

Switch-reference constructions in Iatmul: Forms, functions, and development

Gerd Jendraschek

Research Centre for Linguistic Typology, La Trobe University, Bundoora, VIC 3086, Australia

Received 15 September 2008; received in revised form 11 February 2009; accepted 18 February 2009

Available online 21 March 2009

Abstract

The paper presents the switch-reference constructions of the Papuan language Iatmul. I will start at the highest syntactic level, by illustrating the role of switch-reference in intersentential tail–head linkage. While switch-reference marking – in Iatmul and canonically – only links clauses, but not sentences, tail–head linkage links sentences, and indicates – at least in Iatmul – whether the following verb in a new sentence has the same or a different subject referent than the last verb of the previous sentence. It thereby helps to identify the subject referent in a system where overt noun phrases are used much less than in a language like English. Tail–head linkage is further used as a strategy to link independent clauses in a language without clause coordination. Chained clauses are also switch-reference marked, but a backgrounded subordinate clause can intervene between two linked clauses (‘skipped clause’) or within one clause (‘centre-embedded clause’) of the chain and thereby make it discontinuous. I will apply relevant criteria to show that the Iatmul clause-linking verb forms are morphosyntactically subordinate, but functionally ambiguous. When linked verbs share some or all of their arguments, we obtain a linkage at a level below the clause. Such constructions can evolve into complex predicates or collocations, which may ultimately lexicalize.

© 2009 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Switch-reference; Tail–head linkage; Subordination; Lexicalization; Papuan

1. Introduction

1.1. Switch-reference marked clauses

Haiman and Munro (1983:ix) define canonical switch-reference (short: S/R) as “an inflectional category of the verb, which indicates whether or not its subject is identical with the subject of some other verb”. Canonically, switch-reference systems thus “indicate coreference or disjoint reference between the subjects of adjacent, syntactically related clauses” (Stirling, 2001:14; see also Stirling, 1993:6–7 for a summarized version of the canonical view on switch-reference systems).

In the simplest case, we have a sequence of two consecutive clauses. If the subjects of the two clauses have the same referent, this fact is marked on the first verb.¹ In this case, subject cross-reference on the verb of the first

E-mail addresses: jendraschek@hotmail.com, g.jendraschek@latrobe.edu.au.

¹ The illustration is based on a verb-final language where the switch-reference markers are suffixal. Where the marker is a prefix on the verb, the switch-reference marked clause tends to follow the reference clause (Lynch, 1983:210).

clause is redundant, as this information will be given in (one of) the following clause(s). This clause is called ‘reference clause’, e.g. in Haiman and Munro (1983:xii); Gordon (1983:83).² If the sentence consists of more than two clauses, the reference clause can itself be switch-reference marked and have one of the following clauses as its reference clause, and so on.

In example (1) from the Papuan language Usan (Reesink, 1983:218), where both clauses have the same subject referent, the subject is indeed not cross-referenced on the first verb *suâb*. The ending *-âb* only expresses identity of subject between the dependent (switch-reference marked) and the reference clause.³

- (1) ye nam su-**âb** isomei
 [I tree cut-**SS**] [I.went.down]
 ‘I cut the tree and went down’

In (2), in contrast, the two clauses have different subject referents, which is expressed on the first verb *suine*. This time, the verbs in both clauses have their subject cross-referenced (Reesink, 1983:217).

- (2) ye nam su-**ine** isorei
 [I tree cut-**1SG.DS**] [it.went.down]
 ‘I cut the tree (and it went) down’

The tendency to leave the expression of the subject to the reference clause alone is not universal though. In Maricopa (Yuman), the subject is cross-referenced on the switch-reference marked clause in both same subject and different subject combinations. The suffix *-k* in (3) marks the dependent verb as having the same subject as the verb of the reference clause (Gordon, 1983:87).

- (3) nyaa ‘-ashvar-**k** ‘-iima-k
 [I 1-sing-**SS**] [1-dance-**ASP**]
 ‘I sang and danced’

Both verbs in (3) carry a prefix ‘- (pronounced as a glottal stop) cross-referencing the subject pronoun *nyaa* ‘I’. The same subject marker suffixed to the first verb therefore seems redundant in this case.

The two clauses in (4) have different subject referents. This fact is made explicit by the suffix *-m*. Third person cross-reference on the first verb is expressed by a zero-morpheme.

- (4) Bonnie-sh Ø-ashvar-**m** ‘-iima-k
 [Bonnie-SBJ 3-sing-**DS**] [1-dance-**ASP**]
 ‘Bonnie sang and I danced’

Here too, the different subject marker *-m* is, strictly speaking, redundant, as the cross-reference marking itself seems sufficient to exclude subject identity. However, the switch-reference marking helps resolve ambiguous cases. The most common case of disambiguation is when the verbs of the linked clauses are marked for the same person/number-category, but have different referents. In (5) from Iatmul,⁴ the two verbs are both marked by *-di* for ‘3SG.M’, but the overt person/number-marking on the first verb actually indicates different-subject linkage.

² Which is preferable to ‘controlling clause’ (as used in Stirling, 1993:4). Being reminiscent of the pair ‘controller-dependent’, it could also refer to the head clause of the clause-chain, i.e. typically the final, fully finite clause, to which all the switch-reference marked clauses are modifiers.

³ The following abbreviations are used: A subject of transitive clause; ADV adverb(ializer); ALL allative; CONSEC consecutive; D1 demonstrative proximate; D2 demonstrative distal; D3 demonstrative contextual; DAT dative; DEP dependent (same-subject converb); DS different subject; DU dual; F feminine; FIN final (verb); FOC focus; GEN genitive; IMP imperative; INCMPL incomplete (derivation); IPFV imperfective; IRR irrealis; LK linker (with various functions); LOC locative; NEG negation; NR nominalizer; O direct object; OPT optative; PL plural; PRS present; REAL realis; REL relative; S subject of intransitive clause; SG singular; SS same subject.

⁴ Iatmul data are presented in the orthography used in Jendraschek (2008). The major differences from the international phonetic alphabet are as follows (allophones in complementary distribution are separated by a comma, those in free variation by a tilde): *a* [a], [a]~[ɔ]; *â* [a]~[ɔ]; *a'* [aʔ]~[a]~[aʔ]; *a'i* [aɪ]~[aɪ]; *aa* [a:]; *b* [ʙ]; *d* [ɖ]; *g* [ɠ]; *i'* [i]; *j* [j̥]; *k'* [kʰ]; *l* [l]~[r]; *n'* [ŋ]; *v* [β].

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/935863>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/935863>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)