Verb classes in Lakurumau (New Ireland): transitivity pairs

Lidia Federica Mazzitelli
Universität zu Köln
APLL 11 – University of Leiden
13-15 June 2019
Lakurumau

Lakurumau is a still undescribed Austronesian language (Western Oceanic, Meso-Melanesian), spoken in the village Lakurumau, in the New Ireland Province of Papua New Guinea
Lakurumau

Lakurumau is not (yet) a recognised language.

In Northern New Ireland, a network of six languages – Lavongai (Tungak), Tiang, Tigak, Kara, Lakurumau and Nalik – is found, which can be described as a language chain (Ross 1988)

Lakurumau has been previously mentioned as a transitional language or a transitional dialect between the two neighbouring languages Kara and Nalik; in actuality, the best definition of Lakurumau is as a distinct member of the Lavongai-Nalik language chain
Lakurumau

- Lakurumau is nowadays spoken by *ca. 800 people* in Lakurumau and some others who live in other villages of the province; intermarriages with speakers of other languages are very frequent

- The language is **endangered** → *Tok Pisin* is the dominant language of the community; most children still have a very good passive knowledge of Lakurumau, but only some have also a good active competence
Lakurumau

• My documentation and description project (2017-2019): an audio-video corpus, a lexicon and a grammar sketch. [https://elar.soas.ac.uk/Collection/MPI1093372](https://elar.soas.ac.uk/Collection/MPI1093372)

• Three field trips (October – December 2017; May – August 2018; April – May 2019)

• 21h recorded; 17.5h transcribed and partially translated; morphosyntactic glossing in ongoing.

• 30 adult speakers (age 19 to 80); 3 children (aged 11, 13 and 16)

• Spontaneous conversations, procedural texts, narratives, stimuli-based narratives
Lakurumau

- Basic features:
  - a basic SVO word order, with left-dislocated topical objects;
  - four numbers: singular, dual, trial/paucal, plural. Dual and trial marking in VP involves optional proclitics and enclitics:

(1) \( A \ f u \ boi \ u \ (o) \ vangan(=aai) \)

\(\text{ART DU pig SM.3NGS(SM.3DU) eat(=DU)}\)

‘The two pigs eat’
Lakurumau

 › VP structure:
   Full pronoun or subject marker – (TAM markers) – (valency markers) - ROOT – (valency markers)
   – (number markers (Du/Trial))

(2) a.  \textbf{Ne} vuna vangan boi
    1SG HAB eat.INTR pig
    ‘I always eat pig’

b.  \textbf{Ga} daa zop fa-maat a boi aa \textit{nanga} ulai lo flu
    SM.1SG.IRR IRR hit CAUS-die ART pig and SM.1SG.R come LOC house
    ‘I will kill a pig and come back home’
Valency and transitivity

Margetts (1999) for Saliba

Valency is a property of the root (abstract lexical entity), while transitivity is a property of the inflected verb, ie. the verb stem (concrete instantiation of the root) with its pronominal subject and/or object affix

(3) Saliba

Ye-hai-ya-ko
3SG-get-3SG.O-PERF
‘He got it already’ (Margetts 1999: 93)
Valency and transitivity

VP structure: **Free pronoun and/or subject marker – (TAM) – STEM – (TR)**

Subject markers can be omitted in the 1. and 2. person if a free pronoun a present and there are no object affixes

(4) *A zalawaan akamaam u vuna vazu-i, u vuna vazu-i*

art z. this sm.3nsg hab plant-tr, s.3nsg hab plant-tr

‘They use to plant the zalawaan (a leaf), they always plant (it)’ (lox052)

Often, the inflected verb coincides with the stem: no subject, TAM or transitivity markers.

(5) *No xus naan*

fp.2sg tell fp.3sg

‘You told her’ (lox039)
Valency and transitivity

Types of stems (semantically bivalent roots; no valency-changing morphology as causatives or reciprocals)

Transitive: simplex transitive stem; intransitive stem + TR –i; stem in –in
zop ‘hit.TR’; vazu-i ‘plant’; raxaam-in ‘see’

Intransitive: simplex intransitive stems; stems in –aai
sop ‘help.INTR’; vaazu ‘plant. INTR’; raxaam-aai ‘look at’

Labile: simplex labile stems
galong ‘break a coconut’
Valency and transitivity

Three types of clauses:

(1) With overt object
(2) With incorporated object
(3) With implicit object

(I do not consider ditransitive clauses here)
Valency and transitivity

(1) With overt object

(6) Ne zop fa-maat a boi
1SG hit CAUS-die ART pig
‘I killed the pig’

Only **transitive** or **labile** stems can appear in these clauses
Valency and transitivity

(2) With incorporated object: The object is undetermined, non-specific and non-referential; it cannot be modified; all affixes follow the object NP and no elements can intervene between the verb and the object.

(7) $U$ vangan boi=raan
    SM.3NSG eat pig=TRIAL
    ‘The tree of them ate pig’

(8) A yot boi=an
    art catch pig=NMLZ
    ‘The capture of pigs’ (lox213)

Only **intransitive** or **labile** stems can appear in these clauses.
Valency and transitivity

(3) With implicit object

(9) *Pe di yaan*  
so.that SM.1PL.INCL eat  
‘(Why are you cooking the shells?) For us to eat’ (lox131)

(10) *Nanga ru-tun pana furalik sa-gu*  
SM.1SG RED-cook for children POSS-1SG  
‘I cook for my children’ (lox151)

Usually, **transitive** and **labile** stems are used where the object is retrievable (8.) and **intransitive** and **labile** stems when it is implicit (9.)
Valency and transitivity

In Lakurumau, all verbal modifiers must be marked for transitivity:

(11) a. *No vuna vangan fadi bul-aai*
   1SG HAB eat.INTR banana always-INTR
   ‘You always eat bananas’ (lox106)

b. *Mo a revin ka buxura ka vala i-yaan bulin a boi...*
   if ART woman SM.3SG pregnant SM.3SG go.on RED-eat.TR always-TR ART pig
   ‘If a pregnant woman goes on eating pig...‘ (lox148)
## Verb classes in Lakurumau

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Intransitive clauses (with incorporated object)</th>
<th>Transitive clause (with overt object)</th>
<th>Morphological process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class I.</td>
<td><em>galong</em></td>
<td><em>galong</em></td>
<td>No change (labile roots)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class II.</td>
<td><em>kaabang</em> [ˈkabəŋ]</td>
<td><em>xabong</em> [ɣəˈboŋ]</td>
<td>Phonetic alternations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class III.</td>
<td><em>vaazu</em></td>
<td><em>vazu-i</em></td>
<td><em>-i</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class IV.</td>
<td><em>raxaam-aai</em></td>
<td><em>raxaam-in</em></td>
<td><em>-in/-aai</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Class I.

The biggest class per number of verbs – **labile roots**


The verbs of the first group also have a reduplicated form, which is always intransitive: *yot* – *yoyot* ‘catch’. The verbs of the second group cannot undergo reduplication

No clear criteria for the subdivision
Class II.

Class II. verbs distinguish their transitive and intransitive form by phonetic processes – so far, I have found 15 verbs in this class:


- **Lenition**: sop [sɔp] INTR – zop [zɔp] TR ‘hit’
- **Stress**: kaabang ['kaːbəŋ] INTR - xabong [ɣə'boŋ] TR ‘help’
- **Vowel alternations**: kayas INTR – xayos TR ‘peel’
Class II.

**Lenition**: inter-vocalic spirantization that affects all unvoiced consonants

\[
\begin{align*}
[k] & \rightarrow [\gamma] \\
[t] & \rightarrow [r] \\
[p] & \rightarrow [v]/[\beta] \\
[s] & \rightarrow [z] \\
[f] & \rightarrow [v]
\end{align*}
\]

*Ne waan* ‘I go’ vs. *Maam paan* ‘We go’

Even if, *de facto*, /\gamma/, /v/, /z/ and /r/ almost always occur as allophones of /k/, /f/, /s/ and /t/, they have morphological distinctive value, cf. the pair *kon* [kɔn] ‘spoil’ / *xon* [γɔn] ‘paddle’. In Class IV. verbs, when there are lenition alternations, the **intransitive** form always has a **non-leniate** consonant - also in intervocalic contexts.
Class II.

Stress
The intransitive form usually has stress on the first syllable, while transitive forms have stress on the last one

**INTR** TR


_faazak_ [ˈfəzək] – _vazaak_ [ˈvəˌzək] ‘carry on shoulders’

Vowel alternations

**INTR** TR


Class II.

Possible cause: effect of the loss of POC final vowels and/or object clitics

Displacement of stress: on the former penultimate, now last syllable:

- Vowel quality changes due to stress displacement

- The lenition in transitive forms might be linked to the weakening of the syllable due to the stress shift: *faàzak / vazaàk*, 'carry'. However, the lenition process is also active in monosyllabic verbs: *sop/zop*, 'hit'; it is also present in languages where the object suffixes are still present (as Kara)

Other languages of the Lavongai/Nalik chain testify to the lenition differentiation between transitive and intransitive forms too (Kara, Nalik, Lavongai)
All stems ending in vowel belong in Class III:


Stems ending in *–i* can be either classified as Class I or Class II:

*roi – roi (*roii)* ‘touch, hold’; *woi – woi (*woii)* ‘spear’

The transitivizer *–i* is also found in secondary transitives and adverbs:

*waxo ‘fall’ – va.caus-paxo-i ‘make fall’*

*mara ‘first’ (in intransitive clauses) – mara-i ‘first’ (in transitive clauses)*
Class IV.

The verbs in this class do not have a simplex stem, only a suffixed one: TR –in (-en)( < POC applicative *-ani; Ross un. ms.) vs. INTR -aai ( < POC *-aki(ni))

raxaam-in ‘see’ – raxaam-aai ‘look at’ *raxaam
rox-in – rox-aai ‘have’ *rox

Exception: woxin – woxaai ‘do; work’ → wok from Tok Pisin wok ‘work; do’


Adverbs
bulin – bulaai ‘always’; marasaaxen – marasaxaa ‘very much’; fexaabunin – fexabunaai ‘together’
Class IV.

POC *-ani (Ross un. ms.)
- Applicative
- Reflects in some languages of the Admiralties group, Meso-Melanesian (New Ireland) and North New Guinea linkages, as well as in Daakaka (North Vanuatu linkage)

In Lakurumau: -in can also attach to simplex intransitive stems with a causative or applicative function (with no counterpart in –aaï)

*vaigotaai

\[ \text{vaaigot ‘be ready’ } \rightarrow \text{vaaigot-in ‘prepare’} \]

marala ‘be angry’: (12) a. \textit{Ne marala pa-num} 1sg be.angry obl-2sg b. \textit{Ne maral-en no 1sg be.angry-appl 2sg} ‘I am angry with you’
All Lavongai/Nalik languages have reflexes of *-ani, which is the general transitivizer (causative and applicative), and reflexes of **de-transitivizing** *-aki.

In other languages instead reflexes of *-ani and *-aki(ni) co-exist as valency-increasing devices.

In the other Lavongai/Nalik languages, -(a)ai can apparently attach to simplex stems to create intransitives (with antipassive function), with no need to have a counterpart in - *ani.

Kara  
fun ‘hide.TR’ – fun-ai ‘hide.INTR’ (Dryer 2013)
Verb classes in Lakurumau – isolated examples

- Suppletion
  
  *yaan* ‘eat.TR’ – *vangan* ‘eat.INTR’

- Only intransitive/transitive stems (semantically bivalent roots)
  
  *pik* ‘pick firewood.INTR’
  *lis* ‘bring.TR’
  *zalen* ‘push through.TR’
Verb classes in Lakurumau - conclusions

Semantically bivalent roots in Lakurumau form four stem classes:

Class I. (labile) is a quite common class in Oceanic languages;

Class II. (TR with \(-i\)) and Class IV. \((-in/-aai\)) display known Oceanic morphology.

Class II. (phonetic alternations) is instead language (or better, language group) specific; it might have emerged as a consequence of stress shifts.
Verb classes in Lakurumau - conclusions

Properties of the verb classes

Class I. (labile stems)  
No clear semantic or phonetic properties

Class II. (–i)  
No clear semantic properties; vowel stems

Class III. (phonetic alternations)  
No clear semantic or phonetic properties

Class IV. (-in /-aai)  
All verbs take Themes (not Patients)  
*find, see, throw, ask, hang, hear*
  → due to the semantics of *-ani*

Further research: the relation between *-ani* and *-aki(ni) – both in their co-existence as valency-increasing devices and as as valency-increasing vs. valency-decreasing devices
Ka doxo marasaxaa! Thank you!

Thank you to all people in Lakurumau, especially:
Dinah Gurumang,
Roberta Sarameli,
Tolingare Tokelau,
Dangui Mosly
References


