down to the sea.’ –EF2p116

In (20), nae ‘proximal (PROX)’ lends additional focus to the pronoun kik ‘2SG.IND’, which is the head of the pronominal NP:

¹ Topicality is discussed in Chapter 10 (Information Structure).
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(20) Bi ra beb nehu, “Mwan=bi kik nae.
and 3PL IPFY.say COMP 3SG.IRR=be 2SG.IND PROX
ko ne=bma i subu na-ma.”
2SG IRR=come PREP chief ASSOC-I PL.EXC
‘And they say, “It will be you now, you will become our chief.”’ –T2p55/D2T43

5.2.3 Article (ART)

The articles are na ‘definite (DEF)’ and te ‘non-specific partitive (PART)’. In the following text, te marks the NP go ‘one’ as non-specific:

(21) Bi ra=m=ru beb, “Ta=n mu=ru sak si,
and 3PL=IPFY=DU say 1PL.INC=IRR ADD=DU go.up a.bit
na bih ta=n mu=ru butihi=te go.”
1SG IPFY.think 1PL.INC=IRR ADD=DU find=PART one
‘The two of them say, “Let’s the two of us go up a little more, I think we’ll find another one.”’ –T1p8/D2T1

Articles are discussed in Chapter 4 (Word Classes).

5.2.4 Possessive Classifier

Depending on the type of possession, the possessive classifier may occur before or after the possessum in the NP head. In (22), the possessive classifier, ka-da ‘our edibles’, occurs before the possessed noun, loklok ‘pudding’:

(22) Ba ka-da loklok nong, ba hal te-ses.
COMM CL.ED-I PL.INC.POSS pudding DEM COMM type ADJ-many
‘Our pudding, there are many kinds.’ –D39T26

In (23), the NP head contains the possessum, wede ‘barn owl’, and the possessive classifier (bila-n ‘his resource’) occurs after the head. This is followed by the possessor NP, mwalgel ‘boy’:

(23) Te mul bis, na wede bila-n mwalgel.
Pfv go.back arrive DEF owl CL.RS-3SG.POSS boy
‘He arrived back, this boy’s owl [did].’ –EF2p227

2 Partitive te is included in the phrase structure rules of both the NP and the VP. For full information on the partitive, see Chapter 6 (Verb Phrases).
5.2.5 Type 1 Adjective (ADJ1)

Type 1 adjectives directly precede the NP head. In (24), the NP head is reb ‘hill’, and buku ‘small’ modifies it as a type 1 adjective:

(24) Bi ut Sanial, ba mwe=gabis teretere, and place S. COMM 3SG.IPFV=be.good very
igo mwe=sadok le buku reb go.
because 3SG.IPFV=sit LOC small hill one
‘And in Sanial, it’s very good, because it sits on one small hill.’ –EF2p98/D2T29

In (25), ngudungudu ‘short’ modifies NP head tobowan ‘speech’:

(25) Ra=n ga=ska-k=te ngudu~ngudu tobow-an te-web.
3PL=IRR MIN=give-INTR=PART INT~short talk-NMZR ADJ2-small
‘They’ll just give a very short speech.’ –EF2p54/D41T6L37

5.2.6 Plural (PL)

The plural marker nii (which takes the same form as the third person plural object/independent pronoun marker, nii) occurs directly after the NP head/pronoun. This is demonstrated in (26), where nii marks plural in the underlined NPs (with NP heads bolded):

(26) Bi, abm~abma nii=rah kaa=m ruwu daltsi val nii, and INT~thing PL=REL 1PL.EXC=IPFY plant around house PL
te gen-i bwatol, bi wabin, aha niaha haricot, 3SG.PFV be.like-TR cabbage and vegetable this.one APP beans
bi tomat, bi abm~abma nii te-ses.
and tomato and INT~thing PL ADJ2-many
‘And the things that we plant around the houses, like cabbage, and vegetables, like beans, and tomatoes, and many things.’ –EF2p98/D2T29

Nouns in locational and temporal phrases do not take plural marking; only general nouns do, and of the general nouns, animates are more likely to attract plural marking than inanimates. This is typical of plural marking in Oceanic languages (Lynch et al., 2002: 37-38). In (27), bwihil ‘bird’ takes plural marking:
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5.2.7 Type 2 Adjective (ADJ2)

Type 2 adjectives are derived from stative verbs; the adjectival prefix *te* ‘type 2 adjective (ADJ2)’ comes from the perfective marker *te* ‘perfective (PFV)’, which is normally prefixed to stative verbs. Sentence (28) shows two consecutive type 2 adjectives, *temres* ‘heavy’ and *tokol* ‘strong’, modifying the NP head *too* ‘time’:

(28) *Too* te-mres tokol mini kidi.
    time ADJ2-heavy strong with 1PL.INC.OBJ
    ‘A very important time for us.’ --EF2p54/D41T6L36

5.2.8 Possessor NP

The possessor NP occurs when the NP contains an indirect possession construction. In (29), the possessor NP is *Cindy* and the possessed noun (constituting the NP head) is *rebu* ‘lemongrass’:

(29) Rebu ma-n Cindy.
    lemongrass CL.DR-3SG.POSS C.
    ‘Cindy’s lemongrass [for drinking].’ --EF1p162

5.2.9 Demonstrative (DEM)

Demonstratives come after any type 2 adjectives in the NP. The distal marker *ihe* comes after the NP head in (30):

(30) Mwas-an niah takaa mwo=dob=dob noko-n dok ihe.
    live-NMZ REL god 3SG.IPV~INT~talk body-3SG.POSS time DIST
    ‘The life that god talked about at that time.’ --EF2p80/D41T11

5.2.10 Prepositional Phrase (PP)

Prepositional phrases constitute the final optional element within the NP. As already mentioned in Chapter 4 (Word Classes), they take the following form:

PP $\rightarrow$ P (NP)
Sentence (31), repeated from (28) above, shows the PP mini kidi ‘with us’ as part of the larger NP:

(31) **Too** te-mres tokol mini kidi.
    time ADJ2-heavy strong with 1PL.INC.OBJ
    ‘A very important time for us.’ –EF2p54/D41T6L36

Individual prepositions are discussed in Chapter 4 (Word Classes).

### 5.2.11 Apposition

Apposition occurs when more than one NP refers to the same entity. The appositive construction can be depicted by the following formula:

**Appositive Construction** → (Appositive Marker) NP

In Abma, apposition may be marked with an appositive marker niah/ah (APP); alternatively, it is morphologically unmarked. In (32), vini ‘village’ and Sanial refer to the same entity, and the appositive marker ah comes between the two NPs:

(32) Na=m sadok li **vini** ah Sanial.
    1SG=1PFV stay LOC village APP S.
    ‘I live in Sanial village.’

In (33), at li uru ‘animate of the earth’ is an NP containing a PP, with at as its head; it stands in apposition to the first NP, tabitekte ‘spirit’:

(33) **Tabitekte** at li **uru.**
    spirit person.of.place LOC earth
    ‘Spirit, being of the earth.’

In (34), the subject NP is bracketed; its head is atsi ‘person’, while kau ‘important one’ occurs in apposition to the head. Kau is flagged by the appositive marker, ah ‘APP’:
Chapter 5: Noun Phrases

(34) Ani, [te no-do, atsi ah kau niah ra=m di] ba,
but PART CL.GE-1PL.INC person APP big.one REL 3PL=IPFV stay COMM

ra=m=ga ska=k=te ngudu-ngudu tobtowan te-web.³
3PL=IPFV=MIN give-INTR=PART INT~short talk ADJ-small
‘But, some of our people, important ones who are here, they’ll just give some really
short speeches.’ –D41T6

5.2.12 Relative Clause (RC)

The relative clause is the final element of the NP. It is coded by a relative clause marker niah
and it modifies the NP head, which is bolded in this example. In (35), the relative clause is
underlined:

(35) Na=m don-i nehu na=ma wishem haavak nii sera
1SG=IPFV want-TR COMP 1SG=PRSP wish child PL every

niah ra=m saasaabisi mwerani, “Happy Children's Day”.
REL 3PL=IPFV gather.together today happy.children’s.day
‘I want to wish all the children that are gathered together today, “Happy Children’s
Day’.” –EF2p60/D41T11

5.3 NP Coordination

Coordination of NPs is straightforward and can be depicted by the following formula:

Coordinated NP → NP (coordinating.conjunction) NP

The structure consists of two or more NPs, conjoined into a single larger NP by an optional
coordinating conjunction. Abma has four conjunctions at the NP level, which are listed in
Table 5.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUNCTION OF COORDINATION</th>
<th>FORM OF COORDINATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONJUNCTIVE ‘AND’</td>
<td>bi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nuuru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISJUNCTIVE ‘OR’</td>
<td>atsige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>io</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Conjunctions that coordinate NPs

³ In this example no-do is the SR variant of SM no-da ‘CL.GE-1PL.INC.POSS’ ‘our general
property’.
The two conjunctive words are *bi* ‘and’ and *nuuru* ‘with’; *bi* is the more common form. *Nuuru* comes from the pronoun meaning ‘the two of them’, so it conjoins a maximum of two NPs. *Bi* conjoins two or more NPs. Usage of *nuuru* is illustrated in (36), *nuuru* conjoins two simple NPs, while in (37), *bi* conjoins a string of NPs:

(36) Ra ban, ba ne-git-a ne-u-ra atsi havin=ah
    3PL IPFV.go COMM CONN-see-TR CONN-ask-TR person woman= this
dini tema-n nuuru datsi-n.
from father-3SG.POSS with mother-3SG.POSS
‘They go to ask for the woman's hand from her father and mother.’ -T3p7

(37) Bi, abm~abma nii=rah kaa=m ruwu mwe=ga daltsi val nii, and INT~thing PL=REL 1PL.EXC=IPFV plant 3SG.IPFV=M IN go.around house PL
te gen-i bwatol, bi wabin, aha – niaha haricot, 3SG.PFV be.like-TR cabbage and wild.vegetable APP – APP bean
    bi tomat, bi abm~abma nii te-ses.
and tomato and INT~thing PL ADJ.2-many
‘And the things that we plant are just around the houses, like cabbage, and wild vegetables, such as beans, and tomatoes, and many things.’ –EF2p98/D2T29

Disjunctive forms are *io* ‘or’, or less commonly *atsige* ‘or’. In (38), *io* is used twice to conjoin three smaller sets of NPs; these combine to form one large one, which is indicated by underlining:

(38) Kaa=m ruwu uu kakan-an io loklok, io abma sera.
    1PL.EXC=IPFV plant due.to bake-NMZR or pudding or something every
‘We plant for baking, or pudding, or everything.’ –EF2p94/D2T29

In (39), *atsige* ‘or’ conjoins two NPS:

(39) Nana atsige kik?
    1SG.IND or 2SG.IND
‘Me or you?’. –T2p7

Note that the above formula for NP coordination suggests that the coordinating conjunction is an optional element, as when two or more NPs are juxtaposed. NP juxtaposition does not occur frequently in Abma, but (40) is one example of this type of NP coordination, where the three underlined NPs combine to form a single coordinated NP:
Chapter 5: Noun Phrases

5.4 Possession

As is typical for Oceanic languages, the system for expressing possession in Abma is relatively complicated. First of all, there are two different kinds of possession: direct and indirect. In direct possession, the possessed NP takes suffixation from a possessive pronoun; it is used to indicate "tight-knit" relationships between the possessor and possessed NPs (see §5.4.2). With indirect possession, a classifier suffixed with a possessive pronoun precedes the possessed NP (and follows the possessor NP if there is one). The classifier takes one of four different forms, depending upon the semantic relationship that holds between the possessed NP and its possessor. Indirect possession is discussed in §5.4.3.

A special kind of indirect possession construction is association. The associative construction indicates a non-controlling relationship between two NPs. It bears many formal similarities to indirect possession, but is not identical to it. Therefore a discussion on the associative construction is delayed until §5.4.4.

Possessive pronouns are obligatory in both direct and indirect possession. Their complete paradigm was given in Chapter 4 (Word Classes), and is copied to Table 5.2 below for ease of reference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>DU</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1INC</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>-daru</td>
<td>-da</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1EXC</td>
<td>-k</td>
<td>-maru</td>
<td>-ma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-m</td>
<td>-mru</td>
<td>-mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-n</td>
<td>-ru</td>
<td>[lengthening of stem-final vowel]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Possessive pronouns
Cross-cutting the distinction between direct and indirect possession is that of simplex versus complex constructions. If a possessor NP is not overtly coded, the construction is simplex; if the possessor NP is expressed, then we have a complex construction. Thus the possessive construction follows one of four basic forms. These are shown in Table 5.3, following the format used by Hyslop (2001: 166) for Lolovoli.

Note that in direct possession, the possessive pronoun is suffixed directly to the possessed noun, whereas with indirect possession, the possessive pronoun is suffixed to a classifier. Also, the possessed noun in direct possession may only take the form of a simple noun, as opposed to a more complicated NP.

Furthermore, the position of the possessed NP vis-à-vis the indirect possession classifier changes, depending on whether the construction is simplex or complex – it comes after the classifier in simplex constructions, but before the classifier in complex constructions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIRECT POSSESSION</th>
<th>INDIRECT POSSESSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SIMPLEX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walu-k</td>
<td>no-m bu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friend-1SG.POSS</td>
<td>CL.GE-2SG.POSS knife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘my friend’</td>
<td>‘your knife’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPLEX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walu-n subu</td>
<td>bu no-n subu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>friend-3SG.POSS</td>
<td>knife CL.GE-3SG.POSS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chief</td>
<td>chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘the chief’s friend’</td>
<td>‘the chief’s knife’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3: Four main forms of possession

5.4.1 Simplex versus Complex Constructions

In simplex constructions (described in the first row of Table 5.3 above), the possessor noun is not overtly realised, but is instead referenced by a possessive pronoun. An example of an indirect simplex construction is given in (41), where the possessor is indicated by the pronoun -k ‘1SG.POSS’:
This contrasts with indirect complex constructions wherein the possessor NP is overtly coded, as is *kuli* ‘dog’ in (42):

(42) sileng ma-n kuli
    water CL.DR-3SG.poss dog
    ‘the dog’s water’ –EF1p162

5.4.2 Direct Possession

NPs that are directly possessed generally have a close relationship with their possessor, referred to as an “inalienable relationship”. Typical inalienable relationships in Abma include: body parts (as in (43)), family and friends (as in (44)), and important personal property such as houses, canoes, and clothing (as in (45)). Direct possession can also be used to express relationships of purpose between two NPs, as will be seen below.

(43) rungu-n kab
    claw-3SG.POSS crab
    ‘crab’s claw’ –EF1p28

(44) atleimwa-k
    wife-1SG.POSS
    ‘my wife’ –T3p7

(45) bwala-m
    clothing-2SG.POSS
    ‘your clothing’ –EF1p139

Other nouns that tend to be directly possessed may be considered extensions of the basic categories. In the body parts category, for example, the following nouns are spiritual/sensual extensions of the individual: *ha- ‘name’, tobmi- ‘reflection’, bungu- ‘smell’, bware- ‘physical/emotional pain’, dale- ‘voice/language’, tabite- ‘spirit’. This category also encompasses bodily secretions such as *misi- ‘urine’, tatsuwa- ‘sweat’, and *su- ‘juice (i.e., breast milk)’, as well as relationships that plants and animals have with their offspring, for example *biri- ‘seed’ and *dulu- ‘egg’.
There is a certain amount of flexibility with regard to the possessor noun. Normally the possessor noun in direct possession is animate. However, if the possessor noun is non-animate but has human-like qualities, such qualities are treated in the same way they would be treated with a human possessor. For example, the engine of a boat could be considered its “voice”:

(46) dale-n aga
    voice-3SG.POSS boat
    ‘noise of the boat’ -T2p110

Whether a noun is possessed directly or indirectly sometimes depends on its semantic relationship with the possessor. For instance, *ru-* ‘leaf’ is directly possessed by *butsuka nong* ‘this tree’ in (47), but in relation to humans, *ruka* ‘leaf’ is not directly possessed; (48) is an example of indirect possession:

(47) Mwi=li-vi ru-n butsu-ka nong
    3SG.IPFV=take-TR leaf-3SG.POSS tree-tree PROX
    ‘He takes this tree leaf.’ –T3p57

(48) no-ma ru-ka
    CL.GE-IPL.EXC.POSS leaf-tree
    ‘our leaf’ –EF2p94/D2T29

In a similar vein, while the borrowing *kalib* ‘callipers’ would not normally be directly possessed, it is amenable to direct possession when considered in terms of its purpose or function:

(49) Kaliv-an abma? Kaliv-an vet.
    callipers-3SG.POSS what callipers-3SG.POSS stone
    ‘What are these for? For [picking up] stones.’ –EF3p29

These examples highlight the important fact that possession-type is not a static feature of nouns themselves, but is rather an indicator of the kind of relationship that holds between nouns.

5.4.2.1 Irregular Forms

There are a handful of direct possession forms that involve partial suppletion of the noun root. These are shown in Table 5.4:
5.4.3 Indirect Possession

Indirect possession is used to signal a variety of possessive relationships between possessor and possessed nouns; these relationships are marked by one of four different possessive classifiers:

- **bila-** ‘possessed noun is a valuable resource of possessor (CL.RS)’
- **ka-** ‘possessed noun is potentially eaten by possessor (CL.ED)’
- **ma-** ‘possessed noun is potentially drunk by possessor (CL.DR)’
- **no-** ‘possessed noun has any other general relationship with possessor (CL.GE)’

5.4.3.1 Bila- ‘Valuable Resource (CL.RS)’

A sampling of items that are often indirectly possessed with *bila-* as the classifier include the animals *bo* ‘pig’, *buluk* ‘bullock’, *kuli* ‘dog’, *mwateete* ‘chicken’, plus the plants *tsi* ‘sugarcane’, *is* ‘banana’, *beta* ‘breadfruit’, *dam* ‘yam’, *bwet* ‘taro’, *wungaka* ‘flower’, *mango* ‘mango’, *sini* ‘kava’, and *kanleutan* ‘food’.⁴ *Wib* ‘pandanus leaves (for weaving)’ are normally classified as a valuable resource, but not the baskets and mats that are made from them. It does seem that, by and large, the *bila-* classifier is used with natural resources: raw materials or unprocessed items. This is not always the case; for example, it is also used with *hinak* ‘prepared meal’, *sum* ‘strand of beads’ and *ka* ‘men’s custom dance’.

When the noun *wawa* ‘auntie’ is part of a possessive construction, it normally takes the *bila-* classifier. There are no known examples of *wawa* being directly possessed. At first glance this is puzzling, as an auntie is not a valuable resource – or is she? She does shoulder more responsibility towards her brother’s children than any other relative, for example, gifting them with valuable red mats during special ceremonies. In this respect then, a *wawa* ‘auntie’ is

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⁴ In the early 1900’s, Niel (n.d.-c) noted in his 24-page manuscript grammar of Abma that *bila-* ‘valuable resource’ was used in relation to plants, children, and industry. *Bila-* is no longer used in relation to children.
quite a valuable asset. Vari-Bogiri (2007) reaches a similar conclusion for the treatment of the
cognate term *vawwa* ‘father’s sister, etc.’ in Raga, the language spoken to the north of Abma
on Pentecost Island.

Example (50) is a simplex construction that demonstrates how *wawa* ‘auntie’ is indirectly
possessed with the *bila*-classifier:

(50) Ra3 PL mwa=li ha tema-a, bi datsi-i,
<br>IPFV=take PREP father-3PL.POSS and mother-3PL.POSS
<br>bi *bila-a* *wawa*.
<br>and CL.RS-3PL.POSS auntie

‘They take them to their fathers, and mother, and aunties.’ – T3p5

5.4.3.2 *Ka-* ‘Edibles (CL.ED)’

If a possessed noun is to be eaten by its possessor, then it usually occurs with the *ka*- ‘CL.ED’
classifier. Sentence (51) involves a simplex possessive construction where the possessor is
pronominal -k ‘1SG.POSS’ and the possessed NP is *bwera* hinak ‘big meal’; the two are
related by the *ka*-classifier:

(51) Na=SG lel-i ka-k *bwera* hinak.
<br>IPFV make-TR CL.ED-1SG.POSS big meal

‘I’m making my big meal.’ – T2p58

Typical possessed nouns that appear with *ka*- include: *beta* ‘breadfruit’, *bwet* ‘taro’, *kahtsin*
*kanteuta* ‘food’, *hinak* ‘meal’, *abma* ‘things’, and *leut* ‘things’. Note that there is some
overlap with items in the *bila*- ‘valuable resource’ category. Usage of *ka*- or *bila-* depends on
how the speaker envisages that the possessed item is to be used by the possessor, i.e., to be
directly eaten or to be used as a resource.

The following text illustrates further how possessive classifiers are manipulated to express
different semantic nuances. It comes from a story about a boy who steals a monster’s
sugarcane. Since the boy intends to eat the sugarcane, *tsi* ‘sugarcane’ first appears with the
*ka*-edible classifier. However, this item is also the property of the monster (Butsungos); in
this context, it occurs with the *bila*-resource classifier:
(52) "Abe, na=ma gan=te, nema=i ka-k tsi
but 1SG-PRSP eat=PART 3SG-PRSP=be CL.ED-1SG.POSS sugarcane
“I’m going to eat some sugarcane for myself,”

si=ah," ba tsibi-n Ø beb, "Ko=n=ba
just=EMPH COMM grandmother-3SG.POSS 3SG IPFV.say 2SG=IRR=NEG.1
but his grandmother said, “Don’t you eat it,

gan te=an, igo bi-la-n Butsungos.
eat PART=PRHB because CL.RS-3SG.POSS B.
because it belongs to Butsungos.” -FN4pp5-7

5.4.3.3 Ma- ‘Drinkables (CL.DR)’

The ma- ‘CL.DR’ drink category is used when the possessed noun is drinkable. These can be liquids, e.g., sileng ‘water’, melek ‘milk’, or items that are mixed with water and drunk, e.g., rebu ‘lemongrass’ and ruka ‘medicine’. Example (53) is a complex possessive construction with two NPs, and it illustrates the use of the drink classifier:

(53) Rebu ma-n Cindy.
lemongrass CL.DR-3SG.poss C.
‘Cindy’s lemongrass (for drinking).’ -EF1p162

5.4.3.4 No- ‘General (CL.GE)’

This category accommodates possessed NPs that are not the personal property of the possessor NP, nor are they potentially eaten or drunk by the possessor NP. Both concrete (as in (54) and (55)) and abstract (as in (56)) nouns occur with the no- classifier:

(54) Na bahngi no-k kaba.
1SG IPFV.burn CL.GE-1SG.POSS firewood
‘I burn my firewood.’ –EF2p101

(55) Ø Bahngi no-n hee, bi mwa=sku.
3SG IPFV.burn CL.GE-3SG.POSS coconut.leaf and 3SG.IPV=carry
‘He lights his torch [coconut leaf], and he carries it.’ –EF2p33/D39T12
Chapter 5: Noun Phrases

(56) Ta bavatla no-da takaa niaha, mwa=buh-u, 1PL.INC IPFV.thank CL.GE-1PL.INC.POSS god REL 3SG.IPFV=hold-TR
mwe=rarei kidi, mwe=rarei no-da 3SG.IPFV=look.after 1PL.INC.OBJ 3SG.IPFV=look.after CL.GE-1PL.INC.POSS

mwas-an.
life-NMZR
‘We thank god for holding us, for looking after us, for looking after our lives.’
–EF2p44/D41T6

Even a husband can be put into this category if he is referred to in a deferential way. In (57), subu ‘chief, husband’ is used in place of the usual directly possessed kin term, hoa- ‘husband’.

(57) No-daru subu mwa=bma=te ibe. CL.GE-1DU.INC.POSS husband 3SG.IPFV=come=CMP someplace
‘But our husband has already arrived from somewhere.’ –Tlp20

When the nouns seesee ‘mat’ and watang ‘basket’ are possessed, they are also placed in the no- general category ((58) and (59)).

(58) Ko bits-i no-m seesee. 2SG IPFV.weave-TR CL.GE-2SG.POSS mat
‘You’re weaving your mat.’ –T2p46/D2T5

(59) Ko bits-i no-m watang. 2SG IPFV.weave-TR CL.GE-2SG.POSS basket
‘You’re weaving your basket.’ –T2p46/D2T5

Both – especially the former – are important assets in Abma culture, and might be expected to be used with the bila- ‘valuable resource’ classifier. However, the material (wib ‘pandanus leaves’) from which they are woven is classified as a valuable resource, and it is unknown whether, given the appropriate context, seesee ‘mat’ and watang ‘basket’ may also take the bila- classifier. For example, they may be classified as a valuable resource in the context of paying school fees, or in wedding arrangements. Ultimately, a noun can only take one classifier at a time, and in most (not all) cases, a reasonable semantic explanation can be provided.
5.4.3.5 Animacy of the Possessor

The possessor NP must be animate in indirect possession (otherwise we have association – see §5.4.4 below). In elicitation, if an inanimate noun is posited as a possessor NP, the results are ungrammatical and potentially ridiculous. Sentence (60) is ungrammatical because it implies that the possessed NP should be drunk by the possessor NP:

(60) *melek ma-n kul
    milk  CL.DR-3SG.POSS coconut
    ‘coconut milk’ -EF1p162

Example (61) is ungrammatical for a similar reason; the ka- food classifier implies that the possessor NP should eat the possessed NP:

(61) *bwarus ka-n watang
    pawpaw  CL.ED-3SG.POSS basket
    ‘pawpaw of basket’ -EF1p153

Nor is no-, the general classifier, acceptable in either of the above cases. Example (62) demonstrates how a transliteration from the English “pseudo-possessive” does not work in Abma, again because the possessor NP is not animate:

(62) *watang no-n bwarus kalim
    basket  CL.GE-3SG.POSS pawpaw five
    ‘basket of five pawpaws’ -EF1p154

None of the above examples work because indirect possession does not permit non-animate possessors. The associative construction does, however, account for inanimate (as well as animate) possessors, and it is to this that we turn next.

5.4.4 Associative Construction

The associative construction in Abma shares a number of commonalities with structures in other Oceanic languages. It is a special kind of indirect possession, marking two nouns as being related somehow, but having a non-possessive, non-controlling relationship with each other. Aikhenvald (2000: 145) calls them “relational classifiers”, and claims that their distribution is limited to Oceanic languages. Hyslop (2001: 186), following Hill (1992) and
Dixon (1988) before her, labels them an “associative construction”, and that term is adapted herein.

5.4.4.1 Form of the Associative Construction

As with other types of possession, association can be either simplex or complex, as illustrated in Table 5.5. In simplex association, only the possessed NP is provided, whereas complex association involves two overtly coded NPs, one for the possessed entity and one for the possessor. Both forms require the na ‘associative (ASSOC)’ marker. Unlike indirect possession, the possessed noun in the simplex form only comes before the associative marker rather than after it. Possessed and possessor NPs can be either inanimate or animate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIMPLEX</th>
<th>Possessed.NP-Associative-Possessor.Pro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vini na-m?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>village ASSOC-2SG.Poss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Your village?’ [Where do you live?]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPLEX</th>
<th>Possessed.NP-Associative-Possessor.Pro + Possessor.NP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vini na-n subu?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>village ASSOC-3SG.Poss chief</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The chief’s village?’ [Where does the chief live?]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5: Associative construction

Note that in Table 5.5 the terms “possessed NP” and “possessor NP” are used, based upon the possessive construction template. This is done to avoid superfluous terminology for a construction that is not predominant in the language. Additionally, the possessive pronouns are the same as those used in direct and indirect possessive constructions.⁵

5.4.4.2 Function of the Associative Construction

The associative construction does not seem to have a consistent function across Oceanic languages, and linguists have used different names for it.

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⁵ In all areas of this thesis, possessive pronouns refer to pronouns that occur in associative as well as direct and indirect possessive constructions.
In some cases, “associative-like” constructions are used when the possessor NP is inanimate and/or non-specific, as Boumaa Fijian (Dixon, 1988), Lenakel (Lynch, 1978), Lolovoli (Hyslop, 2001), Naman (Crowley, 2006), Paamese (Crowley, 1982), and South Efate (Thieberger, 2004).

Another common function of this construction is to mark a part/whole relationship, a producer/product relationship, or a nominalised subject/object relationship. This is attested to in Lenakel (Lynch, 1978), Lewo (Early, 1994), Manam (Lichtenberk, 1983), Naman (Crowley, 2006), Neve’ei (Crowley, 2006), and Paamese (Crowley, 1982).

Finally (and most relevant to the current discussion), it has been occasionally noted that the NPs concerned are in a non-controlling relationship with each other (Erromangan (Crowley, 1998) and Gumawana (Olson, 1992).

In Abma, the possessor NP has no actual control over the possessed NP in an associative relationship. This is unlike a typical possessive relationship wherein the possessor can manipulate the possessed NP. The lack of control is for one of two reasons: (1) the possessor NP is inanimate and therefore does not have the ability to control, or; (2) the possessor NP is animate but cannot control the possessed NP due to some inherent quality of the latter.

Table 5.6 sets out the qualities of the possessor and possessed NPs in the associative construction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possessor NP inanimate (§5.4.4.2.1)</th>
<th>Possessed NP an intangible</th>
<th>lack of control over possessed NP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possessor NP animate (§5.4.4.2.2)</td>
<td>Possessed NP a part of a larger whole</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possessed NP has authority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.6: Characterisation of possessor/possessed nouns in the associative construction

Each of these scenarios is considered below. It can be inferred from Table 5.6 that the ensuing discussion is based around semantic categories. Admittedly, categorisation based wholly on meaning and intuition is harder to verify than, say, classification based upon formal evidence. However, it is worth considering as a preliminary analysis, and perhaps at a later date it may be followed up in a more systematic way.
From the outset, it is important to emphasise that the associative construction is just one part of a larger system for expressing relationships between nouns in the language – a system that also includes direct and indirect possession. Thus, whether an NP-NP construction is expressed through possession or association depends on which form best reflects the NP-NP relationship. Of course, some NP-NP relationships do not fall clearly into a single possessive/associative category. This presents a challenge to analysis, and it is at this point that arguments are made for one category or the other.

5.4.4.2.1 Possessor NP is Inanimate

Haudricourt (1960: 114), publishing from the grammatical notes of Paul Monnier, observes that [the associative suffix] -na is used between non-persons, as in:

(63) matlobo-na-n                val⁶  
apex-ASSOC-3SG.POSS         house  
‘apex (highest point on roof) of house’ - (Haudricourt, 1960: 114)

The possessor noun can also be intangible, e.g., a nominalisation of a verb, as in (64). The verb tobob ‘talk’ is nominalised, realised as tobtowan ‘talk’. Furthermore, tobtowan is part of a larger indirect possession construction (underlined). This entire indirect possession construction comprises the possessor NP:

(64) nok na-n no-da=ru tobtowan  
end ASSOC-3SG.POSS CL.GE-IPL.INC.POSS=DU talk-NMZ  
‘the end of our (DU) talk’ -FN4p123/D39T26

Example (65), a nominalisation of the verb um ‘work’, also shows that while the possessor NP is inanimate, the possessed NP can be animate:

(65) atsi na-n umw-an  
person ASSOC-3SG.POSS work-NMZ  
‘a worker’ [Lit.: ‘man of work’] -EF1p45

---

⁶ Haudricourt writes -na as a suffix, but suffixes do not accommodate multi-word possessor NPs, as in the following example, where the possessor NP is sileng terabwa ‘new water’:

sileng te-rabwa na-n tang  
water ADJ-new ASSOC-3SG.POSS tank  
‘new water in the tank’ -Thesis II-20

Thus the associative marker is coded as a separate word in this study.
Sentences (66) and (67) present an interesting contrast to each other. They are identical in form, being a simplex construction. The possessor NP is not overtly coded, but is simply referenced by -n, the third person singular possessive pronoun. On the assumption that the man is the owner of the pig, (66) is ungrammatical because the associative construction does not permit human possessors. On the other hand, if the man is dead, and the pig is being killed in his honour, then this is within the functional realm of association. This latter situation is reflected in (67):

(66) *bo na-n
    pig ASSOC-3SG.POSS
    ‘his pig’ [pig owned by a man]

(67) bo na-n
    pig ASSOC-3SG.POSS
    ‘pig for him’ [pig killed in a man’s honour, for his funeral]

5.4.4.2.2 Possessor NP is Animate

Normally if a possessor is animate, it has the ability to control the possessed entity – the typical outcome of this would be a normal possessive construction. However, for a variety of reasons, certain NPs that are technically “possessed” lack the semantic attributes of a “possessable” noun, and they cannot be manipulated or controlled. Therefore, they are not disposed to occur in a normal possessive construction. This is where the associative construction comes in.

Possessed NP is an Intangible

If the possessed NP is an intangible item, then it is likely to be part of the associative construction rather than of a possessive one. Measurements are included in this category:

* katris na-n subu ‘measurement of the chief’, meres na-n ‘his weight’, mere na-n ‘his height’.

NPs that express a location or direction cannot be directly managed or controlled; for example, these nouns cannot occur as the direct object of a sentence. In order for location or direction to be expressed, an associative construction must be used. Examples of locations and directions include: mwii na-m ‘the left-hand side of you’, lolok na-n taru nii ‘middle of the people’, and lekoo na-n Tarisabwit ‘Tarisabwit’s garden’.
Other examples of intangible possessed NPs within the associative construction include: *lelian na-n waetman nii* ‘ways of the white man’, *mwee na-n* ‘his manner’, *tsutsuku na-n subu* ‘history of the chief’, and *daduru na-m* ‘the bad taste you get after drinking water’.

Questions may arise when considering the following abstract nouns which are indirectly possessed, rather than incorporated into the associative construction: *no-k vihnian* ‘my thoughts’, *no-n mwamablelan* ‘her play’, *no-m mwasan* ‘your life’, and *no-n janis* ‘her opportunity’. Since these nouns are intangible, why do they occur in a possessive construction rather than an associative one? A possible explanation is that, relative to the associative nouns listed in the preceding paragraph, all of these intangibles are potentially controllable. An individual has a certain amount of power over one’s thoughts, play, life, and opportunities. On the other hand, one cannot control one’s history (*tsutsuku*), or the bad taste they get in their mouth after drinking water (*daduru*). Similarly, a single individual has relatively little control over the customs of an entire socio-cultural sub-group (*lelian na-n waetmanii* ‘ways of the white man’). And while one may arguably have control over their manner (*mwee*) – their way of relating to people – this is a much less conscious process than decisions about life choices and opportunities.

Finally, we must consider the following sample of abstract nouns, which are not part of an associative construction, but are directly possessed: *ha-* ‘name’, *dale-* ‘language’, *bware-* ‘pain’, *tobmi-* ‘reflection’, *tabite-* ‘spirit’, and *bungu-* ‘smell’. It is true that most of these concepts are not under individual control, and hence there is a valid argument that they should be not “possessed”, but “associated”. However, a more salient feature of these nouns is that they mark essential aspects of one’s individuality; they are inseparable from a person. Therefore they fall within the realm of direct possession.

**Possessed NP is a Part of a Larger Whole**

The associative construction is triggered when the possessed NP is a part of a larger whole. This includes the selection of one person from a larger group, as with *vaawo na-n* ‘the first one [of the group]’ and *nok na-n* ‘the last one’, [e.g., the last-born child].
Body parts also play a role in association. Walter (1985) conducted an interesting study on the knowledge and attitudes of Suru Mwerani speakers towards the human body. She compiled a seemingly exhaustive list of names for several dozen body parts, including specific names for component parts of the face and head, the eye, the nose, the mouth, the ear, the cranium, the front and back of the outside of the body, the hands, and the feet. She also questioned speakers about the names for internal organs. According to her study, all are directly possessed, with the following exceptions — internal body parts — listed in Table 5.7. These are coded with associative na-:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noun Phrase</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>balbal na-</td>
<td>‘achilles tendon’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>da na-</td>
<td>‘blood’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>silsilkamel na-</td>
<td>‘pancreas’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waba na-</td>
<td>‘kidney’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walahi na-</td>
<td>‘knob of elbow’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>warubu na-</td>
<td>‘heart’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watang na-</td>
<td>‘placenta’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watangla na-</td>
<td>‘stomach’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7: Body parts that occur in the associative construction

The achilles tendon (balbal na-) and the knob of the elbow (walahi na-) stand out as points of vulnerability in the body. The achilles tendon, in particular, takes a long time to heal once it is injured; perhaps, then, it is beyond individual control. 7

Other organs coded with the associative construction are what Walter considers to be “unknown”. She writes: Cette particularité grammaticale s’ajoute à ce que nous savions déjà des organes internes = moins connus, cachés et un peu inquiétants… (1985: 11). [‘This grammatical particularity adds to what we already know about internal organs = less well known, hidden, and a little worrying…‘]. In other words, organs that are not well understood are not controllable — hence they are natural candidates for the associative construction.

Such an analysis is intuitively appealing but it does not provide all the answers: it does not explain why some internal organs are directly possessed and others occur within the associative construction. For example, why are the lung (usa-) and the liver (ite-) directly

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7 One may gain the impression from the current discussion that association is related to a possessor’s lack of control, while direct possession involves a possessor’s full control. But while directly possessed body parts may be fully controllable by their possessor (i.e., we can control the movement in our fingers), the fact of their existence is not, i.e., we cannot control the fact that we have hands; we were born with them. In this sense, then, direct possession is non-controllable.
possessed, but the pancreas (silsilkamel na-) and the kidney (waba na-) occur within the associative construction? At this point, one can only conclude that body parts within the domain of the associative construction are lexically determined.

Involuntary bodily functions that have removable but unpleasant by-products also form the associative construction. Dribble and vomit fall into this category: liaut na-n Booga ‘Booga’s vomit’ and kasuu na-k ‘my spit/dribble’. This is in contrast to misi- ‘urine’, su- ‘breast milk’ and tatsuwa- ‘sweat’, which are all directly possessed nouns. What can really differentiate the two groups?

If we recall that “control” is the defining feature that distinguishes possessed NPs in the associative construction, then it is possible to argue that vomit and a dribble are disagreeable bodily secretions that their “owners” would rather not be responsible for. The fact that these nouns are not directly possessed, but form part of the associative construction, suggests that the production of undesirable vomit or dribble is involuntary and non-controllable.

In contrast, the directly-possessed nouns – urine, breast milk and sweat – are regularly-occurring bodily functions. They are a part of life, and inherent to one’s existence. Because they are so ordinary, perhaps there is less embarrassment associated with these bodily by-products, and therefore more “ownership” is permitted.

**Possessed NP has Authority**

The associative construction codes human relationships wherein a lack of control is implied. For example, subu ‘chief’ in subu na-n bwihil nii ‘chief of the birds’ and matsia ‘uncle’ in matsia karu na-n havin ‘two uncles of the woman’ are expressed within an associative construction because presumably, chiefs and uncles cannot be ordered around. Furthermore, it is possible to depict both husbands and wives as non-controllable: subu na-m ‘your husband’ and havin na-ma ‘our wives’.

On the other hand, ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ can also be expressed through direct possession: an alternative to subu na- ‘husband’ is hoa- ‘husband’; alternatives to havin na- ‘wife’ are atleimwa-, atbe-, and dantsu-.

How can this disparity be explained?
Based upon what is already known about how possession and association function in Abma, the most compelling argument is that the choice of form depends upon the speaker’s attitude towards his or her spouse. This question clearly requires further study.
Chapter 6: Verb Phrases

6 VERB PHRASES

The verb phrase (VP) is a complicated constituent in Abma, with numerous morphosyntactic elements. The components of the VP are discussed in §6.1. Transitivity marking is briefly mentioned as a morphological element of the VP, but it is affected by other factors, i.e., its position within complex predicates (SVCs), its interaction with the partitive marker te, and other discourse pragmatic factors. Thus transitivity is discussed separately in §6.2. The partitive marker te is also sufficiently complex as to merit separate discussion (§6.3): its functionality changes depending upon whether it occurs in the affirmative or the negative. Finally, §6.4 examines each of the aspect and modality markers, how they interact with the aktionsart of the verbs with which they occur, and how they relate to each other within the larger framework of aspectual/modal coding in the language.

6.1 Elements of the Verb Phrase

This section describes the elements of the VP and explores their functions in detail, particularly grammatical morphemes such as the minimiser (MIN), the additive (ADD), the partitive (PART), and the completive (CMP) markers, which do not fall neatly into any word class and are not necessarily transparent in their meanings and functions.

Since the VP contains a multitude of components, it is broken down for ease of description into the pre-verbal complex, the head, and the post-verbal complex. Although the potential for complexity is great, the only required elements of the VP are the subject pronoun, aspectual/modal marking, and the VP head, as shown in Figure 6.1:
Chapter 6: Verb Phrases

Verb Phrase $\rightarrow$ Pre-Verbal Complex + Head + Post-Verbal Complex:

$\begin{align*}
\text{Pre-Verbal Complex} & \rightarrow \text{Subject Pronoun} \quad \text{Aspect/Modality} \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{ba NEG.1} \\ \text{gam MIN} \end{array} \right\} \quad \left( \text{mu ADD} \right) \quad \left( \text{ru DU} \right) \\
\text{Head} & \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{SingleVerb} \\ \text{Serial Verb Construction} \end{array} \right\} \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \left( -i \text{ TR} \right) \\ \left( -k \text{ INTR} \right) \end{array} \right\} \quad \left( -an \text{ PASS} \right) \\
\text{Post-Verbal Complex} & \rightarrow \left( \text{Direct Object NP} \right) \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{c} \text{nga NEG.2} \\ \text{an PRHB} \\ \text{te CMP} \\ \text{te PART} \end{array} \right\}
\end{align*}$

Figure 6.1: VP structure

First the VP head is discussed, and then its pre- and post-verbal components.

6.1.1 Head of the Verb Phrase

The head of the VP can be a single verb or a serial verb construction.

6.1.1.1 Single Verb

A single verb is the most basic realisation of the VP head. For example, sadok ‘stay’ is the verb in (1):

(1) Ra=m sadok li vini.
    3PL=IPFV stay PREP village
    ‘They live in the village.’

Morphologically, a single verb may be unmarked, as in (1), or it may be suffixed by one or more of the grammatical morphemes that follow it in the VP head. In (2), gani ‘eat’ is suffixed with a transitivity marker:

(2) Ra=m gan-i bwet.
    3PL=IPFV eat-TR taro.
    ‘They are eating taro.’
6.1.1.2 Serial Verb Construction

Serial Verb Constructions (SYCs) occur when two verbs combine to form a single VP head. They are more complex than the single verbs described above, but their structure is nevertheless subsumed within the head. For example, in (3), the SVC is *batsab rotvi* ‘break by stepping on’, and this verb complex is followed by a direct object, *ran beta* ‘branch of the breadfruit tree’:

(3) Mwe=sak, mwe=sak, bi mwe=sasa nehu
3SG.IPFV=go.up 3SG.IPFV=go.up and 3SG.IPFV=sing COMP

bat=sab rotvi ra-n beta, ba tebu.
3SG.HYP=step break branch-3SG.POSS breadfruit COMM no
‘He climbed up, and up, and he sang that he would break the branch of the breadfruit tree, but he didn’t.’–FN4p67/D39T10

Most SYCs follow a similar structural pattern to *batsab rotvi* ‘break by stepping on’ in (3) above. However, one type of SVC (called a “type 3 SVC”) does not conform to the VP phrase structure rule given in §6.1 because it subsumes the entire post-verbal complex between the two serialised verbs in the VP head. Verb serialisation is examined in Chapter 8.

6.1.1.3 Transitive (TR) -ni/Intransitive (INTR) -k

Transitivity marking (-ni) and intransitivity marking (-k) regularly suffix onto the verb root; an example of transitivity marking is provided in (2) above.

There are some syntactic/pragmatic factors that determine the type of transitivity suffixation, if any, that attaches to the verb root. These issues are explored in §6.2.

6.1.1.4 Passive (PASS) -an

Abma is one of the few Oceanic languages that morphologically encodes passivisation. The passive construction is discussed in Chapter 7 (Simple Sentences), but (4) demonstrates how the passive marker -an suffixes onto the verb root:
Chapter 6: Verb Phrases

(4) Te **gan-an** na kanleutan
   3SG.PFV eat-PASS DEF food
   ‘Food was eaten.’ –EF3p34

6.1.2 Pre-Verbal Complex

The pre-verbal complex comprises a subject pronoun and aspectual/modal markers (which are required), and an assortment of other grammatical morphemes. These are discussed below.

6.1.2.1 Subject Pronoun

The subject pronoun is a required element of the VP. The paradigm of subject pronouns is listed in Table 6.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject pronoun</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Table 6.1: Subject pronouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>na</em> 1SG</td>
<td><em>ta</em> 1PL.INC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kaa</em> 1PL.EXC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ko</em> 2SG</td>
<td><em>karu</em> 2PL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ø</em> 3SG</td>
<td><em>ra</em> 3PL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the VP, subject pronouns and aspectual/modal markers (which come just after the subject pronoun – refer to the phrase structure in Figure 6.1) are separate entities. There is a clean morpheme boundary between the two elements – except with the first person plural exclusive (1PL.EXC) subject pronoun. When this co-occurs with perfective aspect (bolded in Table 6.2) or irrealis modality (bolded in Table 6.3), it takes on a portmanteau form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject pronoun + perfective aspect marker</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Subject pronoun + perfective aspect marker</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>na + =t</em></td>
<td>1SG + PFV</td>
<td><em>ta + =t</em></td>
<td>1PL.INC + PFV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ko + =t</em></td>
<td>2SG + PFV</td>
<td><em>kaa + =t</em></td>
<td>1PL.EXC.PFV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ø + te</em></td>
<td>3SG + PFV</td>
<td><em>ra + =t</em></td>
<td>2PL + PFV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2: Subject pronouns combined with perfective aspect

---

1 The perfective aspect marker has various allomorphs (see Chapter 3 (Morphology)), but the forms used here, *=t* and *te*, assume that a free verb root follows.
As can be seen from Table 6.2 and Table 6.3, other subject pronouns do not take a portmanteau form, but remain unchanged, regardless of the aspectual or modal environment that they occur within.

6.1.2.2 Aspect/Modality

Aspect/modality is compulsory within the VP: either the verb is explicitly marked, or alternatively, absence of any marking indicates imperative mood. The aspectual markers are *mwe* ‘imperfective (IPFV)’ and *te* ‘perfective (PFV)’, and the modality markers are *mwan* ‘irrealis (IRR)’, *nema* ‘prospective (PRSP)’, and *bat* ‘hypothetical (HYP)’. All of these forms have at least two allomorphs (discussed in Chapter 3 (Morphology)). The function of aspect/modality markers is covered at greater length later in this chapter, in §6.4.

6.1.2.3 Negative (NEG.1) *ba*

*Ba* ‘negative (NEG.1)’ constitutes the first part of the *ba*...*nga* discontinuous negative morpheme that was discussed in Chapter 4 (Word Classes).

6.1.2.4 Minimiser (MIN) *gam*

*Gam* (with allomorphs *gam=*, *ga=*, =*gam*, and =*ga*), is a grammaticalisation of the verb *gamra* ‘to just do something’. It functions to minimise an event, and is roughly translated into English with the word ‘just’.

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2 The irrealis modality marker has various allomorphs (see Chapter 3 (Morphology)), but the forms used here, =*n* and *mwan*, assume that a free verb root follows.
Its function is best conveyed through an example: in (5), an old woman has just finished explaining the intricacies of pre-western cooking. She then contrasts this with the relative ease of cooking in the present day, using gam ‘minimiser (MIN)’ to support her point of view:

(5) Ta=t=ba=m lel-i=nga, te=gen go=ah niaha,  
1PL=PFV=NEG.1=ADD do-TR=NEG.2 3SG.PFV=like one=PROX REL  
gema ah kaamat di, bi go ah ra=t di  
1PL.EXC.IND REL 1PL.EXC.PFV live and one REL 3PL=PFV live  
baawo, ani kaa=m=gam iusum sosban nante=ah.  
before but 1PL.EXC=IPFV=MIN use saucepan nothing.more=PROX  
‘We don’t do it anymore, like us who lived before, and those who were alive before, but we just use a saucepan, nothing more.’ –FN4p117/D39T26

Gam is also used with events that are about to occur, in order to downplay their duration or importance (6):

(6) Na=n=ga van ne-gi-l-i taro katsil, bi  
1SG=IRR=MIN go CONN-dig-TR taro three and  
na=n=ga mulma.  
1SG=IRR=MIN come.back  
‘I’ll just go dig three taros, and then I’ll come right back.’ -EF1p126

It is also used to record events that have occurred in the very recent past, relative to event time. In (7) the speaker is making a correction to a talk he has just finished:

(7) Go=ah niah na=m=gam veb nehu, tei Liwusvet,  
one=PROX REL 1SG=IPFV=MIN say COMP FOC L.  
ba tei te ba=i=te Liwusvet=nga,  
COMM FOC 3SG.PFV NEG.1=be=PART L.=NEG.2  
ani tei atsi=ah niaha, tei no-n kadadago.  
but FOC person=PROX REL PAST CL.GE-3SG.POSS guard  
‘What I was just saying, that it was Liwusvet, but it wasn’t Liwusvet, but this person was his guard.’ –T2p111/D2T49

Gam ‘minimiser (MIN)’ may also convey something like a “near miss”: in (8), the blackfin barracuda and the coconut crab (wakatsiwas) are in a race. The barracuda is just on his way to the agreed-upon destination, but the coconut crab is already sitting there:
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(8) Te=\textit{gam} dok ne-van ut go, ba mwe=gen go=ah. PFV=MIN stay CONN-go place one COMM 3SG.IPV=like one=his

\begin{verbatim}
  wakatsiwas=ah te sadok=te. coconut.crab=his 3SG.PFV sit=CMP
  ‘He was just going to this place, but this coconut crab was already sitting there.’ - T3p93
\end{verbatim}

6.1.2.5 Additional (ADD) \textit{mu}

\textit{Mu} ‘additional (ADD)’ is a grammatical morpheme that appends a sense of “addition” to the verb with which it is associated.

In (9), \textit{mu} ‘additional (ADD)’ is used twice. In the first instance it occurs in conjunction with \textit{sak} ‘go up’ to indicate additional distance, e.g., ‘go up a little more.’ In the second instance, \textit{mu} is associated with \textit{wutihi} ‘find’ to convey the meaning ‘find a little more’:

\begin{verbatim}
(9) Bi ra=m=ru veb, “Ta=n mu=ru sak si, and 3PL=IPV=DU say IPL=IRR ADD=DU go.up a.little

  na bih ta=n mu=ru wutihi te=go.”

  1SG IPFV.think IPL.INC=IRR ADD=DU find PART=one
  ‘And the two of them said, “Let's go a little further, I think we’ll find another one.”’ - T1p8
\end{verbatim}

The following sentence follows the preface: \textit{Once there was a man named Bulemamkan. He had ten wives}. The morpheme \textit{mu} ‘additional (ADD)’ in (10), which is associated with \textit{di} ‘stay, exist’, conveys that an additional person also “exists”, i.e., is introduced as a character in the story:

\begin{verbatim}
(10) Tei lego, bi atsi havin te=mu di, FOC before and person woman 3SG.PFV=ADD stay

  ah dalma nii ra=t hural ne-tka-i.

  1REL man PL 3PL=PFV walk CONN-carry-TR
  ‘Once there was also this woman who slept with lots of men.’ - T3p32
\end{verbatim}
6.1.2.6 Dual (DU) ru

Ru functions as a dual marker. It is used in conjunction with the subject pronoun to indicate that the subject is dual in number:

(11) Ra=m=ru sak.
     3PL=IPFV=DU go.up
     ‘The two of them go up.’

6.1.3 Post-Verbal Complex

All elements in the post-verbal complex of the VP are non-compulsory: these include the direct object NP and a few grammatical markers.

6.1.3.1 Direct Object NP

The direct object NP represents the entity typically affected by the action/event depicted in the verb. When it occurs, it comes directly after the VP head.

The direct object NP is tightly linked to the verb. For example, when negated, only the verb and the direct object occur within the bounds of the ba...nga ‘negative (NEG.1/NEG.2)’ morpheme; all other elements of the sentence are shifted to the periphery. In (12) for instance, the verb sab rotvi ‘break by stepping on’ and the direct object ran beta ‘branch of the breadfruit tree’ occurs within, not outside of, the ba...nga discontinuous negative morpheme:

(12) Ba, te=ba sab rotvi ra-n beta=nga.
     COMM 3SG.PFV=NEG.1 step break branch-3SG.POSS breadfruit=NEG.2
     ‘But he didn’t break the branch of the breadfruit tree.’ -FN4p67/D39T10

6.1.3.2 Negative (NEG.2) nga

Nga ‘negative (NEG.2)’ constitutes the second half of the discontinuous ba...nga negation marker that was discussed in Chapter 4 (Word Classes). In the VP, it comes after any (optional) direct object NP.
6.1.3.3 Prohibitive (PRHB) *an*

The prohibitive marker *an* constitutes the second half of the discontinuous *ba...an* prohibitive marker that was discussed in Chapter 4 (Word Classes). Its usage is complementary to the more common *ba...nga* ‘negative (NEG)’.

6.1.3.4 Completive (CMP) *te*

The completive marker *te* (homonym of perfective *te* and partitive *te*) is a clitic that attaches to the last word in the VP. It marks an event as completed. This marker is often used to contrast a completed event with another, non-completed, event.

In (13), the action in the first part of the sentence (*dongvi* ‘look for’) is thwarted by the fact that the action in the second verb (*van* ‘go’) has already been completed:

(13) Ra=t=ga mu=bma ne-dongvi, ba mwe=gen go=ah, te van=te.
3PL.PFV=MIN ADD=come CONN-look.for COMM 3SG.IPFV=like one=PROX 3SG.PFV go=CMP
‘They just came back again to look for him, but like, he’d already gone.’ –T2p89

Example (14) presents a similar pattern: the boy feels hungry and wants to eat his taro, but the monster Butsungos has already eaten it. Unsurprisingly, Butsungos’ action (*gan* ‘eat’) is marked with completive *te*. [NB: This example is transcribed from another text; spelling conventions, word boundaries, and English translation of the original are retained herein.]

(14) Atsi havak mwe sadok ba mah mwe gatsi, person boy 3SG.IPFV sit COMM hunger 3SG.IPFV bite Ø vep bat gan-i ka-n bwet naenong, 3SG IPFV.say 3SG.HYP eat-TR CL.ED-3SG.POSS taro now ba Butsungos te gan sera te. COMM B. 3SG.PFV eat finish CMP
‘The boy was left all alone and started feeling hungry. He would have liked to eat his water-taro, but Butsungos had gobbled it all up.’ – (Mabonlala, 1986: 10, 50)
6.1.3.5 Partitive (PART) *te*

Presence of a partitive marker within the VP suggests that the verb is not fully carried out; in the negative mood, on the other hand, the partitive implies that the verb is completely unfulfilled.

Within VP phrase structure partitive *te* occurs in the same position as *te* ‘completive (CMP)’. If there is no direct object present (whereby non-specific partitive *te* is included as an article preceding the noun within NP phrase structure rules), then only context can disambiguate whether *te* represents a completive marker or a partitive marker.

Sentence (15) shows how *te* ‘partitive (PART)’, in conjunction with the prohibitive marker *ba... an*, marks the intransitive action *vaut* ‘come out’ as completely unachieved:

(15) Kaa=m=ru goo~koo ru-n, igo
1PL.EXC=IPFV=DU INT=shut leaf-3SG.POSS because
es-en mwan=ba vaut te=an.
smoke-NMZ 3SG.IRR-NEG.1 come.out PART=NEG.2
‘The two of us bend its leaves because the smoke inside can’t come out at all.’ -FN4p105/D23T1L119

The partitive requires further discussion, and is covered in greater detail in §6.3.

6.2 Transitivity

Most verb roots have an invariant intransitive/transitive form. However, a significant number of verbs have an alternating intransitive/transitive form. (Verb sub-classes are covered in Chapter 4 (Word Classes).) What is interesting is that such verbs can lose their transitivity marking when their semantics appear to be transitive. This section discusses why verbs that seem to be semantically transitive are sometimes coded as intransitive. Under what circumstances does this occur?

Verbs take transitive morphology in semantically transitive situations, with the following exceptions:
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- Initial verbs in certain serial verb constructions are coded as intransitive;
- Verbs that take partitive marking are coded as intransitive;
- Verbs with reduced prominence are intransitively marked.

6.2.1 First Verb in a Nuclear-Layer Serial Verb Construction

Serial verb constructions are not covered until Chapter 8, but briefly, they can occur at the “nuclear” level, or the “core” level. The first verb of a nuclear-layer serial verb construction is always coded as intransitive, regardless of its verbal semantics.

Three instances of type 2 serial verb constructions (underlined) occur in (16). Dakra-k ‘hang’ is the intransitive form of dakra-ni, and takes the intransitive marker, -k. Bwii ‘fold’ is the intransitive form of bwiri, and ling ‘leave’ is the intransitive form of -lengi or lengu:

(16) Kaa=m **dakra-k** boml-a mere,
     1PL.EXC=IPFV  hang-INTR  do.again-TR  high
     ihgo  natsu-ma  nii  ra=m  deng,  ba
     if  child-1PL.EXC.POSS  PL  3PL=IPFV  cry  COMM
     kaa  **bwii** boml-a,  seesee,  bi  ne-leng  gololo.
     1PL.EXC  IPFV.fold  do.again-TR  mat  and  CONN-leave  do.well
     ‘We hang them up again, if our children cry, we fold them back up, the mats, and leave them nicely.’ –D2T23

Serial verb constructions (comprising two consecutive verbs) constitute a single clause. It is the clause as a whole that must be considered for transitivity. If the SVC is semantically intransitive, then the second verb in the SVC is intransitively coded. On the other hand, if the SVC is semantically transitive, then the second verb of the SVC takes transitivity marking, assuming it is one of the verb sub-types that allows transitivity marking. See Chapter 8 (Serial Verb Constructions) for more information.

6.2.2 Verbs with Partitive Marking

Verbs marked as partitive may not also take transitive marking. Transitivity codes a direct relationship between the verb and its object; the partitive marks a less straightforward relationship. For example, a partitive direct object may be only partially affected by the action of the verb, or the partitive object may be non-specific.
Contrast the following two examples, which are identical except for their verbal morphology.
Sentence (17) is coded as transitive, and (18) as partitive:

(17) Te gel-e val?
   3SG.PFY buy-TR house
   ‘Did he buy the house?’ -EF3p6A

(18) Te gel=te val?
   3SG.PFY buy=PART house
   ‘Did he buy any/some [non-specific] house?’ -EF3p6A

Sentence (18) is formally partitive – not transitive. However, it is semantically transitive because the direct object is still present. The relationship between the direct object and the verb is simply less direct in the partitive than in the transitive. The partitive is discussed in detail below (§6.3).

6.2.3 Verbs with Reduced Prominence

François’ (2002: 135-140) discussion of how syntactic environment affects transitivity marking in Araki (spoken off the south coast of Espiritu Santo in Vanuatu) has provided the springboard for the current analysis in Abma. François’ work is influenced by Hopper and Thompson’s (1980) typological discussion on transitivity. Hopper and Thompson posit a scalar notion of transitivity, taking into account the syntactic and the semantic-pragmatic environment within which the verb is embedded. Essentially, the more affected the object and the greater the “intensity” of transfer of action from the subject to the object, the greater the likelihood that the verb is marked transitively. If an action or event is foregrounded and topical, as when it is introduced into the discourse for the first time, then it is more likely to be transitively marked than if the event is well-established and functions only in the background. In Abma, backgrounded verbs may lose their transitivity marker.

In (19), the speaker is talking about what happens when a visiting chief comes to a village and meets another chief: they drink kava and eat together. Because drinking and eating amongst chiefs is a normal activity, and because the activities of eating and drinking are natural correlates anyway, the speaker codes only the first verb, -mni, as transitive. The subsequent verb, gan ‘eat’, has reduced prominence. Therefore it drops its transitive suffix:
6.3 Partitive (PART) te

As has already been mentioned, partitive te is a constituent of both the NP and the VP (although, of course, not simultaneously). But since its inclusion within either phrase is underlined by a number of semantic commonalities, it is most elegantly analysed within a single section. The partitive appears more frequently within the VP than the NP, and so it is discussed in more detail herein, rather than in Chapter 5 (Noun Phrases).

In the affirmative, presence of a partitive marker signifies that the action of the verb is not fully executed, or that it is carried out in an unconfident or non-rigorous manner. It can also indicate that a direct object is non-specific or indeterminate in quantity. On the other hand, partitive marking in negative contexts leads to the interpretation that an event is completely rather than partially unfulfilled, or that a direct object is completely rather than partially unaffected. At a superficial level, one could distinguish the affirmative partitive and the negative partitive as a difference between ‘some’ versus ‘any’.

Verbs that formally indicate the intransitive (either through loss of a transitive suffix or addition of intransitive -k) will do so before the partitive suffix is attached. In (20), the verb root ska ‘give’ takes intransitive -k suffixation; then =te ‘partitive (PART)’ is encliticised to
the verb stem. On the other hand, the second verb in this sentence, gel ‘pay’, does not take the intransitive suffix -k, but it does lose its transitivity marker, -e, before partitive =te is attached. The individual morphological behaviour of each verb varies according to its conjugation class – see Chapter 3 (Morphology) to review this.

(20) Ko ska-k=te mwani mini Lucy ihgo
    2SG give-INTR=PART money PREP L. if

mwan gel=te abma go.
3SG.IRR buy=PART something other
‘Give some money to Lucy in case she [needs to] buy something else.’ –EF2p16

6.3.1 Uses of the Partitive in the Affirmative

6.3.1.1 Non-Specific NP

In European languages, the partitive is usually a grammatical morpheme manifested in the form of a particle or case marker which indicates “part of a whole”, or “some of a whole”, with reference to an affiliated NP. An example from Finnish illustrates this typical usage of the partitive:

(21) Poika osti kirjoja.
    boy-NOMINATIVE bought book-PLURAL-PARTITIVE
‘The boy bought some books.’ (Lyons, 1999: 101)

With transitive verbs, Abma features the partitive in a similar way: it refers to some portion of a whole NP, expressing an indefinite quantity (e.g., ‘some’). In (22), inclusion of te ‘partitive (PART)’ highlights the fact that the amount of bwet ‘taro’ to be grated is imprecise:

(22) Ba naanong, ba na=ma sawiri=te bwet si=ah
    now COMM 1SG=PRSP grate=PART taro POL=now
‘But now, I’ll grate some of this taro first.’ –FN4p90/D23TIL27

And like the Araki language (François, 2002: 59), Abma uses the partitive to grammatically distinguish between specific and non-specific reference in NPs. The role of te ‘partitive (PART)’ as a non-specific partitive article is discussed in Chapter 4 (Word Classes). François elucidates the notion of specificity with a “banana” example: the banana in I ate a banana is

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3 Lyons does not indicate morpheme boundaries in most of his examples, including this one.
grammatically indefinite, marked by a (as the listener was previously unaware of this referent), but specific (as a specific banana was consumed). In contrast, *I want to eat a banana* is indefinite but non-specific, since presumably the speaker does not have a particular banana in mind.

An example of how non-specific partitive operates is shown in the pair of examples below. In (23), Belani wants to get married, and has a specific husband in mind: Simon. Note that there is no partitive marker in this sentence:

\[(23) \text{Belani} \ mwo=don-i \ nehu \ mwan=lak \ i \ atsi \ mwalgel. \]
\[\text{B.} \ 3SG.IPFV=want-TR \ COMP \ 3SG.IRR=marry \ PREP \ person \ boy \]
\[
\text{‘Belani wants to marry a boy.’}
\]
\[
\text{Ha-n \ ah \ Simon.} \]
\[
\text{name-3SG.POSS \ APP \ S.}
\]
\[
\text{‘His name is Simon.’ –EF3p6A}
\]

Example (24) is identical to (23), except that a partitive marker is cliticised to the end of the intransitive verb *lak* ‘marry’. This denotes the peripheral argument *atsi mwalgel* ‘boy’ as non-specific. Because the speaker has no specific boy in mind, the second sentence in this example, *han ah Simon* ‘his name is Simon’, is rendered ungrammatical because if the boy concerned is non-specific, then he cannot have a name:

\[(24) \text{Belani} \ mwo=don-i \ nehu \ mwan \ lak=te \]
\[\text{B.} \ 3SG.IPFV=want-TR \ COMP \ 3SG.IRR=marry=PART \]
\[
i \ atsi \ mwalgel. \]
\[\text{PREP \ person \ boy} \]
\[
\text{‘Belani wants to marry a boy.’}
\]
\[
*\text{Ha-n \ ah \ Simon.} \]
\[
\text{name-3SG.POSS \ APP \ S.}
\]
\[
*\text{‘His name is Simon.’ –EF3p6A}
\]

*Te* ‘partitive (PART)’ can also co-occur with possessed NPs, so long as the NP is non-specific. This is illustrated in (25), where *kabakaba* ‘bat’ is non-specific:

\[(25) \text{O \ ba, \ ko \ beb, \ ko=m \ sib \ ne-lel-i \ abma?} \]
\[
\text{oh \ COMM \ 2SG \ IPFV.say \ 2SG=IPFV \ go.down \ CONN-do-TR \ what}
\]
\[
\text{‘Oh, you say, you are going down to do what?’}
\]
6.3.1.2 Partial Execution of Transitive Verbs

Lyons (1999: 101-102) also demonstrates with Finnish how the partitive can also refer to more than just an NP – in fact, its domain can be the entire predicate, with the insinuation that the predicate is incomplete. In (26), the partitive corresponds to a progressive interpretation of the verb:

(26) Tyttö lakaisi lattiaa.
girl-NOMINATIVE swept floor-PARTITIVE
‘The girl was sweeping the floor.’ (Lyons, 1999: 101-102)

Similarly, in Abma, the partitive lends a sense of “partial completion” to transitive verbs. Use of te ‘partitive (PART)’ in (27), combined with repetition of the verb and use of a biri bu ‘small knife’, suggests that the agent is engaged in not a single decisive action, but a series of tentative ones:

(27) Nema siba=te ba, nema siba=te ba,
3SG.PRSP peel=PART COMM 3SG.PRSP peel=PART COMM
Mabonmwel, nema siba i biri bu.
M. 3SG.PRSP peel INSTR small knife
‘She’ll peel it, she’ll peel it, Mabonmwel will peel it with the small knife.’ -FN4p91 / D23T1L33

Also, consider the text in (28), in which an attempt to break is marked with the partitive, whereas a successful execution of the verb takes regular transitive marking:

(28) “Kaa=ga mu=bma ne-bwah=te.”
2PL=MIN ADD=come CONN-break=PART
“‘Now you guys come and try to break it.’”
Mwa=bwah-a, ra=mwa bwah-a vet nong.
3SG.IPFV=break-TR 3PL=IPFV break-TR stone this
‘He breaks it, they break this stone.’ –T1p29

A point worth noting with regards to (27) and (28) is that neither of these examples feature partitive te in conjunction with an overtly coded direct object – the direct object is simply
assumed. In fact, overtly coded NPs after te are hard to find in the data. This is probably because partially executed verbs render the verb intransitive, or at least less transitive. This question requires further study.

6.3.1.3 Expression of Uncertainty, Desire, Politeness, Deference

Partitive te is often exploited to underline the uncertainty of hypothetical situations, desires, requests, and attempts. In (29), the verb -hma ‘come’ takes a partitive te enclitic. The effect of this, in combination with bat ‘hypothetical (HYP)’, is to suggest that intransitive -hma ‘come’ is an uncertain event:

(29) Atsi=ah niah, te hural ne-git-a nehu, iwel
person=PROX REL 3SG.PFY walk CONN-see-TR COMP enemy

bat=[b]ma=te, ba mwa te=di goro.
3SG.HYP=come=PART COMM rather 3SG.PFY=stay block
‘A man who ensures that no enemy can harm him, rather, he will be protected.’
[Lit.: ‘A man who walks about and sees that, [if] an enemy should come, he would not allow it, he would block him.’] –T2p113/D2T49L64

Since the partitive does often convey a sense of unfulfilled action, it is a natural correlate to non-real is modalities such as the hypothetical in (29), the prospective in (22) and (27), and expressions of desire or intention as in (24). It is also used as a marker of politeness or deference.

Sentence (30) is a good example of deference: in this example, the speaker is expressing thanks to his visitor for giving him an opportunity to speak into the tape recorder. Note that there are two instances of the verb root ska ‘give’: ska-ni ‘give-TR’ and ska-k=te ‘give-INTR=PART’. The speaker employs transitive skani in the first instance in order to suggest that the visitor is being generous and “giving fully” of her time. When referring to what he himself might contribute, he then switches to partitive skakte, an implication that his talk will be a “humble” one, and that he can only give a “little”.
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(30) Koviah buubuu i-ni igo ko mwa=skā-ni too thank.you very.much PREP-3SG.OBJ because 2SG IPFV=give-TRNS time

mini nana uugoah na mwa=skā-k=te PREP 1SG.OBJ PURP 1SG IPFV=give-INTR-PART

no-k vihni-an. CL.GE-1SG.Poss think-NMZR

‘Thank you very much because you give me time so that I might air some of my thoughts.’

6.3.2 Uses of the Partitive in the Negative

If partitive in the affirmative codes an event as partially operative or an associated NP as partially affected by an action, and carries a polite tone, then partitive marking on negated verbs results in an emphatic negative interpretation, wherein an action is construed as being not somewhat, but completely unfulfilled, or an NP as not partially, but entirely unaffected by the action. This is the most common result; however, questions that are framed in the partitive negative can also be interpreted as polite and tentative.

The most unexpected consequence of partitive negative marking occurs with copular or stative verbs. In this environment, the partitive negative appears to be losing its emphatic interpretation and is instead neutralising with regular negation (non-partitive negative).

6.3.2.1 Emphatic Negative

The partitive negative examples which follow are best explained by the logic: “NOT + SOME = NONE”. As Crowley (1982: 141) observes of the partitive negative in Paamese:

It would appear that in expressing a verb with a non-generic object in the partitive, we are asserting the fact that the patient is not unaffected simply partially, but that it is in fact completely unaffected. Similarly, by marking a negative intransitive verb with the partitive, we are asserting that the action or state is completely unachieved, rather than only partially unachieved.

In the following pair of examples, (32) is considered to be more strongly worded than is (31):
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(31) Ko=t ba=mta-ni tata=nga?
    2SG=PFV NEG.1=be.afraid-TR father=NEG.2
‘You’re not afraid of my father?’

(32) Ko=t ba=mta-k=te tata=nga?
    2SG=:PFV NEG.1=be.afraid.of-INTR-PART father=NEG.2
‘You’re not at all afraid of my father?’ –T2p87

If ba=mta-ni (as in (31)) is used, the assumption is that the question has only been asked once. On the other hand, (32) is used if the speaker needs to repeat her question to double-check her understanding because her interlocutor, incredibly, appears to have no fear of her father. Hence the overall tone of (32) is stronger than that of (31).

In (33), a mother fearful for her life is pleading with her vengeful son (who is equipped with bows and arrows), swearing that she had never abandoned him. She uses te ‘partitive (PART)’ with the intransitive verb -mkoo ‘abandon’ to emphasise this fact:

(33) Nutsu-k tewot, ko-bma, na=t ba=mkoo
    child-1SG.POSS beloved 2SG-come 1SG=PFV NEG.1=abandon
    te=nga i kik!
    PART-NEG.2 PREP 2SG.OBJ
‘My child, come here, I never abandoned you at all!’ –T2p22

The following four sentences further illustrate the contrast between partitive and non-partitive. In (34), the speaker does not use the partitive because he wants a specific answer to his question. In (35), the speaker provides a specific answer, so again, the partitive is not employed. Sentence (36) (without partitive marking) is negated, and conveys a generic truth, or a sense of habituality. Sentence (37) is identical to (36) except that the partitive is used. Using the logic “NOT SOME = NONE”, te ‘partitive (PART)’ effectively changes the interpretation of abma from ‘something’, as in (36), to ‘anything/nothing’ in (37). It also gives the sentence a perfective reading:

(34) Ko=t ih bamte abma nanib?
    2SG=PFV hit make.die what yesterday
‘What did you kill yesterday?’

---

4 As will be discussed in §6.4.1.1.3, imperfective aspect is not used with negative polarity. Hence this example, and many of the examples which follow in this section, are in perfective aspect.
(35) Na=t ih bamte temwa.
   1SG=PFV hit make.die rat
   ‘I killed a rat.’

(36) Na=t=ba ih bamte abma=nga.
   1SG=PFV=NEG.1 hit make.die something=NEG.2
   ‘I don’t kill things.’

(37) Na=t=ba ih bamte=te abma=nga.
   1SG=PFV=NEG.1 hit make.die=PART something=NEG.2
   ‘I didn’t kill anything.’

Another pair of examples contrasts the more general/less emphatic non-partitive in (38) with its more definite, fully unexecuted partitive counterpart in (39):

(38) Na=t=ba git-a=nga.
   1SG=PFV=NEG.1 find-TR=NEG.2
   ‘I can’t find it (but it might be somewhere else).’

(39) Na=t=ba git-a te=nga.
   1SG=PFV=NEG.1 find-TR PART-NEG.2
   ‘I can’t find it anywhere (and I’m finished looking).’

Similar to (37), partitive te lends (39) a sense of perfectivity that is lacking in (38), which is more general in scope.

6.3.2.2 Marks Tentativeness in Questions

In questions, the partitive negative can lend a sense of tentative politeness to a query. This is illustrated in (40):

(40) Ko=t ba=ilangi=te vini te-meme=nga?
   2SG=PFV NEG.1=know=PART island ADJ2-red=NEG.2
   ‘You don’t know of any red island at all?’ –T2p83/D2T45

While this example is expressed with the partitive negative, it differs from other instantiations of partitive negative in that it is a request, and not a declaration of non-completion of an event. Since it is a question, the partitive negative signals cautious politeness here.
6.3.2.3 Neutralisation Between Partitive/Non-Partitive

The function of the partitive negative in Abma appears to be neutralised when negating the copula verb *bibi* ‘to be’. *Bibi* is always negated in the partitive negative, but without the emphatic meaning that is imbued in other partitive negative constructions:

(41) Te ba=i=te bila-ma=nga.
    3SG.PFY NEG.1=be=PART CL.RS-1PL.EXC.POSS=NEG.2
    ‘It doesn’t belong to us.’ –D2T31L5

The partitive negative is also used to negate stative verbs, again without any emphatic sense:

(42) Mwe=gan-i waka ah te ba=mses te=nga.
    3SG.IPFV=eat-TR fruit REL 3SG.PFY NEG.1=be.ripe PART=NEG.2
    ‘He’s eating an unripe fruit.’ –EF1p87

6.4 Aspect and Modality

Abma’s grammatical system includes two aspectual markers (*te* ‘perfective (PFV)’ and *mwe* ‘imperfective (IPFV)’). Although the cover term “aspect” is used here, *te* and *mwe* also effectively indicate tense as well as aspect, depending upon whether the verb being coded is stative or not. This is discussed in §6.4.1.

Mutually exclusive to aspectual coding are the modality markers: *mwan* ‘irrealis (IRR)’, *nema* ‘prospective (PRSP)’, and *bat* ‘hypothetical (HYP)’, which are covered in §6.4.2. The imperative mood is unmarked, and in this case the aspect/modality slot is empty.

6.4.1 Aspect

The grammatical aspectual markers are *te* ‘perfective (PFV)’ and *mwe* ‘imperfective (IPFV)’. These are covered in §6.4.1.1. Abma also uses other syntactic means for indicating aspect, which are briefly reviewed in §6.4.1.2.

6.4.1.1 Boundedness: Perfective (PFV) *te* and Imperfective (IPFV) *mwe*

*Te* ‘perfective (PFV)’ and *mwe* ‘imperfective (IPFV)’ are in opposition to each other in terms of “boundedness”. Givón (2001b: 288-289) likens the notion of boundedness to a
photographic lens. Perfective aspect is akin to viewing an event from far away, through a narrow-angle lens. The event is thus viewed within its entirety and so the overall scope of the event has a start point and an end point – therefore, it is “bounded”. On the other hand, imperfective aspect is akin to viewing an event from nearby, through a wide-angle lens. The event is so close at hand that its start and end points are outside one’s field of vision; this is “unbounded”. Thus the event itself is the same; only the perspective changes. Figure 6.2 and Figure 6.3 illustrate Givón’s conception of perfective and imperfective lens focus, respectively:

As an imperfective marker, mwe codes current action, as well as habitual occurrences. It is also frequently used in narratives. Because of its association with continuing events, mwe ‘imperfective (IPFV)’ is strongly associated with the present tense. On the other hand, since te ‘perfective (PFV)’ codes events in their entirety, it is often associated with the past tense.

However, the bounded/unbounded contrast does not apply so readily to stative verbs. Like all verbs, stative verbs require some kind of aspectual/modal marking. But they are inherently static – they do not change over time, and being atelic, they have no implied endpoint. Since their internal constituency cannot normally be observed, they cannot be marked with mwe ‘imperfective (IPFV)’ (except in unusual circumstances, where a slowly-changing state is
observed from a close-up perspective). Therefore, *te* ‘perfective (PFV)’ is the normal aspectual marker for stative verbs.

(Occasionally, a state can be considered a future possibility; in such cases, the stative verb is coded with the irrealis modality marker *mwan*. This is discussed in more detail in §6.4.2.1.1.)

Table 6.4 cross-tabulates how *te* ‘perfective (PFV)’ and *mwe* ‘imperfective (IPFV)’ interact with the inherent aspectuality of the verb. For example, the effect of *te* ‘perfective’ and *mwe* ‘imperfective’ marking on a non-stative verb results in the verb being interpreted as occurring in the past or the present, respectively. As for stative verbs, *te* ‘perfective’ marks the verb as being a state, while *mwe* ‘imperfective’ lends an inchoative sense to the stative verb:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NON-STATIVE</th>
<th>STATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>te</em></td>
<td>past</td>
<td>stative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mwe</em></td>
<td>present</td>
<td>inchoative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4: Interaction between aspect marking and verb aspectuality

In the following two sections on non-stative verbs and stative verbs, the interaction between aspectual marking and the aspectual character of the verb is explored further. This is then followed by an examination of how negation is handled in the perfective aspect.

### 6.4.1.1.1 Non-Stative Verbs

As mentioned above, when the perfective marker is attached to non-stative verbs, the action is depicted as completed. Imperfective marking conveys that an action is still in progress. This is illustrated with *-bma* ‘come’ in (43) (perfectively marked) versus (44) (imperfectively marked):

(43) Na te=bma.
    1SG PFV=come
    ‘I came.’ –EF1p68

(44) Na mwa=bma.
    1SG IPFV=come
    ‘I am coming.’ –EF1p68

In (45), *mwe* ‘imperfective (IPFV)’ (in the form of allomorph =m) functions as a durative marker:
In Abma, habitual events are also coded with the imperfective marker. Consider (46), where the speaker explains how to weave a basket. Since basket-weaving is a characteristic of daily life, and it is procedural in nature, she uses imperfective aspect. (Imperfective is marked by initial consonant mutation on verbs beginning with bilabial sounds, as with ko ban ‘you go’.)

(46) Na mwa=two stori na-n watang.
1SG IPFv=tell.story story ASSOC-3SG.POSS basket
‘I’m going to tell a story about baskets.’

Tugoah ko=m don-i neh u ko=ma vits-i watang,
if 2SG=IPFV want-TR COMP 2SG=PRSP weave-TR basket
ba, aina, ko ban ni-ng-ri
COMM something 2SG IPFV.go CONN-remove-TR
bila-m wib.
CL.RS-2SG.POSS pandanus.leaf
‘If you want to weave a basket, like, you go get your pandanus leaf from [a tree].’
–EF2p37/D39T6

Imperfective aspect is also regularly used in narratives. Once a particular scene in a story has been established, the speaker is then free to use the imperfective, which creates a sense of the “here and now”; this continues on until the next significant scene is introduced.

Example (47) is taken from the middle of a historical account of a war. Since the war occurred in the past, the narrator introduces significant events using perfective marking on verbs, but once the event is established, verbs are thereafter coded in the imperfective:

(47) Ra=t vena, ra=t vena, bi mwa=iah.
3PL=PFV shoot 3PL=PFV shoot and 3SG.IPFV=fall.down
‘They shot her, they shot her, and she falls down.’

Igo rowo-n, tei te bulong.
because power-3SG.POSS FOC 3SG.PFV not.exist
‘Because her strength, it was gone.’
And she falls down, and she falls down towards her child, and they pick up an axe, they go cut her into very small pieces.' -D2T11/T2p31

Imperfective marking on verbs persists until the next significant event is introduced.

6.4.1.1.2 Stative Verbs

As discussed above, perfective marking on non-stative verbs generally leads to a past tense interpretation of the event. However, perfective marking does not have this effect on stative verbs. In (48), the perfective marker does not locate the sentence in the past:

(48) No-k toraoses ra=t meme.
    CL.GE-1SG.POSS trousers 3PL=PFV be.red
    ‘My trousers are red.’ –EF1p93

The perfective marker is indeed the default marker for stative verbs. The alternative, imperfective marking, is usually incompatible due to its focus on the internal dynamics of an event. However, there are occasions when it is useful to code a stative verb with the imperfective. This occurs when a state is indeed observed to be going through a slow change. For example, while (49) is more typical, (50) is also used if there is focus on the actual change in water level:

(49) Sileng te=web.
    water 3SG.PFV=be.small
    ‘There’s not much water.’

(50) Sileng b=web.
    water 3SG.IPFV=small
    ‘The water level is going down.’

Imperfective marking on stative verbs is also useful in complex sentences, where an extended state allows two events to be overlapped temporally. In the following sentence, the stative
verb -tkol ‘be unripe’ is coded imperfectively. This then frees up the “conceptual time” for the activity of banana grating to take place:

(51) Naanong, ihgoah is nii ra mwa=tkol ngamwa, now when banana PL 3PL IPFv=be.strong yet

ba ta=n lel bwiri loklok.
COMM IPL=IRR make can pudding
‘Now, when the bananas are still unripe, we can make pudding.’ –FN4p3

Such “conceptual time” is significant enough for the perfective form of the verb to be deemed ungrammatical:

(52) *Naanong, ihgoah is nii ra te=tkol ngamwa,
now when banana PL 3PL PFv=be.strong yet

ba ta=n lel bwiri loklok.
COMM IPL=IRR make can pudding
‘Now, when the bananas are still unripe, we can make pudding.’ –FN4p3

So it is clear that speakers can manipulate aspect marking to convey nuances of meaning.

Example (53), a historical recount, provides a final example of this: it contains two stative verbs, one marked imperfectively, the other perfectly:

(53) Kaa=m git-a mwas na-n ut kut
1PL.EXC=IPFV see-TR life ASSOC-3SG.POSS place bush

mwe=gabmwa naanong. Igo no-ma sileng
3SG.IPFV=be.bad now because CL.GE-1PL.EXC.POSS water

fe bulong.
3SG.PFV not.exist
‘We see that life in the bush is bad now.
‘Because our water was gone.’

Gabmwa ‘be bad’ is marked imperfectively. While it could also have been marked perfectly, the use of imperfective highlights the fact that residents of the bush are suffering, and this suffering is ongoing, and getting worse. This therefore heightens the seriousness of the problem.
Then when the speaker talks about the lack of water, he switches to perfective marking. Use of the perfective marker emphases that water is not merely in the process of drying up – it has already dried up. Therefore, the drought is a *fait accompli*, and the situation is dire.

### 6.4.1.1.3 Negation

Negated verbs (stative or non-stative) must also be coded for aspect. Only perfective coding is grammatical, even if a verb clearly occurs in the present time, and not the past. As with stative verbs, then, perfective coding is the unmarked norm, while imperfective coding is marked, or less usual. Comrie (1976) notes that “…in many cases, the meaning of the unmarked category can encompass that of its marked counterpart,” and this appears to be the case in Abnla. (On the other hand, when future events are negated, the irrealis marker *mwan* is used. This roughly parallels the situation in Lenakel, where there is only a morphological distinction made between future negatives and non-future negatives, as opposed to more finely-graded distinctions in the negative between the future, present, past, etc. (Lynch, 1978: 43-51). The negative irrealis is discussed in §6.4.2.1.2.)

To illustrate how te ‘perfective (PFV)’ functions in negation, note the grammaticality of (54), which is perfectly marked, versus the non-grammaticality of (55), which is imperfectively marked:

(54) Belanie te=ba git-a=nga.
B. 3SG.PFV=NEG.1 see-TR=NEG.2
‘Belanie can’t find it.’ [Lit.: ‘Belanie can’t see it.’] –EF1p53

(55) *Belanie mwe=ba git-a=nga.
B. 3SG.IPFV=NEG.1 see-TR=NEG.2
‘Belanie can’t find it.’ -EF1p53

Even in-progress situations (where the affirmative takes imperfective marking) have a negative counterpart that is perfectly marked. Contrast (56) and (57):

(56) Na=m nok naa i umw-an nong.
1SG=IPFV finish now PREP work-NMZR this
‘I’m finishing this work.’ –EF1p162

(57) Na=t bado nok=nga i umw-an ahe.
1SG=IPV not.yet finish=NEG.2 PREP work-NMZR this
‘I’m not finishing this work yet.’ –EF1p162
One possible functional explanation for the dominance of *te* ‘perfective (PFV)’ in negation is because a negated entity – an action or event that does not occur – must be bounded, and the perfective marker codes bounded events.

### 6.4.1.2 Other Syntactic Means for Marking Aspect

Aside from the grammatical morphemes *te* ‘perfective (PFV)’ and *mwe* ‘imperfective (IPFV)’, there also exists a cohort of lexical morphemes that regularly function as durative/habitual/continuous aspect markers. The major ones are: *di* ‘stay, exist’, *dok* ‘stay, exist’, *sadok* ‘sit down’ and *–tbo* ‘lay down’.

All four morphemes are used in serial verb constructions to express the aspect of an associated verb. *Di* and *dok* are additionally used in clause chains, as well as *vaawo* ‘start’. While the usage of these verbs is frequent, their functional gloss is not entirely regular or predictable, so they cannot be considered grammatical morphemes. However, they are clearly heading down that trajectory.

Chapters 8 (Serial Verb Constructions) and 9 (Complex Sentences) explain in detail the way serialisation and clause chaining, respectively, are used to express aspect.

### 6.4.2 Modality

Modality marking fills the same position in the VP as aspect marking; thus aspect and modality are mutually exclusive. They cannot be simultaneously coded onto the verb.

*Mwan* ‘irrealis (IRR)’ indicates irrealis modality in general, *nema* ‘prospective (PRSP)’ codes intentions, and *bat* ‘hypothetical (HYP)’ codes hypothetical, subjunctive, and counterfactual modalities.
6.4.2.1 Irrealis (IRR) *mwan*

The irrealis marker *mwan* codes an event that has not yet happened, or is not likely to happen. By virtue of its inherent semantics of “uncertainty”, *mwan* ‘irrealis (IRR)’ is typically used in reference to future events:

(58) Itan *mwan=i* dokah?
who 3SG.IRR=come here
‘Who will come here?’ -EF1p62

In this way, irrealis modality contrasts with imperfective and perfective aspects, as the latter two refer to events that have occurred, or are in the process of occurring. They are therefore inherently realis in modality.

But while *mwan* ‘irrealis (IRR)’ normally has a future tense interpretation, as in (58) above, it can also be juxtaposed with past events to indicate uncertainty about the truth value of these events, as in (59):

(59) Na=m hu *mwan=i* wul katsil, na go ah
1SG=IPFY think 3SG.IRR=be month three DEF one REL
tagele dobo.
3SG.PFY fiddle.with for.a.while
‘I think it may have been three months that he fiddled around with them.’ -T1pp48-49/D2T25

Note that in (59), *mwan*, prefixed to the copula verb *bibi* ‘to be’, is not connected to a particular event. It simply functions as a marker of uncertainty regarding the length of time over which the event was carried out. The event itself occurred in the past, as indicated by the perfective marking on *sagele* ‘fiddle with’.

6.4.2.1.1 Stative Verbs

While irrealis modality usually co-occurs with non-stative verbs, it is also used with stative verbs in the appropriate context, as in (60):

(60) Mwas-an *mwan* gabis. *mwan* sabwaleh, sera.
life-NMZ 3SG.IRR be.good 3SG.IRR be.same everyone
‘Life will be good, it will be the same for everyone.’ –T1p43/D2T9
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Gabis ‘be good’ and sabwaleh ‘be the same’ are projected as potential future states; hence they take irrealis marking.

6.4.2.1.2 Imperatives and Warnings

Although Abma does have an imperative mood, which is unmarked (see Chapter 7 (Simple Sentences)), the irrealis marker is also used to issue imperatives.

Sentence (61) is extracted from a text where the leader of the birds, the hawk, is dictating to the kingfisher what his duties are to be. Irrealis =n is coded in kon dangro sera ‘you will finish praying’ and kon veb seresere too ‘you will announce the weather’:

(61) Ko=n dangro sera bi abma ah mwan=gab
     2SG-IRR pray finish and what REL 3SG.IRR=happen
     ba ko=n veb seresere too.
     COMM 2SG=IRR say say.aloud weather
     ‘You will finish praying, and what will happen, you will announce the weather.’
     –T2p67/D2T43

Warnings are also commonly issued with irrealis mwan. A common utterance is Ko=n rarei! ‘Watch out!’, where =n codes irrealis. In (62) the youngest child is warned by his infuriated elder siblings not to come down from his position high up in a tree. Again, the first clause, sibma ‘come down’, takes =n ‘irrealis (IRR)’ marking:

(62) Ko=n sibma tavan, ba kaa=mwa hi kik!
     2SG=IRR come.down low.position COMM 1PL.EXC=IPFY hit 2SG.OBJ
     ‘You come down and we’ll kill [e.g., hit with intent to murder] you!’
     –FN4p69/D39T10

6.4.2.1.3 Negation and Prohibition

An irrealis event can be negated if it is unlikely to happen, as (63) illustrates:

(63) Ihgo mwan=uus ba mwan ba=bma te=nga.
     if 3SG.IRR=rain COMM 3SG.IRR NEG.1=come PART=NEG.2
     ‘If it rains, then he won’t come.’
     –EF1p97

Prohibitions can also be coded with the irrealis. In (64), -bma ‘come’ is coded with both irrealis and prohibitive:

(64)
6.4.2.2 Relevance: Prospective (PRSP) *nema*

*Nema* ‘prospective (PRSP)’ is used to indicate something that is just about to happen “just now”. It is often used to express wishes or intentions, but whether or not the action or event actually occurs is uncertain.

Sentence (65) illustrates the prospective marker in an independent clause:

65) Mabonmwel, ba **nema** vetsi nana noko-n bvet.
M. COMM 3SG.PRSP help 1SG.OBJ body-3SG.POSS taro

‘Mabonmwel will help me with the taro.’

It is important to emphasise that *nema* ‘prospective (PRSP)’ is not a tense marker. It does imply futurity, but this is relative to the temporal frame of the rest of the sentence. In contrast, tense markers in their most basic form account for absolute time, not relative time.

Verbs marked with *nema* typically occur in a subordinate clause where the verb in the main clause is often an utterance verb such as *veb* ‘say’ or *uhleli* ‘ask’. The result is an expression of unfulfilled intention. This is exemplified in (66) and (67):

66) Te=veb **nema=bma** ba kiisa-n
3SG.PFV=say 3SG.PRSP=come COMM brother-3SG.POSS

Ø mat.
3SG.IPFV die

‘He said he was coming when his brother died.’ –EF1p162

67) Na=t uhleli i-ni nehu **nema** vetsi kik.
1SG=PFV ask PREP-3SG.OBJ COMP 3SG.PRSP help 2SG.OBJ

‘I asked him to help you.’ –EF1p111
Note that in neither (66) nor (67) is there a guarantee that the event will actually be carried out. *Nema* is often used in this context, where an expression of intent may or may not be followed by action. In (68), the intended action coded by *nema* is ultimately thwarted:

(68) Bi bwara teltel=ah te=gam dok ne-veb, and big snake=PROX 3SG.PFV=MIN stay CONN-say

* nema sib. ba kab mwe=gatsi.
3SG.PRSP go.down COMM crab 3SG.IPFV=bite
‘And this big snake is just saying that he’ll go down, when the crab bites him.’
-D20T16L10

Verbs in prospective modality are subordinated not only to main verbs that are perfective, as demonstrated in the examples above, but also to main verbs in imperfective aspect and irrealis modality, as shown by (69), (70), and (71) below. Note also that the main verbs in (69), (70), and (71) are not utterance verbs. While *nema* ‘prospective (PRSP)’ often co-occurs with utterance verbs in the main clause, it is not restricted to these:

(69) Ko-m gitulu wede nehu nema=i ni 2SG-IPFY choose owl COMP 3SG.PRSP=be 3SG.IND

ba naanong ba te=mat.
COMM now COMM 3SG.PFV=die
‘You chose the owl (so that he should be the one), but now he’s dead.’ -T2p63/D2T43

(70) Ra=m rere naanong, uugo nema lak.
3PL=:IPFY prepare now in.order.that 3SG.PRSP marry
‘They’re preparing now to marry.’ -FN4p85/D20T22

(71) Ba entorah mwan=van ah nema ren...
COMM when 3SG.IRR=go SUB 3SG.PRSP be.daylight
‘And when it’s almost daylight…’ -T2p65/D2T43

6.4.2.3 Hypothetical (HYP) *bat*

*Bat* ‘hypothetical (HYP)’ is also a marker of irrealis modality. However, it is used specifically in hypothetical situations. Its functionality also spills over into counterfactual and subjunctive contexts.
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Its major role is that of a hypothetical marker, as in (72). The speaker was asked what he would do if he found a large sum of money. His response is coded in the hypothetical, as indicated by the bolded verbs:

(72) Ihgoah na=bat wutihi=te mwani alibe ah bate-i
if 1SG=HYP find=PART money sometime REL 3SG.HYP-be
bwara mwani te=gen go ah bate-i nehu
big money 3SG.PFY=like this SUB 3SG.HYP-be say
faev milian...
five million
‘If I found money sometime where it was big money, like, it was, say, five million...’ - T2p47

Closely related to the hypothetical is the counterfactual, which depicts events that could have occurred, but were known to have not been successful. *Bat* is also used in counterfactual contexts:

(73) Ø Ban, Booga Ø ban, bi Ø ban,
3SG IPFV.go B. 3SG IPFV.go and 3SG IPFV.go
mwo=goo dobmi uugoah bat lelte bo,
3SG.IPV=walkabout try in.order.that 3SG.HYP make=PART pig
ba tebu.
COMM no
‘He goes, Booga goes, and goes, he tries going walkabout in order that he might do some pig business, but it doesn’t happen.’ - T2p101/D2T49L30

In the above sentence, *bat lelte bo* ‘might do pig business’ can also be construed as having a subjunctive meaning. Sentence (74) has a subjunctive reading, too:

(74) Ba ra=t dongvi atsi tokol niah bat saleh
COMM 3PL=PFV look.for person strong REL 3SG.HYP rule
i-nii.
PREP.3PL.ACC
‘They looked for one strong man who would rule them.’ - T2p53

6.4.2.3.1 Stative Verbs

Hypothetical modality normally occurs with non-stative verbs, but if reference is made to a hypothetical state, then stative verbs are amenable to hypothetical marking:
(75) Uugoaha, mwas-an no-n tarut nii
in.order.that live-NMZr CL.GE-3SG.POSS people PL

bat gabis.
3SG.HYP be.good
‘In order that the life of the people would be good.’ -T2p49/D2T37

In (75), the speaker would prefer people’s lives to be easier, but this is not the case. Hence the stative verb gabis ‘be good’ is in hypothetical modality.

6.4.2.3.2 Negation

Hypothetical situations can be negated: in (76), the speaker is talking about how the word for bwala kul ‘coconut shell’ used to be different, and if that word had been uttered in a previous time, nobody would have understood:

(76) Niah mwate, ba ko bat=ba wutihi “bwala kul”=nga.
REL before COMM 2SG HYP=NEG.1 find shell coconut=NEG.2
‘Whereas before, you wouldn’t be able to find “bwala kul”.’ –FN4p90/D23T1
Chapter 7: Simple Sentences

7 SIMPLE SENTENCES

In this chapter the essential features of simple sentences are discussed. Section §7.1 looks at basic sentence structure and the two basic forms that simple sentences take: verbal and non-verbal. It also demonstrates the way core constituents can move around in the sentence. Section §7.2 then moves away from the core elements of the sentence, looking at prepositional phrases, adverbials of time and location, and other adverbials. After this exploration of sentence form, the basic sentence types are described in §7.3, following traditional grammatical categories such as declarative, existential, negative, interrogative, and imperative/prohibitive. Then reciprocals/reflexives are briefly looked at in §7.4. Finally, passivisation is explored in §7.5.

7.1 Basic Sentence Structure

Simple sentences in Abma are either verbal (i.e., the predicate is a VP) or non-verbal (i.e., the predicate is an NP or some other element). Most sentences are verbal, so these will be examined first.

7.1.1 Verbal Predicates

Abma has a nominative-accusative system and the basic word order of the sentence is SVO. Although constituents do have some scope for moving around in the sentence (discussed in §7.1.3 below), SVO is nevertheless the normal way of ordering sentences, and verbal predicates appear after an optional subject NP.

Minimally, a verbal predicate corresponds to a single clause. Sentence (1) contains only a verb, with no subject NP or direct object NP:

(1) Mu=us.
   3SG.IPfv=rain
   ‘It’s raining.’

In (2), haavak nii ‘children’ is the subject and rat sasa ‘they sing’ is the predicate, an intransitive VP. Examples in this chapter highlight the key sentential components under discussion with brackets.
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(2) [Haavak nii] [ra=t sasa].
child PL 3PL=PFV sing
‘The children sang.’ -T2p30

The subject pronoun *ra* ‘3PL’ in (2) is a key element of the VP, co-indexing the VP with the subject NP, and taking aspectual/modal encliticisation when necessary. While subject NPs occur pre-verbally, they are not necessarily present in all sentences with verbal predicates. This is especially true of sentences with a non-third person subject. Sentence (3), for example, is an intransitive clause with the predicate *nam di* ‘I stay’, but it lacks an overtly coded subject NP:

(3) [Na=m di] lele-n val-ik.
1SG=IPFY stay inside-3SG.POSS house-1SG.POSS
‘I stay inside my house.’ -EF2p224

In this case, the subject pronoun, *na* ‘1SG’, assumes a meaning similar to the nominative pronoun *I* in English.

That said, it is, however, possible for an independent pronoun to occur in subject NP position and therefore be indexed by a subject pronoun (within the VP). In (4), the first sentence contains two conjoined VPs (which are bracketed). There are no subject NPs in the first sentence. In the second sentence, the independent pronoun *nii* ‘3PL.IND’ occurs in subject position. This is co-indexed in the following VP by the third person plural subject pronoun, *ra=t* ‘3PL=PFV’:

(4) [Te=mkoo i kuran], bi [mwe=ak-o karis,
PFV=allow PREP war and IPFY=give-TR bow.and.arrow
‘He allowed the war [to happen], and he gave bows and arrows to the people.’

mini tarut nii]. [Nii] [ra=t vai-ni],
PREP people PL 3PL.IND 3PL=PFV shoot-TR
‘They shot them.’ -T3p29/D2T13

Verbal predicates may be intransitive (§7.1.1.1), transitive (§7.1.1.2), or copular (§7.1.1.3), and these three types are discussed below.
7.1.1.1 Intransitive Clauses

Intransitive sentences have no direct object. In (5), the subject is *ut* ‘place’ and the predicate is *te=web* ‘PFV=be.small’:

\[(5) \ [Ut] \ [te=web \ nge]. \]
\[\text{place \ PFV=be.small \ just} \]
\[\text{‘The place is just small.’} \quad \text{–D2T29}\]

Sentence (6) illustrates a negative intransitive; negation is marked by the discontinuous negative morpheme, *ba....nga*. The subject is *atsi* ‘person’ and the verb *i* ‘be’ is contained within the larger (bracketed) predicate:

\[(6) \ [Atsi] \ [ra=t \ ba=i=te \ hal \ kau=nga], \ li \ vini \ ah \ Sanial. \]
\[\text{person \ 3PL=PFV \ NEG.1=be=PART \ quantity \ big=NEG.2 \ LOC \ village \ APP \ S.} \]
\[\text{‘People are not in big quantities \{there aren’t a lot of people\} in the village of Sanial.’} \quad \text{–D2T29}\]

7.1.1.2 Transitive Clauses

Transitive clauses have a direct object. In (7), *bo* ‘pig’ is the subject NP, and *mwe gatsi kidi* is the predicate, wherein *kidi* ‘1PL.INC.OBJ’ is the direct object:

\[(7) \ [Bo] \ [mwe=gats-i \ kidi]. \]
\[\text{pig \ 3SG.IPFV=bite-TR \ 1PL.INC.OBJ} \]
\[\text{‘The pig bites us.’} \quad \text{–EF1p7}\]

Sentence (8) is transitive but this example lacks an independent subject NP. The direct object NP is *waluk* ‘my friend’:

\[(8) \ [Na=m \ git-a \ walu-k.]. \]
\[\text{1SG=IPFV \ see-TR \ friend-1SG.POSS} \]
\[\text{‘I see my friend.’} \quad \text{–EF2p149A}\]

A sentence may also be transitive, but lacking a direct object NP. In (9) (repeated from (4) above), the first clause of the first sentence is intransitive, while the second clause is transitive; its direct object NP is *karis* ‘bow and arrow’. The second sentence of this example is more interesting: it is transitive because *vaini* ‘shoot’ takes transitivity marking. But in this instance its direct object is assumed rather than explicit:
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(9) [Te=mkoo i kuran], bi [mwe=ak-o karis, PFV=allow PREP war and IPFV=give-TR bow.and.arrow
‘He allowed the war [to happen], and he gave bows and arrows to the people.’

mini tarut nii]. [Nii] [ra=t vai-ni]. PREP people PL 3PL.IND 3PL=IPFV shoot-TR
‘They shot them.’ -T3p29/D2T13

Even though the direct object of vai-ni ‘shoot-TR’ is absent in (9), the verb still takes a transitive suffix. However, other verbs are invariably transitive in form; they never gain or lose a transitive suffix. In (10), the first instantiation of the invariantly transitive verb aldiro ‘visit’ has no overtly coded direct object. In its second instantiation, aldiro is followed by an object; in either case, its form is unchanged:

(10) Ra=m ruwu bila-a beta bi ra ban 3PL=IPFV plant CL.RS-3PL.POSS breadfruit and 3PL IPFV.go
‘They plant their breadfruit and they go

ne-di dobo li vini na-a. Tei naa va bwaleh, CONN-stay do.for.a.while LOC village ASSOC-3PL.POSS FOC now time one and stay for a while in their villages. Now one time,

bi ra beb ra ban ne-aldiro. Ra ban ihe, and 3PL IPFV.say 3PL IPFV.go CONN-visit 3PL.IPFV go there they say they’re going to visit [them]. They go there,

go te=gam dok ne-van ne-aldiro bila-n, ba te=mat. one PFV=MIN DUR CONN-go CONN-visit CL.RS-3SG.POSS COMM 3SG.PFV=die one [person] just goes to visit his [breadfruit], but it’s dead.’ –FN4p63/D39T10

For a review of verb subcategories, see Chapter 4 (Word Classes).

7.1.1.3 Copular Clauses

Copular verbs denote equational sentences – they signify an equivalence between the subject and predicate. The predicate can be an NP or a PP, but not an adjective or adverb. Type 1 adjectives are instead instantiated as nouns in this position, and what are often classified as spatial adverbs in many languages (e.g., here and there, or above and below in English) are categorised as locative nouns in Abma (see Chapter 4 (Word Classes)).
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Bibi ‘be’ and gamui ‘become’ are copular verbs. In (11), mwe gamui ‘become’ is part of the predicate; ngudu kauah ‘a nice fat one’ is the predicate nominal:

(11) [Cindy] [mwe=gamui ngudu kau=ah].
C. 3SG.PFV=become good.size big.one=PRox
‘Cindy’s becoming nice and fat.’ [Lit.: ‘Cindy is becoming this good-sized big one.’] –EF2p208

Although bibi ‘be’ is slightly irregular in the way it is conjugated and in its morphophonemic behaviour, it exhibits basic verbal properties such as requiring a subject pronoun and being inflected for aspect/modality. In (12), the topicalised subject NP is nana ‘1SG.IND’; the predicate consists of the copula na bi ‘I am’ (coded in imperfective aspect) plus the predicate nominal sesesrakan terabwa ‘new teacher’:

(12) [Nana], [na-Ø bi sesesrakan te-rabwa].
1SG.IND 1SG-IPFY be teacher ADJ2-new
‘Me, I’m a new teacher.’ –EF1p8

Although (12) above has a copula, copulas are actually optional in imperfective aspect. The alternative would be a non-verbal predicate – these are discussed in §7.1.2 below.

Equational sentences not coded in imperfective aspect (such as perfective aspect or realis modality) require a copula. Sentence (13) is coded in the irrealis, and a copula is required within the predicate:

(13) [Hotsi-k] [mwan=bi sesesrakan].
brother/sister-1SG.POSS 3SG.IRR=be teacher
‘My brother/sister will be a teacher.’ -EF2p165

As a corollary to this, since negated sentences do not allow imperfective aspect marking (see Chapter 6 (Verb Phrases)), the copula is also necessary in equational sentences that are negated. In (14), the copula verb (reduced to i in this environment) is preceded and followed by the discontinuous negative morpheme, ba...nga. This sentence contains no subject NP:

(14) [Te ba=i=te bila-ma=nga.]
3SG.PFV NEG.1=be=PART property-1PL.EXC.POSS=NEG.2
‘It isn’t our property.’ –T2p5/D2T31
Copular clauses may also contain PPs, though usage of PPs is very limited. Going by the available data, only two prepositions are amenable to occurring as predicate within a copular clause. These are *le* ‘time (TIME)’, ‘location (LOC)’, which appears a total of six times in the corpus, and *uu* ‘purpose (PURP)’ ‘pertaining to’, which occurs three times.

In (15), *le sikaah* ‘during this year’ is a PP occurring within the copular clause, which is bracketed:

(15) Jo, [mwan=bi le sika=ah], ba leng mwan=ih.
   or 3SG.IRR=be TIME year=PROX COMM wind 3SG.IRR=hit
   ‘Or, it will be during this year, there will be a hurricane [the wind will hit].’ - T2p71/D2T43

In (16), *uu nana* ‘as for me’ is a PP within the (bracketed) copular clause:

(16) Malka mwe=gats-i kik ba [mwe=gamui
   cold 3SG.IPFV=bite-TR 2SG.OBJ COMM 3SG.IPFV=become
   uu nana] ba tebu.
   regarding 1SG.OBJ COMM no
   ‘The cold bites at you, but as for me, no.’ -T3p50

7.1.2 Non-Verbal Predicates

Non-verbal predicates, at the bare minimum, consist of a subject NP followed by a predicate in an equational sentence. The predicate normally contains another NP; other elements such as adjectives, PPs, and adverbs occur infrequently in predicate position. Erstwhile adjectives are typically nominalised in predicate position (type 1 adjectives), or they are instantiated as stative verbs in verbal predicates (type 2 adjectives). Because of this, and also since Abma has several existential verbs (including negative existential), the usage of non-verbal sentences in the language is generally rather limited.

Example (17) illustrates how numerals occur in predicate position. *Karu* ‘two’ is juxtaposed in a non-verbal predicate against the subject NP, *nitsu* ‘his children’:

(17) Maa tei te gakat bi [nitsu-n] tei [karu], tei daalat karu.
    hunger FOC 3SG.PFV gnaw and child-3SG.POSS FOC two FOC girl two
    ‘Hunger gnawed [there was a famine], and he had two children, two girls.’ - T1p8/D2T1
Other examples of NP juxtaposition are given in (18), (19), and (20). The predicate NPs occur in the second part of the sentence:

(18) [Kik] [itan]?
2SG.IND who
‘Who are you?’ [Lit.: ‘You who?’] -EF1p5

(19) [Nana] [sesesrakan].
1SG.IND teacher
‘I’m a teacher.’

(20) [Go=a], ba [lasngi].
one=PROX COMM taro.leaf
‘This one, it’s taro leaf.’ -FN4p96/D23T1

While apposition was described in Chapter 5 (Noun Phrases) in terms of its role within the NP, it also functions at a sentential level. In (21), the non-verbal predicate is the appositive NP, Denison:

(21) [Ha=k] ah [Denison].
name-1SG.POSS APP D.
‘My name is Denison.’ -EF1p4

### 7.1.3 Manipulation of Basic Sentence Structure

Subjects normally occur before the verb (or predicate NP), and direct objects occur after the verb. Constituents may shift away from their normal position, but this is less common. Section §7.1.3.1 looks at subject postposing, and §7.1.3.2 discusses object preposing.

#### 7.1.3.1 Subject Postposing

If the subject is removed from its usual pre-verbal position, then it must be preceded by the definite subject marker, na, as in (22) and (23):\(^2\)

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1. In this sentence, **goaha** ‘this one’ is technically a topic NP rather than a subject NP. Subjects versus topics are covered in Chapter 10 (Discourse Structure).
2. Subjects are always definite in Abma, for reasons discussed in Chapter 10 (Information Structure). The morpheme **na** ‘definite (DEF)’ therefore doubles as a subject marker and a marker of other definite NPs (that are not subjects).
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(22) [Mwe=lel-i ka-n bwer a hinak], [na mal].
3SG.IPFV=make-TR CL.ED-3SG.POSS big meal DEF swamp harrier
‘He makes his big meal, this swamp harrier does.’ —T2p57/D2T43

(23) [Ra=t sasa], [na haavak nii].
3PL=PFV sing DEF child PL
‘They sang, the children.’ —T2p30

If the postposed subject is not marked for definiteness, then the sentence is ungrammatical, as in (24):

(24) *[Ra=t sasa], [haavak nii].
3PL=PFV sing child PL
‘They sang, the children.’ —T2p30

The na subject marker also operates at the discourse level; this is explored in Chapter 10 (Information Structure).

7.1.3.2 Object Preposing

Preposed direct objects are moved to the very front of the sentence, before the VP and any subject NP. Unlike postposed subjects, preposed direct object NPs receive no special morphology. They are merely set apart from the rest of the sentence by a pause, while the verb retains its transitive suffix. This is illustrated in (25). Bikin ah vee ‘main dish of island cabbage’ is the preposed direct object; the verb -lngi ‘put’ remains transitive (its intransitive form is ling):

(25) [Bikin ah vee], [te=lng-i Ø le dis].
main.dish APP island.cabbage 3SG.PFV=put-TR DO LOC dish
‘The main dish, island cabbage, she put it in a dish.’—FN4p101/D23T1

Chapter 10 (Information Structure) explains how topics introduce the theme of the discourse, and how they are set apart from the rest of the sentence by a pause. Direct objects therefore fulfil this function when they are fronted.
7.2 Non-Core Elements and Adjuncts

The non-core components and adjuncts include prepositional phrases, adverbials of time and place, and other adverbials that do not form part of the sentence core. They occur at the periphery of the sentence, either before the subject NP or after the direct object NP. They never come between the subject NP and the VP, or between the verb and the direct object.

7.2.1 Prepositional Phrases

Prepositional phrases are not core constituents of the sentence. In (26), the PP is *dini kik* ‘from you; in (27), the PP is *saasari ut Melsisi* ‘near Melsisi’:

(26) [Na=ma van] naa dini kik nong.  
1SG=PRSP go now ABL 2SG.OBJ now  
‘I’m going to go away from you now.’ –T1p55/D2T25

(27) [Ra=t di] saasari ut Melsisi.  
3PL=Pfv stay near place M.  
‘They stayed near Melsisi.’ –T1p59/D2T21

Typically, PPs occur after the verb and any direct object, but in theory they can also occur before the core constituents. For example, *le ren sera* ‘every day’ can occur before or after the predicate, as shown in (28) and (29):

(28) Le ren sera [mwa=mni sileng].  
TIME day every 3SG.IPFV=drink water  
‘Every day he drinks water.’ -EF1p7a

(29) [Mwa=mni sileng] le ren sera.  
3SG.IPFV=drink water TIME day every  
‘He drinks water every day.’ -EF1p7A

7.2.2 Adverbials of Time

Time adverbials are instantiated as temporal nouns. Like PPs, they usually occur after the VP, but they can also occur sentence-initially. In (30) and (31), the adverbials of time are bolded:
7.2.3 Adverbials of Location

Adverbials of location take the form of a locative NP. Unlike other adjuncts, there are no known examples of locative adverbials occurring in any position except for directly after the predicate:

(32) [Mwe=sadok mwe=lel-i kanleutan] kamel.
    3SG.IPFV=sit 3SG.IPFV=make-TR food meeting.house
    ‘He sits down, he makes food in the meeting house.’ –FN4p19

In (33), bek ‘near me’ is a bound locative NP:

(33) [Mwi=di] be-k.
    3SG.IPFV=stay proximity-1SG.POSS
    ‘He is staying with me.’ –T2p7/D2T31

7.2.4 Other Adverbials

Aside from PPs, temporal adverbials, and locative adverbials, there are various other adverbials that function as peripheral constituents to the basic sentence. These take the form of adverbs, adjectives, and NPs (which are not temporal or locative NPs).

In (34), naut lengleng ‘a very long way’ is an adverbial of distance (in the form of an NP):

(34) [Ko=m hural] naut lengleng.
    2SG=IPFV walk a.long.way very
    ‘You walk a very long way.’

Ras nge ‘just all the time’ is an adverbial of frequency in (35):

(35) Ba [ko=n mwas luh~luhmwi] ras nge.
    COMM 2SG=IRR live INT~be.good all.the.time just
    ‘But you just live really well, all the time.’ –T1p43/D2T9
In (36), temrab ‘long’ is a type 2 adjective functioning as an adverbial:

(36) [Ko==n mwas] te-mrab o!
2SG-IRR live ADJ2-long oh
‘Oh, you’ll live long!’ –EF1p163

7.3 Basic Sentence Types

There are five basic sentence types in Abma based on function: declarative, existential, negative, interrogative, and imperative/prohibitive. These are minimally distinguished from each other on formal grounds – structurally, they are all identical. Differences between them lie in verbal semantics, morphological marking and intonation patterns.

7.3.1 Declarative

Declarative sentences make an assertion. Sentences (37) and (38) are examples of declarative sentences:

(37) [Na ban Vila].
1SG IPFV.go V.
‘I’m going to Vila.’ -EF2p164

(38) [Dolsen] [te git-a nana].
D. 3SG.PFV see-TR 1SG.OBJ
‘Dolsen saw me.’

7.3.2 Existential

Existential sentences have the specialised function of asserting the existence of a person, a thing, or an abstract entity. They have a standard SV structure where V (verb) affirms the existence of S (subject). There is no “dedicated” existential verb; however, postural verbs fulfill this function: these are di ‘stand, stay’, dok ‘stay’, -tbo ‘lay down’, and sadok ‘sit down’. There is also a verb that asserts non-existence: bulong. The copular verb bibi ‘be’ is not used in existential constructions.

In (39), the speaker declares the existence of verakabin ‘its ashes’ using the verb mwidi ‘it stays’:
(39) Bi [bwara verakabi-n] naanong [mwi=di].
and big ashes-3SG.POSS now 3SG.IPFY=stay
‘And now there are lots of ashes.’ –FN4p102/D23T1

In this well-used expression, the concept of bwara- ‘pain’ is asserted using mwodok ‘it stays’:

(40) [Bware-m] [mwo=dok].
pain-2SG.POSS 3SG.IPFY=stay
‘I’m sorry about you [e.g., you’re leaving].’ [Lit.: ‘Your pain stays.’] –EF1p157

The negative existential bulong ‘not exist’ is used in a range of contexts:

(41) [Bwet] [te bulong].
taro 3SG.PFY not.exist
‘There’s no taro.’ –EF1p33

(42) [Hal-an tarak] [te bulong] dokah.
road-3SG.POSS truck 3SG.PFY not.exist here
‘There’s no road here.’ –EF1p66

(43) [Rowo-k] [te bulong].
power-1SG.POSS 3SG.PFY not.exist
‘I’m weak.’ [Lit.: ‘My power does not exist.’] –EF1p65

7.3.3 Negative

In negative sentences, the proposition asserted by the verb is negated. The discontinuous negative morpheme is ba...nga. This morpheme is restricted in scope: ba ‘negative (NEG.1)’ directly precedes the verb root and nga ‘negative (NEG.2)’ follows either the verb root or the direct object, if there is one. Sentence (44) demonstrates how ba...nga encases the verb plus direct object, lebte abma ‘take something’:

(44) Ra ban ba, abe ra=t=ba leb=te
3PL IPFV.go COMM COMM 3PL=PFV=NEG.1 take=PART
abma=nga.
something=NEG.2
‘They go, but they don’t take anything.’ –EF2p74/D41T11
7.3.4 Interrogative

Interrogative sentences have the same structure as declarative sentences. There are two types: polar questions and information questions. Structurally, both types are identical to their declarative counterparts. They are only distinguished by their intonation patterns, and by the fact that information questions contain an interrogative pronoun.

Information questions usually terminate with a rise-fall intonation. On the other hand, polar questions finish either with a rising intonation, or a rise-fall intonation. (See Chapter 2 (Phonology) for detail on sentence intonation.)

Sentence (45) is an example of a polar (“yes-no”) question:

(45) Ha-n ah Dolsen?
   name-3SG.POSS APP D.
   ‘Is his name Dolsen?’ –Ch.7p7

With information questions, the interrogative pronoun takes the same position in the sentence as the phrase that it replaces. There is no “wh-movement”, as there is in English and many other languages. In (46), itan ‘who’ is the interrogative pronoun:

(46) Itan mwi=di le kamel?
    who 3SG.IPFV=stay LOC meeting.house
    ‘Who is in the meeting house?’ -EF2p163

In (47), the interrogative pronoun is abma ‘what’:

(47) Ko=m lel-i abma?
    2SG=IPFV do-TR what
    ‘What are you doing?’ –EF2p29

Sometimes in natural speech the interrogative pronoun is dropped but is implied. In (48), nehu ‘how’ or abma ‘what’ is implied at the end of the sentence:
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48) Aeh mabi-k tewot, ko=n=ba di te=an
oh grandchild-1SG.POSS beloved 2SG=IRR=NEG.1 stay PART=PRHB
ne-van=te dini nana, igo na=n=gam gab?
CONN-go=PART ABL ISG.OBJ because 1SG=IRR=MIN do
‘Oh beloved grandchild, don’t be going away from me, because I’ll just do [what]?’
[What will become of me?] -T1p56/D2T25

In (49), *ibe* ‘where’ is implied at the end of the sentence:

49) Ani no-k bu?
but CL.GE-1SG.POSS knife
‘[Where’s] my knife?’ -T2p9

Questions can also be framed in the negative, as demonstrated by (50). Their structure does not differ from the affirmative negative, but they have question intonation:

50) Ko=t ba=mta-k=te tata=nga?
2SG=PFV NEG.1=be.afraid-INTR=PART father=NEG.2
‘You’re not at all afraid of my father?’ -T2p87/D2T45

7.3.5 Imperative/Prohibitive

Imperative sentences have the same configurational structure as declarative sentences. They must retain their subject pronoun, but the aspectual/modal marker is either absent, as in (51), or is irrealis, as in (52):

51) Ko van ne-aldiro Noella.
2SG go CONN-visit N.
‘You go visit Noella.’ -EF1p18

52) Ko=n veb seresere mwa=si nuhu
2SG=IRR say say.aloud rather=POL COMP
nema ren naanong.
3SG.PRSP be.daylight now
‘You will announce first that it’s going to be daylight now.’ -T2p65/D2T43L118-119

The prohibitive is identical to the imperative except that the discontinuous negative prohibitive morpheme, *ba/an*, is used. Again, modality can be zero-marked, as in (53), or irrealis-marked, as in (54):
(53) Ko=ba dinga-ni woko-m=an li tan.
    2SG=NEG.1 stand.up-TR leg-2SG.POSS=PRHB LOC ground
    ‘Don’t stand your leg up on the ground.’ –EF2p13

(54) Ko=n=ba di te=an ne-van=te dini nana.
    2SG==IRR=NEG.I stay PART=PRHB CONN-go=PART ABL 1SG.OBJ
    ‘You must not leave me.’ –T1p55/D2T25

7.4 Reflexives and Reciprocals

Although reflexives and reciprocals seem to occur rarely in natural speech, a regular pattern for their formation was revealed through elicitation.

In reflexives, the object pronoun has identical reference to the subject. Sentence (55) illustrates a reflexive construction where the object pronoun *nana* ‘1SG.OBJ’ is co-referential with the subject pronoun *na* ‘1SG’:

(55) Na=n ih bamte nana.
    1SG==IRR hit make.die 1SG.OBJ
    ‘I’ll kill myself.’ –EF3p24

When reflexivity is coded in the plural, the same rules apply. In (56), *kaaman=ru* ‘1PL.EXC.IRR=DU’ is co-indexed to the sentence’s direct object, *gema=ru* ‘1PL.EXC.OBJ=DU’:

(56) Kaaman=ru ih bamte gema=ru.
    I PL.EXC.IRR=DU hit make.die I PL.EXC.OBJ=DU
    ‘The two of us will kill ourselves.’ –EF3p24

In the third person singular, no direct object NP is coded, but a serial verb construction containing the verb *bamla* ‘do to oneself’ is used. In (57), *bamla* occurs within the serial verb construction *das bamla* ‘cut himself’:

(57) Atsi haavak ahe te=das bamla i bu.
    person child PROX 3SG.PFY=cut do.to.self INSTR knife
    ‘This child cut himself with a knife.’ –EF1p156

See Chapter 8 (Serial Verb Constructions) for more information.
Reciprocal subjects must be plural. The direct object is usually the pronoun *atsigo* ‘one of them, another’ or *go* ‘one, another’. Sentences (58) and (59) are examples of reciprocals:

(58) Ta=m=ru gal~kalahi *atsigo.*
   1PL.INC=IPFY=DU INT=lies another
   ‘The two of us are lying to each other.’ –Ch.6p18

(59) Ra=m=ru al~aldiro *atsigo.*
   3PL.=IPFY=DU INT=visit another
   ‘The two of them are visiting each other.’ -Ch.6p18

Reduplication is not a requirement for forming reflexives or reciprocals. But as can be seen from (58) and (59) above, it does often occur, especially in reciprocal constructions. True to its “intensifying” function, it reflects action that is ongoing in some way. For example, the difference between the reflexives in (60) and (61) is one of duration:

(60) Ta=m lehvi kidi.
    1PL.INC=IPFY wash 1PL.INC.OBJ
    ‘We wash ourselves.’ –EF3p24

(61) Ta=m leh~lehvi kidi.
    1PL.INC=IPFY INT=wash 1PL.INC.OBJ
    ‘We keep washing ourselves (i.e., with several buckets of water).’ -EF3p24

7.5 Passivisation

Passivisation is not well-attested in Melanesian languages (Lynch et al., 2002: 45), but in Abma it is one of the few ways that the valency of the verb can be manipulated. Even so, it is not a widely used strategy.

Passivisation eliminates any notion of agency, instead focusing attention on the action itself. Comparing (62) and (63) below, it can be seen that the action (“eating”) is more salient in (63) than in (62) because in (63), it occurs in sentence-initial position:

(62) Kuli  te  gan-i kanleutan.
    dog  3SG.PFV eat-TR food
    ‘The dog ate the food.’ –EF3p34

(63) Te  gan-an na kanleutan.
    3SG.PFV eat-PASS DEF food
    ‘It was eaten, the food.’ -EF3p34
In Abma, passives are typically used in narratives where traditional or customary activities are explained to the listener. In such genres, the activity itself is the focus, and agency is not so important.

This construction generally conforms to Dixon and Aikhenvald’s typology of the passive (1997: 73). Intransitive passive clauses are derived from an underlying transitive clause through the shifting of grammatical roles: the original direct object (O) of the transitive clause becomes the new subject (S) of a passive intransitive clause, and the original subject (A) of the transitive clause is nullified. Rather than being shifted to the front of the sentence (the normal position for sentential subjects in Abma), the new S usually remains in its former O position, but is preceded by the na ‘definite subject (DEF)’ marker. ³

Passivisation is also indicated through morphological marking on the verb: the verb loses any transitivity marking and adopts the -an ‘passive (PASS)’ suffix. For example, *lel-i ‘do-TR’ becomes *lel-an ‘do-PASS’. Passive sentences in Abma are formally distinguished by the suffixation of -an to the verb root.

While most languages allow the underlying A to play an optional peripheral role in the sentence, in Abma A is always omitted – its presence is not even optional. Dixon and Aikhenvald (1997: 74) term this an ‘agentless passive’, and acknowledge that some languages never permit underlying A in a passive construction. In (64), for example, the subject (A) is kab ‘crab’; when this sentence is passivised (as shown in (65)), underlying A is omitted:

(64) Kab te gats-i Manuella.
crab 3SG.PFV bite-TR M.
‘The crab bit Manuella.’ -EF1p151

(65) Manuella te gat-an.
M. 3SG.PFV eat-PASS
‘Manuella was bitten.’ -EF1p151

Sentence (65) above, an elicited example, is not typical because the S (Manuella) occurs before the verb. As mentioned in above, it normally comes after the verb, marked with na

³ This na is the same morpheme as the definite article na mentioned in Chapter 4 (Word Classes). Grammatical subjects in Abma are invariably definite, as will be seen in Chapter 10 (Information Structure).
`definite subject (DEF)’. For example, in (66) the passivised verb is *mwelelan* ‘it is made’; the subject *kamel* ‘meeting house’ comes post-verbally. Because this violates SVO word order, it must be marked with the definite subject marker, *na*. The agent is not mentioned at all, as would be expected in the passive. This is appropriate to the text type, because the focus of this narrative is on the activity of building. Therefore the agent is not important here:

(66) Too naanong, na=m don-i nehu na=ma veb,
    time now 1SG=IPFV want-TR COMP 1SG=PRSP say
    hal-an       go-ah       niaha,  *mwe=lel-an*
    manner-3SG.POSS one-PROX REL 3SG.IPFV=make-PASS

    *na* *kamel,*  Senorol Pentikos.
    DEF meeting.house Central Pentecost

‘Now I want to talk about the way meeting houses are built in Central Pentecost.’ - FN4p13

Although agents are not coded in the passive, they are assumed to be human. The consequences of this constraint are not terribly far-reaching because most agents are human, anyway. However, some verbs do have non-human agents, and these verbs cannot be passivised. For example, the verb in (67), *sina* ‘shine on’ has a non-human agent, *al* ‘sun’. Therefore (68) is ungrammatical:

(67) Al mWl=Slna Sln1.
    sun 3SG.IPFV=shine.on kava
    ‘The sun shines on the kava.’ -EF3p33A

(68) *Mwi=si-an  na  sini.
    3SG.IPFV=shine-PASS DEF kava
    ‘The kava is shone upon.’ -EF3p33A

Passivisation is not a prominent feature of natural speech, but it does crop up from time to time, especially amongst speakers who live in SM/SR mixed areas. In syntactic terms, it is well-established in the language, occurring within serial verb constructions as well as in complex sentences.
8 SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

8.1 Overview

Verb serialisation has come to light only relatively recently in Oceanic linguistics. Initially, discussion of serialisation was confined to African languages, and was originally referred to as "verbal combinations" by Christaller (1875) and Westermann (1930). Later, Stewart (1963) coined the term "serialisation" and conducted the first transformational analysis. Ansre (1966) discussed how purported "serial verbs" have grammatical as well as verbal features. Stahlke (1970), Bamgbose (1974), and Schachter (1974) all examined Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) within various theoretical frameworks, but continued to focus on African languages. Not until later was there a more extended typological discussion of SVCs by Foley and Olson (1985), Sebba (1987), Lord (1982; 1993) and Alsina, Bresnan, and Sells (1997), among others. SVCs were first mentioned in the Austronesian context by Dempwolff (1939: 66), who noted that some simple sentences in Jābēm had several predicates for the same subject. However it was Crowley (1987) who really drew Oceanic languages into mainstream discussion by examining SVCs in Paamese. That seminal paper paved the way for other analyses of Oceanic language SVCs, including those by Durie (1988), Sperlich (1993), Early (1993) Forman (1993), Hamel (1993), Bradshaw (1993), Hyslop (2001), Meyerhoff (2001), François (2002), Margetts (2004), and the recent edited volume by Bril and Ozanne-Rivierre (2004). While it is obvious from reviewing these works that there is substantial variation in the way SVCs are identified and described, they do have some generally-agreed-upon formal attributes:

- Two (or more) verbs form a single clause, with no subordination or coordination (Bril, 2004; Durie, 1988; Foley and Olson, 1985; Hamel, 1993).
- SVCs do not have intervening conjunctions (Foley and Olson, 1985; Hamel, 1993).
- Tense-Aspect-Modality (TAM) has scope over the entire series of verbs (Baker, 1989; Bril, 2004; Durie, 1988; Early, 1993; Foley and Olson, 1985; Hamel, 1993).
- SVCs share one or more arguments (Bril, 2004; Durie, 1988; Hamel, 1993).
- Positive/negative polarity is shared by all verbs in the series (Bril, 2004; Hamel, 1993).

Furthermore, verbs within the SVC often fulfil the following functions:

- marking TAM (Baker, 1989; Early, 1993; Givón, 1991; Senft, 2004);
- indicating temporal, spatial, or psychological movement (Early, 1993; Givón, 1991; Senft, 2004);
- marking case role for various semantic roles such as locative, benefactive, instrumental (Early, 1993; Givón, 1991; Senft, 2004);
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• indicating cause-and-effect, purpose (Early, 1993; Senft, 2004); and
• specifying manner of action (Crowley 2002, Bril 2004).

In the literature on Oceanic languages, it is also common to view serialisation as a sequence of multiple verbs comprising a single “event” (Bril, 2004; Early, 1993; Hamel, 1993). However, as Crowley (2002) and Foley (2003) have pointed out, it is difficult to define precisely what an “event” actually is. KILL is often used to illustrate this dilemma: is this lexeme one “event” (‘kill’) or two (‘carry out an action that causes someone to die’)?

Foley contends that the syntactic packaging in which a verbal concept is encoded (e.g., as an SVC or a single lexical item) has little bearing on the cognitive notion of “event”. He examines the way four different languages treat KILL, and notes their diversity, from single verb, to serialisation involving a single macro-event with component sub-events, to serialisation involving a sequence of two independent macro-events. He uses this data to highlight the absurdity of claiming that the semantic structure of KILL comprises a single event in one language, but multiple events in other languages. He concludes that serial verb constructions have little to offer to any theoretical discussion on language and cognition; they are merely a token of cross-linguistic variation.

Nevertheless, they play an important role in the syntax of Abma VPs: they are used to indicate aspect and modality, as well as to express adverbial and directional meanings. But because the concept of “event” is problematic, we will instead hang our definition of serialisation on the notion of the “clause”. This is discussed in the following sections.

8.2 Nuclear- vs. Core-Layer Serialisation

Olson (1981), Foley and Van Valin (1984), Foley and Olson (1985), Crowley (1987; 2002), Sperlich (1993), and Bril (2004), inter alia, distinguish nuclear-layer SVC’s from core-layer ones, and this distinction has been largely adopted in the literature on Oceanic languages. The nuclear layer comprises the inflected verbs; the core layer contains the nucleus plus its arguments. Beyond this is the periphery, which includes adjunct participants. The differentiation between nuclear and core-layer serialisation is significant in terms of clause juncture typology. Crowley depicts this with the following cline shown in Figure 8.1:
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Verbal Compounds > Nuclear Serial Verbs > Core Serial Verbs > Clause Chains > Subordinate Clauses > Coordinate Clauses (Crowley, 2002: 18)

Figure 8.1: Clause juncture typology

On a scale of cohesion where verbal compounds form the most tightly-knit layer of juncture and coordinate clauses the loosest, nuclear-layer SVCs are syntactically more cohesive than core-layer SVCs.

Figure 8.2 is adapted from Margetts’ (2004) conception of the layered structure of the clause (itself adapted from Van Valin and LaPolla (1997)) in order to illustrate how the nuclear and core layers relate to each other:

![Figure 8.2: Nuclear vs. core layering (adapted from Margetts (2004: 67))](image)

In Figure 8.3, Bril (2004) essentially depicts the same concept, but with a more detailed focus on form:

![Figure 8.3: Nuclear vs. core layering (Bril, 2004: 4)](image)

Figure 8.3 makes reference to “same-subject” and “switch-subject”: these terms, which refer to the argument structure of the SVC, are freely used in the literature. Same-subject refers to situations where both (or all) verbs in the SVC share the same subject; switch-subject refers to situations where the object of the first verb (V1) is the subject of the second verb (V2). Also implicit within the depiction of switch-subject in Figure 8.3 is “inclusory” serialisation, wherein the subject of V2 comprises both the subject and object of V1. For example, in ‘I follow you we go-down,’ the subject of V2 ‘go-down’ is ‘we’, which is semantically composed of both ‘I’ and ‘you’.
“Ambient” serialisation is not formally represented in Figure 8.3. However, using it as a model for constructing our own formalism (wherein arguments of the verb are depicted in lower-case letters), then ambient serialisation is: \( sv_{x} V_{y}(o) \). That is, in a series of two verbs, the first verb functions as argument to the second verb. In semantic terms, ambient serialisation occurs when one verb, a stative verb \( (V_{y}) \), describes the manner in which the action verb \( (v_{x}) \) of the SVC is performed. Essentially the subject of the stative verb is the entire event encoded by the action verb (Crowley, 2002: 41-42).

### 8.3 Formal Features of Serialisation in Abma

Verb serialisation in Abma consists of two or more verbs that form a single clause (§8.3.1); they share at least one argument (§8.3.2) as well as positive or negative polarity (§8.3.3). Section §8.3.4 discusses the two levels of juncture in serialisation, nuclear and core. Finally, embedded SVCs (one SVC occurring within another) are examined in §8.3.5.

#### 8.3.1 A Single Clause

SVCs in Abma consist of two or more consecutive verbs in a single clause, with no intervening conjunctions. The form of such clauses, as well as their verbal semantics, is consistent with the general characterisation of SVCs as outlined in §8.

Sentence (1) shows a same-subject construction where two consecutive verbs form a single clause, with no subordination or coordination and no intervening conjunctions. The verbs concerned, \( ban~goro \) ‘go’ + ‘run’ = ‘pass’ are governed by the same subject (\( sika~katsil \) ‘three years’) and aspect (imperfective aspect, which is marked by consonant mutation in the third person singular form of \( ban \) ‘go’):

(1) Kaa=m ruwu sini, ba sika katsil Ø ban goro, 
IPL.EXC=IPFV plant kava COMM year three 3SG IPFV.go run

be lego ba kavet, bi lego ba kalim, 
but one.time COMM four and one.time COMM five

mwi=di mwa li atsi.
3SG.IPFV=stay differently LOC person

‘We plant kava, and three years pass, sometimes four, sometimes five, it depends on the person[’s location].’
8.3.2 Sharing of Arguments

SVCs must share an argument. Normally, it is the subject that both verbs share, as in (1) above – this is a same-subject construction.

In addition to the subject, verbs within a transitive SVC also share their direct object. Sentence (2) is another example of a same-subject construction, but here, the verbs leb bamla (leb ‘take’ + bamla ‘do again’ = ‘take back off’) share a subject pronoun, na ‘1SG’, as well as a direct object NP, sini ‘kava’:

(2) Na=m leb baml-a sini dini kabwal.  
1SG=IPFY take do.again-TR kava from bed  
‘I take the kava back off the bed.’ –EF2p14

On the other hand, (3) is an example of switch-subject serialisation because seese ‘mat’, the direct object of V1 rangni ‘remove from a container’, also functions as the subject of V2 baiang ‘move away’:

(3) Mwe=sak, mwe=rangni seese baia baiang, ba Ø  
3SG.IPFV=go.up 3SG.IPFV=remove mat IPFY.go.away COMM 3SG  
butihi atsi haavak ah te=tbo le seese, bi  
IPFY.find person child REL 3SG.PFY=lie.down LOC mat and  
mwa=li, mwa=buh-u, bi mwe=gan-i.  
3SG.IPFV=take 3SG.IPFV=hold-TR and 3SG.IPFV=eat-TR  
‘He goes up, removes the mats, and he finds the child lying down inside the mats, and he takes him, holds him, and eats him.’ –FN4p11

An alternative way to interpret (3) is as an inclusory construction, wherein the subject who takes the mats out also goes away with them; therefore the subject and object of V1 combine to form the V2 subject. However, since inclusory vs. switch-subject serialisation is identical in form, classification of an SVC as one or the other is a subjective decision. Thus to avoid unnecessary confusion, ambiguous cases will simply be termed “switch-subject” for the remainder of this chapter.

Ambient serialisation is formally characterised by the fact that V1 (action verb) functions as an argument to V2 (stative verb). In other words, the subject of the stative verb is the entire
event encoded by the action verb. In (4), V2 luhmwi ‘be good’, a stative verb, has as its subject the V1 action verb, mwanemnok ‘it will be finished’. The result is mwanemnok luhmwi ‘it will be finished [cooked] well’.

(4) Ba ko=n mas ne-voovani, uugoah mwanemnok luhmwi.
COMM 2SG=IRR must CONN-wait in.order.that 3SG.IRR=be.finished be.good
‘You must wait so that it’s cooked well.’ –T2p14/D2T31

The most challenging aspect of (4) is the notion that V1 (mwanemnok ‘it will be finished’) is actually an argument of V2 (luhmwi ‘be good’). If we were to envisage that, rather than being a verb, V1 were an NP subject (i.e., a more typical verbal argument), then we could paraphrase this SVC as meaning ‘the finishing is good’ → ‘it is cooked well’.

Sentence (5) also contains an example of ambient serialisation, nedam melat ‘answer slowly’. The action in V1, dam ‘answer’, is the argument of the stative verb in V2 position, melat ‘be slow’. The composite meaning is ‘answer slowly’:

(5) Ra=m=ru hu, ba te=dok nge nedam melat.
3PL=IPFY=DU call.out COMM 3SG.PFY=stay just CONN-answer be.slow
‘The two of them called out to him, but he just answered slowly.’ –T1p10/D2T1

8.3.3 Shared Polarity

Positive/negative polarity is shared by all verbs in the series. The two components of the discontinuous negative marker, ba ... nga, precede the first verb and follow the second verb (or direct object), respectively. This is illustrated in (6), with the SVC lel baml-a ‘do’ – ‘do again’ = ‘do again’, wherein baml functions as an adverbial:

(6) Ihgo Brian bat=ba lel baml-a tarak=nga, if B. 3SG.HYP=NEG.1 do do.again-TR truck=NEG.2
ba na bat=ba sak=nga.
COMM 1SG HYP=NEG.1 go.up=NEG.2
‘If Brian hadn’t fixed the truck, I wouldn’t be going.’ – FN5p16
Negative polarity is slightly different for type 3 SVCs, but this discussion is postponed until §8.4.3.1.

8.3.4 Layers of Juncture: Nuclear vs. Core

8.3.4.1 Nuclear-Layer Serialisation

Verb serialisation in Abma distinguishes between the nuclear and core levels. Nuclear-layer serialisation is recognisable by the fact that it allows transitivity marking (if any) to be suffixed to V2, only. In addition, V2 permits neither subject nor aspecual/modal marking. Sentences (1), (2), (4), and (6) are all examples of serialisation at the nuclear level. If we examine (6) in particular, we see that V2 bamla ‘do again’ shares subject and modality marking with V1 lel ‘do’. Also, bamla takes transitivity marking for the entire construction; lel ‘do’ is unmarked for transitivity.

As mentioned in Chapter 6 (Verb Phrases), one requirement of nuclear-layer serialisation is that the first verb in the two-verb construction may not be formally marked as transitive, even if the larger SVC of which it is part is indeed transitive. For example in (7), the simple verb (b)wata ‘break’ is transitive, but in (8), bwata loses its transitive suffix because it is the V1 in the SVC, wat rotvi ‘break’:

(7) Kaa bwat-a kabi-n ka-ma leut.
    IPL.EXC IPFV.break-TR firewood-3SG.POSS CL.ED-IPL.EXC.POSS thing
    ‘We break the firewood for our food.’ –T1p41

(8) Na=n wat rotvi nga-k.
    I SG=IRR break break hand-1SG.POSS
    ‘I’ll break my hand.’–T2p15/D2T31

8.3.4.2 Core-Layer Serialisation

As with the nuclear level, V2 is not marked for subject at the core layer. V2 does however take aspectual/modal marking, but the aspect/modality marker is reduced to the neutral third person singular imperfective marker, mwe, regardless of aspect/modality marking on V1. This observation corresponds with Meyerhoff’s (2001) and Crowley’s (2002) characterisation of the way SVCs materialise in Bislama and Paamese, respectively.
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Following the example set out by Crowley (1987: 45; 2002: 57), Table 8.1 demonstrates how aspectual/modal markers in Abma are degraded for the V2 in core constructions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASPECT/MODALITY OF INITIAL VERB (V1)</th>
<th>ASPECT/MODALITY OF SUBSEQUENT VERB (V2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperfective <em>mwe</em></td>
<td>Imperfective <em>mwe</em>¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfective <em>te</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrealis <em>mwən</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothetical <em>bat</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.1: Degradation of aspectual/modal markers in Abma

The reduced marking on V2 is in reality devoid of functional value as an aspectual/modal marker. Rather, it flags the predicate as a core-level serial construction: less tightly knit syntactically than an SVC at the nuclear level, but certainly more cohesive than two clauses would be.

The nuclear and core layers are also distinguished from each other by their transitivity marking. At the nuclear level, any transitivity marking attaches to the second verb; this then represents the transitivity of the entire SVC. At the core level, any transitivity marking also applies to the entire SVC, but the marker is not necessarily suffixed to the second verb. Depending on the SVC type (SVC types are covered in §8.4), the position of the transitivity marker in the core-layer SVC can vary. It can attach to the second verb, as it does at the nuclear level; alternatively, it can attach to the first verb. The transitivity marker can actually come between V1 and V2. (Section §8.4 will further clarify this explanation.)

Sentence (9) is an example of a core construction with transitivity marking on V1. In the SVC *bwiri ruka mwabma* ‘fold’ + ‘leaf’ + ‘come’ = ‘fold leaves inward’, *bwiri* is the transitive form of *bwii*:

---

¹ The imperfective morpheme may take the form of *mwe*, Ø, or initial consonant mutation, depending upon its conditioning with the V2 verb root (see Chapter 2 (Phonology)). Also, all V2 verb roots, whether serialising at the nuclear or the core layer, undergo initial consonant mutation if the initial consonant is amenable to it. (See Chapter 3 (Morphology) to review initial consonant mutation.) However, initial consonant mutation is only recorded in interlinear glosses for V2 verb roots that serialise at the core layer.
(9) Loklok  te=tbo  lolok,  bi  na=mwa  bwi-ri  
pudding  3SG.PFY=lie.down  middle  and  1SG=IPFV  fold-TR  
ruka  mwa=bma  noko-n.  
leaf  IPFV=come  body-3SG.POSS  
‘Pudding sits in the middle, and I fold the leaves inward.’ –FN4p95/D23T1

Also, notice that aspectual marking of V2 mwabma ‘come’ in (9) is degraded, following the prediction of Table 8.1. However, this is not obvious because the aspect of V1 is also imperfective. Sentence (10) shows more clearly how imperfective mwa= marking on V2 (mwabma ‘come’) is reduced in comparison to te= ‘perfective (PFV)’ marking on V1 (tewu ‘blow’):

(10) Te=wu  tsivi  mwa=bma.  
3SG.PFY-blow  conch.shell  IPFV=come  
‘He blew on the conch shell as he came.’ –T2p105/D2T49

8.3.4.3 Difficulties In Determining Layer Of Juncture

While formal marking on the verb root can be helpful in determining layer of juncture, it is nevertheless sometimes difficult to know whether a given SVC is nuclear or core. The third person singular imperfective aspectual/modal marker, whose presence or absence can indicate core or nuclear serialisation respectively, can be ambiguously marked. For example, free V2 verb roots in core constructions beginning with bilabial or labio-velar sounds do not take a separate imperfective prefix (mwe). Instead, aspect is indicated by initial consonant mutation in third person singular imperfective. Hence, superficially at least, verbs beginning with these sounds “look like” they are nuclear, even at the core level.

Conversely, bound verb roots (see Chapter 3 (Morphology) for a review) require prefixation for phonotactic reasons. The upshot of this is that at the nuclear level these verbs in the V2 position appear to be “incorrectly” prefixed with aspectual/modal marking. In (11), -tbo ‘lie down’ is V1 of the SVC mwatbo mwammi ‘lie down’ + ‘drink’ = ‘lie drinking’; it extends the duration of the activity. The V2 -umni ‘drink’ is a bound root (as indicated by the preceding hyphen) and cannot occur in isolation; therefore it takes imperfective prefixation (mwa=):
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(11) Bi mwo=son-i nusu-n, \textit{mwa=tbo} mwa=mn-i
and 3SG.IPFV=put-TR child-3SG.POSS 3SG.IPFV=lay IPFV=drink-TR

\begin{verbatim}
libwi-n     odoma.
root-3SG.POSS    odoma
‘Then she puts down her child, and he lies drinking the roots of the \textit{odoma}
tree.’ -T2p16/D2T33
\end{verbatim}

So it is not always clear-cut as to whether a construction is nuclear or core, at least on a superficial level. In such situations, the clear-cut cases provide a “template” for less obvious examples.

8.3.5 Embedded Serial Verb Constructions

Occasionally, SVCs may be embedded within other SVCs. In (12), the inner SVC \textit{muuh sasabisi} ‘call out’ + ‘gather together’ in turn functions as VI for the larger SVC \textit{muuh sasabisi mwetak} ‘call out to gather together’ + ‘do again’ = ‘call out again to gather together’:

(12) \[
\text{[[M=\text{uuh sasabisi}] mweta-k]} \text{ i 3SG.IPFV=call.out gather.together do.again-INTR PREP}
\]

\begin{verbatim}
bwihil nii, ra=t sasabisi.
bird PL 3PL=PFV gather.together
‘He called out to gather the birds together again, and they came together.’ - T2p63/D2T43
\end{verbatim}

In (13), \textit{wubtsi rotvi} (‘jerk’ + ‘break’) is a self-contained SVC which also serves as VI for the larger SVC \textit{wubtsi rotvi gololo} ‘break by jerking’ + ‘do well’ = ‘break well by jerking’.

(13) Sini te \[
\text{[[wubtsi rotvi] gololo].}
kava 3SG.PFV jerk break do.well
\]
‘The kava breaks easily.’ -DS-19.7.6

8.4 Serial Verb Types

Serial verb constructions are categorised into three main types based upon their clause layer and the position of the main verb in relation to the supporting verb. While primary categorisation is made on structural grounds, the semantic/functional roles map nicely onto these categories, as shown in Table 8.2:
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Table 8.2: Categorisation of SVCs in Abma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SVC TYPE</th>
<th>SEMANTIC/FUNCTIONAL ROLE</th>
<th>CLAUSE LAYER</th>
<th>ORDER OF VERBS/RESTRICTIONS ON VERBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1a       | Aspectual:  
\(\text{di} \text{ ‘stand, stay’}\)  
\(-\text{tbo} \text{ ‘lie down’}\)*  | nuclear      | \(V_s\) \(V_m\)  |
| 1b       | \(\text{dok} \text{ ‘stay’}\)  
\(\text{sadok} \text{ ‘sit’}\)  | core         | \(V_m\) \(V_s\)  |
| 2        | Modal, Adverbial         | nuclear      | \(V_m\) \(V_s\)  |
| 3        | Directional              | core         | \(V_m\) \(O\) \(V_s\) |

\(V_s\) = Supporting Verb; takes on the defining semantic/functional role for the SVC. [Note: This may be in either V1 or V2 position.]

\(V_m\) = Main Verb; lexical verb in the SVC. [Note: This may be in either V1 or V2 position.]

\(O\) = Object

*\(-\text{tbo}\) is a bound verb root and it must be prefixed with an aspectual/modal marker.

SVC type 1 is same-subject. Type 2 codes either same-subject or ambient constructions – ambient SVCs are identifiable by the fact that the V2 supporting verb is a stative verb. Type 3 is either same-subject, switch-subject or inclusory – if V1 is intransitive, then it is a same-subject construction. On the other hand, transitive instances of type 3 SVCs can be interpreted as either semantically switch-subject or semantically inclusory, but as mentioned in §8.3.2, type 3 SVCs are herein always referred to as “switch-subject”.

As for transitivity marking, type 1 and type 2 SVCs only allow the transitivity marker to suffix onto V2. In contrast, type 3 SVCs only allow transitivity marking on V1, because if there is a direct object, this follows V1, and not V2. Thus transitivity marking cross-cuts the “nuclear” versus “core” categorisation of SVCs, because a small minority of type 1 SVCs are instantiated at the core level.

8.4.1 Type #1: Aspectual / Nuclear ~ Core / \(V_s\) \(V_m\)

The four V1 supporting verbs in this category, \(\text{di} \text{ ‘stand, stay’}\), \(-\text{tbo} \text{ ‘lay down’}\), \(\text{dok} \text{ ‘stay’}\) and \(\text{sadok} \text{ ‘sit’}\) normally occur as independent verbs, and have full lexical meaning. Relative to their status as main verbs, they have a marginal role indicating durative/continuous aspect in an SVC.

All type 1 SVCs are same-subject constructions; that is, V1 and V2 share the same subject. Of course, V1 is always semantically intransitive. If the SVC as a whole is transitive (depending upon the semantics of V2), then transitivity marking may be suffixed to V2 (if V2 is
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Amenable to such suffixation, regardless of whether serialisation occurs at the nuclear (di, tbo) or the core (dok, sadok) level.

In (14) a storyteller is relating the birth of an island. People would come and check the island’s progress every now and then until finally a tree was found to be growing there. When the speaker uses the SVC mwatbo ban ‘lie down’ + ‘go’ = ‘keep going’, he is referring to quite a lengthy period of time. V1 -tbo indicates duration:

(14) Vini=ah mwa=tbo ban, bi, butsuka island=PROX 3SG.IPFV=lie.down go and tree
     mwi=dib, baawo li-n, bwaleh. 3SG.IPFV=grow first LOC-3SG.OBJ one
     ‘This island keeps going until a tree grows on it, for the first time.’ – T2p140/D20T26

Example (15) illustrates a clear case of V, di ‘stand, stay’ supportingVM as a durative marker in two SVCs: di draon ‘stay’ + ‘drown’ = ‘drown’ and di surasurak ‘stay’ + ‘be hidden’ = ‘stay hidden’. The respective V2s draon ‘drown’ and surasurak ‘be hidden’ are not indexed for aspect/modality, as expected:

(15) Bi bwet mwan=sib ne-di draon, ne-min~min and taro 3SG.IRR=go.down CONN-stay drown CONN-INT~drink
     le lok is, ne-sasrob le lok is, LOC pudding banana CONN-fall.down LOC pudding banana
     bi mwi=sib mwi=di sura~sura-k. 3SG.IPFV=grow down 3SG.IPFV=stay INT~hide-INTR
     ‘And the taro will go down and drown, be swallowed up in the banana pudding, fall down in the banana pudding, and it goes down and stays hidden.’

Dok and sadok differ from di and -tbo in that they serialise at the core level. This is evidenced by imperfective mwe= marking the V2 roots gagal ‘crawl’ in (16) and raha ‘grate’ in (17):

(16) ... mwe=gau, bi mwo=dok mwe gagal...
     3SG.IPFV=grow and 3SG.IPFV=stay IPFV crawl
     ‘… he grows, and he is crawling…’
     [‘stay’ + ‘crawl’ = ‘crawling’] – T2p16/D2T33L14
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(17) Ba datsi-n le lim mwe=sadok mwe=rah-a
COMM mother-3SG.POSS LOC house 3SG.IPFV=sit IPFV=grate-TR

ka-n lok bwet.
CL.ED-3SG.POSS pudding taro
‘And his mother in the house is grating her taro pudding.’
[‘sit’ + ‘grate’ = ‘grating’] –T2pI9/D2T33

Note also in (17) that transitivity marking is coded at the end of the SVC, onto V2 raha
‘grate’.

8.4.2 Type #2: Modal, Adverbial / Nuclear / V_m V_s

The supporting V2 verbs in nuclear-layer type 2 SVCs express various types of modality such
as ability (dihi), permission (bwiri), attempt (dohmi), and compulsion (rada). In this context,
the SVC is a same-subject construction. Supporting verbs also fulfill adverbial and reflexive
functions. When V2 is stative, then the argument structure is ambient; that is, the subject of
V2 is the event encoded in V1.

Chapter 4 (Word Classes) discusses a specific sub-type of verb ("Second Verb in SVC") that
is dedicated to filling the V2 position of an SVC. Although verbs in this sub-class are used
specifically in the type 2 SVC category, other verbs may also occur in V2 position.

As with type 1 SVCs, if the construction is transitive, then transitivity marking is suffixed to
V2 (assuming that V2 does not have an invariant form), and never to V1. Even if the first verb
of the construction is semantically transitive, transitive suffixes are not permitted on V1.

Sentence (18) is a same-subject construction, vilis bwiri ‘paddle’ + ‘can (PERMISSION)’ =
‘can paddle’. This is an example of how type 1 and type 2 SVCs are negated: the
discontinuous negative morpheme precedes V1 and follows V2:

(18) Ko=n=ba vilis bwiri=nga dokih.
2SG=IRR=NEG.1 paddle be.able=NEG.2 there
‘You can't paddle there.’ – FN5p11

Example (19) provides two examples of SVCs. In the first one, barih dobdobmi ‘tread’ + ‘try’
= ‘try to tread’, V2 reflects irrealis modality:
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(19) A t s i  m w e = s a m a  l e  t e h ,  m w e = s a m a  0  b a r i h
person 3SG.IPFV=come.up LOC sea 3SG.IPFV=come.up 3SG IPFV=tread

dob-dobmi,  v i n i = a h ,  b a  t e i  t e  b e h ~ b e h  n g a m w a ,
INT~try island=PROX COMM FOC 3SG.PFV INT~soft yet

te=tbo  n g a m w a  t e = g e n  l e b e h ,  m u = s u b m u l
3SG.PFV=lie.down yet 3SG.PFV=like mud 3SG.IPFV=go.back.down

b a m u l  v a n  t e h .
do.again underneath sea

‘A man comes up out of the sea, he comes up and tries treading on this island, but it is still soft, it is still soft like mud, and he goes back down again under the sea.’ – T2p139/D20T26L8

In the second SVC in (19) above, submul bamul ‘go back down’ + ‘do again’ = ‘go back down again’, the supporting verb bamul ‘do again’ does not express modality, but instead fulfils the adverbial function of repetition.

The class of “adverb-like” verbs that fit into the Vₗ slot for type 2 SVCs is quite a large and open one. The Vₗ is deemed to have an adverbial function when it modifies, reinforces, results from, or generally supports the Vₘ.

The supporting verb baata ‘be tight’ in (20) has the function of a manner adverbial in this ambient SVC. Note that this is a transitive construction. Since lik ‘tie’ is VI, it does not permit transitivity marking, even though the verb is semantically transitive. Baata ‘be tight’ is semantically and formally intransitive, but the entire SVC, lik baata ‘tie tightly’, takes nani ‘goat’ as its direct object:

(20) T e = l i k  b a a t a  n a n i .
3SG.PFV=tie be.tight goat

‘She tied up the goat tightly.’ [‘tie’ + ‘be tight’ = ‘tie tightly’] – EF1p188

In (21), V₂ girigiri ‘sweep’ describes (metaphorically) the way in which VI gan ‘eat’ is carried out, i.e., thoroughly. Note that VI gan carries no transitive marking (which would be -i). Also, there is no direct object in this sentence; instead, there is a PP, as indicated by the preposition i. This is probably done to place emphasis on the action.
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(21) Abma  te=dok  ne-bma  ne-gan  giri-giri
     something  3SG.PFY=stay  CONN-come  CONN-eat  INT~sweep

\begin{verbatim}
  i beta nong...\textsuperscript{2}  
  PREP breadfruit  PROX
\end{verbatim}

‘Something came and completely cleaned out these breadfruits...’ – FN4p79
[‘eat’ + ‘sweep’ = ‘eat up completely’]

In (22), \textit{gabarani}, as the supporting verb, is an elaboration on the main verb, \textit{son} ‘put’. Again, transitivity marking is removed from V1 but is present as a V2 suffix:

(22) \textit{Mwo=son  gabara-ni}  hoa-n.
     3SG.IPFV=put  throw.out-TR  husband-3SG.POSS

‘She divorces her husband.’ [‘put’ + ‘throw out’ = ‘divorce’] – FN5p17

In (23), the meaning of \textit{mwamlu rus}, ‘leave’ + ‘move’ = ‘move away from’, is more emphatic than the isolated simple verb \textit{-mlu} ‘leave’. This SVC is intransitive, as evidenced by the absence of transitivity marking on \textit{rus} ‘move’, and by the prepositional phrase \textit{(dini ut niah te sadok iginan} ‘from the place where he stayed’) that directly follows the SVC:

(23) Ba  te=ren  bi  mwa=mlu  rus  dini  ut
     COMM  3SG.PFY=be.daylight  and  3SG.IPFV=leave  move  ABL  place

\begin{verbatim}
  niah te sadok  iginan.
  REL  3SG.PFY  sit  at.this.place
\end{verbatim}

‘Daylight broke, and he leaves the place where he had stayed.’ – T2p83/D2T45L8

Example (24) contains the same verb as in (23) \textit{(rus)}, but here the transitive marker is attached to V2 in the SVC \textit{ling rusi} ‘put’ + ‘move’ = ‘push’. (Note that the transitive form of \textit{ling} ‘put’ is \textit{lingi}, or alternatively, \textit{-lngi}.)

(24) Le  ren  sera,  ba  na=m  ling  rus-i  mulnga-n
     TIME  day  every  COMM  1SG=IPFY  put  move-TR  limit-3SG.POSS

\begin{verbatim}
  ka-k  kanleutan.
  CL.ED-1SG.POSS  food
\end{verbatim}

‘I am eating more and more every day.’

[\textit{Lit.: ‘Every day, I push the limit of my food.’}] – EF1p185

\textsuperscript{2} Aspectual marking for \textit{gan} ‘eat’ carries over from \textit{dok} ‘stay’, the first verb in this chained construction.
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Type 2 SVCs sometimes express reflexivity. In (25), *ih* ‘hit + *bamte* ‘cause to die’ = *ih bamte* ‘hit dead’. This SVC is then contained within the larger SVC *ih bamte bamula*, wherein *V1 ih bamte* ‘head dead + *V2 bamula* ‘do to oneself’ = ‘kill oneself’:

(25) Atsi te=[[ih *bamte]*  
  person 3SG.PFV=hit cause.to.die do.to.self-TR  
  ‘The man killed himself.’ –EF1p156

8.4.3 Type #3: Directional / Core / $V_m (O) \quad V_s$

Directionals, which are serialised at the core layer, are the most firmly entrenched SVC type in Abma. Normally the main verb in $V_1$ expresses some specific motion, and the supporting verb in $V_2$ indicates deictic direction of the motion. While motion can be expressed by a single independent verb, serialisation is the more common strategy. Crowley (1987) notes a similar phenomenon for Paamese. The most common directional verbs occurring in the $V_2$ slot are: *ban* ‘go’, *-bma* ‘come’, *sib* ‘go down’, *sibma* ‘come down’, *sak* ‘go up’, *sama* ‘come up’.

In terms of argument structure, type 3 SVCs can be either same-subject or switch-subject. Intransitive $V_1$s lead to a same-subject construction, whereas transitive $V_1$s indicate either switch-subject or inclusory serialisation. However, as already mentioned in §8.3.2, since there is no way to formally distinguish switch-subject from inclusory serialisation, the distinction is not attempted here.

In (26) *rob mwabma* ‘run’ + ‘come’ = ‘run towards’ is an example of same-subject serialisation for type 3 because $V_1 \ rob$ ‘run’ is intransitive:

(26) Ko *rob mwabma* be-k!  
  2SG.IMP run IPFV=come proximity-1SG.POSS  
  ‘Run to me!’ –EF1p190

In type 3 SVCs, a direct object intervenes between $V_1$ and $V_2$ if $V_1$ is transitive. Example (27) is switch-subject, wherein *Mabontare* functions dually as the object of $V_1 \ rava$ ‘pull’ and the subject of $V_2 \ sibma$ ‘come down’:

(27) Ko Mabontare *rava=be*  
  2SG.IMP pull IPFV=come  
  ‘Pull me!’ –EF1p190
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(27) Ra=m rav-a Mabontare nong mwi=sibma, bi 3PL=IPFV pull-TR M. this IPFV=come.down and

ra=t rav-a, bi ra=t das rotvi woko-n naa dokah. 3PL=PFV pull-TR and 3PL=PFV cut break leg-3SG.POSS now here
‘They pull Mabontare towards them, and they pulled, and they broke her leg here.’ – T2p33/D2T11L49

Note in (27) above and (28) below how type 3 SVCs are unique in their transitivity marking. That is, whereas V1 in the other two types is intransitive (with transitivity marking only allowed on V2), in type 3 SVCs, V1 may be marked as transitive, while V2 is always coded as intransitive. In (28), V1 selkani ‘carry’ takes a transitive suffix while V2 sak ‘go up’ is intransitive:

(28) Bi ra=m selkani tela mwe=sak, ra=m sak and 3PL=IPFV carry-TR axe IPFV=go.up 3PL=IPFV go.up

ne-das bwera~wera. CONN-cut INT~piece
‘Then they pick up the axe, they go cut him into little pieces.’ – T2p31/D2T11L43

Sentence (28) above has an overt direct object, tela ‘axe’. But even when the direct object is not overtly coded, a transitive V1 must take transitivity marking (assuming it is not an invariant transitive – see Chapter 4 (Word Classes)). In (29), -tkai ‘hold, carry’ is the transitive version of -tka ‘hang’; the direct object (a woman to be married) is implied. If it had been overtly realised, it would have come between V1 -tkai and V2 sama:

(29) Ra mwa=tka-i mwe=sama, mwe=sama mwe=lak 3PL IPFV=carry-TR IPFV=come.up 3SG.IPFV=come.up 3SG.IPFV=marry

i atsi nong. PREP person this
‘They carry her up, she comes up and marries this man.’ – T2p24/D2T11L5

Sentence (30) illustrates how V1 is open not only to transitive marking, but to partitive (indefinite:) marking if the direct object is non-specific (see Chapter 6 (Verb Phrases) for a review of partitive marking):

(30) Ko leb=te sileng mwa=bma be-k. 2SG take=PART water IPFV=come proximity-1SG.POSS
‘Bring me some water.’ – EF1p191
Since the transitivity marking for type 3 differs from the other SVC types, it was initially unclear whether these transitive examples were SVCs or instead some kind of clausal subordination. However, the following example of the SVC *tetkai nana mwabma* ‘carry’ + ‘me’ + ‘come’ = ‘bring me’ has reduced aspect marking on V2 -*bma* ‘come’ and no subject marking. These characteristics are only possible with SVCs. This is therefore evidence that these transitive examples are indeed SVCs:

(31) Uu abma ba ko te=tka-i nana mwa=bma dokah due.to what COMM 2SG PFV=carry-TR 1SG.OBJ IPFV=come here

entorah ko te=ililngi nehu na=bat van vil?
when 2SG PFV=know COMP 1SG=HYP go quickly
‘Why did you bring me to this place when you knew I’d have to leave quickly?’ – EF1p173

In (31) above, if -*bma* ‘come’ were indeed in a separate clause from -*tkai* ‘carry’, then it would have been obligatorily coded with a subject pronoun. This is not the case.

8.4.3.1 Discontinuous Negative Marking for Type 3 SVCs

Section §8.3.3 describes how in type 1 and type 2 SVCs, the verbs and any objects are flanked on either side by the two parts of the discontinuous negative morpheme, *ba...nga*. The fact that *ba...nga* “embraces” the verbs is an indication of the unitary nature of SVCs.

Type 3 SVCs do not conform to this pattern. While *ba* still precedes V1 of a type 3 SVC, *nga* comes directly after V1, or the direct object (if there is one). This is in contrast to negation in the other two SVC types, wherein *nga* comes after V2, not V1.

For example, in (32), the two serial verbs are *rab* ‘pull’ and *sibma* ‘come down’. Note how the second half of the negation marker, *nga*, comes after the direct object *nguduka katsil* ‘three logs’ rather than after *sibma*:

(32) Ra=t=ba rab=te nguduka katsil=nga mwi sibma.
3PL=PFV=NEG.1 pull=PART log three=NEG.2 IPFV come.down
‘They didn’t pull down (any) three logs.’

Since discontinuous negative marking is aberrant for this sub-type, how is it then possible to know that type 3 SVCs are truly SVCs?
One important piece of evidence in favour of SVC classification is the fact that V2 (e.g., *sibma* ‘come down’ in (32) above) remains unmarked for subject (taking on this information from VI) and its aspectual marking is degraded, which is the norm for core-layer serialisation (see §8.3.4.2).

### 8.5 What is Not a Serial Verb Construction in Abma?

Perhaps a more interesting question than “What is an SVC?”, is “What is not an SVC?” in Abma.

#### 8.5.1 Juxtaposed Clauses

Juxtaposed clauses, which look very similar to SVCs, are not SVCs. The verbs *sib* ‘go down’ and *banghi* ‘burn’ in (33) each have their own subject marker. Since one of the criteria for identifying an SVC in Abma is that only V1 can be subject-marked, then it would appear that *ram sib ra banghi* ‘they go down they burn’ in (33) contains two clauses, reflecting a chain of immediately consecutive events:

(33) Ra=m ak-o bi ra=m sib Melsisi, 3PL=IPFV carry-TR and 3PL=IPFV go.down M.
     bi ra=m sib, ra banghi.
     and 3PL=IPFV go.down 3PL IPFV.burn
     ‘They take it and they go down to Melsisi, and they go down and they burn it.’ –T3p29

#### 8.5.2 Causative Constructions

Many descriptions of SVCs in Oceanic languages include a section on causative constructions (Crowley, 2002; Early, 1993; Hamel, 1993). Causatives in Abma are coded in the syntax, formed by the verb *leli* ‘make’ plus a direct object and another verb. Initially it was tempting to create a separate type of causative SVC, since the data contains a number of examples like (34):

(34) Ko=m sawiri, ba ko=n lel-i walkai-n baiang.
     2SG=IPFV scrape COMM 2SG=IRR make-TR hole-3SG.POSS IPFV.go.away
     ‘You scrape it and you’ll make the worm hole come out.’ –FN4p92
However, if causatives were really serialised, then (35) would be ungrammatical, because V2 would not be permitted to take the subject pronoun, ra ‘3SG’:

(35) Dus mwe=lel-i bwala-kte ra-Ø mes.
  rain 3SG.IPFV=make-TR clothing-GNZR 3PL-IPFV be.wet
  ‘The rain made the clothes wet.’ –EF1p89

Causatives are instead a kind of subordinate clause, with a zero-marked complementiser. See Chapter 9 (Complex Sentences) for discussion on subordination.

### 8.6 Grammaticalisation

It has been commonly attested that the direction of language change goes from the lexical to the grammatical (Hamel, 1993; Lord, 1993; Sperlich, 1993). Abma is no exception, and serialisation provides fertile ground for this process to take place. This section considers the grammaticalisation of one verb, goro.

Goro as a single verb, or as the main verb in an SVC, has a range of related meanings: ‘chase, wear, continue, close, cover, block’, and probably more. Example (36) portrays goo, the intransitive form of goro ‘chase’, as V₁ in a type 2 SVC (where transitivity marking on the verb is not permitted):

(36) Kaa=m goo doBMI bo ba kaamat
  1PL.EXCL=IPFV chase try pig COMM 1PL.EXC.PFV
  ba=wuH baata=nga.
  NEG.1=hold be.tight=NEG.2
  ‘We tried chasing the pig but we couldn’t hold onto it.’ –T2p102/D2T49

Yet, simply by virtue of its generality of scope, one might suspect that this verb is becoming grammaticalised. As Hopper and Traugott (1993: 96) and Lord (1993: 258) point out, increasing generalisation of a lexical item is an indicator of impending grammaticalisation. And so it seems that goro may be turning into a preposition. When goro occurs not as a main verb, but as a supporting V2 for type 2 SVCs, its lexical meaning is slightly less transparent, and more grammaticalised. In (37), goro is technically V₃ in a type 2 SVC, but clearly it could also be interpreted as a preposition here:
(37) Nema gan goro kamel.
3SG.PRSP eat cover meeting.house
‘He’ll eat at the meeting house.’ - FN4p42/D20T30

While (37) is interesting but proves nothing, (38) is more enlightening:

(38) Na=n gamui subu goro gimi.
1SG=IRR become chief cover 2PL.OBJ
‘I’ll become the chief over all of you.’ - D2T43L99/T2p63

Sentence (38) is not illustrative of verb serialisation, as it fits into no paradigm for an SVC type. Goro gimi cannot be a clause, as goro is not marked for subject or aspect/modality. Instead, subu goro gimi must be a predicate NP in an equational sentence, wherein goro is functioning as a preposition. Hence the forces of grammaticalisation are slowly changing goro, which is largely still a verb for synchronic descriptive purposes, into a preposition.
9 COMPLEX SENTENCES

9.1 Overview

Complex sentences can be defined as sentences that comprise more than one clause. There are a number of ways in which the clauses of a complex sentence may relate to each other, at varying levels of syntactic cohesion. Figure 9.1, originally provided in Chapter 8 (Serial Verb Constructions) and repeated below, gives a typology of clause juncture proposed by Crowley. Clausal cohesion ranges from the very tightly knit, as with verbal compounds, to coordinate clauses, which are the least interdependent:

Verbal Compounds > Nuclear Serial Verbs > Core Serial Verbs > Clause Chains > Subordinate Clauses > Coordinate Clauses (Crowley, 2002: 18)

Figure 9.1: Clause juncture typology

This chapter concentrates on the bolded elements of Figure 9.1: sentences characterised by clause chains, subordinate clauses, and coordinate clauses. Following Thieberger (2004: 291), Table 9.1 contrasts the formal characteristics of clause linkage exhibited by these three sentence types. It can be seen that clause chains in Abma lack the morphosyntactic flexibility of subordinate and coordinate clauses and thus have the tightest level of clause juncture of the three. This is in accordance with Crowley’s predictions of clause juncture typology:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL OF JUNCTURE</th>
<th>V1</th>
<th>V2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject NP</td>
<td>Subject Index Morph.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clause chaining</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clause subordination</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clause coordination</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.1: Formal characteristics of clause linkage in complex sentences

This chapter begins with the most loosely knit of the complex sentence types, coordinated clauses, in §9.2. Then subordinate clauses are covered in §9.3. Clause chains, the most syntactically unified of complex sentences, are examined last, in §9.4.
9.2 Clause Coordination

As mentioned above, coordinated clauses have a relatively loose integration with each other in the sentence. Each coordinated clause within the sentence functions independently, taking its own subject NP, subject pronoun, aspect/modality marker, and direct object.

Clauses related through coordination can have a conjunctive ("a and b"), disjunctive ("a or b"), or adversative ("a but b") relationship. These functions are listed in the first column of Table 9.2. The second column summarises the forms of coordination: normally coordination occurs with the help of a coordinating morpheme, but in one type of conjunctive coordination, it is possible to simply juxtapose the conjoined clauses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUNCTION OF COORDINATION</th>
<th>FORM OF COORDINATOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>conjunctive (&quot;a and b&quot;) (§9.2.1)</td>
<td>Ø (clause juxtaposition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bi ‘and’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ba ‘comment (COMM)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disjunctive (&quot;a or b&quot;) (§9.2.2)</td>
<td>io ‘or’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>atsige ‘or’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adversative (&quot;a but b&quot;) (§9.2.3)</td>
<td>ani ‘but’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ba ‘comment (COMM)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.2: Clause coordination

Abma has few coordinating morphemes. The discourse marker ba ‘comment (COMM)’ is prevalent in natural speech, and it is sometimes translated into English with ‘but’, or even less frequently, with ‘and’. However, its primary function is that of a discourse marker (explored in the next chapter (Information Structure)); its ability to occasionally indicate coordination is incidental to this central role.

Some Vanuatu languages (e.g., Araki (François, 2002: 173) Lolovoli (Hyslop, 2001: 424), and South Efate (Thieberger, 2004: 296)) use the Bislama borrowing ale ‘okay, and then’ as a coordinator. In Abma, ale ‘okay’, occasionally occurs at the beginning of a sentence, but it does not coordinate clauses.

9.2.1 Conjunctive Coordination

Conjunctive coordination ("a and b") is indicated by clause juxtaposition as well as by other morphemes that function to bring two or more clauses together in the same sentence.
9.2.1.1 Juxtaposition

Juxtaposition is characterised by consecutive clauses, but with no conjunction to separate them. Each clause depicts a separate event. For example, in (1) the three underlined clauses occur in succession. There are no intervening conjunctions, and each clause has its own aspect marker (mwe ‘imperfective (IPFV)’):

(1) Bi, mwe=gam sib mwi=git-a, mwa=sroo
    and 3SG.IPFV=MIN go.down 3SG.IPFV=look-TR 3SG.IPFV=send
    dantsu-n nii.
    wife-3SG.POSS PL
    ‘He goes and looks, and he sends his wives.’ –T2p105/D2T49L40

Note that a pause is not necessarily even required between juxtaposed clauses. For example, there is no pause between the first two clauses in (1); nor is there one between the last two clauses in (2):

(2) Mwi=sib teweb, mu=dumre mwi=git.
    3SG.IPFV=go.down a.little.bit 3SG.IPFV=get.up 3SG.IPFV=look
    ‘He goes down a little bit, then gets up and looks around.’ –T2p109/D2T49

While these examples may superficially resemble type 3 SVCs, upon closer examination they do not conform to type 3 SVC constraints. See Chapter 8 (Serial Verb Constructions) for a review.

9.2.1.2 Bi ‘And’

Bi ‘and’ is the most commonly-used coordinating conjunction:

(3) Ø Beb mini atsi nii, bi atsi nii ra mwa=ililngi.
    3SG IPFV.say PREP person PL and person PL 3PL IPFV=know
    ‘He says it to the people, and the people know.’ –FN4p43/D20T30

(4) Ba, mwel nong te=sak, bi mwa=tbat.
    COMM cycad PROX 3SG.PFV=go.up and 3SG.IPFV=bend
    ‘This cycad tree grows, and bends.’ –T2p93/D2T49L8
9.2.1.3 *Ba* ‘COMMENT’

The comment marker *ba* has a marginal role as a coordinating conjunction, but it occasionally fulfils this function:

(5)  

```
Ko=t  sibma  li  hal  ba  ko=t  git-a
2SG=PFV come.down  LOC  road  COMM  2SG=PFV see-TR
```

```
hala-ma  te  gab-kabmwa  sik.
road-1PL.EXC.POSS  3SG.PFV  INT-be.bad  very
‘You came down the road and you saw that our road is really bad.’ –T1p2/EF1p14
```

(6)  

```
Mwe=sama,  ba  Ø  butihi  atsigo  ah
3SG.IPFV=come.up  COMM  3SG  IPFV.find  one.of.them  REL
```

```
te  sadok  le  kamel.
3G.PFV  sit  LOC  meeting.house
‘He comes up, and he finds a man sitting in the meeting house.’ –EF2p31/D39T12
```

(Both (5) and (6) above contain subordinate clauses which are not underlined.)

9.2.2 *Disjunctive Coordination*

Disjunctive coordination (“a or b”) is formed through two disjunctive coordinators, *io* ‘or’ and *atsige* ‘or’.

9.2.2.1 *Io* ‘Or’

In (7) and (8), *io* ‘or’ conjoins the underlined clauses:

(7)  

```
Mwo=doni  bo,  io  mwo=doni  seesee.
3SG.IPFV=want  pig  or  3SG.IPFV=want  custom.mat
‘He wants a pig, or he wants a custom mat.’ –T1p34/D2T3
```

(8)  

```
Kabakaba,  ra=m  sal  nge  mere,  io  ra=m  gab.
bat  3PL=IPFV  fly  just  high.place  or  3PL=IPFV  do
```

```
ra  mwa=mtsuu=te?
3PL  IPFV=sleep=PART
‘Bats, they just fly up, or they do what, they sleep a bit?’ –EF2p23/D39T8
```
9.2.2.2 Atsige ‘Or’

Atsige ‘or’ conjoins pairs of clauses in (9) and (10):

(9) Ihgoah ra=m gomonio, atsige ra=m lel-i kastonl.
when 3PL=IPFV baptise or 3PL=IPFV do-TR custom.ceremony
‘When they do a baptism, or they do a custom ceremony.’ -T3p5

(10) Ba mwi=di, ba, alibe nehu, sande bwaleh, atsige
COMM 3SG.IPFV=stay COMM sometime say week one or
mu=mu sasviri sande bwaleh si, ihgoah mu=us.
3SG.IPFV=ADD exceed week one a.bit if 3SG.IPFV=rain
‘It stays something like a week, or it can even exceed a week if it rains.’ -T2p12/D2T31

9.2.3 Adversative Coordination

The adversative (“a but b”) is used when one clause is in antithesis to another one in the
sentence. The adversative coordinators are ani ‘but’ and the discourse marker ba ‘comment
(COMM)’.

9.2.3.1 Ani ‘But’

In (11) and (12), ani ‘but’ conjoins the underlined clauses:

(11) Ba na=t ba=ililngi dihi tobtowan=nga, ani na=n veb=te nge teweb.
COMM 1SG=PFV NEG.1=know do.well speech=NEG.2
but 1SG=IRR talk-PART just a.little.bit
‘I don’t know how to give a good talk, but I’ll talk a little bit.’ -D1T1

(12) Ani, Aromantine, ba nitsu-n te=ses muumuu, ani havin nii, ba ra=t lak sera.
but A. COMM child-3SG.POSS 3SG.PFV=be.many very
but woman PL COMM 3PL=PFV marry finish
‘But, Aromantine, she has lots of children, but the women, they’ve all married.’ -EF2p106/D2T29
9.2.3.2 *Ba* ‘COMMENT’

Sentences (13) and (14) illustrate adversative coordination by means of the comment marker, *ba*:

(13) \[ \text{Na=t git sige } \text{ba } \text{te bulong.} \]
1SG=PFV look follow COMM 3SG.PFV not.exist

‘I looked for him everywhere but I couldn’t find him [he wasn’t there].’ –EF2p70

(14) \[ \text{Na=n...=..:::n...=-do;:;:;g;>...::-i}
\]
1SG=IRR look.for try COMM

\[ \text{na=n=ba wutihi=nga.} \]
1SG=IRR=NEG.1 find=NEG.2

‘I’ll look for him but I think I won’t find him.’ –EF2p20

### 9.3 Clause Subordination

Unlike coordinated clauses, subordinate clauses are formally and functionally dependent on another main clause in the sentence. The subordinate clause follows the main clause, and its existence is normally flagged by a subordinating conjunction.

Subordination is instantiated in three major ways: as adverbial clauses (§9.3.1), relative clauses (§9.3.2), and complement clauses (§9.3.3).

#### 9.3.1 Adverbial Clauses

Adverbial clauses do not form part of the core argument structure of the sentence. They are syntactically peripheral, and provide supporting information to the main clause. For example, adverbial clauses may be used to explain the reason or purpose of the event described in the main clause. Thus they usually appear at the margins of the sentence, either before or after the main clause.

In Abma, adverbial clauses are introduced by a subordinating conjunction, but aside from this indicator of subordination, they may be fully inflected for person, number, aspect/modality, and may take their own subject and direct object NP, just as main clauses can.
Table 9.3 lists the main adverbial clause types and the subordinating conjunctions that introduce them:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLAUSE TYPE</th>
<th>SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reason (§9.3.1.1)</td>
<td>igo ‘because’, nehu ‘because’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purpose (§9.3.1.2)</td>
<td>uugo ‘in order that’, nehu ‘in order that’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temporal (§9.3.1.3)</td>
<td>entoroah ‘when’, ihgo ‘when’, tugoah ‘when’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conditional (§9.3.1.4)</td>
<td>ihgo ‘if’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concessive (§9.3.1.5)</td>
<td>masenah ‘although’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.3: Adverbial clause types

The above-listed categories have subordinating conjunctions that apply specifically to that category. However, the subordinating conjunction niah (with its related forms teah, niahah, ni, ah, and aha) functions as a “jack-of-all-trades”. It is used in some of the categories listed above, as well as in others that are not covered here. It flags a variety of different adverbial clauses, lending them a meaning particular to the given context in which they occur. It is also the standard marker of relative clauses (discussed in §9.3.2). The breadth of scope of niah corresponds with Lynch, Ross, and Crowley’s characterisation of relative clause markers in Oceanic language as usually having “some kind of broad subordinating function” (Lynch et al., 2002: 43). Niah ‘general subordinator (SUB)’ is given special attention in the sub-section on general adverbial subordination (§9.3.1.6).

9.3.1.1 Reason Clauses

Reason clauses are flagged by the subordinating conjunctions igo (and its allomorph igonani) ‘because’. In (15), the clause following igo ‘because’ is a reason adverbial:

(15) Rong-an noko-ma mwe=gabis kau lengleng feel-NMZ body-1PL.EXC.POSS 3SG.IPFV=be.good big.one very
    igo ko mwa=bma ne-aldiro gema.
    because 2SG IPFV=come CONN-visit 1PL.EXC.OBJ
    ‘We are very glad because you come and visit us.’ -T1p2

In (16), igonani ‘because’ introduces the underlined adverbial clause of reason:
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(16) Na=t=babar dobob basela te=nga, subu nii,
1SG=PFV=NEG.1 talk be.a.lot PART=NEG.2 chief PL

- igonani too, ba Ø ban=te.
because time COMM 3SG IPFV.go=CMP
‘I’m not talking very much, chiefs, because the time, it’s gone by.’ -EF2p60/D41T11

Nehu ‘because’ is also used to introduce reason clauses:

(17) Mwa=bma i datni-n ren=ah niaha Vanuatu
3SG.IPFV=come PREP some-3SG.POSS day=this REL V.

Ø buh baata nehu mwane=i i datni-n
3SG 3SG.IPFV.hold be.tight because 3SG.IRR=be some-3SG.POSS

- ren te-mres.
day ADJ-heavy
‘It’s come to one of these days that Vanuatu holds tight to because it will be one of the important days.’ -EF2p48/D41T6

The general subordinator ah is also used in reason clauses. In (18), kuran tenok naanong ‘the war is finished now’, explains the reason for the actions described in preceding clauses:

(18) Bi, ra=m submulma, ra beb nehu nema
and 3PL=IPFV come.back.down 3PL IPFV.say COMP 3SG.PRSP

submulma naanong, go=ah nema mul naanong, come.back.down now one=PROX 3SG.PRSP go.back now

- ah kuran te=nok naanong.
SUB war 3SG.PFV=finish now
‘They come back down, they say that they’re coming back down, they’ll return now because the war is finished now.’ –T2p33/D2T11L46

9.3.1.2 Purpose Clauses

Purposive clauses are introduced by uugo (and its allomorph uugoah) ‘in order that’. In (19), uugoah introduces a subordinate purposive clause, which is underlined:
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(19) Karu rus ban, igo na=ma rabaraut naanong, 2PL move IPFV.go because 1SG=PRSP flap.wings now

_uugoah_ na=ma datere.
in.order.that 1SG=PRSP crow
‘You people move away because I’m going to flap my wings now, in order that I crow.’
–T2p93/D2T49L10

Purposive clauses are also occasionally introduced by _nehu_, as shown in (20). _Nehu_ is normally used to introduce complement clauses (see §9.3.3), but it also plays a secondary role in introducing adverbial clauses.

(20) Ko=:n mas ne-rob _nehu_ ko ne=bma luhmwi
2SG=IRR must CONN-run PURP 2SG IRR=come do.well

_bis_ le too.
go.until LOC time
‘You must run to arrive on time.’ -EF1p132

The general subordinator _ah_ is also used to mark purpose. In (21), _tetbo bodi val_ ‘lay down blocking the house’ is a purpose adverbial that describes the intention of the actor:

(21) Bi te=sak _ah_ te=tbo bodi val.
and 3SG.PFV=go.up SUB 3SG.PFV=lay.down block house
‘He went up so as to lay down and block the house.’ –D20T16L4

9.3.1.3 Temporal Clauses

Temporal adverbial clauses share some kind of temporal dependency relationship with the main clause. For example, the adverbial clause may be coded to indicate simultaneous action with the main clause. In (22), the subordinate conjunction _ihgoah_ ‘when, while’ indicates that the following adverbial _te dasi tsi_ ‘he cut sugarcane’ occurs at the same time as _te sasa_ ‘he sang’:

(22) Te sasa _ihgoah_ te das-i tsi.
3SG.PFV sing while 3SG.PFV cut-TR sugarcane
‘He sang when he cut sugarcane. -EF1p35

Another conjunction that depicts simultaneous actions/events is _entorah/entoni_ ‘at the time, when’. In (23), _entorah_ prefases the subordinate temporal clause, which is underlined. The main clause follows afterwards:
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(23) Ba entorah mwateete te=gam git-a tobmì-n
COMM when chicken 3SG.PFY=MIN look-TR reflection-3SG.POSS
le gilas, ba te git-a ah leilin,
LOC mirror COMM 3SG.PFY look-TR REL feather
tei te gabis.
FOC 3SG.PFY be.good
‘When the chicken just looked at his reflection in the mirror, he saw that his feathers were nice.’ – T3p75

Temporal clauses are also used when the action in the main clause cannot occur until the action of the subordinate clause has first been achieved. This is illustrated in (24), where the actions depicted in the main clauses are dependent on the successful completion of the temporal adverbial clause, tugoah mwedab sera ‘when it’s bleached’:

(24) Bi tugoah mwe=dab sera, ko mwa=li, bi, ale,
and when 3SG.IPVF=be.white finish 2SG 3SG.IPVF=take and then
ko=m garahvi, ko=m garahvi sera, bi ko=mwa bits-i
2SG=IPVF flatten 2SG=IPVF flatten finish and 2SG=IPVF weave-TR
no-m watang.
CL.GE-2SG.POSS basket
‘And when it’s bleached, you take it, and then, you flatten it, you finish flattening it, and you weave your basket.’ – EF2p39/D39T6

9.3.1.4 Conditional Clauses

Conditional clauses are specifically introduced by ihgo or its allomorph, ihgoah ‘if’. These are exemplified in (25) and (26); the subordinating conjunctions are bolded and the hypothetical adverbial clauses are underlined:

(25) Na=n gabis ihgo ko=n gabis.
1SG=IRR be.good if 2SG=IRR be.good
‘It’s okay with me if it’s okay with you.’ – EF1p46
Conditional clauses are also sometimes flagged through a topic-comment structure. (Discourse structure is discussed in Chapter 10.) In (27) for example, the conditional subordinate clause, *kobimbatavan* ‘if you come down’, is separated from the main clause by a pause and the comment marker, *ba*:

(27) Ko=n sibma tavan, ba kaa=mwa hi kik.

‘You come down, and we’ll beat you.’ - FN4p69/D39T10

9.3.1.5 Concessive Clauses

Concession is also expressed through a subordinate adverbial clause. The conjunction that marks this type of clause is *masenah* ‘although, even though’. In (28), the adverbial clause follows the main clause:

(28) Naanong, ko leb gabara-ni, beba na-n haavak, now 2SG take remove-TR paper ASSOC-3SG.POSS child

*masenah* te bado van=nga le Kilas Wan.

‘Now, you take out the child’s papers, even if they haven’t yet gone to Class 1.’ - EF2p66

In (29), the adverbial concessive clause (underlined) comes between the main clause and its object complement (complements are discussed in §9.3.3):

(29) Ba kaa=mwa butihi nchu, *masenah* no-m meres

COMM 1PL.EXC=IPFV find COMP although CL.GE-2SG.POSS assets

*mwan bulong, ba ko=n mwas luh–luhmwi ras nge.*

‘We find that, although you won’t own anything, you’ll live really well, all the time.’ - T1p43/D2T9
9.3.1.6 Other Clause Types

The general subordinator *niah* (and its various allomorphs), introduced in §9.3.1 above, can flexibly be used in adverbial clauses to express meanings other than those covered in the preceding categories.

The adverbial clause (*na temnok* ‘I finished’) delimits the main clause activity (*nat guk* ‘I cooked’) in (30). Notice that *ah* is the subordinate conjunction used here:

(30) Na=t guk *ah* na te=mnok, bi na=m gan.
1SG=PFV cook SUB 1SG PFV=finish and 1SG=IPFV eat
‘I cooked until I finished, then I ate.’ –T2p45/D2T5L2

*Ah* ‘subordinator (SUB)’ is often used in adverbial clauses of emphasis. That is, the adverbial clause functions to emphasise the information given in the main clause:

(31) Atsi nong, ba mwee na-n teman,
person PROX COMM manner ASSOC-3SG.POSS father-3SG.POSS
tei te gabmwa *ah* te gabmwa.
FOC 3SG.PFV be.bad SUB 3SG.PFV be.bad
‘This woman, her father’s manner was bad, really bad.’ –T2p85/D2T45L16

(32) Ø *Ban* *ah* Ø *ban.*
3SG PFV.go SUB 3SG PFV.go
‘He goes and goes.’ –T2p119/D3T11L13

9.3.2 Relative Clauses

Relativisation occurs when a specific NP within the main clause is modified or further described by another clause in the sentence. Sentence (33) gives an example of a relative clause in Abma: the main clause is *nat gita havin nii* ‘I saw the women’ and the relative clause is *ram di Vila* ‘they live in Vila’. The purpose of the relative clause in this case is to further describe the direct object NP of the main clause, *havin nii* ‘women’. The subject pronoun *ra* ‘3PL’ in the relative clause is co-referential with *havin nii*. Therefore it may be said that the direct object of the main clause (*havin nii* ‘women’) is co-referential with, or indexed by, the subject (*ra* ‘3PL’) of the relative clause. *Niah* is the relative clause marker.
This is its typical form, but occasionally it is *niaha, ni, ah, teah* (when the head NP is partitive), or even Ø. In this example as with all examples in this section, the NP in the main clause and its co-referent in the relative clause are bolded; the relative clause itself is underlined.

(33) Na=t git-a havin nii, niah ra=m di Vila.
    ISG=PFV see-TR woman PL REL 3PL=IPFY live V.
    ‘I saw the women who live in Vila.’ -EF2p174

As demonstrated in (33), the relative clause has all the trappings of a main clause: it may take subject and direct object NPs as well as person, number, and aspectual/ modal marking. The only constraint placed on the relative clause is that one of its arguments must refer back to a specific NP in the main clause, and it must be a formally reduced version of the NP (i.e., it cannot be a full lexical NP). This co-referential element within the relative clause can be a subject, direct object, an adjunct (temporal/locative), or even a possessor. Its form within the relative clause depends upon its function therein, but as a general rule, it takes the same form it that it would take in the main clause, albeit in reduced, non-lexical NP form.

For instance, if it is the subject of the relative clause that refers back to an NP in the main clause, then this is coded by a subject pronoun. Sentence (33) above is an example of this. Or, if it is the direct object of the relative clause that is co-referential with an NP in the main clause, then the direct object is unmarked. This reflects the treatment of direct objects in main clauses: if there is no overtly coded NP direct object in the main clause, then the NP is simply not coded. To continue the analogy, a possessor in the relative clause takes the form of a possessive pronoun, because this is the reduced form it takes in the main clause. Temporal phrases in the relative clause are often not coded, because there is no dedicated pronominal word that substitutes in for lexical temporal NPs. And locative NPs in the relative clause are often coded as *iginan* ‘there’.

NPs holding various positions within the main clause are amenable to modification by a relative clause; this is typical for Oceanic languages (Lynch et al., 2002: 43). NPs in the main clause that can be modified by a relative clause are subjects, direct objects, prepositional objects (including goals of ditransitive verbs), and possessors within a possessive

---

1 There are no known examples of a prepositional object within the relative clause being co-referential with a main clause NP.
construction. Table 9.4 highlights the possible relationships that may hold between NPs in the main clause and their co-referential counterparts in the relative clause:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN MAIN CLAUSE</th>
<th>IN RELATIVE CLAUSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Direct Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject (§9.3.2.1.1)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Object (§9.3.2.1.2)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositional Object (§9.3.2.1.3)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessor (§9.3.2.1.4)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.4: Relationships between main clause NPs and relative clause co-indexed referents

9.3.2.1 Main Clause/Subordinate Clause Relationships

This section examines the interrelationship between main clause NPs and their relative clause co-referents in more detail. An example sentence is given for each cell in Table 9.4.

9.3.2.1.1 Subject of Main Clause

Subject of Relative Clause

The subject of the main clause is co-indexed with the subject of the relative clause. Since the subject NP refers to a plural entity, its referent in the relative clause is the subject pronoun *ra* ‘3PL’:

(34) Atsi ah kau niah ra=m di ba, person APP big.one REL 3PL=IPFV stay COMM
ra=n=ga ska-k=te ngudu-ngudu tobowan te-web. 3PL=IRR=MIN give-INTR=PART INT=half talk ADJ2-small
‘These big men that are here, they’ll just give really short talks.’ –EF2p54/D41T6

Direct Object of Relative Clause

The subject of the main clause is co-indexed with the direct object of the relative clause. Sentence (35) is non-verbal; its topic/subject is *kada kanleutanah niah tat kani mwate* ‘our food that we ate before’, and the remainder of the sentence is the predicate. The head of the
subject NP is *kada kanleutanah* ‘our food’, and this is modified by *niah tat kani mwate* ‘that we ate before’. The direct object is unmarked in the relative clause (just as it would be in the main clause):

(35) **Ka-da**  
\[ \text{CL.ED-1PL.INC.POSS} \] **kanleutan=ah** \[ \text{food=PROX} \] **niah ta=t** \[ \text{REL 1PL.INC=PFV} \] **kan-i** \[ \text{eat-TR} \] **mwate, time.before** \[ \text{ba tei ka-da} \] \[ \text{COMM FOC CL.ED-1PL.INC.POSS} \] **kabtsin, ba tei abma?**  
\[ \text{COMM FOC} \] **what**  
‘Our food that we ate in the old times, were they vegetables, or what?’  
–T2p129/D39T25

**Adjunct of Relative Clause**

The first part of (36) contains an equational sentence wherein the subject consists of the NP *entorah* ‘time’ plus the relative clause that modifies it; the predicate consists of *bibi ut revereb* ‘is late afternoon’.

The relative clause modifying *entorah* ‘time’ contains an unexpressed but assumed temporal referent. It is this uncoded temporal constituent in the relative clause that refers back to *entorah*:

(36) **Entorah**  
\[ \text{time} \] **niah um-an** \[ \text{REL work-NMZR} \] **nong 3SG IPFY.go}** \[ \text{PROX 3SG.IPFV=finish} \] **ban mwo=nok,** \[ \text{bibi ut revereb, bi te=gen go=ah,} \] **3SG.IPFV=like one=PROX** \[ \text{ra=m gan-i hinkan.} \] **3PL=IPFV eat-TR meal**  
‘The time that work goes and finishes, it’s late afternoon, and like, they eat a meal.’  
–FN4p21/D20T30

**Possessor in Relative Clause**

The subject NP is co-referential with the third person singular possessor, *-n* ‘3SG.POSS’, in the relative clause:

---

2 *Entorah* normally functions as a subordinating conjunction in a temporal adverbial clause, meaning ‘when’ (see §9.3.1.3). However, it can also be a noun meaning ‘time’, as in this example.
Chapter 9: Complex Sentences

9.3.2.1.2 Direct Object of Main Clause

Subject of Relative Clause

The direct object of the main clause (teltel ‘snake’) is co-referential with the subject of the relative clause. The subject of the relative clause is in this case enclosed within the portmanteau form te ‘3SG.PFV’:

(38) Walu-k te=di goro tel tel ah te=lel dobmi
friend-1SG:POSS 3SG.PFV=stay block snake REL 3SG.PFV=do try

nehu nema gats-i nana.
COMP 3SG.PRSP eat-TR 1SG.OBJ

‘My friend blocked a snake that was trying to bite me.’ -EF1p59

Direct Object of Relative Clause

In this example, the direct object of the main clause (halan bo ‘pig business’) is co-referential with the unmarked direct object of the relative clause (kom sagele ‘you’re fiddling with [it]’):

(39) Na=t ba=ililngi hal-an bo=nga ah ko=m sagele.
1SG=PFV NEG.1=know road-3SG.POSS pig-NEG.2 REL 2SG=IPFV fiddle.with

‘I don’t know what kind of pig business you’re doing.’ –T2p107/D2T49L44

Adjunct of Relative Clause

The direct object of the main clause, ut ‘place’, is co-referential with the locative phrase in the relative clause, iginan ‘there’:

(37) Biri nitsu atsi=ah niah ha-n ah Tsihiitak,
small child person=PROX REL name-3SG.POSS APP T.

Ø ban mwe=aldiro bila-n.
3SG IPFV.go 3SG.IPFV=VISIt CL.RS-3SG.POSS

‘This small child whose name is Tsihiitak, he goes and visits his [breadfruit tree].’ –FN4p63/D39T10

3 Han ah Tsihiitak ‘his name is Tsihiitak’ is a verbless clause, one of the clause types described in Chapter 7 (Simple Sentences).
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(40) Ra=m=ru gosige ut ah ra=ma=ru van
3PL=IPFV=DU look.for place REL 3PL=PRSP=DU go
ne-ntsuu iginan.
CONN-sleep there
‘The two of them look for a place where they can go sleep.’ –D20T16

Possessor in Relative Clause

In this example, the direct object in the main clause, go ‘one’ is co-referential with the possessor -n 3SG.POSS’ in the relative clause. The ni relative clause marker is not heard in the original text, but the translator inserted it:

(41) Ba te=sak, bi mwe=sak mwi=git-a
COMM 3SG.PFV=go.up and 3SG.IPFV=go.up 3SG.IPFV=look-TR
go [ni] ra=t das rotvi woko-n.
one REL 3PL=PFV cut break leg-3SG.POSS
‘And he went up, and he goes up, he looks at the one whose leg they cut off.’-D2T11

9.3.2.1.3 Prepositional Object of Main Clause

Subject of Relative Clause

In (42), the prepositional object in the main clause, subu kau ‘big chief’, is co-referential with the uncoded subject of the relative clause mwabma ‘he comes’:

(42) Ra=m gogoogo mini subu kau, niah mwa=bma.
3PL=IPFV show.respect PREP chief big.one REL 3SG.IPFV=come
‘They show respect to the big chief who comes. –D2T43L196

Direct Object of Relative Clause

The prepositional object of the main clause is bwihil go ‘another bird’. Its co-referent is an unmarked direct object in the relative clause. Note that the verb hu ‘call someone (a name)’ is optionally di-transitive; the direct object is the person or object being named, and the indirect object, marked by the preposition i, refers to the name itself.
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(43) Bi Ø beb ha bwhil go, niah ra=mwa hu and 3SG IPFV.say PREP bird other REL 3PL=IPFV call

i "Weememe", nehu, "Mwan=bi kik nae". PREP W. COMP 3SG.IRR=be 2SG.OBJ now
‘And he says to another bird, the one they call “Weememe”, “It will be you now.”’ -T2p75/D2T43

Adjunct of Relative Clause

In (44), the pronoun iginan ‘there’ refers back to the prepositional object in the main clause, ut ‘place’:

(44) Ba te=ren, bi mwa=mlu rus, COMM 3SG.PFV=be.daylight and 3SG.IPFV=leave move

mwa=mlu rus dini ut ah te sadok iginan. 3SG.IPFV=leave move from place REL 3SG.PFV stay there
‘Daylight broke, and they got moving, they left from the place where they had stayed.’ -T2p83/D2T45L8

Possessor in Relative Clause

This is an example of a non-verbal sentence. Its subject/topic NP is Sanial, ba, li boro vini, niah kaam di linah ‘Sanial, in this small village where we stay’, and the predicate is ba butsubutsuka nii ‘[there are] lots of trees’.4 Within the subject NP is the prepositional object boro vini ‘small village’. This is co-referenced by the third person singular possessive pronoun -n in the relative clause. The possessive pronoun is attached to the bound noun li- ‘location’, resulting in lin ‘its location’ or ‘the location of it’:

(45) Sanial, ba, li boro vini, niah kaa=m di S. COMM LOC small village REL IPL.EXC=IPFV stay

li-n=ah, ba butsu–butsu-ka nii. location-3SG.POSS=PROX COMM INT~tree-generic.tree PL
‘Sanial, in this small village, where we stay, there are lots of trees.’ -EF2p92/D2T29

4 Subjects and topics are explored in Chapter 10 (Information Structure).
9.3.2.1.4 Possessor in Main Clause

Possessor NPs do not occupy a place in the syntax of the sentence the way subjects and objects do. However they do have a position within the NP, and in the examples below, it is the possessor NP that is specifically co-indexed within the relative clause.

Subject of Relative Clause

The possessive pronoun within the main clause, -ma ‘1PL.EXC.POSS’ is co-indexed with the subject of the relative clause. In the relative clause, the co-referent to -ma is the first person plural exclusive subject marker, kaa.

It should be emphasised that the relative clause refers specifically to the single morpheme, -ma ‘1PL.EXC.POSS’, and not to the larger word, bema ‘with us’, within which -ma is encapsulated:

(46) Ra mwa=bma be-ma niah kaa=m di Sanial.  
3PL IPFY=come proximity-1PL.EXC.POSS REL 1PL.EXC=IPFY stay S.  
‘They come stay with us who live at Sanial.’ [Lit.: They come to our proximity, where we stay at Sanial.’] -EF2p108/D2T29

Admittedly, it may be unusual for a pronominal suffix to function as the head of a relative clause. However, it is referential, just like an overtly coded NP possessor would be.

Direct Object of Relative Clause

In (47), the possessor NP in the main clause is co-indexed with the direct object in the relative clause (where the direct object is unmarked). Arguably, it is specifically the possessor NP (renah ‘this day’), and not the entire possessive construction (datnin renah ‘one of these days’), that is co-indexed with Vanuatu buh baata ‘Vanuatu holds onto [it] tightly’.

(47) Mwa=bma i datni-n ren=ah  
3SG.IPFV=come PREP some-3SG.POSS day=PROX  
niah Vanuatu Ø buh baata.  
REL V. 3SG IPFV.hold be.tight  
‘It’s come to one of these days that Vanuatu holds onto tightly.’ - EF2p48/D41T6
Sentence (48) below brings up some interesting features of syntax. The possessor NP of the associative construction in the second sentence, *lel nan val* ‘the making of a house’, is *val* ‘house’. In the third sentence, *kabwal* ‘bed’ then substitutes in for *val*, basically functioning as the de facto possessor NP of the associative construction in the previous sentence. The speaker continues with this pattern, replacing *val* and *kabwal* with *abma* ‘something’. It is this third instantiation of the possessor NP that is co-indexed with an assumed direct object within the relative clause. The relative clause marker is *te=ah* (a phonological word formed from the partitive clitic, *te*, and the relative clause marker, *ah*). *Teah* signals that the uncoded direct object of the relative clause, *ram doni* ‘they want it’, is a partitive noun.\(^5\)

\[ (48) \quad [Ra=m \quad sama...] \quad Uu \quad lel \quad na-n \quad val. \\
[3PL=IPFV \quad come.up \quad PURP \quad making \quad ASSOC-3SG.POSS \quad house \\
\quad lo \quad kabwal, \quad io \quad abma \quad te=ah \quad ra=m \quad don-i. \]

‘[They come up...] To make a house. Or a bed, or whatever they want.’

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**Adjunct of Relative Clause**

The possessor NP within the main clause is *goah* ‘this one’. The NP *goah* itself refers to the NP *tsuubung* ‘morning’, which precedes it in the sentence. *Goah* is also co-indexed in the relative clause with the adjunct of *ramaru gookoo* ‘the two of them will race [at this time]’.

Although this temporal referent is not overtly coded within the relative clause, its existence is assumed: an unspoken notion of temporality (‘this time’/‘this morning’) refers back to the NP *goah* ‘this one’ in the main clause. The main clause NP plus the relative clause are bracketed in this example to facilitate the reader:

---

\(^5\) Since the uncoded direct object in the relative clause is presumably a partitive noun, it is unclear why *don-i* ‘want-TR’ in the relative clause has not dropped its normal transitivity marking, as would be expected of such verbs when occurring with the partitive. Since *doni* ‘want’ is “stranded” in sentence-final position (which is not typical), perhaps transitivity marking is coded as an overt signal of the unexpressed direct object.
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(49) Ø Ban ah bi tsuu-tsuubung, ah tsuubung, ah tsuubung, 3SG IPFV.go EMPH and INT-morning APP morning APP morning

[taro-n go=ah niah ra=ma=ru gookoo],

time-3SG.POSS this=PROX REL 3PL=PRSP=DU race

bi ra=m=ru gookoo.
and 3PL=IPFV=DU race

‘Early morning comes, morning, morning, this time when the two of them are to race, and the two of them race.’ –T3p91

Possessor in Relative Clause

This example contains a rather complicated associative construction within the main clause, halan mwasan nan ut li vini ‘the manner of living at the place in the village’, of which ut li vini ‘place in the village’ is the possessor NP. This possessor NP is then followed by the relative clause, kaa mwas lin ‘we live at its location’; the bound NP lin ‘its location’ contains the possessive pronoun -n ‘3SG.POSS’. It is this possessive pronoun that refers back to the possessor NP, ut li vini ‘place in the village’ in the main clause:

(50) Na=ma dahkuru hal-an mwas-an na-n ut
1SG=PRSP follow road-3SG.POSS live-NMZr ASSOC-3SG.POSS place

li vini niah kaa mwas li-n, dokah.
LOC village REL 1PL.EXC IPFV.live location-3SG.POSS here

‘I’m going to follow the manner of living in the village where we live here.’
–T1p39/D2T9

9.3.3 Complement Clauses

Complementation occurs when a core role of the sentence, i.e., the subject or direct object, is in the form of a clause. These are referred to as “subject complements” and “object complements”, respectively. For example, (51) contains an object complement (underlined), nama skakte tobtowan ‘I’ll give a little talk’. Mwaura ‘ask’ (bolded) is the complement-taking predicate (CTP) (following the terminology of Noonan (1985)) – the transitive verb that triggers the object complement. As with all complement clauses in Abma, this one is syntactically indistinguishable from the main clause. In this case, it is coded in irrealis (prospective) modality because the action is yet to be realised. Nehu functions as the complementiser, i.e., the morpheme that marks the following clause as a complement. Most frequently the complementiser takes the form of nehu; alternatively, it is not marked.
(51) Ko mwa=ura dini nana nehu na=ma ska-k-te tobtow-an.
2SG IPFV=ask PREP 1SG.OBJ COMP 1SG=PRSP give-INTR-PART talk-NMZR
‘You asked that I give a little talk.’ –EF1p14

The complement clause in (51) is an object complement because it functions as the direct object of the sentence. As for the coding of subject complements, their form is limited to nominalisations, and it will be argued in §9.3.3.2 that Abma does not have any.

9.3.3.1 Semantic Class of CTP in Main Clause

Noonan (1985) lists the typical semantic classes of verbs in the main clause that take object complements. Verbs in Abma map onto some of the categories that he mentions. Table 9.5 outlines his semantic categories, as well as the Abma verbs that correspond to each category and permissible complementisers. Note that this table only applies to object complements, since there are no subject complements in Abma.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTIC CLASS OF CTP IN MAIN CLAUSE</th>
<th>CTP</th>
<th>COMPLEMENTISER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Propositional Attitude (§9.3.3.1.1)</td>
<td>veb ‘think, plan’ vih/vihni ‘think’</td>
<td>nehu, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge/Acquisition of Knowledge (§9.3.3.1.2)</td>
<td>gita ‘see, realise’ ililngi ‘know’ rongo ‘hear, learn’ wutihi ‘discover, find out’</td>
<td>nehu, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Perception (§9.3.3.1.3)</td>
<td>gita ‘see’ rongo ‘hear’</td>
<td>nehu, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulative (§9.3.3.1.4)</td>
<td>leli ‘make, cause’</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utterance (§9.3.3.1.5)</td>
<td>-mkoo ‘agree’ soosoo ‘send a message’ uhleli ‘ask’ -ura ‘ask’ veb ‘say’</td>
<td>nehu, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desiderative (§9.3.3.1.6)</td>
<td>doni ‘want’ rongo ‘feel like’</td>
<td>nehu, O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.5: Complement taking predicates

Examples of complementation occurring with each of these semantic classes are now discussed.
9.3.3.1 Propositional Attitude

With propositional attitude CTPs, the speaker expresses his or her belief in the truth of proposition uttered in the complement clause. This is demonstrated in (52): bih ‘think’ is the CTP, and ut te gabis ‘the place is good’ is the object complement:

\[(52)\text{Sanial, ba na bih nehu, ut te gabis.}\]

‘Sanial, I think that the place is nice.’ –EF2p102/D2T29

9.3.3.1.2 Knowledge/Acquisition of Knowledge

These CTPs indicate knowledge of the event coded by the complement, regardless of how this knowledge is obtained (e.g., through seeing, hearing, discovering, etc.). In (53), the CTP is butihi ‘find’ and the object complement is boswos sera nge mini gema ‘it’s just completely simple for us’. The complementiser is nehu:

\[(53)\text{Kaa=mwa butihi nehu Ø boswos sera nge mini gema.}\]

‘We find that it’s just completely simple for us.’ –Tlp42/D2T9

Complements may also be coded in irrealis modality if the circumstances are irrealis, as demonstrated in (54). Leng nema ih ‘there will be a hurricane’, the object complement, is uttered in prospective modality, which is a kind of “imminent” irrealis:

\[(54)\text{Ba ko-n=gam son-i li tan, ba kaamane=iliangi nehu, leng nema ih.}\]

‘You’ll just put it on the ground, and you’ll know that there will be a hurricane [the wind will hit].’ –T2p71/D2T43

9.3.3.1.3 Immediate Perception

Immediate perception CTPs are used in situations where the object complement is directly perceived, that is in a literal sense, and not in the figurative sense of “see = understand”, for
example. In (55), the immediate perception CTP is *gita* ‘see’, and the object complement is *bilan leut tedi wob* ‘his things are outside’. The complementiser is unmarked in this example.

(55) Ra=m=ru git-a bila-n leut te=di wob.⁶
    3PL=IPFV=DU see-TR CL.RS-3SG.POSS thing 3SG.PFV=stay outside
‘The two of them see that his things are outside.’ –T1p11/D2T1

9.3.3.1.4 Manipulative

The verb coded within a manipulative CTP has some sort of effect on its object complement. The causative, for example, is typically expressed using a manipulative construction. In (56), *leli* ‘make, do’ is the CTP, and *bwalakte ra mes* ‘the clothes are wet’ is the affected object complement. The complementiser cannot be used when the CTP is manipulative:

(56) Uus mwe=lel-i bwal-a-te ra-O mes.
    rain 3SG.IPFV=make-TR clothing-GNZR 3PL.IPFV be.wet
‘The rain made the clothes wet.’ –EF1p89

9.3.3.1.5 Utterance Predicates

Utterance predicates can be formulated using direct or indirect speech. The format of both is essentially the same, the only difference being that direct speech involves a quotation, whereas indirect speech is reported.

Sentence (57) is an example of direct speech, where *mwanbi kik nae* ‘it will be you now’ is the complement:

(57) Bi Ø=beb ha Bwihil Bon, bwihil go, Bwihil Bon, and 3SG=IPFV.say PREP pigeon bird one pigeon
    Ø beb ha=ni nehu. "Mwan=bi kik nae."
    3SG IPFV.say PREP=3SG.OBJ COMP 3SG.IRR=be
    2SG.IND now ‘And he says to Pigeon, one bird, Pigeon, he says to him, “It’ll be you now.”’
    –T2p73/D2T43L169

⁶ Note that the complement clause takes perfective aspect marking. This is appropriate marking for the situation; if the clause were coded in the imperfective, then it would take on a progressive sense, i.e., ‘his things are sitting outside’.
Typically, the modality of the object complement in indirect speech is irrealis. For example, in (58) the object complement is in hypothetical modality: *ko batebma* ‘you were supposed to come’:

(58) Te=veh nehu ko bate=bma.
3SG.PFv=say COMP 2SG HYP=come
‘He said that you were supposed to come.’ -EF1p57

9.3.3.1.6 Desiderative

Desiderative CTPs express the wish for the information conveyed in the object complement. In (59), the complement is *mwanei atleimwa k ah kik*, literally, ‘she will be my wife, you’:

(59) Na=m don-i nehu mwane=l atleimwa-k ah kik.
1SG=IPFV want-TR COMP 3SG.lRR=be wife-ISG.POSS APP 2SG.IND
‘I want you to be my wife.’ -T2p87/D2T45L17

Note that because the CTP expresses a wish, the object complement is in irrealis modality. This makes sense from a meaning-based perspective: wishes expressed by desiderative CTPs are as yet unfulfilled.

9.3.3.1.7 Non-CTPs in Abma

Table 9.5 above lists the CTPs in Abma that correspond to the semantic classes of CTPs identified by Noonan (1985). However, Noonan recognises a number of other CTPs that do not materialise as complement constructions in Abma. Table 9.6 below lists these “residual” CTPs, and the way that their meanings are instead instantiated in Abma (if not through complementation):
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTIC CLASS OF PROPOSED CTP</th>
<th>ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF EXPRESSION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretence (imagine, pretend, fool, trick)</td>
<td>Adverbial clause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentative (factive) (regret, be sorry, be sad, be odd, be important)</td>
<td>Subject or direct object NP, e.g., <em>Bwarem mwodok</em> ‘Your pain stays’ or <em>Nam rongo ilan</em> ‘I feel sadness’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Direct object NP; adverbial clause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modal</td>
<td>SVC; clause chain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Achievement (manage, chance, dare, remember to, happen to, try, forget to, fail, avoid) | “Success”: manipulative CTP (e.g., *leli* ‘do’); knowledge CTP (e.g., *ililngi* ‘know’).
“Failure”: direct object NP; negative verb *bulong* ‘not exist’ as comment to preceding topic; negative interjection, e.g., *tebu* ‘no, not successful’. |
| Phasal (begin, start, continue, keep on, finish, stop) | SVC; clause chain; clause coordination; adverb. |
| Negation | Discontinuous negative morpheme *ba...nga; bulong* ‘not exist’; *bariak* ‘not want’. |
| Conjunctive (and, then) | Clause coordination. |

Table 9.6: Predicates that do not trigger complements

9.3.3.2 Not a Complement: Nominalisations

Nominalisations are really not clauses at all in Abma – they are nouns that happen to be derived from verbs. Nevertheless, nominalisations occurring in subject or direct object position of the sentence are mentioned here, in keeping with the practice of other descriptions of complementation (see Hyslop, 2001: 391-392; Lynch, 2000a: 161-164; Noonan, 1985: 60-62).

In (60), *mwasan* ‘life’ is a nominalisation of *mwas* ‘live’, and it functions as sentential subject. Note that *mwasan* is a possessed NP within the possessive construction *noma mwasan* ‘our life’:

(60) No-ma mwas-an mwa=srisrik tokol.
CL.GE-1PL.EXC.POSS live-NMZR 3SG.IPFV=be.difficult be.strong
‘Our life is very difficult.’ –EF1p14/D1T1

In (61), *vilisan* ‘paddling’ (underlined) is a nominalisation of *vilis* ‘paddle’. Its CTP is *ililngi* ‘know’ (bolded), and it functions as the direct object in this sentence. Note that the sentence contains no complementiser, *nehu*:

In (61), *vilisan* ‘paddling’ (underlined) is a nominalisation of *vilis* ‘paddle’. Its CTP is *ililngi* ‘know’ (bolded), and it functions as the direct object in this sentence. Note that the sentence contains no complementiser, *nehu*:
The underlined elements in (60) and (61) are considered to be NPs and not sentential complements, for the following reasons:

1. The complementiser, nehu, never precedes nominalisations. Non-nominalised complements (except for with the manipulative CTP) at least have the option of taking nehu as a complementiser.
2. Nominalisations can appear within a possessive construction, as does mwasan ‘life’ in (60). Non-nominalised complements cannot be subsumed within a possessive or associative construction.
3. The discontinuous negative morpheme ba...nga delineates a single clause plus its direct object, if there is one. In (61), the clause “enclosed” by ba=/-nga is ililngi vilisan ‘know [how to] paddle’ – not ililngi ‘know’ alone. Therefore vilisan ‘paddling’ is considered to be a direct object NP of the main clause. If it were a separate clause, then it would not have been included within the realm of the discontinuous negative morpheme.

The difficulties of analysing nominalised complements as clauses are therefore obvious. In Abma, they are instead categorised as NPs.

9.4 Clause Chains

9.4.1 Overview of Clause Chains in Abma

Clause chains are often used in “action” discourse, wherein a series of events occur in rapid succession to one another, or even simultaneously. In Abma, chaining is primarily exploited for this function, but it also serves other functions such as marking aspect and modality. Chains are economical in their grammatical marking, conveying a good deal of lexical information with minimal coding.

In a chain, two or more clauses are strung together to form a complex sentence. The primary verb carries person, number, aspectual/modal information, and (rarely) any transitivity marking. To this, one or more dependent verbs are affiliated, conjoined by a “chaining” morpheme. The dependent verb(s) may take transitivity marking, but otherwise lack the grammatical coding of the primary verb and thus depend upon the primary verb for this information.
An example of clause chaining in Abma is given in (62). Here, the *ne-* ‘connector (CONN)’ morpheme (used specifically with clause chains) conjoins the primary clause, *kaam sib* ‘we go down’, with the following clause, *wesa* ‘wash them’. Note how the primary clause marks subject and aspect (*kaa=m* ‘1PL.EXC=IPFV’); this information carries over and applies to the subsequent clause *wesa*, which is not coded for subject and aspectual/modal information:

(62)  
\[
\begin{array}{llllll}
\text{Kaa=m} & \text{dari} & \text{sera} & \text{rumu-n,} & \text{kaa=m} & \text{sib} \\
1\text{PL.EXC=IPFV} & \text{split} & \text{finish} & \text{leave-3SG.POSS} & 1\text{PL.EXC=IPFV} & \text{go.down} \\
\text{ne-wesa} & \text{le} & \text{sileng.} \\
\text{CONN=wash} & \text{LOC} & \text{water} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘We finish splitting the leaves, we go down and wash them in the water.’ \(\text{--T3p1}\)

Sentence (63) is an example of negated chain. The discontinuous negative morpheme *ba...nga* operates on the first clause (*sibma* ‘come down’) only. The connector morpheme *ne-* has the result that subsequent clauses fall under the scope of this negation marker, as well as any other grammatical information encoded onto the first verb:

(63)  
\[
\begin{array}{llllll}
\text{Te=ba} & \text{sibma=nga} & \text{ne-bwel.} \\
3\text{SG.PFY=NEG.1} & \text{come.down=NEG.2} & \text{CONN=dance} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘He didn’t come down to dance.’ \(\text{--T1p18-D2T1}\)

Peripheral arguments can intervene between two clauses in a chain. In (64), *le lim* ‘to the house’ comes between V1 *sak* ‘go up’ and V2 *-mtsuu* ‘sleep’:

(64)  
\[
\begin{array}{llllll}
\text{Ba} & \text{atsi} & \text{havin} & \text{te=sak} & \text{le} & \text{lim} & \text{ne-mtsuu.} \\
\text{COMM} & \text{person} & \text{woman} & 3\text{SG.PFY=go.up} & \text{PREP} & \text{house} & \text{CONN=sleep} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘But this woman went up to the house to sleep.’ \(\text{--T3p32}\)

Direct objects may also come between two clauses in a chain, but this is rare because the first verb in the chain is normally intransitive. Functions of the clause chain are considered in §9.4.3 below.

In contrast to the aspect marking on the V2 of SVCs, which is always imperfective, the non-initial verbs of a clause chain are normally coded in basic non-imperfective aspect; that is, the initial consonant of non-initial verbs is not mutated to reflect imperfective aspect (see Chapter 3 (Morphology)). This is the case for all speakers, except, it seems, for elderly speakers, who do mutate the initial consonant. Initial consonant mutation (or lack thereof) in non-initial
verbs is independent of the aspect modality/marking coded on V1. So for example, V2 of the clause chain in (62), narrated by a younger speaker, does not undergo initial consonant mutation, but the V2 of the chain in (63) does mutate the first consonant (/lw/ → /bwl). The speaker of the latter sentence is an old man. This is typical of the dichotomy that is exhibited throughout the corpus.\footnote{Because initial consonant mutation appears to be age-dependent and is not a requirement of chaining, it is not recorded in the interlinear gloss of the verb, regardless of whether its initial consonant is mutated or not.}

Section §9.4.2 looks more closely at the syntactic features of clause chains. Then §9.4.3 discusses their functions, and §9.4.4 briefly looks at the ordering of constituents within the chain. Section §9.4.5 examines the limitations of chaining in Abma, and §9.4.6 discusses the position of clause chains within the larger overall system of clause juncture in the language.

### 9.4.2 Cross-Linguistic Features of Clause Chains

Referring to OV languages, Longacre (1985: 264) discusses three distinctive features of clause chains:

1. A clause (typically a final clause) is of a “distinctive structure”; this clause then “drives” the other clauses in the chain.
2. Non-final clauses are marked to indicate same-subject or different-subject.
3. A significant amount of attention is paid to temporal relations.

Let us assess how clause chaining in Abma weighs up against the three points listed above:

**The final clause “drives” the other clauses in the chain.** In other words, the final clause takes grammatical encoding that is absent in non-final clauses. This statement is made on the assumption that the finite verb comes last in the clause chain. While this is generally true for OV languages, in VO languages the finite verb tends to come first (Foley, 2003: 20; Givón, 2001a: 383-385), and it contains the grammatical information for the entire chain. Foley (1986: 180) also notes that the dependent verbs usually take some sort of clause-chaining morphology to indicate their affiliation with the finite (inflected) verb.

Such is the case with Abma, a VO language: the first verb in the chain carries full subject, aspectual/modal, and any transitivity marking; the following dependent verbs are uninflected (except for any transitivity marking). Dependent verbs are linked to the initial verb by $ne$-, the
connecting prefix that is used exclusively in verb chains. In (65), the first VP (na baawote ‘I am starting a little bit’) is bolded. Note how it carries full subject and aspectual information, as well as a partitive marker. The (underlined) second verb in the chain, dodob ‘talk’, is affiliated to the first verb by ne- ‘connector (CONN)’. Other than this, V2 contains no grammatical information whatsoever:

(65) Na baawo=te ne-dobtob li dale-kte teweb.
    1SG IPFV.start=PART CONN-talk LOC language-GNZR a.little
‘I’m starting to speak the language a little bit.’ - EF1p144

Non-final clauses are marked to indicate same-subject or different-subject. In Abma, chaining is limited to same-subject constructions. The connecting morpheme ne- is the only prefix that occurs with dependent clauses.

A significant amount of attention is paid to temporal relations. Typical functions of clause chains are to mark temporal succession (‘and then’) as well as temporal overlap (‘while’). In Abma, chaining fulfils both these functions, especially the former.

9.4.3 Functions of Clause Chains in Abma

As mentioned above, the coding of consecutive/simultaneous events is the primary function of clause chaining; these are discussed first, in §9.4.3.1. Aspectual functions are covered next (§9.4.3.2), then modal functions (§9.4.3.3). Finally, §9.4.3.4 gives examples of other types of clause chaining.

9.4.3.1 Chaining of Consecutive/Simultaneous Events

The majority of clause chains in Abma depict a series of consecutive events, along the lines of go (and) find your brother in English. V1 almost always comes from a closed set of basic directional motion verbs: van ‘go’, -bma ‘come’, sak ‘go up’, sama ‘come up’, sib ‘go down’, sibma ‘come down’, mul ‘go back’, mulma ‘come back’, and saget ‘come up’. The V2 (V3, etc.) is then a more specific motion or activity verb. (This is the opposite order of type 3 directional SVCs.)
Sentence (66) illustrates a clause chain where V1 *mwabma* ‘come’ is marked for third person plural subject and imperfective aspect. This is followed by another general directional verb, *sak* ‘go up’, which is finally followed by the more specific action *di* ‘stay’. Note that only V1 takes grammatical information (subject and aspect), and that subsequent verbs in the chain are minimally marked with *ne-*, the connecting morpheme:

(66) Bi ra mwa=bma ne-sak ne-di li butsuka.
    and 3PL IPFV=come CONN-go.up CONN-stay PREP tree
    ‘And they come, climb, and stand up in the tree.’ –T2p26

In (67), the first clause in the chain, *van* ‘go’, takes subject marking, whereas V2 (*rahrah* ‘wash’) is unmarked; it takes its grammatical information from V1:

(67) Ko van ne-rah~rah.
    2SG go CONN-INT~wash
    ‘You go wash!’ –T2p7

The following sentence is an example of simultaneous action, which is infrequently coded by clause chains. In (68), V1 (bolded) is *git* ‘look’, and V2 (underlined) is *sib* ‘go down’.

Together, the two verbs combine to mean ‘look down at’, which is essentially the simultaneous execution of two actions (‘look’ and ‘go down’):

(68) Karu git ne-sib matwe-n teh, ne-git-a
    2SG look CONN-go.down edge saltwater CONN-look-TR
    wulwulakan no-n Bwatulkul.
    sign CL.GE-3SG.POSS B.
    ‘You guys look down at the edge of the saltwater and see the sign of Bwatulkul.’ –T3p43

Of course, the fact that *git nesib* ‘look down at’ constitutes a simultaneous action is only part of what makes (68) interesting. *Git nesib* also takes a direct object NP, *matwen teh* ‘edge of the water’, and the chain then continues on after this object, adding another verb *gita* ‘look’, followed by a direct object NP for the second verb, *wulwulakan non Bwatulkul* ‘sign of Bwatulkul’.

Notice that V1 in the chain, *git* ‘look’, takes no transitivity marker, even though *git nesib* ‘look down at’ takes a direct object. There are too few examples in the data to make any generalisations about this, but it would appear that if V1 and V2 code simultaneous action in a
clause chain, and if the two verbs together take a direct object, then V1 is unmarked for transitivity – not unlike the way V1 in a transitive SVC is coded.

9.4.3.2 Chaining for Aspect

When certain verbs occur as V1 in a clause chain, they provide aspectual information vis-à-vis subsequent verbs in the chain. This of course is not the only method by which aspect is conveyed; it is also expressed via grammatical morphemes (see Chapter 6 (Verb Phrases)), and through verb serialisation (see Chapter 8 (Serial Verb Constructions)).

A small group of verbs indicate progressive/durative/habitual aspect, appearing as the first verb in a clause chain. These are the verbs di ‘stand, stay’, dok ‘stay’, sadok ‘sit’, and -tbo ‘lie down’. Only di and dok are used with any regularity. Then there is also the verb vaawo ‘start’, which codes the action in V2 as inceptive.

In (69), di ‘stand, stay’ is a lexical verb that lends a durative/habitual quality to the following verb, daltsi ‘surround’:

(69) Waka *ah kaa=m don-i kaa=ma gan-i, fruit REL 1PL.EXC=IPFY want-TR 1PL.EXC=PRSP eat-TR
ba mwi=di ne-daltsi ut.
COMM 3SG.IPFV=stay CONN-surround place
‘The fruit that we like to eat, it’s surrounding the place.’ - EF2/D2T29

Vaawo ‘start’ has an inceptive sense when it takes the first position in a clause chain:

(70) Ut te vaawo ne-bung, ba gema, place 3SG.PFY start CONN-be.dark COMM 1PL.EXC.IND
kaar mwa=mlu.
1PL.EXC IPFY=leave
‘When it starts to get dark, we leave.’ - T2p92

Sentence (71) repeats the same verb, goro ‘chase’, in sequence to indicate duration. This is a rare example of the first verb in the chain taking a direct object. (The verb goro ‘chase’ is derived from goo-ro ‘walk-TR’.)
9.4.3.3 Chaining for Modality

The first verb in this type of chain expresses modality, which carries over to subsequent verbs in the chain. Verbs in V1 position include: mas ‘must’, doni ‘want’, bariakan ‘not want’, and ililngi ‘know’.

Example (72) features the Bislama borrowing mas ‘must’ as the V1 in this clause chain, followed by van ‘go’ and dongvi ‘look for’, which are both unmarked (aside from ne- ‘connector (CONN)’):

(72) Ta;n mas ne-van ne-dongvi.
    I PL.INC=IRR must CONN-go CONN-look.for
    ‘We must go look for him.’ –EF1p131

Volitional verbs that express modality in V1 position include doni ‘want’ in (73) and a verb of negative volition, bariakan ‘not want’ in (74):

(73) Ko=m don-i ne-gan=te abma?
    2SG=IPFV want-TR CONN-eat=PART something
    ‘Do you want to eat something?’ [Lit.: ‘You want eating something?’] –T2p7

(74) Kaa bariakan ne-mat.
    1PL.EXC IPFV.not.want CONN-die
    ‘We don’t want to die.’ [Lit.: ‘We don’t want dying.’] –EF1p58

Negante abma ‘eat something’ in (73) also bears a strong resemblance to a complement clause, as doni ‘want’ is transitively marked. However, complement clauses take full grammatical coding, whereas gan ‘eat’ in (73) takes the normal marking for a clause chain.
9.4.3.4 Other Functions of Chaining

Clause chaining serves other apparently miscellaneous functions, which are explored below.

In (75), *te gabis nehural* ‘it is good to walk’ is a clause chain wherein V1 provides assessment of V2:

(75) Rowo-n Ø behbeh, **te gabis** ne-hural.
    power-3SG.POSS 3SG.IPFV be.soft PFV be.good CONN-walk
    ‘He is weak, it is good to walk.’ –EF2p15A

In (76), V1 *ling* ‘put’ and V2 *netbo* ‘lay down, stay’ together mean ‘leave it’, which seems to have a postural sense. In its structure and usage, this chain strongly resembles Bislama *livim i stap* ‘leave it’. It also superficially looks like an SVC, but it does not fit into any of the SVC types:

(76) **Ko ling** ka-k leut ne-tbo.
    2SG put CL.ED-1SG.POSS thing CONN-stay
    ‘Leave my food.’ –EF1p194

*Dobmanaa* ‘do suddenly’ is V1 in the clause chain *ram dobmanaa nedabalani* ‘they suddenly roll him’. Thus, V1 appears to have an adverbial function here:

(77) Bi lele-e mwe=gakat, bi **ra=m dobmanaa**
    and inside-3PL.POSS 3SG.IPFV=angry and 3PL=IPFY do.suddenly
    ne-dabalani.
    CONN-roll
    ‘And they are angry, and they suddenly roll him.’ –FN4p60/D2T47

9.4.4 Order of Constituents

On rare occasions when a number of semantic sub-types comprise a single clause chain, then the order of chaining is:

Aspect/Modal Verb + Directional Motion Verb + More Specific Verb
This is illustrated by (78), wherein V1 is the aspectual verb *dok* ‘stay’; this verb carries subject/aspectual information. *Dok* is followed by the directional motion verb *sib* ‘go down’, which is in turn followed by the most specific verb in the series, *boovani* ‘wait’:

(78)  
Ra=t=ru  dok  ne-sib  ne-boovani.  
3PL=PFV=DU  stay  CONN-go.down  CONN-wait  
‘The two of them made their way down and waited.’ –T2p96

### 9.4.5 Limitations of Clause Chaining in Abma

Foley (2003: 20) points out that clause chaining is uncommon in Austronesian languages. However it exists in South Efate, a language of Vanuatu (Thieberger, 2004: 321). Also there is some evidence that clause chaining exists in the Sa language, which is spoken to the south of Abma on Pentecost Island (pers. comm., Murray Garde, 17th September 2006). Although it subsists in Abma – the formal criteria for chaining are met – its functionality is rather limited when contrasted with the complexity of chaining in, say, Papuan languages (Longacre, 1985).

For instance, it is unusual to find more than two verbs in a chain. And unlike the rich variety of sequencing combinations that can be found in languages where chains are prominent, in Abma, the combinations are minimal, with the first verb in the sequence typically chosen from a rather limited pool of candidates. Also, while adverbs and direct objects may come between the constituent verbs in a clause chain, the coding of the chain in such cases tends to be irregular and unpredictable.

### 9.4.6 Clause Chaining Relative to Other Layers of Juncture

In Abma, clause chaining can be contrasted with SVCs on the one hand, and subordinate and coordinate clauses on the other.

#### 9.4.6.1 Clause Chains versus Serial Verb Constructions

To begin, clause chains are syntactically less cohesive than SVCs (covered in the last chapter). Briefly, in serialisation, two verbs form a single clause, without being joined by any morphology. Recall that, at the nuclear level at least, the discontinuous negative morpheme *ba*...*nga* treats the SVC as a single clause. On the other hand, negation treats each verb in a
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chain as a separate clause. This suggests that SVCs have a tighter level of juncture than clause chains do.

Serialisation and chaining also fulfil different functions: serialisation codes aspect and modality, as well as expressing adverbial and directional meanings. While clause chains also code aspect and modality, their primary role is to depict actions as occurring in quick succession.

Sometimes a clause chain is subsumed within an SVC, or vice-versa. In (79), the chain *hural ne-bele* ‘walk around and play’ occurs within the larger type 3 SVC *hural ne-bele ban* ‘walk around and play’ + ‘go’ = ‘go walking around and playing’:

(79) Naanong, kaa=m [hural ne-bele] ban.
   now 1PL.EXC=IPFV walk CONN-play IPFV.go
   ‘Now, we go walking around and playing.’ - T3pp45-46

On the other hand, an SVC can be contained within a chain, as with (80), where the SVC, *di rus* ‘stay’ + ‘move’ = ‘is moving’, is the second verb of a clause chain, *sak nedi rus* ‘go up and be moving’:

(80) Ba mwan=[sak ne-[di rus]] dokah.
   COMM 3SG.IRR=go.up CONN-stay move here
   ‘He’ll go up and be moving in this place.’ – FN4p100/D23T1

9.4.6.2 Clause Chains versus Subordinate Clauses

Clause chains are more tightly knit than subordinate clauses. Both involve a relationship of dependency, wherein one clause has grammatical autonomy (upon which the other clause(s) depend). But this is really where the similarity ends: the functions of chains (event sequencing, aspect and modality marking) and subordination (adverbials, complementation, and relativisation) are completely different. Furthermore, subordinate clauses have morphosyntactic marking that is identical to main clauses, whereas chained clauses are stripped of any grammatical coding.
9.4.6.3 Clause Chains versus Coordinate Clauses

Clause chains should also be contrasted with coordinated constructions. Both are multi-clausal, however, in coordination, the clauses are independent, whereas with chaining, all clauses except the main clause are dependent. This is because clauses following V1 in a chain must assume the grammatical marking attributed to V1.

Chaining and coordination both constitute complex sentences. However, coordination lacks the strength of cohesion that chaining offers. In (81), the speaker alternates the same verb between chaining (nea- ‘connector (CONN)’) and coordination (bi ‘and’). (On one occasion, the speaker combines both strategies: bi nesak ‘and go up’ on the first line of the example. There is no clear explanation for this.) Both strategies are iconic of the duration of the event, but the chaining captures a sense of “speed” that the coordinated verbs lack. The coordinated verbs convey duration of time, but the rate of movement seems to “slow down” when the verbs are coordinated as opposed to chained.

In (81), chained sections are underlined and coordinating conjunctions are bolded:

(81) Ra=m=ru sak, bi ra=m=ru sak, bi ne-sak.
    3PL=IPFV=DU go.up and 3PL=IPFV=DU go.up and CONN-go.up
    ra=m=ru sak ne-sak ne-sak, bi ra=m=ru sak,
    3PL=IPFV=DU go.up CONN-go.up CONN-go.up and 3PL=IPFV=DU go.up
    bi ra=m=ru sak bis be-n metakal.
    and 3PL=IPFV=DU go.up go. until proximity-3SG.POSS sun
  ‘The two of them went up, and they went up and up, they went up, up, up, and the two
  of them went up, and the two of them reached the proximity of the sun.’ –T3p85

Thus each clausal juncture device, be it chaining, coordination, subordination, or other constructions like serialisation, complement each other in the creation of a dynamic yet well-structured discourse, what Foley (2003: 12) terms the “overall system of expressive space”.

Chapter 10: Discourse Structure

10 DISCOURSE STRUCTURE

10.1 Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the most salient aspects of Abma’s discourse structure. Information flow in Abma generally observes an “Old Things First” principle (Cowan, 1995: 30) and the following sections demonstrate how, through the use of both subjects/predicates and topics/comments, Abma applies this principle. Subject versus topic is explored in §10.2. Then the notion of focus is looked at (§10.3), and finally, §10.4 describes head-tail linkage, a device for maintaining discourse cohesion.

10.2 Subject vs. Topic

To this point, the syntax of Abma has been discussed at the sentence level, in terms of standard SVO grammatical relations. While the subject is central to grammatical relations within the sentence, topic operates at the paragraph level, and it plays an important role in discourse structure. In fact, Abma exhibits at least some of the qualities of so-called “topic prominent” languages, according to criteria listed by Li and Thompson (1976; 1981), Chu (1983), and Yip and Rimmington (1997). The sections below will discuss the way Abma exploits not only subjects, but also topics, as a strategy for managing the flow of information in the discourse.

10.2.1 Distinction Between Subject and Topic

What is “topic”, and how does it differ from “subject”? Myhill (1992: 24) writes of topic, “This term is a highly problematic one, and I do not know of any satisfactory definition of it.” Similarly, Tomlin (1995: 519) bemoans the fact that “[w]e still cannot say clearly what a clause level theme or topic is, despite decades of trying…”

Givón (1983: 8) writes, “Within the thematic paragraph it is most common for one topic to be the continuity marker, the leitmotif, so that it is the participant most crucially involved in the action sequence running through the paragraph…” (italics in original). In other words, the topic occurs not so much as a sentence-level phenomenon as the subject does, but rather as a salient feature of the discourse, as the “theme” of the text. It is information that is “known, predictable, or inferable” (Kroeger, 2004: 136). It is this kind of topicality at the higher level, at the paragraph or discourse level, which is the way that “topic” is instantiated in Abma. It
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does not figure into the basic argument structure of the verb, and it is not grammatically encoded into the language to the extent that subject is, but nevertheless it has an important role to play in the way that discourse is structured, as will be seen in §10.2.1.2 below. Admittedly, this portrayal of “topic” requires subjective judgment, but the text counts in §10.2.3 will provide some objective evidence to support this characterisation of topic in Abma.

10.2.1.1 Subject

First, though, it is worth reviewing the subject. The subject NP, when it occurs, immediately precedes the VP, forming an intonation contour with it. Even when a subject NP is not overtly coded, it is always indirectly referenced by a subject pronoun within the VP. Furthermore, the subject NP is always elaborated on by a predicate, which follows it. Subjects are therefore core to the basic argument structure of the sentence. In addition, they play an important role in reflexive constructions, passives, clause chains, and serial verb constructions.

Sentence (1) shows an overtly coded subject NP, ut ‘place’, followed by the rest of the sentence, which is the predicate. The predicate contains the VP teweb ‘it is small’, of which ut is an argument:

(1) Ut te=web nge.
    place 3SG.PFV=be.small just
    ‘It’s just a small place.’ [Lit.: ‘The place is just small.’]

In (2) no subject NP is indicated but its existence is nevertheless implied by the subject pronoun, na ‘1SG’. (An independent subject NP would in this case have to be nana ‘1SG.IND’.)

(2) Na=m sadok li vini ah Sanial.
    1SG=IPFV stay LOC village APP S.
    ‘I live in the village of Sanial.

Some texts contain very few subject NPs. Text 1 in Appendix 1, for example, contains only three subject NPs out of a total of 58 clauses: one in line [33] (non vinhian ‘her interest’), one in line [41] (datninii ‘some of them’), and one in line [43] (Nivana). On the other hand, Text 2 in Appendix 1 contains nine subject NPs out of a total of 61 clauses, in lines [5], [11], [15], [16], [26], [29], [39], [44], and [50].
10.2.1.2 Topic

As mentioned in §10.2.1, topics represent known or predictable information; they maintain continuity in the discourse. In this chapter, we distinguish “old” topics from “new” topics. “New” topics refer to NPs that are presented in topic position of the sentence for the first time. In contrast, “old” topics are already familiar (i.e., topical) to the interlocutors. Since an old topic is already known, the syntax does not pay it much attention – it is usually alluded to through pronominal marking and zero anaphora.

The remainder of this section concentrates on new topics. New topics are distinguished by the fact that (a) they take the form of an NP (which is sometimes coded within a PP); (b) they are either uttered as an isolated unit, or they occur sentence-initially (within a separate intonation contour), followed by a pause. They could be considered to be a type of left-dislocation, if the terminology of Ward and Birner (2003: 131) were to be used, and; (c) they are followed by a comment. Just as a subject is elaborated upon by a predicate, a topic must be followed by one or more comments. Comments expand upon the topic; for example, it’s a beautiful place is the comment in Vanuatu, it’s a beautiful place.

In order to constrain the characterisation of “topic”, only NPs are included in the definition. There are many examples of VPs occurring sentence-initially, followed by a pause and then one or more comment clauses. However, these are usually instances of head-tail linkage; see §10.4.

Sentences (3) through (6) constitute the first four lines of a narrative about the village of Sanial; the topics are bolded:

(3) **Sanial.**
S.
‘Sanial.’

(4) **Nana, ba ha-k ah Denison Siaban.**
1SG.IND COMM name-1SG.POSS APP D. S.
‘Me, my name is Denison Siaban.’
Chapter 10: Discourse Structure

(5) Na=m sadok li vini ah Sanial.
    1SG=IPFV stay LOC village APP S.
    ‘I live in the village of Sanial.’

(6) Sanial, ba, biri vini.
    S. COMM small village
    ‘Sanial, it’s a small village.’

The single NP Sanial in (3) is specified as the major theme of the text. In (4), nana
‘1SG.IND’ is the lesser topic of the following two lines, and attention then reverts back to
Sanial in (6). There is, then, a basic topic-comment structure to the discourse.

Often, within the comment itself, an entire subject-predicate construction occurs (although (3)
through (6) above do not demonstrate this). Li and Thompson (1976: 468-469; 1981: 92) term
these “double subject” sentences – although they are really not two subjects, but a topic
followed by subject + predicate construction. Yip and Rimmington (1997: 112) call them
“topic | subject-predicate structures”. An example of this type of construction is given in (7).
The topic, Sanial, is followed by a pause and the oft-used comment marker, ba. The comment
contains its own SV structure, in which mwateete ‘chickens’ is the overtly coded subject NP,
and ram di ‘they stay’ is the predicate:

(7) Sanial, ba mwateete ra=m di.
    S. COMM chicken 3PL=IPFV stay
    ‘In Sanial there are chickens.’ [Lit.: Sanial, chickens stay.] –D2T29

While subject can change from one sentence to the next, the topic is often constant across
several sentences in a paragraph. In this role, it frequently provides the basis for anaphoric
reference in discourse. In Text 1 of Appendix 1, for example, the topic uu Nivana ‘about
Nivana’ (the speaker’s daughter) is coded at the beginning of line [7] and is then referred to
anaphorically for the next eight clauses, until line [13]. According to Li and Thompson (1976;
1981: 102), topic control of anaphoric reference is one indicator of a topic-prominent
language.

There is even some evidence that topics are preferentially co-referenced over subjects. In (8),
both the topic, vini niirah ‘these villages’, and the subject, butsubutsuka nii ‘trees’, are
available to be co-referenced by ram gabis ‘they are good’. The question is, which constituent
is co-referenced? When asked, speakers indicated that ram gabis is co-referential with the
topic and not the subject:
Thus it appears that, all things being equal, topic has priority over subject in anaphoric reference. There are, however, limitations to this relationship. For example, animates are coreferenced over inanimates, regardless of whether they are subject or topic. In (9), *ram gabis* ‘they are good’ refers to the subject *haavak nii* ‘the children’ (rather than the topic), according to speakers:

(9) Vini nii=rah, ba haavak nii ra-Ø mamabel dokah
dal~taltsi, bi ra=m gabis.
INT~go.around and 3PL=IPFV be.good
‘These villages, children play here, and they [the children] are good.’ -EF3p26

Equally, speakers utilise common sense semantic interpretations when assessing anaphoric reference. In (10), the co-referenced subject of *mwasbee* ‘she is glad’ is the topic *havin* ‘child’, because the child is benefiting from the actions of her mother. On the other hand, in (11), the co-referenced subject of *mwasbee* is the subject *datsin* ‘her mother’ (and not the topic), because obviously the child is not glad about being beaten:

(10) Havin=ah, ba datsi-n mwe=rah-a bwala-kte,
child=PROX COMM mother-3SG.POSS 3SG.IPFV=wash-TR clothing-GNZR
bi mwa=sbee.
and 3SG.IPFV=be.glad
‘This child, her mother is washing her clothing and she [the child] is glad.’ –EF3p26

(11) Havin=ah, ba datsi-n mwa=hi, bi mwa=sbee.
child=PROX COMM mother-3SG.POSS 3SG.IPFV=hit and 3SG.IPFV=be.glad
‘This child, her mother hits her, and she [the mother] is glad.’ –EF3p26

Therefore it seems that, with certain limitations, topics have a binding function in the discourse, and their presence helps to maintain the thematic flow of the text. However, subjects also play a role in discourse cohesion, as will be seen in §10.2.3.2.
10.2.2 Definiteness and Word Order

Cowan (1995: 30) notes that a common cognitive discourse principle for SVO languages is the Principle of “Old Things First”: “Each sentence added to a discourse should be structured so that (old/given) thematic material precedes rhematic (new) material.” As mentioned in §10.1, Abma (an SVO language) generally adheres to this principle. That is, information in the first part of the sentence is usually definite/old/known, either because it has already been mentioned in the text, or because it is considered to be common knowledge.

However, the “Old Things First” principle can be problematic with regard to new topics. Recall from §10.2.1.2 that new topics are NPs that are presented in topic position of the sentence for the first time. If an NP appears in the discourse for the first time, then it is usually indefinite/new/unknown material, not definite/old/unknown information.

The language does have ways of getting around this predicament. Before the new topic appears in topic position (at the beginning of the sentence), it can be first “introduced” in another position towards the end of a previous sentence, in accordance to the “Old Things First” principle.

For example, in (12), *bwalakih* ‘bow and arrow’ is simply introduced as the direct object (new information) of the first sentence. This then functions as the new topic of the following sentence:

(12) Bi, ra bai-ni bwalakih.
and 3PL IPFV.shoot-TR bow.and.arrow

*Bwalakih* nong, ba te=twak.
bow.and.arrow PROX COMM 3SG.PFV=make.snapping.noise
‘And they shoot their bows and arrows. These bows and arrows, they made a snapping noise.’ –D2T11

The two sentences in (12) could also be called “topic-focus” constructions. Focus has not been mentioned until now; it represents the new information in the sentence. When the topic (old information) precedes the focus (new information), we have a topic-focus construction. Often the focus of one sentence becomes the topic of subsequent sentences, as in (12). Focus is discussed in more detail in §10.3.
Like topics, subjects appearing at the beginning of the sentence are also generally assumed to be definite. And like topics, they can be introduced (as unknowns) into the discourse by being displaced from their normal sentence-initial position. For example, a subject can occur within a subject-predicate construction that is part of a larger topic-comment frame. Recall that Yip and Rimington (1997: 112) call these “topic | subject-predicate structures” (see §10.2.1.2, and (7) more specifically).

In (13), nutsun ‘her child’ is an indefinite/new/unknown NP that must be introduced into the discourse. It functions as subject in the first sentence of (13), but the subject is displaced from the very beginning of the sentence by the adverb tehu ‘and then’, and a pause. Once introduced, nutsun may appear sentence-initially, as it does in the second sentence:

(13) Tehu, and.then ba nutsu-n COMM child-3SG.POSS Boo. 3SG IPFV.be.born Nutsu-n child-3SG.POSS

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{te=woo,} \\
&\text{3SG.PFV=be.born} \\
&\text{bi ra=m=ru rarei} \\
&\text{and 3PL=IPFV=DU look.after} \\
&\text{nutsu-ru=ah} \\
&\text{child-3DU.POSS=PROX}
\end{align*}
\]

dobo.

‘And then her child is born. Her child was born, and the two of them look after their child for a while.’ -D20T18/T3p83

In short, the syntax may be manipulated in any number of ways to adhere to the “Old Things First” principle.

10.2.3 Quantitative Text Counts

Up to this point, three observations have been made about the way information is structured in Abma: (1) the language has a topic/comment structure as well as a subject/predicate structure; (2) topic NPs attract anaphoric reference and they play a role in maintaining discourse continuity; and (3) definite NPs may occur in the first part of the sentence, while indefinite NPs may not.

In an attempt to substantiate at least the second of these claims, three separate text counts were conducted for both texts in Appendix 1 in order to measure discourse topicality. Givón (1983: 12-15) devised two of these text counts: lookback and persistence. Thompson (1990) devised the third, called the “topicality quotient”. All three of these are discussed in Myhill (2003). The principle underlying all three of these measures is that the more frequently an NP
is mentioned – either in the form of a full NP, or as anaphoric reference to the NP such as a pronoun or zero anaphora, or even a clause – the higher its topicality.¹

Lookback (referential distance) is measured by identifying an NP in the text, say a subject or topic NP, and counting how many clauses back its most recent previous reference was. The maximum number of clauses that can be counted backwards is 20. A lookback count of 1 would mean that the NP was mentioned in the immediately preceding clause; a lookback count of 20 would mean that an NP had not been mentioned in the previous 20 clauses, or that it is being mentioned for the first time (in which case it is automatically assigned a count of 20). Indefinite NPs introduced into the discourse for the first time would thus be expected to have a high lookback count (20), whereas established NPs would presumably have a low lookback count.

To measure persistence, an NP is identified and then a count is made of the number of consecutive clauses that mention this NP. The count only continues until there is a break in reference to the NP. Therefore a low persistence count implies low topicality, while a high persistence count implies high topicality.

With the topicality quotient measure, a particular referent in the discourse is selected. The total number of clauses in the text that refer to this entity (including zero anaphora) is then tallied up, and this number is divided by the total number of clauses in the text. A low topicality quotient suggests there is low topicality, and vice-versa for a high topicality quotient.

Overtly coded new topic and subject NPs provide the basis for each text count. Subjects and new topics are identified on the basis of the formal criteria set out in §10.2.1.1 and §10.2.1.2 above. In terms of the actual counting of clauses, relative clauses are not included in the tally.

¹ An NP referent can be an argument of the clause, or it can be substituted by the clause if the semantic connection is clear enough. For example, given *She is very interested in school. Her interest is strong*, the clause in the first sentence, *is very interested*, would be considered to be a previous reference to the NP *interest* in the second sentence, even though *is very interested* is a clause rather than an argument to the verb.
10.2.3.1 Text 1

Table 10.1 gives the average lookback and persistence counts for all new topics and subjects in Text 1, Appendix 1. Lookback is counted for each of the seven topic NPs in Text 1, and then averaged; the same process applies to the three subject NPs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEW TOPIC NP</th>
<th>SUBJECT NP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOKENS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW TOPIC NP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOOKBACK</strong></td>
<td>9.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERSISTENCE</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBJECT NP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOKENS</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOOKBACK</strong></td>
<td>7.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERSISTENCE</strong></td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10.1: Average lookback and persistence for new topics and subjects in Text 1, Appendix 1

Recall from §10.2.3 above that the maximum assignable lookback count is 20 (Givón, 1983:13). Thus a lookback count of 9.86 for topics and 7.67 for subjects seems to be relatively high. This is not very surprising: new topics and subjects are often broached “out of the blue” and are thus assigned an automatic lookback count of 20. When new topics and subjects do have a previous mention, they are typically introduced at the end of the sentence, as is the case with Nivana in line [6] and Vila in line [7], for example. Also worth noting here is that the count is fairly equal between topics and subjects (9.86 vs. 7.67).

While lookback assesses new topic and subject NPs vis-à-vis the preceding discourse, persistence assesses them in terms of the following discourse. It measures the topicality of “old” topics and subjects, i.e., constituents that have already been introduced, by counting the number of clauses that refer to them after their initial mention. Unlike the lookback count, the persistence count reveals a disparity between topic and subject: topics persist almost six times...
as long as non-topical subjects in the discourse (4 vs. .67). This suggests that they are more thematic in the discourse.

The new topics and subjects that are listed in the “Text Used” row in Table 10.1 are then each given their own topicality quotient in Table 10.2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEW TOPIC NP/SUBJECT NP</th>
<th>ROLE IN TEXT</th>
<th>TOPICALITY QUOTIENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nivana ‘N.’</td>
<td>TOPIC/SUBJECT</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nokon sukul ‘school’</td>
<td>TOPIC</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vaawo nan abma ah mwan leli tsuubung ‘the first thing she does in the morning’</td>
<td>TOPIC</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abma niah nam doni nehu Nivana bat leli ‘what I want Nivana to do’</td>
<td>TOPIC</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abma niah nam gita, le mwasan non Niva ‘what I see in Niva’s life’</td>
<td>TOPIC</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non vinhian ‘her interest’</td>
<td>TOPIC/SUBJECT</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[le osbital] à Vila ‘[the hospital] at Vila’</td>
<td>TOPIC</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>datninii ‘some of them’</td>
<td>SUBJECT</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10.2: Topicality quotient for topics and subjects in Text 1, Appendix 1

Recall that the topicality quotient is calculated by counting the total number of clauses that refer to a given topic or subject NP, including anaphoric reference, and dividing that number by the total number of clauses in the text. (Thus the maximum topicality quotient that can be achieved is 1.)

The topicality quotients in Table 10.2 indicate that Nivana, the speaker’s child, is by far the most topical element of this text. Nivana is initially mentioned at the end of line [6], then moving to topic position in line [7]. She is subsequently referred to, mostly by zero anaphora, for the remainder of the text. Subsumed within this over-arching topic are a few fairly significant sub-topics with Topicality Quotients of .26, .22, and .17. These are all presented as topics – if not in their first occurrence, then at some point in the text.

[Le osbital] à Vila ‘[the hospital] at Vila’ has topicality over only a few lines and is a minor “topic” at best. The subject datninii ‘some of them’ is not topical at all – it is mentioned once within the comment of the sentence and is then left to decay.

The data for Text 1 demonstrate that overall, it is the topics and not the non-topical subjects that are carrying the major functional load of maintaining topicality in the discourse.
10.2.3.2 Text 2

Text 2 of Appendix 1 produces rather different results. It is the subject, and not the topic, that maintains continuity in this narrative. As shown in Table 10.3, there are far more subject NPs than topic NPs (9 compared to 1). This alone suggests that topic marking is not a dominant feature. The persistence count also reveals that the sole topic NP, *ululan non Bwatkulkul* ‘B.’s handwriting’, is a “flash in the pan” – it is mentioned once at the very end of the story, then immediately decays. At the time of mention, it is actually extremely salient because it signals the death of the mother, a key actor in the story. In this sense at least, *ululan non Bwatkulkul* is topical.

The subject NPs would have had a lower lookback rate than 4 because both subject NPs (the mother and her child) are used regularly in the text and thus have moderately low lookback counts. However, the first mention of the indefinite subject *nutsun* ‘her child’ occurs in the comment of line [5], thus forcing the lookback rate for this particular NP up to 20. This then skews the average lookback count.

A persistence count of 4.67 for subject NPs is moderately high but not exorbitant. Four or five clauses is the average length that the speaker dwells on each of the two major participants (the mother and her son), switching back and forth between them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEW TOPIC NP</th>
<th>SUBJECT NP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOKENS</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOOKBACK</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERSISTENCE</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEXT USED [LINE NUMBER]</strong></td>
<td><em>ululan non Bwatkulkul</em> ‘B.’s handwriting’ [49]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|               | *nutsu atsi* ‘this small child’ [11] | *
|               | *nutsu atsi haavak* ‘this small child’ [16] | *
|               | *datsin* ‘his mother’ [15], [26], [39], [50] | *

Table 10.3: Avg. lookback and persistence for new topics and subjects in Text 2, Appendix 1

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3 The songs within this story are not included in any of the three text counts.
The “Text Used” row of Table 10.3 is examined in more detail in Table 10.4. Since nutsun, natsu atsi, and natsu atsi haavak all refer to the same participant (the boy), they are merged into a single entity (nutsun) in Table 10.4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEW TOPIC NP/SUBJECT NP</th>
<th>ROLE IN TEXT</th>
<th>TOPICALITY QUOTIENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nutsun ‘her child’</td>
<td>SUBJECT</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>datsin ‘his mother’</td>
<td>SUBJECT</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ululan non Bwatkulkul ‘B.’s handwriting’</td>
<td>TOPIC</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10.4: Topicality quotient for topics and subjects in Text 2, Appendix 1

The topicality quotients indicate that nutsun (the boy) is a highly salient participant. His mother (datsin) is also an important player – both are marked as subjects in the text. And as mentioned above, ululan non Bwatkulkul ‘B.’s handwriting’ is a marginal topic, at best.

10.2.3.3 Summary

Lookback averages for Text 1 and Text 2 confirm the obvious: newly introduced subject and topic NPs are unlikely to be previously mentioned in the discourse. This goes against the “Old Things First” principle. However, subject or new topic NPs are occasionally “introduced” into the discourse at the end of a preceding sentence. This results in a lower lookback count than perhaps there would be otherwise.

Persistence counts and topicality quotients calculated for the two texts reveal that both topic and subject have a role to play in maintaining discourse continuity. It seems that in the first text, topics are more salient whereas in the second text, subjects play a bigger role. It is unclear why this is the case. Perhaps speakers idiosyncratically exhibit a preference for either topic or subject dominance, or perhaps other factors are at work, i.e., the type of stylistic effect that the speaker wishes to create. A cursory study of two short narratives cannot provide any answers to these questions, but at least this brief overview is a starting point for further investigation.

10.3 Focus

As with the term “topic”, the characterisation of “focus” has undergone a good deal of scrutiny (cf. Dryer (1995) and Vallduvi and Vilkuna (1998), inter alia). The term is not
dissected in this section; rather, a basic working definition of focus is taken from Myhill (1992: 23-24). According to Myhill, the focused constituent is an island of inactivated/low-activated material, occurring within the context of a highly activated sentence.

What then is “activation”? Myhill writes (p21), “An entity is activated to the extent that it is at the forefront of the hearer’s consciousness. Roughly speaking, the more recently an entity has been mentioned, the more activated it is.”

Essentially, then, a focused constituent either represents new information, or old information that is not salient in the listener’s mind. Focusing is the oft-used strategy for beginning a story, introducing new participants into the discourse, and answering wh-questions. As was mentioned in §10.2.2, focused constituents of one sentence often become the topic of the next.

One other technical term that should be mentioned here is “contrastive focus”. Items that are in contrastive focus are paired with one or more other entities with which they are contrasted. For example, in *I made the cake, but Mary made the pie*, the constituents under contrastive focus are *cake* and *pie*. Examples of contrastive focus in Abma are given in the following sections.

10.3.1 Syntactic Strategies for Showing Focus

There are various strategies for bringing an item into focus and the following sections will discuss some of them. What all the strategies have in common, though, is that focused constituents, representing relatively inactivated new information, appear after the more activated information in the sentence. Thus the strategies mentioned below essentially function as “delaying devices”. Sections §10.3.1.1, §10.3.1.1, and §10.3.1.3 discuss the three most commonly used delaying devices: grammatically coded focus marking, comment marking, and definite marking, respectively. Then §10.3.1.3 examines a miscellany of other ways for exploiting the syntax in order to postpone the introduction of a focused constituent.

10.3.1.1 Focus Marker *Tei*

Abma has a dedicated focus marker, *tei* (grammaticalised from the verb te-i ‘it was (PFV-be’) ), which focuses on whatever information follows it in the text. It is often translated into
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English (via similar structures in Bislama) with existential *there*, or a cleft construction. Hence in discourse pragmatic terms, it is a natural candidate for introducing inactivated (focused) information, as is the cleft construction in English (Myhill, 1992: 24).

Using *tei* is the standard way to begin a custom story in Abma. In (14), all information is new – the first *tei* alerts the listener to a new story and the second *tei* introduces the set of participants:

(14) Tei va bwaleh, bi atsi nii, tei nii te-sangwul.
FOC time one and person PL FOC 3PL.IND ADJ2-ten
‘Once there were ten people.’ –D39T10/FN4p63

Sentence (15) is also the first sentence of a narrative; in this case, the focused constituent is a clause rather than an NP:

(15) Atsi te sadok Bwatnabne bi maa tei
someone 3SG.PFY sit B. and hunger FOC
tei gakat.
3SG.PFY bite
‘Once there was a man who lived in Bwatnabne, and there was a famine.’
[Lit.: ‘Someone was in Bwatnabne and hunger, it was biting.’] –T1p8/D2T1

Contrastive focus is achieved by juxtaposing two or more focused constituents. In (16), the focused constituents are underlined in the text as well as the free translation:

(16) Go=ah niah na=m=gam beb nehu, tei Liwusvet,
one=PROX REL 1SG=IPFY=MN say COMP FOC L.

ba tei te ba=i=te Liwusvet=nga,
COMM FOC 3SG.PFY NEG.1=be=PART L.=NEG.2

ani tei atsi=ah niaha, tei no-n kadadago.
but FOC person=PROX APP FOC CL.GE-3SG.POSS guard
‘What I just said was, it was Liwusvet, but it wasn’t Liwusvet, it was this one who was his guard.’ –T2p111/D2T49L59

*Tei* ‘FOC’ typically occurs in narratives depicting past events. Its copula verb counterparts are *bibi* in the imperfective, and *mwanbi* or *mwanei* in the irrealis. These, too, provide focus in some sentences, although they have not been grammaticalised to the extent that *tei* has been.

In (17), *bibi* ‘it is’ focuses *non janis kau lengleng* ‘his big chance’:

Tei ‘FOC’ typically occurs in narratives depicting past events. Its copula verb counterparts are *bibi* in the imperfective, and *mwanbi* or *mwanei* in the irrealis. These, too, provide focus in some sentences, although they have not been grammaticalised to the extent that *tei* has been.
In (18), *mwane* ‘it will be’ focuses on all the different kinds of dirty leaves that can be placed over a hot stone oven:

(18) Ruka. Ruka nii nani, ba bwal–bwalta.
leaf leaf PL PROX COMM INT–dirty.leaf ‘Leaves. These leaves, really dirty leaves.’

*Mwane=i* ru bega, ru is, ru bwet, ru wavih.
3SG.IRR=be leaf heliconia leaf banana leaf taro leaf taro ‘It will be heliconia leaf, banana leaf, taro leaf, above-ground-taro leaf,

ru abma te=ah te doti.
leave thing PART=REL 3SG.PFY be.dirty any kind of dirty leaf;

mwi=sib tavan le kaba.
3SG.PFY=go.down low.position LOC fire it goes down into the fire.’ –FN4p104/D23T1

10.3.1.2 Comment Marker *Ba*

It has been shown in §10.2.1.2 that a topic-comment configuration is one possible way of structuring information in Abma. *Ba* (or, less frequently, *abe*) is a comment marker, and it signifies that a comment is to follow, as in (19) and (20). The information in comment position (underlined) can also be referred to as focus, since it is adding new information to the discourse:

(19) Bi butsu-n waka nii, ba ra=ming di nge ban.
and tree-3SG.POSS fruit PL COMM 3PL=IPFY stay just IPFY.go ‘And fruit trees, they’re just everywhere.’ –D2T29

Sentence (20) also demonstrates is that focused constituents can make a comment on clauses (*kotba mubmanga* ‘you never came’), as well as smaller constituents:
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(20) Ko=t=ba mu=bma=nga, Havin, ba
te gabis nge.
3SG.PFV NEG.l ADD=come NEG.2 woman COMM
‘You never came, Woman, but that’s okay.’ –FN4p98/D23T1

The comment can be verbal, as in the above examples, or non-verbal, as in (21):

(21) Sanial, ba, biri vini.
S. COMM small village
Sanial is a small village. –D2T29

Example (22) illustrates a common discourse strategy where a series of comments occur one after the other, with the focused information all the while becoming increasingly specific:

(22) Sanial, ba, li boro vini, niah kaa=m di
li-n=ah, ba butsu–butsuka nii.
S. COMM LOC small village REL 1PL.EXC=IPFV stay LOC-3SG.POSS=PROX COMM INT~tree PL
‘Sanial, in the small village where we stay, there are lots of trees.’ –D2T29

It is not uncommon for a single sentence to have several comments (or focused constituents) strung along one right after the other, with the material becoming increasingly focused as it goes along.

10.3.1.3 Definite Marker Na

As discussed in Chapter 7 (Simple Sentences), the syntactic function of na ‘definite (DEF)’, is to mark grammatical definite subject in passive constructions, where the subject is moved from its normal pre-verbal position. However, the discourse function of na extends beyond subjects to mark any definite but inactivated NP that occurs after the verb. The NP constituent is already known, but it has not been mentioned for a while and is not topical – it is not prominent in the mind of the listener. In other words, na ‘definite (DEF)’ marks focus in the discourse.

This is entirely consistent with the overall design of information structure in the language, where less activated entities appear towards the end of the sentence. And because the end of the sentence is normally the domain of indefinite/new/unknown/ entities, then it makes sense
that, when a definite/old/known (but inactivated) NP appears in that position (i.e., an NP flagged by na ‘definite (DEF)’), it is unusual and should therefore receive special (na) coding.

Example (23) is taken from a text where the woman is describing different kinds of mats that are sold (red mats, small mats, flashy mats, etc.). She then abruptly changes the subject, saying kaam songi bumla le watang ‘we put them back in the basket’. This constitutes a temporary setback to the discourse, because the listener is left wondering, ‘What is put back in the basket? (Weren’t the mats sold?)’ But the speaker answers this obvious question in the next line, saying na goah te gabis ‘the ones that are good’. This is a typical focused element as it answers an (implicit) wh-question. Moreover, it is takes definite marking (na) because the “good” mats had already been referred to in the discourse, but had become inactivated in the mind of the listener:

(23) Kaa=m salem i-ni.
    1PL.EXC=IPFV sell PREP-3SG.OBJ
    ‘We sell them.’

Kaa=m song-i boml-a le watang.\textsuperscript{4}
    1PL.EXC=IPFV put-TR do.again-TR LOC basket
    ‘We put them back in the basket.’

Na go=ah te gabis.
    DEF one=PROX 3SG.PFV be.good
    ‘The good ones.’

Niah kaa mwa=utsu manikos.
    REL 1PL.EXC 1PFV=keep.for.self people.of.Pentecost
    ‘That we keep for Pentecost people.’ –T3p3

Sentence (24) is an old woman’s response to the question, “What kind of food did we (as a society) eat in the old times?” Her reply, which becomes increasingly specific and focused, culminates in the NP na ilabmetah ‘these ferns’ (bolded). Although ilabmet has not been previously mentioned in the discourse, it is standard fare in central Pentecost and everyone is familiar with it as a food item. In other words, it is a definite NP, though previously inactivated, and is a focused element:

\textsuperscript{4} It is unclear why the first verb of the type 2 SVC, songi bomla ‘put back again’, is marked as transitive. This would not be expected of the first verb in a type 2 SVC.
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(24) Tei ka-da kabtsin, ba, 
FOC CL.ED-IPL.INC.POSS vegetable COMM

  tei vaawo na-n abma, ba tei na ilabmet=ah.
FOC first.one ASSOC-3SG.POSS thing COMM FOC DEF fern=PROX
‘Our vegetables, the first of them, it was the fern.’ -T2p129/D39T25L3

Sentence (25) gives a final example of focusing with definite *na*. There is a shared understanding of the existence of the abstract entity *nok vehuran* ‘my story’ (bolded) – therefore it is marked as definite. At the same time, ‘my story’ is inactivated, because its existence has not been overtly mentioned until this point. Therefore it is also focused:

(25) Tei nante nong, na no-k vehuran.
FOC nothing.more PROX DEF CL.GE-I SG.POSS story
‘That’s the end of my story.’ [Lit.: ‘It’s nothing more, my story.’] –T3p5

10.3.1.4 Other Delaying Devices

The focus marker *tei*, the comment marker *ba*, and the definite marker *na* are indicators that focused information is to follow in the sentence. Other syntactic strategies are also exploited for the same purpose.

One strategy is to use a relative clause. In (26), the speaker uses a relative clause (bracketed) to delay the presentation of the focused information (bolded). This occurs in conjunction with a topic-comment structure (where the comment is underlined) and grammatically focused constituents (bolded, following *tei* ‘focus (FOc)’):

(26) Bi te=wih Ie bwera melang, abma [ah tei 
and 3SG.PFV=lower LOC big cave thing REL FOC

  te lel-i], ba tei te=slo sum, tei katsil.
3SG.PFV do-TR COMM FOC 3SG.PFV=sew bead FOC three
‘And he went down inside the big cave, the thing that he did was, he sewed up strands of beads, three of them.’ –D2T43L37-39

Example (27) uses a combination of relative clauses (bracketed), topic-comment constructions (where the comment is underlined), and contrastive focus (e.g., saying what the focused element is not (bolded)), as strategies to focus the final new and unexpected element, *ko mwamsimsi lin* ‘you piss on it’:
(27) Abma [ni mwi=di li-n=ah],
thing 3SG.IND 3SG.IPfv=stay location-3SG.POSS=PROX
‘The thing that’s on top of this,

ba te ba=i=te, te ba=i=te
COMM 3SG.PFV NEG.1=be=PART 3SG.PFV NEG.1=be=PART
‘it’s not, it’s not

abma=nga [niah te=bma ibe].
something=NEG.2 REL 3SG.PFV=come place
‘something that comes from somewhere else.’

Ani ko=n leI sera ka-m lok bwet,
but 2SG=IRR make finish CL.ED-2SG.POSS pudding taro
‘But you finish making your taro pudding,

ba dabmwak ah, bi abma [ah ko=n lel-i],
3SG.PFV be.like this.one and thing REL 2SG=IRR make-TR
‘like this one, and what you do,

ba ko=n sak ne-di mwadawe-n
COMM 2SG=IRR go.up CONN-stand.up edge-3SG.POSS
‘you go stand up at the edge of it,

mwadawe-n mwadawe-n lok nong,
edge-3SG.POSS edge-3SG.POSS pudding PROX
‘at the edge, at the edge of this pudding,

bi ko mwa=mmsi li-n.
and 2SG IPFV=piss location-3SG.POSS
‘and you piss on it.’ -D2T43L59-67

Finally, (28) demonstrates how a general question-answer format is used to show contrastive focus (underlined):

(28) Logo=ah ba logo-n tsintsin
pudding=PROX COMM pudding-3SG.POSS drum
‘This pudding, [is it] the pudding of the drum [custom ceremony]

no-n atsi ah mwe=lel leut=ah?
CL.GE-3SG.POSS man REL 3SG.IPfv=do thing=PROX
‘of the man who’s doing this thing?'

Ohoo. Logo-n niah mwe=sak le saa.
no pudding-3SG.POSS REL 3SG.IPfv=go.up LOC field
‘No. [It’s] the pudding of he who goes up to the field.’ -T3p17
10.4 Head-Tail Linkage

Head-tail linkage is a discourse cohesion device characterised by a “chaining” of sentences, where the clause (usually the final clause) of one sentence motivates the initial clause for the next, and so on. It is well-attested in Vanuatu languages, including South Efate (Thieberger, 2004: 324), Lolovoli (Hyslop 2001: 426), Sye (Crowley 1998: 282), and Lewo (Early 1994: 454).

Head-tail linkage is frequently used in procedural texts because the linear nature of the discourse is iconic of the linear ordering of events. A couple of examples follow.

In (29), the speaker explains how to make a basket. Linked verbs are bolded, and they function to bind the events together into a cohesive text. For example, the activity *mwasla* ‘dry’ is semantically linked to *mwasla sera* ‘finish drying’ in the next sentence. *Mwasla sera* occurs in the same sentence as *dariha* ‘split’. *Dariha* continues until the activity is finished (*dari sera*). And so it continues:

(29) Ko  **mwa=sla** bwenges  na-n  no-m  
2SG  **3SG.IPFV=dry** pandanus.leaf  ASSOC-3SG.POSS  CL.GE-2SG.POSS  
‘You dry the pandanus leaf for your
watang  li-n.  
basket  location-3SG.POSS  
‘basket on it [fire].’

Bi, ko  **mwa=sla sera, bi ko=m dari-ha.**  
and 2SG  IPFV=dry finish and 2SG=IPFV split-TR  
‘And you finish drying it, and you split it.’

Ko=m  **dari-ha te-we~web.**  
2SG=IPFV split-TR  ADJ2-INT~small  
‘You split it a tiny bit.’

Ko=m  **dari sera, bi ko ban, bi ko mwa=unu**  
2SG=IPFV split finish and 2SG IPFV.go and 2SG IPFV=submerge  
‘You finish splitting it, and you go, and you submerge it
le  sileng.  
LOC water  
‘in the water.’ –D39T6

In (30), the speaker is narrating a sequence of events in a custom story that occurs between a hawk and an owl. Again, the bolded verbs in the text are semantically linked. The activity *leli*
‘make’ in the first sentence is completed in the second sentence (lel sera ‘finish making’). Lel sera occurs in the same sentence as mwosoosoo ‘send a message’. Mwosoosoo is picked up at the beginning of the next full sentence, and is coordinated to another verb, [ru]bma ‘[the two of them] come’. [Ru]bma is then followed on by [te]bma, which begins the next sentence. And so forth, and so on:

(30) Te lel-i bwera lok bwet.
3SG.PFY make-TR big pudding taro
‘He [hawk] made a big taro pudding.’

Te=lel sera lok bwet, bi mwosoosoo
3SG.PFY=make finish pudding taro and 3SG.IPFY=send.msg
‘After he finished making the taro pudding, he sends a message

meta-n wede, nuhu ra=ma=ru gan-i. Subu naa.
source-3PL.POSS owl COMP 3PL=PRSP=DU eat-TR chief now
‘to the owl [the chief] saying the two of them should eat. This chief now [owl].’

Mwo=soosoo meta-a, bi ra=m ru=bma.
3SG.IPFY=send.msg source-3PL.POSS and 3PL=IPFY DU=come
‘He sends the message to them, and the two of them [messenger and owl] come.’

Te=bma bis ne-di be-n, bi
3SG.PFY=come go.until CONN-stay proximity-3SG.POSS and
‘He [owl] came to him and

Ø beb ha=ni nehu, ra=m=ru gan-i
3SG IFPV.say PREP=3SG.OBJ COMP 3PL=IPFY=DU eat-TR
‘he [hawk] tells him that the two of them are eating

lok bwet=ah.
pudding taro=PROX
‘this taro pudding.’ –D2T43

Paviour-Smith (2006) speculates that head-tail linkage results from a tradition of night-time story telling, where the light is low and the speaker cannot see the faces of his interlocutors very well. In the interests of maintaining a clear flow of information, the speaker pauses after every sentence or two, and listeners provide oral confirmation of understanding. Once positive feedback is provided, the speaker continues on, maintaining discourse cohesion by beginning the new sentence with the same verb that ended the last section. Although difficult to verify, this hypothesis is certainly an appealing one.
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APPENDIX 1
**TEXT 1**

_Narrated by Marie-Jean Matan of Vanrasini village_

_“My Daughter Nivana”_

1. Baawo, ba na bavatla kik, kau
   first COMM ISG IPFV.give.thanks 2SG.OBJ big.one
   lengleng, Cindy.
   very C.
   ‘First, I give a big thank you to you, Cindy.’

2. Mwe=gamui uu nana,
   3SG.IPV=be.like as.for 1SG.OBJ
   ‘As for me,

3. ba no-m umw-an aha ko mwa=bma uuru,
   COMM CL.GE-2SG.POSS work-NMZR REL 2SG IPFV=come regarding.it
   ’your work that you come to do,

4. ba na=m sabotem* kau lengleng.
   COMM 1SG=IPFV support big.one very
   ‘I really support it.’

5. Ko veb nuhu na=ma dobtob=te uu...
   2SG.IMP say COMP 1SG-PRSP talk=PART regarding
   ‘You say I should talk about something …’

6. na mwa=two hal-an, Nivana.
   1SG IPFV=tell.story road-3SG.POSS N.
   ‘I’m going to talk about Nivana.’

7. Ba, uu Nivana, ba te=woo Vila.
   COMM regarding N. COMM 3SG.PFV=be.born V.
   ‘Nivana, she was born in Vila.’

8. Le osbital* à* Vila.
   LOC hospital in Vila
   ‘At the hospital in Vila.’

9. Tei kaamat di iginan, kaamat di Vila,
   FOC 1PL.EXC.PFV stay there 1PL.EXC.PFV stay V.
   ‘We stayed there, we stayed in Vila,’

10. tei te bado=i no-n sika bwaleh ngamwa,
    FOC 3SG.PFV not.yet=be CL.GE-3SG.POSS year one yet
    ‘it was not yet her first year,”
11. ba kaa=m=ru mulma kaa=∅ mulma dokah.
   COMM 1PL.EXC=IPFV=DU come.back 1PL.EXC=IPFV come.back here
   'the two of us came back, we came back here.'

12. Ba, kaamat te=bma.
   COMM 1PL.EXC.PFY PFV=come
   'We came back.'

13. Kaamat mulma Vanrasini, ba na=t git-a nehu
   1PL.EXC.PFY come.back V. COMM 1SG=PFY see-TR COMP
   'We came back to Vanrasini, and I saw that,

14. Nivana, ba na=m git-a nehu no-n mwas-an,
   N. COMM 1SG=IPFV see-TR COMP CL.GE-3SG.POSS life-NMZ
   'Nivana, I see that her life,

15. ba te=ba gabis dihi=nga.
   COMM 3SG.PFY=NEG.I be.good be.good=NEG.2
   'it's not very good.'

16. Igo mwe=ras~ras.
   because 3SG.IPV=INT~be.sick
   'Because she’s always sick.'

17. Ani, tei kaamat di Vila, ani no-n mwas-an,
   but FOC 1PLEXC.PFY stay V. but CL.GE-3SG.POSS life-NMZ
   'But when we stayed in Vila, her life,

18. ba tei te gabis i go tei te=ba ras~ras
   COMM FOC PFY 3SG.be.good because FOC 3SG.PFY=NEG.1 INT~be.sick
tei nga.
   PART=NEG.2
   'it was good because she wasn’t always sick.

19. Ba, naanong, ba mwe=gabis. Ras, ba
   COMM now COMM 3SG.IPV=be.good always COMM
   mwe=gabis=te.
   3SG.IPV=be.good=PART
   'But now, she’s fine. She’s always pretty good.'

20. Bi mu=sukul* naanong.
   and 3SG.IPV=attend.school now
   'And she’s attending school now.'
21. Mwi=di, mwa=li sukul=te le kinda*, va karu. 3SG.IPFV=stay 3SG.IPFV=take school=CMP LOC kindergarten time two  
'And she stays, she’s taken kindergarten twice.'

22. Tei sika go ni te=nok, FOC year other REL 3SG.PFV=finish  
'It was last year,'

23. ba tei te sukul, te=di le kinda. COMM FOC 3SG.PFV attend.school 3SG.PFV=stay LOC kindergarten  
'that she attended school, she was in kindergarten.'

24. Ba, mwi=di mwetak nae va karuan nong, COMM 3SG.IPFV=stay do.again now time second PROX  
'She’s repeating now for her second time,'

25. noko-n sika go=ha. body-3SG.POSS year one=PROX  
'during this year.'

26. Bi, abma niah na=m git-a, and thing REL 1SG=IPFV see-TR  
'And, what I see,'

27. le mwas-an no-n Niva, LOC live-NMZR CL.GE-3SG.POSS N.  
in Nivana’s life,

28. ba na=m git-a nchu, ni, COMM 1SG=IPFV see-TR COMP 3SG.IND  
'I see that she,'

29. ba mwi=intres* tokol le sukul. COMM 3SG.IPFV=be.interested be.strong LOC school  
'she’s very interested in school.'

30. No-n vinhi-an. CL.GE-3SG.POSS think-NMZR  
'Her interest.'

31. Na=m yusum* “intres” nong, 1SG=IPFV use “interest” PROX  
'I use “interest” here,'

32. ba le dale-kte, ba na=bat veb nuhu, COMM LOC language-GNZR COMM 1SG=HYP say COMP  
'but in language, I should say that,'
33. “no-n vinhi-an” mwi=di tokol. CL.GE-3SG.POSS think-NMZR 3SG.IPVF=stay be.strong “her interest” is strong.’

34. Sori*, igo na=m=gam yusum "intres". sorry because 1SG=IPFY=MIN use interest ‘Sorry, because I just used “interest”.’

35. Ani, no-n vinhi-an, mwi=di tokol. but CL.GE-3SG.POSS think-NMZR 3SG.IPVF=stay be.strong ‘But her interest is strong.’

36. Noko-n sukul. body-3SG.POSS school ‘In school.’

37. Igo, vaawo na-n abma ah mwan lel-i because first.one ASSOC-3SG.POSS thing REL 3SG.IRR do-TR tsuubung, morning ‘Because, the first thing she does in the morning,

38. ba mwan dumre, ba, mwan dumre, bi mwe=leleh, COMM 3SG.IRR get.up COMM 3SG.IRR get.up and 3SG.IPVF=wash ‘she gets up, she gets up, and she washes,

39. mwe=leleh, bi Ø ban, mwi=di le sukul. 3SG.IPVF=wash and 3SG.IPVF=MIN go 3SG.IPVF=stay LOC school Mwan=uus masen. 3SG.IRR=rain regardless ‘she washes, and she goes, she stays at school. Even if it’s raining.’

40. Mwan=uus masen, ba mwan=van mwa. 3SG.IRR=rain regardless COMM 3SG.IRR=go in.contrast ‘Even if it’s raining, she goes anyway.’

41. Ihgo mwan=van ne-di ba datni-n nii if 3SG.IRR=go CONN-stay COMM some-3SG.POSS PL ra=n bulong, 3PL=IRR not.exist ‘If she goes there and some of them are not there,

42. ba mwe=ga mulma le lim. COMM 3SG.IPVF=MIN come.back LOC house. ‘she just comes back to the house.’
43. Bi abma niaha na=m don-i nehu Nivana bat lel-i, and thing REL 1SG=IPFV want-TR COMP N. 3SG.HYP do-TR
   ‘And what I want Nivana to do,

44. ba na=m don-i go=ah niaha, COMM 1SG=IPFV want-TR one=PROX REL
   ‘I want this,

45. abma ah na=m don-i tokol nuhu, thing REL 1SG=IPFV want-TR be.strong COMP
   ‘what I really want is,

46. mwan=gau bi mwe=lel mini nana, 3SG.IRR=grow and 3SG.IPFV=do with 1SG.OBJ
   ‘her to grow up and do for me,

47. ba nae=ah niah mwan sukul gololo, COMM this.time=now REL 3SG.IRR attend.school do.well
   ‘now she’s doing well in school,

48. na=m don-i go nante ah mwan sukul 1SG=IPFV want-TR one nothing.more SUB 3SG.IRR attend.school
   gololo, do.well
   ‘I want nothing more than for her to do well in school,

49. igo mwane=i=te alibe, ba mwan veetsi nana, because 3SG.IRR=be=PART sometime COMM 3SG.IRR help 1SG.OBJ
   ‘because there will be some time when she will help me.’

50. Bi, na bih, tei nante nong Cindy, ani and 1SG IPFV.think FOC nothing.more PROX C. but
   koviah.
   thank.you
   ‘And, I think that’s all Cindy, but thank you.’

*Borrowing
TEXT 2

Narrated by Mireille Kaentoh of Melsisi village
“The Vengeful Son”

1. Tei lego, bi atsi havin, 
   FOC once and person woman
   ‘Once there was a woman,

2. tei te=rut, bi Ø=ban lekoo. 
   FOC 3SG.PFY=be.pregnant and 3SG=IPFY.go garden
   ‘she was pregnant, and she went to the garden.’

3. Ø=Ban Ø bwet-a no-n kaba. 
   3SG=IPFV.go 3SG IPFY.cut-TR CL.GE-3SG.Poss firewood
   ‘She went to cut her firewood.’

4. Te=van ngamwa ne-di ne-wet-a no-n kaba, 
   3SG.PFY=go yet CONN-stay CONN-cut-TR CL.GE-3SG.Poss firewood
   ‘She was still cutting her firewood,

5. ba nutsu-n Ø=boo. 
   COMM child-3SG.Poss 3SG=IPFV.be.born
   ‘when her child was born.’

6. Bi Ø bariak nutsu-n. 
   and 3SG IPFY.not.want child-3SG.Poss
   ‘And she doesn’t want her child.’

7. Bi mwe=das-i libwi-n odomwa. 
   and 3SG.IPfv=cut-TR root-3SG.Poss odoma
   ‘And she cuts the roots of the odoma tree.’

8. Bi mwo=son-i nutsu-n, 
   and 3SG.IPfv=put-TR child-3SG.Poss
   ‘And she puts down her child,

9. mwa=tbo mwa=mn-i libwi-n odomwa. 
   3SG.IPfv=lay.down 3SG.IPfv=drink-TR root-3SG.Poss odoma
   ‘he lays drinking the roots of the odoma tree.’

    and 3SG.IPfV=go.back do.again LOC house
    ‘And she goes back to the house.’

11. Nutsu atsi mwa=tbo mwa=mn-i odomwa, 
    child person 3SG.IPFv=stay 3SG.IPfV=drink-TR odoma
    ‘The child keeps drinking the odoma,
Appendix 1: Text 2

12. bi mwa=mn-i, bi mwe=gau, and 3SG.IPFV=drink-TR and 3SG.IPFV=grow 'and he drinks, and he grows,

13. mwe=gau, bi mwo=dok mwe galal, 3SG.IPFV=grow and 3SG.IPFV=stay PFV crawl 'he grows and he is crawling,'

14. mwe=galal, bi mwe=gan-i songo~songo dobo le waka. 3SG.IPFV=crawl and 3SG.IPFV=eat-TR INT~dirt on.and.on LOC bush 'he crawls and he eats the rubbish around the bush.'

15. Bi datsi-n mwe=sadok le lim, ba Ǿ=beb and mother-3SG.POSS 3SG.IPFV=sit LOC house COMM 3SG=IPFV.say te mat=te. 3SG.PFY die=CMP 'And his mother stays in the house and says he already died.'

16. Bi nutsu atsi haavak mwa=tbo, and child person child 3SG.IPFV=stay 'And the child stays on,'

17. mwe=gau, bi mwe=gau, bi Ǿ=ban, 3SG.IPFV=grow and 3SG.IPFV=grow and 3SG=IPFV.go 'he grows and grows and goes on,'

18. te=van aha, alibe nehu no-n sika na bih, 3SG.PFY=go SUB sometime say CL.GE-3SG.POSS year 1SG IPFV.think 'he kept going until around say his age I think

19. tei te sangwul vebnan telabtsil, FOC 3SG.PFY be.ten plus eight it was eighteen,

20. bi mwe=lel-i no-n bwalaki. and 3SG.IPFV=do-TR CL.GE-3SG.POSS bow.and.arrow 'and he made his bow and arrow.'

21. Bi mwe=selka-ni, bi Ǿ bwel mwa=bma li hal, and 3SG.IPFV=carry-TR and 3SG IPFV.dance PFV=come LOC road 'And he carries it, and he dances up the road.'

22. Bi mwe=sasa. and 3SG.IPFV=sing 'And he sings.'
23. Sasa-an naa ni na=ma lel-i ah:
   sing-NMZ PROX REL 1SG=PRSP do-TR now
   ‘This song that I’ll do now:’

   “Datsingi, te lingi nana mban dende uloo.
   “Te rongo lingi anggo tam sisi ondomwa.
   “Tam sisi ondomwa, ah susun, mweramba tan.
   “Tam sisi ondomwa.”

24. Ba mwo=dok bai-ni no-n bwalakih.
   COMM 3SG.IPFV=stay shoot-TR CL.GE-3SG.POSS bow.and.arrow
   ‘And he is shooting his bow and arrow.’

25. Ba Ø=bwel mweta-k mwa=bma saasari val-in
   COMM 3SG=IPFV.dance do.again-INTR IPFY=come near house-3SG.POSS
   datsi-n, mother-3SG.POSS
   ‘He comes dancing again near his mother’s house,

26. ba datsi-n le lim, mwe=sadok mwe=rah-a
   COMM mother-3SG.POSS LOC house 3SG.IPFV=stay IPFY=grate-TR
   ‘his mother in the house, she is grating

27. ka-n lok bwet.
   CL.ED-3SG.POSS pudding taro
   ‘her taro pudding.’

28. Bi mwo=dok mwo=rong-o nutsu-n.
   and 3SG.IPFV=stay IPFY=hear-TR child-3SG.POSS
   ‘And she hears her child.’

29. Ba nutsu-n mwe=sasa mweta-k:
   COMM child-3SG.POSS 3SG.IPFV=sing do.again-INTR
   ‘Her child sings again.’

   “Datsingi, te lingi nana mban dende uloo.
   “Te rongo lingi anggo tam sisi ondomwa.
   “Tam sisi ondomwa, ah susun, mweramba tan.
   “Tam sisi ondomwa.”

30. Ba mwo=dok bai-ni non bwalakih.
   COMM 3SG.IPFV=stay shoot-TR CL.GE-3SG.POSS bow.and.arrow
   ‘And he is shooting his bow and arrow.’
31. Tei bwalakih no-n, lian tei te sangwul. 
FOC bow.and.arrow CL.GE-3SG.POSS arrow FOC 3SG.PFV be.ten 
‘His bow and arrow, it had ten arrows.’

32. Ø=Bwel mweta-k, mwa=bma, mwa=bma, mwa-bma, 
3SG=IPFY.dance do.again-INTR 3SG.IPV=come 3SG.IPV=come 3SG.IPV=come 
‘He dances again, he comes, he comes, he comes,’

33. te=bma saasari val-in datsi-n, 
3SG.PFV=come near house-3SG.POSS mother-3SG.POSS 
‘he came hear his mother’s house,’

34. ba mwe=sasa mweta-k: 
COMM 3SG.IPV=sing do.again-INTR and he sings again:’

“Datsingi, te lingi nana mban dende uloo. 
“Te rongo lingi anggo tam sisi ondomwa. 
“Tam sisi ondomwa, ah susun, mweramba tan. 
“Tam sisi ondomwa.”

35. Ba mwo=dok bai-k mweta-ni 
COMM 3SG.IPV=stay IPFV.shoot-INTR do.again-TR 
‘He shoots again’

36. lian no-n bwalakih. 
arrow CL.GE-3SG.POSS bow.and.arrow 
‘the arrows of his bow and arrow.’

37. Te sagele bi mwe=sagele bi Ø bukngak. 
3SG.PFV amble and 3SG.IPV=amble and 3SG.IPV.arrive 
‘He ambled on and on and arrived.’

38. Te=bma saasari val-in datsi-n, 
3SG.PFV=come near house-3SG.POSS mother-3SG.POSS 
‘He came near his mother’s house,’

39. bi datsi-n mwo=rob bawob, 
and mother-3SG.POSS 3SG.IPV=run IPFV.go.outside 
‘and his mother runs outside.’

40. Te=ga mu=bma ne-git li tsuku-n im, 
3SG.PFV=MIN ADD=come CONN.look LOC back-3SG.POSS house 
‘She just came a little more to look around the back of the house,’
41. **ba mwi=git-a nutsu-n,  O=beb:**
   COMM 3SG.IPFV=see-TR child-3SG.POSS 3SG=IPFV.say
   ‘and she sees her child and says:’

42. **“Nutsu-k tewot, ko-bma!”**
   child-1SG.POSS beloved 2SG.IMP-come
   ‘“My beloved child, you come!”’

43. **“Na=t ba=mkoo te=nga i kik.”**
   1SG=PFV NEG.1=abandon PART=NEG.2 PREP 2SG.OBJ
   ‘‘I never abandoned you at all.”’

44. **Ba nutsu-n  O=beb:**
   COMM child-3SG.POSS 3SG=IPFV.say
   ‘Her child says:’

45. **“Kik naa, ko=t varik nana ihgoah na=t web.”**
   2SG.IND now 2SG=PFV not.want 1SG.OBJ when 1SG=PFV be.small
   ‘‘You now, you didn’t want me when I was little.”’

46. **Mwe=galahi datsi-n,  O=beb:**
   3SG.IPFV=lie mother-3SG.POSS 3SG=IPFV.say
   ‘He lied to his mother, saying:’

47. **“Ko git mwi=sib le teh,**
   2SG.IMP look IPFV=go.down LOC saltwater
   ‘‘Look down at the saltwater,’

48. **“ko=n git-a abma ah mwi=di li**
   2SG=IRR see-TR something REL 3SG.IPFV=stay LOC

   wulnga-n teh.
   horizon-3SG.POSS saltwater
   ‘‘you’ll see something in the horizon.”’

49. **“Ululan no-n Bwatulkul.”**
   handwriting CL.GE-3SG.POSS B.
   ‘‘Bwatulkul’s handwriting.”’

50. **Datsi-n te=git mwi=sib le teh,**
   mother-3SG.POSS 3SG.PVF=look IPFV=go.down LOC saltwater
   ‘His mother looked down at the saltwater,

51. **bi mwa=sroo li tan bi  O=ban ibe.**
   and 3SG.IPFV=sink LOC ground and 3SG=IPFV.go somewhere
   ‘and sinks into the ground and is lost.’

52. **Bi te=nok.**
   and 3SG.PVF=be.finished
   ‘And it’s finished.’
APPENDIX 2
LIST OF SPEAKERS

The following table is a compilation of all recorded texts, alphabetised by speaker. Note that recordings were made not only of speakers of the Suru Mwerani dialect, but also of Suru Rabwanga and Suru Kavian. The recordings were made between June 2003 and August 2004.

SK = Suru Kavian dialect  
SR = Suru Rabwanga dialect  
SM = Suru Mwerani dialect

If a dialect is not indicated after a speaker’s name, then their dialect is SM. Speakers with two dialects after their name, e.g., (SR/SM) are reported by others to use features of both dialects. SM and SR are reported to be closely related, and my own observations concur with this view.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF SPEAKER</th>
<th>VILLAGE IN PENTECOST</th>
<th>TOPIC OF TEXT</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benwel Bule (SM/SR)</td>
<td>Naruwa</td>
<td>Children’s Day speech</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Bule</td>
<td>Naruwa</td>
<td>Children’s Day speech</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marco Bule (SR)</td>
<td>Namaram</td>
<td>How to dye mats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willie Bule</td>
<td>Naruwa</td>
<td>Children’s Day speech</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bonifacio Buleban</td>
<td>Vaneaa</td>
<td>Sarion and Wakatsiwas have a race</td>
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<td>Joseph Bulemeres</td>
<td>Enkul</td>
<td>Story about the ground of Pentecost</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Bulemeres</td>
<td>Enkul</td>
<td>The importance of pigs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Bulemeres</td>
<td>Enkul</td>
<td>How the birds were given their responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fr. Titus Bulesanibo (SR)</td>
<td>Dirihi</td>
<td>How to build a nakamal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lalangan Christopher Buletakak (SK)</td>
<td>Wasak</td>
<td>Kastom story and song</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lalangan Christopher Buletakak (SK)</td>
<td>Wasak</td>
<td>Kastom story and song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert Buleuru</td>
<td>Larinmwat</td>
<td>A boy and girl get married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert Buleuru</td>
<td>Larinmwat</td>
<td>Rat’s parents find her a good husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willie Bulewak</td>
<td>Naruwa</td>
<td>Story about birds and chickens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willie Bulewak</td>
<td>Naruwa</td>
<td>Talk about drawings by Enoch Tabilebo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patty Bulewaka</td>
<td>Naruwa</td>
<td>Children’s Day speech 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patty Bulewaka</td>
<td>Naruwa</td>
<td>Children’s Day speech 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patty Bulewaka</td>
<td>Naruwa</td>
<td>Children’s Day speech 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mireille Kaentoh</td>
<td>Melsisi</td>
<td>The mother who abandoned her child</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mireille Kaentoh</td>
<td>Melsisi</td>
<td>Bulemamkan’s wife is killed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isabel Mabonkoo (SR)</td>
<td>Wutsunmwel</td>
<td>How to weave a basket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabel Mabonkoo (SR)</td>
<td>Wutsunmwel</td>
<td>How to make taro pudding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy Mabonlala (SM/SR)</td>
<td>Naruwa</td>
<td>Children’s Day speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula Mabonlala</td>
<td>Vanrasini</td>
<td>What I did yesterday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>TOPIC OF TEXT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paula Mabonlala</td>
<td>Vanrasini</td>
<td>There’s going to be a wedding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albertine Mabonrang</td>
<td>Larimwat</td>
<td>How to make mats</td>
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<td>Anna Mabonsah</td>
<td>Naruwa</td>
<td>How to cut a tattoo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connie Mabonsuwe (SR/SM) and</td>
<td>Naruwa</td>
<td>Food and cooking in the old times, compared to today – I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam Mabontaba (SM/ SR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madeleine Mabonsuwe</td>
<td>Leodova</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miriam Mabontaba (SR/SM)</td>
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<td>Vilomena Mabontaba</td>
<td>Lokoovili</td>
<td>How to make a basket</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marie-Noelle Mabontel</td>
<td>Vanrasini</td>
<td>How the snake has come to live on every island</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marie-Noelle Mabontel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marie-Noelle Mabontel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noella Mabonwel</td>
<td>Vanrasini</td>
<td>What I did yesterday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virma Mabonwusu</td>
<td>Libukuu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virma Mabonwusu</td>
<td>Libukuu</td>
<td>How the war ended</td>
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<td>Gwynneth Matan (SR/SM) and</td>
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<td>How to weave baskets</td>
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<td>Osbourne Tabi (SR/SM)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joy Matan</td>
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<td>Marie-Jean Matan</td>
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<td>Raton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raton village women (SK)</td>
<td>Raton</td>
<td>Church song, “Hosannah”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denis Siaban</td>
<td>Sanial</td>
<td>If I had 5 million vatu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denis Siaban</td>
<td>Sanial</td>
<td>Trouble with Butsungos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denis Siaban</td>
<td>Sanial</td>
<td>Story of the hole at Vanrasini</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denison Siaban</td>
<td>Sanial</td>
<td>Life in Sanial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denison Siaban</td>
<td>Sanial</td>
<td>How to make kava</td>
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<tr>
<td>Denison Siaban /Noella Mabonwesel</td>
<td>Sanial/ Vanrasini</td>
<td>How to make pudding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denison Siaban, John Siaban, Eileen Matanvau</td>
<td>Sanial/ Vanrasini</td>
<td>Conversation</td>
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<td>John Siaban</td>
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<td>Serafin Siaban</td>
<td>Sanial</td>
<td>The younger brother and the breadfruit tree</td>
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<td>Sanial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edmond Tabi (SK)</td>
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<td>S. Braon Tabi (SK)</td>
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<td>Oscar Tabi (Chief)</td>
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<td>Osbourne Tabi (SR/SM)</td>
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<td>George Tabisal</td>
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<td>Why the booga is afraid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nathaniel Tabisanibo (SR)</td>
<td>Bulongbibo</td>
<td>Two girls find their father</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<tr>
<td>Albano Tabisari</td>
<td>Vanrasini</td>
<td>The grandparent, the grandchild, and the snake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albano Tabisari</td>
<td>Vanrasini</td>
<td>The youngest child outwits his siblings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Albano Tabisari</td>
<td>Vanrasini</td>
<td>A boy's visit with the devil</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeffrey Tanmeme (SK)</td>
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<td>Kastom story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey Tanmeme (SK)</td>
<td>Mwasi</td>
<td>Kastom story</td>
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<td>Maurice Tanmwonok</td>
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<td>Kastom story</td>
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<td>Maurice Tanmwonok</td>
<td>Vanrasini</td>
<td>A chief's work</td>
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<td>Maurice Tanmwonok</td>
<td>Vanrasini</td>
<td>The move down to the Lik</td>
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<td>Raymond Tevigokon (SK)</td>
<td>Meri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raymond Tevigokon (SK)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Fight between chiefs</td>
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<td>2. Boy dies</td>
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