LANGUAGE PROFILE 10

Manambu

10.1 Introduction

The island of New Guinea is probably the most linguistically diverse and complex area in the world, with over 1,000 languages spoken in an area of 900,000 square kilometers. About 300 to 400 languages belong to the Austronesian language family.

Figure LP10.1 Location of Manambu speakers in New Guinea
Other, non-Austronesian, languages are called “Papuan” (Foley 1986: 1; Aikhenvald and Stebbins 2007). This rough denomination covers over sixty linguistic families and a fair number of linguistic isolates spoken in the area. Within New Guinea itself, the Sepik River basin (which includes East Sepik and West Sepik, or Sandaun, provinces), with its 200 languages, is the most linguistically diverse. Of the several language families of the Sepik (including the Lower Sepik, Ramu, Sepik Hill, Kwoma-Nukuma, and Tama families), the Ndu family is the largest in terms of both the number of speakers and the territory over which it extends, from the Sepik river itself northwards to the coast (Roscoe 1994).

Manambu is a member of the Ndu language family. About 2,500 people speak Manambu in four villages in the East Sepik Province (Ambunti district) along the Sepik River: Avatip, renowned as the most traditional village and a sort of Manambu “metropolis”; Malu, the place where the first contact with Europeans took place early in the twentieth century; Yambon, or Yuanab; and Yawabak (see Figure LP10.2). Not more than 200–400 Manambu speakers live in scattered expatriate communities in major cities of Papua New Guinea including Port Moresby, Wewak, Lae, Madang, Kokopo and Mount Hagen. Because of the complex language contact situation, the Manambu language is considered to be endangered (seeTextbox LP10.1).
In terms of its grammatical structure, Manambu is one of the most complex languages in the Ndu family. The relative complexity of Manambu can be partially accounted for by language contact (see Chapter 14). The Manambu incorporated into their community members of neighboring tribes whom they had conquered as a result of inter-tribal warfare (Harrison 1993; Aikhenvald 2009). These outsiders spoke different languages and as they learned Manambu they did so imperfectly, bringing in features of their own native speech. Some of these features eventually spread through the entire Manambu community, creating a substrate effect.

We now turn to a few salient features of the language. First we present a brief snapshot of the Manambu’s linguistic type, and some typological features. We then discuss one of the key issues in Manambu grammar: the marking of grammatical relations on verbs, and on nouns.
10.2 The linguistic features of Manambu

10.2.1 Phonology

Manambu has twenty-one consonants and nine vowels, more than any other language of the Ndu family. These are shown in Tables LP10.1 and LP10.2. An interesting Ndu phonological feature is discussed in Textbox LP10.2.

Stress is contrastive: it may distinguish words with different meanings. Minimal pairs are ákǝs, a particle indicating habitual negation, and ákǝá ‘catch!'; gǝñǝr ‘to tail, with tail’ and gǝñǝ́r ‘later.’

SIDEBAR LP10.1

TRANSCRIPTION NOTE

The orthography for Manambu follows the IPA except for the transcription of palato-alveolar and palatal consonants. As in many orthographic systems, the letter j indicates the postalveolar affricate, y indicates the palatal glide, and ñ indicates the palatal nasal. These are shown in Table LP10.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE LP10.1 Consonants in Manambu</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bilabial</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Voiceless non-labialized stops</td>
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<td>Voiceless labialized stops</td>
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<td>Voiced non-labialized stops</td>
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<td>Voiced labialized stops</td>
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<td>Voiced fricative</td>
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<td>Voiceless fricatives</td>
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<td>Lateral</td>
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<td>Trilled rhotic</td>
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<td>Nasals</td>
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<td>Glides</td>
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<tr>
<th>TABLE LP10.2 Vowels in Manambu</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Short vowels</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
10.2.2 Morphology

As discussed in Chapter 4, languages can be classified based on their degrees of fusion and degrees of synthesis. Manambu can be described as synthetic, that is, allowing many morphemes per word. The language is also agglutinating, so it is relatively easy to determine the boundaries between morphemes, although there is some fusion. Most grammatical morphemes are suffixes. There are just two prefixes: the valency-increasing kay-, which will be discussed below, and the second-person imperative a-.

10.2.3 Word classes: nouns

The major word classes in Manambu, nouns and verbs, are both open classes. The two are clearly distinguished, as they have different grammatical categories and different inflectional possibilities.

Beginning with nouns, nominal categories include two genders (masculine and feminine), three numbers (singular, dual, and plural), nine case forms, and a number of derivations. Number marking is found on only some nouns. Kinship terms, including the word for ‘child’ ñan, and a handful of nouns from other semantic groups (such as kudi ‘mouth’), are marked for number, e.g., asay ‘father,’ asay-va (father-DU) ‘two classificatory fathers’ (see Sidebar LP10.2), asay-ugw (father-PL) ‘many classificatory fathers.’ The noun ñan ‘child’ has a semi-suppletive form ñedi for the dual number, and a plural ñan-ugw ‘children.’

A special type of plural can be marked on personal names. This is referred to as an associative plural. It refers to a group of two or more people associated with the person who is named. Thus, Tanina-bor

### TEXTBOX LP10.2 PRENASALIZED STOPS

Manambu shares an interesting phonological feature with many Papuan and Austronesian languages of this area: voiced stops and the voiced affricate are prenasalized in syllable-initial position. So, the word for ‘man’ /du/, is pronounced as [“du]. Incidentally, this root is shared by all the Ndu languages and is the name given to the whole family.

### SIDEBAR LP10.2 CLASSIFICATORY FATHERS

Each Manambu person has more than one man whom they address as asay ‘father.’ One uses this term for a biological father, and also for one’s father’s brothers — that is, ‘paternal uncles.’ These are called “classificatory fathers.” A child belongs to the same clan as their classificatory father. A son would learn traditional lore and family history from one of his fathers and listen to their advice. In addition, names — which are considered a prized possession among the Manambu — are inherited from one’s classificatory fathers.

### SIDEBAR LP10.3

In Example (1), you will notice that the associative non-singular and the dual marker in Manambu are homonyms. This is accidental; they are not etymologically related, as each has a different proto-Ndu etymology (see Aikhenvald 2008: 594–595).
The same form Tanina-\textit{bar} can refer to Tanina and more than one person, i.e., more than two altogether. In such cases, plural agreement markers appear on the modifiers — such as the demonstrative \textit{a-di} ‘DIST. DEM- PL’ in Example (2) — and on the verb:

\begin{enumerate}
\item \texttt{DIST. DEM-du}\textit{ Tanina-ASSOC.NSG}\texttt{ go.out-3DU}
\begin{quote}
Those two, Tanina and one other person, are going out
\end{quote}
\item \texttt{DIST. DEM-PL}\textit{ Tanina-ASSOC.NSG}\texttt{ go.out-3PL}
\begin{quote}
Those several/many, Tanina and other people, are going out
\end{quote}
\end{enumerate}

Gender is marked in independent pronouns and in pronominal suffixes on the verb. But it is only distinguished for the second and third-person singular categories; the distinction is \textbf{neutralized} (not made) in the non-singular numbers — the dual and the plural. Each noun is assigned masculine or feminine gender. In the noun phrase, modifiers (including demonstratives, interrogatives, possession markers, and three of the adjectives) agree with the gender of the head noun; there is gender agreement in the verb as well.

For the majority of nouns, gender is not expressed on the noun itself, that is, one cannot determine the gender of a noun simply by looking at its form (as is true with much of the vocabulary of Romance languages). The only exception is personal names — a highly salient subgroup of nouns in Manambu that are also considered tantamount to monetary valuables, those whose ownership is disputed in name debates (see Textbox LP10.3). Most personal names have masculine and feminine counterparts, which are distinguished morphologically; for example, the male name \textit{Kigin}\textunderscore{\textit{bar}} has a female counterpart \textit{Kigin}\textunderscore{\textit{bar}}-\texttt{a-fr}. Some male personal names

\begin{textbox}
\textbf{THE VALUE OF NAMES}

Manambu culture differs dramatically from those of western societies. For example, the Manambu people place particular importance on ownership of personal names, and totemic names belonging to the major clan groups and their subclans. Possessing multiple names is viewed as a major asset. Ritual debates concerning name ownership are, traditionally, the main political forum and the center of village life. For a detailed ethnographic study of the Manambu, see Harrison (1990, 1993).
\end{textbox}
contain the morpheme du ‘man,’ e.g., Kawi-du, while some female personal names contain ta:kw ‘woman,’ e.g., Namamayra-ta:kw.

Nouns are assigned genders according to the sex of a human referent, and to the shape and size of a referent of any other semantic group. That is, men are assigned to the masculine, and women to the feminine gender. A large dog or a large house is treated as masculine, and a small dog or a small house as feminine. Many speakers are aware of the correlation between gender assignment and size: a-də wuna-də wi (DIST.DEM-Sg.M 1SG-SG.M house) ‘that (masculine) house of mine’ – referring to a big house I own – may be translated as ‘that big man-type house of mine.’

Conversely, a-Ø wuna-Ø wi (DIST.DEM-SG.F 1SG-SG.F house) ‘that (feminine) house of mine’ – referring to a small house I own – may well be translated as ‘that small woman-type house of mine.’ Round objects, such as ab ‘head,’ gwas ‘turtle,’ or ya: l ‘belly,’ are normally feminine. But a belly of an unusually large size can be referred to with the masculine form of a modifier.

Assigning a gender to a mass noun depends on the amount of the referent: money can be referred to as masculine if we are talking of a large sum; a small sum will be referred to with feminine gender. A not-too-dark night is feminine; if a night is completely dark, it becomes masculine. The word kam ‘hunger’ is treated as masculine if one is very hungry, and as feminine if one is only a bit peckish. A further important function of gender is to distinguish
polysemous nouns. For instance, ma:m ‘older sibling’ can refer either to an elder brother or an elder sister; gender is instrumental for disambiguating the reference.

By semantic extension, an unusually big or bossy woman can be treated as masculine, and a squat fattish man as feminine. The word ab ‘head’ typically requires feminine agreement, due to its round shape. But if one is suffering from a severe headache, one can say ‘my-masculine head is hurting’ - this is because the head then feels unusually big and heavy.

10.2.4 Word classes: verbs

Some Manambu verbs are either strictly intransitive or strictly transitive. Strictly intransitive verbs include motion verbs, e.g., yi- ‘go,’ ya- ‘come,’ giEp ‘run,’ and a few others, such as porki ‘be torn.’ A few verbs can be used only transitively, e.g., yi- ‘say, speak’ and kur- ‘do, make, get.’ There are few ditransitive verbs, e.g., kwatiya ‘give to a non-third person,’ kui ‘give to this person,’ and derivations based on this. However, over 80 percent of verbs in Manambu are ambitransitive: they can be used either transitively or intransitively, in a similar way to English eat: in its transitive use, it requires an object (e.g., I have eaten dinner); in its intransitive use, no object appears (e.g., I have eaten already).

Ambitransitive verbs in Manambu include ingestive verbs kə - ‘consume (food, drink, smoke)’ and jə- ‘chew,’ and verbs of cognition wukə- ‘hear, obey, understand’ and laku- ‘know, understand.’ The verb ralı(na)- ‘untie, be untied’ is among the few ambitransitive verbs of the type similar to English break, as in I have broken a glass and A glass broke. This represents one of two types of ambitransitive verbs, where the subject of the intransitive clause (glass in a glass broke) corresponds to the object of the transitive clause (I have broken a glass). We will call this type of ambitransitive S.of.I = O.of.T. The other type of ambitransitive verb is exemplified by English eat. Here the subject of the intransitive clause (I ate) corresponds to the subject of the transitive (I ate a sandwich). This type will be referred to as S.of.I=O.of.T. Moving back to Manambu ralı(na), Examples (3) and (4) illustrate that this is the S.of.I=O.of.T type.

(3) Intransitive

[wun-a kwar]SUBJ (kap) ralı
POSS.1SG.F grass.skirt (by.itself) untie.3SG.F.NPST
‘My grass skirt comes/has come untied (by itself)’

(4) Transitive

[wun-a kwar]OBJ ralı-wun
POSS.1SG.F grass.skirt untie-1SG.F.NPST
‘I untied/have untied my grass skirt’

The prefix kay- derives a transitive verb from an intransitive verb. The intransitive verb porkı(na)- ‘be torn’ is shown in Example (5).
In Example (6), the verb 'be torn' is transitivized.

(6) Causativized transitive

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{PROX.DEM.sg.f} & \text{bad} & \text{child} \\
\text{POSS.1SG.F} & \text{put-UP-clothes} & \text{kay}\text{-tear(INTR).3SG.F.NPST} \\
\end{array}
\]

'This naughty girl (fully) tore my clothing'

This prefix kay- occurs with about a hundred verbs referring to states and processes (the most frequently used ones are listed in Aikhenvald 2008: 407). Derived transitive verbs containing kay- are strictly transitive.

The prefix kay- can also occur on several dozen ambitransitive and transitive verbs, all of them verbs of manipulation. With these verbs, it does not function as a causative (see Textbox LP10.4) and does not increase valency. Instead, its effects are as follows:

1. It converts any ambitransitive verb into a strictly transitive one. That is, the transitivity status of the verb is affected. However, kay- does not make such a verb into a causative, i.e., it does not introduce a new “causer.”
2. The semantic effect of kay- on transitive and ambitransitive verbs implies an increase in manipulative effort, intentionality, volitionality, and control on the part of the subject (A), and may also imply that the object (O) is multiple or large.
Consider the ambitransitive verb *rali(na)*-'untie, be untied,' which was introduced in Examples (3) and (4). In (7), the same verb is used with the prefix *kay-*.

The ropes are tangled, and untying them requires special effort:

(7) yañ ko-di yañ a-rali a-kay-rali
    come.SEQ PROX.DEM-PL rope IMP-untie IMP-MANIP-untie
    ‘Come and untie these ropes; untie them with special effort’ (since they are entangled)

This causative-manipulative polysemy is rather uncommon cross-linguistically. It is reminiscent of similar patterns described for Oceanic languages (Harrison 1982; Dixon 1988), which are also spoken in the Pacific region.

Verbal inflectional categories cover three persons, two genders (distinguished in second and third person), three numbers, and a variety of aspects. Among the various modal meanings are the “frustrative” (‘intend but fail to do’), the purposive ‘intend’ and the desiderative ‘want,’ as shown in Example (8).

(8) wun kami: ko-kar
    1SG fish consume-DESIDERATIVE
    ‘I want to eat fish’

A verb in the declarative mood can cross-reference the person, number, and gender of the subject. If a clause contains a constituent that is more topical than the subject, this constituent can also be cross-referenced alongside the subject. This will be discussed more fully below.

As we will see, past and non-past tenses are fused with person-marking suffixes, while future and irrealis are marked with suffixes. Most verbs take directional markers, specifying whether the movement follows an upward, a downward, or an outward direction, toward the speaker or away from them. A verbal root can be reduplicated to express intensive, continuous, or repeated action.

Verbs are productively combined with each other to specify the manner or a sequence of actions, such as *væs-piñ-ə* (step-slip) ‘slip stepping,’ or *gəp-wula-* (run-go. inside) ‘go inside by running.’ Some verbs have taken on grammatical meanings (i.e., have become grammaticalized; see Chapter 13) when combined with other verbs: the verb *təp-* ‘to be closed’ acquired the meaning of ‘do for the last time,’ as in *və-təp-* (see-be-closed) ‘see for the last time,’ and the verb *wa-* ‘say, speak’ developed into a causative marker, as in *yaga-* ‘be scared,’ *wa-yaga-* ‘make (someone) scared.’

10.2.5 Adjectives

Manambu has two subclasses of adjectives. Both are closed classes that do not admit new members. One subclass consists of just three members: *kwasa* ‘small,’ *numa* ‘big,’ and *yara* ‘fine.’ These adjectives always agree with the noun in gender and in number, e.g., *numa-du* *du* (big-SG.M man) ‘big man,’ *numa təkw* (big SG.F) ‘big woman,’ *numa-di*
The other subclass has about sixteen members, covering meanings of value (e.g., **vyakətə** ‘good’, **kuprapə** ‘bad’), size (e.g., **gorqə** ‘tiny,’ **smi** ‘long’), and color (e.g., **gla** ‘black,’ **wama** ‘white,’ **niqi** ‘red’). These adjectives do not agree with the noun they modify but have a single form, regardless of the gender and number of the noun, e.g., **vyakətə du** ‘good man,’ **vyakətə təkw** ‘good woman.’ Many of these adjectives are transparently related to nouns: for instance, **niqi** ‘red’ is also the word for blood, and **wama** ‘white’ is derived from **wam** ‘white cockatoo’ (a type of bird).

### 10.2.6 Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns are a closed word class (the full set is given in Table LP10.3). The categories of number (singular, dual, plural), gender (masculine, feminine), and person (first, second, third) are all distinguished. However, they are not maximally distinguished; there are not distinct forms for every logically possible combination of these three categories. We can analyze the distribution of categories as follows:

- **Number** is distinguished in all forms. One can always tell from the pronoun whether the referent is singular, dual, or plural.
- **Gender** is only distinguished in the second- and third-person singular. Gender distinctions are neutralized (i.e., not made) in the first-person singular and in all nonsingular (dual and plural) categories.
- **Three persons** are distinguished in the singular and plural. The distinction between second person and third person is neutralized in the dual; i.e., there is only one marker for all non-first persons in the dual.

### 10.2.7 Demonstratives

Demonstratives are the most complex of the closed word classes. They distinguish five directions – up, down, across, outwards, and inside or away from the Sepik River – in addition to three additional degrees of distance.

The three demonstrative stems are **ka-** ‘this, close to speaker,’ **wa-** ‘this, close to hearer,’ and **a-** ‘that, far from both speaker and hearer.’ Each of these stems can
combine with one of five directional suffixes, wur ‘up, upstream,’ -d(a) ‘down, downstream,’ -aki ‘across,’ -aku ‘outwards’ or -wula ‘inside, away from the Sepik River towards the shore.’ For example, a Manambu speaker refers to stars, which are far up in the sky, as kǝ-d-i-a-wur kugar (PROX.DEM-PL-LINKER-UP-star) ‘those stars (up),’ and a village close to the speaker away from the Sepik River is referred to as kǝ-d-a-wula tǝp (PROX.DEM-M-LINKER-AWAY.FROM.RIVER-village) ‘this village away from the Sepik River.’

10.2.8 Clause combining and switch reference

Similar to many other languages of New Guinea, Manambu has extensive clause-chaining, a construction that creates chains of clauses by using a special set of suffixes on the verbs in the non-final clauses in the chain, then fully inflecting the verb in the final clause of the chain. In addition, and again like many other languages of the area, Manambu has a complex system of switch-reference, whereby the clause-chaining suffixes indicate whether the subject of the clause is the same as, or different from, that of the main clause. Example (9) illustrates a chain of two clauses. The suffix -ku on the verb of the first clause is a clause-chaining suffix. In addition to forming the chain, it marks two other grammatical meanings: that the action of the non-main clause is completed, and that its subject is the same as that of the main clause. Note that in same-subject chained clauses (e.g., the first clause of (9)), the person of the subject is not marked on the verb. Clause boundaries are indicated with square brackets.

(9) [a-di jǝb kur-ku] [ata yǝd] DIST.DEM-PL design make-COMPL.SS then go.3SG.M.PST

‘Having made those designs, he went off’

In contrast, in Example (10) the subjects of the chained clause and the main clause are different. The predicate of the non-main clause contains a person marker (-dǝ-, which indicates third-person masculine singular) followed by the clause-chaining suffix -k, which indicates both that the action of the chained clause is completed, and that we are to expect a different subject from the following main clause.

**TEXTBOX LP10.5 THE CULTURAL RELEVANCE OF COUNTING**

The Manambu language has a decimal counting system. Proficient speakers can count up to a hundred using Manambu terms. In traditional times, counting was an established cultural practice: male prowess was estimated on the basis of how many enemies a man had killed, and so it was customary to count the victims, as a matter of competition. Nowadays, Tok Pisin and English numbers are used more and more often, especially in counting money.

**Glossary**

- **COMPL**: completed action
- **SS**: same subject (switch reference)
- **DS**: different subject (switch reference)
The verb always occurs at the very end of a chained clause. In a main clause, the order is more flexible: the verb-final principle is a tendency rather than a steadfast rule.

10.3 Grammatical relations

Understanding grammatical relations in Manambu is pivotal for getting a grasp of its structure. Grammatical relations are marked in two ways: by case-marking on nouns, and by agreement on verbs. Although these are common ways of indicating grammatical relations cross-linguistically, the way these are realized in Manambu are typologically unusual.

10.3.1 Verb agreement

Verbs in Manambu can be inflected by two sets of suffixes that mark the person, gender, and number of arguments. Verbs can be ‘fully’ or ‘partially’ inflected. Fully inflected verbs agree with (or “cross-reference”) two arguments: the subject and any other argument (except the copula complement or quoted speech) that is more topical than the subject, i.e., the topic. (See Textbox 10.6 for a discussion of topicality.) Partially inflected verbs agree with only the subject; an example of this is the non-final verb in (10). Some verbs are uninflected and don’t take person agreement at all; we saw this with the desiderative verb in (8) and the non-final same-subject verb in (9).

If there is no constituent more topical than the subject and the verb is a fully inflected verb, the subject (A or S) is cross-referenced as the topic. This is done with one of the set of ‘topic’ agreement suffixes (glossed TOP). The full paradigm of suffixes that cross-reference the most topical argument is given in Table LP10.4.

TEXTBOX LP10.6 TOPICALITY

Many languages are like Manambu in having grammatical means – such as morphemes or separate constructions – that indicate whether or not the people or entities referred to by arguments are important to the surrounding discourse. If they are, they are likely to come up repeatedly. Such referents are considered to be topical in the discourse. In English the passive construction is used when the patient is more topical than the agent; the passive allows the topic to be the subject of the clause. For example, in the sentence Elizabeth was hit by a car, Elizabeth (the patient) is the topic, and is thus put into subject position via the passive construction. We expect subsequent conversation to revolve around Elizabeth (“Oh no! Is she okay?”) and not the car. (Therefore “Oh no! I hope the car is alright!” would be a distinctly odd reply.)
Consider Example (11). The ambitransitive verb ‘know’ is used intransitively, i.e., without any object. The subject, ‘he,’ is cross-referenced on the verb as the most topical argument.

(11) bu lakuna-d
already know-3SG.M.TOP.NPST
‘He knows (already); he is knowledgeable’

This same verb can be used transitively, with an object. In (12) the object is not topical, that is, it is not something that is likely to be further discussed in the discourse. Since the subject is the most topical argument in the clause, again it is the only participant cross-referenced on the verb.

(12) [kɔmajɔ] lakuna-d
PROX.DEM.SG.F story know-3SG.M.TOP.NPST
‘He knows/understands this story’

A non-subject argument can also be cross-referenced by these suffixes if it is more topical than the subject. This is true regardless of the verb’s transitivity. In Example (13) the object is topical (the conversation revolves around the road) and is thus indexed by a suffix from the paradigm in Table LP10.4, the same set used for the subject in (11) and (12). The subject is also cross-referenced on the verb, but now with a different suffix from an independent set, given in Table LP10.5. Thus the verb in (13) agrees with two arguments: the topic and the subject.
Arguments other than the subject or object can also be topics and cross-referenced on the verb. In (14) it is the addressee that is marked, since it the topic.

In (15) the topical argument refers to a time (note that ‘time’ is usually feminine, being conceived of as round and cyclic; hence the feminine form of the demonstrative ‘that’ is used).

The choice between cross-referencing one or two arguments on a Manambu verb is largely independent of the verb’s transitivity: both transitive and intransitive verbs can cross-reference one or two arguments.

The Manambu system of verb agreement is typologically unusual in two ways. First, the number of cross-referenced arguments (one of which has to be the subject) depends on the discourse properties of the non-subject constituent, rather than on the transitivity, or other lexical properties, of the verb.

Secondly, the subject can be cross-referenced by one of two sets of suffixes, as opposed to just one. But note that the subject is the only argument that must be

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TABLE LP10.5 Cross-referencing paradigm for non-topical subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON/GENDER</th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>DU</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NPST</td>
<td>PST</td>
<td>NPST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.F/M</td>
<td>-tua-</td>
<td>-tw</td>
<td>-ta-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.F</td>
<td>-onma-</td>
<td>-onm-</td>
<td>-bra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.M</td>
<td>-muna-</td>
<td>-muna-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.F</td>
<td>-la-</td>
<td>-l</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.M</td>
<td>-da-</td>
<td>-d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(13) a-∂- [yo∂-m]o 3SG.F DIST.DEM-SG.M road(M)-ACC/LOC
laku-la-d know-3SG.F.SBJ.NPST-3SG.M.TOP.NPST
‘She knows the road (fully)’

Arguments other than the subject or object can also be topics and cross-referenced on the verb. In (14) it is the addressee that is marked, since it the topic.

(14) ∂k∂-k ata wa-tua-d 3SG.M-DAT thus say-1SG.SBJ.PST-3SG.M.TOP.PST
‘I said to him thus’

In (15) the topical argument refers to a time (note that ‘time’ is usually feminine, being conceived of as round and cyclic; hence the feminine form of the demonstrative ‘that’ is used).

(15) [∂∂]TEMPORAL ya-∂- 3DIST.DEM.SG.F time come-3SG.M.SBJ.PST-3SG.F.TOP.PST
‘He came at that time’
marked on the verb in one way or the other. Thus, the verbal agreement system constitutes evidence for the grammatical relation of subject, despite the fact that two sets of suffixes are involved. The system also provides evidence for the grammatical relation of topic in Manambu, as the topic is the argument cross-referenced by the paradigm in Table LP10.4.

10.3.2 Case-marking on nouns, and grammatical relations

In addition to verb agreement, grammatical relations are also indicated by case-marking, with subjects being marked one way, and non-subjects being marked differently. Nouns distinguish nine case forms:

i. Subjects do not take any case-markers.

ii. Objects can either not be case-marked or take the case-marker \(-Vm\). This pattern will be discussed further below.

iii. Oblique arguments take case-markers based upon their semantics. The oblique cases are as follows.

a. locative case (‘at’, ‘to’) \(-Vm\)

b. dative-aversive (‘to’, ‘for fear of’) \(-Vk\)

c. comitative (‘with’ as in ‘do something with someone’) \(-wa\)

d. terminative (‘up to a point’) \(-Vb\)

e. transportative (‘via transport’) \(-say, -sap\)

f. allative-instrumental (‘to’ or ‘with (an instrument)’) \(-Vr\)

g. substitutive ‘instead of’ \(-vey\)

The object of a transitive verb takes no case-marker if it is either indefinite, or non-referential and non-topical, or not completely involved in the activity. An example is in (12) above: ‘this story’ is not topical and thus is not case-marked. (Similar examples are ‘grass skirt’ in (3), ‘clothing’ in (6), and ‘ropes’ in (7)). See Textbox LP10.7 for a comparison of this type of case-marking pattern to that found in Spanish.

**TEXTBOX LP10.7 DIFFERENTIAL OBJECT MARKING IN SPANISH**

This type of pattern, where objects take a case-marker only if they have certain semantic or discourse properties, is common cross-linguistically. The technical name for this in linguistics is differential object marking. An example of another language with differential object marking is Spanish. In the sentence *Esta mañana he visto la hermana de María* ‘this morning I saw Maria’s sister,’ the object is obligatorily marked with the accusative preposition a. Contrast this with *Esta mañana he visto la nueva iglesia* ‘this morning I saw the new church,’ where the object is unmarked, due to the semantic and discourse properties of the noun phrase (i.e., it is inanimate and non-topical). The factors that determine the presence or absence of a with objects in Spanish are famously subtle, and there is a large literature on this subject.
In contrast, the noun ‘male children’ in (16) is the topic of a stretch of discourse, and so it acquires case-marking, in addition to being cross-referenced on the verb.

(16) a kə-la-di
DIST.DEM.SG.F eat-3SG.F.SBJ.PST-3PL.TOP.PST
kərapə wapi dua-ñan-ugw-am
bad bird man-child-PL-ACC

‘That bad bird ate up the male children (we are talking about)’

That is, agreement on verbs and case-marking on nouns follow different principles.

- Verb agreement: subjects are always cross-referenced; non-subjects are only cross-referenced if they are topical.
- Case-marking: subjects are never case-marked; objects are only case-marked if definite, referential, and/or topical. Non-core arguments are case-marked in accordance with their semantic role.

10.4 Conclusions

We have seen that the grammatical structures of Manambu are typologically interesting and unique. However, even though the grammar may seem exotic, the pieces are familiar and the language follows the same core principles on which other grammatical systems are based. This universality across languages attests to the common cognitive make-up of our species, and the common needs of speakers in daily communication within societal structures. We’ve also seen hints at the relationship between the Manambu language and culture, as the language simultaneously reflects and transmits the Manambu worldview.
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

This is a comprehensive study of the Manambu language.

These two books are detailed ethnographic studies of the Manambu and their culture.

This article discusses the history and expansion of the Ndu-speaking people.

EXERCISES

1. The discussion of the Manambu personal pronouns provided an analysis of the distribution of the grammatical categories person, gender, and number, stating where they are marked and where they are neutralized. Construct a similar paradigm for English personal pronouns. Analyze the categories and write a similar set of statements that accurately characterizes the distribution of grammatical categories. Then provide a set of statements on how the English and Manambu paradigms are similar and how they are different.

2. Review the discussion on the semantic basis of gender assignment and the effect of gender on lexical meanings. Given this discussion, consider each pair of expressions below. Of the two meanings given, which is likely to be signaled by the masculine form of the expression, and which is likely to be signaled by the feminine form?
Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald

3. The following pairs of clauses each exemplify ambitransitive verbs in Manambu. For each pair, determine whether the verb is of the S.of.I=O.of.T type (where the subject of the intransitive clause corresponds to the object of the transitive) or the S.of.I=S.of.T type (where the subject of the intransitive corresponds to the subject of the transitive). See section 10.2.4 of this profile to review this distinction.

a. kaykwa- ‘spill’ (transitive); ‘capsize’ (intransitive)
   b. rali- ‘untie’ (transitive); ‘come untied’ (intransitive)
   c. laku- ‘know’ (transitive); ‘be knowing’ (intransitive)
   d. kaja- ‘move (something) apart’ (transitive); ‘disperse; move apart’ (intransitive)
   e. sakku- ‘forget something’ (transitive); ‘be forgotten’ (intransitive)
   f. j-s- ‘chew something’ (transitive); ‘chew’ (intransitive)

4. Each of the Manambu sentences below consists of multiple clauses in a clause chain. For the purposes of this exercise, verbs with clause-chaining morphology are in boldface, although the suffixes have not been separated and glossed. Based on the meanings of each example, state which of the following clause-chaining forms would be most appropriate for each boldfaced verb:
Sequential action, same subject
Sequential action, different subject
Simultaneous action, same subject
Simultaneous action, different subject

5. In Example (4d) above, the expression translated as ‘drown’ in English is actually a clause chain gu ko-ku kiya-dsk, literally ‘consumed water and died.’ The verb ko-ku has the suffix for sequential, same-subject clause chains. This implies a conceptualization of drowning as involving events in sequence (drink water, then die). Does this match your conceptualization of drowning? Why or why not? You may want to consider how drowning is expressed in English or other languages that you speak in addressing this. (For a larger project, look up expressions for drowning in other languages and compare.)

6. In each of the examples below, the final inflection of the verb has been replaced by a series of Xs. Using the paradigms in Tables LP10.4 and LP10.5, provide the appropriate cross-referencing suffix or suffixes for each of the following Manambu sentences. In each case, the topical argument is given in bold.

**Answer:** tua-d (SG.SBJ-3SG.M.TOP)

a. kami: do ko-kwa-XXXX
   fish 3SG.M eat-PST.HABITUAL-
   ‘He used to eat fish.’

b. yig:n vs-kona-XXXX
   nightmare see-FUT-
   ‘She will have (lit. see) a nightmare.’
c. na:gw
   vya-wuto-tu-XXXX
   sago.palm   hit-break-many-
   ‘She broke all the (branches) of the sago palms.’

d. ǝgam
   ku-sada-k-XXXX
   bag.SG.F.LOC   put-down-FUT-
   ‘She will put (the purse) inside the bag.’

e. brokɔdɔ
   ǝaj    kɔda     wa-XXXX
   3DU.OBL  paternal.uncle  PROX.DEM  say-
   ‘This paternal uncle said to them.’