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(an Austronesian language of West Central Papua)

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TOWARDS A LEXICOGRAMMAR OF MEKEO

(AN AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGE OF
WEST CENTRAL PAPUA)

A. A. Jones



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Canberra

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PREFACE

This book represents the first comprehensive sketch of the grammar of Mekeo, an Austronesian language of Papua New Guinea. The work is based on my evaluation and preliminary analysis of a finite corpus of data and includes much incidental discussion of comparative, typological and theoretical issues.

Mekeo represents the furthest geographical limit of a series of Austronesian migrations that gradually progressed westward along the south-east coast of Papua New Guinea. There are four distinct varieties of Mekeo – four phonological dialects, with some lexical differences and much graduated variation in discourse-pragmatic usage. The present description of Mekeo grammar is thus *pandialectal*.

From wide-ranging comparisons with the work of other scholars on typologically similar but genetically unrelated languages (Chichewa, Warlpiri, Lakota) I formed hypotheses about Mekeo grammar which I have tested against my data. The results often provide fresh insights into the grammar of an Oceanic language that may prove to be not untypical of other such languages.

Mekeo is a predominantly head-marking language. This feature is shared by some other Oceanic languages, as well as by most of the Non Austronesian Papuan languages of Papua New Guinea – facts of no little importance for historical linguistics. Largely because of this feature, plus the combination of head-marking with verb-final word order, and the free, or pragmatic ordering of all preverbal elements, I argue that Mekeo is characterised by the absence of a governing relation between the verb and its nominal arguments, and a unilateral syntactic dependency of the noun on the verb. The verb on the other hand ‘depends on’ the nouns for the denotational meaning of its incorporated pronominal arguments – a unilateral semantic dependency. In later chapters of this work I explore the consequences of what can be referred to as asymmetric double bondedness. Mekeo grammar is analysed as operating simultaneously on a number of different levels of structure, following Halliday’s description of English.

On the level of discourse I argue that Mekeo is a weakly cohesive language, in the sense that reference tracking is covert, or relies entirely on shared background knowledge and expectation norms.

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In the course of writing the thesis which forms the basis of this book I received unstinting support and advice from Tom Dutton and Darrell Tryon of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University in Canberra. The present volume has, furthermore, benefited immensely from exhaustive commentaries by my three examiners: Johanna Nichols, Frank Lichtenberk and John Lynch. Naturally I am alone responsible for any errors of fact or interpretation that remain.

I began this work in 1983, as the recipient of an ANU scholarship. However, it was only in 1986 (that is, after my scholarship had expired) that I felt ready to produce a systematic account of Mekeo grammar or, to be more precise, lexicogrammar. The chief impetus was a paper on head-marking and dependent-marking languages by Johanna Nichols, which appeared in that year.

I originally wrote this account while teaching full-time (in the TESOL field) in Sydney. However, I made frequent trips to Canberra, and Andrew Pawley, head of the Department of Linguistics in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, has always been very generous with his facilities. Indeed all of his staff have given me invaluable assistance from time to time. I am particularly indebted to Lois Carrington for her editorial help on several separate occasions, not to mention her scrupulous revisions of my bibliography, and to Theo Baumann for his generous help with the maps.

I owe a special debt to all my friends and helpers in the field, a debt that will never be repaid in kind. Hence it gives me great pleasure to be able to preface this first published account of their language and culture with their names:

At Inauauni I was made welcome and assisted materially as well as intellectually by Bona Paeke, Charles Iko, Bona Aisa, Peter Kokopo, Adrian, Mariano, Victor, Johnny Oaeke, John Evi, his brother-in-law Joe, Bernard, Robert, Stephen, Lavalava John, Auau and Anikina. A'iso, Andrew and Nicholas were occasional visitors who contributed important background information about their clans.

I owe an immeasurable debt to Paul Aongoa, my friend and mentor, together with his wife Mary, his eldest son Paul and his daughter Theresa, all of whom contributed in important ways to my academic and/or material needs. Paul was at that time in charge of the small medical centre at Akufa Station, where I was also frequently assisted by my good friend Simon Abala, and by Baki Bilolo, a war veteran, as well as by Mariano (across the river), Xavier, Camillo and Kango. Oa from Veifaa gave me a very useful text. School children like Camillus and Belo were frequent helpers and informants.

Clement Ame, Peter Keanga, Michael Biniemo and Joseph Ngope all helped to make me welcome at Ioi – Clement especially put in long hours on transcription and translation. Other friends, acquaintances and helpers at Ioi included Peter Keaeke, James Keanga, Michael

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At Urulao I was assisted by Peter and Willie, while at Okovae I was made welcome by Pastor Mangaivi, who took me into his house. I was there aided in my language work by his son Joseph, Stephen Biabu, Kore, Amini, Agabaea, and Pastor Berny Paul. I am indebted to Stephen's uncle Aukabai for important texts.

There were countless others without whose help and hospitality I could not have completed my research. I should not, however, forget the unique contribution of Alan Natachee, Mekeo poet and mystic, on the subject of certain abstruse genres of the language.

My work would, moreover, have been impossibly difficult without the hospitality shown me by the Roman Catholic priests at Veifaa, namely Fr J. Diaz, Fr X. Verges and Fr A. Boudaud (who kindly allowed me to use the priest's quarters in villages throughout the Mekeo area); Fr P. Didier on Yule Island and Fr P. Compte in Port Moresby; and Bishop Benedict To Varpin and Fr E. Duggan at Bereina.

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grammatical and lexical analyses, and the respect that they showed for their data, much of the complexity and subtlety of the language might have escaped me.

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THE TERMS OF THE GRAMMAR

- Actant** : A candidate for a role or function, which may be core or peripheral (oblique).
- Agent** : The obligatory controlling role implicated in every finite verb.
Always +Control and +Dynamism in Dik's (1978) terms.
- Base** : A root or stem acting as the 'base' for another word form.
- Bond** : A relation of unilateral dependency between structural functions.
I distinguish between syntactic (or functional) bonds and pragmatic (or referential) bonds. Both are unilateral, but they operate in opposing directions. Syntactic dependencies operate cataphorically while pragmatic dependencies operate anaphorically.
- Cataphor** : Any element functioning as a topic or as the focus of a verbal predication.
These may be roots or stems, nominal or verbal, and they may also be entire rankshifted predications, cataphorically defining the verbal functions indexed on the verb word.
- Coherence** : The plausibility and internal consistency of an unfolding scene with all its social and cultural implicatures.
- Cohesion** : The expression of co-reference and semantico-logical relations in discourse.
The realisation of textual unity.
- Core** : a) The verb word consisting of a lexical nucleus carrying an affix or affixes marking the presence of one or at most two core actants in core functions.
'Core' means 'obligatory' in this context.
b) The 'coda' of a complex predicate: what follows the focus. Often takes secondary stress, and then functions as a secondary focus.
- Focus** : The crux of the message, what is presented as new in an assertion.
May be co-extensive with the predicate (simple predicates) or may precede the verb word in a predicate (complex predicates).
- Function** : a) A use to which the systems of language are put by the speakers.
Major functions are called macrofunctions. Three universal macrofunctions are the experiential, the interpersonal and the textual.

b) A structural function: subject-of-verb, topic, predicate, oblique, etc.

Note that in Mekeo every free element has at least two functions, corresponding to two simultaneous levels of structure, syntactic and discourse-pragmatic.

Every finite verb has at least one bound function: subject-of-verb. It may also have a second bound function: object-of-verb.

- Juncture** : The grammatical conjunction of verbs in a single complex predication.
- Nuclear juncture is the conjoining of two or more verbal nuclei.
 - Core juncture is the conjoining of two or more predicational cores.
 - Peripheral juncture is the conjoining of two or more peripheries.
- Level** : Language structures different kinds of information, realised as different kinds of units, on several levels simultaneously. These are also called strata.
- All language has levels of realisation, or levels of surface structure. These are the phonological~graphological, the lexicogrammatical and the semantic.
- Layer** : Verbal predicates can be analysed into three lexicogrammatical layers.
- These are the nucleus (lexical), the core (grammatical) and the periphery (discourse-pragmatic).
- (Apart from these technical meanings, 'level' and 'layer' are used interchangeably.)
- Nominal** : Any root word that can function as a non-verbal topic or predicate.
- Noun** : Any lexical root or base functioning as a noun (i.e. non-verbally).
- Nucleus** : A root, or conjoined roots, functioning as the lexical head of a verb word.
- Object** : An optional function indexing the target of a transitive verb.
- Operator** : A grammatical category that can be realised at any point in a given layer.
- An operator may be realised in any of a number of different ways.
- Periphery** : The representation of a single scene – over time – in a language. This is an 'outer' layer of predicational structure comparable to the paragraph and with appropriate and exclusive grammatical operators.
- Predicate** : The final and the only obligatory element of a predication.
- What is asserted about some topic or topics.
- A simple predicate consists of a nominal root/stem or an intransitive verb.
 - A complex predicate consists of a non-verbal focus followed by a verb.
- Predication** : A nominal or verbal proposition with the illocutionary force of an assertion.
- Fully expressed predications decompose into a topic and a predicate.
- Process** : a) Any representation that implicates a temporal dimension (e.g. any finite verb).

- b) A kind of event which does not in the first instance implicate a human actant.
- Rank** : Position on a scale of constituency and illocutionary force.
The two topmost levels of the lexicogrammar commute.
- Rankshift** : Demotion from a higher to a lower rank.
This generally here means demotion from the rank of an assertion (i.e. a predication) to that of a name or noun (a nominal topic).
Rankshifted predications may then be embedded in other higher level predications.
- Relation** : An abstract structural link between a predicate and its core functions.
Relations thus bind subject and object markers to the verbal nucleus.
- Role** : The semantic specification for a verbal function.
Such as agent, causer, patient, etc., but also 'peripheral' for an oblique constituent (by definition not a function).
- Root** : A lexical morpheme that can take grammatical~derivational affixes.
- Scene** : The situation indexed by a verbally functioning base. The sum of the pragmatic indices and actants 'present' to a predication (a proposition) by virtue of our knowledge of the world. The scene exists in time.
A frame is an abstract schema corresponding to a scene.
(Note: Scenes and actants refer to facts about the world, not linguistic entities.)
- Stem** : A root or roots plus at least one grammatical~derivational affix.
- Subject** : The one obligatory function of every finite verb. Realises the one obligatory participant in every verbal process, which is semantically always an agent.
The subject is indexed by the prefix on the verb word.
- Topic** : a) That portion of a predication which precedes the predicate and which, in the unmarked case, is taken as given.
b) Any nominal (non-verbal) base that precedes the predicate. These may be definite or indefinite, specific or non-specific.
- Verb** : Any lexical root or base functioning as a finite verb.

SOME LITERARY AND TYPOGRAPHIC CONVENTIONS

- Italics** : Indicates discourse emphasis.
- Underlining** : Indicates an important word or expression, especially one used as a technical term of the grammar.

- Apostrophe : In East Mekeo examples this indicates a slight pause or hiatus between vowels, and sometimes a weak glottal catch (a *trace* of /ʔ/).
- Macron : Indicates vowel length, and especially compensatory length upon deletion of a third person singular suffix. Usually realised as less than two morae, often very slight.
- Grave accent : Indicates marked word stress (different from compensatory length).
- Comma : Indicates a pause, and a potential break in the pattern of pitch contours.

Diamorphemes are given in capitals and in italics, as for example *MIA* 'be, become'. These have predictable realisations in each dialect. No historical claims are made for these (see §1.2.3).

HISTORICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The names of the dialects are abbreviated in the text as follows:

North-West Mekeo	NWMek
West Mekeo	WMek
North Mekeo	NMek
East Mekeo	EMek

Dialectal variants are listed according to the linear schema:

NWMek > WMek > NMek > EMek

This order possibly reflects the historical stages of development of the sound systems (see §1.2.3 below), but no claim is made for this here. Note that when two (or more) dialectal forms are identical, only one token appears in the list.

PMek stands for Proto Mekeo, unsystematically reconstructed at various points of my thesis, and assumed to represent a stage of exclusively shared development before the break-up into dialects.

An stands for Austronesian

NAN is non-Austronesian

POc stands for Proto Oceanic

PCP is Proto Central Papuan

WCP refers to the West Central Papuan subfamily of the Central Papuan family of languages and KMR refers to a hypothetical proto language before the predecessors of Kuni, Mekeo and Roro had differentiated (this maybe identical with Proto WCP).

* represents a) a PMek form, or b) an attested form no longer in current use.

** represents an unacceptable form or utterance.

LANGUAGE-THEORETICAL ABBREVIATIONS

A	actor	INF	non-finite/deverbalising prefix
ACCT	account (benefactive)	INT	uncertainty marker (interrogative)
ADV	adversative	IO	indirect object
ASS	assertion/predication marker	IP	intonation pattern
AT	atelic suffix	IPF	progressive-imperfective aspect
B	buffer consonant	ITR	intransitive (verb)
CA	'causative' prefix	ITS	intensive
CJ	core juncture	LOC	locative verbal prefix
CND	(pre-)conditional conjunction	N	noun
CNJ	conjunction	NEG	negative operator
CNT	continuative aspect marker	NFUT	non-future tense
COM	comitative	NI	noun incorporation
CR	case relation; co-relative predication	NOM	nominalising affix
D	source: Desnoës dictionary	NP	nominal predication
DES	desiderative mood	O	object function
DF	definite	OBL	oblique function
DIS	discreditative particle	OBLG	obligative mood
DNT	deontic source	OM	object-marking suffix
DUR	durative aspect	P	predicate (underlying)
DX	deictic particle	PASS	passivising prefix
E	exclusive	PC	pitch contour dictionary
EMP	emphasis, emphatic	PF	perfect-perfective aspect
ESL	English as a second language	PL	plural
F	focus of new information	POSS	possessive preposition
FUT	future tense	PrV	pragmatic valency
GB	Government-binding theory	RC	relative clause
HYP	hypothetical mood	RD	partial reduplication
I	inclusive	REC	reciprocal
IC	intracausative-analytic process	RED	full reduplication
IDF	indefinite T are	RM	role marker
IF	illocutionary force	RRG	Role and reference grammar
IMP	imperative mood		

RTR	remote transitivity suffix	T ^M	main topic – classes of T are listed fully in §1.3.3.3
S	subject, subject function	TM	tense-mood marker
SFL	Systemic-functional linguistics	TR	transitive (verb)
SG	singular	US	utterance situation
SM	subject-marking prefix topic	V, Vb	verb
T, TOP	topic, topicalising function	V1, V2...	valency 1, valency 2...
TH	thematic consonant	VP	verb phrase
		XCL	exclamation

CHAPTER I

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE DESCRIPTION

1.1 AIMS AND SCOPE

This work represents an initial sketch of a synchronic pan-dialectal grammar of Mekeo, an Austronesian language of Papua New Guinea. There are four distinct regional dialects of Mekeo.

The dialects are primarily phonological variants with straightforward mapping rules that allow native speakers (and linguists) to transphonemicise from one dialect to another with a little practice. The sets of correspondences are set out in Tables 2 and 3 (§1.2.2.2). “Each contrasting set of correspondences defines a *diaphoneme*, and the system can be called a *diasystem*” (Anttila 1972:292).

No attempt is made here to give more than a working description of the phonological systems. A sub-phonemic (or redundant) transcription is used, which permits a consistent transcription of all four dialects and registers even sub-phonemic sound correspondences between these. Within the constraints of this system I record allophonic variation *within* each dialect.¹ Because of this, and also in order to avoid committing myself to any historical hypothesis, I have used a system of diamorphemes, which are printed in capital letters,² throughout the description. These often have distinct but predictable realisations in the different dialects.

There are some small lexical differences between the dialects. These are documented for two hundred ‘basic’ concepts in Appendix 2. The differences between the four dialects are, however, best described in terms of grammatical usage. The four dialects share a common grammatical system – a *diasystem* in Anttila’s terms – but some regional preferences for ‘minor patterns’ have emerged. Distinctive “fashions of speaking” (Whorf 1956)³ represent the cumulative effect of habitual usage. The concept of usage derives from the concept of markedness, in that ‘ordinary usage’ accounts for the choice of one of a set of alternatives

¹ Sub-phonemic variation in any one dialect is largely free, but free variants often correspond to separate phonemes in *other* dialects – albeit inconsistently. The transcription used sometimes represents a somewhat *standardised* version of the phonemic system, designed to preserve all such correspondences (see §1.2.2.2).

² That is, rather than as starred reconstructions representing Proto Mekeo morphemes.

³ Whorf elsewhere uses the term “configurative rapport”. Hasan (1984:33) has coined the expression “consistency of foregrounding”. She identifies this level of language as the bearer of hidden agendas or cultural ideologies (1986).

as being 'unmarked' in a given situation.⁴ Variation of this kind is frequently indicative of directions of change, and it is my aim here to identify such directions or tendencies as exist.

The grammar of Mekeo is exemplified for all four dialects. Any given grammatical point may be illustrated by a single example from a single arbitrarily⁵ chosen dialect or by several examples from a number of dialects. One reason for heterogeneous exemplification of this nature is to avoid assigning primacy of any kind to any one dialect. However, the main reason is to be able to compare *usage* across the dialects. Wherever the norms of usage differ between the dialects this is illustrated by an array of examples. This is done on all levels, from the closed word classes to the systems of discourse cohesion and coherence. In pursuing this methodology, the description is pitched at students of language change, as well as at those interested in synchronic variation. Moreover, in as much as the language being described has certain typological specifications, this involves examining how typological theory, and hence universal grammar, can handle evidence of change.

Examples are, in all but a few cases,⁶ taken from unelicited texts, which come from collections of authentic language documents (such as the entries in the Desnoës (1933) dictionary, which consist of the transcriptions of mission linguists) or utterances that I personally recorded in the form of field-notes or tapes (representing material collected over a period of years, from 1980 to 1986). Since examples do represent authentic language texts – examples of language in use – a certain amount of unnecessary cultural detail is inevitable. There is often, in consequence, occasion to comment upon aspects of the culture, or the culture-specific 'utterance situation' (US for short).

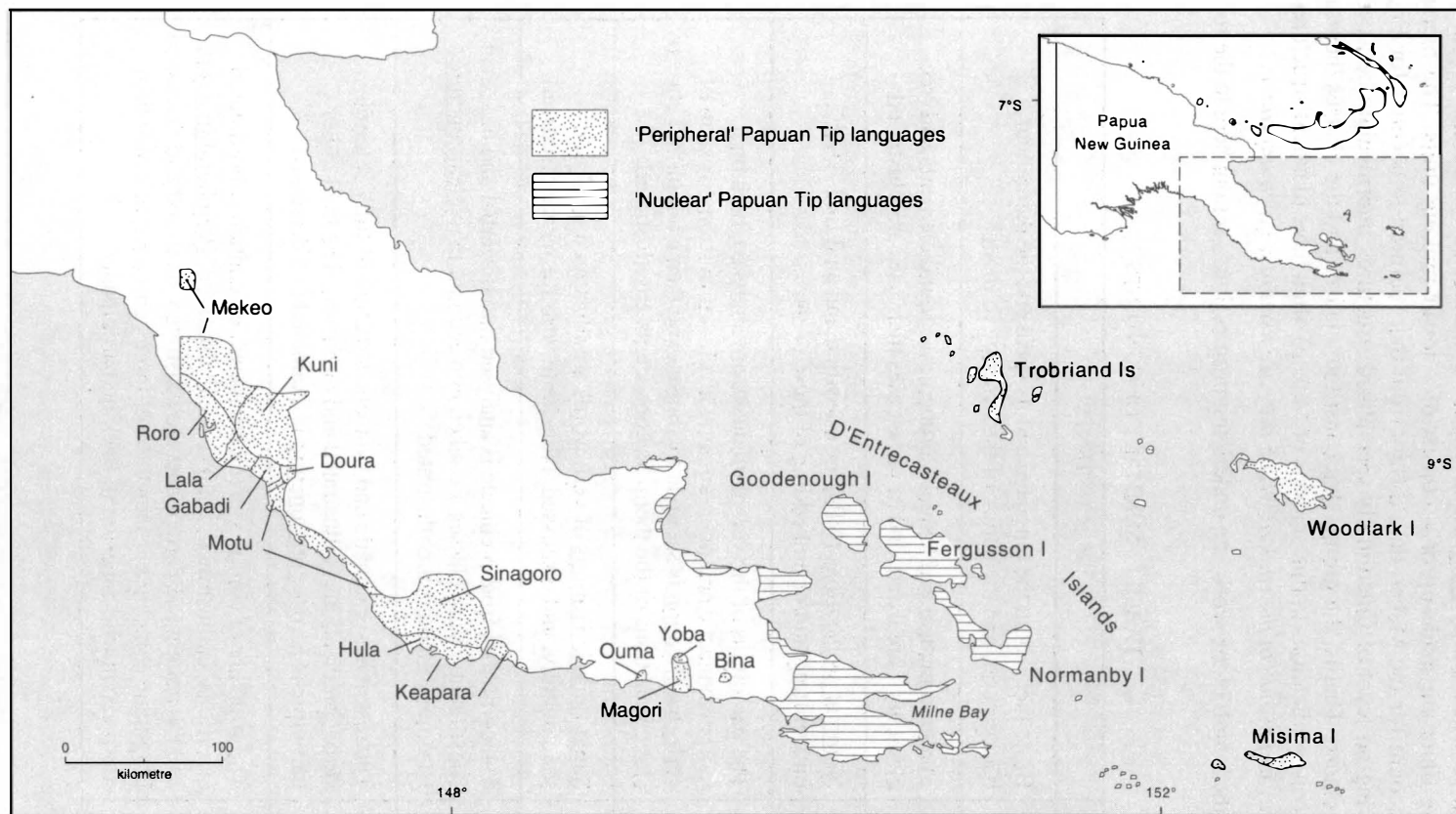
Although, as a part of the synchronic descriptive method, historical and reconstructive hypotheses are eschewed, I try to present the data in such a way as to facilitate the task of comparison and reconstruction when it is eventually undertaken. For example, the various morphological derivations of basic verbs are described in terms of the classes of root verbs that accept them, and those that do not, and the modulations of meaning produced for the former. This is done in order to facilitate comparison with established verb classes in other Oceanic languages. Wherever possible the categories of the grammar of Mekeo are related to categories previously recognised in grammars of other Oceanic languages, and to the problems of Oceanic and/or theoretical linguistics.

Mekeo is a verb-final language and a head-marking language, and the implications of head-marking for a head-final language are explored. A model combining anaphoric and grammatical dependence is proposed. These represent two abstract and weakly cohesive forces that operate in opposing directions. A basic tendency towards monovalence is identified, a tendency signalled by spurious object-marking. Mekeo on the whole functions as much to preserve face as to convey accurate information to the hearer. The hearer encodes his own interpretation of a message in parallel with the speaker. Here compatibility is more important than any exact correspondence, and an acceptably fuzzy version of reality is ultimately negotiated.

4 *Usage* is in origin a lexicographer's word, and one currently out of fashion, having yielded to 'use'. However, Pawley and Syder (1983) have advanced strong theoretical arguments for its reintroduction. A full examination of Mekeo usage would have to employ some of the special elicitation techniques developed by Quirk and his colleagues in collecting the data for the *Survey of English Usage* (see Quirk and Greenbaum 1970).

5 The availability of authentic, attested utterances sometimes constrains this choice.

6 Exceptions are short everyday expressions, or simple clauses employing paradigmatically predictable verb forms, and using attested roots/stems in that dialect.



MAP 1: LOCATIONS OF THE AUSTRONESIAN LANGUAGES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN PAPUA

Selected concepts of systemic-functional linguistics have been tested against the Mekeo data and have been found to be useful analytic tools. A core assumption is that the lexicogrammar is organised by rank. Rank implies a hierarchy of structural units, where higher-ranking units are made up of – consist of – lower-ranking units. The hierarchy required to account for the Mekeo data differs from that required to account for English grammar, having no level of functionally specialised structures intermediate between the word and the clause. That is, the groups that constitute clauses and the clauses themselves (what I refer to as predications in this analysis of Mekeo) often have identical structures and functions.⁷ *They differ only in the rank at which they are used in a given utterance.*

In view of the length of the work, the underlying progression is set out here in the form of a table:

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

	CONTENTS
Ch. 1	Basic facts about the language and its speakers; the theoretical background, and the nature of the descriptive model.
Ch. 2	The grammatical and lexical morphemes – bound elements and free elements – are listed, and in some cases their uses are illustrated.
Ch. 3	<u>Nominal predications</u> (NPs) are classified and analysed. The rankshifting and/or embedding of these is discussed.
Ch. 4	The paradigms of the verbal predicate are analysed, both on a morphosyntactic and on a semantic level. A provisional system of <u>verb classification</u> is set up at the outset, and then exemplified class by class. Functions of the thematic consonants are illustrated.
Ch. 5	<u>Same-rank derivations</u> of verb words are illustrated, analysed semantically, and discussed. Non-finite verb forms are discussed.
Ch. 6	The complex verbal predicate is analysed into its verbal and indexical constituents. Verb classes are taken into account in <u>nuclear juncture</u> . Discourse markers are illustrated.
Ch. 7	The discourse-pragmatic and syntactic structure of fully determined verbal predications is illustrated and discussed. The tracking of participants across <u>core juncture</u> is examined and discussed.
Ch. 8	The structure of complex predications, which contain subordinated assertions, is illustrated, analysed and discussed. <u>Peripheral juncture</u> and the tracking of participants are illustrated, analysed and discussed. Pragmatic coherence is seen to be of more central significance than morphosyntactic cohesion in tracking participants.

⁷

This is only to say that head constituents of endocentric units can often function like whole units.

The data are first introduced at the level of roots and morphemes. Note that many of these can function as discourse topics and predicates. Many of the same roots reappear as marked (nominal or verbal) predicates (Chapters 3 and 4). Finally, nominal and verbal elements are analysed together, combined into longer or shorter sentences, in terms of their reciprocal discourse-pragmatic functions and the syntactic constraints that apply to them. It will be seen that there is an underlying spiral progression, whereby the same (types of) items may reappear again and again at successively higher levels of the grammar.

1.2 NATURE AND LIMITS OF THE TEXT: WHAT IS MEKEO?

This analysis has grown out of my interactions with a Text – a delimited linguistic corpus regarded as an hypostatized datum – that is itself made up of texts.⁸ This concept of Text has been expounded by Halliday as follows:

A text, in the normal course of events, is not something that has a beginning and an ending. The exchange of meanings is a continuous process that is involved in all human interaction; it is not unstructured, but it is seamless, and all that one can observe is a kind of periodicity in which peaks of texture alternate with troughs – highly cohesive moments of relatively little continuity. The discreteness of a literary text is untypical of texts as a whole.

(Halliday 1978:195)

Texts are, initially, delimited and structured by entirely extralinguistic factors: society and culture, the ongoing situations of utterance. But they are further ‘determined’ by the methods and the vicissitudes of the collection process. Clearly, a linguist’s Text is limited: it is limited by some combination of the aforementioned circumstances.⁹ The only time that this would not be the case would be in the eventuality that the linguist was a native speaker and hence capable of generating, alone, an unlimited corpus of language.

All of the above factors have keenly felt implications for linguistic description and analysis, in that they have the capability of skewing one’s whole schema, one’s overall view of the systems of the language and the ‘meaning’ of these systems. This possibility can be guarded against only by a rigorous documentation of one’s sources, possible influences and procedures. This is the aim of the present section.

1.2.1 BACKGROUND OF THE DESCRIPTION

1.2.1.1 PREVIOUS DESCRIPTIONS

Beginning from the earliest days of contact (i.e. in 1886; see §1.2.2.1) and continuing right up until the time of the Second World War, missionary linguists of the Sacred Heart Mission¹⁰ made copious language notes and produced a number of short sketch grammars of

⁸ A “text” is “the basic unit of language in use”. Length is immaterial. Texts can be single utterances or connected passages of discourse, spoken or written. (See Halliday 1970b:143, 160 and, more particularly, 1978, §2).

⁹ Chomsky’s concept of ‘observational adequacy’ is not often invoked in the evaluation of grammars. Indeed its implications have rarely if ever been explored.

¹⁰ This is a Roman Catholic missionary order founded in the north of France in 1852. Missionaries from this order established a base on Yule Island in 1885 and received permission from the Administrator of Papua, William MacGregor, to work inland east of the Biaru River. The history of the order in Papua is given in *The Mustard Seed* (Delbos 1985).

the easternmost variety of Mekeo. This was the variety with which they first came into contact and the one they initially adopted for the purposes of education and proselytisation.

However, the administration, at the direct behest of Sir William MacGregor, was also bent on documenting native vernaculars, and F. Lawes, a government officer, published a vocabulary list of Mekeo in 1890 in the Annual Report for British New Guinea for 1889-90. Then, some years later, a vocabulary by Fr P. Bouellat was published in the Annual Report for 1900-01. Dr W.M. Strong, a government anthropologist, published an outline of Mekeo morphology, with some notes on syntax, in 1913-14.¹¹ Some time later the Sacred Heart missionaries produced two grammar sketches that are available on microfilm from the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, ANU, Canberra – a Mekeo Grammar written in French by Fr Généreux Norin (circa 1937; manuscript) and a Mekeo Grammar written in English by Fr Edward van Goethem (written in the 1920s according to Taylor; 16pp., typescript).

A considerably longer and more ambitious account of Mekeo grammar, written by Fr Hubert van Lamsweerde in French and dated 1940, is held by the New Guinea Collection, University of Papua New Guinea. This is in typescript and covers some 35 pages or so (and counting some very rough notes in longhand, perhaps 72). It presents a useful overview of all the closed systems of the grammar, and it includes model paradigms for the person-marking ‘verbal particles’, arranged according to a system of tenses and moods. This work seems to have been modelled on Fr E. Joindreau’s innovative Roro Grammar (1907/1968) which strove to be quite free of preconceptions based on European language models. Fr van Lamsweerde also had a Mekeo–English dictionary on cards, according to Taylor (1976).

The language notes of at least seven or eight different priests dating from the 1890s to the 1930s were combined by Fr Gustave Desnoës, in the late 1920s and early 1930s into an encyclopedic Mekeo–French dictionary which is replete with unelicited examples, often critical linguistic evaluations of these, socio-cultural commentaries, and which contains cross-references to cognates in related languages such as Roro, Kuni and Motu. Two major contributors were Fr Giuseppe Vitale (1866-1947) who spent 59 years in the diocese, chiefly among the Mekeo, and Fr Vincenzo Egidi (born 1875), the tireless genealogist of the Mekeo and of the neighbouring tribes (Mekeo, Roro, Kuni, etc.) from 1903 to 1911. Fr Desnoës finished his long compilation, to which he had added his own first-hand language data, in 1933 (by then in retirement, in Marseilles). The manuscript of Fr Desnoës was typed up at Veifaa by Fr van Lamsweerde who (while adding the fruits of his own linguistic observations) completed this task in 1942. The dictionary runs to 1,140 pages, not counting prefaces and appendices, and it is in two volumes. There are at the time of writing three bound copies of this dictionary in existence, one having been lost. It is available, thanks to the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, on microfilm.

Although the head words of this dictionary are in the eastern variety of the language that had by that time been definitively labelled ‘Mekeo’, these are accompanied in almost all cases by equivalents from ‘Amoamo’, a dialect spoken to the north. Another dialect mentioned by Desnoës was Inaukina. This is in fact a sub-dialect, or communalect, of West Mekeo. All these dialects were known collectively as ‘Bush Mekeo’ at that time (and their speakers were in fact called the ‘Bush Mekeo’).

¹¹ It was, it seems, based on materials provided by the Mission (Taylor 1976).

It was not until after the arrival of H.A. Brown of the London Missionary Society in Moru in 1938 that Kovio, another variety of Mekeo, received any serious attention. He studied this isolated inland language, which was quite unrelated to the Toaripi spoken in the coastal villages, with the aid of native pastors who spoke Toaripi and Motu (or Police Motu). He eventually acquired a working knowledge of it, and reduced it to writing. He subsequently produced a grammar, a dictionary, a school primer and a translation of the Gospel of St Mark into Kovio. All of these except for the primer were lost in a fire in 1947, when the mission house at Moru was completely destroyed. He has since retranslated the Gospel of St Mark (Brown n.d.¹), and while doing so he put together a sketch grammar (dated 1955, typescript, 8pp.) and a short (24pp.) Kovio-English Dictionary (Brown n.d.²). He has also translated a number of prayers and hymns into Kovio.

Brown had, as it happens, also translated the same prayers and hymns into Tati, which is the Toaripi name for the 'Bush Mekeo' of Inaukina and such other Mekeo villages as had contact with Toaripi speakers (e.g. Apangaipi/Kuipa). This was in fact another distinct variety of Mekeo that received scant attention from the missionaries of the Sacred Heart who continued to ignore its existence even after Fr Xavier Perrin arrived on the Akaifu River (probably in the late 1930s; see §1.2.2.1 below).

More recently, Andras Balint (1968) has published a study of Mekeo time expressions and attitudes to time.

1.2.1.2 CLASSIFICATION – GENETIC HYPOTHESES

Mekeo is, according to recent work by Ross (1988), a member of the West Central Papuan subfamily of the Central Papuan family of languages, which contains two other subfamilies (networks, chains) and which can be represented in a somewhat simplified form as follows:¹²

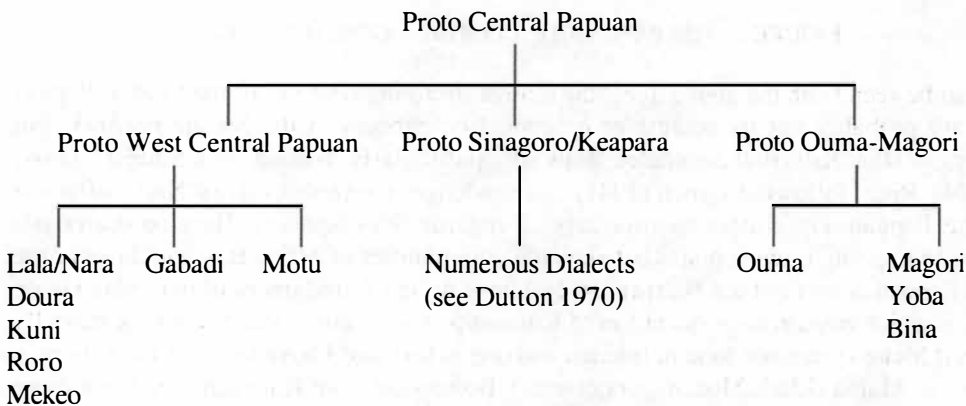


FIGURE 1: CENTRAL PAPUAN FAMILY – GENETIC TREE

The position of Gabadi within the western group is somewhat problematic, but otherwise the above classification is relatively uncontroversial, building as it does on much detailed work by Dutton (1970, 1971, 1973, 1976) and Pawley (1975).

¹² The reader is referred to the original for finer detail and discussion.

Mention should also be made here of Lynch's (1978b, 1980, 1983) important contributions to the study of the internal relationships of the Central Papuan family. Lynch (1978b) saw a language grouping he called Proto Motu-Western as a low level offshoot of Proto Magoric-Western. Above Proto Magoric-Western a branch called Proto Ouma-Western had split off from PCP at the same time as Proto Eastern. In later work, however, Lynch mapped and correlated *ordered sound changes* to derive a somewhat different family tree for the Central Papuan languages. Motu now represents a PCP-level isolate midway between the Western and Eastern subfamilies, as does Ouma midway between the Eastern and Magoric subfamilies. Both Mekeo and Gabadi are seen as having split off, very early on, from the Western subfamily. In short, these languages had begun their independent development at a time when Kuni, Roro, Lala and Doura were still all, at most, dialects of a single language.

The wider genetic relations of Mekeo have been established by Ross over many years of comparative study (see Ross 1983b, 1988). The Papuan Tip cluster is one of three clusters which Ross recognises in his Western Oceanic group, which includes all the Austronesian languages of the Papua New Guinea region.¹³ The internal relationships of this cluster can be shown as follows (after Ross 1988, Figure 6):

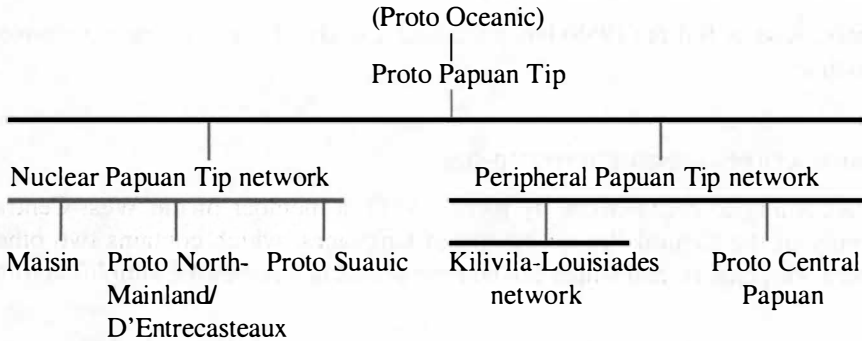


FIGURE 2: THE PAPUAN TIP CLUSTER – GENETIC TREE

As can be seen from the above tree, “the closest surviving relatives of the Central Papuan family are probably not its nearest geographical neighbours in the Suauc network, but members of the Kilivila/Louisiades network, particularly Nimoa and Sudest” (Ross 1988:194). Ross, following Lynch (1981), acknowledges the probability of NAN influence upon the Papuan Tip cluster (particularly as regards SOV syntax). He also draws our attention to ongoing trade contacts between the communities of Milne Bay and those of the Central Papuan coast (and see Bulmer 1982). I have myself found traces of two inland trade languages which contain large quantities of Kunimaipa vocabulary combined with a radically simplified Mekeo grammar (one in Imunga and one in Ioi), and I have heard of the existence of a third in Maipa (Mark Mosko, pers.comm.). Borrowing from Roro (and no doubt other languages) is an ongoing, intermittent process that is usually disguised by prompt transphonemicisation

¹³ Western Oceanic itself may be only ‘in some sense’ a genetic group (Ross 1988).

1.2.2 THE DISTRIBUTION OF MEKEO

1.2.2.1 VARIETIES OF MEKEO

Documentary sources make frequent references to tribes and sub-tribes, clans and villages, and sometimes comment upon the 'languages' spoken by these essentially sociological and geographical groupings. It was the mere order of discovery which ensured that the name 'Mekeo' – a Roro word – was given to all of the non-Roro-speaking inhabitants of the Saint Joseph River district immediately inland from the narrow strip of coastal Roro villages. Administrators and missionaries alike adopted this term. The missionaries of the Sacred Heart, having made their initial base on Yule Island (Tsiria), had begun by learning the local dialect of Roro, and it was Roro speakers who guided them on their first expeditions into the interior, describing all they met with in the Roro language and giving the Roro equivalents of non-Roro personal, clan and village names. The word *mekeo* originally referred to a kind of edible fern which formed a distinctive component of the Mekeo diet; cognate terms in the Mekeo language are *ve²e* or *veke* in the east and *ekco* in the west. The various forms of the word, and more particularly the traces of /m/~v/ alternation, suggest that it may have been a borrowing from Toaripi, one of the Eleman languages (Tom Dutton, pers.comm.).¹⁴

Luigi Maria D'Albertis, an Italian explorer, and the Reverend James Chalmers, of the London Missionary Society, both made fleeting visits to various Mekeo villages (D'Albertis reached Inawabui in 1875 while Chalmers held services in a number of villages in the early 1880s). But it was only after the Sacred Heart Mission had established a settlement on Yule Island in 1886 that sustained contact commenced.

The first expedition to the Mekeo was undertaken in November by two priests, Verjus and Couppé. Travelling overland by foot they reached Inawabui, where they were greeted enthusiastically and urged to stay. The next day they continued on to Eboa and Inawaia.

(Stephen 1974:67)

In May 1887 the same two priests made a second expedition, by canoe, contacting for the first time the villages of Inawae, Inawi, Aipeana and Veifaa, as well as revisiting Inawaia (see Map 3). They appear to have been greeted with the same enthusiasm everywhere they went, and the mission historian Dupeyrat (1935:124) describes their departure from Inawi as

¹⁴ The Roro (as well as Mekeo villages such as Inawi) seem to have come under the cultural influence of the Elema in the 19th century. Seligman notes that the Iokea (whom he considers to be eastern Elema) had a tradition of enmity with "the Ve'e" (a major Mekeo 'tribe' that includes the people of Rarai and surrounding villages), whom they regularly raided, often aided and accompanied by the Pioufa, another Mekeo 'tribe' based on Veifaa who were their allies in this (Seligman 1910:314). West Mekeo traditions that I have collected suggest, however, that these raids may have been the work of the Tati of Keharo under Ikaroa or Bobolewa, in other words the work of Mekeo-speakers and not the Elema (see Swadling et al. 1977 and Trompf 1977). The Eleman acquaintance with the Mekeo in general was an intimate and longstanding one. Brown (1973:284-285) reports that, according to local [Elema] traditions, speakers of Mekeo dialects, whom the Elema call Tati and Kovio, "were formerly spread over a much wider area. What is now Popo appears to have been one of their settlements when Chalmers first visited the Gulf. Being few in number they allied themselves with the Toaripi and became merged with them. Tapala was also originally a Tati village, but it is now grouped with Heatoare (Moveave). Even further to the west, in the area inland from Kaipi, there were once Tati settlements. Attacks by the Anga (Kukukuku) caused these Tati people to flee to the Kaipi or to Moveave for protection. Some people claim to be of Tati descent, but apart from this they are fully integrated with the Elema, and they retain no memory of the language of their ancestors". It has been shown, in fact, that their language does contain traces of Austronesian (though these could of course be the result of normal borrowing).

“une véritable marche triomphale”. From this time on the Mekeo began to seek out the missionaries on Yule Island, and from 1890 mission stations began to be founded in Mekeo villages. The first station was in Inawi and four years later, in 1894, Veifa’a station was founded by Fr Vitale and Brother Salvatore (known to the Mekeo as Kala).

William MacGregor, as the Administrator of Papua, visited a number of newly contacted Mekeo villages in May 1890 (accompanied by Bishop Verjus, who acted as his interpreter), and had this to say of Inawaia: “They have a near relationship with Roro, into which they intermarry, and *many of them understand the Roro language, from which their own is different*” (Despatch No.60; my emphasis). Missionaries and patrol officers were soon compiling short or long word lists of both these languages. As regards Mekeo, the mission linguists noticed the existence of relatively minor local differences between certain villages and groups of villages in the Mekeo-speaking area; these were thought to line up with a major tribal division between the Pioufa and the Ve’e (which latter divides up, on geographical grounds, into Northern Ve’e and Southern Ve’e, the result of a remembered southward migration). However, while there may initially have been some truth in this, language notes made during this period suggest that variation was rather village-based. For instance the village of Inawabui (Southern Ve’e) stood somewhat apart lexically, as did the village of Pepeo (Northern Ve’e). All the villages contacted at this time lay south and west of the great swamplands and along the course of the Angapunge/Angabanga River (the Saint Joseph) which soon became a crucial part of one of the main routes from the coast into the mountains, for missionaries and administrators alike. The aforementioned swamps initially blocked contact with the inhabitants of many small villages to the west.

The second really distinct variety of Mekeo to be documented was at first considered to be an unrelated *language*: Kовio.¹⁵ This was again a consequence of the direction from which it was first encountered and its geographical separation from the ‘central’ Mekeo (as they soon came to be called). Kовio was at that time spoken throughout the whole bend of the Lakekamu River and down almost to the coast; it is nowadays confined to two villages on the west bank of the bend of the river. This is very close to the foothills of the Owen Stanley Range where Kamea (or Kapau), an unrelated Papuan language, is spoken. Contact between the two groups has become frequent, but this is a recent phenomenon. Further up the river Kunimaipa, also a Papuan language, is spoken, but contact is rare. The word *kovio* – whatever its provenance – was and still is used by other Mekeo-speakers to signify a) the mountains to their north, b) the inhabitants of these mountains in a very general way,¹⁶ and

¹⁵ Note that Sidney Ray’s ‘Kovio’ refers to the dialects of Kunimaipa spoken around the southern slopes of Mount Yule (Kunimaipa is a non-Austronesian language and belongs to the Goilalan language family along with Fuyuge, Tauade, Biangai and Weri). In the earliest days of research and exploration ‘Kovio’ was used to refer to some or all of the Kunimaipa dialects spoken on the southern slopes of Mount Yule, in the valleys of the Inaua River (to the east) and on the Upper Akaifu River (to the west). Other names applied to such dialects were: Olu, Lopiko, Oru-Lopiko, Kwoifa; Kuepa, Kuefa, Goiefu (see Strong 1912, and Ray 1912). The term Olu is still used by the Mekeo of Ioi to refer to a small group of NAN-speakers living to their north-east; Olu, Lopiko and Kwoifa were almost certainly varieties of the Hariri dialect of Kunimaipa (see Geary and Coleman n.d.). Kuefa, etc., would belong to the Helevi dialect (Geary and Coleman n.d.). The dialects are nowadays usually referred to by place names; e.g. Karuama, after the village of that name, but in fact signifying the dialect spoken throughout the entire Tapala valley.

¹⁶ The other general term for the inhabitants of the mountains is *baŋa-baŋa, paŋa-paŋa*.

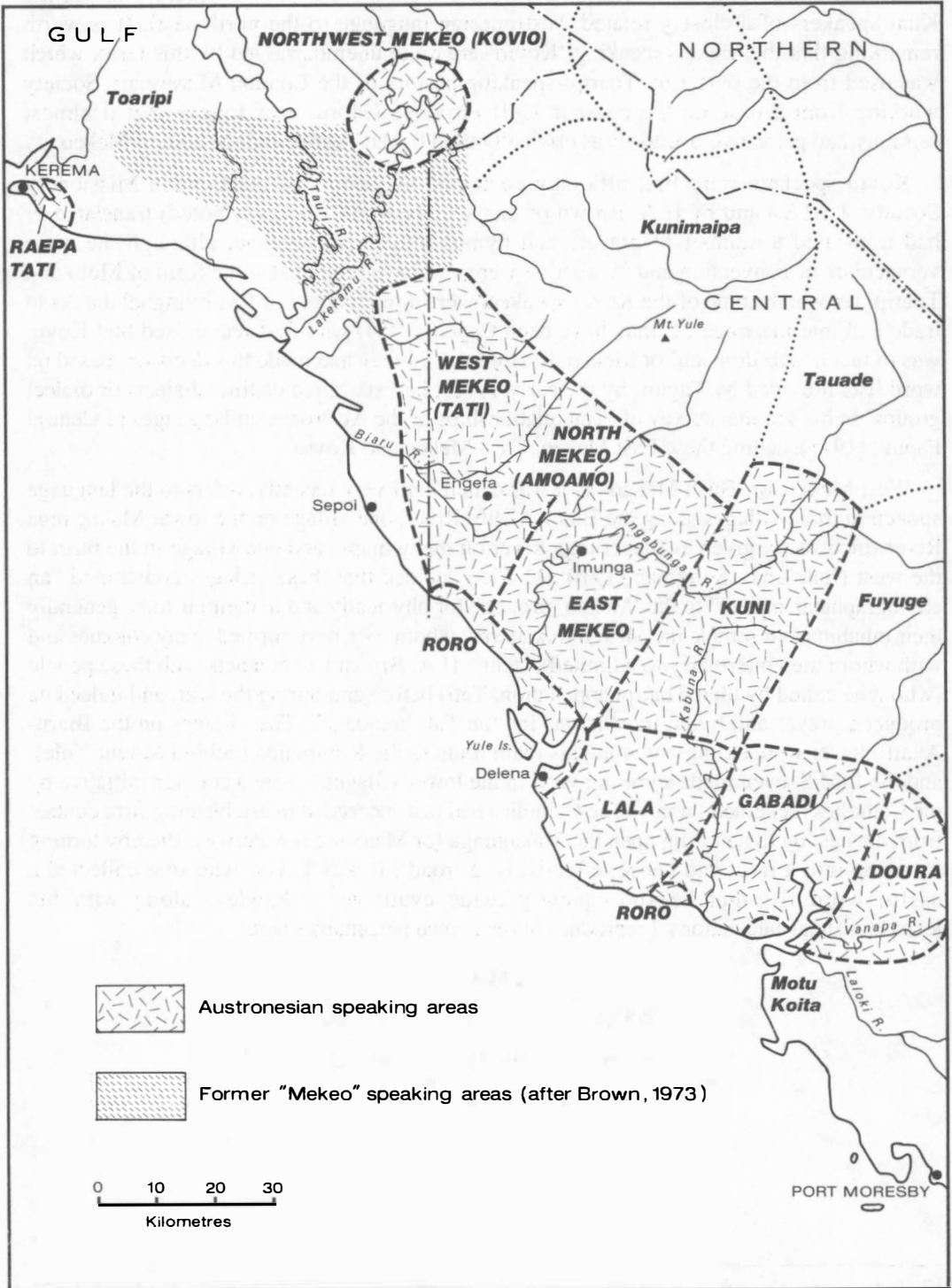
c) the stone axes that they traditionally obtained from these people, directly or via the Kuni (speakers of a closely related Austronesian language to the north-east). It is worth remarking that the Mekeo-speaking 'Kovio' are quite unembarrassed by this term, which was used from the outset by Toaripi-speaking pastors of the London Missionary Society working from a base on the coast in Gulf Province (Moru, near Iokea). Yet it almost certainly had pejorative overtones as originally used by the Toaripi and the eastern Mekeo.

Kovio speakers were first officially contacted by pastors of the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.) and by H.A. Brown of that society who (as already noted) translated or had translated a number of prayers and hymns into their language, although the main vernaculars of conversion and instruction were and have remained some form of Motu and Toaripi (in which some of the Kovio speakers were already more or less bilingual thanks to trade and intermarriage). It may have been Capell (1954) who first recognised that Kovio was in fact a 'sub-division' of Mekeo. In any case, Pawley had made this decision, based on word lists provided by Taylor, by the early 1970s; he lists 'three distinct dialects or dialect groups' in his seminal survey of 'The relationships of the Austronesian languages of Central Papua' (1975), calling these East Mekeo, West Mekeo and Kovio.

West Mekeo, or 'Bush Mekeo' as it was called until very recently, refers to the language spoken in three villages along the Biarua-Akaifu River, one village on the lower Makagunga River (incorrectly given as Inaufunga River on many maps) and one village in the bush to the west (Inaukina). Seligman (1910:311-312) decided that these villages constituted "an ethnographical annexe" to the 'Mekeo' proper, "for physically and in their customs generally their inhabitants resemble the Mekeo folk among whom they have formed many colonies and with whom they intermarry to a limited extent". H.A. Brown had contacts with these people (whom he called by their Toaripi appellation: Tati) before and during the war, and indeed he produced prayer and hymn translations in "the Tati language". The villages on the Biarua-Akaifu River were strung out along his main route to the Kunimaipa (behind Mount Yule); and the L.M.S. even made some converts in the lower villages before a counter-initiative by the Catholics reclaimed them.¹⁷ The Catholics had just succeeded in establishing firm contact from the east by dynamiting open the Makagunga (or Maakunga) waterway, thereby turning a swamp into a river and hence, effectively, a 'road'. It was Taylor who first collected a useful word list that he subsequently made available to Pawley, along with his lexicostatistical calculations. I reproduce his estimated percentages here:

	EMek	
WMek	77-79	WMek
Kovio	65-71	69-75

¹⁷ Brown had a rest house at Ameiaga at one stage and had made converts both there and in Kekebilo (now Piunga; the site of Kekebilo was further down-river). Fr X. Perrin (died 1978 in Marseille) was the main Catholic evangelist of the West Mekeo. He reconverted Brown's converts, who subsequently barred the river to the Protestants, including Eleman traders bringing bottle-glass and sago in exchange for canoe logs. He last visited Akufa in 1959.



MAP 2: LOCATIONS OF THE WEST CENTRAL PAPUAN GROUP OF LANGUAGES

My attention was drawn to the fact that a fourth variety of Mekeo existed while I was teaching at the Provincial High School outside Bereina in 1980-81, and I was able to collect a lexically and phonologically distinctive word list. This language variety had long been acknowledged by the missionaries, who called it Amoamo (and who at first imagined it to closely resemble or even to *include* the Biaru-Akaifu language).¹⁸ The ‘Amoamo tribe’ was mentioned by MacGregor who had to make them a warning visit in June 1890. He found them living in a new village (i.e. without coconut trees) north of the Makagunga River and on the far side of a swamp called Kaopu. He noted “about a score of houses, fit to contain as many families” and stated further: “In all respects they resemble the neighbouring tribes of the Upper St Joseph [i.e., the Mekeo], and speak the same language *with some local differences*” (Despatch No.69, my emphasis). As already noted, Desnoës provided Amoamo equivalents for almost all Mekeo head-words. My own lists accord well with these, allowing for the intervening passage of time.

Besides the major social-geographical varieties just described, there are at least two phonological sub-varieties. Each of these is spoken in just one village, and they thus constitute communalects. They are spoken in Papangongo (*Babaŋoŋo*) and Engefa (*Eŋeŋeŋa*). I describe them briefly in §1.2.2.3 below.

Pawley, as I have noted above, accepted the existence of *three* distinct ‘dialects’ of Mekeo. He did not, however, enter into any discussion of the vexed dialect-versus-language question. His lexicostatistical percentages do not in themselves appear to justify treating his ‘dialects’ as such.¹⁹ I shall briefly outline, in the next section, my own reasons for considering my *four* varieties of Mekeo as dialects of the one language rather than as separate languages. It will be argued that this is by no means an obvious step, even though my cognation counts and hence my percentages are considerably higher than Taylor’s.

1.2.2.2 PHONOLOGICAL DIALECTS OF MEKEO

It is possible to define four phonologically distinct varieties of Mekeo, that are further distinct in terms of their basic though not their more general vocabulary, and which for reasons to be clarified below I shall call dialects. I shall refer to them, following Pawley’s lead, in revised geographical terms. I shall call them, respectively, East Mekeo (instead of the administratively and anthropologically sanctioned ‘Central Mekeo’),²⁰ West Mekeo (rather than ‘Bush Mekeo’, or the administration’s ‘North Mekeo’), North Mekeo (a term which I confine to the dialect of the three ‘Amoamo’ villages) and North-West Mekeo (or Kivio). These terms will be abbreviated, respectively, to EMek, WMek, NMek and NWMek.

¹⁸ Note that a village called Amoamo lies close to Veifaa and people there speak the eastern variety of Mekeo. Van Lamsweerde (1940, ‘Introduction’) divided the ‘Mekeo’ into five “*tribus*” (Pioufa, Ve’e, Amoamo, Inaukina and Kuipa) and two “*peuplades*” (Inaufanga and Lapeka) and he implied that these all spoke one language with local differences. The five ‘tribes’ exist, in some sense, still; they speak three dialects between them. His Inaufanga – “250? âmes perdues dans les marécages au NW” – are the Kivio. The Lapeka are, as we now know, Kuni, who speak a dialect of that language convergent with East Mekeo.

¹⁹ Wurm and Laycock (1961) suggest that dialect status is linked to mutual intelligibility which, in the New Guinea area, does not seem to occur when the percentage of shared cognates in basic vocabulary falls below 81%.

²⁰ Mosko, for example, speaks of the Bush Mekeo (= my WMek + NMek) and the Central Mekeo (= my EMek). See Mosko (1985:16).

The four phonological systems represented are not only distinct but are, systems, internally consistent. They are also much reduced, in comparison with the reconstructed systems of Proto Central Papuan and Proto Oceanic (see Ross 1988), as a result of phonological attrition over time (see §1.2.3).

They all retain the five-vowel system of Proto Oceanic, viz.

<i>i</i>	<i>u</i>
<i>e</i>	<i>o</i>
<i>a</i>	

Their consonantal inventories consist of not more than eight phonemes (see Appendix 1 for a fuller analysis) and, in the case of two varieties, only seven.²¹ I now present these four different consonantal systems, together with a) a non-contrastive variant of the velar stop and b) one very distinctive consonantal intrusion for each system – except that of NWMek – which I have here underlined. The non-contrastive variant is [t] in all dialects and has restricted use (e.g., in ‘modern’ Mekeo, in borrowings from English, in baby talk, etc.), but it also *tends to* occur spontaneously before a high front vowel. It shares this tendency with the palatal variants of the velar stops (see Appendix 1B). I have put this consonant in round brackets.²²

I present the four systems in a number of different formats, once purely as phonological systems, independent of one another, then twice again, arranged by correspondences. This is to facilitate the transphonemicisation by the reader of in-text examples, a language skill quickly picked up by native speakers when confronted with a closely related language or dialect and one which linguists can with small effort emulate.

TABLE 2: CONSONANT SYSTEMS OF THE FOUR DIALECTS

NWMek:	<i>β</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>w</i> (<i>o</i>)	<i>m</i>	<i>y/e</i>	WMek:	<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>(t)</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>ŋ</i>
	<i>p</i>	<i>(t)</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>ŋ</i>			<i>p</i>	<i>(t)</i>	<i>k</i>							
EMek:	<i>p</i>	<i>(t)</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>ʔ/∅</i>	<i>l</i>	NMek:	<i>b</i>	<i>(t)</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>ŋ</i>		
	<i>f</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>ŋ</i>				<i>v</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>ŋ</i>							

²¹ Rotokas, with its 6 consonantal phonemes, is usually taken to represent the lowest end of the range for consonant systems generally. However, among the Austronesian languages, the Hawaiian system with its eight consonants is usually considered to be very spare.

²² The sound system of Mekeo is changing gradually in a number of ways, under the influence of massive borrowing from English. The velar stops are for instance being palatalised. This happened initially before high front vowels (e.g. English ‘tea’ was borrowed in the east as *ki*, which then went to [tʃi]) but now occurs in many other environments as well, and almost invariably in borrowings (thus *kopu* ‘soap’, is now universally *tsopu*). Such ‘free’ variation is described in Appendix 1B.

The letters above represent phonemes, i.e. ideal forms. There is a good deal of allophonic variation in the realisation of most of these phonemes, and the in-text examples preserve the variants as recorded. See Appendix 1B for details of the allophones.

The /w/ in NWMek represents a weak variety of [w] pronounced with spread lips, freely intervarying with a true vowel [o]. It is worth noting that these systems, as they stand, resemble the most basic of the Papuan consonantal systems (e.g. Fore).

TABLE 3: CONSONANT CORRESPONDENCES(1)

NWMek:				WMek:		
<i>b</i>		<i>g</i>		<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>g</i>
<i>p</i>	(<i>t</i>)	<i>k</i>		<i>p</i>	(<i>t</i>)	<i>k</i>
<i>w</i> (<i>o</i>)				<i>w</i>		
<i>m</i>		<i>ŋ</i>		<i>m</i>		<i>ŋ</i>
	<i>y/e</i>				<i>l</i>	
EMek:				NMek:		
<i>p</i>	(<i>t</i>)	<i>k</i>	?/∅	<i>b</i>	(<i>t</i>)	<i>g</i>
<i>f</i>	<u><i>s</i></u>			<i>v</i>	<u><i>z</i></u>	
<i>m</i>		<i>ŋ</i>		<i>m</i>		<i>ŋ</i>
	<i>l</i>				<i>l</i>	

The actual correspondences can probably be more usefully displayed as follows:

TABLE 4: CONSONANT CORRESPONDENCES(2)

NWMek:	<i>β</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>ŋ</i>	<i>y[e]</i>
WMek:	<i>b</i>	<u><i>p</i></u>	<u><i>w</i></u>	<u><i>g</i></u>	<u><i>k</i></u>	<i>m</i>	<i>ŋ</i>	<i>l</i>
NMek:	<i>b</i>	<i>v[w]</i>		<i>g [k]</i>		<i>m</i>	<i>ŋ</i>	<i>l</i>
EMek:	<i>p</i>	<i>f</i>		<i>k</i>	?/∅	<i>m</i>	<i>ŋ</i>	<i>l</i>

The convergence of NMek with EMek is evident in the range of acceptable variation for certain phonemes in the NMek system. The typical NMek /b/ with delayed voice onset often approximates EMek /p/. NMek /g/ fluctuates between [g] and [k], often reflecting the underlying correspondences, but not consistently. Again, NMek /v/ can be realised as [f] under the influence presumably of EMek /f/, or as [w] when corresponding to WMek /w/. But informants do not adhere to these 'guidelines' consistently enough, nor can they distinguish between the sounds reliably enough, to justify the recognition of separate phonemes.

I have alphabetised the four dialects for non-specialist use, employing all of the symbols contained in Table 3 except β (which I assimilate to v) and η (which I write as ng). To these I add the English alphabetic symbols for the three intrusive consonants: d , z and s . I also add t to transcribe both the special register of baby talk and the ‘exotic’ stop found in certain words, not all borrowed. And I use j to represent the affrication of WMek / g / and intrusive \underline{d} before [i]. Affrication of a stop in the same environment in NMek and in EMek is written ts . The English alphabet can be thus adapted with little fuss to provide the Mekeo with a writing system that obeys the rules they learn in school for English and which can also cope with all the sounds, phonemic and sub-phonemic, of their four dialects. The twenty letters needed are:

a, b, d, e, f, g, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, s, t, u, v, w, z

There are two separate mission alphabets in use at present. One was designed for EMek and uses g for / η /. The other was designed by Brown for NWMek (his ‘Kovio’) and WMek (his ‘Tati’). The latter uses z for / η /. The first was unsuitable for WMek and NMek which need g for their / g /. Note that they are accustomed to giving it this value from an early age, from their English studies in school. However, there is a good deal of confusion and idiosyncratic writing systems abound, as WMek and NMek school children are still taught the EMek writing system (where g stands for / η /) by their teachers in primary school, who themselves have often been educated in the larger EMek villages.

The intrusive consonants are fairly strictly conditioned and appear to be relatively recent phenomena.²³ They nowadays occur in virtually all lexical environments that fulfil the phonological condition: li_a (e.g. WMek *ida*, NMek *iza*, EMek *isa* ‘he, she, they’, for now rarely heard **ia*).²⁴ Certain lexical environments in certain dialects seem still to resist the intrusion. WMek *aibaia* ‘is not’ only rarely goes to ***aibaida* (one does, however, hear NMek *aibaiza* quite frequently).

In EMek the third person singular perfective object marker, which is traditionally *-ia* (< *-i-a*, -PF-3SG) nowadays usually contains the intrusive [s], giving *-isa* (< *-i-s-a*, -PF-B-3SG). This is especially the case after verbal roots ending in *-a* (e.g. *e-kapa-isa* ‘s/he did it’). This form has replaced the now largely archaic form with *-ia* (***e-kapa-ia*). In this position I label the intrusive consonant ‘B’, for ‘buffer consonant’. In WMek intrusion does not occur in this grammatical environment (cf. *e-gabaia* ‘s/he did it’), though in NMek one does hear *e-gaba-iza*.

In EMek we very often get an intrusive [s] in the environment: li_o (e.g. *oiso* ‘three’, for now archaic *oio*, and *-iso*, second person singular object marker, for archaic *-io*). Intrusion in this environment is lagging behind EMek elsewhere, but it does occur in some common

²³ The intrusion of [s] in EMek is an historical phenomenon that was in fact fiercely resisted by the Catholic missionaries (who incidentally documented its progress). Its use seems to have been pretty well established (but still ‘optional’) by the early 1930s. However, neither Desnoës nor van Lamsweerde recognised it in preparing their Mekeo-French dictionary (which van Lamsweerde revised and typed some ten or more years after Desnoës had compiled it). Nowadays (that is, 1980-1984) one rarely hears anyone speak without inserting it in every appropriate environment. This applies to all age groups. However, even the latest prayer books printed by the mission preserve the old spellings without the [s].

²⁴ Starred forms represent hypothetical or attested ancestral forms. Note that these have not been systematically reconstructed, a task which awaits another thesis, nor do they necessarily represent any stage of ‘Proto Mekeo’. In this case the ancestral form persists side by side with the innovated form (at least in the idiolects of some older speakers, not to mention the priests).

roots (WMek *oido*, NMek *oizo* 'three'). And the forms with intrusive consonants appear to be becoming ever more acceptable (more and more the 'standard' pronunciation) with the passage of time. Only NWMek resists the trend, although even there a weak [y] can sometimes be heard in the appropriate environments.

EMek /ʔ/ is often sounded very weakly and just as often dropped completely. So completely has it been dropped that it has been replaced by the intrusive *s* in the appropriate environment, which is /i_a,o. Thus the first person plural exclusive pronoun shows the following pattern of realisations:

rare		very rare		most common
<i>iʔa</i>	>	<i>ia</i>	>	<i>isa</i>

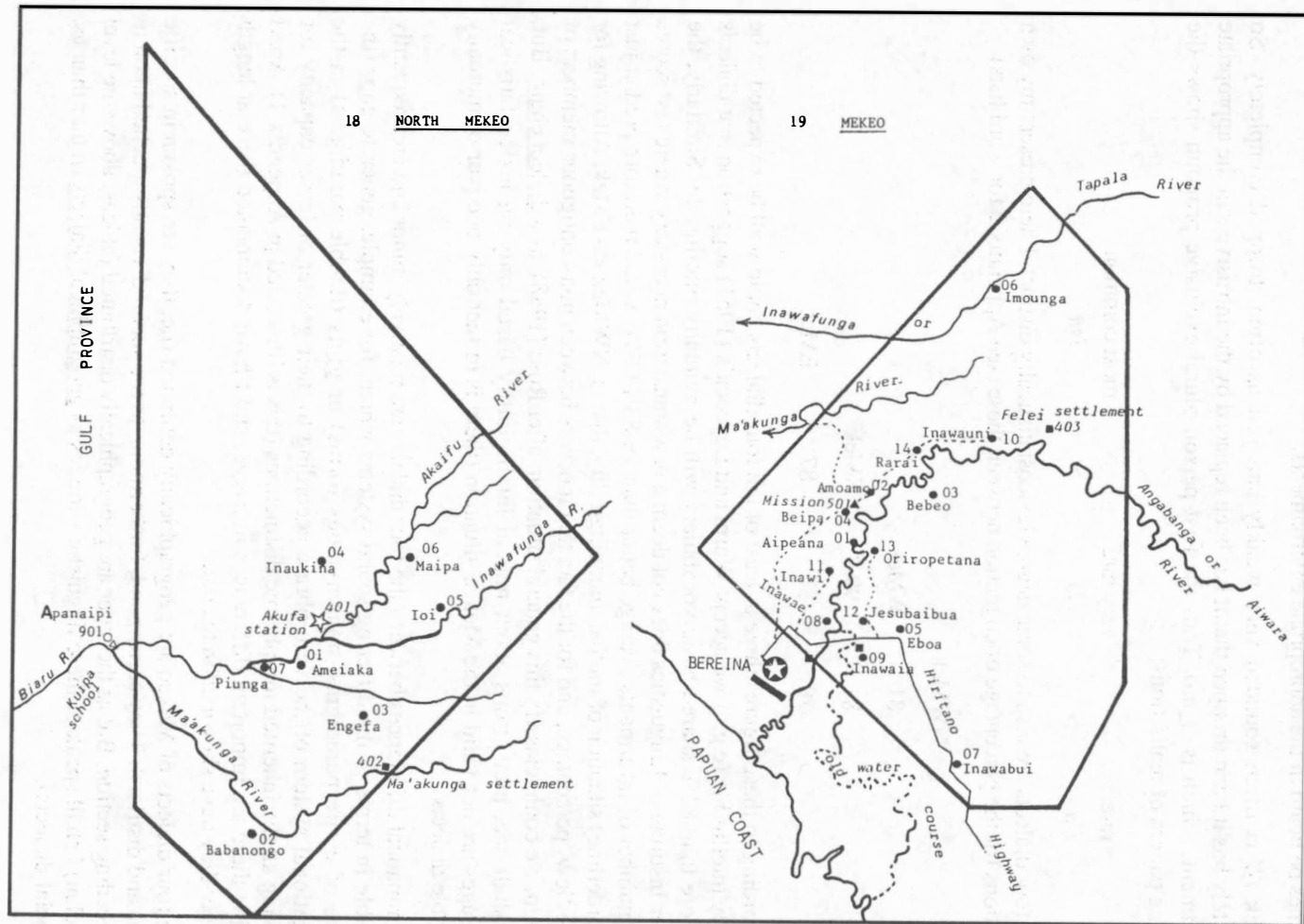
The four dialects are also to some degree lexicostatistically distinct. I here present my own calculations for the percentage of cognation between these (see Appendix 2 for word lists):

NWMek			
81	WMek		
81	99	NMek	
79	87	87	EMek

According to these figures three at least of the four dialects could well be expected to be mutually intelligible (e.g. if we accept Wurm and Laycock's (1961) suggestion that dialects with more than 81% shared basic vocabulary will be mutually intelligible. Similarly, the Summer Institute of Linguistics does not deem a new translation necessary where test scores from a number of informants average better than 78-83%). We would therefore predict just one (borderline) situation of mutual *un*intelligibility, that is, NWMek <> EMek. Allowing for this one 'low' percentage, and for the fact that it occurs between non-contiguous members of the group, we could classify this general situation, after Ross (1988), as a dialect chain. But, as we shall see, predictions about mutual intelligibility based only on lexicostatistical percentages are not valid in the Mekeo situation (there is in fact only one pair of mutually intelligible dialects).

Grammatical differences between the four dialects are relatively minor and are frequently explicable in terms of the differing sound systems which, for example, generate gaps (the absence of entire paradigms, homonymous forms) or gluts (double paradigms) in the conjugational system of the verb phrase according to their greater or lesser capacity for preserving all the inherited morphemic distinctions (this is illustrated in Appendix 4). Apart from this there are important differences in *usage*, and I have documented these at length whenever they have shown up in the data.

The four dialects of Mekeo are geographically delimited (i.e. they are spoken in specific villages and districts). They correspond, furthermore, to the *social* divisions touched upon in the preceding section. But as the latter are geographically distributed (at least above the level of the clan) I shall speak of these linguistic varieties as geographical dialects (rather than as, say, social dialects).



MAP 3: LOCATIONS OF ALL MEKEO VILLAGES AND SETTLEMENTS IN CENTRAL PROVINCE
(According to the 1980 Village Directory.)

All four dialects are, in fact, mutually unintelligible, except NMek–WMek.²⁵ This fact is obscured by the familiarity that most Mekeo have nowadays with the neighbouring dialects (bearing in mind that NWMek neighbours onto no other Mekeo dialect), but on first encounter only a minimal degree of communication can take place between speakers of the different dialects (with the one exception made above). This is, of course, a major argument for treating these speech varieties as distinct languages.²⁶ Yet, apart from certain words for everyday items that are unshared, the great bulk of the vocabulary is cognate across all four varieties. And the sound correspondences are absolutely regular. This means that although a speaker of any one variety will find any other variety unintelligible *in an initial encounter*, the system of sound correspondences is rapidly learned, and functional communication can usually be established within a matter of days if not hours. This is one of my main reasons for calling these language varieties dialects rather than languages.²⁷

Perhaps the criterial feature of a language as such – that is, as social construct – is the native speaker’s own perception of the speech community and its limits. In this respect it can be said that speakers of all four dialects of Mekeo acknowledge a commonality of culture and language, and affirm and reaffirm this cultural and linguistic identity at every opportunity. Moreover, although they consider differences in vocabulary and pronunciation as emblematic and distinctive within the community, and even speak of having different “tongues” (*maea*, *mala*), they actively and eagerly search for intertribal genealogical links in oral tradition (in so far as this is available to them – the secrecy of clan charters is allied to the fact that these are invariably challenged by other clans). A chance phrase from Desnoës’ dictionary sums up this general attitude well:

- 1.1 *Mala-mai ŋomē fa-faʔi-naaŋao.* (EMek)
 tongue-1PL.E base RD-thick-3SG one
 The ultimate source of our language(s) is one.

Passive bilingualism between dialects (also called sesquilingualism) appears to be the most natural or the easiest way of overcoming the problem of linguistic intercourse when speakers from different dialect areas meet (meetings which are of course nowadays much more frequent than in the traditional situation). This solution may in fact become permanent for some speakers. Politeness dictates that an initial exchange be carried out – whenever possible – in the dialect of a visitor (i.e. the person away from his/her own home). After that the sesquilingual mode of communication will usually come into operation. Full adoption of a distinct linguistic code – a dialect – tends to indicate full adoption of social identity as well (as in ‘marrying in’ to a village).

25 Speakers of NMek and EMek can ‘hear’ one another with a fair degree of ease.

26 Wurm and Laycock (1961:32), for example, subscribe to this criterion. They define “mutual intelligibility” as “the degree of the possibility of exchange of information”.

27 While one can attempt to quantify the degree of mutual intelligibility between two speakers in terms of information conveyed or lost on a particular occasion, as did Wurm and Laycock (1961), such measurements lose their meaning over time (i.e. with prolonged mutual acquaintance of the speakers). We shall here use the yardstick of the initial encounter between linguistically inexperienced speakers; failure to communicate at this time counts as mutual unintelligibility. Mutual unintelligibility, thus defined, as between the various dialects of Mekeo, rapidly gives way to ‘secondary’ or ‘learned’ intelligibility; this phenomenon can best be described (or ‘measured’) using the terms devised by Hockett (1958): as 2-day dialects, 3-day dialects, etc. I did not attempt to actually measure this phenomenon while in the field; but each of the dialects of Mekeo could certainly be characterised in this fashion, *vis-à-vis* each of the others.

As Hockett (1958:327) pointed out, communication can be one-way; and Wurm and Laycock (1961:129-132) discuss some of the phonological factors that can explain the direction of intelligibility in an objective way.²⁸ This situation holds to some extent in the Mekeo area (though for historical as well as linguistic reasons), that is, as between the 'central' dialect of Mekeo (which was adopted by the mission) and all the others. Veifa'a and still is the social/political nexus of the Mekeo speaking areas (while Bereina is the administrative centre for an area that extends well beyond these), and its speech variety is regarded by many as the 'standard'. Veifa'a has the headquarters of the Roman Catholic mission, with a large school, as well as the only hospital in the west of Central Province. (The Provincial High School outside Bereina is Catholic; it is run by the De La Salle Brothers and forms an axis with Veifa'a that runs straight through Bereina town.) The Catholic priests who carry the sacraments of their church to the remotest villages (albeit usually at intervals of several weeks or months) have until recently done their preaching in the 'central' dialect of Veifa'a, where they live for much of the year. Prayer books, hymnals, gospel stories and even a school reader are printed in this dialect (albeit a rather special variety thereof). Primary school teachers acquire this dialect during mission training and use it for instruction throughout the whole Mekeo area. As a result of all these pressures, a passive knowledge of the 'central dialect' is extremely widespread.

1.2.2.3 SUB-DIALECTS OF MEKEO (COMMUNALECTS)

There are two phonologically divergent sub-varieties or sub-dialects of Mekeo, one exclusively spoken in Papangongo (*Babaŋoŋo*) the other exclusively in Engefa (*Engepa*).

The Papangongo communalect is distinguished mainly by word-stress patterns more typical of EMek than WMek (to which dialect it clearly belongs) and a certain conservatism. Thus WMek /ikoina/ 'different' is pronounced [ikwina] in the other villages but [ikōina] in Papangongo (perhaps under the influence of EMek [i?ōina]). Where WMek *e* > *i*/_a, *i*, Papangongo retains *e* as in EMek: *e-ida* 's/he sees/saw' as opposed to WMek *īda*. Compare NMek *e-iza*, EMek *e-isa*. Similarly where WMek has *i-aŋa-i-a* '3SG-bite-3SG', Papangongo has *e-aŋa-i-a*. Compare NMek *e-aŋa-i-z-a*, EMek *e-aŋa-i-s-a*. And where WMek and NMek now have excrescent consonants in words like WMek *babije* 'woman' (NMek *babize*), *i-afzia* 's/he takes/took' (NMek *e-afiza*), Papangongo has none. It resembles EMek in this.

In Engefa // is regularly pronounced as a trilled [r]. Other phonetic characteristics regarded as distinctive by other EMek speakers are a 'big/deep voice' (*aina apao-ŋa*), 'thick speech' (*mala e-fa'i'i*, perhaps a retroflex articulation) and rapid speech (*ke-nini-'ani ke-fia-koa*). An Engefa person would typically say *a-ro-roŋo* instead of *a-lo-loŋo* 'I don't know.'

Besides the two communalects described above there are other slight differences of pronunciation and/or usage setting one village off from another. Van Lamsweerde (1940) has claimed that the Ve'e villages (Rarai, Bebeo, Imounga and Inawauni in the North and Inawabui, Eboa, Inawaia and Jesubaibua in the South) spoke an identifiably different dialect to that spoken in the Pioufa villages (Veifa'a, Apiana, Amoamo, Inawi, Inawae and Oriropetana). Van Lamsweerde claims that the Ve'e villagers prefer the velar nasal /ŋ/ in contexts where the Pioufa use an apico-dental nasal /n/ or even //l/. Van Lamsweerde admits that even at that time he wrote, this distinction was dying out due to increased levels of

²⁸ Wurm and Laycock here draw heavily on E.V. Pike's (1954) theory of phonetic rank.

intervisiting (and intermarrying) between villages since peace had been imposed by the government.

Such variation is nowadays idiolectal, with women in general favouring /n/ and disfavouring /ŋ/. In fact there is a predominantly dental articulation, amounting to a speech style, that is associated with female speakers and also children.²⁹ The phoneme /ŋ/ regularly goes to [n] in all environments. Somewhat more rarely, velar and post-velar phonemes are replaced with dental (or alveo-dental) stops, so that one says *tutu* instead of *?u?u* 'breast' and *tetele* for *?e?ele* (and *kekele*) 'small'. This is a kind of baby talk. If used by an adult it may draw the reprimand: *Fo-lo-pa-ajua!* 'Don't act like a child!' There are frequently also small lexical differences between the various communalects. Thus standard *piu-ake* 'throw away' becomes *puake* in Veifa'a. In Inawauni they say *fae-fae* for 'orange', and *paŋuako* for 'village parrot' ('banana parrot'), while in Veifa'a and other villages they say, respectively, *olanitsi* and *kovao* for these two objects. Such words become emblematic of village identity.

1.2.2.4 POPULATION DISTRIBUTION AMONG VILLAGES

The Mekeo-speaking area contains 24 villages and some three to five settlements.³⁰ There are two 'stations' (Veifaa Mission and Hospital; and Akufa Station on the Biarua-Akaifu, an aid post). Depending on the circumstances, these places are referred to by either their official or their unofficial names. The official names are those used in Government publications. Many of these represent Roro names. These names have, however, by dint of official use, gained currency throughout the whole area, in official contexts or when the medium of communication is the official language, English. Younger speakers pick up this usage in school. In the home village and/or in the medium of Mekeo, on the other hand, at least when older speakers are conversing amongst themselves, the 'true' Mekeo names are used.³¹ A closely related problem is the widespread use of the EMek versions of WMek placenames, even in the west. It is the fashion to prefer indigenous versions of place names, and this coincides with my own inclination. I shall therefore prefer the proper Mekeo (dialect-specific) versions of Mekeo proper names, including Mekeo village names and placenames. How these correspond with the official names is shown in the following population tables.

At the time of the 1980 National Census, in which I assisted, there were 6,969 Mekeo living in the Mekeo Census Division (= my EMek) and another 1,956 living in the North Mekeo Census Division (= my WMek + NMek, with the exception of Imunga which belongs to my EMek). The two Kovio villages (= my NWMek) were then home to 218 people. This yields a total figure of 9,143 Mekeo speakers for 1980. Here is a breakdown of the present population by villages, along with the 1971 figures (where I have them) and Seligman's estimates for 1897:

²⁹ In EMek it is said: *Mala ?oni-n-ai ke-niniani* 'They speak with the tip of the tongue'.

³⁰ This account is based on my own knowledge of the Mekeo-speaking area supplemented by mission and Government sources.

³¹ See Seligman (1910:312, fn.2): "Sometimes the names of villages are tribal, pointing back to a time when *pangua* and tribe were coextensive". This makes more ethnographic sense if we substitute 'clan' for 'tribe' (except perhaps as regards Ve'e and Pioufa, which are names of tribes or sub-tribes).

TABLE 5: POPULATION FIGURES FOR THE MEKEO VILLAGES

		1980	1971	1897
EMek: Pioufa				
Veifaa	<i>Veifaa, Pioufa</i>	978	1000*	634
	a) <i>Oŋo-foʔina</i>			
	b) <i>Alo-aivea</i>			
Aipeana	<i>Aivea</i>	797	710	444
Amoamo	<i>Amo-amo</i>	219	198	140
Oriropetana	<i>Onino-feka</i>	298	289	190
Inawi	<i>Oaisa-aka</i>	928	879	408
Inawae	<i>Inau-ae</i>	205	137	89
EMek: Northern Ve'e				
Rarai	<i>Ve'e, Nŋai, Maea</i>	473	483	---
Bebeo	<i>Pepeo</i>	169	132	185
Inawauni	<i>Inau-auni</i>	200	183	---
Imunga	<i>Ifu-ifu</i>	214	140	---
EMek: Southern Ve'e				
Jesubaibua	<i>Ieku (-baibua)</i>	440	385	178
Inawaia	<i>Inau-aisa</i>	790	716	315
Eboa	<i>Evoa</i>	611	546	300
Inawabui	<i>(Inauabui) Kaŋa</i>	647	613	200
NMek				
Maipa	<i>Maiba</i>	139		
Ioi	<i>Aŋabu</i>	101		
Engefa	<i>Inau-fokoa</i>	232		
WMek				
Inaukina	<i>Inau-tsina</i>	188		
Ameiaka	<i>Ameiaga</i>	149		
Piunga	<i>Biuŋa, Biiŋa</i>	183		
Papangongo	<i>Baba-ŋoŋo</i>	288		
Afanaifi	<i>Kuipa, Apa-naipi</i>	560		
Akufa	<i>Agupa</i>	82		
Ma'akuga	<i>Makagunja</i>	29		
Waika	<i>Waika</i>	5		
NWMek				
Urulau	<i>Urulau</i>	68		
Okovai	<i>Okavae</i>	150		

* Hau'ofa counted 1145 in 1971.

1.2.3 HISTORICAL PHONOLOGY

Ross (1988) reconstructs a system of 25 consonantal phonemes for Proto Papuan Tip and 21 for Proto Central Papuan. The systems of Mekeo with 7/8 consonants are clearly – in comparison – much diminished.

Of the West Central Papuan sub-family, Motu preserves the largest number of consonantal phonemes, showing reflexes of 18 different PCP consonants. Conflation accounts for the fact that the consonantal *system* of Motu has only 15 phonemes. Most of the Motu reflexes preserve the chief phonetic features of the original POc phonemes. For this reason I take it that the Motu phonemes represent the most conservative version of the Proto West Central Papuan sound system. I here present full tables of correspondences for the four Mekeo dialects, Motu, Proto Central Papuan, Proto Papuan Tip and Proto Oceanic, adapted from Ross (1988):

TABLE 6: MEKEO/MOTU/PCP/PPT/POc – CONSONANT CORRESPONDENCES

POc:	*p fortis	*p lenis	*b	*m	...	*bw	*ɪnw	*w
PPT:	*p	*v	*b	*m	*pw	*bw	*ɪnw	*w
PCP:	*p	*v	*b	*m	*p	*w; *b	*mw	*w
Motu:	p	h	b	m	∅	∅	m	v, w
NWMek:	.	β; β, p/_u	p	m	∅	∅	m	o, w
WMek:	.	b; b, p/_u	p	m	∅	∅	m	w
NMek:	.	b; b, p/_	p	m	∅	∅	m	w, v
EMek:	f	p; p, f/_u	f	m	∅	∅	m	v, f

POc:	*t	*ɾ, *R	*d, *dɾ, *j	*l/_i, u	*y; *l/_e, a, o	∅
PPT:	*t	*ɾ	*d, *j	*l/_i, u	*y; *l/_e, a, o	∅
PCP:	*t	*l	*d	*i	*y	*Y/*_a
Motu:	t; s/_i, e	r	d	i	l	l-
NWMek:	∅-; -k-	ŋ, n	k	i	∅	∅
WMek:	∅-; -k ³²	ŋ, n	k; dʒ/_i	i	(l)	∅
NMek:	∅-; -k-	ŋ, n	k; ts/_i	i	(l)	∅
EMek:	?-, ∅-; -ʔ-	ŋ, n	ʔ	i	l	l-

³² Ross (1988:205) gives: ʔ-, ∅-; -ʔ-, but as [ʔ] is not phonemic in dialects other than EMek I have altered his formula to leave out an initial glottal stop.

POc:	*n	*ñ	*s, *c	*k fortis	*k, *q lenis	*g
PPT:	*n	*ñ	*s	*k	*q	*g
PCP:	*n	*ñ	*ɾ	*k	*ɣ	*g
Motu:	n	n	d	k	∅, ɣ	g
NWMek:	ŋ; ŋ, n /_i, i_	.	g	∅	∅	∅
WMek:	ŋ; n /_i, i_	.	g; dʒ /_i	∅	∅	∅
NMek:	ŋ; n /_i, i_	.	g; ts /_i	∅	∅	∅
EMek:	ŋ; n /_i, i_	.	k; k, ∅ /_i	∅	∅	∅

POc:	*ŋ	.	.
PPT:	*ŋ	*kw	*gw
PCP:	*ŋ	*kw	*gw
Motu:	∅, ɣ	kw	gw
NWMek:	ŋ, n, ∅	o	o
WMek:	ŋ, n, ∅	o	w
NMek:	ŋ, n, ∅	o	o, w
EMek:	ŋ, n, ∅	o-; -ʔo-	o-; -f-

LEGEND:

- o stands for: /o/, or for rounding of any other vowel.
 . stands for: no reflex known.
 ... stands for: not applicable.
 () stands for: suggested loans.

Although I do not wish to indulge in any extended historical arguments in this work it is clear from the consonantal systems presented in §1.2.2.2 that the three western dialects form a single group as distinct from EMek. A comparison of western /g/, /k/, /b/ and /p/ with the eastern reflexes /k/, /ʔ/, /p/ and /f/ suggests that the western group of dialects is phonologically more conservative. The period of shared linguistic history is attested by shared phonological innovations such as the substitution of a velar obstruent for PCP */r/ and a velar nasal for PCP */l/. Exclusively shared lexical innovations also argue for a period of shared isolation, followed by a split into an eastern and a western dialect, from which the present-day dialects descend. These relationships are illustrated by the following isoglosses based on a few very basic necessities of life such as food staples:

TABLE 7: SELECTED ISOGLOSSES

	Roro	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek	Kuni	Lala	Motu
Fire	: <i>aroha</i>	<i>moiba</i>	<u><i>ido</i></u>	<u><i>izo</i></u>	<i>lo</i>	<i>aloba</i>	<i>alova</i>	<i>lahi</i>
Pig	: <i>aiporo</i>	<i>kuma</i>	<i>kuma</i>	<i>kuma</i>	<i>?uma</i>	<i>boloma</i>	<i>boloma</i>	<i>boroma</i>
Sago	: <i>pareo</i>	<i>aia</i>	<i>aida</i>	<i>aiza</i>	<i>ipako</i>	<i>ipako/faleo</i>	<i>bale?o</i>	<i>rabia</i>
Bananas	: <i>uarupi</i>	<i>poa</i>	<i>poa</i>	<i>foa</i>	<i>o'o</i>	<i>ko</i>	<i>ko?o</i>	<i>ani</i>
Taro	: <i>hovoo</i>	<u><i>kokou</i></u>	<u><i>kokou</i></u>	<u><i>kokou</i></u>	<i>?o?ou</i>	<i>bao</i>	<i>ilu</i>	<i>talo</i>
Coconut	: <i>tona</i>	<u><i>gonja</i></u>	<u><i>gonja</i></u>	<u><i>gonja</i></u>	<i>koŋa</i>	<i>doa</i>	<i>ni?u</i>	<i>niu, karu</i>
Yams	: <i>taa</i>	<i>aŋimai</i>	<i>kukui</i>	<i>aniani</i>	<i>lama</i>	<i>mabo</i>	<i>ve?u/kalu</i>	<i>maho/taitu</i>

EMek vocabulary attests a considerable degree of contact with Kuni speakers (especially Lapeka Kuni). And Kuni and Lala in fact have a closer relationship than Table 7 shows.³³ The lexical evidence suggests a series of nesting relations such as the following:

[- [- [- (((NWMek)WMekNMek)(EMek)) - Kuni, Roro] - Lala] - Motu]³⁴

Generally speaking, the four Mekeo dialects form a low-level sub-group within West Central Papuan. I propose the following genetic tree for these dialects:

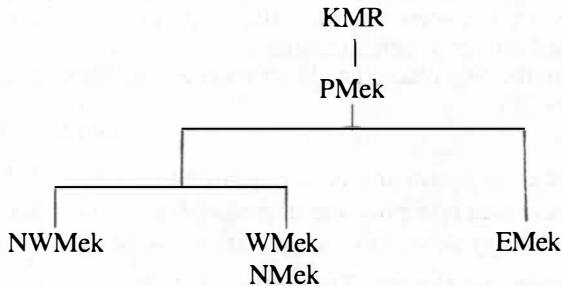


FIGURE 3: THE MEKEO DIALECTS – GENETIC TREE

Note that in this work I am working towards a synchronic description and that nothing hinges upon the above hypothesis.

1.3 THEORY – DATA – THEORY

Any first scientific description of a language is inevitably constructed of countless large and small analytic decisions that reflect – and should reflect – the general theoretical allegiances of the working linguist, as well as an unavoidably idiosyncratic attitude and emphasis with regard to the scholarly issues of the day. All of these will – equally inevitably – come to be modified in the course of accommodating fresh language data, so that the end

³³ Underlining indicates groups of cognates exclusive to the Mekeo dialects or shared between some dialect(s) and related language(s).

³⁴ The position of Gabadi is problematic still – it may prove to be an offshoot of Mekeo (more precisely of the Afa?i clan/village). Doura is an offshoot of early Lala (see Wilson 1975) that now shows signs of convergence with Motu.

product, the final account, should mirror the unconscious ‘theory’ of native speakers rather than that of the linguist or any school of linguistics. The non-naive or scientific observer does, however, bring to the analytic task – for better or worse – some kind of theoretically loaded metalanguage, as well as a set of minimal expectations or parameters, some sort of conceptual model of what any human language ‘must be like’. And yet – precisely as a scientist – this same observer has to struggle to arrive at an essentially presuppositionless and transparent account of whatever unique language he or she now confronts in all its inchoate vitality. The paradox is all too easily overlooked, or dismissed. I shall, for my part here, attempt to actually document the dynamics of an ongoing interaction – an *Auseinandersetzung* – between a philosophy of language, the product of my ‘formation’ in linguistics, and the reality of the raw materials that incrementally, over some twelve months, made up my ‘text’.³⁵ As Nichols (1986:116) has pointed out: “The fact that linguistic theory is ultimately rooted in linguistic typology shows how important it is to capture the uniqueness of individual languages in cross-linguistically and cross-theoretically meaningful terms”.

It should be pointed out at once that the method or procedure here proposed builds on theoretical distinctions made in 1961 by M.A.K. Halliday in his ‘Categories of the theory of grammar’:

Description consists in relating the text to the categories of the theory...The set of these abstractions, constituting the body of the descriptive method, might be regarded as a ‘calculus’, since its function is to relate the theory to the data. It is important to distinguish between calculus (description) and theory; also between description and the set of generalizations and hypotheses by which the theory was arrived at in the first place. The latter precede the theory and are not susceptible of ‘rigorization’...

(Halliday 1961:1.3)

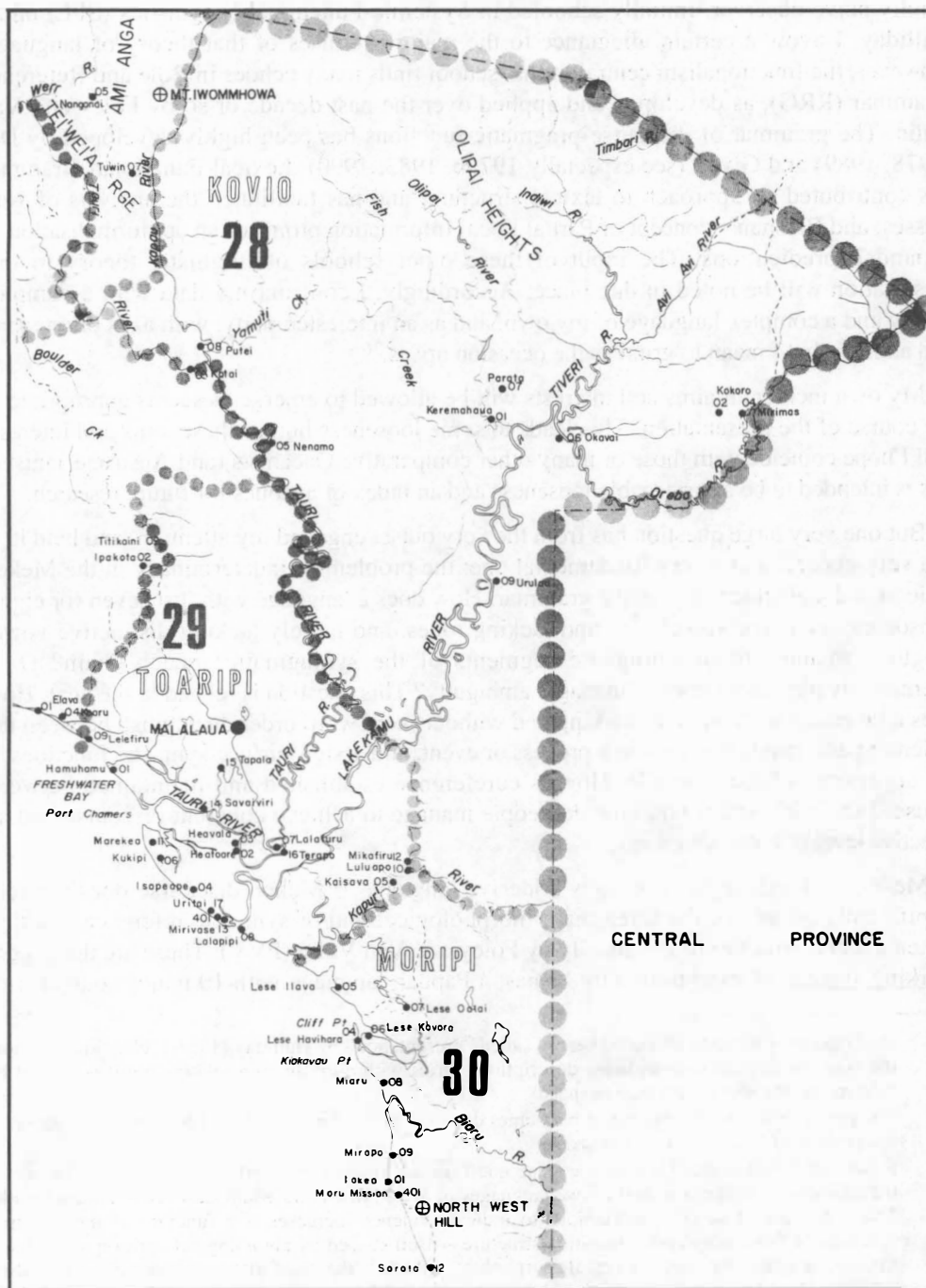
While I have to take the latter as given, any description will be a test of the *theory*, in as much as the nature of linguistic data is in principle unpredictable. And it is thus the simplicity of a description, *within the terms of the theory*, that manifests the power of that theory.

Description depends on the theory...Theoretical validity implies making maximum use of the theory...It is not necessary to add a separate criterion of ‘simplicity’, since this is no use unless defined; and it would then turn out to be a property of a maximally grammatical description, since complication equals a weakening of the power of the theory and hence less grammaticalness.

(Halliday 1961:1.11)

Clearly, should the categories and the algorithms of the theory result in an inelegant description, the status of the categories and algorithms themselves would be cast seriously in doubt. On the other hand, should these theoretical constructs prove capable of accounting for ‘limiting case’ grammars comprehensively and without ‘sloppiness’, their validity would naturally be enhanced. In part, I shall be testing, in the course of this description of Mekeo, the categories and scales (i.e. the paradigmatic systems) of systemic-functional grammar against a new (or, rather, hitherto more or less undescribed) language.

³⁵ *Text* is a technical term of the theory. See §1.2. *Auseinandersetzen* is an untranslatable German term that suggests the ‘jockeying together’ of the competing claims of theory and data in describing a language.



MAP 4: THE LAKEKAMU RIVER, SHOWING THE MEKEO VILLAGES OF OKAVAE AND URULAU

One has of course more intellectual baggage than ‘a theory’. Writing as I am within an established field of linguistic research – the investigation of Oceanic and, more generally, Austronesian languages – it is out of the question that I emulate, or attempt to emulate, a wholly naive observer. Initially schooled in Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) under Halliday, I avow a certain allegiance to the major premises of that theory of language. However, the functionalism central to that school finds many echoes in Role and Reference Grammar (RRG), as developed and applied over the past decade or so by Foley and Van Valin. The grammar of discourse-pragmatic functions has been highly developed by Dik (1978, 1989) and Givón (see especially 1979b, 1983, 1990). Lexical Functional Grammar has contributed an approach to lexical structure, and has facilitated the analysis of verb classes; and Bresnan’s concept of Partial Local Information promises an apt formalisation of expanded predications. The input of these other schools of linguistic theory to this dissertation will be noted in due place. Accordingly, I confront my data with a complex theory and a complex language of my own, and as an interested party, with axes of one kind and another that I mean to grind as the occasion arises.³⁶

My own incidental aims and interests will be allowed to emerge as seems appropriate in the course of the presentation. This leads to some looseness but, as these aims and interests will I hope coincide with those of many other comparative Oceanists (and Austronesianists), this is intended to be a serviceable looseness and an index of avenues for future research.

But one very large question has from the very outset engaged my attention, and held it. It is a very general and a very fundamental one: the problem of indeterminacy in the Mekeo lexicon and, coincidentally, in the grammar. How does a language with just seven (or eight) consonants and five vowels³⁷ – and lacking tones, and largely lacking distinctive vowel length – manage to disambiguate segments of the syntagmatic speech chain? Or – alternatively put – how does it ‘manage’ ambiguity? This question is related to the next. How does a language without case marking and without fixed word order distinguish between the different participants involved in a process or event, and assign surface-syntactic functions to the arguments of the clause?³⁸ How is coreference established and maintained between clauses? Or is it? And if not, how do people manage to achieve coherent discourse and an effective level of communication?

Mekeo is, I will argue, a weakly cohesive language.³⁹ Mekeo discourse does not rely significantly on any of the three main morphological and/or syntactic reference tracking systems identified cross-linguistically by Foley and Van Valin (FVV). These are the gender marking system, as exemplified by Yimas, a Papuan language with 10 major noun classes

³⁶ Description of the kind proposed here is called “presentation” by Halliday (1961:1.11): “Presentation, the way the linguist expounds the description, varies with purpose, and relative merit is judged by reference to the specific purpose intended”.

³⁷ The precise number of consonantal phonemes depends on the dialect spoken. EMek is, incidentally, in the process of losing /ʔ/. to leave six.

³⁸ Foley and Olson (1985:51) pose the same question and suggest that verb serialisation can be one of the answers, as happens with the Kwa languages of West Africa and South East Asian languages like Thai: “the use of serial constructions to indicate valence increases is a function of the isolating structure of these languages”. Isolating structure – itself caused by phonological attrition over time – involves a gradually reduced verbal morphology, which is the chief alternative means of encoding valency. One reason this explanation does not apply to Mekeo is the fact that verbal morphology is here a result of relatively recent agglutination.

³⁹ By ‘cohesive’ is meant, ideally, having the quality of a minimally ambiguous discourse, where precise morphological and/or syntactic devices reliably identify and cross-index the different linguistic components across both short and longer stretches of text.

and some half dozen minor ones, the switch-reference system, as exemplified by Lakhota, and the switch-function system, as exemplified by English grammar with its strict interpretive conventions (see FVV 1984, Chapter 7).

Mekeo does, in common with such closely related languages as Tawala (Ezard 1978) and Iamalele (Beaumont 1988), and To'aba'ita (Lichtenberk 1988), exhibit a number of morphosyntactic, pronominal and lexical devices which directly or indirectly *increase* cohesion and – sometimes – permit the hearer to identify all the participants in a text/event uniquely.⁴⁰ However, these devices do not amount to a fully efficient reference tracking system across utterances. Reference in Mekeo – as in certain Asian languages, of which Chinese and Urdu represent typical examples⁴¹ – depends largely on systems of pragmatic implicature (given as a 'fourth system' in Foley and Van Valin (1984), but not described in any detail). Similar devices are used in unplanned English discourse.⁴² The importance of *pragmatically* determined anaphora has recently been recognised, and its operations outlined, by Lichtenberk (1988). It will be seen below that formal anaphoric devices in Mekeo exhibit some similarities to as well as some differences from the system described by Lichtenberk for To'aba'ita, and that reference is ultimately, in many instances, formally underdetermined.

All in all, a relatively high level of formal indeterminacy is a salient and a puzzling feature of much extended communication in this language – perhaps more in narrative texts than in conversation. Reference in Mekeo discourse can be largely *implicit*. I have set out, in a sense, to *explain* this phenomenon. In §8.5.3 I do this in terms of a preference for variable or negotiated meanings.

Key aspects of Mekeo grammar, and of the proposed model, are enumerated below, as well as certain related theoretical matters that are felt to be of particular interest. This overview, and the more language-specific detail in the other sections of this chapter, will help to put the chapters to come and the large quantities of data therein into some wider perspective. Seven points will be touched on:

1. Morphosyntactic typology.
2. Discourse-pragmatic structure.
3. Word classes.
4. Why lexicogrammar?
5. Rankshift.
6. Causativity and/or transitivity.
7. A deontic auxiliary: *OMA*

1. Morphosyntactic typology

On the level of morphosyntax, Mekeo is a mainly head-marking language. Nominal arguments are not marked for case. In fact, the main arguments of the verb are encoded by pronominal affixes directly attached to a verbal predicate, and the nominals themselves are (syntactically speaking) optional. In a similar way, predicate nominals, including adjectival nouns, relational nouns and postpositions, bear a determining suffix, which agrees with an equally optional topic nominal for person and number. The marked predicate is the head of the predication, and its only obligatory constituent.

⁴⁰ Martin (1983:48) has declared – somewhat cautiously – that “participant identification seems a likely candidate for a functional universal”.

⁴¹ See especially Hasan (1985) on systematic ellipsis in Urdu.

⁴² Ochs (1979) describes referent deletion (i.e. ellipsis) and the use of demonstratives in place of definite articles as being symptomatic of unplanned discourse and child language.

The main exceptions to the rule of head-marking are: a) marked nominal topics, some of which take the suffix *-ŋa*, others the following particle *auŋa*;⁴³ and b) unmarked referential topics which under certain circumstances function as the semantic head of a group. Whole predications can function as marked topics with predication enclitic *auŋa*, and this particle in effect marks such predications as subordinate to a following main predication. However, the marking of discourse-pragmatic functions is qualitatively different from the marking of syntactic functions, in that a) it is optional and b) apart from the suffix *-ŋa*, topic markers are not bound.

Word order in Mekeo is verb-final – which is to say, head-final. This is a combination of features that defies certain inductive generalisations. Greenberg's (1966) Universal #41, for example, states: "If in a language the verb follows both the nominal subject and nominal object as the dominant order, the language almost always has a case system".⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Nichols (1986:82) has pointed out that processing constraints strongly favour head-initial word order in a head-marking language.

The syntactic functions of subject and object are (as noted above) encoded as affixes on a verb word. But the inadequacy of coreference marking (where 'third person' means little more than 'not first or second person') combined with freedom of word order often means that reference and/or denotation must be assigned to these functions on pragmatic grounds. Case-frames (if one can speak of such here) are very fluid in terms of which actants can fill which syntactic roles. Nominals refer forward – cataphorically and ambiguously – to the role markers on the verb, and where the latter lack denotation the former lack function. This creates a system of cross-dependency. Verb-final word order in such a language is, as already noted, a less than optimal situation (see Nichols 1986:81-82).⁴⁵ The verb word can, however, constitute a complete predication – as does any non-verbal word in predicative function.⁴⁶

As a head-marking language Mekeo seems to preserve the original structure of Proto Oceanic (Pawley 1977). It also belongs, typologically, with the Bantu languages, and with the Amerindian languages described by Boas and Bloomfield (and more recently by scholars like Van Valin, working with Lakhota). Many Papuan languages are also head-marking languages, at least at the level of the clause,⁴⁷ and work done on these by SIL linguists provides a valuable source of insights and suggestive comparisons (e.g. Beaumont 1988). It is also worth noting that Capell's (1969) distinction between object-dominated and event-dominated languages foreshadows the marking parameter as a typological criterion for New Guinea area languages.

⁴³ The former may be an abbreviated form of the latter and only attaches to personal pronouns.

⁴⁴ See Matthew S. Dryer (1992) for new dimensions to word-order typology.

⁴⁵ Nichols (1986:82) states that "head-marking morphology favours verb-initial order". And again: "Establishing grammatical relations at the beginning must be communicatively efficacious, in that it streamlines the hearer's processing". Mekeo appears to violate this principle, and thus also, incidentally, to violate several of Grice's "maxims of conversation" (see Levinson 1983: 100-102).

⁴⁶ In which case the *topic* of such a predication would have to be sought exophorically, in the context of the situation. See Levinson (1983:58), on context-dependency and "pragmatic indices". And see Hale (1983) on secondary predicates in Warlpiri.

⁴⁷ Foley, a personal communication quoted in Nichols (1986, fn.30). From the context this clearly refers to clause-internal marking (i.e. the verb word carries the markers) not to grammar above the clause. As will be shown in Chapters 7 and 8, interclausal grammar is not necessarily the same as intraclausal grammar in terms of the dominant marking pattern.

It has recently been said that “of the head-marking languages, only Navajo has received significant *theoretical* attention” (Nichols 1986:115, my italics). One may, presumably, now add Lakhota. However, Schütz (1986), in a recent grammar of Fijian,⁴⁸ also independently recognises many of the main principles of a head-marking grammar. He provides a treatment of that language that departs from traditional accounts and solves many of the descriptive problems presented by the optionality of nominal arguments (which he calls “specifiers”). Pawley (1977), in the unpublished paper referred to above, has recognised that a main function of head-marking affixes in Oceanic languages is as determiners.

Because of the longer American tradition, and the attention to theory there, I initially sought models from that quarter. On the basis of recent work by Nichols (1986) in particular one can straightaway make a very general prediction about Mekeo grammar. As a predominantly head-marking language, at least at clause level, Mekeo will be characterised by the absence of a governing relation between verb and noun,⁴⁹ and will exhibit an asymmetrical (or unilateral) dependency of nominal arguments on the verb. This sort of dependency constitutes a special type of syntactic bond (Nichols 1986:108).

Nominal arguments can be associated (retrospectively) with function-markers on the verb, and thereby with a syntactic function.⁵⁰ However, the latter depend on free nominals for denotation and/or reference. Simultaneous cataphoric bonds, working in the opposite direction to the syntactic bonds, produce a different kind of dependency, complementary to the first. The clause-initial nominals provide denotation and/or reference – cataphorically – for the function-markers on the verb and these are, *semantically speaking*, dependent on the nominals for meaning/reference. Bresnan and Mchombo (1987) have recently demonstrated that the bonds created by anaphoric (and cataphoric) agreement are independent of and substantively distinct from those created by grammatical agreement. In the present work (in Chapters 7 and 8) I explore this distinction and some of the consequences of this kind of asymmetric double bonding for clause structure and discourse level grammar.⁵¹

Working on the Australian language Warlpiri, Jelinek (1984) had established that the affixes on the auxiliary in a double-marking language actually realise the syntactic functions – they do not merely cross-reference them.⁵² Extrapolating from this, I assume here that the affixes on the verb in a head-marking language like Mekeo represent incorporated arguments. Jelinek went on to suggest that the nominals were *adjuncts*, and indeed still *constituents*, of two kinds: adargumental and adsentential. However, in an aside she says: “nominals are syntactically integrated into the main clause, like relative clauses” (Jelinek 1984:61). As I show below, the role of nominal adjuncts in a head-marked predication is not devoid of

48 Fijian, as a verb-initial language (VOS, VSO), conforms more nearly than Mekeo to the ‘ideal-type’ of head-marking languages (Nichols 1986:81-82). Siegel (1987), in his review of Schütz, picks out the treatment of nominals as appositives.

49 See Nichols (1986:107) who argues that the term ‘government’ properly describes only dependent-marked grammatical relations and “is not appropriate for head-marked constituents”. Head-marked verbs ‘sub-categorise’ their arguments which remain optional clause constituents. Van Valin (1985) takes the same approach to Lakhota grammar and (1990) discusses at length the theoretical problems presented by head-marking languages for Government and Binding theory.

50 Compare Nichols (1986:108), and Van Valin (1985:398).

51 The terms ‘bound’, ‘bond’ and ‘binding’ are nowadays replete with suggestions of Government and Binding theory, where they have precise formal meaning. I use them here, following Nichols (1986), in a technical sense of my own. I shall wherever possible substitute bonding for ‘binding’ to make this distinction clear.

52 In fact Van Valin (1977) had earlier analysed Lakhota verbs words in the same terms. Bresnan and Mchombo (1987) work with the same premise.

syntactic functions and constraints, just as they are not *entirely* optional, not *just* floating topics.

It is perhaps remarkable that cross-reference should be so weakly encoded at a formal level. However, a number of coreference rules do apply to main topics, as well as to the structure of specificational co-relative predications, and these enable the hearer to identify certain nominal arguments as *either* the subject *or* the object of a verbal predicate. For the rest pragmatic constraints ensure that little real ambiguity remains.

An aspect of non-configurational languages like Warlpiri (which has double-marking) has been brought out by Hale (1983). This is the fact that a given nominal can have an attributive or a *predicative* function, and that a matrix *predication* can contain numerous embedded secondary nominal or verbal *predicates*. This insight applies equally well to Mekeo, which is like Warlpiri a non-configurational language, and this fundamental ambiguity of nominals adds considerably to the density of discourse.

One of the potential consequences of head-marking is an elaboration of the discourse-pragmatic level of expression. "Head-marked patterns contribute to flat syntax which minimises intra-clause and inter-clause structure, freeing a language to concentrate on the grammaticalization of discourse prominence and cohesion" (Nichols 1986:114). Verbal predications are syntactically 'flat' in Mekeo, and the order of non-verbal elements is free. But certain rules involved in the thematisation of arguments intersect with this freedom to front and to juxtapose elements at will in such a way as to produce a fairly complex syntactic system.

2. Discourse-pragmatic structure

The vast majority of Mekeo utterances of more than one word can be analysed in terms of an underlying discourse-pragmatic structure, in which the main syntagm consists of theme + rheme.⁵³ The rheme is always a predicate, and when the predicate is a verb there may be several adargumental or adsentential topics. The order of elements is largely free apart from the verb word, which is always the predicate or a part of the predicate, and which is nearly always clause-final.⁵⁴ However, the order of elements is constrained in so far as these express the intersection of discourse-pragmatic functions (such as main topic) with syntactic functions (like subject or object of the verb).

There are processes of fronting and relativisation, reinforced by intonation patterns, whereby it is possible to foreground topic nominals. There are also morphologically marked topics and a suprasegmentally marked focus. Scope of assertion is finely shaded and varies in accordance with the pragmatics of the situation.

Discourse-pragmatic structures are linear.⁵⁵ The basic principle is that known or given information (a topic or topics) is followed by new and/or important information (comment, assertion). Linear structures of this nature are subject to recursion (recursive hypotaxis),

⁵³ Givón's concept of the pragmatic mode was a major theoretical source here (see Givón 1979a and 1979b, Chapter 7). Halliday has shown how, for English, a pragmatic system ('thematic structure' plus 'information structure') coexists with and even dominates the inherited syntactico-semantic system. Rood and Taylor (1996) have, incidentally, written a 'topic-comment' analysis of Lakhota grammar which would bear comparison with this analysis.

⁵⁴ The very few alternative candidates for postverbal position are certain discourse markers and predicate adjectives.

⁵⁵ See Nichols (1978b:331) on this.

which is described here by means of the terms ‘rankshift’⁵⁶ and ‘embedding’. This process occurs iteratively, so that the structure of an utterance *in production* rarely has a depth of more than one (in terms of constituency). However, a finite verb whose incorporated arguments have privilege of reference, can retrospectively tie together casually juxtaposed nominals as arguments of predication. Or cataphoric topics can previsualise the arguments of an expected verb word.

The possibility of having a predication, or a string of embedded predications, within a matrix predication accentuates the linear dimension of Mekeo. Many group level constructions in Mekeo can be analysed as rankshifted predications. However, by the same token, it is not always easy to say when a predication has been rankshifted and when it is still functioning with the force of a predication, though embedded in another.

There is a class of exocentric constructions which cannot be analysed as being derived from predications. Meanwhile, the presence of groups in a predication – whether derived from other predications or not, by the process I call rankshift – results in a level of constituent structure. As already noted, the constituents of a verbal predication may occur in any order, and the overall impression is one of linearly presented or asserted cataphoric NPs leading up to an independent head-marked verb. This impression is borne out by the prosodic nature of Mekeo speech, which is characterised by frequent pauses.

3. Word classes

I have set out to write a ‘classless’ grammar in much the same sense and for much the same reasons as Milner (1956) did with Fijian and Biggs (1969) with Maori. A strict dichotomy between nouns and verbs (as is generally accepted for the Indo-European languages) is not appropriate in a description of Mekeo. Mekeo grammar is highly productive in its unrestricted use of lexical bases – roots or stems⁵⁷ – as nouns or verbs. Almost any given root can function nominally or verbally as the occasion demands. In this sense, there are no nouns or verbs as such in Mekeo, only multifunctional bases. I will, however, use the terms ‘noun’ and ‘verb’ to mean, respectively, ‘a base functioning as a noun’ and ‘a base functioning as a finite verb’. Since nouns typically function as topics and finite verbs typically function as predicates, I am in effect employing these terms to designate discourse functions, not word classes.⁵⁸

While all languages allow some freedom of movement between these classes, Mekeo is unusual in having very few restrictions on this movement. Although it is true that some bases are more prototypically noun-like or verb-like than others,⁵⁹ or *more likely* to appear in one or the other function – a consideration that has caused many linguists to view Fijian as a language *with* word classes⁶⁰ – I feel that the evidence of the Mekeo data is sufficient to warrant an attempt to write a grammar of multifunctional lexical bases.

⁵⁶ See 5. below.

⁵⁷ A base is a lexical item that is uninflected for person/number or for tense/mood. It is thus *non-finite*. A root is a monomorphemic lexical base, while a stem consists of a root or roots plus a derivational affix or affixes. Compare Capell (1969:48).

⁵⁸ I follow Hopper and Thompson (1984) in this, since Mekeo grammar outside the verb word is largely discourse-based. See Jones (1991) for a considered treatment of word classes in Mekeo.

⁵⁹ A parameter explored by Givón (1984, Chapter 3), who classifies referents in terms of their relative time-stability. See also Hopper and Thompson (1984:705) on ‘prototypical nouns’.

⁶⁰ See Arms (1974:15) where frequency of use in a given function is used as criterion of class membership, and to justify setting up word classes in Fijian grammar.

Bases nonetheless incorporate specifications as to their syntactic potential (permissible arguments and derivations) when functioning as verbs.⁶¹ Similarly, certain typically nominal bases which name abstract relations (kin terms, parts of wholes, etc.) almost invariably take a determining suffix. However, inherently non-relational class nouns also take determining suffixes (the third person singular form) to express certain types of structural relations. And relational nouns also have an unsuffixed generic use. The borders between these ‘classes’ are thus fuzzy.

Apart from the one large class of content words, there are a number of closed classes of deictics and pro-forms, grammatical functors and particles.

4. Why lexicogrammar?

In Mekeo, more than in many other languages, the functions of the lexicon and the grammar overlap, and these cannot be treated as distinct components of the language. Together they constitute a single level of form or structure which, following Halliday, I call lexicogrammar. The use of this term is especially apt for Mekeo, for three separate reasons:

- a) The Mekeo verb phrase (or verb word, as I prefer) constitutes a complete predication, obligatorily incorporating a subject function and, optionally, an object function. The syntactic role structure of a whole predication is thus internal to a word.
- b) Verbally functioning bases – typically – implicate one or another of two systems of role relations (based on either transitivity or causativity), and this constrains the kinds of derivations to which they are susceptible. This fact permits a fundamental division of Mekeo ‘verbs’. However, aside from morphologically signalled derivations, the basic role relations of most roots (what Talmy calls their ‘valence’) are not overtly signalled.⁶² To illustrate from English, the verb *bounce* can be either transitive or intransitive, as the situation warrants or the speaker decides. Many Mekeo verbs resemble those English verbs that take middle voice, but Mekeo goes even further in this respect. And whereas in English the linguistic context of *bounce* (the identity of its subject and, if appropriate, object, both of which are easily recognised by virtue of word-order rules) is normally sufficient to disambiguate its role relations in a given utterance, in Mekeo all free nominals are optional and it is often only the context of situation that can assist the hearer in deciding on voice, valency, and reference, and thus in decoding the message.
- c) Many lexical roots – particularly those that most typically function as verbs – are semantically complex and may incorporate semantic specifications, particularly as to manner (see Talmy 1985).⁶³

5. Rankshift

Often neither word order nor morphology reflects a distinction between predicative and attributive constructions. However, when an utterance ceases to function as a predication and

⁶¹ The number of distinct verb classes may indeed be seen as compensating – in some sense – for the lack of a categorical noun–verb distinction.

⁶² Talmy (1985:64) also speaks of “lexicalization doublets”. Comrie (1985:311, 314) touches upon the same phenomenon, contrasting English with Russian and German.

⁶³ *Bounce*, incidentally, also illustrates the incorporation of ‘manner’.

is embedded in another,⁶⁴ it loses the illocutionary force of an assertion. This loss of illocutionary force will be referred to as rankshift. The term embedding can be used to describe the *use* of a rankshifted predication as topic or focus in a matrix predication. However, rankshift is not *a condition of embedding*.

Since (lexical and grammatical) morphemes can function as words, and words can function as predicates, any string can have either of two structural functions in any

given utterance. Only presence or absence of (illocutionary) force – something with no reflex in form – distinguishes these functions.⁶⁵

This situation is peculiar in that most languages have some kind of attribution transformation whereby for example a predicative element might move to the opposite side of the subject/topic when being used attributively. Mekeo does not normally register this change of function in any overt way, and can thus present a deceptive appearance of clause chaining when in fact we have to deal with multiple embeddings.

Since (lexical and grammatical) morphemes can function as words, and since words can function as either topics or predicates, any string can be ambiguous as between a predicative and an attributive meaning. Often only presence or absence of illocutionary force – something that may have no reflex at all in form – distinguishes between these two functions.

6. Causativity and/or transitivity

From what has preceded it will be seen that discourse-pragmatic theme-rheme structure in a sense ‘overrides’ the inherited semantico-syntactic system. The latter is, however, highly developed and operates rigorously within the constraints of the discourse-pragmatic system. It is in fact a double system in that, while many Mekeo verbs obey a system of rules based on the alternation: $S \Leftrightarrow A$, an even larger number obey the rules of a system based on the alternation: $S \Leftrightarrow O$.⁶⁶ These systems are outlined in §1.3.2.3 below, where I expound the functional roles somewhat differently. I call the former the system of causativity and the latter the system of transitivity. Each system represents a different process dynamic with a characteristic way of (re-)arranging the participants in a process/event, and of dealing with control. Together they make up the system of effectivity. This split effectivity system may be seen to correspond with the system of split intransitivity prevalent in other languages of this type, notably Lakhota.⁶⁷ More will be said about this in §1.3.2.3.

7. A deontic auxiliary: OMA

Finally it should be mentioned that the interpersonal component of the grammar – a macro-functional component which is expressed in English by means of the system of mood,

⁶⁴ A category that, in a head-marking language, includes appositional relations like ‘subject’ and ‘object’. See §1.7.1 below.

⁶⁵ Compare Hale (1981) on the Warlpiri nominal constructions. Two nominals marked for the same case and number in a Warlpiri sentence were held to constitute a subsential predication – not an NP – with one being predicated of the other. Predicates included parts of wholes and attribute nominals. Similarly, I here posit a predication reading of all nominal constructions. After rankshift a predicate or a predication can function as a nominal group.

⁶⁶ *S* stands for ‘subject of any intransitive verb form’, *A* stands for ‘subject of a transitive verb’ and *O* stands for ‘object of a transitive verb’. These are traditional symbols for traditional functions of TG grammar and are adopted by Dixon in work that I will refer to often. However, I depart from Dixon’s tripartite scheme in my own analysis.

⁶⁷ See Merlan (1985) for a definitional cross-linguistic discussion of split intransitivity.

where indicative contrasts with interrogative and imperative – is largely expressed in Mekeo in terms of two subjunctive moods and a single superordinate verb, itself marked for person, number, and mood: *OMA*. This verb, when it occurs alone, can have such varied meanings as ‘say, mean, hope, intend, do’. When it follows another verb in one of what I call the intentional moods it explicates and *locates* the will (the intention) behind the process/event being reported – or, as I prefer to say, it encodes the deontic source.⁶⁸ It can in this way impose obligative or imperative or interrogative mood upon the lexical verb that it governs.

Mekeo has long attracted attention from linguists, both because of the small size of its phonemic inventory and because of its low cognate percentages with the other languages of Central Papua. “The lexico-statistical evidence...indicates either that all other languages belong to a subgroup apart from Mekeo, or that Mekeo has undergone exceptionally rapid changes” (Pawley 1969:2). There has been a persistent theory to the effect that the divergence of Mekeo should be attributed to the “fusion of an incoming race with a Papuan stock” (Seligman 1909:320). The issue was complicated by theories that successive waves of Indonesian or Polynesian travellers had reached the south-east coast of Papua, seeding the local languages with exotic vocabulary items (argued in Capell 1943, Pawley 1969 and Wurm 1975).

While most of these theories are no longer in vogue they have not as yet been formally proved or disproved. I do not set out to do this here. What emerges from the present thesis, however, is confirmation that Mekeo grammar has developed in a largely idiosyncratic manner, probably under the influence of its non-Austronesian neighbours. The precise extent of lexical and grammatical borrowings from neighbouring languages can not as yet be assessed. However one thing that seems clear from the lexical data I have gathered, if not the grammatical, is that Pre-Mekeo split into at least two dialects, the ancestors of NWMek, WMek and NMek on the one hand and of EMek on the other.⁶⁹

In one sense, Mekeo is not unusual. Head-marking languages account for a large proportion of the world’s languages.⁷⁰ However, the structure of such languages has yet to be satisfactorily described. This is grammar inside the predication but outside the clause. As regards Mekeo, the grammar has to handle nominals that may or may not be predicates, nominals that may or may not be constituents of a given predication, and constituents that may or may not occur in surface structure, as well as a range of zero-derived verb forms and constructions. Consequently, the present description has had to be innovative in a number of ways. Partial precedents have been found in recent accounts of Lakhota, Chichewa, Warlpiri and Fijian, and descriptive strategies have been borrowed eclectically. Parallels have been drawn wherever possible.

Major conceptual problems remain with the model here presented. The implications and interconnections of its various component parts have only begun to be investigated. Moreover, being based on an analysis of unelicited data, it raises many more empirical questions than it answers, posing problems that only further fieldwork will resolve. However, as it stands, it documents *unmarked* usage across the four dialects, and represents

⁶⁸ Deontic modalities represent processes or events in terms of logical necessity and obligation.

⁶⁹ This split is best typified by the different terms for staple foods in the Western group (where sago is the most important staple), and in the East (where bananas are more important than sago). The Western group has *aia, aida, aiza* ‘sago’ and *poa, foa* ‘banana’, while EMek has *i-pako* ‘sago’ and *o’o* ‘banana’ (where ‘ ’ signifies a slight hiatus or pause).

⁷⁰ Cross-linguistically, to put it in Praguean terms (see Van Valin 1985:406), dependent-marking is *marked* while head-marking is *unmarked*.

– at least – a relatively wide-ranging sketch of a little-known language, which other scholars will undoubtedly revise and embellish in the not-too-distant future. It will serve, I hope, as the groundwork for this future research.

1.3.1 LEVELS OF LANGUAGE, LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

Language – as such – consists of three analytic levels (or strata), and two interlevels.

The theory requires that linguistic events should be accounted for at a number of different levels: this is found to be necessary because of the difference in kind of the processes of abstraction involved.

(Halliday 1961:1.4)

Each level and interlevel thus naturally corresponds with a separate field of scientific inquiry, as set out schematically here:

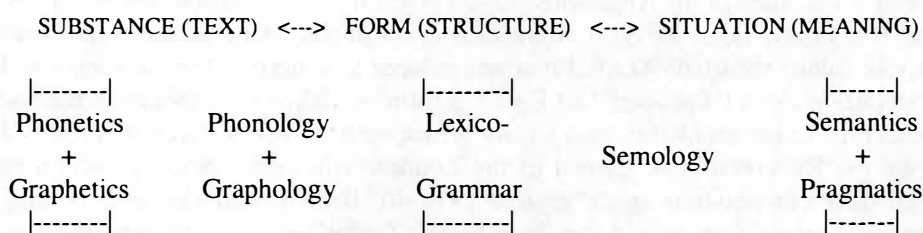


FIGURE 4: LEVELS OF LANGUAGE

I shall be largely concerned in the pages that follow with the open and closed systems that operate over the lexicogrammatical structures of Mekeo, i.e. with ‘form’. I analyse surface strings into a number of overlapping layers of structure (see §1.3.3.2.1 and §1.3.3.2.3 below).

I shall also be attempting to describe systems of exophoric reference,⁷¹ and the ways in which these ‘interlock’ with the systems of the grammar (as well as the performative functions of the language: how one gets things done with words). I shall, moreover, be trying to account for the semantics of Mekeo in terms of the realities of life for the Mekeo villager, *as perceived by the Mekeo villager, now and in the past*. It will thus be necessary to ‘ground’ the facts of the language in the facts of the situational and the cultural context, a functional grounding that has been tentatively labelled ‘semology’.⁷²

This ‘semological’ realm is of particular importance for any description of the systems of Mekeo grammar because of its peculiar centrality to these. In Mekeo, high levels of homonymy *and* polysemy (the former caused to a great extent, though not solely, by consonantal attrition over time – see §1.2.3 above) combine with a system of discourse cohesion that is marked by a lack of the kind of structural mechanisms that ensure unambiguity of reference (and coreference) in so many other languages. Mekeo, for example, makes no use of switch function or switch reference systems, and it has no system

⁷¹ Halliday and Hasan (1976:18 and 32-33) have distinguished between textual reference, which they call “endophoric” reference (its two varieties are more widely described as anaphoric, where reference is made to a preceding mention, and cataphoric, where reference is to a following mention) and situational reference, which they called “exophoric” reference. Exophoric reference is thus equivalent to deictic reference “in the strict sense” (Halliday 1985:291).

⁷² By Halliday. J.C. Catford has coined the term ‘plerology’ (according to Berry 1975:44. fn.1).

of grammatical gender. Mekeo thus relies heavily on exophoric reference and the pragmatic knowledge of the hearer. Despite the use of extralinguistic props the language manages to retain an extraordinary level of intrinsic and – indeed – functional indeterminacy, especially as regards the participant roles in an event (or process). To borrow the words of Foley and Van Valin (1984:324):

Rules of conversational inference based on cultural knowledge...play a major role in the assignment of coreference for the participants in the discourse. Sentences are often multiply ambiguous and subject to different interpretations depending on the knowledge the hearer brings to the task.

The substance of my corpus is overwhelmingly a phonic one, reflecting the primacy of the spoken language in Mekeo culture. But the written language has its place in this culture too, nowadays, thanks to the more or less phonemic writing systems devised by various missionaries. The ‘central’ Mekeo dialects (Mekeo as spoken around Rarai, Veifa’a, Inawi, etc., on and to the south of the Angabunga River) began to be written down in the 1890s by priests of the Sacred Heart Mission. Somewhat later (in the 1930s perhaps) the western dialect spoken along the Biaru-Akaifu River was reduced to writing by the same mission, but using a slightly different alphabet. And Kovio, a form of Mekeo then spoken in the north-west bend of the Lakekamu River, near its confluence with the Tiveri River, was reduced to writing by the Reverend H.A. Brown of the London Missionary Society, who used a somewhat different notation again, around 1939-40. Brown produced a dictionary, a grammar and a school primer, and translated Mark’s Gospel into the language (these were subsequently lost in a fire in 1947, and then more hastily redone). Various prayers and hymns were written down in Kovio in the 1940s and 1950s, and some of these were also translated into Tati – the Toaripi name for the western variety of Mekeo that I referred to just above – using the same Kovio alphabet. There are thus three separate alphabets in existence today.⁷³

Many if not most Mekeo – those with any mission contact at any rate – have had since then some sort of facility with letters instilled in them in mission primary schools, to the extent that they can ‘say and write’ pretty well anything in their own dialect. However, the ephemeral nature of the texts produced – for example, letters, notes, lists – has precluded the kind of dynamic interaction over time between the phonic and the graphic substance that is so characteristic of languages with a longer postliterate history. While the Sacred Heart Mission has printed a considerable number of prayer books, gospel stories and hymnals over the years on its Yule Island press, these have had such limited impact on the psychological representations of native speakers that, while the Fathers have fairly consistently preferred an isolating analysis of running text, for example separating the subject-marking prefixes from the verbal nucleus, native speakers just as consistently opt for an agglutinative representation, writing the verb phrase as a single word.⁷⁴

⁷³ The most salient difference between them is that Brown uses *z* for [ŋ], while the Roman Catholics use *g* in the east and *ng* in the west. Note that the pandialectal alphabet proposed above (in §1.2.2.2) sidesteps all such discrepancies.

⁷⁴ The Mekeo spoken and written by the missionaries constitutes – according to my informants – a separate subdialect (and/or a separate register) of ‘central’ or east Mekeo.

1.3.2 MACROFUNCTIONS IN CONTEXT

1.3.2.1 UNIVERSAL MACROFUNCTIONS

SFL theory recognises four major macrofunctional components in the grammar of any language. These are highly general functions. They derive from the semantic and pragmatic levels of language⁷⁵ and are intrinsic to the nature and origin of the grammatical system in context and in use. They may be shown as follows:

EXPERIENTIAL/LOGICAL

INTERPERSONAL

TEXTUAL

These functions are presented like this – in a column⁷⁶ – in order to emphasise that they find simultaneous expression across a stretch of language, and indeed often exploit the same lexicogrammatical means. Halliday describes the complex ‘layered’ nature of all ‘text’ as follows:

It embodies all these types of meaning in simultaneous networks of options, from each of which derive structures that are mapped on to one another in the course of their lexicogrammatical realization. The lexicogrammar acts as the integrative system, taking components of the semantics and combining them to form multilayered, ‘polyphonic’ structural compositions.

(Halliday 1977:193)

I shall have much more to say about layers of meaning and/or analysis below.

An experiential component and a logical component function on a single plane to form what can be called the ideational component. The ideational component conceptualises and structures the speaker’s experience of the real world, including the inner world of his own consciousness, and enables the speaker to communicate information about these (conceptual) structures to others. It separates out different classes of process or events and different kinds of ‘things’, and in as much as it is the ‘descriptive’ function⁷⁷ it includes the other macrofunctions, conceptualising these too in the process in a culturally coherent way.

The experiential component encodes events and processes in clauses, that is to say as predications. It is this component that structures our experience in terms of such grammatical systems as ergativity, or transitivity and causativity as happens in Mekeo. In other words, the important perceived participants in events or processes are encoded as structural functions such as subject, object, indirect object and oblique. Here, too, the systems of tense, aspect

⁷⁵ For Halliday these two layers, or domains, are theoretically inseparable, though this whole area of the theory has yet to be mapped out in detail. Halliday (1978) is the best treatment to date.

⁷⁶ The order of the functions reflects a theoretical assignment of priority to the ideational component (cf. Thrane 1980:2), which may not hold to the same extent for every language.

⁷⁷ ‘Macrofunctional components’ have been recognised by many scholars of language besides Halliday, and it is instructive to see how these all line up. The following table is after Thrane (1980):

Bühler	Lyons	Halliday	Jakobson	Popper
Ausdruck	Expressive	—	Emotive	Expressive
—	Social	Interpersonal	Phatic	—
Appell	—	—	Conative	Stimulative
Darstellung	Descriptive	Experiential	Referential	Descriptive
—	—	Logical	—	Argumentative
—	—	Textual	—	—

and mood interact to express a (language-specific) construction of perceived reality. This is, in effect, grammar below the clause.

The logical component represents logico-semantic relations between propositions and head-dependent relations within propositional structures. It represents an immediate constituent analysis of the syntactic data, in that structural functions are ignored in logical bracketing. Logical structure is primary in Mekeo above the level of the word. At the same time, the complexity of functional structure *within* the word, especially the verb word, and *between* minimal clauses (which is again to say verb words), is in fact central to Mekeo grammar. And logico-semantic indeterminacy within the *predication* (or expanded clause) and between predications (at the level of peripheral juncture) is what lends Mekeo and, no doubt, other structurally similar languages a rather special character. This level corresponds to what was known traditionally as syntax.

The interpersonal component represents the grammar of interaction, as between participants in an on-going speech event, a communication situation. In English, it has to do with person and mood, that is to say the inter-varying roles of the speech act participants and the different kinds of speech acts they participate in. In Mekeo it has to do with all these things but is, besides, critically concerned with the deontic structure of the speech act, i.e. with identifying the deontic source of every utterance, every intention, every 'meaning'. The Mekeo thus seem to respond to any stimulus with an automatic, unspoken question: 'Who says so?' All utterances should be attributed, or attributable. And the deontic source is in fact specifiable, in Mekeo, by means of the specialised auxiliary verb *OMA*, 'to say, to intend, to mean', which operates in conjunction with a system of 'subjunctive' moods that are marked on the verb (see §1.4.4 below).

The textual component gives language cohesion and referential meaning. It consists in all the possible uses of the systems of the grammar, uses that constitute utterances as messages, sent and received by identifiable speech act participants and meaningful in terms of layered *con-texts* (of language or of life). The textual component is in large measure a pragmatic component: it includes the systems of text reference (endophoric reference) and deixis (exophoric reference), as well as imposing an overall topic-predicate structure on almost every utterance.

1.3.2.2 TRANSITIVITY FUNCTIONS

Besides the foregoing set of four major macrofunctions, Mekeo overtly distinguishes a number of lower level macrofunctional components *within* the experiential component. These 'conjugations' recognise and represent culturally distinguished areas or modes of activity, fashions of interacting with the world. I shall call them 'transitivity functions' since they are realised by means of a classification of typically verbal roots in terms of the kinds of objects these ordinarily take and the kinds of effects they produce. Different classes of objects/effects are morphologically distinguished by means of specialised object-marking suffixes on the verb root. The object markers are distinct in that they contain different thematic consonants (or indeed none). There is, for example, the domain of manually/physically wrought effects on passive objects (marked by *-ŋ*, or *-n*), the domain of instrumentally wrought effects on autonomously conceived and often disintegrating objects (marked by *-∅*), the domain of brief, deft and perfunctory operations which often result in the appropriation or elimination of an object (marked by *-β*, *-b*, *-p*), the domain of curt, perfunctory or destructive operations

which often cause a visible transformation (i.e. change of shape) or a dispersion of their objects (marked by *-g*, *-k*), as well as a domain of nullified transitivity (marked by zero affixation for person and number). All of this will be dealt with in considerable detail in §1.3.4.3, §4.1.4 and §4.3.3 below.

1.3.2.3 TRANSITIVITY VERSUS CAUSATIVITY

Mekeo syntax is structured by two distinct systems that one might subsume under a general term like effectivity, or executivity or role-realisation systems.⁷⁸ These are two systems of grammatical operations whereby the functions (or roles) implicated by transitive verbs can be syntactically interrelated. Intransitive verbal roots fall into two major classes, according to the syntactic system whose rules they will obey on gaining a second function.

Under the first of these systems the subject of an intransitive verb corresponds to⁷⁹ the subject of the derived transitive form of the same verb. This can be represented as $S = A$ (where S is intransitive Subject, and A is transitive subject, or Actor). Under the second system the subject of an intransitive verb corresponds to the *object* of the derived transitive form of the same verb. This can be represented as $S = O$ ($O <$ transitive Object). The system represented by the first of these equations is the system of transitivity. That represented by the second is the system of causativity. Dixon (1979:70) has suggested that different languages tend to conflate (or identify grammatically) different members of this role-set, and in these terms many aspects of Mekeo grammar can be explained as a merging of *the properties of S* and *A*, and a simultaneous devaluing of *O*.

In view of the fact that I divide all Mekeo verbs into those that function according to the rules of the system of transitivity and those that function according to the rules of the system of causativity it is no longer necessary to have three function names. Consequently I will refer to the subject function of all verbs (transitive or intransitive) as S and the object function of all verbs (transitive or causative) as O . In each system, however, these functions will have different semantic specifications:

TRANSITIVITY:

$S =$ Actor

$O =$ Goal

CAUSATIVITY:

$S =$ Causer

$O =$ Causee or Undergoer

These two semantico-syntactic systems represent two different ways of effecting change in the world, and they involve different kinds of actants.⁸⁰ All verbs require an agentive subject in Mekeo. However, any kind of actant can be represented as subject-of-verb and as such will be felt to be an agent. Verbal roots that typically (that is, for semantic reasons) take human subjects will typically obey the rules of the system of transitivity (whereby an

⁷⁸ Modern linguistics lacks a blanket term to cover transitivity and causativity (and ergativity). Dixon (1979) all but names the two syntactic sub-systems which he distinguishes in terms of derivational operations (described as $S = A$ and $S = O$). These syntactic 'domains' represent what Lyons (1977:491) calls different "valency schemata". He notes that different English verbs follow one or the other semantic, and are classed accordingly as "operative" (transitive) or "factive" (causative). See §1.3.4.4, §5.2.9 and §5.2.10 below for ongoing discussion of this topic.

⁷⁹ Note that I wish to argue against the interpretation of correspondences as transformations (the rearrangement of invariant actants).

⁸⁰ I use this term (originally from Tesnière 1959) to mean the real-world candidates for the structurally defined syntactic functions/roles that a given verb form (simple or derived) requires (or implicates).

agentive subject ‘acts upon’ a non-agentive inanimate object). Verbal roots that typically take inanimate subjects will typically obey the rules of the system of causativity (whereby an agentive subject ‘controls’ an agentive object). Intransitive verbs consequently divide up into those that denote actions performed by humans (or animals, or spirits) and those that denote processes undergone by inanimate entities.⁸¹

Causativity represents the predominant system in Mekeo grammar, and one whose operations can spread into the domain of the transitivity system. There are two basic kinds of causativity: direct and indirect (periphrastic). But, on the level of complex verbal predications, causativity manifests itself in the relations between the arguments of verbally functioning roots (within the nucleus). And, on the level of interclausal syntax, causativity manifests itself as the causative serialisation of verbal predicates. The second system – transitivity – operates with a considerably more restricted range of roots and appears to be semantically ‘defective’ in certain functions (where it assumes an intensive or intra-causative meaning).

Transitivity involves action, the visible exercise of force by a typically animate or human subject. One tries to change the world by using one’s energy, either to change one’s position in it or work upon it (by activating some part or parts of one’s own body, or through the intermediary of an instrument). Causativity is a more indirect method of acting upon the world, less visible in its exercise, and it usually involves the manipulation of objects or people so that these somehow ‘deputise’ for the higher agent and carry out his/her will. The *will* itself is represented in Mekeo by the operation of the superordinate modal verb *OMA* (to be described in §1.4.4), and all attempts to control others, or events in general, and attempts to identify the source of responsibility for actions, a preoccupation of the Mekeo, tend to be coded in terms of that verb.

1.3.2.4 A FIFTH MACROFUNCTION

My data, as well as months of participant observation in the field, have led me to set up a fifth major macrofunction for Mekeo: the invocational function. This is, more accurately, the deictic-referential function of Lyons (see Lyons 1975). For the Mekeo, reference in itself constitutes⁸² a species of action, a class of speech *acts*. These speech acts can be described informally as invocations. There are two kinds of invocations: those where the person or thing named is present to the utterance situation (i.e. deictic speech acts – these can be personal or impersonal), and those where that which is invoked is absent.

Other writers have described this kind of speech act. See for example Brown’s (1986:48) definition of the Oroko (NAN) word *ihura*:

ihura [T(oaripi) *isuta*] *n.* traditional exclamation that embodies the name of the clan *aualare*. The *ihura* thus vary from clan to clan. They are used in moments of triumph or excitement. There are various kinds, distinguished by a definitive *n.* in apposition, e.g. *maea* [T. *maea*] (body), *ma* [T. *ma*] (water), *mea* [T. *mea*] (ground). *ihura ara* to utter an *ihura*; also, of a dog, to bark, or rather to give a short howl.

⁸¹ This semantically justified dichotomy of verbs (in some languages) is adumbrated by Dixon (1979:117-118), who is at pains to point out the distinction between semantically motivated systems like causativity and syntactically motivated systems that override semantic distinctions, like ergativity.

⁸² As Searle (1969) has suggested.

This sort of language behaviour has also been described for the Motu and the Koita.⁸³ The utterances in question have been described as ‘sneeze calls’. They are discussed briefly again in §2.1.1.1 below.

It is true that men often invoke the name of a clan or village ‘in moments of triumph or excitement’.⁸⁴ But there are a whole range of far less dramatic usages among the Mekeo, and all come under the general rubric of deictic-referential. Proper names (personal names) are, for instance, often used in this manner. The name is called out, usually in full, in the presence of a person to be ‘honoured’ or ‘recognised’. The name is not uttered in address, i.e. it is not a vocative usage, and the compliment is ideally returned:

A: *Ah, Alan Jones!*

B: *Ah, Aogoa!*

People have often said to me – shaking their heads with what could have been wry affection, or grudging admiration – *Ah, nao!* ‘Ah, European!’ (all dialects). Again, when homesick, a man might call out: *Ah, paŋua!* ‘Ah, (home) village!’ (EMek).

In another usage, a person might call out while eating (perhaps with great weariness): *Ah, poa!* ‘Ah, bananas!’ (WMek). Or, watching a pig forage: *Ah, ?uma!* ‘Ah, pig!’ (EMek). A head-shake is frequently appropriate. The basic function here seems to be ‘recognition or acknowledgement’. To ‘recognise’ is, in Mekeo, *ba-goa-lai-n-a, pa-koa-lai-n-a*, which is a causative verb based on the root *goa, koa* ‘true likeness’.

1.3.3 UNIT, RANK AND FORCE

In Mekeo grammar there are four levels – four ‘ranks’⁸⁵ – of units/functions:

PREDICATION	GROUP	WORD	MORPHEME
-------------	-------	------	----------

These levels constitute a fixed hierarchy. The two topmost levels are frequently identical in terms of morphology and syntactic structure, and are differentiated only by the uses made of them, their syntactic *functions*. The highest level unit is characterised by its having the force⁸⁶ of a full and independent assertion – thus potentially representing an independent utterance – while that immediately below it is negatively characterised by its lacking such force.

Non-predicative structures often have exactly the same structure as predications and are thus headed constructions. These are labelled ‘groups’. They may also be topicalised and/or relativised, in which case they take a pronominal head. There is also a minor class of unheaded units, which will be called phrases, at this level. Groups and phrases are only found embedded in predications, where they function as topics.

83 “A warrior would call out, I may perhaps say invoke, the name of his *ufu* [clan-house] when striking a blow, and Father Egidi adds that warriors returning from a war party would embrace the main piles of the *ufu* ‘invoking and praising them’” (Seligman, 1910:332, fn.2). I give Seligman’s note on this usage in full in §2.1.1.1 below.

84 Koita is a non-Austronesian language. The Koita live in nine villages on or close to the coast in the western Motu area, in the vicinity of Port Moresby (Dutton 1969:26-31; Taylor 1970a:1).

85 See §1.3(5), above. Rank is a basic term in systemic-functional grammar, but the concept is common to other theories. Ranks refers to level of linguistic complexity. Lower level units stand in a constituency relationship to higher.

86 By ‘force’ is meant *illocutionary* force.

All languages have ranks of structure (or sizes of units). The units on each rank (except the very lowest) are made up from units of the rank immediately below. Thus, in English, morphemes make up words, which make up groups or phrases, which make up clauses, which make up sentences. The notion of rankshift allows for higher ranking units to function at the rank of their own constituents (e.g. a prepositional group functioning as a modifier in another group, or a relative clause, which can also in English function to modify the head of a nominal group). Rankshift is thus often called embedding.

Rankshift as used here, with reference to Mekeo, signifies the loss by a structure of its predicative force. It can apply to predications or to reduced predications, which are their marked heads, and which are here called predicates. Words, i.e. unmarked nominals, can also function as predicates in Mekeo. When used as adargumental topics in a verbal predication they too can be regarded as rankshifted predicates.

In Mekeo, when a structure is embedded in another structure of equal rank this can only mean that one predication (or a predicate) is embedded in another predication. This can occur under either of two conditions. The original predicate or predication may lose its predicative force to function as a topic – possibly in apposition to another nominal topic, or in apposition to a function marker on a verb. However, a predicate or a predication may also be embedded in another predication while retaining its own predicative force (in which case it functions somewhat like parenthetical identification in English, if nominal, and somewhat like a non-defining relative clause, if verbal). Both the above possibilities contrast with chained predicates and chained predications, and the interpretation of a string of language as to which of the above is the intended reading, is largely a matter for the hearer (though intonation and speed of delivery usually provides some guidance).

Rankshift – which has no obligatory reflex in form – differs from morphologically marked same-rank derivations whereby verbs can alter their process dynamics and their argument-taking potential. It also differs from the up-ranking derivation which either a) adds argument-marking to a previously unmarked root, thereby transforming it into an argument-taking predicate, or b) adds predicative force to an unmarked root. Rankshift is by definition downward.

All predicates and predications correspond to asserted propositions, with the exception of ‘invocations’ (§1.3.2.4 above).⁸⁷ Rankshift, which removes the force of assertion, is the single most important process in Mekeo grammar, accounting for much of the complexity of full (= fully determined) predications by means of a morphologically and syntactically unmarked functional shift. Without movement, and without marking, the level or rank of a unit is known solely from its function – otherwise said from its force, or the lack of it.

Rankshifted predicates and predications have to be distinguished from predicates and predications that have been embedded as such, in apposition to a main predicate. Any nominal and any NP within a predication can be itself a predicate. However, as Hale (1983) noted, this is not a simple matter.

⁸⁷ Other types of illocutionary force – interrogative, for example – can be specified morphosyntactically (by means of the superordinate verb *OMA*). See §1.4.4 and §4.2.4 below. Discourse particles can help to assign special illocutionary functions to an originally ideational/assertive utterance.

1.3.3.1 RANK SCALE OF UNITS

Rank is usually defined (abstractly) as position in a hierarchy of successively more inclusive units of structure. The lexicogrammar of English is – following Halliday (1977, 1978) – organised in terms of rank rather than constituent structure.⁸⁸ Halliday has schematised the English rank scale somewhat as follows:

	CLAU <u>S</u> E				CLAU <u>S</u> E COMPLEX
GROUP:	Verbal	Nominal	Adverbial	Prepositional	GROUP COMPLEX
WORD:	Verb	Noun	Adverb	Preposition	WORD COMPLEX
	MORPHEME				MORPHEME COMPLEX

FIGURE 5: THE ENGLISH RANK SCALE OF UNITS

According to this schema there are four levels, or ranks, of unit. Morphemes make up words, words make up groups,⁸⁹ and groups make up clauses.

The units which go to make up higher units are all *functionally heterogeneous*. Complexes on the other hand are recursive structures formed by paratactic or hypotactic combinations of like units (coordination, apposition, modification, etc.) at the rank in question. A sentence, for example, is defined as a clause complex.

Even more than English, Mekeo lends itself to an analysis based primarily on the notions of rank and rankshift. This is because such a large proportion of group-level constructions in Mekeo can be analysed as rankshifted predications (clause-level units),⁹⁰ constructions which are neither syntactically nor morphologically distinguished from actual predications but which function as topics in a matrix predication. The levels of the lexicogrammar of Mekeo can be thus represented as follows:

⁸⁸ In fact Halliday and systemic grammarians generally accept constituent structure as the basis of their analysis, but with minimal bracketing, thereafter organised by rank.

⁸⁹ A group is here, by definition, an endocentric construction (= a headed construction) functioning as a constituent of a clause: *a very big dog, up the hill*. They contrast with phrases, which are exocentric constructions: *cats and dogs, on the table*.

⁹⁰ It is thus being proposed that many nominal predications may not only be read as simultaneous, secondary predicates (cf. Hale 1983:30-42, on Warlpiri nominals), but also that these are initially predicative. Compare this with Nichols (1978b:118) who derives secondary predicates in English and Russian from initial predicates.

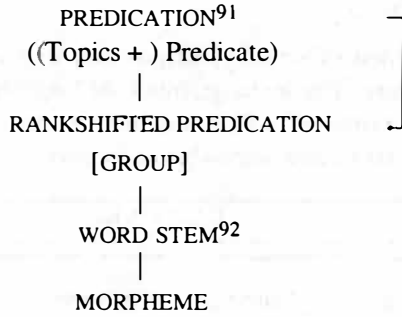


FIGURE 6: THE MEKEO RANK-UNIT SCALE (1)

The morphemes are the building blocks of words and, although some words consist of a single morpheme (a lexical root), morphemes will be treated as functionless in isolation (i.e. *as* morphemes). At word level, roots have lexical meaning, which includes syntactic information about potential combinations of grammatical relations. Stems can have syntactic meaning, but they have no referential meaning. This is supplied when they receive marking and enter the domain of discourse, as (heads of) predications *in context*.

The ranked levels of units can be illustrated from EMek as follows:

TABLE 8: THE MEKEO RANK-UNIT SCALE ILLUSTRATED

	NOMINAL	VERBAL
PREDICATION	<i>Imoi papie-ŋa!</i> child woman-3SG The child is (a) female!	<i>Ŋau-ŋa ke-imo!</i> offspring-3SG 3PL-child His/her babies became children!
GROUP	<i>Imoi papie-ŋa...</i> child woman-3SG The little girl...	<i>Ŋau-ŋa ke-imo...</i> offspring-3SG 3PL-child That his/her babies are becoming/ became/had become children...
WORD	<i>imo</i> child <i>papie-ŋa</i> woman-3SG	<i>ŋau-ŋa</i> offspring-3SG <i>ke-imo</i> 3PL-child
MORPHEME	<i>imo</i> child; <i>papie</i> woman; <i>-ŋa</i> 3SG	<i>ŋau</i> offspring; <i>imo</i> child; <i>-ŋa</i> 3SG; <i>ke-</i> 3PL

In Mekeo, any word can constitute a predication, while at the same time any expanded predication can be rankshifted downward to the level of a word, and can be embedded in and function as a constituent of a matrix predication:

91 Minimally a marked head, such as a relational noun or a finite verb.
 92 This term covers both ‘nouns’ and ‘verbs’. One is tempted here to adopt terms like ‘nounation’ and ‘verbatation’. Nounation suggests the nominal functioning of an uncategorised lexical base, verbatation the verbal functioning of such a base. Compare Whorf’s (1956:96-98) use of “verbatation” and “stativation”. I shall, however, continue to use the traditional terms noun and verb in this thesis, though sometimes resorting to ‘verbatation’ when I wish to specify the *process* of becoming a verb phrase.

- 1.2 *Uṅaṅa(.)* (all dialects.)
It/she/he is a sorcerer.
a/the sorcerer
- 1.3 *Ama-u(.)* (all dialects.)
father-1SG
He is my father.
my father
- 1.4 *Lau e-u(.)* (EMek)
I POSS-1SG
It belongs to me.
mine
- 1.5 *E-bua-i-a(.)* (NMek, WMek)
3SG-bear-PF-3SG
S/he carried it.
the fact of her carrying it
- 1.6 [*Babie, eka e-bua-i-a*] *a-ida.* (WMek)
Woman, basket 3SG-bear-PF-3SG] 1SG-see.
I saw a/the woman (who was) carrying a basket.
OR: I saw that a/the woman was carrying a basket.

There is a class of exocentric nominal constructions that cannot be derived from predications. These link nominals in coordinate syntagms by means of a conjunction or a limiting enclitic. For example, both NPs in the following:

- 1.7 *Ida agawā po, poa mo gi-ani-ani.* (WMek)
s/he spouse.3SG together banana only 3PL-eat-RED
He and his wife/She and her husband, they only ever eat bananas.

Here the first NP is headed by *POU* 'together', the second by *MO* 'just'.

However, the topmost and second topmost levels or ranks are very often structurally identical. Only in having or not having the illocutionary force of a predication (IF) do they differ. As there are two main kinds of predication, there are two main kinds of groups: nominal predications and verbal predications. The rank scale of the units can now be represented as:

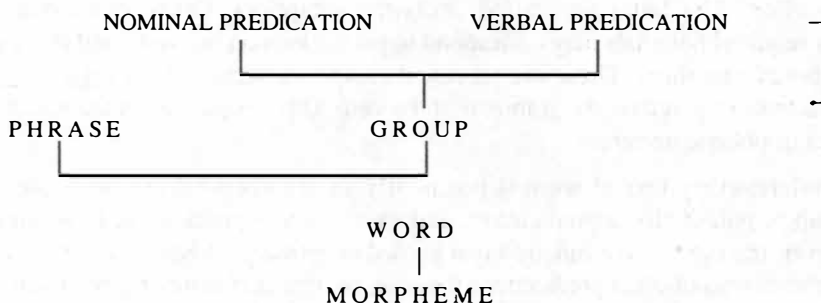


FIGURE 7: THE MEKEO RANK-UNIT SCALE (2)

However, in view of the fact that so many groups correspond structurally with predications, the relations between predications and groups, and phrases, is perhaps better captured by a three-level representation, as in:

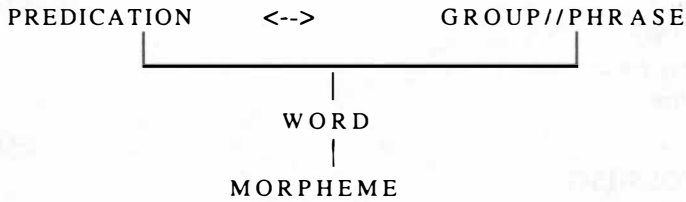


FIGURE 8: THE MEKEO RANK-UNIT SCALE (3)

Units at each level *are constitutive of* structures at the next highest level, as in English grammar, where the clause represents the uppermost level and limiting case of multivariate structure. Nothing less structured than the clause constitutes a message. In Mekeo, however, any structure at all can constitute a predication, and hence a message. Even one-word utterances can be analysed as elliptical predications:

(TOPIC +) PREDICATE

The predicate, which can always stand on its own as a reduced predication, may have internal structure, by way of grammatical markers affixed to a root or stem. In the case of a verb word (or VP) these affixes may constitute incorporated grammatical functions, and may thus be fully pronominal. This internal structure *may* be amplified by the semantic or pragmatic specification of its arguments by free-standing nominals that I class as topics.⁹³ On the other hand it can stand on its own, and even though 'reduced' by the absence of topics, it still functions as a fully determined verbal predication. Similarly a marked nominal head functions as a fully determined nominal predication. Reduced and expanded predications do not constitute two different *ranks*. With head marking, topics are always optional adjuncts.

There are numerous kinds of topics (see §1.3.3.3, and more especially §7.2 below). They range from circumstantial adjuncts (*apogo, afogo, favoko* 'tomorrow'; *ajo-ai, bauŋa-ai, paŋua-ai* 'from/in the village') to appositive nominals that correspond to the arguments of a predicate. These latter may be syntactically linked to a marked nominal predicate, or bonded to one of the syntactic functions of a verb and so integrated into the syntactic structure of the verbal predication. The latter are called anchored cataphors. Other semantically and pragmatically required nominals may correspond to no markers on the verb, and these will be called unanchored cataphors. These are all called cataphors because they refer forward to grammatical actants required by the grammar of the verb. Other topics again are circumstantials – time deictics or oblique nominals.

To recapitulate, every lexical word is potentially an argument-taking predicate. Every nominal group is potentially a predication, and every verbal predication is potentially a group. However, the predicative function is regarded as primary. When functioning as non-predicative constituents of other predications they can be regarded as having been rankshifted

⁹³ A topic here represents the more or less specific mention of an entity or a circumstance as 'give' or 'agreed upon' so as to set the background for information to be presented as new and/or important in the predicate.

downward. They can now *function as* topics in an expanded nominal or verbal predication. Expanded predications can also undergo rankshift in their entirety, and thereafter can fulfill all the same functions as a word or a group. They can also undergo a process similar to relativisation, which involves nominalisation.

All of these matters will be discussed again and illustrated at length at appropriate points in the work, and their full implications for grammar and discourse will be explicated in the appropriate chapters and sections. However, rankshift is specifically dealt with below, in §1.3.3.4. Fully determined or expanded predications and embedded predications are dealt with in Chapters 7 and 8, after the classes of root words and the classes of predications and the internal structure of predications have all been examined at greater length in the intervening text.

1.3.3.2 THE FORCE OF PREDICATION⁹⁴

Predications differ from lower level units in that they have illocutionary force: the force of assertion. By virtue of this force they constitute speech acts. When they lose it they must be treated as ‘word’ level units, or as structures prior to use.

Invocation – more particularly, deictic invocation – can have, as we saw above (§1.3.2.4 and following subsections), a performative and presentative function not ordinarily described for English. This applies primarily to proper names and deictic pro-forms, but common nouns, specific and generic, definite and indefinite, occasionally occur in this non-predicative use. However, the predicative mode predominates in Mekeo discourse.

Nominal predications can assert a) identity, b) class membership, or possession of a common attribute, c) a determining relation, and d) quantity. The predicate nominal frequently (in some cases obligatorily) carries a determining suffix that refers anaphorically to the topic. I illustrate these different kinds of assertions briefly here.⁹⁵ Topics are spoken with a rising or falling-rising pitch, and may be followed by a pause, while predicates are invariably spoken with a falling pitch. Graphically, topics are followed by a comma, which represents the actual or potential pause:

- | | | |
|------|--|--------|
| 1.8 | <i>Isa, lopia!</i>
s/he chief
He is the chief! | (EMek) |
| 1.9 | <i>Eṛaea, kuma!</i>
that pig
That is a pig! | (WMek) |
| 1.10 | <i>Eṛa'ina, amu?e!</i>
that dog-3SG
That is a dog! | (EMek) |

⁹⁴ The most delicate level of encoding for a predication is the prosodic, and I describe the system of basic pitch contours in §1.3.3.3.

⁹⁵ It will be noted that I seem to group a number of heterogeneous constructions under the cover term of ‘nominal predications’. In fact I will argue that these are all structurally and functionally identical. The justification for this is given in Chapters 2 and 3 (especially the latter).

- 1.11 *Tsi, mekia!* (EMek)
tea sweet/nice
The tea is sweet/nice!
- 1.12 *Tsi, mekia-ŋa!* (EMek)
tea nice-3SG
The tea is indeed sweet/nice!
- 1.13 *Goŋa, ima!* (WMek)
coconut five
The coconuts are five.
- 1.14 *Im-babie-ŋa!*⁹⁶ (NWMek)
child-female-3SG
(It is) a little girl!
- 1.15 *Isa, lau ama-u!* (EMek)
He I father-1SG
He is my father!
- 1.16 *Imi, imā!* (WMek)
child hand.3SG
(It is) the child's hand!

Ownership is asserted by means of an overt or covert possessive particle *E-*, which takes a determining suffix that agrees with the possessor:⁹⁷

- 1.17 *Eŋai'ina, lau e-u tsiati!* (EMek)
that I POSS-1SG shirt
That is my shirt!

The possessive particle accretes to the possessed nominal in some cases:

- 1.18 *Na-auke!*⁹⁸ (NWMek)
POSS.3SG-dog
(That is) his/her dog!

Verbal predications describe/assert the participation of an obligatory agent and an optional object in some process or event (action, mental reaction, speech act):

- 1.19 *Iji, a-mai.* (WMek)
I 1SG-come
I came, have come.
- 1.20 *Itsi, foa a-ani-a.* (NMek)
I banana 1SG-eat-3SG
I ate a/the banana.

⁹⁶ NWMek *im-babieŋa* is a syncopated and now fully lexicalised form of *imi babie-ŋa* (child.female-3SG) 'The child is (a) female'.

⁹⁷ See §2.2.1.4 and §3.1.6 below for further details.

⁹⁸ *E-* does not always appear in surface structure. NWMek, WMek, NMek *ŋa-*, *na-* are elliptical forms of *e-ŋa*, *e-na*. See §2.2.1.4, Table 18, for the EMek evidence for *E-*.

- 1.21 *Iu, ia ae-a-oŋo.* (NWMek)
 I her/him NEG-1SG-know/hear
 I do not know her/him.
- 1.22 *Imi, e-kua-lai.* (WMek)
 child 3SG-hang-away
 The child fell, has fallen.
- 1.23 *Fe-ke-lao ke-oma.* (EMek)
 OBLG-3PL-go 3PL-intend
 They want to go. OR: They said they would go.

In a fully head-marked language the verb word is in itself a full grammatical clause.⁹⁹ In the simplest form of verbal predication there is only the verb word with its function marking affixes, i.e. a verbal predicate. Fully determined verbal predications, as in examples 1.19 to 1.22 above, *include* a verbal predicate, as well as one or more forward-looking *topics*, which typically denote but do not refer, and which semantically define the arguments of the verbal predicate (or at least restrict their potential for referring).

Even one-word utterances – far from uncommon in Mekeo – represent predications. They assert or predicate something *of* something – some topic. The topic of the predication must be sought, in such cases, either in the immediately preceding discourse or in the surrounding context of the utterance situation:

- 1.24 *Uŋauŋa!* (WMek)
 sorcerer
 [S/he is a] sorcerer!

Interjections, or exclamations, are analysed here as predicating something *of* some person, thing, event or situation. That is to say, they are treated as reduced clauses. The vast majority of all utterances can thus be analysed as representing predications.

Otherwise said, although most utterances have structure on the ideational level, over and above this they are structured as messages. Something is asserted, or predicated, of something. This is why I prefer to speak here of a theme (consisting of one or more topics) and a predicate, rather than of theme and a rheme. The latter term does not have the requisite predicative connotations.

A predication is, in this grammar, a proposition with the ‘force’ of an assertion.

Nominal predications correspond to relational propositions of the kind expressed via the copula or the verb ‘to have’ in English. Propositions are, of course, the proper domain of truth-conditional semantics. But their illocutionary force and interpersonal functions engage all predicative utterances in the realm of pragmatic felicity conditions and implicatures.

A peculiarity of Mekeo is that predicates and predications may be embedded in matrix predications. They can in this way function as secondary predicates/predications. In other words, they can be embedded as *appositive* predicates (in apposition to the main predicate) – in contrast to those predications that, after rankshift, have lost the force of assertion. This will be illustrated further below, especially in Chapters 7 and 8.

⁹⁹ It has the same distribution as a predication of which it forms a part. Note that the term clause is not used in this account, where I speak of verbal predicates. A verbal predicate is itself a self-contained predication. Predicate is a discourse-pragmatic unit contrasting with topic, while a predication is (the assertion of) a proposition.

1.3.3.2.1 GENERAL STRUCTURE OF PREDICATIONS

The basic structure of any independent predication is the product of essential discourse-pragmatic functions.¹⁰⁰ It can be represented as in Figure 9:

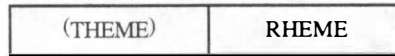


FIGURE 9: GENERAL STRUCTURE OF PREDICATIONS (1)

The theme is ‘the starting point’, what the speaker proposes to talk about in the rheme. The theme may be implicit, but the rheme is the indispensable part of every utterance, *what is being presented as new and/or important* information.¹⁰¹ A head-word contained in the rheme generally carries affixal markers that represent grammatical functions. These markers refer to entities which may also be represented in the theme, by a coreferential nominal.

Theme and rheme are distinctively encoded by prosodic means (to be described in detail in §1.3.3.3). Briefly, the theme is spoken with rising or falling-rising pitch-tones. It is followed by a slight but distinctly perceptible pause in non-hurried speech. The rheme is spoken on a falling pitch.

The theme is as we said ‘the starting point’, what the speaker proposes to talk about in the rheme. It consists of one or more ‘agreed upon’ topics. The theme may be left out, wholly or in part, but the rheme is the indispensable part of every utterance, what is being presented as *new and/or important* information.¹⁰² The rheme is made up of predicated information and is better called *the predicate*.

A syntactic head-word contained in the rheme generally carries affixal markers that represent grammatical functions and the arguments that fill these functions. These markers refer to actants which may also be represented in the theme, by coreferential nominals.

¹⁰⁰ The layer of clause structure that can be analysed in terms of given versus new information is called “information structure” by Halliday, and I retain this term. As Prince (1981) points out, these concepts are notoriously woolly. Chafe (1976:32) early on made the important point that “givenness is a status decided upon by the speaker”. Yule (1980) provided hard evidence for this from recordings. However, Chafe’s (1976:32) definition of given, as what is in the consciousness of the hearer at the time of the utterance, is not the one used here. Prince (1985) prefers to speak in terms of “assumed familiarity”, and provides a taxonomy of rather heterogeneous types and degrees. This, plus Chafe’s own notion that there are degrees of newness (Chafe 1976, 1987), suggests the abandonment of all such categories in favour of *an objective scale of prosodic emphasis, as assigned by the speaker*. Objective givenness and newness are thus scalar concepts. However, a basic dichotomy has indispensable explanatory power in the context of Mekeo grammar-discourse. The definitions here assigned to these terms are now provided:

GIVEN: what is mentioned by a speaker because it is assumed to be unpredictable *in this context*. It is presented/given as an agreed-upon non-controversial basis for the forthcoming information which *will be* debatable.

NEW: what is asserted by a speaker because it is thought to be new and/or important *in this context*. I leave the term ‘important’ purposely vague. It implies that the information will be more or less *surprising* to the hearer. Chafe’s ‘given’ is but *a part of* the discourse-pragmatically constituted scene, and I will refer to this in its entirety as the KNOWN. It provides reference for anaphors and/or deictics, and a background of shared expectations.

¹⁰¹ The terms theme and rheme derive from the work of the Prague School of linguistics. My use of them here is close to that in Halliday (1985).

¹⁰² ‘Newness’ is held to be a relative notion that grades into contrastiveness on a scale of *importance*. The degree of importance assigned to the information presented represents a subjective assessment on the part of the speaker. I follow Bolinger (1961, 1970) in this, rather than Givón (1984, 1990).

The theme is realised as a number of topics. By topics are meant lexical items that are presented as part of the theme rather than the rheme. That is, the information they represent does not constitute part of the information that is being asserted as the main predicate. This allows for the fact that some topics may be presented as new information (these may constitute embedded predicates). However, new topics are not part of what is being treated by the speaker as discourse-pragmatically *important* information.

Topics represent the following four semantic entities: a) arguments of a nominal or verbal predicate and b) circumstantial topics such as locative¹⁰³ and temporal deictics and oblique-marked peripheral participants such as instrument or location/source. The former can be referred to as adargumental topics, and the latter as adsentential topics.

The theme may also include grammatical items such as conjunctions, as well as modal particles and discourse markers, which cannot be considered topics.

Adargumental topic nominals provide denotation and sometimes reference for arguments affixed to a head word in the rheme. They in turn receive their syntactic functions from the arguments with which they correspond. Because they precede these arguments they will be referred to as cataphors.

There is always one main topic in a verbal predication, and this must correspond with one of the arguments marked on the head word, that is with either the subject or the direct object of the verb.¹⁰⁴ The leftmost adargumental topic in a verbal predication is always the main topic, and only nominals in this position are ordinarily relativised. There may be other topics, corresponding to the full range of optional and obligatory arguments of the verb, marked and unmarked on the verb word.

MAIN	TOPIC	TOPIC	
1.25	<i>Kuma maua,</i>	<i>oai, babie</i>	<i>po-bini-a.</i> (WMek)
	pig	big you woman	OBLG.2SG-give-3SG
	You should give the big pig to the woman.		

The word *babie* 'woman' is not a topic because it is not followed by a comma representing an actual or potential pause. It is a part of the predicate and would accordingly be spoken with a falling intonation. The nominal preceding the verb word is very often incorporated in the predicate in this way, and when this happens it is the focus of the predication,¹⁰⁵ and it takes the tonic pitch accent and the main stress.

In a nominal predication there is only one topic, and this is normally the first nominal in the utterance. Adsentential topics are rare in nominal predications. The predicate may consist of one nominal, or of two nominals of which some relation is predicated.

¹⁰³ Some unmarked locatives can represent arguments of motion verbs.

¹⁰⁴ Not all arguments of the verb are marked, e.g. indirect objects, causees.

¹⁰⁵ Note that the term 'focus' has this as its primary meaning in the present grammar. My use of this term derives from Halliday's 'focus of new information', and the Praguean 'focus of assertion'. This is a contrastive focus in the sense that every semantic peak is in some sense contrastive (Bolinger 1961:87). Focus here is a scalar notion (see Yule (1981) for a similar use of the term). This will be important for the analysis of longer utterances where there may be more than one focus with more than one degree of salience. There is also a prosodically marked contrastive focus, and a cleft focus to be illustrated below. (It will be clear that focus here has nothing to do with the 'focus' of Philippine-type languages.)

	TOPIC	PREDICATE	TOPIC	PREDICATE	
1.26	<i>Ia,</i>	<i>ama-u.</i>	<i>Ia,</i>	<i>iu ama-u.</i>	(NWMek)
	he	father-1SG	he	I father-1SG	
	He's my father.		He is my father. ¹⁰⁶		

The predicate *is presented as* consisting of, or containing, some new and/or important information. While the theme *is presented as* given (i.e. already known, or as inferrable information, or information not subject to dispute) it may as already noted contain new information. There is after all no need to represent an established referent with a full nominal. In the following example the topic nominal represents new information, but it does not take marked pitch or stress. Meanwhile the focus is clearly anaphoric and hence represents old information, but it still takes the tonic pitch accent:

		PREDICATE.....	
	TOPIC	FOCUS	
1.27	<i>Ina-u,</i>	<i>eka ejaia e-ba-aba.</i>	(NMek)
	mother-1SG	house that 3SG-CA-stand	
	My mother is building that house.		

In short it is not the information itself but its assertion, a propos of a certain topic in a certain situation, that is deemed important by the speaker.

The discourse-pragmatic functions of a predication can now be represented in greater detail than above as Figure 10:

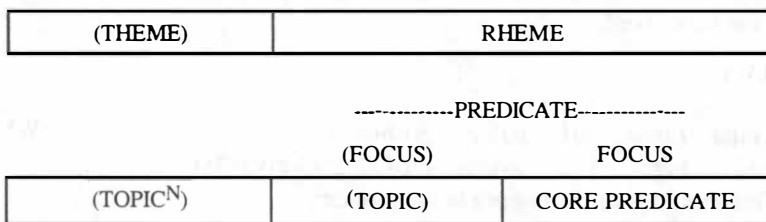


FIGURE 10: GENERAL STRUCTURE OF PREDICATIONS (2)¹⁰⁷

TOPIC^N signifies that there may be more than one topic here. In the case of nominal predications, there are never more than two topics, and the predicate *is* the focus:

		PREDICATE	
	TOPIC	FOCUS	
1.28	<i>Inei,</i>	<i>pito-ŋa!</i>	(EMek)
	bird	red-3SG	
	The bird is red!		

In the case of verbal predications, the focus either immediately precedes the verbal head or is coextensive with that head. The latter is the usual case with intransitive verbs:

¹⁰⁶ The first of these utterances is in fact more marked than the second. The pronominal 'object' (here *iu* 'I') is more often retained than deleted in such constructions, and so is not contrastive.

¹⁰⁷ The term theme is sometimes useful in order to cover a chain of topics; while (as noted above) the term predicate is generally preferred to rheme.

		PREDICATE		
		TOPIC	FOCUS	
1.29	<i>Fata,</i>	<i>e-mai.</i>		(EMek)
	Father	3SG-come		
	Father has come.			

With transitive verbs either the rightmost topic or the leftmost constituent of the predicate can be treated as the focus (it will be recalled that the term topic in this analysis has structural/syntactic meaning). What remains to the right of the focus is invariably at least one verbal core,¹⁰⁸ which is the syntactic head but which functions *prosodically* as a post-tonic *coda*. This gives the following minimal structure of a transitive predication:

		PREDICATE.....			
		TOPIC	FOCUS	CODA	
1.30	<i>Fata,</i>	<i>isa</i>	<i>e-isa.</i>		(EMek)
	Father	him/her	3SG-see		
	Father has seen him/her.				

The core is frequently a secondary focus, with a secondary pitch accent, and is thus included in the scope of assertion. Moreover, with appropriate pitch and stress, the verb word itself can function as the focus. In that case the nominal immediately preceding it may or may not be included in the scope of assertion. An example follows:

		THEME.....	PREDICATE		
		TOPIC	TOPIC	FOCUS	
1.31	<i>Paebo,</i>	<i>iji,</i>	<i>i-aŋa-i-au.</i>		(WMek)
	snake	I	3SG-bite-PF-1SG		
	The snake bit me.				

		THEME	PREDICATE		
		TOPIC	FOCUS	CODA	
1.32	<i>Paebo,</i>	<i>iji</i>	<i>i-aŋa-i-au.</i>		(WMek)
	snake	I	3SG-bite-PF-1SG		
	The snake bit me.				

A *marked* topic¹⁰⁹ encodes new and/or important information, and in this case the predicate will encode something that is known. This is illustrated in §1.3.3.2.2, but one example follows:

		TOPIC	FOCUS	
1.33	<i>Abala</i>	<i>ida.</i>		(WMek)
	bad	s/he		
	Bad s/he is.			

There are, therefore, at what may be regarded as a very elementary level of communication, two independent levels of predicational structure. These present the speaker of Mekeo with the following mapping possibilities:

¹⁰⁸ The concept of a syntactico-semantic core, which I have borrowed from Foley and Van Valin (1984), will be elaborated in §4.1.6 and §8.1. The core is basically a verbal nucleus affixed with up to two 'core arguments'.

¹⁰⁹ I am using 'marked' here and in the paragraphs that follow in the Praguean sense of the word. When used in this sense it will be italicised.

1.37 TOPIC PREDICATE
Loβia, iu ama-u. (NWMek)
 chief I father-1SG
 The chief is my father.

1.38 TOPIC PREDICATE
Ida, imi inā. (WMek)
 she child mother.3SG
 She is the child's mother.

These last constructions are often referred to as examples of 'inalienable possession' in the literature of Oceanic linguistics. The assertion of 'inalienable possession' is here treated as the assertion of a determining relation. Otherwise put, an abstract relational class term is made determinate with regard to some already determinate noun or pronoun.

In relational predications the nominal representing the 'object' of the relation is always incorporated in the predicate, while the relational term carries the tonic accent and is thus the focus:

PREDICATE
 TOPIC | _____ FOCUS
 1.39 *Isa, imoi inā.* (EMek)
 she child mother.3SG
 She is the child's mother.

All of the above constructions most typically take third person pronominals or demonstratives as their topics, and these regularly undergo ellipsis. So one frequently has to reconstruct the underlying proposition – by adding a definite deictic or anaphoric nominal – in order to account for the person and number of the predicate marking suffixes. Problems of analysis often occur when one ellipsed construction is embedded in another, and where two predicate marking suffixes are in competition for a single slot.¹¹²

The suffixes that mark the predicate in a nominal predication (and reflect the person and number of some topic nominal, which may be in a subject or an object relation to the predicate) are not discarded after rankshift – after which the erstwhile predicate itself functions as a topic. The same suffixes that functioned as predicate markers then function as specificational topic markers.

As detailed below in §1.4 and §1.4.1, all non-verbally functioning lexical items are treated here as nominal expressions, and so one can have any of the following as nominal predicates: proper names (individual nouns), class nouns, non-substantive (adjectival) nouns and non-finite 'verbs', as well as all kinds of pronominal expressions (a class that includes deictics, specific and non-specific, and quantifiers, definite and indefinite). The following classes of nominal predications have been identified:

- a) Identification. This constitutes assignment to a one-member class: 'He is the chief'. This category differs merely in terms of class size, i.e. in degree, from the next one.

¹¹² See Petrie (1980:51-52) who recognised the same problem for Roro. Starosta, Pawley and Reid (1982:27-28) touch on this problem in relation to Philippines and Formosan languages.

- b) Attribution. This constitutes assignment to a class of things that share a given property, i.e. to a ‘basic level’ class¹¹³ (‘That is a dog’), or assignment of the property itself, here expressed as a nominal predicate (‘The tea is hot’, ‘She is kind’).
- c) Determination. This constitutes the determination of one thing in relation to another, both of which must be definite (‘This is my hand’, ‘She is your mother’). The function here called determination is expressed by means of relational predications.
- d) Quantification. This amounts to counting and/or asserting the quantity of things: ‘The coconuts are few/many/five/etc’, ‘It is much’, ‘They are many’.

Nominal predicates *frequently* carry a determining suffix indicating the person/number of the subject-topic, though there are exceptions to be detailed below. These suffixes are listed exhaustively in Table 10 in §2.1.2.1.1. As I am here concerned only to describe the discourse function of predicates (as opposed to any grammatical and/or referential functions the suffixes may have in themselves) the suffixes can be regarded as predicate markers.

Predicate markers are obligatory when the topic has a first or second person referent.

1.40 *Oi apala-mu.* (EMek)
 you bad-2SG
 You are bad.

1.41 *Isa lau ama-u.* (EMek)
 s/he I father -1SG
 (He is) my father.

Also for all person/number combinations in the subject-topic of a relational predication:

1.42 *Eke, im-babie-ŋa imā.* (NWMek)
 that child-female-3SG hand.3SG
 That (is) the little girl’s hand.

But for third person singular topics of attributional predications the predicate marker is optional, and its presence can be regarded as emphatic.

1.43 *Tsi, mekia.* (EMek)
 tea sweet
 The tea is sweet.

1.44 *Tsi, mekia-ŋa!* (EMek)
 tea sweet-ASS.3SG¹¹⁴
 The tea is sweet indeed!

However, in the plural the appropriate predicate marker is obligatory:

¹¹³ The cognitively ‘basic’ level of classification has been found to correspond with the genus level of Linnaean classification; it is a ‘middle’ level (“in the middle of taxonomic hierarchies” according to Lakoff 1987:46). More recent work by Rosch and associates verifies these findings. Classes are culture-specific.

¹¹⁴ I add ASS (for ASSERTION = predicate marker) because it is optional here. One thinks here of the POC nominalising suffix **(a)ŋa*, though Ross (1988:390) sees its use as a predicate marker in Bali as an innovation. However, the Mekeo predicate markers are in fact determining suffixes marked for person and number.

- 1.45 *Imi, abala-tsi!* (WMek)
 child bad-3PL
 The children are bad!

In this secondary, emphatic function the third person singular predicate marker is found even on some topics which do not seem to have undergone rankshift. In this generalised use it indexes these items as *marked* topics. The form *-ŋa* is for example attached to first and second person emphatic pronouns (e.g. EMek *lau-ŋa* ‘as for me’), as well as to the third person singular and plural forms (EMek *isa-ŋa* ‘as for them’; see §2.2.1.2).

As noted above, there are two possibilities for mapping topics and predicates, which are structural functions, onto given/known and new (this was diagrammed in the last section).¹¹⁵ These can be illustrated for nominal predications as follows:

UNMARKED: GIVEN/KNOWN > NEW

- 1.46 *Inaina amu?e-ŋa!* (EMek)
 this dog-ASS.3SG
 This is a dog!
- 1.47 *Au apala!* (EMek)
 man bad
 The man is bad!
- 1.48 *Eke kuma!* (NWMek)
 that pig
 That is a pig!

MARKED: NEW > KNOWN

- 1.49 *Amu?e, inaina!* (EMek)
 dog this
 It’s a dog, this is!
- 1.50 *Apala, au-ŋa!* (EMek)
 bad one-3SG
 It’s bad, this man/one is!
- 1.51 *Kuma, eke-ŋa!* (NWMek)
 pig that
 It’s a pig, is that!

The predicate marking suffix on demonstrative pronouns is obligatory in EMek after rankshift, i.e. in nominal groups, but optional in the other dialects under the same conditions. It is optional in EMek *before* rankshift, adding an emphatic nuance to the predication (see example 1.46 above).

1.3.3.2.3 SEGMENTAL STRUCTURE OF VERBAL PREDICATIONS

The verbal predication can be conceived of as having a layered structure in respect of the different structural functions – corresponding to the different macrofunctional components

¹¹⁵ See footnote 100, §1.3.3.2.1, where definitions are provided for all terms.

described above – that are simultaneously realised in any surface string. There are four layers of grammatical structure¹¹⁶ functioning to convey very complex ‘layered’ messages.

The basic layer is precisely the same as for nominal predicates, with two prime textual or discourse functions realised as:

(THEME +) RHEME
or: (THEME +) PREDICATE

This can be called the layer of discourse structure.

As already indicated, the theme may contain nominal topics corresponding to arguments of the verb, and these can be referred to as adargumental topics (A-TOPICS).

These arguments may, therefore, receive double mention in a predication.

The theme may contain oblique nominal topics and nominal topics such as locative and temporal deictics that specify the circumstances of an event or an assertion. The latter can be referred to as adsentential topics (S-TOPICS).

The theme may also include grammatical items such as conjunctions, as well as modal particles and discourse markers, which cannot be considered topics – and it may include nothing else, should potential topics be left implicit by the speaker.

Topics are always optional. However, when all of the arguments of a verbal predicate are represented in an utterance by adargumental topic nominals, that predication constitutes a fully determined predication (also called an expanded predication).

Note that although the first adargumental topic in a predication is always the main topic, there can be subsidiary adargumental topics (up to two), all included in the THEME of the above formula. The rightmost nominal (of any kind) in a fully expressed transitive predication is usually the focus, and thus a constituent of the predicate, but this is an optional function too as the verb itself can be the focus:

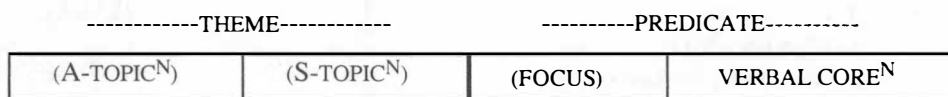


FIGURE 12: GENERAL STRUCTURE OF VERBAL PREDICATIONS

It is to be expected that verbal predications will also be structured in terms of semantico-syntactic functions/relations, corresponding to a representation of processes/events as having initiators and patients. This is indeed the case. But in a fully head-marked language the participants in such processes and events are primarily encoded on the verb word, as *sV* or *sVo*.¹¹⁷ And it is this internal structure of the verb word that constitutes the second layer, the layer of syntactic structure (which corresponds to clause structure in a language like English). As already noted, the actants *may* receive double mention. They are obligatorily

¹¹⁶ These are not to be confused with the semantico-syntactic layers of a predicate (as described in §4.1.6 below and in Chapter 8), or with levels of constituency or rank as described above. It is unfortunate that the same concept needs to be reapplied in different areas of the grammar. I make no principled distinction between the terms ‘levels’ and ‘layers’.

¹¹⁷ For *sV* read ‘subject-marking prefix + verbal nucleus’ and for *sVo* read ‘subject-marking prefix + verbal nucleus + object-marking suffix’.

indexed by the affixes on the verb word, but they may appear again, as free nominals, in preverbal position. In terms of traditional comparative and typological descriptions,¹¹⁸ the ‘unmarked’ order of the free nominals and affixed role-markers in a typical transitive predication can be represented as follows:

$$S + O + sVo$$

- 1.52 *Papie lau e-au-n-i-au.*¹¹⁹ (EMek)
 woman I 3SG-hit-TH-PF-1SG
 The woman hit/beat me.

Preverbal word order is, however, free – in the sense that it is determined by discourse-pragmatic considerations. Thus the following pattern is very nearly as common as the preceding in situated discourse:

$$O + S + sVo$$

- 1.53 *Lau papie e-au-n-i-au.* (EMek)
 I woman 3SG-hit-TH-PF-1SG
 The woman hit/beat me.

Markedness is thus a precarious notion as regards word order in Mekeo, but an *unmarked* pattern can be established, by the careful elicitation of context-free ‘citation forms’. This means that the layers of discourse and information structure are held temporarily in abeyance. The *unmarked* order of elements in a ditransitive predication is as follows:

$$S + IO + O + sVio$$

- 1.54 *Itsi iza mae a-bini-tsi.* (NMek)
 I they betel.nut 1SG-give-3PL
 I gave them betel nut.

The common (though optional) ordering of elements in motion predications is perhaps indicative of ‘leakage’ towards SVO word order:¹²⁰

$$S + sV + O (= Goal)$$

- 1.55 *Iji a-ao Apaŋaipi.* (WMek)
 I 1SG-go Afanaifi.
 I am going/went to Afanaifi.

Subject and Direct Object are in fact fairly unproblematic surface-syntactic categories in Mekeo – as in other ‘exemplary’ Oceanic languages – being definable as those functions (or relations) indexed by the pronominal affixes on the verb root (or stem).¹²¹ Indirect Object is also a clearly recognisable syntactic category, distinct from Direct Object which it normally precedes in the sentence and outranks in terms of access to the object-indexing slot within the verb word.¹²² We have, thus, three overtly realised structural functions, two of which will

¹¹⁸ Where *S* = Subject, *O* = (Direct) Object, *IO* = Indirect Object and *V* = Verb Root/Stem.

¹¹⁹ The other morphemes in the verb word are explained further below.

¹²⁰ Or of course conservation of an earlier order (Tom Dutton, pers.comm.). It is in any event a general feature of verb-final Papuan Tip languages (Malcolm Ross, pers.comm.). In Mekeo only predicate adjectives and discourse markers can otherwise occur after *V*.

¹²¹ The Mekeo subject can be semantically defined as *S/A* in Dixon’s terms.

¹²² I thus differ with Lichtenberk’s (1983:161) reasoning on the absence of an *IO* in Manam. See §4.3.3.3 below for some data.

ordinarily be indexed on the verb word. The two indexed roles represent the core-layer participants in any Mekeo predication. The three obligatory actants represent the maximal grammatical valency.

The *semantics* of the subject derive from its function. The subject will always be the highest Controller represented in the predication. The object, on the other hand, can represent a wider range of roles, including Actor (but never the Controller when this is different from the Actor). The selection of the Mekeo object depends largely upon pragmatic considerations (however, even here a human recipient or causee outranks other candidates for object position – which is, as noted above, the *unmarked* focus slot in a verbal predication). An object may be lightly or profoundly affected, or not affected at all, functioning merely as the target of an Actor's actions. I shall for this reason describe the general semantic role of the object function as: the Target.¹²³

The object normally represents the referential peak of the Mekeo predication, as object nominals fill the *unmarked* focus slot immediately before the verb, and object-marking suffixes convey more kinds of pragmatic information about objects than do subject-marking prefixes about subjects¹²⁴ (see Pawley and Reid 1980). The causative prefix *BA-* (as well as the causative serialisation of verbs) can thus function to promote an Actor to Focus position, rather than to demote it, albeit at the cost of adding a Controller. Causativisation thus *foregrounds* the Actor. For example:

	TOPIC.....	FOCUS.....	CORE.....	
1.56	<i>Fata,</i> Father	<i>otsi ofa-ŋa-ai</i> horse back-3SG-OBL	<i>e-ʔaŋa-au.</i> 3SG-climb-go.up	(EMek)
	Father got up <i>on the horse's back</i> .			
	TOPIC.....	FOCUS.....	CORE.....	
1.57	<i>Otsi ofa-ŋa-ai,</i> horse back-3SG-OBL	<i>fata</i> father	<i>ke-pa-ʔaŋa-au-a.</i> 3PL-CA-climb-go.up	(EMek)
	They put <i>father</i> up on the horse's back.			

The causativisation transformation thus functions to foreground the Actor in Mekeo, rather as passivisation foregrounds the Object in English.

The third layer of structure functions to relate what is new to what is given. As already noted in footnote 100 in §1.3.3.2.1, this will here be termed information structure. As also noted in the same place, these terms refer to a speaker's intentions as to what will be presented (i.e. given) as agreed-upon, and what will be presented as new and/or discourse-pragmatically important.¹²⁵ The new (unlike the given) is subject to questioning or debate, but it may also be a candidate for discourse topic across a stretch of text. In that case it would be promoted to subject function, and occasionally at least to main topic position when represented by a free nominal.

¹²³ Note that while real world actants are assigned function-specific semantic roles, these actants also have scene-specific (situation-specific) roles such as are laid down in Fillmorean case grammar, and that the latter do not correspond to the former (see especially Starosta 1991).

¹²⁴ For example, thematic consonants indicate degree and manner of affectedness. Foley (1976) introduced the concepts of 'referential salience' and 'referential peak'. The term 'pragmatic peak' is used by Van Valin and Foley (1980) to mean much the same as 'referential peak' here. Note that this is distinct from the 'pragmatic pivot' (FVV 1984).

¹²⁵ "Givenness is not a function of discourse at all. It is a product of speaker's intentions" (Yule 1980:284). I take it here that the same holds for newness.

morphologically marked or unmarked functions of the verb, and the nominal that immediately precedes the verb word can refer to any of these, but it is always the focus:

THEME			PREDICATE			
TM	+	(TN)	+	(F) ¹²⁶	+	V
= Main Topic				= Focus (New)		= Core (Verb Word)

FIGURE 14: DISCOURSE PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS (VERBAL PREDICATION)

All nominals except F (the Focus) may be followed by a brief pause. This is because F is a part of the predicate. I will return to this claim in §1.3.3.3 where I will justify it in terms of intonation.

The subject of the Mekeo verb is always the controller. As already noted, whichever actant controls the action/event – i.e. whichever is highest on the hierarchy of control – must be encoded as the subject. The control hierarchy is:

Causer > Actor > Self-causer

An Actor is regularly displaced by a Causer in causativised verbs and serial causatives, and Actor then displaces Target as the Object. This results in an Object which is in effect a delegated Actor, and this is formally recognised by the absence of a thematic consonant before the object-marking morpheme (§4.1.2, §4.3.3.2). This can be illustrated as follows:

	Actor	Target	Actor-Verb-Target		
1.59	<i>Imi,</i>	<i>gugu</i>	<i>gi-ani-a.</i>	(WMek)	
	child	tobacco	3PL-eat-3SG		
	The children are smoking tobacco.				
	Causer	Target	Actor	Causer-Verb-Actor	
1.60	<i>Ida,</i>	<i>gugu,</i>	<i>imi-tsi</i>	<i>e-ba-ani-itsi.</i>	(WMek)
	s/he	tobacco	child-3PL	3SG-CA-eat-3PL	
	S/he is making the children smoke tobacco.				

Some objects are thus quasi-agentive, but *all subjects are agentive*.¹²⁷

The object of the verb – which, as we saw above, normally receives tonic stress and functions as the focus – is singled out for further salience in Mekeo grammar through being a referential peak.¹²⁸ The object of a transitive verb also features as the ‘pivot’ of a productive passivisation transformation, whereby the original agent-subject is deleted and the object is

¹²⁶ The subject-agent of Mekeo conflates the Actor and Patient of lexibase grammar. In Dik’s (1978) terms it is + dynamism and + control.

¹²⁷ F is marked as optional since VP is sometimes the Focus.

¹²⁸ Foley argued that certain grammatical functions can be marked for more pragmatic features (such as specificity and definiteness) than other functions in the same language. When the highly marked function is the object, this situation can be described as ‘patient prominence’ (see Gil 1982, 1984, for a justification of this notion in Austronesian languages). Pawley and Reid (1980:53) attributed this kind of prominence to Proto Oceanic grammar, where an ‘object focus system’ prevailed, “roughly parallel to the ‘(subject) focus system’ of Philippine type languages”.

promoted to topic or 'subject' position (see §5.5.2 below). The object of a verb in perfective aspect is usually both specific and definite.

As Mekeo is a verb-final language, it is also a head-final language. The analysis of a predication into its immediate constituents (as opposed to ranked functional constituents) reveals a fourth layer of structure which we may (following Halliday) call the logical layer. Mekeo syntax is ordered according to a principle of recursive hypotaxis. The innermost brackets of a representation identify the leftmost head of the predication, and the other constituents – dependents to the left and successive subordinating heads to the right – are ordered in terms of adjacency to it:

- 1.61 (((Dependent Head¹) Head²) Head³) (EMek)
Au, akaikia, e-mai, la-isa.
 man big 3SG-come 1SG-see(-3SG)
 The man is/was big, he came, I saw him. OR: I saw the big
 man who came.

Head-final order also has important implications in terms of nominal co-reference within the predication. Participants, or topics, are listed – put as it were in a queue – at the beginning of the predication, before the verbal indices can give us any clue (via person/number marking) as to their grammatical functions and semantic roles in the process or event being described. But, as it happens, such clues are rarely unambiguous (this is discussed in Chapters 7 and 8). Many Mekeo predications preserve an irreducible residue of indeterminacy as regards co-reference between the free nominal topics and the bound role-markers. This indeterminacy extends to the actual 'voice' of the verb (i.e. whether a given verb is functioning causatively, transitively or intransitively, or reflexively).

Another consequence of the head-final structure of the Mekeo predication is that the head (as the summation of the entire message, the core) will often be in competition with the focus (as the *crux* of the message) for the attention of the hearer. The verb, as head, has a vital syntactic role to play in distributing functions. It is indeed the only indispensable constituent of the predication. But it also provides information about the physical nature of the discourse-pragmatic scene, in the context of which the message has relevance and importance. Underpinning all of this dynamic tension between non-coincident structures is the unvarying discourse level formula: THEME + PREDICATE. All four layers of unmarked structure (for a transitive predication) can now be displayed in parallel:

discourse structure	THEME: TOPIC ^N	PREDICATE:	
syntactic structure	<i>S (+ IO) (+ OBL^N)</i>	FOCUS <i>O</i>	CORE <i>sVo</i>
information structure	GIVEN	(NEW -----)	
logical structure	(Dependent Nominals ^N) + (Adjuncts ^N)		Verbal HEAD

FIGURE 15: FOUR LEVELS OF VERBAL PREDICATIONAL STRUCTURE

The layers or levels described above are analytic grids but it is claimed that they also exist, in some sense, in the minds of native speakers when they construct their own utterances. The

analysis is motivated and necessary to fully explain the data, which constitute language behaviour.

The functioning of topics will be discussed at length in Chapters 7 and 8. Meanwhile we pass on to a discussion of optionality, an examination of the prosodic definition of segments, and then to a consideration of rankshift and its implications.

1.3.3.2.4 OPTIONALITY OF TOPICS

A central question for the grammar of a head-marking language is the optionality of non-head constituents of predications, all of which are here called *topics*. As Van Valin (1985:398) puts it: “In an endocentric construction all the dependents are optional”. This statement applies to nominals in apposition to incorporated arguments, but it says nothing about other non-verbal constituents of a predication, such as adsentential adjuncts (time deictics, locative expressions, postpositional groups, and so on). Moreover, it says nothing about the factors that influence a speaker either to include or exclude such potential topics from mention. As none of these elements are syntactically required – the head with incorporated arguments constituting a complete clause – they are *all*, to some degree, optional.

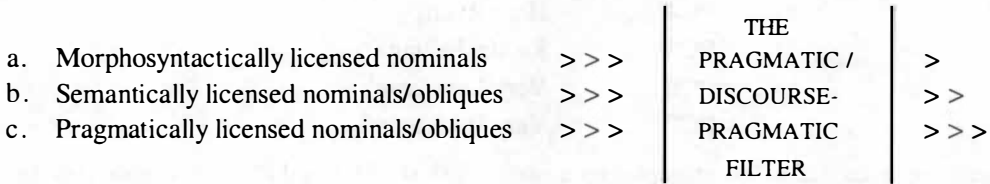
For a dependent item to be represented in a predication I will say that it must be ‘licensed’. An item may be licensed in one of three ways. It may be

- a. Morphosyntactically licensed, through being indexed by an affixal marker on a nominal or verbal head. Such items are the subject and/or the object of a verb, the subject of a nominal predicate, and the object of a relational predicate.
- b. Semantically licensed, through being implicated by the semantics of a verb, especially a derived verb. These include the third argument of a ditransitive verb (the semantic object, not indexed on the verb), the object of a causativised transitive verb, and the locative goal of certain verbs of motion or of putting/placing, none of which are indexed on the head word.
- c. Pragmatically licensed, through being pragmatically required by a verbally indexed *scene*, in the context of situation and of culture. For example, a knife or a shell or an axe is pragmatically implicated in a sentence about cutting, thanks to our knowledge of the world and of the culture. It is not explicitly encoded on the verb, nor is it implicated semantically.

Morphosyntactically licensed topics are semantically though not syntactically required. These may be deleted if recoverable (which they often are, especially subjects and/or main topics). Semantically licensed topics are also semantically required. These are not so frequently deleted, since they are less often recoverable (i.e. they are less likely to be continuing discourse topics). Pragmatically licensed topics represent peripheral participants and circumstants, including time and place, and if any such are considered relevant by the speaker they must be represented — knowledge as to which ones the speaker considers relevant is not otherwise available.

An entity may then be licensed, but may still not be mentioned, should pragmatic or discourse-pragmatic considerations render such mention unnecessary (i.e. if its reference is either anaphorically or exophorically recoverable), or should its mention be socio-

pragmatically inappropriate. These discourse-pragmatic and pragmatic considerations¹²⁹ can be conceptualised as a filter, which tends to block the passage of linguistic items that are easily recoverable. This whole system can be displayed as a diagram:



Relative degrees of optionality are shown by the number of arrows exiting from the filter, as compared with the number entering it. Morphosyntactically licensed items are very likely to be filtered out, and unrepresented in actual utterances, while pragmatically licensed items on the other hand are highly unlikely to be blocked. Semantically entailed items (i.e. 'demoted' items) occupy a midway position. The filter operates according to such parameters as referential distance, and takes into account the kinds of things that a speaker may assume are in the hearer's consciousness or are a part of the hearer's background knowledge (what is referred to above as KNOWN).¹³⁰

I will also argue below that in certain kinds of discourse (e.g. narrative) the filter dysfunctionally blocks nominal topics that are not easily recoverable, and indeed sometimes blocks items that are not recoverable at all.

1.3.3.3 SUPRASEGMENTAL STRUCTURE OF UTTERANCES

Mekeo is a stress-timed language oriented to a system of predetermined word stresses (with the main stress on the penultimate syllable and a secondary stress on every second syllable leftward from that). Mekeo is usually characterised by a slow rate of delivery,¹³¹ under several intonation contours. This is precisely what Givón (1979:98) predicts for a language dominated by 'the pragmatic mode'. It is, moreover, what one might expect of a head-final head-marking language where syntactic bonds are based on coreference restrictions rather than on bilateral dependence and government.

In §1.3.3.2 it was stated that in a typical predication a single nominal (or verbal) topic, or a series of such topics, will set the scene and constrain our expectations, and that this/these will be followed by a nominal or a verbal predicate which constitutes the crux of the message. The complete message may constitute an assertion or a question or a command, and it may be a *marked* or an *unmarked* realisation of the particular function. The mood and *markedness* of such a message is determined by the pattern of pitch contours. Complex utterances realise complex patterns of pitch contours. I refer to these patterns as intonation patterns (IP), and in the representation their boundaries are marked by double slashes (/ /).

There are seven fundamental pitch contours in Mekeo (abbreviated to PCs) that I shall want to refer to both here and later in this dissertation by the following numbers:

¹²⁹ Discourse-pragmatic reference is intratextual or endophoric reference, pragmatic reference is extratextual (or exophoric). See Givón (1984:31).

¹³⁰ See Givón (1983) for an account of this based on text counts. And see Lichtenberk (1988) for an account of referential distance in To'aba'ita.

¹³¹ However, certain villages (e.g. Inautsina) are renowned for a rapid-fire delivery.

PC1	Low Falling
PC2	Low Rising
PC3	Falling-Rising
PC4	High Rising
PC5	Rising-Falling
PC6	Very Low Level
PC7	Very High Level

These are separated in the examples by a single slash (/). PC1 and PC2 have quite specific and invariable functions in Mekeo grammar: PC2 signals an unmarked topic or topics (normally unquestioned information) while PC1 signals the predicate, and within that the focus. The combination of PC2 and PC1 in a single utterance (and IP) is what adds typical message structure to a linear sequence of elements, and this theme-rheme/topic-predicate construction, which I call a predication, remains the basic discourse-pragmatic parameter of the grammar. In its simplest form the theme will contain a single topic and the rheme will consist of a simple predicate:

PC2: TOPIC + PC1: PREDICATE = Predication

The low-rising tone of the topic indicates that the speaker is about to make an assertion, and that he requires the hearer to attend to the old information and to await the new or predicated information. The following falling tone on the predicate tells us that the utterance is now being completed and that any variation on this fall will very likely constitute the beginnings of a new message, leading up to another predicate. It is the pattern that is meaningful, as PC1 and PC2 also occur in other contexts.

PC 3 represents a marked pitch contour that, on a topic, can be understood as a request for confirmation from the hearer that the information represented is indeed familiar, or acceptable as the basis of the message. On the focus, it signals that the new information is felt by the speaker to be surprising, amazing, or at least is contrary to one's expectations in some way (i.e. it is contrastive).

As regards verbal predications, a number of topics (representing, as we saw above, various kinds of actants and circumstants) can precede a verbal predicate. Each *unmarked* topic takes the same pitch contour: (low-)rising (PC2). Each topic is followed by a potential (and very often an actual) pause. An *unmarked* focus (and, by the same token, predicate) takes a falling pitch contour (PC1). Oblique topics in initial position often take a high level tone (PC7) or a high-pitched version of PC3. Adverbial topics (such as time deictics) in initial position are often pitched very low (PC6).

A verbal predicate may have internal structure of its own, which occurs when some non-verbal word is prosodically incorporated into the pause group constituted by the verb word. The unmarked candidate for such inclusion is the NP corresponding to the object of the verb. However, any argument of the verb and even an adverbial word may, as the situation arises, be incorporated into the predicate. The predicate is thus not to be equated with a traditionally constituted VP, made up of a verb and its object. (Argument incorporation is a pragmatically motivated process that nonetheless obeys a single argument constraint.¹³²)

¹³² It is interesting to compare Kidima's (1990) analysis of Kiyaka, and recent prosodic work within the GB paradigm which places a purely numerical restriction on the syntax of the IP (Inflection Phrase) for certain languages.

A predicate in its entirety equals the scope of assertion. Not all the information contained therein is necessarily treated as new and/or important, however. What *is* treated as new/important – the focus – is marked by salient stress and pitch movement, i.e. what is often called a tonic accent, or tonic prominence. The focus of a nominal predication is the last word in the predicate. The focus of a verbal predicate may be a) the first word in that segment of the utterance, b) the verb word itself, c) a post-verbal element, or d) there may be a double tonic, made up of two separate PCs.¹³³

In verbal predications the focus, when this is a preverbal nominal, is never followed by a pause;¹³⁴ it is followed without any audible hiatus by the verb word. The focus takes a falling pitch contour on its inherently stressed syllable, and when this is an incorporated nominal the falling tone will be repeated, though less saliently, on the inherently stressed syllable of the verb itself. When an incorporated nominal is *not* the focus, that is when the focus falls on the verb word, that nominal constitutes a pre-tonic segment that effectively *leads into* the tonic.

The underlying structure of a nominal predication can be represented as:

$$\text{TOPIC}^{\text{M}} \quad (+ \quad \text{TOPICS}^{\text{N}}) \quad + \quad \text{PREDICATE}$$

$$\text{where PREDICATE} \quad = \quad (\text{PRE-TONIC} +) \text{ FOCUS} (+ \text{ CODA})$$

The underlying structure of a verbal predication can be represented as:

$$\text{TOPIC}^{\text{M}} \quad + \quad \text{PREDICATE}$$

$$\text{where PREDICATE} \quad = \quad (\text{PRE-TONIC} +) \text{ FOCUS}$$

A coda consists of a post-tonic word or words (i.e. pause-groups) which continue or repeat the tonic pitch contour with considerably weaker stresses. The coda usually includes a verb word, which is preceded by an incorporated nominal item functioning as the focus. The latter thus takes the main or tonic pitch movement. When the coda contains a verb word it can be referred to as the core, in order to emphasise that it is the key syntactic component of the predicate, and the head of the predication.¹³⁵ I will follow this practice when it seems appropriate.

A coda can consist of a) a core (preceded by a nominal focus), b) several cores in series, i.e. a chain of VPs, c) a core plus a classifier noun head, d) a core plus a conjunction or a discourse marker, e) a core followed by the deontic auxiliary *OMA* (one or more tokens possible), or f) a conjunction or a discourse marker. All of the above possibilities will be exemplified in the course of the following chapters.

I here adduce a number of examples from a tape-recorded narrative text to illustrate the occurrence and use of some of the above-described pitch contours and intonation patterns.¹³⁶

¹³³ As already noted, many predicates consist of more than one pitch contour, and these may be the same or different. Complex topics, such as rankshifted predications, also often contain more than a single PC, though these are often identical, the same pitch movement being repeated on each inherently stressed syllable of each separate word. It is for these reasons that I continue to speak of functionally defined *superordinate units* such as topic, predicate and focus, each of which *contains* an indeterminate number of pitch contours, rather than speak of tone groups and intonation patterns as such.

¹³⁴ As in Beratha's (1991) analysis of Balinese, nothing can intervene between the focus and the verb.

¹³⁵ As already noted, the core is a verbal nucleus affixed with up to two verbal arguments. It is the marked syntactic head of a predication.

¹³⁶ They are from *The Story of Kino-Kino (Flying Squirrel)* and *Ofuala (Blue-Tongued Lizard)*, Episode 3: *The Dispersal of the Animals*.

In example 1.62 the final verb word is the focus. The focus is prosodically defined and centres on the main (i.e. normally the final) word stress on the final verb word. This is underlined here, along with all the other stressed syllables. Notice the contrastive topic *amu?e isa* in example 1.63:

		PREDICATE:	(EMek)
1.62	TOPIC.....	PRE-TONIC FOCUS	
	// 2 <u>Auni-?i</u> <u>fou</u> , / 1 <u>ke-ka</u> <u>ke-feu-feu.</u> //		
	both-3PL together	3PL-lie 3PL-sleep-RED	
	The two of them were lying down sleeping.		

		PREDICATE:	(EMek)
1.63	TOP1 TOP2.....	FOCUS CODA	
	// 2 <u>Pau</u> , / 3 <u>amu'e isa</u> , / 1 <u>lakō</u> <u>e-io-kini-a.</u> //		
	now dog him	penis 3SG-squat-expose.PF-3SG	
	Now, ¹³⁷ (the) dog him, his penis he sat (and) exposed it.		

Every inherently stressed syllable is indicated in the above examples by the underlining of its main vocalic constituent. In these examples topics are modified and expanded by a limiting adverbial and by a resumptive pronoun, respectively, each of which continues the tonic pitch contour (PC2 and PC3, respectively) on its stressed syllable. The main movement of each pitch contour falls on the last stressed item in each pause group, a fact which reminds us that these are underlying or potential predicates themselves. It can be seen that PC1 also occurs twice within each predicate.

There are clear pauses (shown by commas) after each topic NP in the above texts, but these are not essential to the preservation of the essential topic-comment intonation structure: PC2 > PC1. Even a short utterance, delivered without a perceptible pause, preserves this characteristic intonation pattern: low-rise – (high-)fall.¹³⁸ For example:

1.64	// 2 <u>Oi</u> , 1 <u>lo-vai.</u> //		(EMek)
	you 2SG-go.home		
	You go home (to your place). ¹³⁹		

Potential pause group is, however, an important category of the description, distinguishing separable groups of words from inseparable groups, such as predicates. Predicates have in fact no other defining criteria apart from the impossibility of pause and the integrity of the pitch contour and/or intonation pattern. Every word is a potential pause group, in isolation. When a word in an example is followed by a potential pause, this means it is analysed as a topic (i.e. not a focus). Potential pause is marked graphically by a comma.

There follow some longer examples from the text. In examples 1.65 and 1.66 there are contrastive topics marked with PC3:

¹³⁷ *Pau* is a time deictic. It is a constituent of the theme, although not a topic (see Halliday 1985). I class time deictics as adverbial topics: T^A.

¹³⁸ Pause and absence of pause between topic and predicate are performance phenomena, that depend on speed and the degree of care taken by a speaker. But the possibility of pause is an important index of function.

¹³⁹ Note that example 1.64 may realise either a declarative or an imperative speech act. The person/number marking on underlying *OMA* resolves this matter.

- 1.65 TOP FOCUS CODA
 // 3 *Ola ajeaje isa, / 1 ŋua e-kupu. //*
 lizard old.man him heart 3SG-block
 Old man lizard him, (his) heart is/was angry.
- 1.66 TOP1 TOP2..... TOP3
 // 3 *E-mai, / 3 ola ajeaje e-ula, / 3 e-lao,*
 3SG-come lizard old.man 3SG-chase 3SG-go
 He came (and) chased the old man lizard he went,
- PREDICATE1: PREDICATE2:
 FOCUS CODA FOCUS CODA
 / 4 *au-ai 1 e-afi-au-kae / 1 iu-ŋa-mo e-a-mou-a. //*
 tree-OBL 3SG-take-up-rise tail-3SG-just 3SG-bite-break-3SG
 having climbed a/the tree he bit his tail.

In a complex predication such as that represented as 1.66 above there is internal topic-comment structure such that the entire first predication (P1) stands in relation to the second (P2) as topic to predicate or perhaps as focus to coda. PC4 (rather than expected PC1) signals a *marked* focus – at the beginning of a predication one would expect PC7 for an oblique nominal functioning as a topic (TOPIC⁰).

PC4 and PC 5 function singly or together to express an interrogative mood.¹⁴⁰ PC4 on its own realises focused polar interrogatives:

- 1.67 // 4 *Oi ma ?uma lo-isa? //* (EMek)
 you INT pig 2SG-see
 Was it *you* who saw *a/the* pig?
- 1.68 // 2 *Oi, / 4 ?uma ma lo-isa? //* (EMek)
 you pig INT 2SG-see
 Was it *a pig* that you saw?
- 1.69 // 2 *Oi, / 4 ?uma lo-isa ma? //* (EMek)
 you pig 2SG-see INT
 Did you *see a pig*?

Although the focus falls on the verb in example 1.69, the argument *?uma* is incorporated in the predicate (there is no pause between *?uma* and *lo-isa*). *?uma* realises a pre-tonic segment of the predicate. It is within the scope of asserted information just as much as *lo-isa* was in 1.67 and 1.68. PC4 stretches across the entire predicate, in every case.

When a predication is proposed as a question, the focus receives a rising tone (PC4) while the coda receives a rising-falling tone (PC5). Any topics (or topic predications) that *preceded* the predicate would take tones appropriate for topics: PC2 or PC3. However, the latter are

140 They carry out this function in parallel with the interpersonal superordinate verb *OMA*, to be described in §4.2.4 below, though they are in fact more reliable indices of interrogative mood in surface structure (where *OMA* frequently does not appear).

141 A pre-tonic segment will from here on be represented as |_____.

often dropped. Here are some WMek examples from a conversation constructed around one young person's narrative of work experiences:

- 1.70 FOCUS CODA (WMek)
 // 4 Igu 5 baba-ŋa-ai? //
 mountain bottom-3SG-OBL
 (Is it) at the foot of the *mountain* ?

This is a typical interrogative: an asserted predicate with PC4 > PC5.

- 1.71 TOP1..... TOP2..... (WMek)
 // 3 Ke binaŋa ŋaea, / 3 go-ba-pua aidama, /
 And work that 2PL-CA-finish time
 And that work, when you (had) finished it,
 PREDICATE.....
 FOCUS FOCUS CODA.....
 / 4 moni tsilâ 5 ge-bini-mi? //
 money little 3PL-give-2PL
 did they give you a little money?

The focus can take PC5 when followed by the interrogative particle *ma*, which then carries PC4. The predicate will then normally take PC1:

- 1.72 FOCUS..... CODA (WMek)
 // 5 Apu abala-tsi 4 má / 1 g-ida ge-manitsi? //
 place bad-3PL INT 3PL-see 3PL-fear
 Did they see (some) bad places (so that) they were afraid?

Note that while the interrogative mood-marking particle *ma* is unstressed it nonetheless carries the appropriate pitch contour – the rising intonation on which a PC4 ends – and prolongs it (as indicated here by the acute accent).

Contrastive focus (FOCUS^C) is realised by an exaggerated version of PC3: a high fall followed by a low rise.

- 1.73 // 3 Oŋoŋo / 1 e-pa-?ua-lai-s-a. // (EMek)
 dry(coconut) 3SG-CA-bend-AT-B-3SG
 He threw down a *dry one*.

Oblique topics are often realised on a relatively high level tone, as a sequence of PC7s, just as backgrounded information and narrative transitions are realised by a relatively low pitch, as a sequence of PC6s. The main topic of a matrix predication (i.e. one containing an embedded co-relative predication) also receives PC7.

- 1.74 // 7 Aŋo-ga tsina-ŋa-ai, / 2 Fata 1 ina (NMek)
 front-1PL day-3SG-OBL father here
 an-e-boa-lai. //
 FUT-3SG-walk-AT
 In the next few days, Father will arrive here.

- 1.75 // 7 *Kuma*, / 2 *imi* 3 *gi-ida au-ŋa*, (WMek)
 pig child 3PL-see one-3SG
 / 2 *iji*, / 1 *abu-u*. //
 I share-1SG
 The pig that the children saw is my property.

The two main functions of *auŋa* – relativisation and topicalisation – can sometimes be distinguished by suprasegmental cues:

Topicalisation:

- 1.76 TOPIC..... FOCUS (EMek)
 // 3 *Papie auŋa*, / 1 *la-isa*. //
 woman TOP 1SG-see.3SG
 As for the woman, I saw her.

Relativisation:

- 1.77 TOPIC^{CR}..... FOCUS (EMek)
 // 3 *Papie* / 1 *au-ŋa*, / 1 *la-isa*. //
 woman one-3SG 1SG-see.3SG
 I saw the one who is/was a woman.

Topicalising *auŋa* follows the topicalised item without a pause, and simply prolongs the low rise of PC3 upwards. Relativising *au-ŋa* is usually preceded by a slight to very slight pause, and has its own pitch contour, i.e. a low version of PC1. (See the following page for a description of T^{CR} and other specialised topics.)

- 1.78 |_____ TOPIC..... FOCUS (WMek)
Imi i-aŋaŋa auŋa, a-au-n-i-a.
 child 3SG-RD-shout TOP 1SG-strike-TH-PF-3SG
 As for the child which was shouting, I struck it.
- T^{CR} FOCUS (WMek)
 1.79 *Imi i-aŋaŋa(,) au-ŋa, a-au-n-i-a*.
 child 3SG-RD-shout one-3SG 1SG-strike-TH-PF-3SG
 I struck the child which was shouting.

Topic and focus are, as we have seen, realised by means of contrastive pitch contours. However, these are gross functions that need to be further classified as to the precise role they fulfil in a given utterance. A variety of topics can be identified on functional grounds, if not on wholly reliable prosodic cues:

- T : Plain topic, or minor topic, as compared with e.g. T^M or T^G. T is typically linked to an argument of a predicate.
- T^M : Main topic of a predication, or of several simultaneous predications.¹⁴²
- T^G : General or given topic over several sequential predications, not necessarily linked to some argument of each, i.e. subject to ellipsis.
- T^O : Oblique-marked topic – may be a nominal or an adverbial predication.
- T^A : Adverbial topic (time deictics, conjunctions).

¹⁴² Simultaneous predications refers to the situation where one predication (e.g. a T^{CR}) is embedded within another and both share a single T^M.

- TCR : Co-relative predication functioning as topic.
 TT : Marked topic. This is an external, 'sentence topic', marked by *auŋa*.
 TN : New topic – introduced as new information, but not as focus.
 TC : Contrastive topic.

The first six are basic (discourse-pragmatic) functions. T, TM, TG and TCR typically represent arguments of an argument-taking predicate. TO and TA cannot represent arguments. The last three on the other hand (TT, TN and TC) are overlay functions that are superimposed on the basic discourse-pragmatic functions.

There is often a sequence of verb words under the scope of asserted new information. Similarly, a newly introduced actant may rate as a focus in its own right, while a following verb word also receives focal intonation. These possibilities call for a subclassification of focus functions:

- F : Secondary focus (typically on core(s) preceding FM).
 FV : A verbal core functioning as an ancillary focus
 FM : Main focus (typically on the immediately pre-verbal item).
 FSub : Subordinate focus (precedes FM – may be a rankshifted predicate).
 FPV : Post-verbal focus (e.g. goal of motion, predicate adjective)
 FC : Contrastive focus.

FM always signals the near end of a predication, whether simple or complex, and the beginning of a new predication with a new TM.

The finer functions in complex predications are not realised so distinctively in terms of pitch contours as are the major functions of simple predications, but they can be specified to a certain degree.

DISCOURSE-PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS:

- | | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|------|----------------------------|
| T | : Rising(PC2) | F | : Falling, or High falling |
| TM | : Falling-rising (PC3) | FM | : Low falling |
| TG | : Very high level, or PC7 | FSub | : Low falling–low rising |
| TA | : Low level, or Low PC3 | FPV | : High falling |
| TO | : High level, or High PC3 | | |
| TCR | : PC3(N) + low fall on <i>auŋa</i> | | |

OVERLAY FUNCTIONS:

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|----|-----------------------|
| TT | : High falling-low rising | TC | : High falling-rising |
| TN | : High falling-rising | FC | : High falling |

There is sometimes a further need to index these topics and focusses, which I do with subscript letters, as in T_i, T_j, etc. (N means indefinite recursion).

Pre-tonic segments and post-tonic codas which are within the scope of asserted information are shown schematically as follows:

Pre-tonic: |_____X
 Post-tonic: X..... or X-----|

1.3.3.4 RANKSHIFT

Rankshift in this grammar is the operation whereby the illocutionary force of an assertion is deleted.¹⁴³ This operation has no reflex in form, though a rankshifted item will often retain the third person singular determining suffix that originally marked it as a nominal predicate, which then functions to add emphasis, or will carry the predication enclitic *auŋa* (the singular with *-ŋa* is the unmarked form). Upon being downranked a predication is syntactically a group. It can thus function as a topic in a matrix nominal or verbal predication. While nominal groups in other languages frequently have a different internal structure to that of predications (e.g. a preposed modifier contrasts with a postposed modifier), or carry some other kind of marking, in Mekeo the structure of an unmarked group is identical to that of the corresponding predication.

The situation is complicated by the fact (as noted in §1.3.3) that predications may be embedded in matrix predications without being rankshifted, i.e. without losing the force of predication. This is dealt with in §1.3.3.4.4 in terms of suprasegmental parameters, and it receives further attention in §3.5; it is dealt with in connection with the embedding of verbal predications in §8.3.1.3.

1.3.3.4.1 RANKSHIFTED NOMINAL PREDICATIONS

The simplest kinds of nominal predications either a) assert the identity of some thing, or person, or indeed event, which should be definite, in relation to some class, or to some member(s) a class, or b) assert the nature of some definite thing or person in terms of some property they possess. Some examples are:

- | | | | |
|------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|
| | TOPIC | PREDICATE | |
| 1.80 | <i>Eŋaina</i> ¹⁴⁴ | <i>amu?e</i> . | (EMek) |
| | that | dog.3SG | |
| | That (is (a/the)) dog. | | |
| | | | |
| | TOPIC | PREDICATE | |
| 1.81 | <i>Amu?e</i> | <i>e?ele</i> . ¹⁴⁵ | (EMek) |
| | dog | small | |
| | The dog (is) small. | | |

After rankshift has applied the assertion is treated as a given, and the erstwhile predication is now treated as a (non-verbal) constituent of another predication, as in:

- | | | | | |
|------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------|
| | | | | |
| 1.82 | <i>Eŋaina</i> | <i>amu?e-ŋa</i> | <i>e?ele</i> . | (EMek) |
| | that | dog-SG | small | |
| | That dog (is) small. | | | |

¹⁴³ In a logical representation of the propositional structure, this force (glossed where necessary as ASS) can be represented as: I-say-so (see Lyons 1977:749-751, and Hare 1970, 1971). This is Hare's neustic component of logical meaning, deleted when the construction is embedded.

¹⁴⁴ The morphology of the demonstrative pronouns is analysed in §2.2.2.2 below.

¹⁴⁵ Pronunciation varies and in-text examples preserve variants as recorded (as noted in §1.2.2.2). The initial glottal stop of (?)*e?ele* appears only in slow speech.

The head of the rankshifted predication takes a determining suffix marked for the person and number of the deictic pronoun, which can be a demonstrative or a personal pronoun (see §3.1.1). Rankshifted *adjectival* predicates do not always take a determining suffix:

- 1.83 *Amu?e e?ele, la-isa.* (EMek)
 dog-3SG small 1SG-see
 The small dog, I saw it.
- 1.84 *Eḡaina amu?e-ḡa e?ele, la-isa.* (EMek)
 that dog-3SG small 1SG-see
 That small dog, I saw it.

They *may* however take one, especially as a second modifier, and in this case there tends to be a slight pause before the adjective, and the attribute is nominalised:

- 1.85 *Eḡaina amu?e-ḡa, e?ele-ḡa, la-isa.* (EMek)
 that dog-3SG small-3SG 1SG-see
 That dog, the small one, I saw it.

It is unusual to find a doubly rankshifted group such as the one here. Mekeo informants resist forming strings of modifiers in this way.¹⁴⁶ When they do, each successive modifier tends to constitute a separate pause group with its own intonation contour, as represented here by commas. I say *tends* as it is a rule not strictly adhered to. However, the strong tendency in itself probably reflects the fact that the strings consist of successively rankshifted predications.

Rankshifted predications functioning as topics can be marked in one of two ways.¹⁴⁷ The first is by means of the determining suffix (e.g. 3SG *-ḡa* as just illustrated, but *-iki*, *-itsi*, or *-i?i/-i'i* if plural, and so on for other persons and numbers) which marked the original predicate as such. The second way of topicalising a rankshifted predication is with *auḡa* (the plural forms are *au-ki*, *au-tsi*, *au-i*):

- 1.86 *Eḡaina amu?e auḡa, e?ele.* (EMek)
 that dog TOP small
 That dog now, (it's) small.
- 1.87 *ḡaitsi ibio-tsi auḡa, belo-tsi.* (WMek)
 those girl-3PL TOP nice-3PL
 Those girls now, (they're) pretty.

It may very well be that the construction shown in example 1.84 above is a reduced form of the construction with *auḡa* shown in 1.85. For example:

Eḡaina amu?e auḡa > *Eḡaina amu?e-ḡa*
 that dog TOP that dog-TOP

The longer construction corresponds in fact to what I shall later call a specificational predication (see §8.3 below). *Eḡaina amu?e auḡa* would thus translate (after rankshift) as 'The one (which is) that dog.'

Deictic predicates (§3.2.1) are also common. They have a restrictive or contrastive function, and occur frequently in conversational texts. I illustrate briefly here:

¹⁴⁶ Petrie (1980:27) noted the same resistance in Roro. See §3.1.7, footnote 36, for more details.

¹⁴⁷ And this of course results in dependent-marking in what is primarily a head-marking language.

- 1.88 *Auke ŋaina.* (WMek)
 dog that
 The dog is that (one).

After rankshift this predication functions as a topic:

- 1.89 *Auke ŋaina i-idawa.* (WMek)
 dog that 3SG-sick
 That dog is sick.
- 1.90 *Kuma ŋaia auŋa i-o.* (WMek)
 pig that TOP 3SG-go
 As for *that* pig, it went/has gone.

Here there is no need to add a determining suffix as the deictic incorporates a third person singular suffix *-na*.

Nominal groups, as rankshifted predications, will appear to have a ‘modifier’ following a ‘head’ – but in fact the adjectival noun *is* the predicate and head prior to rankshift. After rankshift, however, the topic is usually *treated as* the head, because it is usually referential while the adjectival noun is usually not referential. And the topic thus controls subject or object agreement on any verb. In the following, *eka* ‘house’ becomes the head and controls all agreement when embedded in a longer predication:

- 1.91 *Eka maua.* (NWMek, WMek, NMek)
 house big
 The house (is) big./The big house.

1.3.3.4.2 RANKSHIFTED VERBAL PREDICATIONS

Verbal predications assert that something happened in time. They represent that process or event within the limits of certain semantic syntactic constraints specific to the language. But essentially they assert that it took place. An example of an assertion is:

- 1.92 *Papie e-mae.* (EMek)
 woman 3SG-die
 The woman (has) died.

Rankshift removes the force of assertion. Having been downranked a prior assertion can be treated as given, and the predication can be embedded like any other non-verbal constituent in some other (nominal or verbal) predication. However, this kind of bare embedding construction is ambiguous:

- 1.93 *Papie e-mae, la-isa.* (EMek)
 woman 3SG-die 1SG-see
 I saw the woman who died./I saw the woman, who died./I saw the woman die.
 OR: (without rankshift) – The woman died, I saw the her/it.

Rankshifted verbal predications are more often topicalised, as below, with the addition of *-ŋa*, or with *auŋa* as a ‘dummy’ head (see next section for more details).

- 1.94 *Papie e-mae auŋa, uŋauŋa kapā.* (EMek)
 woman 3SG-die TOP sorcery thing.3SG
 (That) the woman died is a sorcery matter.

- 1.95 *Papie e-mae-ŋa-ai la-mai.* (EMek)
 woman 3SG-die-3SG-OBL 1SG-come
 I came (have come) while the woman was dying.

In example 1.95 a ‘prior’ assertion is marked as being – in its entirety – the equivalent of an oblique argument of the main/final verb. It is in fact an oblique predication.

A non-topicalised example of a rankshifted verbal predication is:

- 1.96 *Eŋaea pata-ŋa a-bai-n-i-o, o-idoŋa?*¹⁴⁸ (WMek)
 that priest-3SG 1SG-tell-TH-PF-2SG 2SG-see
 That priest I told you about, did you see (him)?

Topicalised it becomes:

- 1.97 *Eŋaea pata-ŋa a-bai-n-i-o auŋa, o-idoŋa?* (WMek)
 that priest-3SG 1SG-tell-TH-PF-2SG TOP 2SG-see
 That priest I told you about, him now, did you see (him)?

1.3.3.4.3 TOPICALISATION AND RELATIVISATION

Marked topics and topicalisation represent a kind of focusing strategy that functions like relativisation and looks like relativisation in that it uses a fossilised version of *au-ŋa*. The construction derives from a predication which can be used like a topic sentence: ‘X (is) the one (– S/he...)’.

- 1.98 *Lopia au-ŋa, (— e-mai.)* (EMek)
 chief one-3SG (— 3SG-come)
 The chief is the one, (— he came.)

In more colloquial English, the completed utterance could be rendered *either* as: ‘The one who is the chief came’ *or* as: ‘As for the chief, he came’. Relativised (if not topicalised) nouns in Mekeo correspond to the underlying relative predications that have been proposed for nominals more generally.¹⁴⁹ This contrasts with

- 1.99 *Lopia au-ŋa, e-mai.* (EMek)
 chief one-3SG 3SG-come
 As for the chief, he came.

I shall just illustrate here the potential ambiguity of topical/relative constructions with third person arguments:

¹⁴⁸ *O-idoŋa* is usually pronounced as [uidoŋa] or [widoŋa] in WMek (but as [o-izoŋa] in NMek).

¹⁴⁹ Bach (1968:92): “The next step then is to postulate that all nouns (at least common nouns) are derived in one way, namely from structures of roughly the form Det + one + S”, i.e. ‘The one who is the chief’. Translated into Mekeo word order this would become S + one + Det, i.e. “(He is) the chief the one-3SG”, or: *lopia au-ŋa*.

- 1.100 *Papie*,¹⁵⁰ *e-mae au(-)ŋa, la-isa.* (EMek)
 woman 3SG-die one-3SG/TOP 1SG-see
 I saw (have seen) the woman who (has) died. OR: I saw (have seen)
 the dying woman. OR: I saw (have seen) the woman die.

The problem is one of agreement. The enclitic topicaliser is partially grammaticalised and to that extent does not agree with any particular antecedent argument. To the extent that it is still an anaphor and a relative pro-form, however, it *should* agree with a nominal antecedent. Thus the following utterance, which has agreement for number, must be analysed as a case of relativisation:

- 1.101 *Ifiao felo-i au-i la-isa-ʔi.* (EMek)
 girl nice-3PL one-3PL 1SG-see-3PL
 I saw the girls who are/were pretty.

This is not a problem for all person/number combinations:

- 1.102 *Isa*,¹⁵¹ *la-ŋoa-p-i-o auŋa, e-isa.* (EMek)
 s/he 1SG-kiss-TH-PF-2SG TOP 3SG-see
 S/he saw (has seen) that I (have) kissed you.
 OR: S/he saw (has seen) me kissing you

This could never mean ‘S/he saw me, who kissed you’ or ‘S/he saw you, whom I kissed’, which would be expressed by means of *au-u* (‘I who(m)’) or *au-mu* (‘You who(m)’).

Multiple *marked* topics are very common in Mekeo, and even the predicate of a predication can be topicalised, as in

- 1.103 *Isa auŋa, la-pai-n-i-o auŋa,* (EMek)
 s/he TOP 1SG-tell-TH-PF-2SG TOP
ʔuma auŋa, e-pitsi-n-i-a auŋa.
 pig TOP 3SG-shoot-TH-PF-3SG TOP
 Him/her now, I told you about him/her now, a pig now, s/he shot it now.

We return to discourse strategies in Chapter 8.

1.3.3.4.4 SUPRASEGMENTAL PARAMETERS

As mentioned at the end of §1.3.3.3, there may be a number of prosodic indications as to whether one is hearing a rankshifted predication embedded in a matrix predication, or a predication *as such* embedded in a matrix predication. The rankshifted predication will normally have the prosodic structure of an independent predication: PC2 > PC1. It will usually have a prolonged PC2, and the internal pause potential of a predication proper will not be manifest:

¹⁵⁰ The domain noun (e.g. *papie* ‘woman’) is a constituent of the relative predication but is also a constituent of the matrix predication. The pronominal head of the relative predication *au-ŋa* stands in apposition to the domain noun *and* to the corresponding affix on the verb. This kind of construction has many different uses and carries a heavy functional load, as will be discussed at more length in §8.3.

¹⁵¹ *Isa* also means ‘they’, of course.

- 1.104 // 2 TOPIC..... PREDICATE (WMek)
Ini bito-ŋa, / 1 a-biji-n-i-a. //
 bird red-3SG 1SG-shoot-TH-PF-3SG
 I shot the red bird.

An embedded predication, on the other hand, may have internal pauses and the intonation pattern of a predication, within a predication:

- 1.105 // 2 TOPIC PREDICATE PREDICATE (WMek)
Ini(,) / 1 bito-ŋa, / 1 a-biji-n-i-a. //
 bird red-3SG 1SG-shoot-TH-PF-3SG
 The bird was red, (and) I shot it.

When a topic belonging to the matrix predication precedes the embedded predication, it is often a marked topic (with *auŋa*) and in such cases there are no internal pauses in the embedded predication:

- 1.106 TOPIC.... TOPIC PREDICATE PREDICATE (NMek)
 // 3 *Au auŋa, / 2 ineu / 1 umu-ŋa, / 1 e-bitsi-n-i-a. //*
 man TOP bird black-3SG 3SG-shoot-TH-PF-3SG
 As for the man, the bird was red (and) he shot it.

As explained briefly in §1.3.3.3, although relativisation and topicalisation are structurally similar phenomena, intonation *may* enable one to distinguish between them. Here are two more examples – of topicalisation and relativisation, respectively:

- 1.107 // 2 TOPIC..... PREDICATE (WMek)
ini bito-ŋa auŋa, / 1 a-ida. //
 bird red-3SG TOP 1SG-saw.3SG
 As for the red bird, I saw it.

- 1.108 // 2 TOPIC TOPIC..... PREDICATE (WMek)
ini / 2 bito-ŋa / 1 au-ŋa, / 1 a-ida. //
 bird red-3SG one-3SG 1SG-saw.3SG
 The bird, (which is) the red one, I saw it.

1.3.4 THE SEMANTICS OF VERBATION

1.3.4.1 ROLE AND REFERENCE¹⁵²

Two *core actants* in a process or event can be grammatically encoded as syntactic functions: subject-of-verb and object-of-verb. These syntactic functions define the fundamental semantic macro-roles of these actants. Thus, the subject always encodes a controlling agent. The object function encapsulates a number of different case-roles, of the kind recognised in case grammars, and these are all to a greater or lesser extent controlled by the subject. These object CRs, and the degree and manner of their affectedness, are signalled by a thematic consonant included in the OM (or by the lack of one), and by the presence or absence of the transitive suffix *-AI*.

¹⁵² I should make clear my debt to Role and Reference Grammar (RRG), a functional theory of language developed over the past ten or so years by Robert D. Van Valin Jr and William A. Foley. The main reference is Foley and Van Valin (1984) (which I abbreviate to FVV), but see also Foley and Olson (1985). I should of course make it equally clear that I alone am responsible for this application of selected elements of that theory to the Mekeo data.

Subjects of intransitive verbs are *formally identified* with subjects of transitive verbs.¹⁵³ In Dixon's widely used notation, the subject represents a conflation of S and A (where S represents the subject of intransitive verbs and A the subject of transitive verbs). Finite verbs with (at least) a subject marked for tense and mood contrast with nominal predicates which carry a determining suffix.

The Mekeo subject is thus always an agent, a role that I define as that of an actively controlling actant. I use the term 'controlling', rather than 'volitional' or 'initiating', since in Mekeo the verb represents an autonomous activity or process, with an actively sustained input of energy, even when the subject-agent is ostensibly inanimate, and the activity or process unconscious.¹⁵⁴ The object, as already noted, can encode a variety of roles. Object-marking takes into account – according to the class of the verb – the degree of autonomy of the object (certain classes of quasi-autonomous objects, such as causees, taking no thematic consonant¹⁵⁵), as well as the more general nature of the activity being described (see §1.3.4.3, §4.1.4 and §4.3.3 *passim* for more detail on this).

In grammars of Oceanic languages generally there are two classes of transitivity, which have traditionally been called 'close' and 'remote' transitivity.¹⁵⁶ These are marked by two distinct verbal suffixes which have been reconstructed for POc as **-i* and **-aki(ni)*, respectively (Pawley 1973; Pawley and Reid 1980). In Mekeo the suffix *-I*, which in most other Oceanic languages marks transitivity as such (i.e. 'close' transitivity) has become specialised as a marker of perfective aspect (PF).¹⁵⁷ The functions of the other suffix, *-AI* (realised variably as *-ai* or *-ei*), are complex. Essentially, it represents a kind of indirect or *metaphorical* transitivity. A major difference between the Mekeo system and that preserved in other Oceanic languages is that, in Mekeo, these two suffixes are not mutually exclusive: *-I* (invariably preceded by TH:-*N*) usually *follows* *-AI*, except in third person singular (at no point in the system is there a choice; see Table 53 in §5.3 below).

In Mekeo these two suffixes can be attached to verbs from specifiable classes with more or less predictable semantic results. The resultant suffixes can be represented schematically as *-(C)I/-(C)∅* and *-(C)AI* (where C = TH, i.e. marks a thematic consonant which has semantic input of its own, though this is often hard to define). An object-marking suffix that contains only *-(C)I* or *-(C)∅* can be called a close transitive suffix. An object-marking suffix that contains *-(C)AI* (plus *-CI/-C∅*) can be called a remote transitive suffix (RTR). Examples are from EMek:

153 There are no traces of split intransitivity such that agent-subjects of intransitive verbs are formally distinguished from patient-subjects, a system that obtains in many of the Amerindian head-marking languages to which Mekeo may be compared. See Merlan (1985), for a detailed description of 'split intransitivity' in its various forms. (Some AN languages do exhibit split-marking, e.g. Achenese)

154 This statement always holds for imperfective aspect. It does not always hold for (transitive or intransitive) verbs in perfective aspect, which usually encode results and/or states. See §4.1.4 and §4.2.1 for a discussion of agentivity and imperfective aspect.

155 This is discussed at greater length below. See §4.3.3.2, §4.3.3.3 and §5.2.

156 These terms, largely popularised by Pawley, describe categories which are defined in terms of the semantic case roles of the objects they typically take.

Close (also direct) objects are: "patient or location of an action, stimulus or goal of a psychological verb", while remote (or indirect) objects are: "instrument, cause, benefactor, referent or concomitant" (see Pawley in Wurm, ed. 1976:310-311 for the definitions quoted; Wolff (in Naylor, ed. 1980:158-159) also uses these terms and has very similar definitions).

157 As will be shown below (§4.1.2 and §4.2.1), perfective aspect is a forced choice for most person/number combinations in non-future tense.

- 1.109 *Imoi, au e-piu-ŋ-a.* (imperfective; -(C)∅)
 child stick 3SG-swing-TH-3SG
 The child is swinging/throwing the stick.
- 1.110 *Imoi, au e-piu-n-i-a.* (perfective; -(C)I)
 child stick 3SG-swing-TH-PF-3SG
 The child swung/threw the stick.
- 1.111 *Imoi, ?opua ke-piu-ai-n-a.* (perfective/imperfective; -(C)AI)
 child toy 3SG-swing-RTR-TH-3SG
 The children dispute/disputed the toy.

The difference between the directly caused effects in examples 1.109 and 1.110 and the symbolic effect, or reaction, in 1.111 is evident. This is one example of what is meant by metaphorical or indirect transitivity. In §5.3 this verb form is illustrated fully.

Most verbs take one or the other suffix, while a smaller number take either (*BIU* above is one of the latter). This is lexically determined. In exemplary Oceanic languages, and to some extent here, they function (as already noted) to define two classes of object roles. The close transitive suffix signals a cluster of roles typically associated with direct objects: patients and products of agentive verbs, and targets of psychological verbs, as well as goals of motion verbs. The remote transitive suffix signals the kind of roles typically expressed as indirect objects or oblique NPs: stimulus (but also target), instrument, concomitant and so on.¹⁵⁸ However, in Mekeo this distinction is not so clear-cut. Objects of close transitive verbs may encode a wide variety of semantic roles, representing peripheral as well as core participants, while objects of remote transitive verbs are usually either goals or targets (when the OM is not referentially 'empty').

In Mekeo the diamorpheme *-I* can be interpreted as essentially a marker of perfective aspect (which is the *unmarked* aspect), as well as of the definiteness or the *distinctiveness* of an object.¹⁵⁹ It will be glossed PF. However, this morpheme *always* appears before pronominal suffixes marking first or second person objects, singular or plural, and it *always* appears before the third person plural pronominal suffix. It also appears after the remote transitivity marker *-AI* (after the following *-N*) in all persons *except third singular* (where for some reason its presence is blocked, i.e. it *never* appears). Thus the opposition between perfective and imperfective aspect operates only at third person singular. Perfective is clearly the *unmarked* aspect. All of this will be illustrated amply and is discussed further in §4.1.2, §4.2.1 and §5.3 below. Meanwhile here are some EMek examples (which are all in the imperfective aspect) that illustrate the kinds of roles that can be fulfilled by close transitive objects in Mekeo:

- 1.112 *A?iva fa-pinauŋa.* (purpose)
 knife OBLG.1SG-work
 I would (= wish to) work for a knife.
- 1.113 *Vai?afu lo-mei.* (location)
 Vai'afu 2SG-faeces
 You defecate in Vai'afu.

¹⁵⁸ It should be noted that this is a *paraphrase* of Pawley and Reid (1980:53).

¹⁵⁹ See Wald (1979) for an apt definition of 'distinctiveness'.

- 1.114 *Isa kuku mo-ŋoi-n-a.* (goal)
3SG tobacco IMP.2SG-request-TH-3SG
You must ask him for tobacco.
- 1.115 *Papie foʔama ke-pako-ŋ-a.* (target)
woman food 3PL-wail-TH-3SG
The women bewail the (stolen) food.
- 1.116 *Imoi fiŋu ke-ʔafo-a.* (theme)
child sand 3PL-throw-3SG
The children are throwing sand.
- 1.117 *Papiau ipako ke-ao-ŋ-a.* (patient)
people sago 3PL-knead-TH-3SG
The people are kneading sago.

Objects of remote transitive verbs with *-AI* can be of the following kinds:

- 1.118 *Iji nao an-a-ao-ai-n-a.* (comitative)
I foreigner FUT-1SG-go-RTR-TH-3SG
I will take the foreigner.
- 1.119 *P-ai-d-o-aka-lai-n-i-au!* (target)
OBLG-NEG-B-2SG-laugh-RTR-TH-PF-1SG¹⁶⁰
Don't laugh at me! (lit. You should not laugh at me!)
- 1.120 *Papie kaapa ke-maniʔi-ai-n-i-ʔi.* (stimulus)
woman snake 3PL-fear-RTR-TH-PF-3PL
The women fear snakes.
- 1.121 *Aŋoa a-pi-io-ai-n-a.*¹⁶¹ (reason)
land 1PL-REC-spear-RTR-TH-3SG
We fight/have fought over land.

The oblique case role, which is marked by the word-final suffix *-AI*,¹⁶² is largely 'ablative' in its range of meanings.¹⁶³ In the following example it expresses, indeterminately, either an instrumental or a locative participant function:

- 1.122 *Inema kabili-ai la-pa-aŋa.* (EMek)
rat trap-OBL 1SG-CA-bite
I caught a/the rat in (= with) a/the trap.

The oblique function generally encodes non-obligatory, circumstantial roles (see §1.3.4.2 for details and examples).

¹⁶⁰ Note that here RTR is realised as *-CAI*, and is followed by PF.

¹⁶¹ Arms (1987:111) gives Schütz credit for recognising this function of RTR in Fijian. See §5.3 below for details of RTR, with numerous illustrations.

¹⁶² There is not usually thought to be any historical connection between *-AI* the remote transitivity suffix and *-AI* the oblique case suffix. They are not confused in practice because the remote transitive suffix does not occur word-finally, always being followed by an OM, while OBL is always word-final.

¹⁶³ These are illustrated in §1.3.4.2 below. Typical meanings expressed are 'place where' or location (example 1.126); 'place whence' or source (1.124), (1.130); 'place whither' or goal (1.125), (1.149); cause (1.147); *-AI* also expresses 'time when' or simultaneity, as in 1.134, etc.; also in 1.145 to 1.148.

Now none of the semantic object roles recognised above are formally distinct. They are not, therefore, relevant categories for the description. Moreover, the agent role is a conditioned category, as all subjects are to some degree agents. However, as will be shown in §1.3.4.4, where a preliminary account is given of lexical causatives and causative derivations, a system of semantic roles extending beyond those already described for the transitive verb is needed to account for all the facts of Mekeo grammar.

Reference and cross-reference are frequently problematic in Mekeo. The third person singular markers are often referentially ambivalent, redundant or missing (e.g. in the last example above there is no object-marking morpheme suffixed to the verb). Reference is, in the last analysis, pragmatically inferred rather than decoded. This will be discussed at length in Chapters 7 and 8.

Core coordinate juncture (§8.1.1 below) is the main syntactic mechanism allowing for predicate expansion (i.e. ‘clause linkage’) in Mekeo. It involves one of the following coreference relations: same-subject (SS), new subject (NS) or promoted subject (PS; this can also be called causative serialisation). In the third person (common person) coreference is impossible to establish except on pragmatic grounds:

	Subject/Object	<-----Predicate----->	
1.123	<i>Papie</i>	<i>e-kafa-i-s-a</i>	<i>e-mae.</i> (EMek)
	woman	3SG-insult-PF-B-3SG	3SG-die
	The woman abused him and he died.//He abused the woman and died.//		
	The woman abused him and died.//He abused the woman and she died.		

The kinds of syntactic relations that hold in a head-marking language differ from those that obtain in dependent-marking languages (grammatical relations that are usually defined in terms of agreement and government). The relation holding between free nouns or NPs and the role-marking affixes on the verb has often been described as one of ‘apposition’. It is a unilateral relation in the sense that the dependents need the head but the head does not need the dependents. However, this unilateral dependency still constitutes a deep-grammatical relation, and I shall refer to it as a bond (following Nichols 1986:108). Now simultaneously with this syntactic bond, there is a semantico-pragmatic dependency holding between these free NPs and the pronominal affixes on the verb, to which they cataphorically refer. The relationship between the free NPs and the verb is, in fact, *bilateral*.

Pawley (1977) has argued that pronominal “determiners” in an exemplary Oceanic language function to assign semantic attributes to co-referential NPs (such as specific/generic, animate/inanimate, as well as person and number), rather than to reflect them. A similar argument could perhaps be made for the pronominal affixes on the verb in a head-marking language: they determine certain minimal attributes of the nominal arguments – that is person and number. This is a large question, with theoretical implications, and no position is taken here.

Keenan (1976a) suggests that the nominal arguments function mainly to restrict the field of reference rather than to refer. This would seem to apply in a particularly apt way to Mekeo, where nominally functioning roots exhibit no marking for such typically nominal features as case, gender, number or definiteness.¹⁶⁴ However, *determinate* nouns do have

¹⁶⁴ They are thus extremely low on the scale of ‘nouniness’, or categoriality (see Hopper and Thompson 1984, §3).

reference, as carried by their pronominal determiners, and (as I show in §2.1.2.1 and §2.1.2.2 below) some nouns are by definition determinate.

1.3.4.2 OBLIQUE FUNCTIONS

The only formally realised case in Mekeo is the oblique (or ablative) case. Nominals of all kinds, and only nominals,¹⁶⁵ can carry the suffix *-AI* (normally realised as *-ai*, but going to *-ae*, *-e* and even *-i* in some western areas, and especially in NWMek). They are thereby peripheralised, and function as optional adjuncts in a predication.

This suffix marks a nominal either as a) designating the locus of a verb involving process, movement or action in place, b) as the source of a verb involving (loco-)motion, or c) as the instrument, medium or means of an action. The meaning of ‘locus’ here extends to the physical conditions that hold at a given time: light, darkness, cold, heat. In its more extended meanings *-AI* can mark a nominal, or a nominalised predication, as having any one of a number of circumstantial and logical roles, such as cause, or reason.

The primary meanings of *-AI* are probably *spatial* location or source, but the suffix is also used to describe location along a temporal dimension, i.e. the ‘time when’ adverbial function. Attached to a nominalised predication embedded in another predication, it conveys the meaning of ‘while, during’.

The term used here to cover all the grammatical functions performed by *-AI* marked nominals is oblique (OBL). An oblique nominal encodes an oblique function. An oblique nominal may be semantically or pragmatically licensed. The former are slightly more optional than the latter, since the hearer can hope to recover them from the semantics of the verb, whereas it is just about impossible to know which peripheral details the speaker considers relevant.

There follow some examples of oblique-marked nominals in use – the first pair are semantically licensed while the second pair are pragmatically licensed:

- 1.124 *Moku-ai la-mai.* (EMek)
Moresby-OBL 1SG-come
I have come from Port Moresby.
- 1.125 *Eka ao-ŋ-ai mo-oŋe.* (WMek)
string.bag inside-3SG-OBL IMP.2SG-put
Put (it) in the string bag.
- 1.126 *Ŋagu Imuŋa-ai aibaia.* (WMek)
feast Imunga-OBL none
There is/was no feast in Imunga.
- 1.127 *Ima-u a?iva-ai la-iva-i-s-a.* (EMek)
hand-1SG knife-OBL 1SG-cut-PF-B-3SG
I have cut my hand with a/the knife.

Certain kinds of (non-human) actants are not precluded from functioning as core relations of the verb (i.e. as subject or object). But they can *also* function as circumstantial actants, in an oblique relation and an instrumental case-role. For example, ‘knife’ in example 1.127

¹⁶⁵ That is to say, of course, lexical bases functioning as nouns.

above functions as a circumstantial actant. However, we can also have either of the following utterances, with 'knife' fulfilling the core functions of subject and object, respectively:

1.128 *A?iva ima-u e-iva-i-s-a.* (EMek)

knife hand-1SG 3SG-cut-PF-B-3SG
A/the knife cut my hand.

1.129 *A?iva la-afi-a ima-u la-iva-i-s-a.* (EMek)

knife 1SG-take-3SG hand-1SG 1SG-cut-PF-B-3SG
I took a/the knife and cut my hand.

Other kinds of inherently agentive actants (such as animals and humans) can *not* function as instrumental obliques. These can only function as core actants or locative/source obliques. We can *not* peripheralise 'I' or any other personal pronouns: ****Lau-ai**. Body parts and inherent agents can take OBL only when this expresses location or source:

1.130 *A?iva, ina-u-ai e-ava-i-s-a.* (EMek)

knife mother-1SG-OBL 3SG-buy-PF-B-3SG
S/he bought the knife from my mother.

1.131 *A?iva, ima-ŋa-ai la-afi-a.* (EMek)

knife hand-3SG-OBL 1SG-take-3SG
I took the knife from his/her hand.

The scene cannot generally be encoded in such a way that inherently agentive actants function as totally controlled participants.¹⁶⁶

A small number of very general nouns that function as subordinating heads are used to form adverbial predications. These follow the predication that they subordinate. They take a third person singular determining suffix (that refers back in a general way to the entire predication) and they frequently (though not always¹⁶⁷) take the oblique-marking suffix *-AI*. The predications of which they are the heads are in this manner rankshifted downward, to function as circumstantial topics of a higher predicative head, functioning to restrict the field of its arguments. These nouns constitute a closed set that I call classifier nouns (see §2.1.2.1.3, and then §8.3.2 below). Some of the more common items are:

a) *buo-ŋa-ai, puo-ŋa-ai* cause-3SG-OBL because of that

b) *gai-na-ai, kai-na-ai* direction-3SG-OBL for that reason
gai-na-ŋa-ai, kai-na-ŋa-ai

c) *fau-ŋa-ai, pau-ŋa-ai* sake-3SG-OBL for the sake of that

Other common types of adverbial expression with *-AI* are the following:

1.132 *x apu-ŋa-ai* (EMek)

x place-3SG-OBL
in/at the place of...

1.133 *nga-e katsia-ŋa-ai* (WMek)

DX-CNT soil-3SG-OBL
in that place

¹⁶⁶ Compare Starosta (1991:481): "PAT and AGT appear only as complements".

¹⁶⁷ To be discussed in §8.3.2. My impression is that *-AI* is understood.

- 1.134 *x kina-ŋa-ai* (EMek)
x day-3SG-OBL
 at the time of...
- 1.135 *x aisama-ŋa-ai* (EMek)
x time-3SG-OBL
 while/at the time of...
- 1.136 *kabula-u-ai* (WMek)
 strength-1SG-OBL
 when I was strong
- 1.137 *ajuʔa-u-ai* (EMek)
 youth-1SG-OBL
 when I was young
- 1.138 *x alo-ŋa-ai* (EMek)
x inside-3SG-OBL
 while *x* was going on
- 1.139 *kumina ao-ŋa-ai* (WMek)
 darkness inside-3SG-OBL
 while it was dark
- 1.140 *ŋa-e ao-ŋa-ai* (WMek)
 DX-CNT inside-3SG-OBL
 while that was happening

A small number of words, marked as above, have become specialised in an adverbial function (i.e. fossilised), some (e.g. example 1.141) filling gaps in the system of relative tense/aspect:

- 1.141 *ala-paisa-ŋa-ai* (EMek)
 where-indeed-3SG-OBL
 already OR: formerly
- 1.142 *ŋani-na-ŋa-ai* (EMek)
 ???-3SG-3SG-OBL
 in spite of this (nevertheless)

Then there is the increasingly common EMek intensifier (see §2.1.2.3.6 below), currently being borrowed into all the other dialects:

- 1.143 *alo-ŋa-ai* (EMek)
 inside-3SG-OBL
 [very (much) (< inside it)]
- 1.144 *ao-ŋa-ai* (NMek, WMek)
 [This may be a calque on the above.]

The suffix *-AI* can also be attached to a verbally functioning root once this has been nominalised with *-ŊA*, and in such cases it encodes the temporal meanings ‘during’ or ‘while’:

- 1.145 *Ubi mae-ŋa-ai ga-mai.* (WMek)
 water death-3SG-OBL 1PL-come
 While desperately lacking water we came.
 (lit. From the death of water we came.)

-AI is also suffixed to *ao*, *alo* 'inside' to mean 'while, during':

- 1.146 *Ga-mae ao-ŋa-ai ga-boa-boa.* (WMek)
 1PL-die inside-3SG-OBL 1PL-walk-RED
 We walked while we were perishing.

We can paraphrase example 1.145 using the stem *AIAMA* 'time' (see 1.135) above):

- 1.147 *Ubi mae-ŋa-ai ga-mae aisama-ŋa-ai ga-mai.* (WMek)
 water death-3SG-OBL 1PL-death time-3SG-OBL 1PL-come
 At the time we were dying from the (desperate) need of water we came.

Or, again, much more briefly put:

- 1.148 *Ga-mae-ŋa-ai ga-mai.* (WMek)
 1PL-death-3SG-OBL 1PL-come
 We were dying when we came.

In what is perhaps an innovative usage -AI can mark the goal of a motion verb:

- 1.149 *Ulalu apu-ŋa-ai ga-gogo.* (WMek)
 wretched(ness) place-3SG-OBL 1PL-enter
 We have entered a/the place of wretchedness.

1.3.4.3 TRANSITIVITY FUNCTIONS

The transitivity of each transitive verb is modulated by a fixed thematic consonant (or indeed the absence of such a consonant), so that there are in effect a number of verbal groupings that correspond to different kinds and degrees of transitivity. They do not correspond to semantic fields so much as they impose their own modulations upon verbs that can be grouped together on social and cultural grounds. I call these modulations transitivity functions.

The thematic consonants occur immediately after the last vowel of the last root of the stem, and immediately before the perfective aspect marker -I. When there is no -I (as in third person singular imperfective) the thematic consonant is followed at once by the third person singular object marking suffix: -a. The object marker in the widest sense of the term includes the following: TH (+ PF) + O. This suffix can also be represented as: -(C)ia (following a fairly standard representation of the third person singular transitive suffix in Maori and Fijian) or, avoiding standardisation with the third person singular, -(C)I/(C)∅.¹⁶⁸

The thematic consonants (TH) are not to be confused with the buffer consonants (see §1.2.2.2), especially the intrusive [z] or [ʒ] in NMek and the [s] in EMek, which have variably invaded the OM in those dialects. These consonants always occur after PF and before O: -PF-z-O, -PF-s-O. In these dialects the third person singular OM could in fact be represented as -(C)i-(S)-a (where S = any palatal fricative). The intrusive consonant is

¹⁶⁸ In discussions of Fijian the suffix is usually shown as -(C)ia, using 3SG (represented by the pronominal suffix -a) as the standard citation form.

glossed as B, for buffer consonant, as it fulfils no grammatical function but often prevents the loss of vocalic phonemes through assimilation.

The thematic consonants have the following realisations:

NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
/ŋ, n/	/ŋ, n/	/ŋ, n/	/ŋ, n/
/β/	/b/	/b/	/p/
/g/	/g/	/g/	/k/
/∅/	/∅/	/∅/	/∅/

These can be represented diamorphemically as /N/, /B/, /G/ and /∅/.

Transitivity functions appear to correspond to different areas of endeavour within Mekeo culture. Thus a given thematic consonant (TH) signals not only a kind of transitivity but also a kind of activity. An area of activity may combine a number of tasks that are perceived in this culture to be related. The weaving or plaiting of bush fibres (a key cultural endeavour carried on by both men and women and one that produces all sorts of important artifacts from matting to bracelets) is, for example, formally related – along with certain other ‘jobs’ – to kneading and pounding activities such as are involved in sago production. All of the verbs concerned take the TH: -N on the object-marking suffix. They all describe a manner of deliberately applying concentrated force to work or rework or displace an object or a substance. And all of the areas described by such verbs combine to define the cultural domain of ‘useful work’, a domain that we could gloss loosely as the deliberate transformative (re-)working of objects or raw materials. This will be discussed at greater length in §4.1.4 and §4.3.3 below.

It is the transitivity of the verb *as a whole* that is modulated by a given thematic consonant, not just the nature or intensity of the effect, nor the nature of the object. Each verb (usually) has a fixed TH, assigned by customary usage, although some expressive variation does occur. The general semantic domains represented can be categorised briefly as follows:

1. /N/ deliberate, sustained and concentrated application of physical (esp. manual) force to directly affect some object, often giving that object a new use-value; highly focussed mental or verbal process, with symbolic effect

Ex.: a)	<i>iu-ŋ-a, au-ŋ-a</i>	hit, strike, kill someone or something
b)	<i>iwa-ŋ-a, iva-ŋ-a</i>	call, address, accuse
2. /B/ perfunctory or deft manipulation or modification of an object, often appropriating something or disposing of it (e.g. dismantling it) in the process

Ex.: a)	<i>ogo-β-a, ogo-b-a, oko-p-a</i>	husk (coconut)
b)	<i>gaŋo-β-a, gaŋo-b-a, kaŋo-p-a</i>	pluck out hairs
3. /G/ decisive and/or aggressive application of considerable physical force, causing physical distortion/dispersion of an object

Ex.: a)	<i>βuβu-g-a, bubu-g-a, pupu-k-a</i>	scrape the grains off a cob of corn
b)	<i>pio-g-a, fio-g-a, fio-k-a</i>	twist something
4. /∅/ i) careful application of mild force, often only lightly or inconclusively affecting an object (e.g. by displacing it)

- Ex.: a) *kapo-a, kafo-a, ?afo-a* swing, throw something
 b) *api-a, afi-a* take hold of something
- ii) application of a procedure/process to effect a qualitative transformation of the object
- Ex.: a) *ani-a* eat something
 b) *poba(-i-a), poba(-i-a), fopa(-i-a)* cook in stones
- iii) methodical application of mild force mediated by the use of an instrument or tool, having *either* a mild effect on the object *or* a disintegrative/destructive effect
- Ex.: *pake(-i)-a, vake(-i)-a, va?e(-i)-a* cut into slices/pieces, by means of a knife
- iv) causation – control of a semi-autonomous actant (can be a person or a thing) which thereby moves or acts
- Ex.: *βa-giβo-a, ba-jibo-a, ba-tsibo-a, pa-ki-po-a* make something or someone. go down/stop

The four kinds of change-in-the-world that are encoded by TH /Ø/ can be characterised by the fact that their effect on an object is always either superficial or indirectly achieved. They can be contrasted succinctly as follows:

- i) lightly modifying the disposition or location of an object or objects
- ii) applying a procedure/process to effect qualitative change in an object
- iii) using some cutting instrument in order to breach the physical integrity of an object; results may be mild *or* may involve destruction of the object
- iv) controlling/directing the actions of some autonomous animate or inanimate actant, which acts or moves as a result

The thematic consonants are also found as components of the remote transitive suffix. There is in that context, in addition to the three thematic consonants listed above, an /L/. Each thematic consonant yields a different variant of the RTR suffix -(C)AI, and each of these variants produces a different semantic result depending on the class of verb to which it is attached. Most of the verb classes that take RTR are otherwise intransitive, so there is no possibility for correspondence between thematic consonants used in close and remote transitive suffixes. The remote transitive suffix is illustrated in §5.3.

The whole topic of thematic consonants – their semantics and their provenance – represents one of the current concerns in Oceanic linguistics. Arms (1973, 1974) and Lichtenberk (1978) have made important contributions, with detailed studies of thematic consonants in Fijian and Manam respectively. It is generally agreed that, while specific thematic consonants do tend to appear in specifiable semantic contexts, these are difficult to define in a hard and fast way. Arms claimed to have found a significant correlation between meanings and thematic consonants in Fijian. But Lichtenberk (1978:191) was able to conclude only that “there is no very close correlation between meanings and thematic consonants in Manam...” He goes on to assert that “there is nevertheless *some tendency* for certain consonants to occur more frequently with certain meanings rather than with others” (my italics). My own claim is certainly somewhat stronger than this (although I do not insist

on the predictability of meanings from thematic consonants). On the whole I find a general consistency and fairly well-defined semantic domains. The topic is pursued below in §4.1.4, and the verb classes defined by the thematic consonants in the close transitive suffix (or indeed the absence of any) are illustrated in §4.3.3, in the appropriate subsections.

1.3.4.4 TWO SYNTACTIC SYSTEMS: TRANSITIVITY VERSUS CAUSATIVITY

As already outlined in §1.3.2.3, two distinct semantico-syntactic systems account for all of the verbal derivations in Mekeo grammar. These systems can be described as process dynamics, as they have their origins in two very different kinds of processes (encoded as process verbs and action verbs, respectively)¹⁶⁹ and in the different role potentials of these processes (and subtypes of these). The system of transitivity carries a considerable functional load, and the central importance of *control* in Mekeo grammar is here evident in the contrast between imperfective-progressive aspect, where maintenance of control by the agent is felt as an sustained inputting of energy, and perfect-perfective aspect, where all input has ceased, and where control is consequently absent. However, a preoccupation with control finds even more explicit expression in the system of causativity. Here control is shared between an agent (the subject) and an actor (the object). The agent stands to the actor as causer to causee. The causer has ultimate control, but the causee is nonetheless represented as carrying out the action and as controlling the execution thereof. This causee can be described as *semi-autonomous*.

Lightly affected transitive objects are marked by the absence of a thematic consonant (i.e. zero-TH). The object-marking suffix is bare, or in some cases absent (i.e. zero-O):

1.150 *E-kafo-∅-a.* (NMek)
 3SG-throw-TH-PF-3SG
 S/he is throwing it.

1.151 *Uve e-la?a.* (EMek)
 vine 3SG-pull-∅
 S/he is pulling (on) the vine.

More profoundly affected transitive objects are distinct from the above in that they do take a (non-zero) thematic consonant. For example:

1.152 *E-au-ŋ-a.* (NMek, EMek)
 3SG-hit-TH-3SG
 S/he is hitting her/him/it.

As shown below, a causee is often – though not always – identified formally with the lightly-affected and semi-autonomous objects of a verbs like ‘throw’ and ‘pull’, as well as the dative-recipient object of ‘give’.

External causativisation can be expressed by means of the prefix *BA-*, as will be described fully in §5.2 below. This derivational process has different results according to the class of verb to which it is applied. Intransitive verbs fall into two main classes: intra-causative and

¹⁶⁹ Process in the most general sense includes actions.

intradirective.¹⁷⁰ The agents of intracausative verbs are self-causing, those of intradirective verbs are self-moving.

An external causee complicates the situation in different ways for each of these. For intradirectives such as motion verbs the original subject becomes the object, which may or may not be marked:

1.153 *Koŋa e-pa-age.* (EMek)
 coconut 3SG-CA-descend
 He throws/threw down the coconut.

1.154 *ŋaaŋa e-ba-tsipō-i-a.* (NMek)
 canoe 3SG-CA-down(river)-PF-3SG
 S/he made the canoe float down (the river).

The causativisation of intracausative process verbs introduces a new participant as subject of the verb, and the original agent becomes the object. What was a self-causing agent is now controlled by an external causer. However, the causee is usually only lightly marked, which is signalled by zero-TH (see §1.3.4.3), and is thus only lightly affected. Zero-TH is also the regular marking for OMs on ditransitive verbs – semantically dative or indirect objects – which usually represent human recipients or beneficiaries. This similarity in the marking suggests some recognition of the continuing autonomy of the object, though it is in the final analysis *controlled* by the new agent-subject. Such objects are (negatively) marked as being still in control – to some extent – of the process which they undergo.¹⁷¹ Note that this holds for inanimate as well as animate objects:

1.155 *Oŋoa e-bou.* (WMek)
 pot 3SG-full
 You should fill the pot.

1.156 *Oŋoa po-ba-bou-a.* (WMek)
 pot OBLG.2SG-CA-full-3SG
 You should fill the pot.

Death is an intracausative process in Mekeo, hence we have:

1.157 *Kina e-pa-mae-s-au.* (EMek)
 sun 3SG-CA-die-B-1SG
 The sun is killing me. (lit. The sun is causing me to die.)

However, there is a special class of intracausative process verbs – which I call analytic process verbs – which can become causativised simply by the addition of an object-marking suffix. This suffix is the same as that carried by highly transitive verbs with profoundly affected objects, selecting the thematic consonant /ŋ/:

1.158 *Gia ge-gobu-n-i-a.* (WMek)
 path 3PL-block-TH-PF-3SG
 They blocked the path.

¹⁷⁰ A full description of the Mekeo verb classes is contained in §4.1.5. Basically, intracausatives are process verbs while intradirectives are a class of action verbs.

¹⁷¹ This is taken up again at more length in §5.2.9.

However, when causativised with *BA-* (it is having these alternatives that defines the class) they take the zero-TH suffix described above as characteristic of lightly affected or semi-autonomous objects. Here are two examples:

1.159 *Paavi e-pa-kupu-θ-a.* (EMek)

door 3SG-CA-block-TH-3SG
S/he closed the door.

1.160 *Mo-ba-jina-θ-i-au!* (WMek)

IMP.2SG-CA-shine-TH-PF-1SG
Show it to me!

The basic principle of causative syntax is that a self-causing agent/undergoer, represented by the subject of an intransitive verb, corresponds to a causee, represented by the object of a transitive verb, when an external causer fills the subject slot of a (derived or zero-derived) transitive verb. The basic principle of transitive syntax is that an agent/actor represented by the subject of an intransitive verb corresponds to an agent/actor represented by the subject of a transitive verb, while an extra participant representing a goal or patient fulfills the transitive object function. In causativity a new controller displaces the agent/undergoer. In transitivity the controller remains in the same function but a goal or patient role is added in object function. When the two systems intersect – that is, when a transitive verb is causativised – the syntax becomes somewhat stretched, as there is no mechanism to mark the goal or patient on the verb (where a causee now fills the object slot).

Causative syntax in Mekeo (and in the Oceanic languages generally) is somewhat unusual by universal standards in that the direct object of a causativised monotransitive verb (representing the Theme or Patient of the action) is not indexed on the verb (see Comrie 1981:168, 1985:338). Obligatory transitives represent a comparatively small class of verbs distinguished by the inclusion of an object in their grammatical valency. Upon causativisation this grammatical valency has a value of three. But the object-marking suffix indexes the causee instead of the original object (this is demonstrated conclusively in §4.3.3.3). There is no double-marking of objects in Mekeo. The semantic object may however be represented in the predication as an unmarked nominal. I call these free nominals indirect objects (IO) and the indexed nominals direct objects (O):

1.161 *Lau otsi vei la-pa-inu-p-a.* (EMek)

I horse water 1SG-CA-drink-TH-3SG
S O IO s V o
I water the horse.

Even when the root belongs to the class of intracausative verbs, i.e. when the first choice for causee would seem to be the patient of change, the participant actually marked as O is the animate or human recipient if such be present:

1.162 *Gia-ŋa po-ba-jina-i-au!* (WMek)

path-3SG OBLG.2SG-CA-show-PF-1SG
IO s V o
Show me the/its path!

Even when not present in surface structure the semantic object (the surface *indirect* object) remains part of the grammatical valency of the verb:

- 1.163 *Fo-ba-tsina-i-au!* (WMek)
 OBLG.2SG-CA-show-PF-1SG
 s V o
 Show [it] to me!

The direct object is not, however, a core actant of which there are never more than two, corresponding to the two markers on a transitive verb.)

Since presence versus absence of full nominals, as well as the order of these, generally reflects the information status of the participants (e.g. their relative newness) rather than any grammatical function/role, one can recognise a semantic object only on pragmatic grounds.¹⁷²

The causative system outlined above still operates in terms of two core roles, subject and object. But the distinction between it and the system of transitivity, a distinction realised on the lexical level of as the division between basically intracausative and basically transitive verbs, requires that these two functions have different semantic specifications for each system. This is particularly necessary when the systems intersect. The functions can be labelled semantically as follows:

ROLES IN TRANSITIVITY:

SUBJECT + OBJECT
 ACTOR + PATIENT~THEME~GOAL

ROLES IN CAUSATIVITY:

SUBJECT + OBJECT
 CAUSER + CAUSEE

ROLES IN CAUSATIVISED TRANSITIVITY:

SUBJECT + OBJECT
 CAUSER + ACTOR

FIGURE 16: ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF TRANSITIVE VERBS

The serialisation of verb roots in nuclear juncture, which can also be causative or transitive (see §6.1 *passim*), presents many of the same descriptive problems as does verbal derivation.

1.4 WORD AND CLASS

The word is the smallest independent unit of Mekeo grammar. Phonologically, it is a potential pause-group, in that it can be pronounced alone. A word is also independent in so far as it is functionally interchangeable with any other member of the class (or subclass) to

¹⁷² Exceptionally, we do find the semantic object indexed on the verb as its direct object after causativisation (see §5.2.2). The causee if present is given oblique case marking. But the OM on verbs causativised with *BA-* normally indexes the demoted agent, now the actor/causee.

which it belongs.¹⁷³ I shall here employ the commonly accepted distinction between closed and open word classes, borrowing my definitions from Robins (1964:230) as quoted in Schachter (1985:4-5).

Open classes are classes “whose membership is in principle unlimited, varying from time to time and between one speaker and another” (Robins 1964). Semantically speaking, these classes are made up of ‘full’ or lexical words – content words – with denotative meanings. The four generally established classes of lexical words are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs (see Schachter 1985:5, and Givón 1984:51).

Closed classes are classes that “contain a fixed and usually small number of member words, which are essentially the same for all the speakers of the language, or the dialect” (Robins 1964:230). These are made up of grammatical or form words: their meaning is *formally* determined, within the closed systems to which they belong. Typical closed class items in English are the pronouns, the prepositions and the conjunctions.

This very fundamental division is valid for the Mekeo data. There are a number of closed classes of grammatical words. Aside from these I treat the entire lexicon as a single open class of multifunctional roots. There is no principled way in which to divide the lexical roots into separate open word classes (e.g. nouns versus verbs, nouns versus adjectives) since the great majority of the roots and stems are grammatically multifunctional.¹⁷⁴ The two fundamental discourse functions are topic and predicate. In Chapter 3, I show how function interacts with rank, and how determinate nominals functioning as topics, or constituents of topics, can in fact be regarded as rankshifted predicates.

However, norms of usage and intuitive or notional considerations permit us in most cases to nominate a ‘typical’ or *prototypical* function for any given lexical root.¹⁷⁵ We *can* thus speak of functional ‘shifts’.

Among the closed classes we can recognise four clear divisions according to function: deictics (which usually function as topics), quantifiers (which usually function as predicates, like the ‘adjectival’ roots), grammatical functors (which operate either as grammatical functors or as illocutionary pro-verbs) and discourse-markers (some of which functions predicatively). These categories are listed in Table 9, §1.4.1.1, and their members illustrated exhaustively in the second half of Chapter 2.

The lexical bases are characterised by high levels of homonymy and polysemy. In many cases meaning is only contextually (i.e. pragmatically) determined. These matters are discussed further in §1.4.2. These essentially lexical features will emerge as critical for the grammatical analysis of complex verbal nuclei in Chapter 6.

173 I distinguish between usually monomorphemic lexical bases (i.e. roots) which can function as non-verbal words (i.e. nominals, topics or predicates) and polymorphemic bases (i.e. stems) functioning as verb words (usually predicates). The nucleus of a verb word is a lexical root or roots to which any of a range of TM-marking affixes may be added, but minimally a subject-marking prefix. The word base refers to both roots and stems.

174 Mühlhäusler (1978) has a very relevant discussion of the ramifications of MF (as he abbreviates ‘multifunctionality’) in New Guinea Pidgin (officially Tok Pisin).

175 See Hopper and Thompson (1984:707-710) for a discussion of ‘prototypicality’ in connection with grammatical categories (as well as for the derivation of this notion).

When each root is characterised by an inherent verbal-derivational potential, with concomitant constraints on arguments it may take, and when such roots can combine in different ways to form complex verbs, it is crucial to be able to identify each root precisely. Yet this is in fact extremely difficult. Whether homonymous roots are conflated in practice, by Mekeo speakers, is a subject for further testing and study.

1.4.1 WORD CLASSES

1.4.1.1 CLOSED WORD CLASSES

The closed word classes can be divided into those made up of items that can refer and those made up of essentially non-referential items with grammatical function or discourse-marking functions. The former have many of the properties of, and are often coreferential with, 'nouns'. They can be referred to as nominal pro-forms. The latter can be referred to as operators or particles. Included here are such items as conjunctions, negative particles and discourse markers. Some particles appear to have once been class nouns, while some pronominals both were and are (e.g. the comparative pronouns). Many particles can be interpreted as pro-verbs, upon occasion having the illocutionary force of predications, and I refer to these as predicators.

The pro-forms are, primarily, deictics, that can under certain conditions replace naming expressions and function as discourse participants (topics). In as much as their reference is not fixed, but depends on the utterance situation (US), they can be called shifters.¹⁷⁶ I include here words that are more conventionally called time adverbials, or adverbs of time. My chief criterion in so doing is their ability to function as complete utterances, e.g. as answers to questions. They can also function as topic or predicate in predications. Following Levinson (1983:74-76), I pursue the interaction of time deixis with cultural measurements of time in the appropriate section below (§2.2.4.1). Note that the time deictics *in fact* constitute a less closed class than the other deictics, a point brought out by Dixon (1988b:235) in his description of Boumaa Fijian: the quantifiers seem to function primarily as predicates, and are thus more 'verb-like' than the other deictics, which tend to function primarily as topics.

The Table below recapitulates that part of the Table of Contents that covers the closed word classes. I have rearranged the sections to indicate families of functions.

¹⁷⁶ Shifters, or deictics, or indexical signs, refer to (index) the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of the act of utterance (Lyons 1977:636). That is, they have 'shifting reference'.

TABLE 9: INVENTORY OF CLOSED WORD CLASSES

- I: A PRO-FORMS (NOMINAL)
- a) Pronouns
 - i) Personal Pronouns, with separate systems of Free, Emphatic, Reflexive and Possessive forms
 - ii) Impersonal Pronouns: Demonstratives and Specificational Pronouns
 - b) Time Deictics
 - i) Definite Time Deictics
 - ii) Indefinite Time Deictics
 - c) Interrogative Pro-forms¹⁷⁷
 - i) Generic Pro-forms
 - ii) Specific Pro-forms
 - d) Quantifiers
 - i) Definite Quantifiers
 - ii) Ordinal Expressions
 - iii) Indefinite Quantifiers
- II: A MODAL PREDICATORS
- a) Discourse Markers
 - b) Modality Markers
 - c) Exclamations
- II: B GRAMMATICAL PREDICATORS
- a) Negators
 - b) Unmarked Adverbials/Intensifiers
 - c) Possessive Particle(s)
- III GRAMMATICAL OPERATORS
- a) Limiting enclitics¹⁷⁸
 - b) Conjunctions (proclitic and enclitic)

1.4.1.2 OPEN WORD CLASSES

The status of lexical classes is the subject of much current debate in Oceanic linguistics, and the remainder of §1.4 is devoted to a justification of my claims about the multifunctionality of bases in Mekeo.¹⁷⁹ This has implications for a classification of verbally functioning bases in terms of their inherent derivational potential such as will be presented in §4.1.5

¹⁷⁷ These constitute a special class as they can be partially defined in terms of a pragmatic function: they are always the *focus*. They are *not*, therefore, optional constituents of an utterance (as are all other nominal elements).

¹⁷⁸ Limiters and conjunctions belong in a special class since they alone can never function as predicates. Every other kind of word can function as a complete utterance.

¹⁷⁹ The paper given as Jones (1991) represents a development of these claims.

It is usual to find some degree of movement of lexical roots between the grand categories of noun and verb in any Oceanic language, ranging from severely restricted movement as in Paamese (Crowley 1982) to the kind of very free movement that caused Milner to discard the noun/verb distinction entirely and to write his grammar of Fijian in terms of lexical bases (Milner 1956/1972). Schütz (1986:95) confirms that, while one can easily distinguish on formal grounds “between verb phrase and noun phrase”, there is no clear-cut criterion for classifying the roots themselves as either verbs or nouns. He settles for a “circular but workable” definition of nouns, and presumably verbs, based on the kind of phrase in which a root “occurs most commonly as the head”, a definition which allows him to go on using the traditional class names. This resembles my own position, where ‘noun’ and ‘verb’ are used as function labels, not class names.

The syntactic freedom of Mekeo roots is probably better captured by terms like ‘nounation’ and ‘verbatation’ (compare Whorf’s (1956:93-99) “stativation” and “verbatation”, which he calls modulus categories in opposition to selective categories;). But, although I will resort to these neologisms from time to time, I retain the more familiar terms in most of what follows, on the understanding that they refer to discourse functions and not word classes.

Dixon (1988a, 1988b) has recently argued that separate noun, verb and adjective classes *can* in fact be isolated in Fijian, as perhaps covert but nonetheless formally specifiable categories, specifiable largely in terms of morphosyntactic tests and usages (what Whorf (1956) called “reactances”):

The semantic principles underlying classifier use...are quite distinct for each of the three classes. The occurrence and effect of derivational affixes and of reduplication...is also tied to word class – e.g. the prefix *+i-* applies only to verbs...and derives a noun.

(Dixon 1988b:238)¹⁸⁰

Dixon’s demonstration coincides with demonstrations elsewhere that languages previously thought to show unrestricted morphosyntactic behaviour of roots do in fact possess a derivational apparatus that can only be explained in terms of two distinct word classes, nouns and verbs (cf. Jacobsen (1979), on Nootkan; and Hébert (1983), on Okanagan). In a similar way, Mühlhäusler (1978; following Hall 1943) has demonstrated that the striking multifunctionality of lexical bases in New Guinea Pidgin (Tok Pisin) overlies a system of basic word classes (noun, verb, adjective and adverb) and regular derivations, and that, in fact, “functional shift in any direction can only occur once” (p.129). In spite of any trepidation one might feel in the light of all these (re-)analyses, it is impossible to avoid stating here, at the beginning of this grammar, that Mekeo has – in a very real sense – no system of open word classes and no unbridgeable dichotomy between nouns and verbs.

The verb phrase (the verb word) in Mekeo is clearly identifiable by virtue of its obligatory affixal morphology, in particular the indispensable subject-marking prefix, and the nominal phrase can be identified by its lack of the same (as well as by certain other syntactic behaviours not available to the verbal phrase). As in Fijian, the same roots may surface either as ‘nouns’ or as ‘verbs’ (heads of verbal phrases) but, unlike in Fijian, there are few morphosyntactic tests – ‘reactances’ – available in Mekeo to decide the question of primary or underlying class (due in part to the fact that Mekeo is an agglutinating while Fijian is an isolating language). This is because the inflectional morphology is confined to verb words.

¹⁸⁰ The + here signifies a propensity to agglutinate to a preceding article.

Although it allows us to recognise different classes of verbs, it does not help us to distinguish between a class of inherently verbal roots and a class of non-verbal roots.

In the absence of clear-cut deciding criteria of a morphological or a syntactic nature, it is possible and useful to situate lexical bases along some sort of scale of prototypicality, using a semantic criterion, so that we may still be able to speak, however relativistically or provisionally, of typically nominal roots, or 'nouns', and typically verbal roots, or 'verbs'. Such a scale is provided by Givón (1984:55) – a time-stability scale which I reproduce here and adapt:

NOUNS	<	>	ADJECTIVES	<	>	VERBS
OBJECTS			PROPERTIES			EVENTS
most			intermediate			rapid
time-stable			states			change

FIGURE 17: GIVÓN'S TIME-STABILITY SCALE

It is not proposed to use the above scale as a metric, but it does objectify the two poles of a semantic dichotomy that underpins my prototypicality hypothesis.¹⁸¹

In Mekeo, the position is this. All typically nominal roots *may* appear as intransitive verbs (i.e. state or process verbs of being or becoming) – and sometimes, more rarely, as transitive verbs – just as all typically verbal roots *may* appear, without affixes of any kind, as subject-topics or objects of appropriate verbs (i.e. verbs of mental process or evaluative verbs). The semantics (i.e. the time-stability) of a root thus does to some degree constrain the use (in that prototypical nominals cannot function as action verbs). Let us consider examples of these two kinds of 'shift' in turn.¹⁸²

A. Verbal functioning of typically nominal roots

Let us first take a prototypical 'common' noun like 'woman', which is *βaβie*, *babie*, *papie*.¹⁸³ This can occur as a verb with the following meanings:

- 1.164 *E-papie*. (EMek)
 SG-woman
 S/he is being or has become a woman.

¹⁸¹ See Hopper and Thompson (1984:707, 2.1) for a more extreme version of this than my own – one in which categorisation is assumed. My use of the word 'typical' presupposes a prototypicality hypothesis.

¹⁸² This kind of shift applies to items of the same rank – i.e. lexical words – which can *shift* between morphological functions at the level of the predication. This is not to be confused with rankshift, which usually involves an embedded predication functioning *as a word* – one rank below its own in the hierarchy of units – in another predication.

¹⁸³ In accordance with the convention, *βaβie* is the form used furthest west (i.e. NWMek), *babie* is the form used east of that (WMek and NMek dialects) while *papie* represents the form used further east again (EMek dialect). See Historical Assumptions and Abbreviations on p.xii. *βaβie* actually means 'a sexually mature and experienced woman', and, 'a marriageable woman, a woman as disposable property' (it is therefore used for one's 'sister' rather than one's 'wife').

This is a straightforward example of a verb of being or becoming: a state or process verb (this depends on the aspect). Roots with 'concrete' referents are also (though considerably more rarely) used as transitive verbs. Here is an EMek example (from Desnoës) with *aku* 'smoke':

- 1.165 *Ŋua-u la-aku-n-i-a.* (EMek)
heart-1SG 1SG-smoke-TH-PF-3SG
I smoked my heart/viscera (with tobacco).

The metaphorical meanings of *aku-ŋ-a* 'smoke (TR)' extend simultaneously in two directions: 'cause to be/become replete, satisfied' versus 'cause to be/become nauseous'. This ambivalence may be a result of the introduction of tobacco, the smoke of which is regarded as pleasant and beneficial, as opposed to the smoke (or smell) from burnt or overcooked food, which is thought to be disgusting. Note that in Mekeo, as in many other Melanesian languages, one speaks of 'eating' tobacco (e.g. EMek *kuku la-ani-a* (tobacco 1SG-smoke-3SG) 'I smoke tobacco').

A root like *βaβie*, *babie*, *papie* can yield verbal derivations just like any typically 'verbal' root: e.g. *βa-βaβie-ŋ-a*, *ba-babie-ŋ-a*, *pa-papie-ŋ-a* 'cause to become a woman; marry; deflower'. Most other indisputably concrete roots behave in exactly the same way, so that from EMek *aku* 'smoke' one has (*e-aku*, (*e-aku-aku* 'smell of (be like) smoke (or nicotine), be/become burnt', as well as the transitive verbalizations mentioned above. And EMek *vei* 'water, river' also occurs as (*e-vei*, and (*e-vei-vei* 'be/become watery, juicy', and in (*e-pa-vei-a* 'cause to be/become watery, thin'. These are conjugable for all tenses, aspects and moods.

In other cases, however, it is far from clear that the root is – 'prototypically' – either nominal or verbal:

- 1.166 *E-isava.* (EMek)
3SG-sick(-ness)
S/he is or has become sick.
- 1.167 *Iva-ŋome la-iva.* (EMek)
speech-base 1SG-speak
I speak 'true' speech.

Dixon's (1988a:236) solution in Fijian, where a similar situation holds, was to assign problematic roots dual membership of lexical classes. My solution is to dispense with the classes and to speak solely in terms of roots (or stems) and discourse functions.

Here is an example of an indisputable noun (borrowed from English) functioning as a transitive verb:

- 1.168 *?uma la-suage-n-i-a.* (EMek)
pig 1SG-swap-TH-PF-3SG
I threw the pig over my shoulder (like a swag).

A major problem begins to emerge when 'denominal' verbs are used *metaphorically*, which very frequently happens (the process is fully productive), as in:

- 1.169 *Ava?a e-kania.* (EMek)
betel 3SG-head
The betel(-pepper) is putting out (or has put out) buds.

The problem is (as noted earlier) that the meaning of the verb cannot be predicted from the meaning of the noun. Each verbal use is in effect an innovation.¹⁸⁴ As Clark and Clark (1979) have discussed at some length, it is only the occasion of use, the pragmatic components of the scene itself, that can fully elucidate the semantics of the verb and identify its participant functions or arguments.

This kind of lexical indeterminacy is not simply a consequence of functional shifts: it applies in some degree to the root itself, as noted in the last section. Thus *kuku*, *ʔuʔu* is 'breast' but also on occasion 'milk'. And Desnoës gives the EMek verb/s (*e-ʔu*, (*e-ʔuʔu* 'nurse', and (*e-ʔu-pa* 'suck on (breast)'. The first of these is intransitive and can apply to either the nursing mother or the nursing child. It could also undoubtedly mean 'be/become a breast, or have breasts'. But, clearly, the meaning 'nurse' is not predictable from the meaning 'breast' alone. *Pugo*, *fugo*, *fuko* is, according to the situation, either 'navel' or 'umbilical cord' or, by extension, the 'central point' of anything. The verb *pugo*, *fugo*, *fuko* means 'be in the middle, be the centre of attention'. This extension of meaning is unremarkable, but it is essentially unpredictable.

B. Nominal functioning of typically verbal roots

The following examples demonstrate the ease with which verbs can function as abstract nouns.¹⁸⁵ That is they can function as subject-topics and even objects in verbal or nominal predications. They take all the morphology that nouns ordinarily take (in their various syntactic functions), and there is no special marking to indicate that these 'prototypically verbal' roots are in any sense *derived*.

- 1.170 *Namo boa au-ŋa i-aŋoga.* (WMek)
 this walk REL-3SG 3SG-hard
 This walk/walking is hard.
- 1.171 *Jesu poi-na oiso.* (EMek)
 Jesus fall-3SG three
 Jesus had three falls. (lit. Jesus's falls were three)
- 1.172 *Iza tsia-bizau*¹⁸⁶ *e-mafu.* (NMek)
 they 3SG-run 3SG-poor
 Their running is poor.
- 1.173 *Iva-ʔi aʔa-ʔi apala.* (EMek)
 speak-3PL laugh-3PL bad
 Their speaking and laughing is terrible.
- 1.174 *Ui agō a-io.* (NWMek)
 water draw.3SG 1SG-go
 I am going to draw water.

¹⁸⁴ As is every act of nominal denotation. Extension of the uses of nominals on an ad hoc basis is complicated by the existence of numerous homonyms (see §1.4.2.2 and §1.4.2.3, on homonymy and polysemy, respectively).

¹⁸⁵ What Lyons (1977:445-446) calls "second-order" nouns.

¹⁸⁶ A good example of consonantal intrusion in a root word. Other speakers still have *biau* 'run'.

- 1.175 *Mary ŋewa ani-na ai-d-ani-a.* (WMek)
 Mary dance death-3SG NEG-B-die-3SG¹⁸⁷
 Mary does not like to dance.
- 1.176 *bi-foŋe au-tsi* (NMek)
 REC-deceive man-3PL
 liars/deceivers
- 1.177 *pa-afu fo²ama* (EMek)
 CA-taboo food
 forbidden food

1.4.1.3 CATEGORISATION OF ROOTS

It has to be recognised that the kinds of ‘functional shifts’ described above are only derivations in a semantic or possibly cognitive sense, i.e. to the extent that a given denotatum is generally *perceived to be* either an entity or a process, to that extent it is perceived to be a prototypical verb or noun (a perception that is of course culturally, which is to say linguistically, determined). Nevertheless certain purely grammatical restrictions on multifunctionality do hold, and specifically the range of derivations to which a given root has access is constrained.

For example, ‘denominal’ verbs¹⁸⁸ are only very rarely transitive – it is usually true that such verbs will *not* be found with a transitive suffix. The two EMek verbs *la-aku-n-i-a* and *la-suage-n-i-a* above, in examples 1.165 and 1.168 respectively, were in fact exceptions to a fairly general rule.

Dixon (1988b:238) remarks that in Fijian “the prefix *i-* applies only to verbs...and derives a noun”. Similarly in Mekeo the prefix *I-* has a nominalising function that presupposes verbally functioning bases. In Mekeo *I-* forms object nouns, but also action nominals, and thus to some degree nominalises whole transitive predications (with an object focus).

The explanation for these constraints on the syntactic behaviour of bases lies in the fact that Mekeo roots incorporate precise specifications as to the system of role distribution and redistribution¹⁸⁹ in which they will participate. Thus while there is no noun//verb dichotomy in Mekeo, all roots can be categorised in terms of their potential behaviour as verbs. In §1.3.4.4 above I proposed to speak in terms of two separate systems of process dynamics: causativity and transitivity. There are in fact a number of sub-divisions in each of these major systems. In effect, although there are no word classes in Mekeo, there are classes of root verbs, and these will be described in some detail throughout §4.3.1.

¹⁸⁷ For a discussion of this peculiar idiom see §4.3.2.4 below.

¹⁸⁸ Verbs based on roots that are prototypically (or ‘semantically’) noun-like.

¹⁸⁹ There is no simple cover term for this area of grammar but when Andrews (1985:76) writes of ‘NP function coding systems’ and when Talmy (1985:96ff.) writes of ‘valence’ as a focusing of given verbal functions they are describing the same phenomenon.

1.4.2 LEXICAL SEMANTICS

Lexical ambiguity¹⁹⁰ can be ascribed to either homonymy or polysemy. Homonymy occurs when two lexical items that are genetically and psychologically distinct share the same phonological realisation. Polysemy occurs when a single phonological form has several related but separate meanings. Although this distinction can be explained in general terms, it is always a somewhat arbitrary decision as to which of the two concepts should be used to explain a given case. It is well to bear in mind the possibility that “the whole notion of discrete lexical senses is ill-founded” (see Lyons 1977:554).

1.4.2.1 THE CONCEPT OF LEXICOGRAMMAR

As mentioned above, there are three reasons for conflating the lexicon with the grammar in this treatment of Mekeo.

The first is the fact that the verb word constitutes a complete predication, i.e. a proposition with an incorporated argument or arguments. Elements that normally fall within a separate domain of syntax are here contained in the verb word.¹⁹¹

The second is the fact that each Mekeo verb incorporates a process dynamic (see §1.3.4.4 above), a latent role-arrangement, which can yield either causative or transitive derivations, and which stipulate the differing role-configurations that may occur with the verb in different derivations. These derivations are often formally unmarked, apart from the addition of an OM. I illustrate briefly with some EMek examples:

- a) 1.178 *E-fifi.*
 3SG-move.away
 X moves away.
- 1.179 *E-fifi-n-a.*
 3SG-move.away-TH-3SG
 Y moves X away.
- b) 1.180 *E-ani.*
 3SG-eat
 X eats.
- 1.181 *E-ani-a.*
 3SG-eat-3SG
 X eats Y.

It will be observed that, for the pair of sentences at a) above, the role played by the intransitive subject is equivalent to that played by the transitive object. In the latter case, an external actant (a causer) controls the process. Meanwhile, for the pair at b), the role played by the intransitive subject and that played by the transitive subject are equivalent. But a patient has been added to the process. Alternation a) illustrates the cause dynamic, and alternation b) illustrates the act dynamic.

¹⁹⁰ Lexical ambiguity has to be distinguished from a) referential ambiguity and b) grammatical ambiguity, two distinct phenomena which will be treated in their appropriate places below.

¹⁹¹ Van Valin (1977) was the first to recognise this phenomenon, in Lakhota. Jelinek (1984) recognised it in Warlpiri, an Australian language, and studied its consequences for the grammar. Bresnam and Mchombo (1987) discuss its implications for Chichewa in terms of Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG).

Mekeo shares this feature with English.¹⁹² What is different, however, is the preponderance in Mekeo of intracausative root verbs of analytic process (exemplified by *fifi* above), something it shares with many other Oceanic languages and which has been a major stumbling block to their smooth description.¹⁹³

The third reason is semantic. Different languages lexicalise different semantic categories to differing extents. Motion verbs in most Oceanic languages, for example, lexicalise direction (as does French: *entrer, sortir, monter, descendre*), whereas English motion verbs lexicalise manner and cause (e.g. *skip, float, bounce*).¹⁹⁴ Mekeo motion verbs generally lexicalise direction. However, they can also lexicalise manner. Verb serialisation is highly developed, and more or less grammaticalised co-verbs expressing manner and effect frequently *follow* a 'main' verb of directed motion.

Similarly, with action and process verbs (transitive and intransitive), co-verbs expressing manner and effect are frequently added to the verb expressing the main event. All typically verbal roots, however, basically lexicalise a *manner* of being, moving or doing. They can then be used transitively or intransitively in a variety of 'applied' meanings. Here are some examples:

- a) *pau, fau* do anything in a stabbing, thrusting manner: plant, implant, stab
- b) *gaga, kaka* fit tightly: be wrapped, squeeze through, ingurgitate, swallow
- c) *gipi, gifi, kifi* bristle: be hooked, caught on thorns, hook, hang up
- d) *pobu, fobu, fopu* curve or collapse in manner of wave breaking: bend over, cave in, pour

Although manner is backgrounded in any derived use, it is rare that it is not implied. This emphasis on manner is seen most clearly in connection with the classes (or transitivity functions) of action-effect verbs (see §1.3.4.3 above and §4.3.3 below). Coincidentally, as noted above, Mekeo shares this orientation with English.¹⁹⁵

1.4.2.2 HOMONYMY

Although most languages tolerate some degree of homonymy, in Mekeo homonymy has reached a point where one might in fact expect it to be dysfunctional, i.e. to impede the normal and necessary processes of communication. A maximal inventory of seven consonantal phonemes for the eastern dialect – glottal stop goes to zero in many idiolects – in combination with five vocalic phonemes does not generate a very large range of acceptable syllables (viz., just 35 of the form CV; see Appendix 1(C) for a more detailed discussion). Vowels juxtaposed through consonantal attrition have assimilated or diphthongised (or

¹⁹² English is similar to Mekeo in respect of the degree to which semantic categories and derivations often remain unmarked in surface structure. Note the formal identity of the so-called ergative verbs in 'He *hid* quickly' and 'He *hid* his brother'. See Talmy (1985:89) and Comrie (1985:311, 314) for further discussion.

¹⁹³ Thus Hohepa (1969:10) speaks of "the general passive meaning" of all Maori statives. He further describes them as "inherently passive". Milner (1972:97) notes that Fijian intransitives generally translate English passives. This feature is often described as patient prominence, but this term fails to capture the agentive character of the central semantic role in Mekeo. The concept of a self-causing 'analytic process' is meant to explain this feature in terms of latent roles.

¹⁹⁴ Talmy (1985), on whom I draw for this section, develops the semantic analysis of verbs as a typological parameter. For the contrast in motion verbs see Talmy (1985:62-76).

¹⁹⁵ Something that may tend to obscure the fact that this is a variable across languages.

triphthongised), further reducing the possibilities for discriminating between inherited items. Thus Desnoës, in the mission dictionary of the eastern dialect, frequently has long lists of entries for the same phonemic (or sub-phonemic) form, and can often only differentiate between non-cognate roots on the basis of cross-linguistic equations (having access, as he did, to dictionaries of Roro, Kuni, Lala and Motu). Cross-dialectal comparisons also served him well as the variable glottal stop corresponds to /k/ in the other dialects and this sometimes enables one to separate out apparent homophones in EMek. The other three dialects support, however, a comparable level of homonymy, including many instances that do not occur in EMek (where a selectively accreting [l-] disambiguates potential homonyms in some cases¹⁹⁶ at least).

As an example of homonymy among everyday items one can find the following *nominal* meanings for the form [au], grouped separately here according to genetic source:

- | | | |
|-----|--|----------------|
| 1. | Man. Body. Character, mood. | cf. Motu /tau/ |
| 2. | Tree. Stick. Wood. | cf. Motu /au/ |
| 3a. | Thing. | cf. Motu /ǰau/ |
| 3b. | One. Thing which, Person who (relative pronoun). | cf. Motu /ǰau/ |
| 4. | Back (locative-relational noun = 'behind (X)'). | ??? |

Typically *verbal* roots under [au] are less easily classifiable by genetic criteria. The meanings covered include at least the following:

- | | | |
|-----|--|------------------------|
| 1. | Knock down with a stick/pole. | (e-)au-a |
| 2. | Attach something (to something) | (e-)au-a |
| 3. | Go in an upward direction, do to completion. | -au(-a) ¹⁹⁷ |
| 4a. | Strike, beat, kill. Intoxicate, bemuse. Fight. | (e-)au-ŋ-a |
| 4b. | Do, fix, work at, etc. Cause. | (e-)au- |
| 4c. | Stir, move, budge. | (e-)au(-au)-ŋ-a |

Complicating this issue, the frequent loss of medial /-ŋ-/ in /aŋu/ gives [au] 'sit', another homonym. Similarly, [aŋa], which corresponds to both /aŋa/ 'chop' and /aŋa/ 'bite',¹⁹⁸ becomes [āa] or [a] in unmonitored speech. This can combine with the verbal morpheme /-u(-a)/ 'off, away' to yield the following analytically compound but superficially simple homonymous verbs:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Chop off, cut away. | (e-)a-u(-a) > (e-)au(-a) |
| Bite in half, bite asunder, bite off. | (e-)a-u(-a) > (e-)au(-a) |

The mention of [aŋa] above is apposite as this item appears, at first glance, to provide a good example of a true semantic blend: polysemy as the end result of accidental homonymy. Can one really distinguish at all between /aŋa/ 'chop' and /aŋa/ 'bite' in Mekeo (without resorting to cross-linguistic comparativist procedures)? Or, more importantly, does the native Mekeo speaker make any such distinction? The two actions are similar enough semantically, one could think, to merge conceptually. What is more there is a third /aŋa/ 'roast, cook, burn', which in some uses is conceptually (or metaphorically) close to 'bite' (as, in English,

¹⁹⁶ Compare EMek a?a 'laugh', la?a 'pull' with NWMek, WMek, NMek aka 'laugh, pull'. See Lynch (1978a) on this phenomenon.

¹⁹⁷ This root occurs as a following co-verb only.

¹⁹⁸ From POC *taRaŋ 'adze' and *kaRaŋ 'bite', respectively (M. Ross, pers.comm.).

'hot' food can be said to burn or to have a bite).¹⁹⁹ Are we, in fact, dealing with homonymy or polysemy from the native speaker's point of view? As Anttila notes (1972:181), "in ultimate analysis it depends on the psychological reality or awareness of the speaker", and what he means is the individual speaker (1972:349), whose linguistic reality/awareness is (as Anttila illustrates) by no means fixed. The native Mekeo speaker appears to treat /aŋa/ as a homonym, standing for any one of three separate words, depending on the situation.

In other cases, where the semantic distance between items is great, we are able to assume without further ado that we are dealing with (perceived) homonyms. In some such instances, similarity of sound leads speakers to make playful or profound connections between the concepts involved. One equation that lends itself to paronomasia is the homonymy in NMek and WMek of the words for 'vagina' and 'fire', both of which are *io*, a verbal conflation that seems to have produced some interesting ramifications on the level of myth.²⁰⁰ Interestingly, 'spear' is also *io* in these dialects, but little notice is normally taken of *this* homonymous relation, where the item denoted is conceptually so far removed from the other two denotata (however, when a pointed stick is rubbed in a grooved log to make fire in the traditional way, the threeway pun *is* likely to be remarked on in one way or another).

Now these are precisely the kinds of homonymous relations that often result in semantic shifts. As Anttila has it (1972:182): "Even if the semantics are unrelated, homonymy is still avoided if it has obscene overtones, because this is another impediment to communication". And indeed, although NMek and WMek tolerate it, the other two Mekeo dialects *have* contrived to eliminate it: in EMek **io* has gone to *lo* or *loo* (under the influence of a fairly general but selective phonetic rule) while NWMek **io* has been replaced by the euphemistic *moifā* 'blow (fire)'.²⁰¹

Another rather instructive group of items seems to connect the concept of the phallus with the concept of growth in general and vegetable growth in particular. The most usual word for 'penis' is perhaps *lako* (*laago*), but *uki* (*utsi*) comes a close second.²⁰² Now *uki* also means 'grow, shoot, germinate; growth, germination; a sprout, a shoot' (while *uʔi*, which is almost certainly a doublet, means 'bud, bloom, become green again; regrowth'). A coconut sprout can, in EMek, be described as either *koŋa lakō* or *koŋa uki-na*, and, in the first case at least, the 'metaphor' is irreducible: 'coconut penis-its' or 'coconut sprout-its'? Here at any rate the two (?) concepts do seem to conflate. Nor does any putative 'obscenity' seem to pose a problem.

Notwithstanding this last example, the bulk of my evidence suggests that homophonous words – even when these belong to seemingly compatible semantic domains – *can* still operate on the psychological level as independent, unrelated signs. However, this is not to say that perceived verbal and conceptual similarities are not exploited in Mekeo culture. In fact the use of metaphor (and simile) is a recognised verbal skill, mastery of which is much admired or, as the case may be, resented. It is described by a special (co-)verb of verbal

199 Historically the word is 'bite' (M. Ross, pers.comm.).

200 Thus the myths of Foikale and Oa Lope (= Aʔaisa) associate the discovery of fire with the discovery of the proper use of a woman's vagina (see Mosko 1985, Appendix 6). Mosko (1985:62-63) explores the "structural" relations between 'heat' and 'fire' and 'vagina' as concepts.

201 One might surmise that this change occurred as a consequence of the influence of the L.M.S. Mission in the 1930s and 1940s, but we have no firm evidence of this.

202 Etymologically speaking one would expect *utsi*, *uki* (cf. POC **quti(n)*).

process: *-epoŋa*.²⁰³ The compound verb form, *e-iva-epoŋa* (WMek, *i-oabi-epoŋa*) thus means ‘s/he speaks/spoke in symbols or metaphors’ (or ‘parables’ – anecdotal or extended metaphors are also very common and Jesus’ parables are readily understood as such).²⁰⁴ But it is also used more critically to mean ‘insinuate, say in a roundabout way, suggest unpleasantly, impute indirectly, tantalise’ and even, simply, ‘mock’. It is regarded as a form of verbal disguise, an artful dissimulation of the truth – naturally a much-prized ability in a culture that treats information of any kind as a scarce commodity to be hoarded jealously or doled out in very small doses. But its use is also often resented and people may say: *fo-lo-iva-epoŋa-n-i-a*, *mo-iva-uka-i-a-mo* ‘Don’t speak in riddles, say what you mean frankly!’.

Homonymy itself is recognised as such and, although it may provide the opportunity for some incidental word play or the need for overt disambiguation (facts which incidentally undermine the argument for polysemy), this does not count as *iva-epoŋa*. For illustration, in one NMek version of the myth of Foikale and Oa Lope, respective culture heroes of the West Mekeo and East Mekeo tribal groupings (quoted by Mosko (1985), Appendix 6:fii) we encounter the following entirely conscious metalinguistic operations:

- a) Foikale says: I grew up here like a tree.
[au] = ‘tree’ ~ ‘man’ ?
- b) Foikale asks, of fire: Will it bite/burn me? Oa Lope replies: No, it is fire.
[aŋa] = ‘bite’ ~ ‘burn’
- c) Foikale asks, of red betel spit: ‘Is it blood?’ Oa Lope replies: ‘No, it is only mouth-blood.’
[ifa] ‘blood’ versus [ake-ifa] ‘mouth-blood’, an idiom for betel spit.

While the first of these *may* represent some deeper, symbolic equation, the second seems merely to demonstrate a quite comfortable familiarity with and an ability to ignore instances of blatant homonymy. In the final analysis, either the use (or inferences about the intention behind the use) or the context of the use will suggest a meaning for any given lexeme (for speaker and hearer separately). I shall arrive back at the crucial importance and insuperable limitations of exophoric reference in my discussions of process dynamics and cross-referencing (Chapters 7 and 8).

It should be noted in conclusion that a great deal of accelerated lexical change has in fact occurred in the Mekeo dialects, relative to PCP and to each other, and that homonymy is the likely cause.

203 This appears to be a Fuyughe borrowing. Dupeyrat (1955:146) comments: “I discovered that the slaughter of the Gabé pigs was enacted as an *evoné*, in other words, as an image or symbol, intended to evoke the idea of an actual war among men”. A note in Desnoës (p.206) indicates that borrowing resulted in a relatively fixed nominal item at first: *iva-epoŋa*, and that verbatism first occurred nearer to the coast (i.e. further from the source).

204 My gloss is based on lengthy discussions in Mekeo and in English. The parallel with parables is frequently drawn (*palapole*), and examples show that what is meant is more than simply to ‘speak confusedly, crookedly’. It is to convey meaning by means of metaphors or symbols.

1.4.2.3 POLYSEMY

Side by side with this high level of homonymy, Mekeo does also operate with a large number of generalised, polysemous signs that seem to signal a consistent preference for a fairly abstract level of semantic representation. The speaker is happy in most cases to let the hearer deduce his, the speaker's, meaning/intention from the context of situation (embedded as this is in the context of culture and culturally plausible concerns). Malinowski (1935/1966) discussed this phenomenon at length and in depth with regard to the language of Kiriwina in the Trobriand Islands. Although he spoke consistently of homonymy rather than polysemy, he was not in fact describing homonymy (or homophony) in my sense of the word but rather in terms of "the homonymous use of the same word in a variety of meanings" and "homonymous extensions of meaning" (pp.21 and 72). This describes polysemy. Some Mekeo examples follow.

- a) *au*: It is clear that while 'man' and 'tree' are (almost certainly) felt to be separate words, some of the subsidiary meanings listed after 'man' are *extensions* of that concept, and *au* is to that extent polysemous, or 'abstract'. *Au* is very frequently used to mean one's most general sense of self, including but not restricted to the physical. *Faa/faaŋa* 'skin', is similarly complex. It means in the first instance 'epidermis'. But it also means the self that is made up of one's *surface* perceptions/sensations.
- b) *ŋa?a*: This word is 'juice, essence' in its most general meaning. It includes such more specific meanings such as 'milk (human or animal), semen, sweat, juice or sap of plants, resin, sago solution'. Any of these meanings can of course be *specified* as, e.g. 'breast *ŋa?a*'. But this kind of specification is more usually left to the pragmatics of the utterance situation. (Note that *ifa* 'blood' is even more abstract than *ŋa?a* since semen 'contains' *ifa manuae-ŋa* (male blood) (Mosko 1985)).
- c) *?u?u*: This word seems to mean essentially 'breast' and to be used *by extension* to mean 'breast milk'. However, it is impossible to be sure about this. Perhaps all polysemous words begin to gather extra meanings in this fashion. (The particular process exemplified here is in fact metonymy.)
- d) *fuko*: This word means 'navel' and/or 'umbilical cord'. It also means, by extension, the 'middle' or 'hub' of something. It also means – figuratively perhaps? – 'descent line'.
- e) *uki*: What is one to make of *uki*?²⁰⁵ As noted above, if it contains a metaphor the source or direction of this has been lost (although the currency of *laako/laago* suggests that *uki* *should* be originally 'sprout'). Without comparative evidence we can probably do nothing but accept it as another instance of polysemy.

The communicative principle that operates in the Mekeo situation of culture can be put as – 'Be no more and no less explicit than the situation absolutely requires'. Malinowski (1935/1966:69-70) noted succinctly of polysemy in Kiriwina that, "given the context of culture...the use of the same sound with a different meaning contributes the one element that is lacking in the situation, and yet necessary for common work or common knowledge of

205 As already noted, the *actual* source is POC **quti(n)* 'penis'.

what goes on". This applies to relatively low-level nominals like *ʔuʔu*,²⁰⁶ which probably means 'breast' in its most basic sense but which can in an appropriate situation be used for 'milk' or 'nursing'. Given a situation in which all the elements are present to both speaker and hearer it is unnecessary for the speaker to give more than the missing information. A man twisting fibre from a vine will not tell you that he is splitting *ue*, *uve* 'vine', since that is obvious to his interlocutor, but that it is *fajo-fajo* or *foima* or *makeke* or any of an enormous number of named creepers and canes that come under the general heading of *ue*, *uve*. This 'technical' aspect of the daily language is daunting at first (as witness Malinowski) but must be balanced against an equal propensity to convey no more information than is absolutely necessary. Thus if the incident occurred in a story about something else the man would be simply twisting *ue*, *uve*. In the face-to-face situation even the verb 'twist' might be replaced by a pro-verb like 'make' since the actual activity is given.

Malinowski goes from a consideration of very specific or technical words to look at a different class of nominal, the class I am calling here abstract or 'classifier' nouns (§2.1.2.1.3). He states that "the more important the term, the more pronounced is the tendency to use it over a wide range of meanings", and he gives as one example the word corresponding to Mekeo *au* 'tree, wood, stick, etc.' Now this is polysemy, as that term is used here. As Anttila (1972:182) notes, difficulty only tends to arise with discourse of this kind as more 'technical' meanings of polysemous terms come into being. But as we saw, there is an ample technical vocabulary in Mekeo, to be used *if the context warrants it*. However, in a cultural situation where so much knowledge is automatically shared it is often unnecessary to be specific, and indeed the implicit assumption of this shared knowledge binds individuals together (just as it excludes the culturally uninitiated).²⁰⁷

1.4.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON WORD AND CLASS

It is in the spirit of Malinowski to treat Mekeo roots as 'contextuals', a term introduced by Clark and Clark (1979), to account for the meanings of innovative denominal verbs in English. The role dynamics of verbally functioning roots are inherent. However, subject-selection applies to many verbs. Semantic specifications of the subject (beyond certain fundamentals like agency and control) are never defined by the verb itself. Object markers may have no reference at all. Verbs thus depend on pragmatic factors for their meaning in use. A set of pragmatic indices present in the extralinguistic structure of a scene – the utterance situation (US) – are manipulated by the speaker in a message-forming operation that Fillmore (1977) has called "perspectivisation". The hearer interprets the utterance in the light of everything that is a) known or b) given to her or him, the culture-specific perception of the scene that she or he presumably shares with the speaker, and the sparse linguistic clues encoded in the utterance itself.

Unmarked nominal arguments in Mekeo function as *reference-restricting* operators (Keenan 1976a). They do not determine reference. Cross-referencing affixes on the verb do little to differentiate third person actants, as third person markers mean little more than

206 By this I mean roots that have (prototypically) concrete referents. Lyons (1977) speaks of "first-order nominals" in this connection (his "second-order nominals" refer to events or processes, while his "third order nominals" refer to abstract concepts).

207 Malinowski seems to be suggesting that Kilivila lacks a middle range of categorisation, at least for things important in the culture. Interestingly, this is 'the basic level' (according to Rosch et al. 1976) "at which terms are used in neutral contexts" (quoted from Lakoff 1987:46).

'someone not present'. Pragmatic inference is again the chief means of disambiguating utterances. However, all of the above-mentioned kinds of pragmatic information are insufficient to decode the utterance precisely. An element of referential indeterminacy always remains.²⁰⁸

Compounding the unusual degree of functional freedom of the bases, and the referential indeterminacy involved in verb functions, Mekeo tolerates a remarkably high degree of both homonymy and polysemy. Homonymy has (as already noted) resulted largely from the gradual attrition of the original, Proto Central Papuan system of consonantal phonemes. Homonymy and polysemy, like ellipsis and exophoric deixis, are probably universal aspects of language use in a face-to-face, village-based culture, where the meanings of words are often immanent in the situation of utterance, and where indeed a restricted code may be more functional than an elaborated one.²⁰⁹

1.4.4 SPECIFYING THE DEONTIC SOURCE: THE SUPERORDINATE VERB *OMA*

The Mekeo are generally very concerned to 'attribute' all statements, to ascribe their illocutionary force to some responsible source.²¹⁰ This is accomplished in terms of the superordinate verb *OMA*, which always follows the verb it 'governs' and denotes by its person and number a 'highest' subject.²¹¹

1.182 *Pe-mai* *a-oma*. (WMek)
 OBLG.3SG-come 1SG-DNT
 I wish s/he would come. OR: I think s/he should come.

OMA, which has cognates in most of the other languages of West Central Papua,²¹² is essentially a reporting verb and it means, basically, 'intend' or 'mean'. But, because of the cultural focus upon the source of the intention that underlies every action or utterance, *OMA* can act as a universal pro-verb, standing in for any other verb. In different utterances it can mean not only 'intend, mean, want, hope, think, be of the opinion that' but also 'do, make, behave' or simply 'be'. When functioning as an adverbial co-verb, *OMA* can often be translated as 'like'.

By common extension, *OMA* serves for 'say, demand, command'. When governing one of the intentional moods (as above), the obligative (OBLG) and the imperative (IMP), it indicates the identity of the agent who *wishes* or *means* for the agent-subject of the governed verb to do whatever is denoted by that verb. When governing a verb in the indicative mood it either reports an utterance or it attributes an intention or a wish or hope, or an opinion, to some subjective source.

²⁰⁸ The reader should consult Clark and Clark (1979) for a lengthy discussion of this whole area of speaker/hearer 'cooperation', and see Sankoff (1972) on the social-functional value of cognitive variability. Meanwhile, the discussion is taken up again below, in Chapters 7 and 8.

²⁰⁹ The terms 'restricted code' and 'elaborated code' were introduced by Basil Bernstein to describe differences in the level of context-dependency in language use between working class and middle-class children in English schools (Bernstein 1971; see Halliday and Hasan 1976, for a concise account). See §8.5.3 below for some further discussion of these matters.

²¹⁰ Mekeo thus codifies a preoccupation with the hidden agenda that is routinely attributed to others (see Hau'ofa 1981:95-96).

²¹¹ I cannot yet say to what extent their functions in these languages replicate the central place of *OMA* in Mekeo grammar. See footnote 1, §4.2.4.2, below, for some possible cognates.

²¹² It can be taken to express a 'higher, performative main clause'. See Ross (1970) and Lyons (1977:778) for a discussion and other references.

- 1.183 *E-mai e-oma.* (EMek)
 3SG-come 3SG-DNT
 "S/he's come", s/he said/thought.²¹³

The term that will be used for *OMA* is the deontic source (abbreviated as DNT), since the primary function of this verb, in Mekeo, is to govern the two subjunctive moods, the obligative and imperative, which express modal necessity, or obligation. *OMA* serves to identify the ultimate source of obligation.²¹⁴

OMA is often deleted from the surface structure, and it is then up to the hearer to supply the appropriate form of the verb, including person (and sometimes number). It is thus often entirely at the discretion of the hearer what interpretation s/he will choose to put upon an utterance, i.e. whether s/he will construe it as an indirect request, or as a statement of intention (and hence perhaps a promise), or indeed as a question, since interrogative 'mood' is expressed in Mekeo by means of this verb. Thus the bare utterance: *Fo-uele* (EMek) (OBLG.2SG/PL-bathe), can be interpreted as the reduced form of either of the following:

- 1.184 *Fo-uele la-oma.* (EMek)
 OBLG.2SG/PL-bathe 1SG-DNT
 I think/want that you should bathe.
- 1.185 *Fo-uele lo-oma?* (EMek)
 OBLG.2SG/PL-bathe 2SG-DNT
 You think/want that you should bathe?

Example 1.184 is as close as one normally come to giving a direct command in Mekeo (at least to non-related adult). Example 1.185, with *OMA* inflected for the second person, would normally be interpreted as a question. Note that these two utterances could also be interpreted as reported speech: 'I said that you should bathe' (1.184) and 'You (singular) said that you should bathe' (1.185).²¹⁵

²¹³ This distinction can be shown by inserting quotation marks to indicate what one judges to be direct speech. Note that this represents a judgement on the part of the hearer.

²¹⁴ See Lyons (1977, Chapter 17) for a detailed discussion of deontic necessity in logic and deontic modality in language.

²¹⁵ *Fo-uele* can be either 2SG or 2PL, due to homophony, while *lo-oma* is clearly 2SG.

CHAPTER 2

CLASSES OF NOMINAL EXPRESSIONS

In this chapter I list all the possible constituents of nominal predications in Mekeo. All of the items in question can be classified as nominals, that is, items that refer *or* denote.¹ In §2.1 I divide up what I call ‘prototypical nouns’ into five sub-categories. This classification is based as much on semantic as on morphosyntactic criteria. In §2.2 I detail membership of the closed or virtually closed systems of pro-forms, among which I number the deictics and quantifiers. And in §2.3 I enumerate lexical predicates.² In Chapter 3 the combinatorial possibilities of all the aforementioned items (i.e. in predications) are considered at some length. This procedure represents something of a methodological anomaly, as membership in the categories and systems described in Chapter 2 presupposes and is indeed based upon morphosyntactic behaviours described in Chapter 3 (in the absence of fixed formal criteria applicable to free items). That is, I present my results first and only then give the evidence necessary to justify them. This is however a feature of the presentation and not of the analytic procedure that has been followed.

Note that, in Mekeo, where a topic is frequently deleted under ellipsis, nomination is indistinguishable from predication. It can also be an invocation. As we saw (in §1.3.2.4 above), to utter the name of a person or the word for a thing in a certain way (with a certain intention) can constitute an invocational speech act. See §2.1.1.1 below for more on this. Non-performative one-word nominal utterances are also common, functioning for example to identify or classify or describe – anaphorically or exophorically – some referential given. In this chapter I deal with nominals in isolation, as components of a lexicon.

Having noted then that all nominal and nominal-type expressions can occur as either topic or predicate in non-verbal predications, and that the said predications can subsequently undergo a rankshift, subsequent to which the same nominals represent constituents of a group level unit, I now survey the membership of all the closed and open systems of nominals and nominal pro-forms (deictics and particles), postponing a detailed description of nominals in use, as nominal predications, until Chapter 3.

¹ This is a wider definition of nominal than that employed by Lyons (1977), who confines the term to expressions that *refer*.

² A pro-form is an expression that ‘stands for’ some referent. This may be a discourse constituent (endophora) or some real-world entity (exophora). It may also represent (‘stand for’) an entire predication (e.g. the ‘grammatical predictors’ in §2.3). As pro-forms I classify them as *nominals*.

2.1 CATEGORIES OF NOUNS

Mekeo nouns are prototypically *names* (*aga, aka*) for individuals and, by extension, for types or classes of individuals – this latter word being used here in the logician’s sense, to signify *instances* of, for example, people, things, places; events, states, processes; and ideas or concepts. That is to say, nouns are lexical items that have meanings – denotations – independently of the utterance situation. The forms *agā, akā*, incidentally, also mean ‘means’ or, better perhaps, ‘its meaning’.³ The meanings of naming words can be, according to the situation, animate or inanimate, concrete or abstract. A nominal can, without any surface marking or derivational apparatus, function as the name for a state, a process or an event (e.g. an action); however, certain roots seem to be more typically verbal in function as they are more often met with as verbs.

Nominals function in two different kinds of predications: verbal and nominal. They specify the arguments of verbal predications, or act as topics or as the predicates of nominal predications. These functions define the term nominal.

Mekeo ‘names’ – our nouns – fall upon inspection into two major *formal* categories: non-determinate nouns and determinate nouns. The first are nouns that do not usually carry a determining suffix (though under certain circumstances they may). Determinate nouns usually *do* carry a determining suffix and their reference is thereby *determined* in relation to some nominal antecedent. These two categories can be broken down further, though no longer on formal grounds, into a number of functional groupings that will be discussed in turn below. But first I will say some more about these major groupings:

A. Typically non-determinate nouns:

- i) Proper Names. These denote specific individuals or recognised social groupings, or places (villages or localities). They cannot normally occur as the head of a possessive construction (i.e. as the possessed), but this essentially extralinguistic (i.e. pragmatic) restriction is the only one that applies to them. They differ chiefly from other non-determinate nouns in having an extra vocative function. That is to say, they can be used as terms of address.
- ii) Common Nouns. This is an open class in two different senses. As we saw in §1.4.1.2, Mekeo is best regarded as having a single class of multifunctional content words based on lexical roots. The class of common nouns is thus ‘open’ to typically verbal roots when these function as nominals. It is also open in that new words – new ‘names’ – can be added indefinitely (e.g. by borrowing or compounding, or by widening or narrowing the denotation of an established item). Such nominals are ‘free’ in that they occur without a determining suffix marked for agreement with some other nominal. I will distinguish, further below, between superordinate class nouns (generic terms), hyponyms (species names), and technical terms (according to the circumstances, secret names).

B. Typically determinate nouns:

- i) Relational Nouns. These represent abstract relations, and typically comprise closed systems. Included here are kin terms, the names for parts of animate or inanimate wholes, nouns of measurement, and a number of terms for inherent attributes or

³ As in (WMek): *Agā, e-pua* ‘That means, it’s finished’.

intimately associated concepts that are often only optionally members of this class. The principle at work here is that of systemic association. Kin terms resemble proper names in that they can be used as terms of address. These nouns can function as predicates of nominal sentences but they more commonly occur, after rankshift, as topics. They (almost) always carry a determining suffix, marked for the person and number of a referential subject/topic.

- ii) Locative-Relational Nouns ('Postpositions'). The majority of these nouns name locations in space (and sometimes, by semantic extension, in time) relative to some chosen viewpoint/object; more abstractly, they refer to relational aspects of people, places or things. They can be described grammatically as postpositions that function to form embedded adverbial predications. They almost always occur with a 3SG determining suffix; and are frequently marked for a circumstantial case role (e.g. source or location) with the oblique case-marking suffix *-AI*. They *can* function as predicates; and in any case will be analysed as rankshifted predicates. Certain very general – that is, abstract – members of this class form a functionally specialised (i.e. grammaticalised) subset.
- iii) Adjectival Nouns. Adjectival nouns can originate at any of a number of points along the time-stability line shown in §1.4.1.2 above. Thus they sometimes seem to represent the property of being something (i.e. a thing-like state, or like a thing) and sometimes the property of becoming something (i.e. a process), and sometimes again the property of having a property.⁴ Some of these roots are functionally distinct in that, in a rankshifted predication, they lose their status as head (which status 'reverts' to the natural, non-determinate head). Some of these roots do seem more inclined than others to exhibit the (third person singular) determining suffix when used predicatively, and it is possible to divide up the adjectival nouns, on the strength of this tendency, into two somewhat fuzzy subcategories.

Each of the above categories of nouns will be described further below, and briefly exemplified.

2.1.1 NON-DETERMINATE NOMINALS

2.1.1.1 PROPER NAMES

The Mekeo today distinguish between the following different kinds of individual names:

- | | | |
|----|--|-------------------------|
| a) | <i>aga maua (aga ibauma), aka akaikia (aka ipauma)</i> | big name, personal name |
| b) | <i>amā agā, amā akā</i> | his/her father's name |
| c) | <i>aga babatismo, aka papatismo</i> | baptismal name |

In connection with the fifth macrofunction proposed in §1.3.2.4 above, it is worth emphasising here that the Mekeo attach special significance to the utterance of a person's full proper name, which is thought to be equivalent to praising them or 'making their name go up'. A 'full name' usually means a two-part appellation made up of one's personal name and one's father's name. The practice is known as *agā i-ba-ari, akā i-pa-ari* 'the making go up of his/her name'. *Ba-ari-ai, pa-ari-ai* is the most commonly used verb stem:

⁴ It is possible, of course, that these are simply distinctions we ourselves are seeking to impose upon the data.

- 2.1 *Ke-pa-ari-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
 3PL-CA-ari-RTR-TH-3SG
 They 'honoured' him.

To make someone's name 'go up' or 'become big' (i.e. become known) is the aim of this practice.⁵ But it survives in everyday jocular usage, with overtones of irony or flattery, between intimates. Thus the following exchange took place between the writer and a fellow teacher whenever they met under relaxed or informal circumstances:

A: *Ah, Alan Jones!*

B: *Ah, Victor Ame!*

The tone is usually one of wry or grudging admiration, as if thinking what a clever person one's interlocutor was, with perhaps an admission of defeat as at having been outdone, or simply outshone.

One verb used to describe this custom is in EMek, *paupa'ari*.⁶ The root *ari* (not *?ari*) means to 'honour, praise', and should not be confused because of the context with *ani* 'kill or die in battle'. Another important term for 'verbally honour, praise' was *auafaŋaina* (apparently for *au-au-aŋa-ai-n-a*, where *aŋa* may be the root meaning 'cry'). A third verb used in this connection is *pa-koa-ŋ-a* 'acknowledge so' (CA-true-TH-3SG).

The names of the dead were particularly revered. "Names of ancestors [beyond the grandparents' generation] have been incorporated in secret magical spells and rites and are therefore not lightly or willingly spoken" (Hau'ofa 1981:41).⁷

Name-sharing is common and is often deliberate on the part of the naming parents. A shared name is called *oaa-*, *waa-*, *vaa-*, *faa-*, inflected for the determining relation. My namesake is *waa-u* (WMek), *faa-u* (EMek), and this is used as a term of address. A father may give his own name to his son:

- 2.2 *Agā Paul amā po ge-bi-waa.* (WMek)
 name.3SG Paul father.3SG together 3PL-REC-namesake
 His name is Paul, he and his father are namesakes.

⁵ The complimentary invocation of the names of the groups to which one was in any way affiliated was important in the past, especially in certain semiritualised speech situations:

A warrior would call out, I may perhaps say invoke, the name of his *ufu* (sic) when striking a blow, and Fr Egidi adds that warriors returning from a war party would embrace the main piles of the *ufu* 'invoking and praising them'. A man who was tired or one of whose muscles were (sic) stiff might in the same way speak the name of his *ufu* on stretching himself, but would more usually under these circumstances 'invoke' his village by its geographical name, thus two men, one of Paiapaia *pangua* (= ward) of Inawi village and the other of one of the Rarai *pangua* (wards) would respectively cry '*Ah-h Waiaka inaenga*' and '*Ah-h Maea inaenga*'. *Inaenga* means 'belly', 'centre', and thus the ejaculation is equivalent to 'Heart of my village.' (From Seligman 1910:332)

The parentheses are mine in this quotation. Maea is the traditional name for Rarai, and Waiaka, nowadays Oaisaka (or Oaiaka) is the name by which Inawi is known in Mekeo.

⁶ The etymology is obscure but, on the basis of Roro *bahu-ba'ari* (see Desnoës 1933) and the EMek verb *pa-'ari* (see text above) I analyse it as *pau-pa-'ari* (where *pa-* is CA). The [r] marks it as a loan word.

⁷ Hau'ofa continues (1981:41): "People call these ancestors *auafa'a* and believe that if they mention their names (as elements of potent mystical powers) outside proper contexts they will be punished with sickness and even death."

Uncomplimentary nicknames are common and are called *ba-kapoko agā*, *ba-kuma agā* ('CA-pig name.3SG') in the west and *pa-kafoʔo akā* ('CA-crazy name.3SG') in the east.⁸ Secret or disguised names were appropriate in certain contexts in the past, as for example when 'hunting' wild yams.⁹

2.1.1.2 COMMON NOUNS

The Mekeo vocabulary of class nouns is only marginally hierarchised, i.e. as a series of ever more inclusive lexical sets, so that when I speak of 'classes of classes' in Mekeo it should be borne in mind that I am referring to a small number of virtually *closed* classes of relatively general words with important grammatical functions.

Words for taxa are rare in some semantic domains and common in others, so depending on what we are focusing on it is possible to have the impression that classification is rare or, on the contrary, that there are only class nouns and that the vocabulary makes no fine distinctions.

2.1.1.2.1 CLASS NAMES

The most general class words are *au* 'man' and *βaβie*, *babie*, *papie* 'woman', *imi*, *imoi* 'child' and *au* 'thing'. The words for 'man', 'woman' and 'child' are (as will be seen in §8.3.1.1) liable to right-dislocation (whereby a predication is nominalised, subordinated, and made relative). However, *au* 'thing' merges with *au* 'man' (and by extension 'person') to function as a multipurpose subordinating and/or topicalising particle *auŋa* (as was illustrated in §1.3.3.4.3 above).

Names for kinds of people reflect primarily the interplay of the twin criteria of age (or, more accurately, social status as determined by age) and sex:

<i>au</i>	married man	<i>βaβie</i> , <i>babie</i> , <i>papie</i>	married woman
<i>kokoae</i> , <i>ʔoʔoae</i>	youth, bachelor	<i>iβio</i> , <i>ibiao</i> , <i>iviao</i>	unmarried girl
<i>koakoae</i> , <i>ʔoaʔoae</i>	widower	<i>apu-apu</i> , <i>afu-afu</i>	widow
<i>imi</i> , <i>imoi</i>			child
<i>imi maŋueŋa</i> , <i>imoi maŋuae</i>			male child
<i>imβaβieŋa</i> , <i>imi babiesŋa</i> , <i>imoi papieŋa</i>			female child

Note that *agawa*, *akava* 'spouse' is a relational term, like the kin terms generally, and does not belong with the free class nouns (and is not in any case usually cited without a determining suffix). The term for 'baby, offspring' *ŋau-* is not usually used as a class noun, while *imi*, *imoi* 'child' is. 'Widow' and 'widower' on the other hand signify social status rather than a relation.

⁸ There is also custom of tabooing the name of a recently deceased person for a short period after their death (I have this information for the west only), their namesakes being addressed temporarily as *Aga-aibaia* 'no-name'.

⁹ A special speech-style known as *kakaŋopa* (EMek) was used at such times.

There are nowadays a few imported or innovated role names: *dokta, tokta*, 'doctor', *medikolo* 'medical assistant', *pata, fata* 'priest', *brata* 'teaching brother', *mitsinari* 'missionary' (for which the term *au-love* was once in vogue). *Pata, fata* and *brata* are also terms of address. *Leipa* (from 'labourer') is used to name people who must act as servants to their affines at special feasts. But teachers are still referred to by means of a defining expression: *pa-malele au-ŋa* (CA-study one-3SG) 'the one who makes study'.¹⁰

The main kinds of specialists (i.e. functionaries) in Mekeo society are:

- | | | |
|----|---|------------------------------|
| a) | <i>lobia, lopia</i> ¹¹ | peace chief |
| | This function is divided between a senior chief (qualified as <i>pakaniau, fakaniau, faʔaniau</i>) and a junior chief (qualified as <i>ege, eke</i>). ¹² | |
| b) | <i>ido, izo, iso</i> | war chief (lit. spear) |
| c) | <i>paika, faika, faiʔa</i> | war magician (lit. cinnamon) |
| d) | <i>uŋa-uŋa</i> | official sorcerer |

The peace chief and the sorcerer both 'employ' other minor functionaries who have descriptive titles.

Natural phenomena of no consequence for survival and of no importance in the culture tend not to have any overarching class term. Thus no word for 'insect' can be elicited (the nearest EMek equivalent being *kapa eʔele-ʔi*, literally 'small things'). It appeared at first as though there were no term for 'animal' (including all the different kinds of wallaby and the other marsupials). But of course the importance of these is that they are all *eaten* and the overarching term is simply *kiki, tsitsi* 'meat'.¹³ In fact *kiki, tsitsi* means 'game meat' (meat that has been hunted for) as opposed to *mitsi* 'tinned meat' and *bulomakau* 'beef'.

Other major taxa are of symbolic rather than practical importance. The chief of these are the birds: *ini, ineu, inei*. The birds provide the people of West Central Papua generally with a special vocabulary that functions to encode intertribal as well as intratribal relations. Every Mekeo clan had its totem bird that stood in a certain relationship to other bird totems.¹⁴ The system of bird totems united the Mekeo with the Roro and the Kuni and even the mountain people (the Goilala). These relations were expressed and debated in the form of myths. They were also expressed by means of special dances. Like other cultural emblems (*gaŋagaŋa, kaŋakaŋa*) the totems could be bought and sold as societies formed or reformed their allegiances and/or alliances.

There is also a preoccupation with the snake taxon: *paεβo, paibo, faibo*, and EMek *kaapa*. There are many named varieties in the Mekeo area. Many of these are poisonous, and loss of life to snakebite is not uncommon. There are also seemingly mythical snakes. Trees *au*, have many named varieties, as do all the chief vegetable food crops.

¹⁰ *Malele* actually means 'write; writing' and by extension 'books; study'.

¹¹ The institution of chiefship exists only in a rudimentary form in the NWMek area, where 'chief' is *piaku*, an introduced term.

¹² It should be borne in mind that the institution of peace chief and all that goes with it seems to have been imported to the NMek and WMek villages from the east in the early years of this century. It is scarcely known at all (and that by hearsay only) in the NWMek villages. The purchase of the institution is well remembered among the WMek. The traditional leaders in the west were the *paika*, the war leaders (who had their own war magic).

¹³ This corresponds to the top or "superordinate level" of Rosch et al. (1976).

¹⁴ The word for totem is *iaufaŋai* according to Seligman (1910, Chapter 29). See §2.1.1.1 where I discuss the terms *auafaŋaina* and *au-au-aŋa-ai-n-a* ('praise', etc.).

2.1.1.2.2 HYPONYMS

In this section some specific terms from certain key domains of language and culture will be illustrated.¹⁵

Below, for example, is a selection of EMek names for different kinds/species of birds:

<i>ini, ineu, inei</i>	bird(s)
<i>opo</i>	Bird-of-Paradise
<i>oŋoise</i>	Kookaburra ¹⁶
<i>foi</i>	Eagle
<i>paili</i>	Sea Eagle
<i>e'εŋo, εŋo</i>	White Cockatoo
<i>lainapa</i>	Hornbill (<i>ainaba</i> in the other dialects)
<i>uŋa?a</i>	Goura pigeon
<i>lainema</i>	Water hen (<i>ainema</i> in the other dialects)
<i>paŋuako</i>	noisy banana parrots around village (also <i>kovau</i>)
<i>tsiolele</i>	has very long tail feathers (WMek <i>biolele</i>)
<i>i'ilo</i>	swarms of small birds that eat the rice
<i>alaŋa</i>	red parrot
<i>aŋeŋe</i>	green parrot

(The last two are, respectively, male and female of the same species.)

vaŋama, efoa, aala, kaŋo-kaŋo are all mound-builders; *eu* (all dialects) is the term for 'mound'

This particular list could easily be expanded to many times the present length, but the above birds all have important places in the symbolic coding of clans and tribes and in the discourse of what might be called ethnosociology. Note that these names are *unmotivated* except for *paŋua-ko* 'village-??'.

Taro is a staple food though not the main staple in any area. The EMek have at least the following terms for different kinds of taro:

<i>?o?ou</i> 'native taro'	<i>aŋe</i> 'Chinese taro'
<i>pao-la?a</i>	<i>aŋe ipauma</i>
<i>olue</i>	<i>aŋe auŋama</i>
<i>ufafa-faŋa</i>	<i>aŋe ŋufa</i>
<i>vei ?o?ou-ŋa</i>	<i>aŋe fua</i>
<i>afi</i>	<i>aŋe lafa</i>
<i>uko</i>	
<i>okoa</i>	
<i>me?o</i>	
<i>maofa</i>	
<i>avata</i>	

¹⁵ This corresponds to the bottom or 'subordinate level' of Rosch et al. (1976). Their 'basic level' is somewhere in between.

¹⁶ This is a kind of kingfisher important in myth. Note that *oŋoi* is 'wild breadfruit', probably the starch staple for some clans in the past. The Mekeo seem to have once lived in tree-houses in the branches of these trees. The introduced 'seedless' breadfruit is *unu* (not expected *uŋu!*) in all dialects.

<i>eŋaʔi-na</i>	<i>eŋai-ʔi</i>
this-3SG	this-3PL
that	those

Third person plural marking on a noun standing alone signifies that a demonstrative pronoun topic (to which that number properly refers) has undergone ellipsis, and that the noun in question is definite, i.e. determinate in relation to that topic pronoun.²⁰

2.4 *Au-ʔi ke-mue ke-mai.* (EMek)
 man-3PL 3PL-turn.back 3PL-come
 The men returned.

2.5 *Ibiao-tsi ai-d-a-idoŋa-i-tsi.* (WMek)
 girl-3PL NEG-B-1SG-see-PF-3PL
 I did not see the girls.

The NPs contained in the last two examples are, I suggest, short for *eŋai-ʔi au-ʔi* and *ŋae-tsi ibiao-tsi*, respectively.

Specificational reference involves a kind of relative construction (in Chapter 8 this will be called the co-relative construction) where one specifies which of several referents is meant. It is accomplished by the use of a postposed pronoun *au-ŋa* (which can when required take plural number marking). Specificational reference thus entails determination (by means of the determining suffix on *au-ŋa*), i.e. definiteness.

2.6 *ʔuma, fai lo-isa²¹ au-ŋa* (EMek)
 pig yesterday 2SG-see.3SG one-3SG
 the pig that you saw yesterday

2.7 *ʔuma, fai lo-isa-ʔi au-ʔi* (EMek)
 pig yesterday 2SG-see-3PL one-3PL
 the pigs that you saw yesterday

It is also possible to topicalise a nominal, which tends to imply definiteness:

2.8 *Kuma auŋa,* (WMek)
 pig TOP
 As for the(a) pig,

If the nominal has already been definitised by means a demonstrative pronoun, topicalisation represents a double definiteness:

2.9 *Eŋaea kuma auŋa, aŋani o-ida au-ŋa ma?* (WMek)
 that pig TOP yesterday 2SG-see one-3SG INT
 As for that/the pig, is that the one you saw yesterday?

2.1.2 DETERMINATE NOMINALS

Determinate nouns are, in general, the names of culturally predicated relations between people, between people and things, or between people and things and their parts or aspects, uses or roles. They represent contingent concepts. However, they always appear as definite

²⁰ Typically determinate nouns are treated extensively in the next section.

²¹ This verb is irregular in various ways – e.g. a PF marker is expected here, as well as compensatory length (-*isā*) to mark a 3SG object. Similarly in 2.7 there is no PF marker.

nouns, being obligatorily marked as determinate in relation to non-contingent referential nominals/pronominals. In themselves they name conceptual features of entities rather than the entities themselves, but they can *stand for* people or things. In that way they come to represent discourse manipulable participants,²² which is to say potential topics.

Some relational nouns can never be topics, in as much as they are too general in meaning ever to become identified with the entities related. Two classes of such terms, nouns of measurement and classifier nouns, are dealt with in §2.1.2.1.2 and §2.1.2.1.3. Adjectival nouns (§2.1.2.3) are similarly constrained by their semantics and rarely function as topics.

2.1.2.1 RELATIONAL NOUNS

2.1.2.1.1 RELATIONAL TOPIC NOUNS

Relational topic nouns are the type-class of determinate nouns, differing from subclasses (such as the adjectival nouns and locative-relational postpositions) only in being less specialised, or less grammaticalised. Relational nouns may be predicative, that is they may function as argument-taking predicates:

	TOPIC	PREDICATE	
2.10	<i>Isa,</i>	<i>ama-u.</i>	(EMek)
	he	father-1SG	
	He is my father.		

	TOPIC	TOPIC	PREDICATE	
2.11	<i>Isa,</i>	<i>lau</i>	<i>ama-u.</i>	(EMek)
	he	I	father-1SG	
	He is my father.			

However, it is because of their tendency to function as topics they are here labelled relational *topic* nouns. After rankshift they can function freely as topics in other verbal or nominal predications.²³ For example:

	TOPIC	PREDICATE	
2.12	<i>Ama-u,</i>	<i>e-mai.</i>	(EMek)
	father-1SG	3SG-come	
	My father has come.		

And:

	TOPIC	PREDICATE	
2.13	<i>Ama-u,</i>	<i>kapula.</i>	(EMek)
	father-1SG	strong	
	My father is strong.		

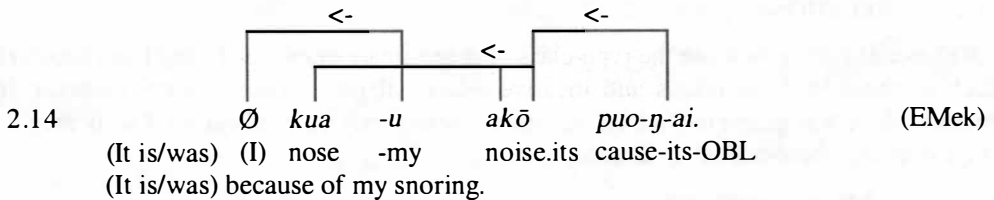
On a semantic level, relational nouns represent arbitrary classes, abstract culture-specific categories, that give human or social meaning to facets of reality. In *use* these nouns are

²² The term is from Hopper and Thompson (1984).

²³ Here one could say (following Hale 1981, 1983) that they are functioning as secondary predicates or subsentential predicates. But one thus loses the insight that their predicative force has (usually) been subtracted in these functions. Some implications of this notion are discussed further in §2.1.2.4. Whether a nominal will (tend to) function as an argument (here a topic), or as a predicate, depends on its meaning (see Simpson 1991:120).

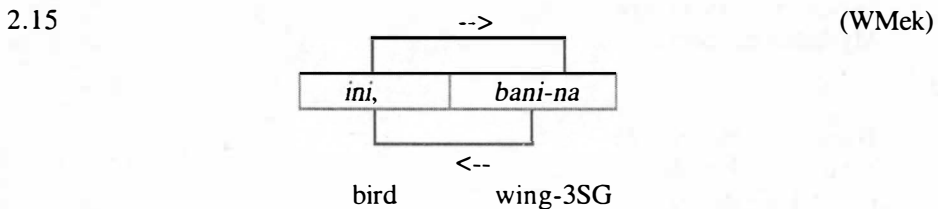
normally made determinate in relation to some referential noun or pronoun. Thus the word for ‘father’ will generally be determinate in relation to a referential item such as a pronoun indexing a speech act participant (‘I’, ‘you’), or a proper or definite noun (‘Paul’, ‘the chief’). The word for ‘nose’ is usually determinate in relation to the term for the person whose nose it is, who represents the whole of which it is a part. The word for ‘reason’ will generally be determinate in relation to the thing or proposition it classifies as such. Marking is often weak or absent, but can surface under certain conditions (such as when an oblique marking suffix is added).

Determinate nouns can be recursively determined, in terms of *other determinate nouns*, themselves possibly determinate in relation to some other, prior given, in the manner of recursive structures generally. For example:



The arrows in the above diagram track the semantic dependencies of the three syntactic heads back to explicit or implicit determining nouns (subjects/topics).

The different sets of determinate nouns constitute closed systems of varying complexity (such as kinship terms and body-part nouns). As noted above, the relations that pertain between the nouns in such systems has been described – for many Oceanic languages²⁴ – as being relations of ‘inalienable’ or ‘dominant’ or ‘direct’ possession, with the suffixed member representing ‘the possessed’ and the unsuffixed member ‘the possessor’. I hope to dispense entirely with that metaphor here. In my description I shall speak solely in terms of determinacy. A topic/subject noun (or pro-noun) is determining in relation to a) some adjectival noun (representing a state or property), or b) some relational noun (representing a class of persons or things). It is itself in turn determined (made definite) in terms of the relational noun. In b)-type predications the topic is sometimes exophoric and/or implicit, as in the following:

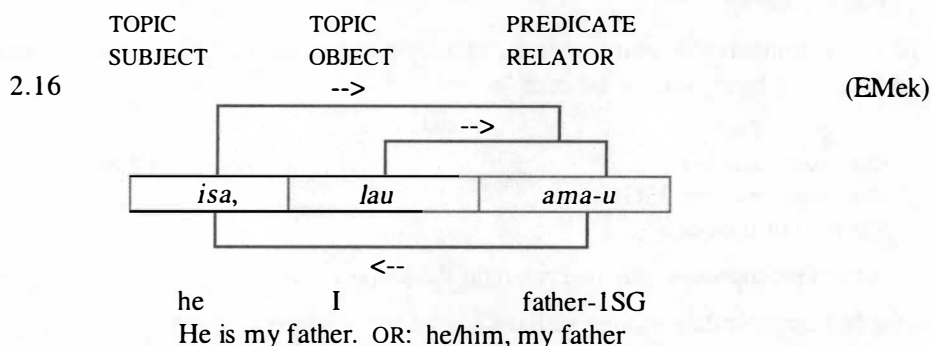


²⁴ I hasten to note that some early mission grammars did not fall into this trap, and one in particular may indeed be said to have preempted the present analysis. See, for example, Fr Joindreau’s (1907) Roro grammar sketch (translated from the French by Blühme in 1968) where my ‘determining suffix’ is referred to as “the suffix of intransitive relation”. Joindreau (1968:11) was quite definite about the distinction between real possession (= ownership) and intransitive relations: “It has to be noted that when a noun is governed by another, i.e. if it contains the idea of real possession, the possessive adjective has to be employed: any other relation which in European languages is often expressed by the possessive adjective has to be expressed by the relational suffix”. This lucid insight was lost in the later mission grammars.

This can be read as: ‘As for the bird, its wing!’ That is: ‘As for the bird, it is its wing that is here important/salient/relevant.’ However, if an exophoric topic is supplied this utterance can be read as: ‘That is a/the wing of a/the bird.’ Example 2.16 below diagrams this underlying structure. After rankshift it can be read as: ‘...a/the bird’s wing...’ and then has no function except as a constituent of another predication.

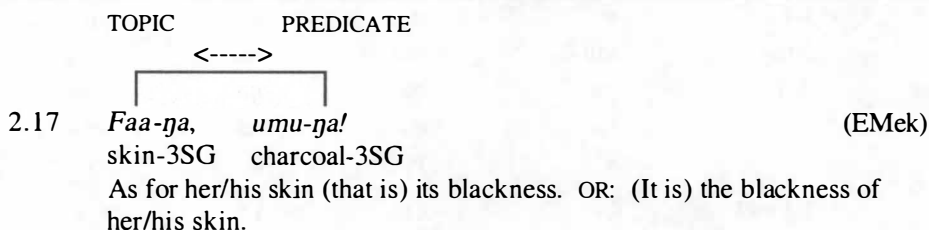
As a predication – before rankshift – it answers such questions as: ‘What is important about the bird?’ and ‘What part of the bird is it?’ and ‘What kind of wing is it?’ and, supplying an exophoric/implicit topic, ‘What is it?’ The arrows indicate the mutually determining relations.

In the proposition represented by the second reading of example 2.15 there is an implicit deictic argument: ‘It/that’. With kin terms the exophoric topic is always a personal pronoun, but the structure of relations is the same. If one sets out the full underlying structure of a similar predication (these are all relational predications) one gets the following:²⁵



This analysis would fit *Nabà ini bani-na* (WMek) ‘That is a bird’s wing’.

With an adjectivally functioning noun, topic and predicate are mutually determining :



This answers such questions as: ‘What *about* her/his skin?’ and ‘What *is* black?’ and, with an exophoric/implicit topic supplied, ‘What about her is important?’²⁶

²⁵ The analysis of relational predications is discussed at length in Chapter 3. But I will just add here that Lamb (1965) has shown that all the semantic components of kin terms (apart from sex) correspond to predicative relations: not ‘relation of’ but ‘is related to’. Pawley (1973:167) noted of Oceanic ‘possession’: “The grammar of the system is...comparable to that governing verb-object relationships...”. Lynch (1973) pursued this further, and in a later paper (1982) attempts to show that the Oceanic ‘possessive constructions’ in fact represent nominalisations of POC verbal sentences.

²⁶ Taumoeofolau (1991) bears out this reading for Tongan, of which she is a native speaker. This suggests that a system of rankshift operates in Tongan. Tongan *ko* like Mekeo *auja* has two disparate functions: marking a predicate and topicalising a rankshifted predicate.

The predicate is *grammatically* determinate in that it carries a suffix marked for the person and number of a) its topic-subject, as in example 2.17, or b) its object, as in 2.16. As the predicate it is, moreover, the head of the predication. Note that, as the grammatically determinate noun is the head, topic nouns (subjects and objects) must be analysed as dependents. The head makes these, too, more definite, *while being itself determined* (and thus made determinate) in terms of its relationship to one of them (the one for which it is marked).

There are then two logical patterns of determination: $x F-x$ and $x y F-y$. There is firstly the relation whereby a topic noun is determined by – and itself *grammatically* determines – some state or property.

- 2.18 $x \quad F-x$
Oai kabula-mu. (WMek)
 you strong-2SG
 You are strong.

Then there is a ‘transitive’ pattern, whereby two topic nominals are linked by a relational noun, one acting as ‘subject’ and the other as ‘object’.

- 2.19 $x \quad y \quad F-y$
Ida oai ina-ma. (WMek)
 s/he you mother-2SG
 She is your mother.

The first pattern presupposes only one referent, the second two.

Below, the full range of determining suffixes for the four dialects is given:

TABLE 10: THE SYSTEMS OF DETERMINING SUFFIXES

Number	Person	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek	
Singular	1st	-u	-u	-u	-u	
	2nd	-mu	-ma	-ma	-mu	
	3rd	-ŋa	-ŋa	-ŋa	-ŋa	
		-na	-na	-na	-na	
		-v̄	-v̄	-v̄	-v̄	
Plural	1st incl	-ka	-ka	-ka	-?a	
	1st excl	-mi	-mi	-mai	-mai	
	2nd	-mi	-mi	-mi	-mi	
		3rd	-ki,	-tsi	-tsi	-?i
			-kia			

The third person singular suffix *-ŋa* is commonly dropped, or ‘swallowed’, in which case its underlying presence is signalled by an irregular word-final stress (i.e. word stress is allocated as if the *-ŋa* were still in place) and by a compensatory lengthening of the now word-final vowel (by approximately one half of a mora: shown as *-v̄* above) which will be indicated in the present work by a macron: **ima-ŋa* → *imā* (hand/paw-3SG) ‘his/her/its hand/paw’. There is also often some degree of nasalisation of the lengthened final vowel. The suffix *-na* is the allomorph of the third person singular that follows /i/ and is not usually

deleted: *aki-na* 'his/her younger same-sex sibling'. Note that when the enclitic particle *mo* 'just, only', is appended to a word the third person singular suffix is *not* deleted from the surface string: **ifō-mo* -> *ifo-ŋa-mo*.

The NWMek third person plural alternants, *-ki* and *-kia*, appear to be just that: free variants. Comparative evidence from other West Central Papuan languages (e.g. Roro) and from Motu, as well as the evidence of the possessive 'prefixes' in NWMek, WMek and NMek (see §2.2.1.4), enables us to reconstruct **kia* for Proto Mekeo.

It will be noticed that the forms of the suffixes marking first person plural (exclusive) and second person plural are homophonous in NWMek and WMek. Ambiguity is generally ruled out by the context of situation, but when necessary a free pronoun can be used to make the meaning clear: *ai ama-mi* 'our (exclusive) father' (NWMek, WMek), as opposed to *oi ama-mi* (NWMek), and *oai ama-mi* (WMek), 'your (plural) father'.

Kin terms and body-part nouns comprise the two most clearly defined semantic sets represented in this class of (typically) determinate nouns. Kin terms denote members of a kinship system from the viewpoint of some hypothetical Ego. Just as Ego's relationships with the human exponents of this system are prescribed by the accident of birth, the labels are, from each Ego's viewpoint, prescriptive and unvarying. However, the kinship system is peculiar in that many of the core relations²⁷ are *reciprocal*: Ego1 'is son to' Ego2, who by the same token 'is father to' Ego1. Note that while this system is in one sense closed, the classificatory extension of kinship terms to non-kin is commonly practised (group affiliation is in some ways fluid; and adoption was a common practice in the past).

Names of body parts also comprise a theoretically closed system, though not a reciprocal one. However, although the system is in principle closed, a certain amount of variation in local usage does result in some terminological disagreements and change over time. All living things – animals, birds, reptiles, fish, plants, trees – entail similar closed systems of partitive relations, often with some more or less metaphoric overlap. But the notion of a whole-part relationship also is applied to inanimate entities: natural features like rivers and mountains, as well as the whole range of cultural artefacts from houses and canoes to bows and arrows and items of apparel. Indeed, we are here approaching the whole range of more abstract relational/locational nouns (to be described in §2.1.2.2 and §3.1.4): nouns which are only somewhat arbitrarily separated out from determinate nouns as such but which have a rather more specialised grammatical function (as 'postpositions').

Another group of words that must be noted here briefly is made up of 'abstract' nouns that may or may not – according to the context – be treated as determinate 'attributes' of a person or thing. These can in general be called adjectival nouns. While some adjectival nouns are always abstract (or 'non-referential') others have both an abstract and a concrete (or 'referential') use (see §2.1.2.3 below).

Categorisation as determinate/non-determinate thus sometimes depends on the particular meaning or interpretation given to a word in a particular situation. A limited number of (non-relational?) words for cultural concepts, or for everyday items that have been invested with special cultural significance, as well as words for customary verbal productions, also allow of two interpretations:

27 To be more precise, the core vertical relations are, typically, reciprocal.

TABLE 11: LEXICAL ITEMS WITH VARIABLE READINGS

	WMek, EMek	NON-DETERMINATE	DETERMINATE
i)	<i>tsinibo, ?inipo</i>	year	age
ii)	<i>idonioni, isonioni</i>	story told by someone	story told about someone
iii)	<i>malele</i>	letter for someone	letter about someone

Kiniβo, *tsinibo*, *?inipo*, in fact denotes a kind of bulrush that flowers each year towards the end of the wet season (see §2.2.4.1 below). The Mekeo use this word (or concept) to count years: *?inipo maʔo* ‘many years’, but *?inipo-u* means ‘my age’ (i.e. ‘my years’). Similarly, *isonioni-mu* is ‘the story of your life, your doings’, rather than ‘a story you like to tell’.²⁸

Finally in this section, I present an overview of the different kinds of concepts that are typically represented by determinate (or relational) nouns in Mekeo. I shall take as my starting point the six semantic categories listed in Lichtenberk (1985b:104-105) as being typically expressed by means of ‘direct possession’ in Oceanic languages. All are or can be expressed as determinate nouns in Mekeo. I have rearranged them slightly, as follows:

- i) part-whole relations (e.g. human body parts)
- ii) kinship relations
- iii) the concept of ‘self alone’ or ‘emphatic self’ (*ipo, epo, ifo, (?)ifo*; §2.2.1.3)
- iv) physical/mental states/attributes (see §4.3.2.1 and §4.3.2.2)
- v) spatial relations (§2.1.2.2 and §3.1.4)
- vi) nominalisations, where the possessor encodes the actor (agent, experiencer) or the patient (see §5.5 for patient-marked nominalisations with *I-*; ITR verbal roots form zero-derived nominals, marked for the actor)

Nominal functions of typically verbal roots are of two kinds in Mekeo, depending on their transitivity. Intransitive roots are marked (suffixally) for the agent, while transitive roots are prefixed with *I-* before being marked for the patient.²⁹ That is, the subjective genitive is distinguished from the objective genitive. I would thus replace vi) above with two categories (giving a total now of seven), as follows:

- vi) intransitive verbal roots
- vii) transitive verbal roots

Even now the list does not exhaust the full range of roots and stems that can appear as determinate nouns, or relational terms. In the first place there are a number of personal pro-forms, besides *epo, (?)ifo* ‘self alone’, that require a determining suffix: EMek *auni-*, for instance, meaning ‘pair’, and *aupa, aupa* ‘each’, as well as other non-specific pronouns (see §2.2.3.3). There are also the classifier nouns (see §2.1.2.1.3). The EMek demonstrative pronouns are also marked for the third person singular or the third person plural (see §2.1.1.2.3 above, and §2.2.2.2 below).

²⁸ Note that *i-s-oni-oni* is a deverbal noun (with prefix *i-* and intrusive [s]) based on the otherwise unattested root **oni* (which must be related to Motu *gori* ‘legend’). NMek has *izonioni*, while NWMek has *pou* for ‘story, legend’ (cf. Roro *pou* ‘story, legend’).

²⁹ In Manam this distinction is not marked. See Lichtenberk (1983:250-251).

In the second place there is the possibility of positing an ad hoc relation between all sorts of class nouns (as in English nouns are placed in apposition). Examples (from EMek) are: *ŋapi-ŋapi foʔama-ŋa* 'evening meal'; *pulomakau imoi-na* 'cow boy; milking lad'; *kuā akō* 'his/her snoring'. And from WMek: *bauŋa binauŋa-ŋa* (village work-3SG) 'homework'.

2.1.2.1.2 NOUNS OF MEASUREMENT

These nouns constitute a separate more or less closed class of more or less grammaticalised items in each dialect. The following are used in EMek:

<i>kalō</i>	length-3SG	<i>Kalō maeva</i>		} S/he is tall.
<i>kaŋā</i>	length-3SG	<i>Kaŋā maeva</i>		
<i>pao-ŋa</i>	leg-3SG	<i>Pao-ŋa maeva</i>		
<i>unia-ŋa</i>	bone-3SG	<i>Unia-ŋa maeva</i>		

Meŋa 'node in bamboo' is also used for 'distance between nodes in bamboo', and is consequently sometimes used as an indeterminate unit of length (as in English expressions such as: 'a good length of X').

In WMek *bini* 'lower leg, tibia' is used to stand for a person's height:

- 2.20 *Ida aji-na*³⁰ *auŋa, bini-na gagamaaŋa,* (WMek)
 s/he yng.sib.-3SG TOP tibia-3SG long
ge ida, bini-na kukupa.
 but s/he tibia-3SG short
 His/her younger brother/sister is short but he/she is tall.

Age, ake 'jaw/mouth' is used to mean breadth or capacity or 'room'. Thus EMek: *Loli, akē e-poŋu* (truck mouth.3SG 3SG-full) means 'The truck is full' or 'There is no room in the truck'.

Ina, inae 'stomach' is used in a similar way for 'width, girth, middle'. For instance: *vei inae-ŋa-ai* (water stomach-3SG-OBL) 'in the middle of the river/lake' (EMek).

A base meaning 'measure' itself, in all the usual meanings of that word, is *kobo, ʔopo*. This functions, as a verb, to mean both 'measure' and 'try' and it gives the derived nominal form: *i-kobo, i-ʔopo* 'act of measuring; measurement, trial, test'. *Kobo-u, ʔopo-u* (measure-1SG) means 'my measure, my size'. This item is listed again in §2.2.1.6 as a comparative pro-form. We shall look at the uses of this base in §3.1.5 and §8.2.5 below.

2.1.2.1.3 CLASSIFIER NOUNS³¹

Classifier nouns are nouns with very general meanings that function as the heads of a special class of co-relative predications (to be described in §8.3.1.1 below). Although many

³⁰ *Agi, aji, atsi, aki* means more precisely 'younger same-sex sibling'.

³¹ These correspond to what Halliday and Hasan (1976) call "general nouns".

of these can also appear as free nouns, they are distinct from the greater majority of free nouns by virtue of their generality and an ability to appear as determinate heads of predications. As heads of predications they can function as relativisers or as instantiators. As instantiators, they present contingently defined entities as instances of very general classes.³²

This is not a large group of words in Mekeo. I consider the following list to be very nearly, if not quite, exhaustive:

<i>au</i>	man, person	}	<i>au-ŋa</i> (one-3SG)
<i>au</i>	tree, wood, stick	}	
<i>au</i>	thing	}	
<i>βaβie, babie, papie</i>	woman	}	+ Right Dislocation
<i>imi, imoi</i>	child	}	
<i>auke, amu?e</i>	dog	}	

Other general nouns sometimes appear as quasi-grammaticalised heads. For example:

<i>ani</i>	kernel	->	true essence
<i>ui, ubi, ivi, vei</i>	water, juice		

The following are more specialised and do *not* usually appear as free nouns. They form adverbial predications of place, cause, reason, purpose, and benefit (see §8.3.2 *passim*):

<i>apu, afu</i>	place	->	trace, track ³³
<i>buo, puo</i>	cause	->	reason
<i>gai, kai</i>	direction	->	reason, purpose
<i>pau, fau</i>	sake	->	benefit ³⁴

Less commonly used are *ou* ‘cause’ (all dialects) and *ŋani* ‘spite, despite’ (all dialects). See *ŋani-na-ŋa-ai* ‘nevertheless’ in §8.3.2.13.

The following items are rather specialised as postpositions and are nominal only in the sense that they can not appear as finite verbs:

<i>aiama, aidama, aizama, aisama</i>	time
<i>gina, jina, tsina, kina</i>	sun, day --> time
<i>go, goa, koa</i>	true likeness, truth

Adverbial predications will be described, as already noted, in §8.3.2 below.

³² It could be argued that these nouns (plus right-dislocation) represent the nucleus of a system of classifiers such as exists in Kilivila.

³³ The main reason for including this item here rather than in §2.1.2.2 is the fact that it can be used as a non-determinate nominal.

³⁴ This possibly forms a doublet with *paku, bagu* ‘forehead’, which is in itself an unexpected reflex in view of Motu *bagu* ‘forehead’. Motu *bagu* does correspond with *pau, bau*. Ross (1983a) has reconstructed PPT **bagu* ‘forehead’, based on Suaucic and Central Papuan reflexes.

2.1.2.2 LOCATIVE RELATIONAL NOUNS: POSTPOSITIONS ± -AI

This is a rather large, more or less closed sub-set of determinate nouns³⁵ with basic locational and directional functions. Many members of this class are, in origin, names for bodily parts/aspects or for spatial orientations relative to some person or thing or place: 'the inside (of x)', 'the front (of y)'. That is to say they have not always been as abstract as they now sometimes seem. The metaphorical extension of meaning is well illustrated by the names for directionally specified parts of people (and things): e.g. *ape*, *afe* 'back, calf of leg' is used relationally to mean 'beyond, outside or after something (or before something)'. Many of these terms can thus refer, by semantic extension, to relative times; indeed they are commonly used as 'adverbs' of time, and indeed as (subordinating) conjunctions; but there are also a number of specialised roots that specifically denote time concepts and temporal relations. Mention must finally be made of certain high-level instantiators that are used solely to express logical relations: cause, reason, purpose.

In their most usual function – as locators/relators – they carry a suffix marked for the person and number of a given noun. They frequently carry, also, the oblique (ablative) case-marking suffix -AI to indicate the location/source/cause of some thing, or a process/event.

These relational nouns occur as 'postpositions': they function as postpositional markers of circumstantial cases on rankshifted predications (groups). But in construction with a subject-topic and an object they would constitute a predication-level construction having the form: *x*, *y*, *F*-*y*:

	<i>x</i>		<i>y</i>		<i>F</i>		- <i>y</i>	
	TOPIC (SUBJECT)	+	OBJECT	+	RELATIONAL PREDICATOR-OM			
2.21	<i>Naba</i> that		<i>iji</i> I		<i>ape</i> back		<i>-u.</i> -1SG	(WMek)
	That is my back.							
2.22	<i>ŋa</i> DX		<i>ava</i> ³⁶ plank		<i>afē.</i> back.3SG			(EMek)
	That is the back of the plank.							

After rankshift the last example can be embedded in another predication, as in:

2.23	<i>(Ava afē)</i>		<i>mo-kopi-kopi.</i>					(EMek)
	plank	back.3SG	IMP.2SG-plane-RED					
	Plane the back of the plank.							

The main function of these relational predicators, however, is as 'adverbials' indicating location or source, marked as oblique relations by means of the suffix -AI. This kind of relational nouns is to this extent grammaticalised. The insubstantial nature of their semantic content ensures, moreover, that some of them will have little currency as full nominal predicates (without -AI).

35 Mekeo is consistently head-marking here, and the postpositional phrase is thus endocentric – since adpositions are generally accepted to be heads – with the postposition itself carrying the agreement-marking and if necessary the case-marking morphemes. In the grammatical traditions of other head-marking languages, such as Mayan, adpositional bases are similarly classed as 'relational nouns' (Nichols 1986:109). In other words, "there is no categorial distinction between PP and NP" (1986:111).

36 This kind of wood, from the Black Palm, was reserved for chiefs in the past.

I here list as many of these relational nouns as I have found in my corpus, as well as all those I was able to identify in the mission documents. I list the base forms of the roots in WMek and EMek, respectively, followed by the third person singular forms of these, and then the oblique case forms (still third person singular). And, finally, I give approximate English glosses.

TABLE 12: THE COMMON LOCATIVE-RELATIONAL POSTPOSITIONS

Root form	Gloss	Root.3SG	Root.3SG.OBL	Adverbial gloss
<i>aa, laa</i>	top	<i>aaŋa, laaŋa</i>	<i>aaŋai, laaŋai</i>	on top, above
<i>age, ake</i>	mouth	<i>agē, akē</i>	<i>ageŋai, akeŋai</i>	in the mouth of, at the entrance to
<i>akuni, aʔuni</i>	high	???	<i>akuniai, aʔuniai</i>	(from) on high
<i>aŋo</i>	front	<i>aŋō</i>	<i>aŋoŋai</i>	in front of, next to
<i>aŋo apa, afa</i>	land some	<i>aŋo apā, afā</i>	<i>aŋo apaŋai, afaŋai</i>	somewhere (else)
<i>aŋo-ma</i>	land-not	???	<i>aŋomai</i>	far away, from afar
<i>ao, alo</i>	inside, mind	<i>aō, alō</i>	<i>oŋai, aloŋai</i>	inside, in
<i>ape, afe</i>	back; calf	<i>apē, afē</i>	<i>apeŋai, afeŋai</i>	behind, outside, beyond
<i>au</i>	????	???	<i>auŋai</i>	after
<i>awani, lavani</i>	left	<i>awanina, lavanina</i>	<i>awaninai, lavaninai</i>	on/from the left
<i>baba, papa</i>	underneath	<i>babaŋa, papaŋa</i>	<i>babaŋai, papaŋai</i>	underneath, beneath
<i>ebo, epo</i>	distance, during	<i>ebō, epō</i>	<i>eboŋai, epoŋai</i>	between, interval
<i>ibu, ipu</i>	midpoint	<i>ibuaina, ipuaina</i>	<i>ibuainai, ipuainai, ibuinaŋai, ipuinaŋai</i>	in the middle of
<i>ina, inae</i>	belly	<i>inā, inaeŋa</i>	<i>inaŋai, inaeŋai</i>	in the middle of
<i>ida, isa</i>		???	<i>idaŋai, isaŋai</i>	elsewhere
<i>gai, kai</i>	direction	<i>gaina, kaina</i>	<i>gainai, kainai/ gainaŋai, kainaŋai</i>	in the direction of, because of
<i>ke, ʔe</i>	locus	<i>keŋa, ʔeŋa</i>	<i>keŋai, ʔeŋai</i>	at, on, near
<i>*keke, ʔeʔe</i>	locus.RED	<i>ʔeʔeŋa</i>	<i>ʔeʔeŋai</i>	very near, right on
<i>koni, ʔoni</i>	tip	<i>konina, ʔonina</i>	<i>koninai, ʔoninai</i>	at the tip of
<i>koŋo, ʔoŋo</i>	shelter	<i>koŋō, ʔoŋō</i>	<i>koŋoŋai, ʔoŋoŋai</i>	in/under the protection of
<i>kopu, ʔofu</i>	underneath	<i>kopū, ʔofū</i>	<i>kopuŋai, ʔofuŋai</i>	underneath, beneath
<i>ma, maa</i>	eye	<i>maŋa, maā</i>	<i>maŋai, maaŋai</i>	in the centre of, at the tip of

Root form	Gloss	Root.3SG	Root.3SG.OBL	Adverbial gloss
<i>maka-ba, ma?a-pa</i>	formlessness, unknown		<i>makabaŋai, ma?apaŋai</i>	at the inception of
<i>mabe, mape</i>	rib, side	<i>mabē, mapē</i>	<i>mabeŋai, mapeŋai</i>	by the side of
<i>meke, me?e</i>	cheek	<i>mekē, me?ē</i>	<i>mekeŋai, me?eŋai</i>	to one side of
<i>mia</i>	sit/become		<i>miaŋai</i>	during, while
<i>muni</i>	space behind	<i>munina</i>	<i>muninai; muniai</i>	behind; after
<i>nie</i>	tooth, edge	<i>niē</i>	<i>nieŋai</i>	at the edge of
<i>oŋo</i>	shadow	<i>oŋō</i>	<i>oŋoŋai</i>	in the shelter of
<i>*poi, foi</i>	space under house	<i>foina</i>	<i>foinai</i>	underneath, beneath
<i>potsi, fo?i</i>	base	<i>potsina, fo?ina</i>	<i>potsinai, fo?inai</i>	at the base of, beneath
<i>(o)ai, uvai (*uai)</i>	precedent, origin	<i>aina, uvaina</i>	<i>ainaŋai, uvainaŋai</i>	before, in the beginning of
<i>uu, uŋu</i>	buttocks, anus	<i>uŋa, uŋuŋa</i>	<i>uŋai, uŋuŋai</i>	at the base of

One might expect that the above-defined roots, being essentially relational, would never occur without determining suffixes; but there are some uses in which the free form occurs: *ape au-tsi* (WMek) ‘outside people’ (with reference to the WMek people as opposed to the EMek; note that it is not *apē*). Similarly we hear in EMek: *Afe mo-lao* (back IMP.3SG-go) ‘Go outside’. Again, it is not *afē* that we hear.

2.1.2.3 ADJECTIVAL NOUNS

Properties of persons and things can be expressed in Mekeo by means of either: a) intransitive state/process verbs, or b) non-referential nominal predicates, here called adjectival nouns. The same lexical roots can occur in either function (apart, perhaps, from a small sub-set to be discussed below, in §2.1.2.3.5). Adjectival nouns are *ipso facto* determinate nouns (though marking is optional in the third person), and like other determinate nouns, can be read as the head of a group or of a predication. Thus the following example has two possible readings:³⁷

2.24 *Polo auŋa, ini bito-ŋa, e-biji-n-i-a.* (WMek)

Paul TOP bird red-3SG 3SG-shoot-TH-PF-3SG

As for Paul, the bird was red, he shot it. OR: As for Paul, he shot the red bird.

Whether example 2.24 receives reading the first or second of these readings depends on whether rankshift has applied, and as rankshift has no reflex in segmental form this is a matter of interpretation. However, suprasegmental cues are sometimes available (see §1.3.3.4.4 above).

³⁷ Compare Hale’s (1981:337) Warlpiri example, which in his terms has both a ‘merged’ reading and a predicate reading. And compare Simpson (1991:197).

When an attributional predication has been rankshifted down to the level of a group, and is embedded under another argument-taking predicate, the erstwhile topic can sometimes function as the semantic head of the group, while the erstwhile predicate effectively becomes a dependent/modifier. Whether this semantic reinterpretation takes place or not depends upon the meaning of the predicate – its level of abstraction, whether it is ‘prototypically adjectival’ or not. This is discussed further in §3.1.2.

Virtually any adjectival-noun predicate can just as well appear as a verb. This applies even to those roots that are, apparently, the most substantive or concrete in their denotation.³⁸ Clearly ‘nounation’ versus ‘verbatation’ constitutes a (high-level) system of options in this grammar, and is independent of the inherent categoriality of the root. Prototypically adjectival roots – abstract roots – behave regularly both before and after rankshift. But the behaviour of roots that are not prototypically adjectival after rankshift has applied reveals like nothing else a fundamental categorial and functional ambivalence attaching to many concepts in this language.

All of the nouns that could be called adjectival in Mekeo, or that can be used as adjectivals, fall into five classes:

TABLE 13: CLASSES OF ADJECTIVAL NOUNS

i)	Substantive	}	3SG: <i>-ŋa</i> (optional)
ii)	Non-substantive		
iii)	Core adjectives		3SG: <i>-∅</i> (obligatory)
iv)	Behavioural	}	3SG: <i>au-</i> (obligatory)
v)	Reified		

Note that this formal breakdown groups the core adjectives, which are semantically non-substantive, together with the identificational predicates (the personal class nouns; see §3.1.1) which are always substantive if not referential. The behavioural adjectives seem to be in origin verbal (they occur with and without reduplication as intransitive verbs of behaviour; e.g. *e-ŋafe(-ŋafe)* ‘be (habitually) kind’). As nominals they occur in reduplicated form (e.g. *ŋafe-ŋafe*) and with the predicate *au* ‘person’, which carries a determining suffix marked for the person and number of the topic noun: *Oi ŋafe-ŋafe au-mu* ‘You are an (habitually) kind person’. This structure can be represented abstractly as: *x, F au-x*. With partial leftward reduplication (e.g. *ŋa-ŋafe*) most of the same roots crop up again as non-substantives at ii). Reduplication is dealt with in §2.1.2.3.4 below. Reified nouns are the names of abstract concepts that are *treated as* substantives except that they cannot occur as nominal predicates. They too must be followed by the determinate *au-*. Note that they differ in this from free nouns which can occur as identificational predicates (with zero suffixation in the third person

³⁸

There are a very few words that – apparently – never function as verbs. These are (all?) stems that already represent derivations from a root. (One example is *ajo-ma* ‘far, distant, distance’.) Compare Mühlhäusler’s constraint on the number of steps permissible in a derivation in Papua New Guinea Tok Pisin (Mühlhäusler 1978: 139-140). These items are not to be confused with the core adjectives of §2.1.2.3.5.

singular) or as *verbal* predicates or as ‘objects’ of the verb *mia* ‘become, change into’ (§6.2.1). Expressions with *au-* translate well enough as ‘X is a man/woman of F’.

It is worth remarking here that the non-substantive adjectives at ii) (e.g. *maewa*, *maeva* ‘long’, *miau*, *meau* ‘heavy’, *paka*, *faʔa* ‘stout, large’) also cannot carry a *personal* suffix (first person, second person). There needs to be a noun of measurement to carry these suffixes while the adjectival noun remains (optionally) marked for the third person singular: EMek *au*, *pao-ŋa maeva* (man thigh-3SG long) ‘The man is tall’. (See §2.1.2.1.2 above.)

There are other constraints on some of the above categories of adjectival nouns. These will be examined in the appropriate sections below. I shall first briefly examine those lexical bases that are – at least to a western way of thinking – semantically substantive.³⁹ I then pass on to an examination of what one might call the prototypically adjectival roots: non-substantive nouns (i.e. abstract nouns). Then, after a review of some specialised adjectival affixes, and the functions of (partial and total) reduplication, I look at a core group of non-substantive adjectivals that exhibit some degree of syntactic specialisation. Finally, some specialised intensifiers are listed and their various uses illustrated. The *verbal* expression of properties (by means of intransitive process verbs) is dealt with in §4.3.1.1 below.

2.1.2.3.1 SUBSTANTIVE ADJECTIVAL NOUNS

While many of the roots/stems used to express properties can be described as abstract nouns (see next section), and so grouped with the ‘deverbal nouns’ (or ‘gerunds’) and the determinate nouns generally, others name classes of things, or kinds of non-count substances. These latter are – semantically speaking – substantives, though they are often used grammatically as predicates and modifiers. It is impossible to make a principled distinction, on formal or functional grounds, between these typically nominal roots, when functioning as nominal predicates in identificational/equational predications, and abstract ‘adjectival nouns’ in the same function.

Typical substantive adjectives are then ‘derived from’ or ‘based on’ roots meaning *primarily* (one could suppose) things or substances. Compare the following possible utterances, based on *βaβie*, *babie*, *papie*, meaning ‘woman’, and *umu*, meaning ‘charcoal’:

WMek	{	2.25	<i>ida</i>	<i>babie</i>	S/he (is) a woman!
					OR
					s/he, (the) woman
	}				
		2.26	<i>imi</i>	<i>babie-ŋa</i>	(The) child (is) female!
					OR
					(the) female child

³⁹ Note that in my usage the term ‘substantive’ is restricted to concrete, referential items. Some grammars of English include abstract nouns under this term.

- 2.31 (*Kina*) *?ama-ŋa-ai felō*. (EMek)
 (day) cold-its-in good!
 Good morning.

Moreover, abstract adjectivals frequently function like a nominalised relative predication, or as Schachter (1985:17) has it, they “designate an object (or objects) embodying a specified quality”. They could, in this function, be glossed as ‘the one/s which is/are X’ (where X is an abstract adjectival); or more simply ‘the X one/s’, as for example, in EMek:

- 2.32 *Kolafu-ŋa e-afi-a*. (EMek)
 thick-3SG 3SG-take-3SG
 S/he took the thick one.

I shall refer to this as the specificational function, of which much more will be made below.

In other ways the more abstract adjectival nouns function just like the substantives described in the previous section:

- 2.33 *ŋa?ina mekia* (EMek) That (is) nice/sweet.
 2.34 *tsi mekia-ŋa* (EMek) The tea (is) nice/sweet.
 OR:
 nice/sweet tea.
 2.35 *ina?ina ?opai-na* (EMek) This (is) straight.
 2.36 *keŋa ?opai-na* (EMek) The path (is) straight.
 OR:
 a/the straight path

These cannot, however, function as the non-determinate head of a deictic predication as in *Nja babie!* ‘Look at the woman!’ (or: ‘Look, it’s a woman!’). Constructions like those illustrated above are discussed in considerably more depth in §3.1.2. Meanwhile here is a sample of some common non-substantive adjectives from the two main dialects:

<u>EMek</u>	<u>WMek</u>	<u>English</u>
<i>a?uni</i>	<i>akuni</i>	high, height
<i>aaŋe</i>	<i>aŋe</i>	vain, idle, random
<i>aŋe-aŋe</i>	<i>aŋe-aŋe</i>	green(-ness)
<i>auŋo?oi</i>	?	huge(-ness)
<i>faeva</i>	<i>paewa</i>	crooked(-ness)
<i>fa?a</i>	<i>paka</i>	stout(-ness); large(-ness)
<i>fa?a-i-s-au</i>	<i>paka-i-au</i>	big, strong
<i>faŋa</i>	?	good, benign, kind (one?)
<i>fo?oa</i>	<i>ku-kupa</i>	short(-ness)
<i>kakaepa</i>	?	straight(-ness), verticality
<i>kakala</i>	?	blocked, blockage
<i>?opai(-na)</i>	<i>kopai(-na)</i>	straight(-ness) – horizontal
<i>lolova</i>	<i>olopa</i>	dry, modest, modesty
<i>maeva</i>	<i>maewa</i>	long, length
<i>mama(-ŋa)</i>	<i>mama(-ŋa)</i>	new(-ness)

<i>mania</i>	<i>mania</i>	medium(-sized) (one?)
<i>me'au</i>	<i>miau</i>	heavy, weight
<i>mekia(-ŋa)</i>	<i>mitsia</i>	tasty, sweet; salty (one?)
<i>meku</i>	<i>megu</i>	moist(-ness)
<i>oŋoŋo</i>	<i>oŋoŋo</i>	dried out, desiccated
<i>ope(-ope)</i>	<i>obeobe</i>	narrow(-ness)
<i>pini(-pini)(-na)</i>	<i>bini(-bini)</i>	complicated (one), difficulty
<i>pito(-ŋa)(piko; pino)</i>	<i>bito(biko)</i>	red(-ness)

When I say that the above nominals are non-substantive I mean that there are no readily recognised referents for such words. This may be – to some degree – a function of my own limited familiarity with the language, but it is fair to say that these words are not referential in common usage.

Some adjectival nouns in this category seem rarely to occur without the third person singular determining suffix *-ŋa*, but this is a matter of usage and varies widely between idiolects and communalects.

2.1.2.3.3 ADJECTIVAL AFFIXES

There are a small number of non-productive adjectival suffixes in Mekeo. These appear to make no distinct contribution to the semantics of the root but merely mark it overtly as 'adjectival'.⁴⁰ Attested suffixes for EMek are: *-ka*, *-pa*, *-ma*, *-lo*, *-ŋo*, *-la*, *-ŋa*, *-le*, *-ŋe*. The *l-ŋ* pairs are possibly doublets. I can only exemplify these morphemes for that dialect.

The diaphones G (realised as *g*, *k*) and B (realised as *β*, *b*, *p*) occur suffixed to verbs immediately before an object marker (see §1.3.4.3 above and §4.3.3.4, §4.3.3.5 below). Their function is there largely expressive, and this seems to be the case with their nominal-adjectival use as well. Consider:

<i>ini-ka</i> , <i>ini-ʔa</i>	(< <i>ini</i> 'thorn')	thorny
<i>pui-ka</i>	(< <i>pui</i> 'hair; bristle')	hairy, bristly
<i>vei-ka</i>	(< <i>vei</i> 'water')	wet, watery
<i>ʔino-ka</i>	(< <i>ʔino</i> 'hard, dry')	hard, tough
<i>fapu-ka</i>	(< <i>fapu</i> 'having a weak spot, a flaw, a gap')	fragile, weak
<i>maŋa-ka</i>	(< ???)	lukewarm, tepid

The *-ka* seems to intensify the meaning of a root. In some cases, however, it signifies 'having, being, characterised by'.⁴¹ It may in a small number of cases represent a shortened form of *kae* 'ascend, upward, up'.

⁴⁰ This phenomenon is not unusual in Oceanic. Codrington (1885) lists the "Melanesian" suffixes *ga*, *ra*, *sa*, *ta*, *li*. Motu has, at least, the following: *ka*, *ga*, *ta*, *va*, *ri*. Of these, according to Lister-Turner and Clark (1954a:15), Motu *ka* = MN *ga*, Motu *da* = MN *ta* and Motu *ri* = MN *li*. But these correspondences cannot be above suspicion, particularly in the light of attested non-correspondences within the West Central Papuan family itself. Thus, for example, Gabadi *mano-va* 'soft', corresponds to Motu *mano-ka* 'soft; weak; cowardly'. The Mekeo-Motu correspondences are mostly of this kind.

⁴¹ Frank Lichtenberk (pers.comm.) points out that cognates of Mekeo *-ka* in other Oceanic languages have very similar functions.

There are a very few nominals with *-pa*:

<i>maŋu-pa</i>	affable, placid
<i>uŋu-pa</i>	disgusted, revolted
<i>maŋe-pa</i>	deserted
cf. <i>ŋoŋo-pa</i>	uvula

Two common adverbials (?) with *-ma* are:

<i>aŋo-ma</i>	(from <i>aŋo</i> 'land')	far, distant
<i>paŋua-ma</i>	(from <i>paŋua</i> 'village')	strange village

Examples of other adjectival suffixes are:

<i>fumo-ŋo</i>	(from <i>fumo</i> 'mushroom, sp.')	mildewed
<i>fufu-ŋo</i>	(from <i>fufu</i> 'hair of head')	head-hair-like
<i>fuka-ŋo</i>	(derivation uncertain)	hairless, smooth
<i>?eva-ŋo</i>	(derivation uncertain)	shameless
<i>fuke-ŋe</i>	(from <i>fuke</i> 'empty')	empty, stupid
<i>aike-ŋe</i>	(derivation uncertain)	fetid

It is necessary to be on one's guard in Mekeo, in this connection, against partial reduplication, onomatopoeic inventions, and full roots assimilating phonologically to the ends of other roots and thereafter appearing as 'mere' suffixes. One probable example of this latter phenomenon is the EMek doublet *koŋa-fu~kola-fu* 'stout, strapping', which in fact probably derives from *koŋa - afu* 'male - ???'. A clear example of partial (rightward) reduplication is EMek *kofe-fe* 'crippled' (< *kofe*, the same meaning).

The suffix *-ŋa* may be identical with the third person singular determining suffix. Some examples suggest a simple rightward reduplication of this ending:

<i>loŋa-ŋa-ŋa</i>	(< <i>loŋa</i> 'chief; good')	(X is) very fine/beautiful
<i>fufu-ŋa-ŋa</i>	(< <i>fufu</i> 'hair')	(X is) very hairy

Note that *mama(-ŋa)* 'new', should probably be analysed as *ma-ma(-ŋa)*; compare Roro *maha-maha* 'young, new'.⁴²

2.1.2.3.4 NOMINAL REDUPLICATION OF ROOTS

Both the full and the partial leftward reduplication of nominal roots – that is, roots invariably or typically used in a nominal function – occur in Mekeo, in all four dialects.⁴³

Full reduplication (RED) sometimes indicates that something is a smaller or in some way a *lesser instance* of the referent of the monomorphemic root (I give the EMek instantiations only in this section):

<i>meŋa-meŋa</i>	Christian prayer	<	<i>meŋa</i>	magic spell
<i>ŋapi-ŋapi</i>	late afternoon, evening	<	<i>ŋapi</i>	night
<i>?ufu-?ufu</i>	garden house	<	<i>?ufu</i>	village clan house

⁴² But see also Mekeo *maia*, 'unripe', which in Roro is still *maha*.

⁴³ There may be some as yet undetermined variations in usage across the dialects.

<i>veʔa-veʔa</i>	small string bag ⁴⁴	<	<i>veʔa</i>	string bag of male
<i>veʔe-veʔe</i>	inedible fern	<	<i>veʔe</i>	edible fern

Partial leftward reduplication also occurs – though less commonly – in a similar diminutive function:

<i>ifa-ifani</i>	small pillow	<	<i>ifani</i>	pillow
<i>i-ilo</i>	rice-birds	<	???	

Most of the examples of full reduplication constitute a large and relatively closed class of bases that usually (though not exclusively) appear in a nominal function and which express either density or profusion, a unified perception of multiplicity:

<i>miʔi-miʔi</i>	stars, fireflies, sparks, spots
<i>miŋu-miŋu</i>	(swarm of) gnats, midges ⁴⁵
<i>ova-ova</i>	roofing made of leaves or grasses (<i>ova</i> is ‘back’)
<i>ipa-ipa</i>	leaves used as a hanging ornament, a fringe of leaves

Many reduplicated names for things like trees, plants, birds, and insects appear to be nominalisations based on monomorphemic roots that themselves function more typically as process verbs. But frequently the monomorphemic base has no function, i.e. it does not occur independently. But even when a plausible etymology can be postulated, the link is too tenuous for most of the reduplicated forms to be considered as motivated. The first two examples below are perhaps exceptions to this rule:

<i>kupu-kupu</i>	undergrowth, thicket	<	<i>kupu</i>	be dense (of grass, undergrowth)
<i>ŋufu-ŋufu</i>	foliage, thicket	<	<i>ŋufu</i>	be dense, thick (of foliage)
<i>iʔo-iʔo</i>	(long) grasses	<	???	
<i>kai-kai</i>	flowers, ornamental efflorescences	<	???	
<i>kota-kota</i>	weeds (e.g. on road)	<	???	
<i>i-love-love</i> ⁴⁶	a shrub (tanket sp.)	<	<i>love</i>	curl up, twirl
<i>vei-vei</i>	mango, mango tree	<	<i>vei</i>	water, juice ⁴⁷
<i>mae-mae</i>	(fruit) tree	<	???	
<i>voŋu-voŋu</i>	tree (good for fence posts)	<	???	
<i>fae-fae</i>	orange (tree), citrus (tree)	<	???	
<i>poku-poku</i>	termites (= white ants)	<	???	
<i>uŋe-uŋe</i>	small worms (in wound, cheese, etc.)	<	<i>uŋe</i>	be rotten, crumbling
<i>?ima-?ima</i>	round worm(s), ground worm(s)	<	???	
<i>io-io</i>	worms, intestinal worms, [also now] germs	<	???	

44 A woman's small string bag. The word *veʔa* refers to the Mekeo male's personal carry-all.

45 Another meaning is 'diminished as by distance' (according to Desnoës, who also has *mi-miŋu*).

46 The pre-formative *I-* is treated in §5.5. Its function here is obscure.

47 Compare *vei-vei* 'be juicy', and *ve-vei-na* 'its juice'. The etymology is nonetheless hypothetical.

<i>eisei</i>	mosquitoes	<	<i>ʔei-ʔei, eʔi-eʔi</i>	(D); possibly variant of <i>eki-eki</i> pain, hurt
<i>ʔoŋu-ʔoŋu</i> ⁴⁸	bellbird	<	???	(see note)
<i>loŋu-loŋu</i>	long-necked bird	<	???	(also <i>loŋu-faio</i>)
<i>kiu-kiu</i>	duck(s), diver(s)	<	<i>kiu</i>	dive
<i>lopi-lopi</i>	duck(s)	<	<i>lopi</i>	red, inflamed (?)
<i>kuria-kuria</i>	(a common variant of the following)	<	???	
<i>kulia-kulia</i>	small banana parrots	<	???	
<i>kafu-kafu</i>	small ornaments	<	???	
<i>ao-ao</i>	arm-shell, shell bracelet	<	???	(cf. Motu <i>taotao</i> shell necklace)
<i>i-kua-kua</i> ⁴⁹	comb	<	<i>kua</i>	comb (hair)
<i>i-s-aki-aki</i>	fighting stick	<	???	
<i>iʔo-iʔo</i>	stick	<	???	

Many names of dances occur only in reduplicated form, possibly to represent the kinds of rhythmic movements involved in most dancing: *kiro-kiro*, *kono-kono*, *kou-kou*, *kue-kue*. *Kiro* is a term of endearment used while fondling dogs: 'little puppy' (?); see below. The term *kou-kou* can mean 'being/coming together'. The root *ku-* signifies movement forward or backward.

A small number of possible and definite loan words invariably occur in a fully reduplicated form:

<i>mula-mula</i>	medicine ⁵⁰	(= Motu <i>muramura</i> 'medicine')
<i>nao-nao</i>	corrugated iron	(< Motu <i>nao</i> 'foreign' (?))

Other loans from French and English are usually, but optionally, reduplicated:

<i>ketsi-ketsi</i> (less usually <i>ketsi</i>)	biscuits	(< English 'cake')
<i>mini-mini</i> (less usually <i>mini</i>)	cat	(< French <i>minou</i> 'kitten')

As regards the latter word, the motivation for RED seems to be hypocoristic. Compare:

<i>kiri, kili</i>	small dog, pup (affectionate term)
<i>kiri-kiri, kili-kili</i>	tickle
<i>kilo, kiro, kilo-kilo</i>	doggy, puppy (affectionate term of address)

Full reduplication can also function to turn a typically verbal root into an abstract nominal. This most usually applies to roots belonging to the class of integral process verbs (see §4.3.1.1) and usually involves an intensification of meaning, while adding a temporal dimension, that is habitual aspect (see §6.1.1). For example:

<i>ŋafe-ŋafe</i>	(habitual) kindness	<	<i>ŋafe</i>	be kind
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⁴⁸ NMek has *kou-kou*. The Mekeo say that the call of the bellbird resembles the sound made when beating bark cloth. The NMek version of the name suggests an onomatopoeic source, with reduplication signalling the repetitious nature of the sound.

⁴⁹ The pre-formative *I-* has a clearly instrumental function here.

⁵⁰ *Mulamula* covers both Western medicines and indigenous potions (including poisons).

- 2.37 *Isa*⁵¹ *ɲafe-ɲafe au-ɲa.* (EMek)
 s/he kind-RED man/person-3SG.ASS
 S/he's a (habitually) kind person.

Full reduplication also functions to turn a typically nominal root with concrete significance into an abstract nominal, without the temporal nuance but implying multiplicity or 'muchness':

- pui-pui* (having) bristles < *pui* bristle, be bristly
mea-mea much mud, muddiness < *mea* clay, mud, be muddy

- 2.38 *Ue-mu mea-mea.* (EMek:D)
 foot-2SG muddiness
 Your foot/feet is/are muddy.

Partial leftward reduplication (RD) can be said to have a grammatical function in that it marks a nominal as determinate. It seems to be phonologically triggered, i.e. by the addition of a determining suffix, although this may be assimilated to a final vowel:

- poa-poa* tattoo, tattooing > *po-poa-ɲa* his/her tattoo⁵²
pui-pui (having) bristles > *pu-pui-na* his/her/its antenna, tentacle

With assimilation:

- ɲafe-ɲafe* (habitual) kindness > *ɲa-ɲafe* his/her kindness; *but also* kind-3SG

For example:

- 2.39 *Au fu-fuɲe felō.* (EMek)
 tree RD-flower good/beautiful
 The flowering tree is beautiful.

- 2.40 *Au ɲa-ɲafe e-au-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 man RD-kind.3SG 3SG-hit-TH-TR-3SG
 The kind man hit him/her. OR: S/he hit the kind man.

The temporal/aspectual sense of habit or repetition may be extended to cover the sense of repetition in space as well as time:

- Pini-pini e-mia.* (< *pini* 'tangled') It's become busy, chaotic, complicated.

Some forms with partial leftward reduplication seem to be the result of a gradual process of assimilation of two separate words with separate main stresses to form a single word with a single main stress (on the penultimate or the antepenultimate syllable). There are several versions of this process, according to the syllable structure of the roots involved.

The various stages and outcomes of this process can be illustrated as follows:

- full reduplication of the root, with main stresses on the two penultimate syllables (e.g. *mèɲa-mèɲa* 'prayer', *ɲàpi-ɲàpi* 'evening' *àpu-àpu* 'cloud').
- full reduplication of the root, with one main stress on the antepenultimate syllable and (e.g. *poà-poa*, 'tattoo', *meà-mea* 'much mud', *uɲà-uɲa* 'sorcerer')

⁵¹ *Isa* is unmarked for structural function (i.e. case) and could, if it stood on its own, be glossed 'him/her' just as well as 's/he'. However, if there is an object function here it is *-ɲa*.

⁵² The root *poa* means 'strike lightly, light blow'. Compare *pa-poa-poa* 'tap repeatedly' and hence 'tattoo (someone)'.

- c) either i) assimilation of a vowel-initial first syllable of the second root to the final syllable of the first root, with a resulting diphthong of the form: VV (e.g. *uŋàuŋa*, variant pronunciation of ‘sorcerer’),
- or ii) elision of the second syllable of the first root (e.g. *?a-?àŋa* ‘thigh’ < *?àŋa-?àŋa* < *?àŋa* ‘crawl’; compare *oŋ-òŋo* ‘dry’ < *òŋo-òŋo*). (In some cases – e.g. where a full syllable of the form CV is deleted, as in *?a-?àŋa* ‘thigh’ < *?àŋa-?àŋa* – this represents an abrupt rather than a gradual change.)

In certain conditions – when a vowel-final final syllable is followed by a vowel-initial initial syllable, b) can lead to c): i). Whether it does so or not probably depends on frequency of use. Variation between communalects and between dialects illustrates this process.

The existence of several fully fossilised (i.e. unmotivated) forms of partial leftward reduplication in the basic vocabulary is evident. The process given here as c): ii) accounts for these. Examples are

<i>ki-kina</i>	armpit	<	<i>*kina-kina</i> ⁵³
<i>?a-?aŋa</i>	thigh	<	<i>?aŋa-?aŋa</i>
<i>aio lo-loko</i>	Adam’s apple	<	<i>loko-loko</i> ⁵⁴

Compare the common adjective *oŋ-oŋo* ‘dry’ (< *oŋo-oŋo* still heard in slow speech).

The partially reduplicated form of *piko/pito* ‘red’, i.e. *pi-pito* has an intensifying meaning: ‘very red’. (The variant with [t], once an innovation, is now the standard.)

In conclusion, the functions and/or attitudes expressed by full reduplication in Mekeo can now be listed as a) diminutive, b) pejorative, deprecatory, c) hypocoristic, d) intensifying, e) expressing plurality/multiplicity/abundance, f) expressing generality or abstractness, g) expressing repeated action or movement, and finally h) onomatopoeic. Some words appear to be fossilised in reduplicated form.

Full reduplication is productive in the hypocoristic function, the expression of plurality/multiplicity/abundance and perhaps to some extent in the intensifying function.

2.1.2.3.5 CORE ADJECTIVES

Mission grammars of Mekeo traditionally identified a small class of ‘true’ adjectives by virtue of the fact that these do not – or tend not to – appear as verbs,⁵⁵ i.e. carrying a subject-marking prefix, and in addition never carry a third person singular determining suffix (although they *are* marked for other person/number combinations). Although these are actually statistical statements, they do define a class of very high-frequency adjectives, with a heavy functional load. A more absolute criterion is the fact that they never appear as topics of predications. Below I display the chief members of this set, which I refer to as core adjectives, arranged in terms of polar meanings along two semantic dimensions:

53 Roro has *tsi-tsia* while Kuni has *dia-dia* for ‘armpit’, with Kuni no doubt representing the original form.

54 Compare NMek, WMek *aio logo-logo*. EMek *loko-loko* means a ‘gourd rattle’. *Aio*, *aio*, *aizo*, *aio* means ‘throat’. Hence *aio loloko* means literally ‘the throat’s rattle’.

55 For example, Van Lamsweerde (1940) and Van Goethem (n.d.).

TABLE 14: MEKEO CORE ADJECTIVES

		NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
DIMENSION	large	<i>maua</i>	<i>maua</i>	<i>maua</i>	<i>akaikia</i>
	small	<i>tsi-tsino</i>	<i>bebela</i>	<i>pepela</i>	<i>ʔeʔele*</i>
VALUE	good	<i>loβiana</i>	<i>belo</i>	<i>velo</i>	<i>felō</i>
	bad	<i>aβaea</i>	<i>abala</i>	<i>abala</i>	<i>apala</i>

*ʔeʔele (or eʔele) forms a doublet with *kekele*.

The words *kaβula*, *kabula*, *kapula* ‘strong’⁵⁶ and *paka*, *faka*, *faʔa* ‘big, large’ probably belongs here too, as they are not used with a third person singular suffix, and are very high-frequency items. The latter has the distinction that it is rarely if ever used as a non-verbal predicate:

- 2.41 *keʔa faʔa* (EMek)
 path/road large
 a/the big path/road
 (**The path/road is big.)

The absence of the third person singular marker on these adjectival nouns is a good test of class membership. Compare a second person singular form and a third person plural form of *aβaea*, *abala*, *apala* ‘bad’ with unmarked third person singular:

- 2.42 *Oi apala-mu.* (EMek)
 you bad-2SG
 You are bad.
- 2.43 *Iza abala-tsi.* (NMek)
 they bad-3PL
 They are bad.
- 2.44 *Ida abala.* (WMek)
 s/he bad
 S/he is bad.

However, EMek *felō* ‘good’ always carries a *marked* stress on the last syllable, presumably to signal an assimilated 3SG determining suffix. It is known that *belo*, *velo*, *felō* is a comparatively recent borrowing from Roro. This is perhaps why it does not conform to all the rules of Mekeo morpho-phonology and word formation.⁵⁷ Although it has reached all dialect areas, in NWMek it is still in competition with *loβiana* (literally perhaps ‘chiefly’) which probably represents the older form elsewhere as well. Note that *lobia(-ŋa)*, *lopia(-ŋa)* is also common in the other dialect areas, also meaning ‘good, beautiful’.

⁵⁶ The *k* of *kaβula*, *kabula*, *kapula* across all dialects suggests it is a borrowing.

⁵⁷ The initial consonant corresponds irregularly across dialects: EMek [v~f], NMek [v], WMek [b] and NWMek [β]. Mission documents show that the word was in the process of entering the language around 1911, from one or another of the Roro dialects (Tsiria/Yule Island, Bereina, Maiva) where it means ‘straight’. Indeed EMek actually *has felo* meaning ‘be straight’. Note that the compensatory stress on the final syllable is only obligatory in EMek; the western dialects have *vêlo*, *bêlo*, *βêlo*.

The core adjectives rarely appear as finite verbs. However, most occasionally do, while others appear as verbs and as co-verbs in what seems to be a special extended use, as semantically bleached intensifiers:

- 2.45 *Peŋa e-velo.*⁵⁸ (EMek)
feather.ornament 3SG-good/beautiful
The feather ornament is beautiful.
- 2.46 *Ika, ga-aŋu-belo.*⁵⁹ (WMek)
we.I 1PL-sit-good
We are well off.
- 2.47 *Imu, e-àpala.* (EMek)
rain 3SG-bad/plenty
The rain is heavy.
- 2.48 *A-peu-abàla.*⁶⁰ (WMek)
1SG-sleep-bad
I am sleeping badly.
- 2.49 *Gugu, o-ani-abalà-n-i-a.* (WMek)
tobacco 2SG-eat-bad/plenty-TH-PF-3SG
You smoke too much tobacco.

When used as an independent verb, *aŋaea*, *abala*, *apala* always takes a *marked* stress on the antepenultimate syllable, as in example 2.47 above. Used thus it expresses multiplicity or plenitude: ‘be many’ or ‘be plenty’. In a common non-verbal usage it means ‘wretched, poor’: *au aŋaea*, *au abala*, *au apala* (literally: man-bad) ‘poor fellow’.

The core adjectives can fulfill typically nominal functions, e.g. as abstract (determinate) nouns, as in example 2.51, and as oblique-marked adverbial nouns, as in 2.52:

- 2.50 *Lau, e?ele-u.* (EMek)
I small-1SG
I am small/young.
- 2.51 *e?ele-u* (EMek)
small-1SG
my youth/smallness
- 2.52 *kekele-u-ai* (WMek)
small-1SG-OBL
when I was small/young

Core adjectives also appear in quasi-lexicalised expressions, as in the second and third examples below:

58 The form of the word in examples always corresponds to that noted down in the field, and not to the somewhat idealised citation form. The forms in the examples illustrate the wide range of permissible variation of consonants in all dialects.

59 These adjectives can be used predicatively, and are not then attached to the verb.

60 This is a circumlocution used by a woman to say that she is menstruating. It recalls the idiomatic phrase: *Babie gawa i-ida* (WMek) ‘The woman has seen the moon’, which has the same meaning.

- 2.53 *Au, maua.* (WMek)
man big
The man is big.
- 2.54 *Ida, au maua.* (WMek)
he man big
He is a bigman.
- 2.55 *Au akaikia, e-mai.* (EMek)
man big .3SG-come
The bigman is coming.

There are no main-verbal uses of *maua*, *akaikaia*, or of *kaβula*, *kabula*, *kapula*, but they do occur as co-verbs:

- 2.56 *Afa-iva-kapuŋa-n-i-a-mo.*⁶¹ (EMek)
HYP.1PL-speak-strong-TH-PF-3SG-just
We might speak loudly.
- 2.57 *Papie e-isava, fo-lo-pua-akaikia-n-i-a.* (EMek:D)
woman 3SG-sick OBLG.NEG-2SG-bear-big-TH-PF-3SG
The woman is sick, as you carry her do not take big steps.

Dixon (1977) noted that numerous languages lacking an open class of noun modifiers nevertheless contain a restricted, closed class of adjectives, and that the range of meanings minimally covered by such a closed adjectival class is cross-linguistically predictable. He has identified a ‘universal’ set of four two-valued parameters of meaning: Dimension, Colour, Age and Value. The Mekeo core adjectives, identified mainly by their inability to function as topics, seem to constitute a reduced version of the system predicted by Dixon.

2.1.2.3.6 INTENSIFIERS

Although the intensifiers can function ‘adverbially’, either to modify a verb (see §6.1.13 below) or to indicate the degree to which someone or something shares an attribute or a property (or, indeed, the strength with which the proposition is asserted), they are based on roots which are in themselves semantically ambiguous and equally capable of lending themselves to either a process interpretation or an object interpretation. In as much as they are formally non-verbal,⁶² and can indeed function as non-verbal predicates, I introduce them here without further apology.

The two most commonly employed intensifiers are (*i-*)*bauma*, (*i-*)*pauma*, ‘much, very, extremely’ and *aloŋai/aloŋaina* ‘much, very, extremely’ (the latter originally an EMek innovation that is now rapidly spreading to all other dialect areas).

Uma (all dialects) means ‘(be) prolix, plentiful; bounty, plenitude’. It can be used alone, as in:

⁶¹ The substitution of /ŋ/ for // is not uncommon. This can happen in reverse. The adverbial ending *-nia(mo)* is discussed in §6.1.8.

⁶² That is to say they lack a subject marker showing tense/aspect/mood. This is not to say that they may not occur as verbs, which they do. I am here considering their more frequent non-verbal functions.

- 2.58 *Uŋaʔa uma.* (EMek)
 Goura-pigeon plentitude/plentiful
 Goura pigeons are plentiful.

Uma thus used is an indefinite quantifier, like *mako*, *maʔo* ‘many, all’. Hence the lack of the 3SG determining suffix *-ŋa* (this is of course optional in any case for 3SG ‘adjectivals’).⁶³

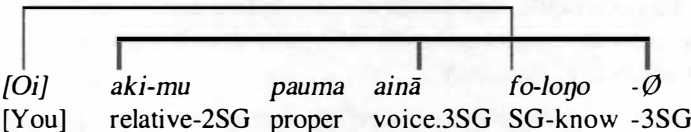
The verbal prefix *βa-*, *ba-*, *pa-* signifies (among other things – see §5.2) the heightened intensity of an action or process. *βa-uma*, *ba-uma*, *pa-uma* must thus be considered a non-finite verb or a verbal noun (depending on usage). It is a true modifier in that it cannot (?) occur as a predicate; and it sometimes functions to modify substantive nominals, just like any other ‘adjectival noun’. Among its meanings are ‘true, proper, full’. Examples are:

- 2.59 *Iza lopzia/lofia pauma.* (NMek)
 s/he chief full
 He is a true/full chief.
- 2.60 *Papie aukae pauma.* (EMek)
 woman exciting true
 (The) woman is very exciting.

Surface agreement in some examples is obscure. Take for example the (EMek) sentence:

Aki-mu pa-uma ainā fo-loŋo.

The topic/subject is understood. The verb *loŋo* only takes an object marker in perfective aspect, so there is no overt OM. Underlying coreference relations may be diagrammed as follows (where the thick line traces the object, the thin line the topic/subject):

- 2.61  (EMek)
 [O*i*] aki-mu pauma ainā fo-loŋo -∅
 [You] relative-2SG proper voice.3SG SG-know -3SG
 You should listen to (your) really close relatives

Aki normally means ‘younger same-sex sibling’ but, by extension, it means ‘close relative’. *Pa-uma* here means ‘real, not classificatory’. The prototypically verbal root *loŋo*, *oŋo*, has a range of meanings that include ‘know, hear, accept’.

In EMek at least *-eŋakai* fulfils all the same functions as *pa-uma*:

- 2.62 *Keke e-alo-eŋakai; e-alo-pauma.* (EMek)
 noise 3SG-inside-ITS 3SG-inside-ITS
 The noise has completely stopped; it has stopped properly.

It is often possible that *BA-UMA* may represent an elliptical form of *I-BA-UMA* ‘big, huge, great’ or ‘very much’. This – as we shall see in §5.5 – usually represents a nominalised verbation with ‘patient focus’. But it can function as here to modify non-substantive, adjectival nouns:

- 2.63 *Belo ibauma.* (WMek)
 good very.much
 (That is) very good!

⁶³ It is obligatorily absent if *uma* is interpreted as a class noun in an identificational predication, which may in fact be the best line to take with the quantifiers.

This expression is used nowadays in all dialects as the equivalent of ‘Thank you’, or ‘Thank you very much’. EMek is *felò ipauma*. Here is another example:

- 2.64 *Ngafako ava apala ipauma.* (EMek)
 Ngafako grass bad very.much
 Ngafako (is a) very bad grass

Aloŋai and *aloŋai-na* serve very similar functions to the above and seem to be indistinguishable as to meaning and usage. The *-na* simply adds a touch more emphasis, perhaps. *Alo-ŋa-ai* literally means ‘in its inside’ (inside-3SG-OBL), or ‘inside it’. In current usage it means ‘very, very much, a lot’. *Ao* ‘inside’ in the other three dialects corresponds with EMek *alo*, so clearly *aloŋai(-na)* is a borrowing into these dialects from EMek. Here is an EMek example:

- 2.65 *Isa mala-ʔi, uvai-na aloŋaina.* (EMek)
 they tongue-3PL old-3SG very.much
 Their language is extremely ancient.

Alo-ŋa-ai can also be used to express a superlative degree of anything:

- 2.66 *Poa gabà auŋa, ani-na o-ani-a aloŋaina?* (WMek)
 banana what TOP death-3SG 2SG-die-3S very.much
 Which kind of bananas do you like best?

Another EMek example that possibly indicates the route by which the original meaning of this word came to be extended is the following:

- 2.67 *Kuku aipa-ŋ-ai alo-ŋ-ai (e-uka).* (EMek)
 tobacco fury-3SG-OBL inside-3SG-OBL (3SG-enter)
 She’s got really high on tobacco. (lit. s/he has entered) the inside
 of the intoxication of tobacco.)

The meaning here borders on ‘proper intoxication’ or ‘real intoxication’. Incidentally, *aiba*, *aipa* seems to have been originally used of the trance-like state of a warrior going into battle, i.e. ‘fighting frenzy’, traditionally induced by rituals and spells (*meŋa*).

Certain kinds of non-verbal discourse markers function to intensify an utterance. These are illustrated in §6.3. A single example follows here:

- 2.68 *E-piau laa’i kuŋa.* (EMek)
 3SG-run not indeed
 S/he can run very fast indeed.

See §6.1.13 for adverbial co-verbs of intensity, often based on the same roots as have been described here.

2.1.2.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS – RANKSHIFT

Rankshift is by definition unidirectional, a matter of downranking syntactic units. For dependent-marking languages like English, with exocentric structures, this means the downranking of a unit to the level and class of its own constituents. This usually entails extra marking to indicate the change of function (e.g. nominalised verbs, relative clauses, etc.). In head-marking languages like Mekeo, however, with their predominantly endocentric constructions (and where consequently all non-head elements are optional), this means that

the marked heads may function as optional dependents, *in spite of their marking*. When a marked head is rankshifted, from being a predicate it becomes a topic. This is how predicate marking morphology can also have a topic marking function.

Rankshift thus implies that the underlying function of all marked elements is predicative. This is why one can speak of a *primary* predicative function.

Rankshifted predicates functioning as topics cannot always be readily distinguished from non-rankshifted predicates embedded in other predications while still retaining their own predicative force (compare Hale 1983).

Unmarked dependents in a head-marking language can function as heads only by becoming marked. This is not rankshift but a cross-level derivation, where an item moves from the level of a morpheme to that of a word. Derivation across levels is also a common process in Mekeo, since any root can take on a verbal function by adding the requisite morphology. Derivation at the same level is also common; for example the alternate verbal derivations to be described in Chapter 5, when morphological marking is changed.

2.2 CLASSES OF NOMINAL PRO-FORMS

2.2.1 PERSONAL PRONOUNS

The personal pronouns primarily refer (anaphorically or exophorically) to humans. First and second person forms index the speech-act participants, but the third person forms are used of animals and things as well as people.

A free pronoun can function as topic or predicate in a nominal predication or as subject, object or indirect object in a verbal predication. There are special emphatic or topicalised forms. A small number of specialised nominal roots and particles are suffixed for person/number and these function as reflexive pronouns, possessive pronouns, and so on. (e.g. *IPO*- 'self only'; *E*- 'belong'; *AUPA*- 'each'; *AUNI*- 'both').

2.2.1.1 UNMARKED PERSONAL PRONOUNS

The *unmarked* forms of the personal pronouns are as follows:

TABLE 15: THE SYSTEMS OF UNMARKED PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Person/Number	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	<i>iu</i>	<i>iji</i>	<i>itsi</i>	<i>lau</i>
2SG	<i>oi</i>	<i>oai</i>	<i>oai</i>	<i>oi</i>
3SG	<i>ia</i>	<i>ida</i>	<i>iza</i>	<i>isa</i>
1PL.I	<i>ika</i>	<i>ika</i>	<i>ika</i>	<i>i?a</i> <i>isa</i>
1PL.E	<i>ai</i>	<i>ai</i>	<i>ai</i>	<i>lai</i>
2PL	<i>oi</i>	<i>oai</i>	<i>oai</i>	<i>oi</i>
3PL	<i>ia</i>	<i>ida</i>	<i>iza</i>	<i>isa</i>

In EMek, in the first person plural inclusive, the glottal stop weakened and has been replaced with the intrusive [s]. *Isa* is nowadays heard from speakers of all ages, although older people will still give *iʔa* as the citation form. The homophony of the singular and plural forms in the second and third persons (all dialects) can be disambiguated by the anaphoric affixes on a verb or by the context of the situation. But number is only unambiguously marked in the first person.

2.2.1.2 EMPHATIC PERSONAL PRONOUNS

The forms of the unmarked personal pronouns just illustrated can be marked as emphatic or contrastive by the addition of the suffix *-ŋa*, or (after /i/) *-na*.⁶⁴ The full array of the emphatic forms can be displayed as follows:

TABLE 16: THE SYSTEMS OF EMPHATIC PERSONAL PRONOUNS

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	<i>iu-ŋa</i>	<i>iji-na</i>	<i>itsi-na</i>	<i>lau-ŋa</i>
2SG	<i>oi-na</i>	<i>oai-na</i>	<i>oai-na</i>	<i>oi-na</i>
3SG	<i>ia-ŋa</i>	<i>ida-ŋa</i>	<i>iza-ŋa</i>	<i>isa-ŋa</i>
1PL.I	<i>ika-ŋa</i>	<i>ika-ŋa</i>	<i>ika-ŋa</i>	<i>iʔa-ŋa / isa-ŋa</i>
1PL.E	<i>ai-na</i>	<i>ai-na</i>	<i>ai-na</i>	<i>lai-na</i>
2PL	<i>oi-na</i>	<i>oai-na</i>	<i>oai-na</i>	<i>oi-na</i>
3PL	<i>ia-ŋa</i>	<i>ida-ŋa</i>	<i>iza-ŋa</i>	<i>isa-ŋa</i>

These forms are in competition with the more analytic construction using the universal instantiator and topicaliser *au-ŋa*. Thus one very commonly hears *lau au-ŋa* rather than *lau-ŋa* (EMek), and so on for all the other pronouns in all dialects. My impression is that the emphatic forms of the pronouns are rather more common in WMek and NWMek. Note that it is not always possible to distinguish between these two usages in ordinary conversation, where *auŋa* is very frequently realised after ellipsis as *ʔŋa* (preceded, albeit, in the speech chain, by a silent beat).

One of the chief functions of *auŋa* is to topicalise words or strings, and the emphatic pronouns are in a sense topicalised by the *-ŋa/-na* suffix. Lichtenberk (1983), whose terminology differs from mine, would say that that they are “thematized”, but with a contrastive or contradictory nuance (see fn.40), and this may indeed be true of Mekeo too.

Note that some bilingual informants explained the plural forms of the emphatic pronouns as implying a greater number of actants than the unemphatic forms:

- 2.69 *Ika na-ga-ao.* (WMek)
 1PL.I FUT-1PL-go
 We (= self plus one other) will go.

⁶⁴ This corresponds in this use (/ŋ/ has several functions; see below) to the morpheme *-ra* in Manam, described by Lichtenberk (1983:473-475) as a “thematizer” (with chiefly contrastive and/or contradictory functions).

- 2.70 *Ika-ŋa na-ga-ao.* (WMek)
 1PL.I-EMP FUT-1PL-go
 We (= self plus several others) will go.

2.2.1.3 REFLEXIVE PERSONAL PRONOUNS

The reflexive pronouns are formed by adding a determining suffix marked for person and number to the diamorphemic root *IPO* ‘self only, own self’. These often appear in apposition to other nominals, in which cases it is not easy to see whether they fulfil the same syntactic function as the antecedent nominals, or another. They can express adverbial meanings like ‘alone, on one’s own’. Reflexes are *ipo* (NWMek), *epo* (WMek), *ifo* (NMek), and (?)*ifo* (EMek). The following forms are generated:

TABLE 17: THE SYSTEMS OF REFLEXIVE PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Person/Number	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	<i>ipo-u</i>	<i>epo-u</i>	<i>ifo-u</i>	? <i>ifo-u</i>
2SG	<i>ipo-mu</i>	<i>epo-ma</i>	<i>ifo-ma</i>	? <i>ifo-mu</i>
	<i>ipō</i>	<i>epō</i>	<i>ifō</i>	? <i>ifō</i>
3SG	<i>ipo-ŋa</i>	<i>epo-ŋa</i>	<i>ifo-ŋa</i>	? <i>ifo-ŋa</i>
	<i>ipo-ŋa-mo</i>	<i>epo-ŋa-mo</i>	<i>ifo-ŋa-mo</i>	? <i>ifo-ŋa-mo</i>
1PL.I	<i>ipo-ka</i>	<i>epo-ka</i>	<i>ifo-ka</i>	? <i>ifo-?a</i>
1PL.E	<i>ipo-mi</i>	<i>epo-mi</i>	<i>ifo-mai</i>	? <i>ifo-mai</i>
2PL	<i>ipo-mi</i>	<i>epo-mi</i>	<i>ifo-mi</i>	? <i>ifo-mi</i>
3PL	<i>ipo-ki, ipo-kia</i>	<i>epo-tsi</i>	<i>ifo-tsi</i>	? <i>ifo-i, ?ifo-?i</i>

Taking NWMek tokens, *ipo-u* on its own means ‘myself’, *ipo-mu* is ‘yourself’ (i.e. idiomatically, ‘On your own head be it!’), and so on. The limiting particle *mo* (or *mu*), ‘just’, has pretty well accreted to the third person singular forms where the meaning can be interpreted as ‘alone’ or ‘on his/her own’, as in:

- 2.71 *Teresa epo-ŋa-mo è-mai.* (WMek)
 Teresa self-3SG-just 3SG-come
 Teresa alone is coming.

When used as a reflexive pronoun, properly speaking, the determining suffix *-ŋa* is regularly dropped, leaving the word stress on the last syllable:

- 2.72 *Ida epō.* (WMek)
 s/he self-3SG
 OR: s/he herself/himself
 = That’s her/his own business!

In EMek at least this root has numerous fully verbal uses, the most basic one being as follows:

- 2.73 *E-?ifo.* (EMek)
 3SG-self
 S/he is one of a kind.

The verbal function may indeed be basic to this root; and *ipo-mu* (see above) should probably be translated as '(It) belongs-uniquely-to you', i.e. (s+)V+o.

2.2.1.4 THE POSSESSIVE PARTICLE

There is a single possessive particle, which only survives in two dialects: NWMek and EMek. This particle is realised in EMek as *e*-⁶⁵ and in NWMek (for some person/number combinations only) as *a*-.⁶⁶ It occurs with determining suffixes which indicate the person and number of the possessor. The clitic words thus formed constitute possessive predicates. In WMek and NMek the person/number-marking suffixes are used alone, in all of the same functions as the possessive predicates in NWMek and EMek. In order to explain this functional similarity, I hypothesise that a possessive particle has been lost in WMek and NMek and I postulate the existence in all dialects of an underlying or overt diamorpheme, representing unmarked possession, which I label *E*-.

The full range of the analytic and unanalytic realisations of the possessive predicate across four dialects is presented below:

TABLE 18: THE SYSTEMS OF POSSESSIVE PREDICATES

Person/Number	English Gloss	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	my, to me	<i>a-ia</i>	<i>ua</i>	<i>ua</i>	<i>e-u</i>
2SG	our, to you	<i>a-ma</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>e-mu</i>
3SG	his/her/to him/her	<i>na</i>	<i>ŋa</i>	<i>ŋa</i>	<i>e-ŋa</i>
1PL.I	our/to us	<i>ka</i>	<i>ka</i>	<i>ka</i>	<i>a-ʔa</i>
1PL.E	our/to us	<i>a-mia</i>	<i>mia</i>	<i>mia</i>	<i>e-mai</i>
2PL	your/to you	<i>a-mia</i>	<i>mia</i>	<i>mia</i>	<i>e-mi</i>
3PL	their/to them	<i>a-kia</i>	<i>tsia</i>	<i>tsia</i>	<i>e-(ʔ)i</i>

In EMek, in the first person plural inclusive, the possessive particle *e*- has been coloured by the following vowel of the suffix. In NWMek, where the possessive particle is realised as *a*-, it has been lost in the third person singular and the first person plural inclusive. In the other two dialects it is missing. There are two possible explanations for this state of affairs.

The evidence of Lala, *ʔe-ʔu*, and Kuni and Roro *e-u* suggests that WMek, NMek *ua* and NWMek *ai(a)* must all derive from a form identical to EMek *e-u* (possibly by metathesis to **ue* with subsequent diphthongisation of /u-/ in NWMek and lowering of following /-e/ to /-a/ more generally). In WMek and NMek an initial *a*- (from **e*-) may have been assimilated to the second syllable of second person singular, to which it lent *a*-colouring before being dropped: **a-mu* > **a-ma* > *ma* 2SG (see the tables).

A second hypothesis is not incompatible with the last-described process for second person singular in WMek, NMek. It may also be that the marked possessive particle *a*- became generalised in the three western dialects, just as the unmarked particle *e*- did in EMek.

⁶⁵ The evidence of Kuni, Lala and Roro *e*- makes it clear that an unmarked possessive particle in these languages derives from Proto WCP **e*-.

⁶⁶ There is evidence from early mission grammar sketches (Van Lamsweerde 1940, Van Goethem n.d.) that until about the 40s there was a second, marked possessive particle *a*-, signifying possession for eating, and then intimate or emphatic possession, which was generally in less frequent use than *e*-.

The resultant predicates now function variably across dialects, either as nominal pro-clitics or as pronominal enclitics, as in:

2.74	<i>Iu, aia-poa</i> . ⁶⁷	< >	<i>Iu-ai(a) poa.</i>	(NWMek)
	I POSS.1SG-banana		I-POSS.1SG banana	
	Me, (it is) my banana.		(It is) mine, the banana.	

To recapitulate, an underlying or overt diamorpheme *E-*, signalling ownership or possession for use, has combined with determining (pronominal) suffixes in a variety of ways, often forming unanalysable portmanteau morphemes. These cliticise variably, either to a preceding pronoun, to form possessive pronouns (like EMek *lau-e-u* ‘mine’), or to a following nominal, forming possessed nominals (like WMek *ua-poa* ‘my banana’). All of these forms can function as predicates. Although the possessive pronouns are less common in the western dialects, they do exist. The full range of these forms for the four dialects is presented below:

TABLE 19: THE SYSTEMS OF POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

Person/Number	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	<i>iu-ai(-a)</i> <i>iyē(-a)</i>	<i>iji-ua</i> <i>iji-ia</i>	<i>itsi-ua</i>	<i>lau-e-u</i>
2SG	<i>oi-ama</i>	<i>oai-ma</i>	<i>oai-ma</i>	<i>oi-e-mu</i>
3SG	<i>ia-na</i>	<i>ida-ŋa</i>	<i>iza-ŋa</i>	<i>isa-e-ŋa</i> <i>iseŋa/ieŋa</i>
1PL.I	<i>ika-ka</i>	<i>ika-ka</i>	<i>ika-ka</i>	<i>i?a-?a</i> <i>isa-?a</i>
1PL.E	<i>ai-ame(-a)</i> <i>ai-ami(-a)</i>	<i>ai-mia</i>	<i>ai-mia</i>	<i>lai-e-mai</i>
2PL	<i>oi-ame(-a)</i> <i>oi-ami(-a)</i>	<i>oai-mia</i>	<i>oai-mia</i>	<i>oi-e-mi</i>
3PL	<i>ia-ke(-a)</i> <i>ia-ki(-a)</i>	<i>ida-tsi</i>	<i>iza-tsi</i>	<i>isa-e-(?)i</i>

The above tabulated forms can be glossed ‘mine, yours, his/hers, ours inclusively, ours exclusively, yours (plural), theirs’. EMek *lau-eu* ‘mine’ is often pronounced [lavev] in accordance with a productive phonological rule and/or an ongoing sound change. There are less frequent allophonic variants of several of these items, but those given above represent all the most current forms.

When modifying the nominal head of a group rather than predicating ownership, these clitic words in NWMek, WMek and NMek have tended to combine with the head noun. While this is still a very mild tendency in EMek, these words have developed into true pro-clitics in NMek and WMek *in this non-predicative use* (as evidenced by the writings of native-speaking informants, who rarely show them as separate words). NWMek too has advanced far in this direction, though as late as the 1950s Brown presented the individual morphemes as isolated words. The above information is displayed in the table below (where the following nouns mean ‘banana’ in each dialect: *poa, foa, o’o*).

⁶⁷ It is possible that accretion of the 1SG possessive predicate to a following nominal in NWMek resulted in insertion of epenthetic *-a* (e.g. *ai-a-poa*).

TABLE 20: INCIPIENT AGGLUTINATION OF POSSESSIVE MORPHEMES

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	(iu) <i>aia-poa</i> (ie) <i>ai poa</i> ⁶⁸	(iji) <i>ua-poa</i> <i>ia-poa</i>	(itsi) <i>ua-foa</i>	(lau) <i>eu o'o</i>
2SG	(oi) <i>ama-poa</i>	(oai) <i>ma-poa</i>	(oai) <i>ma-foa</i>	(oi) <i>emu o'o</i>
3SG	(ia) <i>na-poa</i>	(ida) <i>ŋa-poa</i>	(iza) <i>ŋa-foa</i>	(isa) <i>eŋa o'o</i>
1PL.I	(ika) <i>ka-poa</i>	(ika) <i>ka-poa</i>	(ika) <i>ka-foa</i>	(i?a/isa) <i>a?a</i> ⁶⁹ <i>o'o</i>
1PL.E	(ai) <i>amia-poa</i>	(ai) <i>mia-poa</i>	(ai) <i>mia-foa</i>	(lai) <i>emai o'o</i>
2PL	(oi) <i>amia-poa</i>	(oai) <i>mia-poa</i>	(oai) <i>mia-foa</i>	(oi) <i>emi o'o</i>
3PL	(ia) <i>akia-poa</i>	(ida) <i>tsia-poa</i>	(iza) <i>tsia-foa</i>	(isa) <i>e(?)i o'o</i>

The phenomena of agglutination and fusion remain to be studied in greater detail. At the moment free forms still occur in some contexts in NMek and WMek. These seem to occur predominantly in predicative (non-rankshifted) utterances:

2.75 *Iji ua kuma auŋa, ubi nie-ŋa-ai.* (WMek)
 I POSS.1SG pig one.TOP water tooth-3SG-OBL
 It is my pig that is by the edge of the water.

In NWMek the final *-a* of the possessive pro-clitics causes the loss of the initial vowel of a following nominal (this does not happen in the other dialects as yet). For example *eka* 'house' goes to *-ka* in the following paradigm of possessed forms:

SINGULAR		PLURAL	
(iu) <i>aiaka</i>	my house	(ika) <i>kaka</i>	our (inclusive) house
		(ai) <i>amiaka</i>	our (exclusive) house
(oi) <i>amaka</i>	your (singular) house	(oi) <i>amiaka</i>	your (plural) house
(ia) <i>naka</i>	his/her house	(ia) <i>akiaka</i>	their house

The full range of possessive constructions, and of options for cliticisation and fusion, is illustrated at greater length in §3.1.6 below.

In early mission grammar sketches of EMek, there are (as already noted) traces of an original system consisting of at least two possession markers: *e-* and *a-*. These combined with the determining suffixes in order to distinguish two different kinds of possessive relation between possessor and possessum. The *e-* form marked (as it still does) 'active, manipulative' possession of objects for use,⁷⁰ while the *a-* form marked 'active eating/

⁶⁸ Reported by Brown (1955:3), who also has *iuai kaβi* ("my speech") where I would write *iu aia kaβi* or *iu aia-kaβi*. He generally represents the pronominal topic as being fused with the possessive element and the word so formed as separate from the possessed nominal.

⁶⁹ The 1PL.I pro-clitic in EMek goes to *a?a*, and not expected *e?a*. Van Goethem has *ea*, perhaps for *e?a*, here. The glottal stop is often very weakly articulated, and we very often hear *ei* or *e'i* for *e?i*. Homophony is evident as between 1PL.E and 2PL but the situation of context usually disambiguates; else one can resort to using free pronouns.

⁷⁰ A definition originally suggested by Crowley, and adopted by Lynch. See Lynch (1982:245).

drinking possession', but also a more general form of *intimate* possession, which could also be referred to as exclusive possession.⁷¹ Two examples illustrate:

2.76 *Ina'ina tsiati, lau e-u.* (EMek)
 this shirt I POSS-1SG
 This shirt is mine.

2.77 *Eŋa'ina isonioni-na, lau a-u.* (EMek)
 that story-3SG I POSS-1SG
 That story belongs to me in an intimate way.⁷²

In modern EMek, in the speech of most people, *e-* fulfills both the above functions.⁷³ In NWMek, on the other hand, *a-* now represents the sole member of the opposition. The system as such is defunct. The single particle *E-* marks possession either overtly as in EMek and NWMek or as an underlying morpheme in the other two dialects. Although it is undoubtedly related to the classifiers, so widely attested in other Oceanic languages,⁷⁴ the Mekeo *E-* cannot (in the general absence of a synchronic system of contrasts) be called a classifier.

2.2.1.5 NON-SPECIFIC PERSONAL PRONOUNS

The most important of these are *aupa*, *aufa* 'each (one), every (one), everyone', and EMek *auni* 'pair' (>'both'). The first of these roots functions primarily as a 'personal' pronoun, but as it has a distributive meaning it finds mention again below as an indefinite quantifier (§2.2.3.3). The second exists only in East Mekeo. This EMek base has no cognate form in the other dialects. In WMek and NMek *autsina* 'two' is a numeral (corresponding to EMek *ŋua*) and cannot be marked for person and number as can *auni*. *Auni* corresponds to the NWMek personal numeral *aunuo*, but this cannot be marked for person/number. *Auni* is listed as a definite quantifier below (§2.2.3.1).

At first glance *aupa*, *aufa* functions like the possessive particle *E-* but it has the added meaning of distributing or apportioning 'ownables' among a number of different possessors. Naturally, it can only carry determining suffixes marked for plural number. The declension is regular. I give the EMek forms:

1PL.I	<i>aufa-ʔa</i>	(It belongs to) each of us (inclusive)
1PL.E	<i>aufa-mai</i>	(It belongs to) each of us (exclusive)
2PL	<i>aufa-mi, aufe-mi</i>	(It belongs to) each of you (plural)
3PL	<i>aufa-ʔi</i>	(It belongs to) each of them

⁷¹ A more accurate though perhaps too lurid term might be 'jealous possession'. Examples from van Goethem (n.d.) are: *a-mai ineina* 'our axes' (i.e. stone axes as opposed to European axes); and: *a-mai foʔama* 'our food' (i.e. indigenous vegetables as opposed to introduced varieties and dry goods). Other forms included in van Goethem's incomplete paradigm, of possible interest for purposes of reconstruction, are 2SG *a-mo* (for expected *a-mu*), 1PL.E *a-mai*, and 2PL *a-moi* (for expected *a-mi*).

⁷² The precise meaning is: 'This story is my property and only I can tell it'. It contrasts with *Eŋaina isonioni-na*, *isonioni-u* 'That story is about me'.

⁷³ The *a-* forms can still be heard in the speech of very old men. Most people nowadays who want to emphasise ownership say *Lau apu-u* (EMek) '(It is) my property'; or *Lau ʔifo-u e-u kapa* (EMek) '(It is) my own thing' (*ʔifo* is the emphatic pronoun). See §3.1.6 for some glossed examples.

⁷⁴ See Lichtenberk (1985) for a typological survey across Oceanic languages.

<i>oi go, oai goa, oi koa</i>	you true OR: truly you
<i>oi go, oai goà, oi koà</i>	your likeness OR: like you

I take *goà, koà* to be shortened forms of *goa-ŋa, koa-ŋa*, which also occur (the grave accent replaces the more usual macron for compensatory length in order to mark a difference in pronunciation: whereas *ā* is long, *à* is short and sharp). Judging from the mission texts (especially Desnoës) the transition from *koa* to *koà*, and the coincident semantic weakening from ‘just like’ to ‘a bit like’, is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Van Lamsweerde for example (editing the Desnoës dictionary circa 1940) frequently felt the need to correct *koa* (as it was written in early entries) to *koà*.

- b) *ioi-na* usually complements *goà, koà* in a redundant fashion: *goà ioi-na, koà ioi-na* ‘true likeness’.
- c) *kobo, ʔopo* is a typically verbal root meaning ‘measure, test, try’. Hence *i-kobo-ŋa, i-ʔopo-ŋa*, with passivising *I-* (§5.5 below), translates as ‘its being measured’ or ‘its measure’, and hence ‘its equal’ and ‘the same’. This term frequently reinforces *GO*, as in (WMek) *X goà i-kobo-ŋa*, (EMek) *X koà i-ʔopo-ŋa* ‘just like X’. NWMek uses the form *bi-kobo* (or *βi-kobo*).
- d) *i-koi* (NWMek, NMek), *i-kui* (WMek), *i-ʔoi* ‘other, different’.⁷⁸
- e) *ia* actually means ‘middle’ or ‘space between two points’, ‘space within a perimeter’.

This use of *ia* can be compared with the extended use of *ina, inae* ‘belly, stomach’ in much the same meaning: *vei inae-ŋa-ai* (EMek), ‘in the middle of the river (= water)’.

I here give some examples of these comparative pro-forms in use:

- | | | |
|------|--|----------|
| 2.79 | <i>Maa-mu umu koà lopia-ŋa.</i> | (EMek:D) |
| | eye-2SG charcoal likenes beautiful-3SG | |
| | Your eyes are beautiful, like charcoal. | |
| 2.80 | <i>Oai, imi babie-ŋa, ikobo-ŋa.</i> | (WMek) |
| | you child woman-3SG measure-3SG | |
| | You are the same as a little girl. | |
| 2.81 | <i>Oi, nao koa, ioi-mu.</i> | (EMek) |
| | you European likeness same-2SG | |
| | You are like a European. | |
| 2.82 | <i>Isa laa'i, au iʔoi-'i ke-mai.</i> | (EMek) |
| | they not man different-3PL 3PL-come | |
| | It was not them, different men came. | |
| 2.83 | <i>Ida aibaia, au ikui-tsi ge-mai.</i> | (NMek) |
| | they not man different-3PL 3PL-come | |
| | It was not them, different men came. | |
| 2.84 | <i>Ia e-lao, afu ioi-na e-lao.</i> | (EMek) |
| | elsewhere 3SG-go place different-3SG 3SG-go | |
| | He has gone elsewhere, he has gone somewhere else. | |

⁷⁸ This item may be cognate with Motu *i-dau* ‘different’ (Motu also has *dau-dau* ‘distant’). Roro *i-kau*, also apparently cognate, means ‘each, every’. The sound change is irregular.

and addressee). This system has, as we know, been inherited from Proto Papuan Tip (and, before that, from Proto Oceanic).⁷⁹ But the original set of morphemes, *i*, *e*, *u*, which can be reconstructed for Proto Central Papuan is only preserved intact in NWMek – the outlier. The terms of the traditional NWMek system are:

TABLE 21: THE NWMek SYSTEM OF PLACE DEIXIS

	here	there	yonder
GOAL:	<i>i-na</i>	<i>e-na</i>	<i>u-na</i>
LOCATION:	<i>i-na-i</i>	<i>e-na-i</i>	<i>u-na-i</i>

This ternary system, also preserved in closely related languages like Lala and Motu, has apparently disappeared from the immediately neighbouring Roro and Kuni, and it was not without some persistence that I was able to elicit it from younger informants in the NWMek area, where it also seems to be on the way out (I knew of its existence thanks to Brown 1955).

There are arguments one might make for the prepositional and indeed verbal status of *i*-, *e*-, and *u*- (as also for the possessive particle *E*-, §2.2.1.4 above). But this will not be pursued here. The final NWMek morpheme *-i* corresponds with *-e* in the other dialects, and is thus perhaps cognate with the verbal aspect marker *-e* (all dialects) which signifies continuity of state/location (see §4.3.1.4.1 below).

Meanwhile, the suppletive system of place deictics in the other three Mekeo dialects can be illustrated using the NMek forms:

TABLE 22: SUPPLETIVE SYSTEMS OF PLACE DEIXIS

	here	there	yonder
GOAL:	<i>i-na</i>	<i>(e-)ŋa</i>	<i>ŋa-ke-ŋa</i>
LOCATION:	<i>i-na-e</i>	<i>(e-)ŋa-e</i>	<i>ŋa-ke-ŋa-e</i> ⁸⁰

The optional initial morpheme *e* in the forms for ‘there’ was not recorded by the early missionaries and does not appear in Desnoës, but my own EMek informants both pronounced it (when speaking deliberately) and wrote it (as when transcribing taped narratives). It is, however, optional. There is an impression that the shortened forms are somehow more appropriate to interactional contexts, while the forms with *e*- are found more in narrative texts. This needs to be checked statistically. In the following section I give the derived demonstrative forms of the place deictics in full (i.e. with the *e*-). In in-text examples, however, whichever form was actually used by the informant is reproduced to illustrate the range of variants.

The above items are often described as adverbials but, while they often *function as* adverbials, they are in fact, semantically speaking, pronouns of place (shorthand formulae for ‘this place’, ‘that place’, etc.; or standing in for place names). In this grammar I conflate,

⁷⁹ Ross (1988:100) notes that “there is sufficient evidence in WM [Western Melanesian] Oceanic languages to propose that POC had at least three demonstratives/spatial deictics, and that we can reconstruct **e/*ne* ‘near speaker’, **a/*na* ‘near addressee’, and **o/*no* ‘distant from both speaker and addressee’”.

⁸⁰ The terms for ‘yonder’ in EMek have *ʔ* for */k/*.

on formal and functional grounds, adverbial function with the oblique case role (realising ‘circumstantial participants’), both ordinarily signalled by the same suffix: *-AI*.⁸¹ For example, just as *paŋua*, EMek ‘village’, is typically nominal in use and hence a ‘noun’, *paŋuai* (< *paŋua-ai*), ‘in/from the village’, can be analysed either as an oblique nominal or as an adverbial phrase.

The base forms of the place deictics can function as the goals of movement verbs. They can thus function as nominal predicates. They also function as topics. They can therefore be analysed, and glossed, as demonstrative pronouns in these (and other) functions. To give another example, *ŋa* can be taken to mean either ‘there’ or ‘that’, according to the situation of use (see §2.2.2.2 below for some examples). (It *can* also mean ‘thus’, but I interpret this as one of its many ‘extended’ uses.)

2.2.2.2 SYSTEMS OF DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS

The demonstrative pronouns can all, as we just saw, be located at one of three points along a proximal–distal axis of distance from the speaker (and, to a lesser extent, the addressee). But they also possess a number of variously elaborated forms that cannot so simply be accounted for.

The simplest deictic deictic of all, and one shared by all four dialects, is the presentative particle: *ŋa!*⁸² *Ŋa!* can mean ‘Look at that!’, ‘That’s it!’ or ‘That’s the way!’. The proximal–distal distinctions are neutralised with this generalised deictic (a particle rather than a pronoun), possibly because of its empathetic overtones (see Lyons 1977:677; and Levinson 1983:81). The frequency of *ŋa* in spoken discourse is remarkable. It has discourse-pragmatic functions, discussed in §7.4.3 below, but it is essentially a gestural deictic anchored in the here-and-now.⁸³

The basic system can be displayed as follows:

TABLE 23: BASIC SYSTEMS OF DEMONSTRATIVE DEICTICS

Location	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
here	<i>i-ke</i>	<i>namo</i>	<i>namo</i>	<i>i-na</i>
there	<i>e-ke</i>	<i>na-ba/e-ŋa</i>	<i>e-ŋa</i>	<i>e-ŋa</i>
yonder	<i>u-ke</i>	<i>e-ŋa-ke-ŋa-ina</i>	<i>e-ŋa-ke-ŋa-i-na</i>	<i>e-ŋa-?e-ŋa-i-na</i>

Note that WMek *naba* (*na-ba?*) is in competition with *e-ŋa* and may represent an innovation.⁸⁴ Some of these short or ‘basic’ demonstratives appear with marked stress on the final syllable in what seems to be a presentational function: *namò!*, *nabà!*, *i-kè!*, *e-kè!*, *u-kè!* In this function they compete with *ŋa!* which is, as we saw, common to all four dialects. *Ŋa* can occur in combination with the demonstrative pronouns, in which case it reveals itself for what it perhaps *essentially* is, a topic marker:

⁸¹ One could speculate that *ina-e*, *e-ŋa-e* are reinterpreted as *ina-ai*, *eŋa-ai*.

⁸² I take the term ‘presentative’ from Anderson and Keenan (1985:279). Examples they give are the French *voici-voilà* and the Latin *ecce*.

⁸³ This system corresponds to what Fillmore has called the “symbolic” as opposed to the “gestural” use of deictics (Fillmore 1971).

⁸⁴ I have a general impression that *naba* predominates in short elicited texts, while *eŋa/eŋaia* predominate in unmonitored discourse.

- 2.88 *Eke ŋa maini!* (NWMek)
 that TOP nothing
 That? (That's) nothing!

Some of the short forms illustrated above are considerably less common in conversational Mekeo than the following, longer variants:

TABLE 24: LONG FORMS OF DEMONSTRATIVE DEICTICS

Location	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
here	<i>i-ke-ŋa</i>	<i>i-na-i-a</i>	<i>i-na-e-a</i>	<i>i-na-i-na</i>
there	<i>e-ke-ŋa</i>	<i>(e-)ŋa-i-a</i>	<i>(e-)ŋa-e-a</i>	<i>(e-)ŋa-i-na</i>

Apart from NWMek *uke-ŋa*, there are no variants for 'yonder'. The above forms of the demonstratives are subject to a certain amount of phonological variation in as much as we frequently hear EMek *ina?ina* and *eŋa?ina* (i.e. with intrusive [?];⁸⁵ perhaps a form of hypercorrection); and in WMek and NMek medial /-i-/ and /-e-/ intervary rather freely, so that one can scarcely identify a dominant, overall variant for either dialect (however, I postulate an underlying aspectual /-e-/ signifying continuity of state/location; see previous section). Note that the NWMek forms can easily be confused by a hearer with the kind of topicalised demonstratives illustrated in example 2.88 above. In NWMek the short forms in fact predominate in conversation.

Further variants of the demonstrative pronouns can be accounted for only in terms of the kinds of speech acts they perform. They seem to correspond fairly closely, as to illocutionary functions, to the two French expressions: *c'est ça!* and *cela justement*. These functions will be labelled the recognitive (expressing sudden pleased 'recognition') and the confirmative (confirming agreement upon the identification of some idea or object). The systems are:

TABLE 25: RECOGNITIVE AND CONFIRMATIVE DEICTICS

Proximal	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
recognitive	<i>i-ke-mu</i>	<i>na-mò</i>	<i>na-mò</i>	<i>i-na-mò,</i> <i>i-na-mò-?e</i>
confirmative	<i>i-ka-ke</i>	<i>i-na-i-a-ke</i>	<i>i-na-e-a-ke</i>	<i>i-na-mo-?e</i>

Distal	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
recognitive	<i>e-ke-mu</i>	<i>na-bà</i>	<i>na-bà</i>	<i>e-ŋa-mo,</i> <i>e-ŋa-mo-?e</i>
confirmative	<i>e-ka-ke</i>	<i>ŋa-i-a-ke,</i> <i>naba-i-a-ke</i>	<i>e-ŋa-e-a-ke</i>	<i>e-ŋa-mo-?e</i>

⁸⁵ Lala, a closely related neighbouring language (to EMek), has undergone a wide-ranging process of glottal stop intrusion. While the susceptible environments are trivially specifiable (like Mekeo, Lala is a language with V and CV syllable structures, so /_V and /V_V are the only phonological conditions one can state), it is impossible either to predict which lexical items will be affected or to specify morphological conditions.

The common morpheme *mo* (~*mu*) occurs as a particle that signifies 'just', or 'only'. *Moʔe* (NMek, WMek *moke*) occurs in isolation with the meanings: 'That's enough!', 'Stop!'. *Ke, ʔe*, also occurs in isolation as an exclamation signifying admiration or surprise: *Cor!*

All of these words can appear before or after rankshift has applied: that is to say, they can appear as embedded predicates or as attributes/modifiers. And they can appear before or after the co-referential class noun, depending on the identificational structure of the predication. These possibilities are illustrated in §3.1.1 and §3.2.1.

2.2.2.3 RELATIVE NOUNS OR 'INSTANTIATORS'

This is a class of 'general' or superordinate nouns that can, by right-dislocation, function as the structural heads of relativised predications (I have already listed the most important of these in §2.1.2.1.3 above). For example, the simple declarative predication of example 2.89 yields the instantiated noun *bauŋa* of 2.90:

2.89 *Iji Biiŋa-ai a-aŋu.* (WMek)
 I Piunga-OBL 1SG-sit/live
 I live in Piunga.

2.90 *Iji a-aŋu bauŋa-ŋa Biiŋa.* (WMek)
 I 1SG-sit/live village -3SG Piunga
 The village where I live (is) Piunga.

The *-ŋa* in *bauŋa-ŋa* is of course⁸⁶ a determining suffix: it is indexed here for 'I live', treating this first person singular 'verb' just like a third person singular nominal. In a word-for-word translation this would be: 'I live, its village'. 'Village' is a superordinate term, a relatively abstract lexical substitute for a concrete village name (such as Piunga).⁸⁷ It instantiates something, without naming it. (Note that relative predications can be formed without any nominal head whatsoever; see examples in §8.3.1.3 below.)

In as much as predications such as the above are endocentric, the head noun in itself functions as the topic of the embedding predication.⁸⁸ But this is a purely structural function that is not reflected in any form of prosodic or discourse prominence. Instantiators ordinarily receive no stress, which is divided between the predicate-focus of the embedded predication

⁸⁶ This *ŋa* is in fact a key element in the grammars of all the West Central Papuan languages and dialects; its precise meaning/use has been a matter of much controversy. Dixon (1979, fn.13) summarises the Taylor's data on Motu *na* (which I take to be cognate with Mekeo *ŋa*):

The particle *na*, said by Capell to mark S function, has complex behaviour which is far from being fully understood – it can be used as the copula in verbless sentences; it may occur after an S NP; and it is occasionally found after an O NP, most commonly when the word order is OAV rather than the more usual AOV. In addition, *na* is sometimes encountered after an A NP, with the sequence *ese na* being attested. The use of *na* characterizes the western dialect; it is used much less in eastern Motu.

Kuni *na* is used to mark a presupposed participant or a preconditional participant or predication. See §8.2.3 on preconditions.

⁸⁷ This fits precisely Schachter's definition of a relative clause as "noun-like or naming, expression", i.e. an expression that 'equates with' some actual or potential name (cf. Schachter 1973:43).

⁸⁸ It is also, according to many analyses, the topic (as well as the head) of the embedded clause. This is borne out for Mekeo by the following freely alternative wording for example 2.90:

bauŋa, iji a-aŋu au-ŋa, Biiŋa (WMek)
 village I sit/live one-3SG Piunga

See Foley and Van Valin (1984:143-144); and compare Kuno (1973) on Japanese syntax.

(secondary stress, low-rising intonation) and the predicate-focus of the embedding predication (primary stress, falling intonation).

Membership in this class, which is *theoretically* open but in practice virtually closed, depends largely on a word's degree of generality (or abstraction). Otherwise said, right-dislocation can only operate on lexical items of a given degree of generality (abstraction).⁸⁹ This is a fact that has been overlooked by some linguists (e.g. Taylor) who have assumed on the basis of restricted evidence that this construction is freely available and constitutes the standard, or the only relativisation strategy in Mekeo (and, for example, Motu). Examples of words that do undergo rightward dislocation to function as relative pronouns are *au* 'man', *babie, papie* 'woman'; *imi, imoi* 'child'; *auke, amu?e* 'dog', for some reason; *bauŋa, paŋua* 'village'; *gina, kina* 'day; time'; and so on.

Au 'person, one', simultaneously belongs to what must be seen as a separate group of high-level superordinate nouns. These nominals have specialised grammatical functions. They can refer back to and relativise an entire verbal predication; that is to say they subordinate it; at the same time they help to 'adverbialise' it (to make it *oblique*) by acting as carriers for the oblique case-marking suffix *-ai*. The simplest of these superordinate nouns or 'instantiators' are *apu, afu* 'place, place where' (also *aŋu* 'sit, seat, place'), and *aiama, aidama, aizama, aisama* 'time, time when'. As previously noted, these words correspond to Halliday and Hasan's (1976:280-281) "general nouns".

There is also a small set of specialised *instantiators* (that have been mentioned once already in §2.1.2.1.3 and that will receive detailed treatment in §8.3.2 *passim*) that can also function to relativise and adverbialise an entire predication. They can be fairly exhaustively listed as follows:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a) <i>buo, puo</i> | cause, purpose, reason |
| b) <i>gai, kai</i> | direction, reason, purpose, cause |
| c) <i>pau, fau</i> | sake, regard, cause |
| d) <i>ou</i> | cause |
| e) <i>ŋani</i> | spite, despite |

It is unclear whether or not to include the following item here:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------|
| f) <i>go, goa, koa</i> | likeness |
|------------------------|----------|

These function as predicates of nominal predications but also, with the addition of the suffix *-AI*, as *logically subordinating conjunctions*. The Mekeo conjunctions are all, as the reader may have gathered, predication-enclitic.

Failing the availability of a suitable item for right-displacement, Mekeo resorts to what we may call the 'default' instantiator: *auŋa* (< *au-ŋa*; frequently heard as 'ŋa). *Au* is an homophonous item that conflates the meanings of 'man/person', 'tree/stick' and 'thing'. *Au-ŋa* is best translated here as 'its one' or 'the one'. It is thus determinate and definite and, as structural head of the predication it creates, it makes the whole string so. Note that in the rare examples with predicative *auŋa* in our data, i.e. before rankshift has applied, the meaning must be translated as '(That) is its/the one', or simply 'That's right!'. That is, it predicates its antecedent.

⁸⁹ What cognitive psychologists like Hunn and Rosch call 'superordinate' or 'non-basic' categories (cf. Lakoff 1987:46-47).

Rankshifted *auŋa* functions as a post-clitic relativising particle. It relativises by means of instantiating the preceding string (in a sense nominalising it) or some part of it. It may or may not ‘agree’ with one or another constituent of the antecedent, relativised predication; that is, it singles some antecedent out as an ‘instance’ – ‘the “one” that is X’. It need not operate on a predication; it can predicate and thence instantiate (and relativise) any nominal topic. For example:

- 2.91 *Babie au-ŋa, e-mai.* (WMek)
 woman one-3SG 3SG-come
 The woman (=the one who is the woman) came.

Auŋa represents the simplest means of making any nominal definite. Definite nominals in Mekeo thus often have the following underlying structure: ‘X its one’ or ‘The one who/which is X’. But *auŋa* also functions to topicalise its antecedent (sometimes redundantly, in which case it adds emphasis); and it can therefore appear following personal pronouns (which are inherently definite):

- 2.92 *Isa au-ŋa, e-mai.* (EMek)
 s/he one-3SG 3SG-come
 Her/him (= As for her/him), s/he came.

Auŋa is in a sense the topic of both predications, while it is clearly the head of the rankshifted/embedded one.

2.2.3 QUANTIFICATION

In this grammar I treat numerals as one kind of quantifier. Numerals are distinct from the other quantifiers solely by virtue of their being exact, precise or definite. I give the counting systems collected for all four dialects in the first sub-section below, and deal with the at least equally important imprecise quantifiers in the second. In the third sub-section I describe the class of limiting expressions.

2.2.3.1 DEFINITE QUANTIFIERS: NUMERALS

The Mekeo counting system is based on the units five and ten. The cardinal numbers 1 to 5 and the number 10 are simple, or monomorphemic roots, recognisably descended from the Proto Oceanic numerals. From 6 to 9 and above 10 counting is performed by means of compound words. The ordinal numbers (after first, which is a normal nominal/verbal root) are expressed by way of transforming the cardinal numbers into causative/intransitive verbs with *BA-*, and then nominalising these by means of the prefix *I-*.

I here present all the numerals and numeral expressions I have managed to collect for each of the four dialects. NWMek1 is the system collected by Brown (1955); while NWMek2 represents data I collected myself. Gaps in the systems of ordinal numbers for dialects apart from EMek indicate that I did not check for these in every case; they are, moreover, infrequently used except for *aiai-na*, *uai-na*, which has (at least) the meanings ‘first, former, ancient, old, native, true’.

TABLE 26: THE MEKEO NUMERALS

No.	NWMek1	NWMek2	WMek	NMek	EMek
1	<i>aipinamo</i>	<i>aipinamu</i>	<i>alaka,</i> <i>alaja</i>	<i>akaonjamo</i>	<i>aja(?)o(mo)</i>
2	<i>iajuo,</i> <i>aujuo</i>	<i>iajopu,</i> <i>aujuo</i>	<i>autsina</i>	<i>autsina</i>	<i>ɲua, auni,</i> <i>auni-ʔi</i>
3	<i>kakapuŋa</i>	<i>kokapuŋa</i>	<i>oido</i>	<i>oizo</i>	<i>oiso</i>
4	<i>iajuo-iajuo</i>	<i>iajo-iajo</i>	<i>bani</i>	<i>bani</i>	<i>pani</i>
5	<i>imabia</i> <i>e-pupu</i>	<i>ima</i>	<i>ima</i>	<i>ima</i>	<i>ima</i>
6		<i>ima aipinamu</i>	<i>ima ɲea</i>	<i>ima ɲea</i>	<i>ima ɲea</i> <i>(ajaʔomo)</i>
7		<i>ima iajopu</i>	<i>ima-ɲea</i> <i>autsina</i>	<i>ima-ɲea</i> <i>autsina</i>	<i>ima-ɲea ɲua</i>
8		<i>ima kokapuŋa</i>	<i>ima-ɲea oido</i>	<i>ima-ɲea oizo</i>	<i>ima-ɲea oiso</i>
9		<i>ima iajo-iajo</i>	<i>ima-ɲea bani</i>	<i>ima-ɲea bani</i>	<i>ima-ɲea pani</i>
10		<i>ima abia</i> <i>abia-pu</i>	<i>okaŋa</i>	<i>oukaŋa</i>	<i>ouʔaŋa</i>
11		<i>ima abia</i> <i>abia-pu</i> <i>aipinamu</i>	<i>okaŋa alaka</i> <i>ɲuaŋai alaka</i>	<i>oukaŋa</i> <i>ɲuaŋai</i> <i>akaonjamo</i>	<i>ouʔaŋa ɲea</i> <i>ajaʔomo</i>
12					
20		<i>ima iajo</i> <i>au iajo</i>	<i>okaŋa</i> <i>autsina</i>	<i>oukaŋa</i> <i>autsina</i>	<i>ouʔaŋa ɲua</i>
100			<i>tsinapu</i>	<i>tsinafu</i>	<i>tsinafu</i>
1000					
(archaic)					
1	<i>maifo</i>				
(archaic)					
2	<i>ainuʔi</i>				
(archaic)					
3	<i>oio, oi-oi</i>				

Tsinafu/tsinapu is a Roro loan according to Van Lamsweerde (1940) who notes the following EMek expressions for higher numbers:

2.93 *ouʔaŋa ke ouʔaŋa ke...*⁹⁰
 ten and ten and....

⁹⁰ *Ouʔa-ɲa* seems to have originally meant 'all'. *ɲea* means 'be absent, lost' i.e. 'forget it'. The inflected EMek form for 'two' *auni-* may derive from *au-ɲua* 'thing-two'.

- 2.94 *ouʔa-ŋa e-lao-lao...*
 ten 3SG-go-RED
- 2.95 *ouʔa-ŋa e-maʔo apala...*
 ten many very

Regarding NWMek, Brown (1955:5) notes that “Traditionally only numbers one to five were in use, the fingers being used to demonstrate meaning. Thus the closed fist would indicate ‘five’, and for higher numbers the fingers of the other hand. If these did not suffice, toes would be enlisted. English numerals are now in general use.”

It might, incidentally, be proposed that NWMek *iaŋuo* ‘two’ derives from an earlier (or borrowed) **i-βa-ŋua*.

2.2.3.2 ORDINAL EXPRESSIONS

These were, it appears, originally employed to count or sequence days, or rather *sleeps* (‘sleep’ is *pei, pi, feu, fev*). A day, when counted, is known as a ‘sleep’ in Mekeo. A major function of the ordinal numbers, for EMek at least, was as day names, or rather *sleep names*. *Feu akā* (‘sleep name.3SG’) is how the ordinals were referred to (Van Lamsweerde 1940). Although I confirmed knowledge of the forms given here for EMek, I did not systematically check for ordinal numbers in other dialects.

TABLE 27: SOME MEKEO ORDINALS

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
first, original	<i>uei-na/ui-na</i>	<i>uai-na</i>	<i>uvai-na</i>	<i>ufai-na</i>
second				<i>i-pa-ŋua</i>
third				<i>i-pa-oi-na</i>
fourth				<i>i-pa-pani-na</i>
fifth				<i>i-pa-ima-ŋa-ai</i>

It seems that **uai-na* originally meant ‘original, aboriginal’ and hence ‘first, best’. The NMek and EMek forms have intrusive [v] and [f] respectively.

Lean (1986:20) notes that in Mekeo “ordinals are constructed by placing *aunga* before the cardinal”. That seems somewhat inaccurately stated. *Au-ŋa ŋua* (thing-3SG two) means literally ‘its thing number two’, and so on. It is a method of counting things, but it may very well be on its way to becoming the standard colloquial representation of ordinals, replacing the inherited forms with *I-BA-* (EMek *i-pa-ŋua* ‘second’, *i-pa-oi-na* ‘third’, *i-pa-pani-na* ‘fourth’, *i-pa-ima-ŋa-ai* ‘fifth’, based on *ŋua* ‘two’, **oi* ‘three’, *pani* ‘four’ and *ima* ‘five’), which were after all chiefly used to reckon days and which have been displaced in that function by the English day names.

Incidentally, Van Lamsweerde (1940) says that periphrastic ordinals were formed by putting *auna* after the cardinal numbers; viz:

[Item] *ŋua, auna*

This is quite compatible with the system given by Lean. It is another way of ordering items by labelling them: item 1, item 2, item 3, and so on. (*Auna* also means ‘(This is) the one’.)

2.2.3.3 INDEFINITE QUANTIFIERS

The imprecise or indefinite quantifiers function exactly like any other nominals. They can also be described as non-specific deictics (cf. Halliday 1985:161-162). They may appear as topic or predicate, and the phrase in which they appear may undergo rankshift (i.e. it may appear embedded in another predication). Some, but not others, may be inflected to show plural number (i.e. they may carry the plural marker *-ki/-kia*, *-tsi*, *-ʔi*). Many quantifier bases may and frequently do appear as verbs.

The most frequently used quantifiers are presented here in the form of a cross-dialectal table. The modification and elaboration, and the negative and ignorative forms of these are discussed below.

TABLE 28: INDEFINITE QUANTIFIERS

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
some, a little	<i>kino-ŋa-mu</i> , <i>apa-ŋa-mu</i> , <i>iā</i>	<i>tsilo-ŋa-mo</i> , <i>apa-ŋa-mo</i> , <i>idā</i>	<i>tsilo-ŋa-mo</i> , <i>afa-ka-ŋa-mo</i> , <i>izā</i>	<i>afa-ʔa-ŋa-mo</i> , <i>afa-ŋa-mo</i> , <i>isā</i>
a drop		<i>kala-tsino-mo</i>	<i>kala-tsino-mo</i>	
a few	<i>amini-aminia-mu</i> , <i>oio ia-kia</i>	<i>oido</i> , <i>ida-tsi</i>	<i>oizo</i> , <i>iza-tsi</i>	<i>oiso</i> , <i>isa-ʔi</i>
much, many, all	<i>mako</i> , <i>mako-kia</i>	<i>mako</i> , <i>mako-tsi</i>	<i>mako</i> , <i>mako-tsi</i>	<i>maʔo</i> , <i>maʔo-i*</i>
many	<i>βoka</i>	<i>boka</i>	<i>poka</i>	<i>poka</i>
how much, how many	<i>βiga</i>	<i>biga</i>	<i>pika</i>	<i>pika</i>
each, every	<i>aupa</i>	<i>aupa</i>	<i>aufa</i>	<i>aufa</i>
other half/side	<i>aβie</i>	<i>abie</i>	<i>apie</i>	<i>apie</i>
different one	<i>ikūi-na</i>	<i>ikoī-na</i>	<i>ikōi-na</i>	<i>iʔōi-na</i>
similar one	<i>ioi-na</i>	<i>ioi-na</i>	<i>ioi-na</i>	<i>ioi-na</i>

The form *maʔo-i* is for an expected *maʔo-ʔi*. The glottal stop is usually dropped from the EMek plural marker. If one conflates the fullest forms for the meaning 'one' from the various dialects one gets the following equation:

$$\begin{array}{ll} alaka > ala-ka-o-ŋa-mo & \text{(WMek, NMek)} \\ aŋa'o > aŋa-ʔao-ŋa-mo & \text{(EMek)} \end{array}$$

This, plus the evidence of Motu *tamo-na* 'one', leads me to reconstruct **kamo-na-mo* for Pre Mekeo (Proto WCP) 'one'. The loss of /m/ is not unusual.

Many of the quantifiers are most frequently met with as oblique or circumstantial nominals marked with *-ai*. *Mako-ai* and *mako-ki-ai*, *mako-tsi-ai*, *maʔo-i-ai* function adverbially to mean 'in large numbers'. However, *mako-ki-ai*, *mako-tsi-ai*, *maʔo-i-ai* can also mean 'all (of them)', in which case it functions as a pronominal. *Mako*, *maʔo* in fact can take the other plural personal suffixes to form pronominals meaning 'all of us' (inclusive), 'all of us' (exclusive), and 'all of you'.

The non-referential or 'ignorative' concepts 'something' and 'someone' are expressed by means of the 'general nouns' *gaba*, *kapa*, and *gai*, *kai* plus the numeral 'one': NWMek *gaba aminia*, WMek *gaba alaka*, NMek *gaba alaka*, EMek *kapa aŋaʔo*, 'something'; NWMek *gai aminia*, WMek *kai alaka*, NMek *kai alaka*, EMek *kai aŋaʔo*, 'someone'. The other classifier nouns mentioned in §2.1.2.1.3 above also combine with the numerals to express meanings such as 'somewhere' and 'sometime'.

BIGA 'some' is mostly found in questions. However, I hesitate to state that this is its only function. It does not occur with a negative operator, whereas all the others do. Nearly all of the above quantifiers can be followed by the existential negator *maini*, *aibaia*, *laai*, to give 'nothing', 'nobody'. *BOKA* 'some, plenty' is an exception as it takes the negative proclitic *a'i*, *aai* (both for *aʔi*): *a'i boka-ŋa*, *ai poka-ŋa*, *aai poka-ŋa* 'not many'.

Some illustrations of the above items in use are given in §3.2.2 below.

2.2.3.4 LIMITERS

Limiters are items that restrict or qualify or, sometimes, express evaluative comment upon the number or quantity of participants in a process or event. Discourse comment markers will be dealt with in §2.4.1 and 6.3 passim below; but *MO* and *BAIA* have a place both here and there. Limiters as such cannot function as predicates.

The chief limiters are the following:

<i>mu</i> , <i>mo</i>	just, only, alone, enough
<i>gugu</i> , <i>po</i> , <i>pou</i> , <i>fou</i>	together (<i>gugu</i> is NWMek only)
<i>iaga</i> , <i>idawa</i> , <i>izawa</i> , <i>isava</i>	also, and (<i>iaga</i> is NWMek only)
<i>gaia~gaia-ke</i>	also, too (WMek, NMek)
<i>baia</i> , <i>baida</i> , <i>paiza</i> , <i>paisa</i>	merely, only, purely, certainly

- MO* 'just, only'
- 2.96 *Ia-mu a-ia-n-i-a.* (NWMek)
s/he-just 1SG-see-TH-TR-3SG
I saw only her/him.
- POU* 'together with'
- 2.97 *Ida ina-tsi po ge-mai.* (WMek)
they mother-3PL together 3PL-come
They and their mother (have) come together.
- 2.98 *Ida inā po ge-mai.* (WMek)
s/he mother-3SG together 3PL-come
S/he and her/his mother (have) come together.
- GUGU, IAVA* 'also'
- 2.99 *Lau isava bia fa-inu-a.* (EMek)
I also beer OBLG.1SG-drink-3SG
I want to drink beer too.

GAIA, GAIA-KE (WMek, NMek) means 'also, too, as well'.

- 2.100 *Iji gaia-ke an-a-ao.* (WMek)
 I also FUT-1SG-go
 I will go too.

BAIA 'merely, simply, only, precisely, definitely'

- 2.101 *ima baia* (NWMek)
 five only
 only five (OR: definitely five)

2.2.4 TIME DEIXIS

Time deictics, which usually function adverbially or as constituents of adverbial predications, are nonetheless listed here as independent nominals or nominal pro-forms, on a par with explicitly named temporal benchmarks like the English names for the days, the months, and so on. They thus parallel the place deictics in the overall scheme of this grammar; indeed many of the morphemes listed under Place Deixis (§2.2.2) can also be used to index time demonstratively: 'there' and 'then' are not all that different in Mekeo. Note that the 'adverbial' uses just mentioned cannot be separated out from oblique nominal functions in this grammar, where 'now' is analysed as 'at this time', and 'then' as 'at that time'.

2.2.4.1 DEFINITE TIME REFERENCE

Purely deictic time reference is generally accomplished by means of the compound expression *ŋa-e-gai*, *ŋa-e-kai*, meaning 'then', most commonly found in a narrative context ('and then...').⁹¹ This expression may in fact represent a reanalysis of *ŋaiga*, *ŋaigai* (< *ŋa-aiga-ai*), found in the northern and western dialects only, which was then borrowed back into these as *ŋae-gai* or *ŋai-gai*. More abstractly, perhaps, one can say: *ŋa aia-ma*,⁹² 'at that time' (*aia-ma* is modern NWMek; compare WMek *aida-ma*, NMek *aiza-ma*, EMek *aisa-ma*; this item can only be glossed as 'time', although Van Lamsweerde cautions that its actual *usage* has been contaminated by the influence of European languages). We also have EMek *aisa-ŋ-ai* (for *aia-ŋ-ai*) and *aisa-ma-ŋ-ai*, both meaning 'at the time that/when; during, while'. All these forms suggest Proto Mekeo **aia* 'time'.

Mekeo time is measured traditionally in terms of 'sleeps' or 'dawns' (= days), 'moons' (= lunar months) and the annual flowerings of a particular rush or reed (= years). Nowadays the tendency is to speak of days as 'suns'. The main terms are:

⁹¹ Desnoës (1933) has *ŋa²e-kai*, but tokens from the other dialects militate against this; the [ʔ] is no doubt intrusive.

⁹² Compare Roro *aita*, Lala *a²ida*, Kuni *aidai* (*aida-ai*), *aigai* (*aiga-ai*), 'when'. Desnoës has EMek *aika* 'when?', but Van Lamsweerde notes that from his own experience it was not current (1930s). The final *-ma* is probably the uncertainty particle *ma*, functioning as an interrogative marker.

TABLE 29: TERMS FOR TIME QUANTA

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
sun, day	<i>gina</i>	<i>jina</i>	<i>tsina</i>	<i>kina</i>
sleep	<i>pei</i>	<i>pi</i>	<i>feu, few</i>	<i>feu, few</i>
dawn	<i>ɲani</i>	<i>ɲani</i>	<i>ɲani</i>	<i>ɲani</i>
moon, month	<i>ɲaoa</i>	<i>ɲaoa</i>	<i>ɲawa/ɲava</i>	<i>ɲava</i>
reed, year	<i>kinibo</i>	<i>jinibo</i>	<i>tsinipo</i>	<i>'inipo</i>

Nowadays *hours* and *clock-time* are culturally and linguistically recognised. *Gina, jina* etc. now means 'sun, day, *time*'. 'Timepiece' (clock or watch) is *gina-maɲa, jina-maɲa, tsina-maɲa, kina-maɲa* (literally, perhaps, 'day-face' or 'time-face'). The interrogative pro-form *biga, pika* is employed to ask the time:

- 2.102 *Jina-ma-ɲa biga?* (WMek)
 day-face-3SG how.many
 What time is it?

Gina-maɲa can thus be taken to mean 'time-piece, clock-time, hour(s)', depending on the context. The only fraction of an hour that is normally discussed is 'half': *abie, apie* (original meaning: 'opposite, other side'). For smaller fractions, and for minutes and seconds, resort is had to English loan words.

The twenty-four hour day subdivides traditionally into a number of somewhat imprecisely defined phases, which are:

TABLE 30: TIMES OF THE DAY

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
dawn	<i>kapa</i>	<i>kapa</i>	<i>kafa</i>	<i>?afa</i>
(early) morning	<i>ɲabimu</i>	<i>kamaɲai</i>	<i>kamaɲai</i>	<i>?amaɲai</i>
broad daylight	<i>gina paka</i>	<i>jina paka</i>	<i>tsina faka</i>	<i>kina fa?a</i>
midday, noon	<i>?</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>atsiawa</i>	<i>atsiava</i>
evening	<i>ɲabi-ɲabi</i>	<i>ɲabi-ɲabi</i>	<i>ɲabi-ɲabi</i>	<i>ɲapi-ɲapi</i>
the night, night-time	<i>ɲabi</i>	<i>ɲabi</i>	<i>ɲabi</i>	<i>ɲapi</i>

Kamaɲai, ?amaɲai (< *kama-ɲa-ai, ?ama-ɲa-ai*), is an adverbial/oblique nominal that is used for 'morning'; its literal meaning might be best given as 'in the cold of it'. NWMek *ɲabimu* is probably *ɲabi* ('night') + *mo/mu* ('virtually < just'). The common greeting nowadays translates as 'Good morning' and may be a loan translation: *ɲabimu belo, kamaɲai belo, kamaɲai velo, ?amaɲai felò*.

EMek possesses a special word for 'noon' or 'midday': *atsiava*. I did not collect this for the western dialects, although it is present in NMek. All dialects have the typically verbal root

ɲani ‘become day’, or perhaps better ‘become the next day’; we will meet this useful root again below.

In the Mekeo, the year subdivides naturally into a dry season and a wet season, plus two distinct transitional seasons. The dry season – of which the little blue Kingfishers coming upriver from the sea are the heralds – is the season of abundance; it is called by the same term as is used for the middle part of the day (*gina paka*, etc.). *Abaɲa*, *afaɲa*, the name of another reed (or rush) gives its name to the typically overcast and oppressive season that precedes the dry. The lunar months or ‘moons’ – *puia*, *fua* in archaic and poetic usage, but more usually *ɲawa*, *ɲava* – were not named.

The days of the week had of course no traditional names (the weekly cycle being an invention of the ancient Babylonians) but with the coming of Christianity, and the institution of Sunday Mass, Sunday came to be known as *ivi kina* ‘song day’ (the church was *ivi eʔā* ‘song house.its’). Apart from this locution the English day names are in common use. *Ivi* (*iβi*, *ibi* in the west) has moreover come to be used for ‘week’: the WMek forms *ɲo-ka ibi* (front-our week) and *ape-ka ibi* (back-our week) mean ‘next week’ and ‘last week’ respectively.

The Mekeo segment the short-term time-line into the following named categories (my data for EMek is fuller than for the other dialects):

TABLE 31: TIME ADVERBIALS

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
in 4 days’ time				<i>u-ɲa-e-ɲani</i>
in 3 days’ time		<i>gege ɲani</i>	<i>ɲa-e-ɲani</i>	<i>(e-)ɲa-e-ɲani</i>
in 2 days’ time	<i>e-ɲani</i>	<i>ɲani</i>	<i>ɲani</i>	<i>(e-)ɲani</i>
tomorrow’	<i>wai</i>	<i>apogo</i>	<i>afoko</i>	<i>favoko</i>
today	<i>bai-gina</i>	<i>bai-jina</i>	<i>pau-tsina</i>	<i>pau-kina</i>
yesterday	<i>wai</i>	<i>aɲani</i>	<i>aɲani/vai</i>	<i>vai/fai</i>
2 days ago	<i>bati</i>	<i>batsi-ai</i>	<i>patsi</i>	<i>paʔe, paʔe-ai</i>
3 days ago		<i>batsi-ai kaua</i>	<i>ɲa-patsi-ai</i>	<i>e-ɲa-paʔe-n-ai</i>
4 days ago				<i>u-ɲa-paʔe-n-ai</i>

We can recognise the verbal root *ɲani* in terms for ‘yesterday’ (and compare Roro *wa-rani*, Kuni *wa-lani*, both meaning ‘yesterday’) and for times later than ‘tomorrow’. The Roro and Kuni items show that the first syllable in Mekeo is not simply a modification of the verbal subject marker *e-* (as in the EMek *e-ɲani* ‘the next day dawned’). NWMek also has the word *ikiva* ‘now’ (see Table 30).

Of particular interest is the way the NWMek system conflates two kinds of remoteness from the Now of the utterance situation. Whether this remoteness would be, in our terminology, categorisable as distance in past time or in future time is immaterial in this system. A similar system operates in Kuni, and may well represent the ancestral West Central Papuan system of time reference. Note that EMek resorts to the *e~u* contrast for the expression of both ‘kinds of distance’ from the present.

Finally there are nowadays expressions for weeks and months as of Now. For reasons of space I give these for EMek only:

- a) next week *aŋo-ʔa* *ivi-n-ai*
 front-1PL week-3SG-OBL
- b) this week *pau* *ivi-n-ai*
 now week-3SG-OBL
- c) last week *muni-ʔa* *ivi-n-ai*
 back-1PL week-3SG-OBL

A step further away in either direction involves some doubly marked oblique forms:

- d) the week after next *aŋo-ʔa* *ivi-na* *aŋo-ai-s-ai*
 front-1PL week-3SG front-OBL-B-OBL
- e) the week before last *muni-ʔa* *ivi-na* *muni-ai-s-ai*
 back-1PL week-3SG back-OBL-B-OBL

One may of course substitute 'month' and 'year' for 'week' in all these constructions.

2.2.4.2 INDEFINITE TIME REFERENCE

Mekeo has a large class of indefinite terms for periods of time more or less distant, in the past or in the future, from the Now of the speaker. Allowing for a certain amount of variation in usage within and between dialects, these can be displayed as follows:

TABLE 32: INDEFINITE TIME DEIXIS

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
afterwards, later on, later	<i>make(-gai)</i> <i>muni-ai</i>	<i>muni(-n-ai)</i> <i>make(-gai)</i>	<i>muni(-n-ai)</i> <i>make(-gai)</i>	<i>(o-)maʔe,</i> <i>(o-)maʔe-kai,</i> <i>muni((-ai)-kai)</i>
before long	<i>kema</i>	<i>make-namo</i>		<i>(o-)maʔe-ni-</i> <i>na-mo</i>
soon	<i>apa-ŋa-mu,</i> <i>make-ŋa-mu</i>	<i>apa-ŋa-mo</i>	<i>afa-ka-ŋa-mo</i>	<i>afa-ʔa-ŋa-mo,</i> <i>afa-ŋa-mo</i>
in just a minute	<i>bau-gai</i>	<i>bai-gai</i>	<i>bau-gai</i>	<i>pau-kai</i>
Now	<i>ikiva, bau</i>	<i>bai</i>	<i>bau</i>	<i>pau</i>
just this minute	<i>bau-mu</i>	<i>bai-mo</i>	<i>bau-mo</i>	<i>pau-mo</i>
just now	<i>makeŋamo</i>			<i>(o-)maʔe-mo,</i> <i>(o-)maʔe-ni- namo</i>
just recently	<i>wai-na-mu</i>	<i>a-ŋani-namo</i>	<i>a-ŋani-namo</i>	<i>vai-namo</i>
some time go	<i>bati-mu</i>	<i>batsi-namo</i>	<i>batsi-namo</i>	<i>paʔe-i-namo</i>
in the past	<i>bati-n-ai</i>	<i>batsi-n-ai</i>	<i>batsi-n-ai</i>	<i>paʔe-i-n-ai</i>
long ago	<i>uai-na-ŋ-ai</i>	<i>oai-na-ŋ-ai</i>	<i>uwai-na-ŋ-ai</i>	<i>uvai-na-ŋ-ai</i>
once upon a time	<i>maka-baŋai</i>	<i>maka-baŋai</i>	<i>maka-paŋai</i>	<i>maʔa-paŋai</i>

The forms in the above table represent something of a compromise as regards what I know and what I suspect about the morphemic boundaries of constituent items. *Make*, *maʔe*, which means ‘after, later’, but also ‘maybe, perhaps’, is almost certainly decomposable into *ma*, uncertainty particle, and *ke*, *ʔe*, a conjunction and/or an exclamation. EMek (*o-*)*maʔe* can also mean ‘perhaps, possibly’. NWMek *kema* might also be decomposable into *ke* + *ma*, a simple reversal of the two constituents. *gai*, *kai*, is a predication-enclitic conjunction meaning approximately ‘but’ (but see §8.2.1 below); it functions here to mean ‘just, only’ (compare the English ‘but yesterday’, for ‘only yesterday’). *Apa*, *afa*, is an indefinite pronoun meaning ‘little, a little, few, a few, a bit’ (see §2.2.3.3), and I suspect that the extra syllable in NMek and EMek derives from an intrusive glottal stop in EMek (transphonemicised ‘regularly’ in NMek imitations). *Muni* is a locative/relational base meaning ‘(be) behind something/someone’ (§2.1.2.2). *Uai* (> *oai*, *uwai*, *uvai*) means ‘old, ancestral, original, true form of anything’; it is used here abstractly and adverbially. The *-n-*, *-ŋ-*, stand for *-na-*, *-ŋa-*, respectively; the final vowel assimilates readily to the following *-a* of *-ai* (marking an oblique circumstant). *Namu*, *namo*, decomposes into *na* + *mu*, *mo*, a particle that basically means ‘just’. However, *namo* or *ŋamo* at least is of frequent occurrence as an independent item – what has here been called a presentative particle (§2.2.2.2).

The words listed in the table do not exhaust the vocabulary of indefinite time reference in Mekeo. Numerous other, often overlapping expressions exist, sometimes though not always composed of the same set of morphemes we have just now considered; for example EMek *pau-moʔe* ‘just this very minute’, from *pau* ‘now’, and *moʔe* (from *mo* + *ʔe*) meaning ‘just right, enough, stop!’ Another common time-adverbial expression is EMek *ala-paisa* (for ‘archaic’ *ala-paia*) ‘once, at one time (in the past)’. *Paisa* in isolation means ‘merely, sheerly, purely, definitely, unquestionably’ (see §2.4.1 and §6.3.7), and *ala* may be ‘what’ (§2.2.5.1 below). EMek also has the nominalised form (with preformative *I-*): *i-paʔe-i-na* ‘the other day’.⁹³

Another group of time-referring idioms describes the regularity, frequency, and so on of an occurrence. Some EMek expressions are cited here:

<i>e-ŋani afa</i>	sometimes
<i>e-ŋani i-puo</i>	repeatedly; unceasingly
<i>kina isa-ʔi-ai</i>	sometimes
<i>kina maʔo</i>	much of the time
<i>kina maʔo-ʔi-ai</i>	frequently; always
<i>ŋani-ŋapi, ŋapi-ŋani</i>	night and day
<i>(o-)maʔe-i-n-ai</i>	suddenly
<i>(o-)maʔe-paŋu</i>	a while ago
<i>aonia-mo</i>	always

E-ŋani has a general orientation towards future time, so an alternative reading for *e-ŋani afa* is ‘soon, after, a short while’; I have also recorded *e-ŋani kapa* meaning ‘in a few days’.

Two relative time markers are *go*, *goà*, *koà* ‘still, yet’, and *gau(-gau)*, *kau(-kau)* ‘already, before, at first, first’. The former seems to be related to Motu *dohore* ‘still, not yet’, rather than to Mekeo *gōa*, *kōa* ‘true, truth’. The Mekeo forms are based on the

⁹³ The second [i] seems to be epenthetic. Compare the [i] in EMek *ina-i-na* ‘this’, (*e-*)*ŋa-i-na* ‘that’.

determinate form **go-ŋa*, attested still in NWMek. The form *miaŋai* (< *mia-ŋa-ai*), from the root *mia* ‘become’, is used to mean ‘meanwhile’ and ‘during’. These items as well as some others are discussed in more detail in §6.2, *passim*, below.

There are a numerous linking expressions that are used chiefly in narrative discourse and which mean roughly ‘then...’ (= ‘after that’):

NWMek:	<i>bai-ge, e bau, na make</i>
WMek, NMek:	<i>ŋae-gai, ŋae-ge; baia-ke; ŋa aidama, ŋa aizama</i>
EMek:	<i>ke pau, pau kai, ŋa aisama</i>

Mo is used in all dialects to begin a new sentence. Its meaning varies but can be rendered approximately as: ‘Well, *then...*’ or ‘Next,...’.

Ŋa-βuo, ŋa-buo, ŋa-puo ‘because of that’ seems to be used very loosely at times, in the meaning of ‘then’.

Ŋae o-ŋa-ai, ŋae ao-ŋa-ai, ŋae alo-ŋa-ai ‘inside that/there’ (that/there inside-3SG-OBL) is used as a linking expression to mean ‘at that time’.

2.2.5 INTERROGATIVE PRO-FORMS

The indefinite/interrogative pro-forms in Mekeo differ from English ‘equivalents’ in that they are ordinarily marked as being specific but indefinite. Unmarked forms are generic. They thus obligatorily express the generic/specific distinction that in English applies primarily to non-human entities: for example, *What?* versus *Which?* In Mekeo these items are not exclusively interrogative in function; they are also used to denote classes of referents that are specific, but indefinite (e.g. ‘something’, ‘someone’).

The indefinite/interrogative pro-forms of place can also express a dative/ablative type distinction: *Whither?* (versus *Whereat?*) – *Whence?*

‘Adverbial’ expressions equivalent to *How?* and *Why?* (and which are less commonly used to mean ‘somehow’, etc.) are derived from the indefinite/interrogative pro-forms, plus root particles like *GO* ‘like’, and *BUO* ‘cause, reason; purpose’.

2.2.5.1 GENERIC PRO-FORMS

I shall here illustrate the cross-dialectal distribution of the underived, generic pro-forms:

TABLE 33: THE GENERIC INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
WHAT?	(<i>ā</i>)	<i>ā</i>	<i>ā/ala</i>	<i>ala</i>
	<i>gaba</i>	<i>gaba</i>	<i>gaba</i>	<i>kapa</i>
WHO?	<i>gai</i>	<i>à-gai</i>	<i>à-gai/gai</i>	<i>kai</i>

There are two root particles employed for ‘what?’ *Gaba, kapa*, also means ‘thing’; and it also functions as the hard-working verb ‘make, do’. A certain amount of semantic bleaching seems to have taken place here. *A, ala*, can also mean ‘how?’ and ‘where?’ and ‘whither?’ A common Mekeo salutation to a passerby is:

- 2.103 *Oai ā o-ao.* (WMek)
 you INT 2SG-go
 Where are you going?

Note that *a, ala* occurs only as an interrogative particle and may be glossed as INT; it is somewhat rare in NWMek and may represent a borrowing from the west. There is some variation in NMek, as might be expected (as a consequence of dialect convergence).

Non-specific place and time can be queried by means of the following pro-forms:

TABLE 34: INTERROGATIVES OF PLACE AND TIME

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
(AT OR FROM) WHERE	<i>gai,</i> <i>gab-ai</i>	<i>ā,</i> <i>gab-ai</i>	<i>ā,</i> <i>gab-ai</i>	<i>ala,</i> <i>kap-ai,</i> <i>kap-ai-s-ai</i>
WHEN	<i>gai-ga</i>	<i>ŋai-ga</i>	<i>ŋai-ga</i>	<i>ŋai-ka/ai-ka</i>

Quantity is queried by means of the single word *βiga, biga, pika* ‘how much/many?’ This root is also used to mean ‘some; a few; be little/few’.

One predominantly adverbial set of expressions represents the Mekeo equivalent to the English ‘how?’, a notion that has to be expressed periphrastically in Mekeo. These translate, literally, as: ‘what like?’ and ‘what meaning?’ They can in fact refer to some specific thing, in which case they challenge the hearer to compare or classify it. When meaning ‘how?’, however, they always have generic reference. Here are the two alternative forms across the four dialects:

TABLE 35: THE ‘HOW?’ INTERROGATIVES

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
HOW?	<i>gai-go</i>	<i>ā goà</i>	<i>ā goà</i>	<i>alā-koà</i>
	<i>gai oma</i>	<i>ā oma</i>	<i>ā oma</i>	<i>ala-oma</i>

The actual meaning of *gai oma, ā oma, ala oma* shades from HOW? into WHY? since *oma* is ‘basically’ perhaps a verb, meaning ‘mean, intend, purpose’ (and as such occurs marked for tense, aspect, mood, person and number). This usually depends on the context of situation, but the root *buo, puo* ‘cause, reason, purpose’ can be added to make the meaning quite explicit. For example

- 2.104 *Ā ge-ma buo...?* (WMek)
 what 3PL-intend reason
 What is their reason for...? OR: Why do/don’t they...?

The verbal functions of *OMA* are illustrated in §4.2.4. The functions of *BUO* are illustrated and discussed in §8.3.2.9.⁹⁴

2.2.5.2 SPECIFIC PRO-FORMS

Specific pro-forms are, minimally, determinate; that is, they may simply specify the class of items from which the answer is expected to be chosen (human versus non-human). However, they usually also carry a third person singular determining suffix that is theoretically in agreement with some (as yet unidentified) class noun. Such items ask: Which particular one (of a class of entities) is in question? Specific pro-forms may be specific+indefinite but are always determinate. They are displayed below in the form of a table:

TABLE 36: THE SPECIFIC INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
WHICH	<i>gai,</i> <i>gai-na</i>	<i>a-gai-a,</i> <i>a-gai-a au-ŋa</i>	<i>a-gae-a,</i> <i>a-gae-a au-ŋa</i>	<i>alā,</i> <i>ala-i-na</i>
	<i>gabā,</i> <i>gabaŋu au-ŋa</i>	<i>gabā,</i> <i>ga-gaba au-ŋa</i>	<i>gabā,</i> <i>ga-gaba au-ŋa</i>	<i>kapā,</i> <i>kapa-i-na</i>
WHO= WHICH PERSON	<i>gai-na,</i> <i>au gabā,</i> <i>gai au-ŋa</i>	<i>a-gai au-ŋa,</i> <i>au gabā,</i> <i>ā au-ŋa</i>	<i>kai-z-au,</i> <i>au gabā,</i> <i>ā au-ŋa</i>	<i>kai-s-au,</i> <i>au kapā,</i> <i>kapa au-ŋa</i>
WHOSE	<i>gai-na</i>	<i>a-gai-ŋa</i>	<i>gai-ŋa</i>	<i>kai i-e-ŋa</i>
(AT) WHICH PLACE	<i>gai-n-ai</i>	<i>gaba-ŋ-ai</i>	<i>gaba-ŋ-ai</i>	<i>kapa-ŋ-ai,</i> <i>kap-ai-n-ai</i>
WHICH...TIME	<i>gai aia-ma</i>	<i>ā aida-ma</i>	<i>ā aiza-ma</i>	<i>alā aisa-ma</i>

All of the classifier nouns can be queried by means of preposed /a, ala/ in the same way as, for example, **aia-ma* ‘time when’. WHY? is, as we saw in the previous section, expressed by means of the root *buo*, *puo* ‘reason, cause’. Another way of encoding this is:

- 2.105 *Ala kai-na(-ŋa-ai)?* (EMek)
 what reason-3SG(-3SG-OBL)
 For what reason?

2.3 GRAMMATICAL PREDICATORS

2.3.1 NEGATION: FREE PARTICLES

These are discussed in more detail and with more examples in §3.4 below. However, I shall give a few examples of the various operators and their uses here for the convenience of readers.

⁹⁴ Another common expression for WHY? is *aima* (*ai-ma?*), in all dialects.

All dialects employ the particle *Aʼi* as a negative operator. This is sometimes realised as *aʼi* or with a weak glottal stop as *aʼi*⁹⁵ (in NWMek, WMek, NMek), or even as *ai* (in EMek). It can occur as a free particle:

- 2.106 *Aʼi oʼo!* (WMek)
 NEG fat
 (It is) not fat!

However, it also occurs as a proclitic particle before nominals, when it can be glossed as ‘non-’ or ‘un-’ or ‘-less’.

- 2.107 *Ai-ofu fa-mia.* (EMek)
 NEG-dirt OBLG.1SG-become.
 I would like to be spotless.
- 2.108 *E-mu ʒope aʼi-fou-ʒa ʒa-mia.* (EMek)
 POSS-2SG fast NEG-public-3SG IMP.3SG-become
 Don’t let your fast be public knowledge.

2.3.1.2 EXISTENTIAL NEGATION

The existence or presence or identity of a person or thing can be denied by the following sentence-final predicates:

NWMek:	<i>maini</i>
WMek:	<i>aibaia</i> , ⁹⁶ <i>aibaida</i>
NMek:	<i>aibaia</i> , <i>aibaiza</i>
EMek:	<i>laaʼi</i>

- 2.109 *Agaoā maini.* (NWMek)
 spouse.3SG not
 He has no wife. (lit. Wife.his not.)
- 2.110 *Gaba-alaka aibaia.* (WMek)
 thing-one not
 It doesn’t matter. (lit. There is nothing.)
- 2.111 *Tsuga aibaiza.* (NMek)
 sugar not
 There is no sugar.
- 2.112 *Ava laaʼi.* (EMek)
 some(-thing) not
 It doesn’t matter. (lit. It is nothing.)

NWMek *maini* also functions to negate the verb in certain paradigms/tenses, notably the past. In this function *maini* comes immediately before the verb in what is of course the focus slot. See the NWMek negative paradigms in Appendix 4 for examples.

⁹⁵ The apostrophe indicates a very weak glottal stop, or just a slight pause (hiatus) between the vowels.

⁹⁶ This item decomposes into *aʼi* ‘not’ and *baia* ‘mere, simple’; [d] is intrusive in WMek, as is [z] in NMek.

In fact *all* the existential negators (i.e. in all dialects) have as a secondary or derived function the ability to negate nominal predicates (which is the *only* function of A'I; see previous section). Thus examples 2.109, 2.110, and 2.111 above can have, respectively, the alternative readings: 'She is not his wife' (or, of course, 'He is not her husband'), 'That is not something', and 'That is not sugar'.

2.3.2 UNMARKED ADVERBIALS

Many of these can be defined as 'deverbal' particles. They can be used either before or *after* a verbal predicate. They are few, and their deverbal usage gives the impression of being innovative.

- a) *aaŋe-mo* for nothing, idly, aimlessly, on a whim
 2.113 *Oi aaŋemo lo-lo?u, ani-na laa'i.* (EMek)
 you idly 2SG-quarrel kernel-3SG not
 It's idle to quarrel, there's no point.
- b) (*mo*) *ajina, atsina, a?ina* properly, completely
 2.114 *Mo-ake mo a?ina!* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG just completely
 Get down the lot of you!
- c) *baŋai, baŋai, paŋai* across, past, well, properly⁹⁷
 d) *kabula, kapula* strongly, energetically⁹⁸
 e) *kerere~kelele* wrongly, incorrectly⁹⁹

Another group of typically verbal roots can be used as adverbial exhortations. I give the EMek realisations:

- a) *ŋoa-ŋoa!* }
 b) *Pafi-afi!* } (Do it) quickly, make haste!
 c) *Fia-koa!* }
 d) *Pakai-pakai!* }
 Patai-patai! } (Do it) slowly, carefully, properly!
 e) *Felò-felò!* }

These constitute minimal sentences. *Belo, belo-belo, felō* and *felō felō* are also used as exhortations, meaning 'Do it nicely, carefully'. This latter group also all lend themselves to free adverbial usage.

There is a small closed class of words that never take the oblique marker *-AI* but which can only function as adverbials. They resemble time deictics in this, and indeed *gau-gau, kau-kau* also functions as an aspectual auxiliary *verb* (§6.2.4).

- a) *pu* (NWMek), *po, fou* together (with)
 b) *bu, buu, puu, puŋu* again

97 This cannot be analysed into a root + *-ai* (OBL).

98 The [k] realisation across dialects suggests it is a borrowing.

99 The more common form with [r] suggests that this too is a borrowing.

- c) *iaga* (NWMek), *iawa/idawa*, *iava*, *isava/isafa* (EMek) also
 d) *gau-gau*, *kau-kau* already

2.3.3 CONJUNCTIONS

2.3.3.1 THE RELATIONAL PREDICATE: *MEI*

MEI corresponds to Motu *mai* (and *ma*), Roro *mai*. It has a primarily predicative function, unlike the other conjunctions. See §3.3.1 below.

2.3.3.2 NOMINAL CONJUNCTIONS

- a) *GE* (*ge*, *bai-ge*, *ηae-gai*, *ηai-gai*, *ke*)
 b) ...*MA...MA/...MAKE...MAKE*
 c) *IA...IA...*
 d) *O* (< English 'or')

See §3.3.2 and §8.3 passim for discussion and exemplification.

2.3.3.3 VERBAL CONJUNCTIONS

These will be illustrated and discussed in §8.2. Here I simply list those items that are treated in this grammar as potential predication-level conjunctions.

- a) MULTIFUNCTIONAL CONJUNCTION: *GAI*
 (has the forms: *gai~gae~ge*, *kai~kae~ke*)
 b) CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS: *MA...MA...*
 c) SIMILATIVE (CAUSAL) CONJUNCTION: *GO*
 d) REASON CONJUNCTIONS: *OLOŃO*, *ŃOME VEIA*
 e) EXPOSITORY CONJUNCTION: *AGA*

2.4 MODAL PREDICATORS

2.4.1 DISCOURSE MARKERS

The various uses of the discourse markers will be illustrated in §6.3 below. I merely list them here, in no particular order:

- a) Uncertainty Particle: *MA* (Interrogative Focusing Operator)
 b) JUST: *MO* (Focusing Operator)
 c) PERHAPS: *MAKE*
 d) JUST SO: *MOKE*
 e) Discreditative Particle: *pama*, *paŃu*
 f) FAIN: *PAI*
 g) SHEER: *BAIA*
 h) INDEED: *Ńàbua* (NMek, WMek), *làkoa* (EMek).

- | | | |
|----|-----------|-------------|
| i) | SURELY: | <i>GUŃA</i> |
| j) | SURPRISE: | <i>KE</i> |
| k) | PITY: | <i>KIA</i> |

Discourse markers express what has been called speaker comment, and simultaneously fulfill important cohesive functions.

2.4.2 MODALITY MARKERS¹⁰⁰

I use the term 'modality' to describe a speaker's assessment of the probability of something being true. Modality markers function as minor predications, appended to other predications.

Affirmative:

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|---------------------|
| a) | <i>go, goa, koa</i> | It is true. |
| b) | <i>ŋàbua, làkoa</i> | It is true, unique. |
| c) | <i>guŋa, kuŋa</i> | It is true. |

Dubitative:

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|-------------------|
| a) | <i>make, ma?e</i> | Maybe. |
| b) | <i>mo?e-ma?e</i> (EMek only) | Maybe; Who knows? |

2.4.3 EXCLAMATIONS

Exclamations often seem to cross dialect boundaries, regardless of sound correspondences, something that merits a study in its own right. The most common of these are listed here, primarily as used by EMek speakers, with brief glosses:

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| a) | <i>aai!</i> | Ouch! | (Fear, aversion.) |
| b) | <i>ah!</i> | Oi! You there! | (Calling someone far off.) |
| c) | <i>e! eae!</i> | Yes!; Indeed! | (Agreement.) |
| d) | <i>eh! yeh!</i> | Hey! | (Calling someone nearby.) |
| e) | <i>eioh!</i> | Oh dear! | (Disappointment, complaint.) |
| f) | <i>eei! eeish!</i> | Ugh; Yuk! | (Aversion, horror.) |
| g) | <i>fai!</i> | Gosh! | (Envy, desire.) |
| h) | <i>kaai! ke!</i> | How awful! | (Dismay, sorrow, pity, regret.) |
| i) | <i>ke! te!</i> | Wow! | (Surprise (+ admiration).) |
| j) | <i>keish! kaash!</i> | Wow! | (Admiration, awe.) |
| k) | <i>kie! tsie!</i> | Poo!, Huh! | (Contempt, refusal. ¹⁰¹) |
| l) | <i>ko!</i> | Ho! | (Attention-getter.) |
| m) | <i>o!</i> | Yes, I am here! | (Indicates presence to a visitor.) |

¹⁰⁰ Note that some items from §2.4.1 appear here in different functions. Usage varies from one dialect to another, as will be noted where space allows.

¹⁰¹ *Kie!*, *tsie!* give the NMek, EMek verb forms *kie-ŋ-a*, *kie-n-i-a* and *tsie-ŋ-a*, *tsie-n-i-a* respectively ('express, disgust, contempt for someone, something').

n)	<i>saai!</i>	Isn't that nice!	(Joy, pleasure.)
o)	<i>tsia!</i>	Poor thing!	(Pity.)
p)	<i>uhm!</i>	Ugh; Yuk!	(Aversion, horror.)

The above exclamations are not only used in isolation, as here, but also appear in compound items with composite meanings (and may underly some of the items listed in previous sections).

Some commonly used exclamatory expressions in EMek are:

<i>Komo-fai!</i> ; <i>Komo-mumà!</i> ¹⁰²	Hush up, please!; Do shut up!
<i>Moʔe-maʔe!</i>	Who knows?!; Who cares?!
<i>Aa faivolo!</i>	Wow!

¹⁰² For *Komo mo-oma!* 'Consent to be quite!' (lit: hush IMP.2SG-DNT). *Komo* seems to be a verbal root.

CHAPTER 3

THE LEXICOGRAMMAR OF NOMINAL PREDICATIONS

As argued above (§1.3.3.1), endocentric nominal groups have no independent source in Mekeo grammar, being explicable as downranked predications. Any string of two or three nominals¹ is therefore held to be, potentially at least, a nominal predication (unless it is a matter of conjoined nouns or nouns in apposition, although here too there can be an element of predication, as will be shown in §3.3). In a nominal predication a topic nominal determines the referential status of a predicate nominal, which carries a determining suffix marked for the person and number of the topic.

Strings of nominals that can be analysed as endocentric groups are explained in this grammar as rankshifted predications, which have lost the force of assertion and which are *functioning as units* in another predication. Many such strings, however, have not lost this force and constitute secondary predicates.²

An analysis in terms of topics and predicates thus accounts for the bulk of the data in as simple a manner as possible, and this is perhaps borne out by the frequency with which native speakers employ the nominalising/relativising pronoun *au-ŋa*, or the topicalising particle *auŋa*, which convert predications into nominal topics. For example:

- 3.1 *Imoi auŋa, lo-isa auŋa, isa auŋa, la-isa.* (EMek)
child TOP 2SG-see TOP s/he TOP 1SG-see
That child, the one you saw, him/her now, I saw him/her.

This rankshift-marking function of topicalising *auŋa* is apparently what accounts for its frequency in all sorts of texts. Any word or string followed by *auŋa* is marked as having been previously predicated, and as now denoting presupposed information. A verbal predicate so marked is capable of functioning as a unit within a matrix predication. Embedded in a verbal predication it can function as a complex cataphoric topic, in apposition to the subject- or object- marking affixes, or as an adsentential adjunct.

¹ The lower limit is one, since topics are subject to ellipsis. The upper limit is impossible to set, though possibly subject to some kind of constraint.

² A similar hypothesis was propounded by Hale (1981) in connection with Warlpiri. Two nominals marked for the same case and number in a Warlpiri sentence are held to constitute a sub-sentential predication – not an NP – with one being predicated of the other. Predicates include parts of wholes and attribute nominals. After application of a rule from the semantic component such predications can be given a ‘merged’ reading, and are interpreted as NPs. I here posit a predication reading for all nominal constructions prior to rankshift. Rankshift functions to give the ‘merged’ reading of a group/NP. Non-rankshifted nominal constructions also occur and these constitute embedded secondary predicates (see Nichols 1978a).

Because, in Mekeo, the expression of definiteness and/or specificity – and of discourse relevance generally – is mainly accomplished by way of establishing some kind of determining relationship between two referents, or between a referent and an abstract state or property – in other words, by linking one expression to another – I shall frame my account of nominal constructions in these terms, i.e. in terms of determination.

The right-headedness of Mekeo word order, which was emphasised in §1.3.3 in connection with verbal predications, applies equally to nominal predications. The rightmost constituent is (in almost every case) the predicate and the marked syntactic head. However, the heads of nominal predications – and here they differ from verbal predications – always represent the focus, and as such are marked by a falling pitch-tone. After rankshift this situation may alter (as illustrated in §3.1.2).

3.1 UNMARKED NOMINAL PREDICATIONS

In this section I shall present substantial exemplification for all of the kinds of nominal constructions that were previewed in §1.3.3.2.2 (i.e. before rankshift) and §1.3.3.4.1 (i.e. after rankshift).

As previously argued, nominal heads are primarily predicates.³ These are normally marked for the person and number of a determining nominal. They assert a defining relation to some (concrete or abstract) referent, their topic ('the grass *is long*') or an object ('he *is my father*'). The lexical content of the predicate may be concrete and coreferential, concrete but non-coreferential or abstract and non-referential. Predications of the first kind of relation are called identificational, those of the second kind attributional and those of the third kind relational. The relation itself is always one of *determination*, though after rankshift the illocutionary force of the original assertion is wholly replaced by the 'structural force' of the determining relation. Here are some straightforward EMek examples of all three categories:

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------------|
| 3.2 | <i>Lau nao-u.</i>
I European-1SG
I am a European. | <u>identificational</u> |
| 3.3 | <i>Lau felō-u.</i>
I good-1SG
I am good. | <u>attributional</u> |
| 3.4 | <i>Isa lau akava-u.</i>
s/he I spouse-1SG
She is my wife. | <u>relational</u> |

Identification in the narrow sense involves classification in terms of a lexicon (i.e. hyponymy) and this is dealt with in §3.1.1. Attribution, which is dealt with in §3.1.2, is the determination of the topic nominal in terms of some property or quality that has been abstracted, to a greater or lesser degree, from its exemplars.⁴ The expression of the former

³ Hale (1983) argued for a predicate reading of *all* Warlpiri nominals.

⁴ In English there is a special word class, the adjectives, to perform this function. Identification and attribution are not in principle different, according to Fawcett (1987:138-139), though they are often differentiated on intuitive grounds. (Fawcett's analysis of relational clauses differs from that of Halliday (1985), in this regard as well as in a number of others.)

relation (but not the latter) is subject to a morphosyntactic constraint: zero suffixation in the third person singular.

Relational predication (which is discussed in §3.1.3) refers to the construction-type known in many other grammars of Oceanic languages as ‘inalienable possession’ – a term that has long been recognised in some quarters as inadequate. It covers kinship relations, and part-whole relations, as well as the assertion of nonce relations between class nouns. Relational predications differ from identificational and attributional predications in that they require three terms, two of which must be referential while the third is abstract.

In §3.1.4 I look at locative relations and the different grammatical uses made of these. In §3.1.5 I examine comparative predications. In §3.1.6 I describe the uses of the possessive particle *E-*, as well as some other constructions that predicate possession (= ownership). Finally, in §3.1.7 I look at the possibility of recursively predicating attributional nouns to form strings.

It may be helpful if I here display the agreement patterns for the first three types of nominal predication mentioned above:

identificational:

[TOPIC (<i>Lau</i>) definite noun	+]	PREDICATE <i>nao-u.</i> indefinite noun + determiner
	<----- Agreement	

attributional:

TOPIC <i>Lau</i> definite noun	+]	PREDICATE <i>felo-u.</i> attribute + determiner
	<----- Agreement	

relational:

[[TOPIC (<i>Isa</i>) proper name, deictic pronoun	+]	OBJECT (<i>lau</i>) proper name, deictic pronoun	+]	RELATOR <i>akava-u.</i> relational noun + determiner
			<----- Agreement	

Brackets indicate the optional deletability of topic-arguments in some constructions. Embedded relational predications yield utterances like: *Deo ŋau-ŋa au-ʔa* ‘We (exclusive) are God’s son’s people’ (which is given again as example 3.89 further below). The agreement patterns formed by a relational predication embedded within another relational predication can be diagrammed as follows (double brackets indicate obligatory deletion):

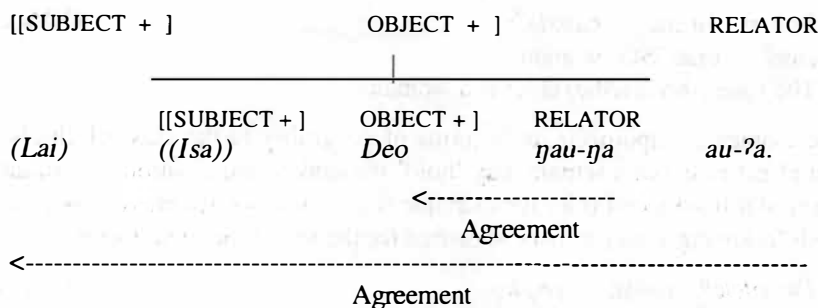


FIGURE 18: AGREEMENT PATTERNS IN NOMINAL PREDICATIONS

3.1.1 IDENTIFICATIONAL PREDICATIONS

An identificational predication is an equation one of whose terms must be a referring expression (any referential nominal, or a deictic pro-form). The second may be a lexical class noun. The first of these in construction is the topic, and this is optionally marked (and is in that case a marked, emphatic topic). The second is the predicate, and this is obligatorily unmarked for the third person singular, but optionally marked with a determining suffix in all other persons and numbers. Marking in these latter cases is the normal, but may be omitted.

3.5 *Lau(-ηa) papie-u.* (EMek)

I woman.1SG

I am a woman.

3.6 *Isa(-ηa) papie.* (EMek)

s/he woman

She is a woman.

In the following example the third person singular marking on *papiē* refers to a deleted third person referent, her brother. *Vis-à-vis* the topic, *papiē* is unmarked:

3.7 *Lau-ηa papiē.* (EMek)

I-TOP sister.3SG

As for me, I'm his/her sister.

As previously noted, identification often involves hyponymy, hence a hierarchy of lexical classes. Identificational propositions are of two general forms: 'Some member of Class (i) is by the same token a member of the superordinate Class A', or 'Some member of Class A is further specifiable as a member of subordinate Class (i).' That is, a definite noun or a pronoun is put into relation with an indefinite noun. However, the Mekeo lexicon as regards persons is not really arranged in terms of hierarchical classes (§2.1.1.2.1). There are few general words for permanent social roles such as worker, cook, doctor and clerk. So this type of 'widening' predication represents a strictly limited range of propositions dealing with people. In such cases the relativising pronoun *au-ηa* is employed.

Here is one such, a predication with 'widening' reference with two nominals, one definite and the other indefinite, both of which denote types of people:

- 3.8 *Lobzia au-ŋa, babzie*.⁵ (NMek)
 chief one-3SG woman
 The (one who is a/the) chief is a woman.

The class of women is superordinate in terms of generality to the class of chiefs (female chiefs are in effect rare, but a female may 'hold' the rank in anticipation of a suitable male office-holder). An introduced role, for example that of teacher (expressed as a relativised nominal, with following *auŋa*), may be specified for the sex of the incumbent:

- 3.9 *Pamalele*⁶ *au-ŋa, papie*. (EMek)
 teach one-3SG woman
 The (one who is a/the) teacher is/was a woman.

The other semantic equation ('narrowing' reference) is illustrated by

- 3.10 *Babie, bamalele babie-ŋa*. (WMek)
 woman teach woman-3SG
 The woman is a (woman who is a/the) teacher.

- 3.11 *Paibo au-ŋa, api*. (WMek)
 snake one-3SG death-adder
 The (one which is a/the) snake is a Death Adder.

Propositions of the 'widening' type are in most traditional contexts redundant. However, propositions of the second kind are much more common, particularly when it is necessary to identify or classify a) a new input such as a sight or a sound, or an object (plant, animal, etc.), or b) a new acquaintance (or oneself for the benefit of some new acquaintance). Note that in almost all such cases the topic is present to the utterance situation and will ordinarily be referenced deictically (by means of a pronoun). Consider, for example:

- 3.12 *Ŋaea au-ŋa, obo*.⁷ (NMek)
 that one-3SG Bird.of.Paradise
 That is/was a Bird of Paradise.

- 3.13 *Inai-na amu?e*. (EMek)
 this-3SG dog
 This is/was a dog.

- 3.14 *Inai-'i amu?e-'i*. (EMek)
 this-3PL dog-3PL
 These are/were dogs.

- 3.15 *Ida uŋà-uŋa*. (WMek)
 s/he sorcerer
 He is/was a sorcerer.

⁵ The forms *lobzia* and *babzie* (with [z] or [ʒ]) may be metathesised forms of *lobiza* and *babize* (i.e. consonantal intrusion) or the labial consonant may have been directly palatalised under the influence of following /i/.

⁶ *Pamalele* < *pa-malele* 'CA-write'. *Malele* means 'writing, letter' but also nowadays 'study, learning'. A student is *malele au-ŋa*.

⁷ The meaning of *ŋaea au-ŋa* before rankshift was 'That's the one'.

As noted in §1.3.3.4.1, the third person singular determining suffix, the morpheme *-ŋa*, does not appear on the predicate noun. But such predications may be, and commonly are, in their entirety rankshifted and then embedded in another predication. When this happens the erstwhile nominal predicate must normally carry a topicalising suffix *-ŋa*:

- 3.16 *Inaina amuʔe-ŋa, e-isava.* (EMek)
 this dog-3SG 3SG-sick
 This dog is/was sick.

Alternatively it may be followed by the topicalising particle *auŋa*:

- 3.17 *Inaia auke auŋa, i-idawa.* (EMek)
 this dog TOP 3SG-sick
 This dog is/was sick.

As regards predications with first and second person topics, the relativising head-word *au-ŋa* (appropriately inflected) is usually required before and after rankshift:

- 3.18 *Oai, ŋoŋo au-mi, po-go-ao.* (WMek)
 you Roro man-2PL OBLG-2PL-go
 You Roro men should go.

It is possible (though not always easy in practice) to differentiate between the empty topicalising *auŋa* and *auŋa* as rankshifted *au-ŋa*, meaning ‘(is) the man’. For example, the rankshifted string *eŋaina auŋa* (EMek) can usually mean either ‘that man’ or ‘that, now’. Intonation and stress are of some help however (see §1.3.3.3 above).

When constructions with a third person singular or third person plural personal pronoun as apparent subject-topic are embedded in another predication they may be interpreted either as rankshifted predications or as coordinate predications. Thus the hypothetical WMek utterance *Ida uŋà-uŋa e-mai* may be read as ‘(He (is) the sorcerer) he came’ or as ‘(He (is) the sorcerer); (he came)’. Personal pronouns have inherent definite reference, and are thus less ‘deictic’ than demonstratives, which always *await definition*.⁸ In the kind of construction just illustrated (and it is common) personal pronouns may indeed be predicates, in apposition to another predicate: ‘It is he – it is the sorcerer.’

I here give further examples of identificational predications involving first and second person pronominal topics and relativised predicates. For the first person singular:

- 3.19 *Lau, Mekeo au-u.* (EMek)
 I Mekeo man-1SG
 I am a Mekeo (man)
- 3.20 *Iji, Biiŋa babie-u.* (WMek)
 I Piunga woman-1SG
 I am a Piunga woman

Two examples with second person singular topics are:

⁸ The deictic force of *ŋa!*, for example, fulfils the functions of attention-getting and attention-directing. It has no referential content whatsoever.

3.21 *Oi, nao⁹ au-mu.* (EMek)
 you European man-2SG
 You are a European (man).

3.22 *Oai, paika au-mu!* (WMek)
 you war.magic man-2SG
 You are a great warrior!

The latter phrase is a common expression of praise and approbation in the WMek area, and is perhaps equivalent to 'You are a fine fellow' or 'You are a champion'.

Turning now to the first and second person plural, predications like the following are common:

3.23 *Ika, paika au-ka.* (WMek)
 we.I war.magic man-1PL.I
 We are great warriors/fine fellows. (Said to an ally, a comrade)

3.24 *Ai, paika au-mi.* (WMek)
 we.E war.magic man-1PL.E
 We are great warriors/fine fellows. (Said to an outsider)

3.25 *Lai Mekeo au-i, ifu au-mai.* (EMek)
 we.E Mekeo man-3PL plain man-1PL.E
 We Mekeo are plainsmen.

3.26 *Oi Olu au-i, iku au-mi.* (EMek)
 you Olu man-3PL mountain man-2PL
 You Olus are mountain men.

3.1.2 ATTRIBUTIONAL PREDICATIONS

Mekeo does not make any clear-cut distinction between belonging to a class and having some of the attributes of that class, or between attributes that belong to classes of entities and attributes that exist independently. In short, Mekeo makes no clear or fixed distinction between 'inherently' nominal lexical items (traditionally substantives) and 'inherently' adjectival lexical items. Many roots are ambiguous as to how they should be interpreted, in some or all utterances. However, there is (as noted above) a class of relatively unproblematic because non-substantive bases, 'adjectival nouns' that are found exclusively either as attributional nouns (\pm rankshift) or as state verbs. And within this class there is another smaller set of 'true adjectives' with behavioural peculiarities of their own (see §2.1.2.3.5 above).

Many rules apply equally to both substantive and non-substantive bases, and I shall treat them here as a single class. They all share one feature that differentiates them from identificational predicates. For third person singular predicates (and only these), there is a criterial difference between the obligatory unmarking of identificational predicates and the

⁹ The word *nao* occurs in Motu and many other native languages of PNG. It actually means 'white foreigner'. Desnoës connects it with *painao* 'steal, thief' (cf. POC **penako*) and also gives *nao au-mu* 'You are a thief'. The latter may represent a back-formation. It is possible that South Seas pastors imported the Polynesian root *nao*, as in *nao-nao*, which in Samoan and Tahitian means 'grope for fishes by inserting the hand into holes' and in Hawaiian 'take hold of, seize, steal'. The sound [n] in this phonological environment usually signals a borrowing.

optional marking of attributional predicates. As we saw in the last section, an indefinite class noun functioning as an *identificational predicate* is obligatorily unmarked in the third person singular. However, a class noun functioning to denote an *attribute* (abstracted from the class) is optionally marked (the marked form having intensive or emphatic connotations). In the first example of each of the following pairs the unmarked predicate permits two interpretations, while in the second example of each pair the marked predicate can only be an emphatic attribute:

- 3.27 *Isa lopia.* (EMek)
s/he chief/good
S/he is a chief. OR: S/he is good.
- 3.28 *Isa lopia-ŋa.* (EMek)
s/he good-3SG
S/he is (indeed/very) good.
- 3.29 *Ŋaina ego.* (EMek)
that cockatoo
That is a cockatoo. OR: That is like a cockatoo.
- 3.30 *Maa-ŋa ego-ŋa.* (EMek)
eye-3SG cockatoo-3SG
Her/his eyes are (just) like a cockatoo's.

Predictably, with *non-substantive* attributes the same contrast exists at the third person singular, although here there is only one possible interpretation of an unmarked predicate:

- 3.31 *Tsi mekia.* (EMek)
tea sweet
(The) tea is sweet.
- 3.32 *Tsi mekia-ŋa.* (EMek)
tea sweet-3SG
(The) tea is (indeed) sweet.

Under the present analysis all 'nominal groups' are interpreted as rankshifted predicates. For example:

- 3.33 *Ke'eva umu-ŋa.*¹⁰ (EMek)
ant.sp. black-3SG
Black *ke'eva* ants < *Ke'eva* ants are black
- 3.34 *[Maʔa ʔeʔele-ʔi] la-isa.* (EMek)
fish small-3PL 1SG-see
I saw [(the) small fish. < (The) fish are small.]
- 3.35 *[Tsi mijia-ŋa] a-inu-a.* (WMek)
tea sweet-3SG 1SG-drink-3SG
I drank [(the) sweet tea. < (The) tea is sweet.]

¹⁰ Certain non-substantive roots, especially in EMek, have attracted a fossilised third person singular suffix which has consequently lost its predicate marking function (which I would gloss as 'indeed').

As with identificational predications, the number of the topic nominal is marked on the predicate nominal. However, all unmarked third person nominals have common number, which coincides formally with singular, so (as in identificational predications) the third person determining suffix will have singular number unless the plural nature of the referent(s) is important for pragmatic reasons.

- 3.36 *Au maua-kia.* (NWMek)
 man big-3PL
 (The) men (are) big.
 ↓
 the big/great men, i.e. the ancestors

With some adjectival nouns more than others – usage and style alone arbitrate in this matter, and usage varies widely – the third person singular determining suffix is optional (and hence is emphatic when present). For some, both forms are normal. For example, each of the two following forms for ‘new’ represent what we may call ‘common usage’, and the presence of third person singular marking in example 3.38) is therefore not emphatic:

- 3.37 *Amaŋe mama.* (EMek)
 marrying new
 (The) newly wed. < (The) marrying (person) is new.
- 3.38 *Eʔa mama-ŋa.* (EMek)
 house new-3SG
 (The) new house. < (The) house is new.

In all other persons apart from the third, all nominals are marked (i.e. both identifier nominals and attributes) and it is usually the context alone which tells the hearer whether a particular use of a substantive is meant to be identificational or attributive. However, as we saw above, the elliptical dropping of first and second person suffixes in identificational predicates sometimes reveals these for what they are. The problem does not arise with the ‘true’ adjectives (§2.1.2.3.5) or other *inherently* adjectival items (see §2.1.2.3.2) which are clearly non-referential. Examples are:

- 3.39 *Lau ʔeʔele-u.* (EMek)
 I small-1SG
 I (am) small.
- 3.40 *Oi pokoa-mu.* (NWMek)
 you short-2SG
 You are short.
- 3.41 *Oai abala-ma.* (WMek)
 you bad-2SG
 You are bad.
- 3.42 *Oai faka-i-z-au-mi.* (NMek)
 you big-?-B-man-2PL
 You are well-built.

Note that in example 3.39 *lau ʔeʔele-u* can be interpreted as meaning ‘my childhood’. The oblique term *ʔeʔele-u-ai* is a common expression meaning ‘during my childhood’ or, more

freely, 'when I was a child'. One could no doubt improvise abstract nouns from the other expressions too if the need arose.¹¹

Typically verbal attributes normally appear in construction with *au-ŋa* (here the relativising pronoun 'one, man, thing'). Indeed the vast majority of abstract attributes do not occur *without* this support (they are not alone in this, of course, as we saw in the last section). Such items are often in reduplicated form. Examples are:

- 3.43 *Ia uga au-ŋa.* (NWMek)
s/he rich person-3SG
S/he is a person of wealth.
- 3.44 *Isa uka-uka au-ŋa.* (EMek)
s/he rich-RED person-3SG
S/he is a person of great wealth.
- 3.45 *Oi moŋe-moŋe au-mu.* (EMek)
you avid-RED one-2SG
You are a very greedy person.

These expressions cannot be derived from predicates (*'Greed is the man'). They are examples of relativisation:

- 3.46 *Ika ŋape-ŋape au-ka.* (WMek)
we.I kind-RED man-1PL.I
We are the ones who are kind.

This does not apply to the core adjectives, which normally occur alone without *au-* support and without a determining suffix in the third person singular. One normally says: *isa felō*, *isa apala* 's/he is good', 's/he is bad', with no determining suffix (marked stress on *felō* is invariable).¹² This is in fact a good test for membership of the sub-category of core adjectives, a test which *lipu(-lipu)*, *lifū(-lifū)* 'bad, disorderly', for instance, fails: ***oai lipu-mu* (WMek) would be unacceptable. Normal usage is:

- 3.47 *Oi lifulifu au-mu.* (EMek)
you bad one-2SG
You are a bad person.
- 3.48 *Ida lipu au-ŋa.* (WMek)
s/he bad one-3SG
S/he is a bad person.

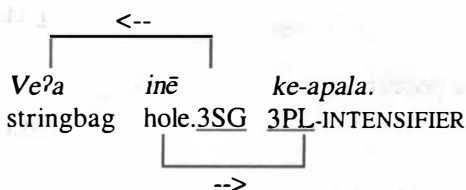
Note that after topicalisation 'a good/bad person' would become 'the good/bad person' ('the person who was defined as being good/bad'):

- 3.49 *Lobia au-ŋa e-mai.* (WMek)
good one-3SG 3SG-come
The good person came.

¹¹ Missionary Mekeo – needing a moral register – encourages such essentially neologistic usages as *fauni-na* 'good' and *apala* 'evil', as in: *Fauni-na apala fou ke-pa-fou-lei-mo* 'They mixed good and evil together', 'They confounded good with evil'.

¹² I have no explanation for this. The other dialects normally have *bèlo*, *vèlo* 'good', though NMek also has *velō*.

3.53 (EMek)



(The) holes in the stringbag are plentiful./ (The) stringbag is full of holes.

The third person plural subject marker on the verb indexes the notional plurality of *inē* 'hole', despite *inē*'s being marked for singular number with reference to *veʔa* 'stringbag'. *Ine* itself has notional plural number in this context (i.e. one imagines many holes in the one bag).

As with our previous example in §2.1.2.3.1 (*gia pika-ŋa* '(The) path (is) mud(dy)'), it is perfectly possible to make *veʔa* the head, since it too is a substantive, and to say, for example:

3.54 (EMek)

Veʔa inē e-ʔua-lai.
 stringbag hole.3SG 3SG-stoop-away
 The holed stringbag fell down.

Here *inē* has undergone demotion and *veʔa* has become the head, and *veʔa* with its notional singular number controls the number of the SM on the verb. This can at times lead to real ambiguity. This can be illustrated using the nominal predication given in example 2.30 in §2.1.2.3.1:

HEAD? HEAD?

3.55 (WMek)

```

graph TD
    Root[?] --- G[Gia]
    Root --- P[pika-ŋa]
    P --- E[e-maeŋe.]
  
```

path mud-3SG 3SG-slip
 The muddy path is slippery. OR: The mud of the path is slippery.

On the other hand the following examples each force a single interpretation:

3.56 (EMek)
Keaŋa fiʔa-ŋa e-maeva.
 path mud-3SG 3SG-long
 The muddy path is long.

3.57 (EMek)
Keaŋa fiʔa-ŋa e-kekea.
 path mud-3SG 3SG-cold
 The mud of the path is cold.

Although these examples are trivial, it is clear that misunderstandings could arise. A very similar situation obtains, incidentally, in French – compare *un savant aveugle*.¹⁴ I here list some other examples of East Mekeo substantive adjectival nouns that occur in my notes and in mission documents to try to convey the flavour of the construction as it ranges across different semantic relations.

¹⁴ This example is from Jespersen (1924:73). Waugh (1976) is a detailed discussion of the phenomenon as it occurs in French. Mühlhäusler (1979:388-389) discusses the distinction between pre- and post-posed modifiers in New Guinea Pidgin.

- 3.58 *oŋa tsini-na* (EMek)
 pot tin-3SG
 a tin pot/can OR: the tin of the pot/can
- 3.59 *kuku aipa-ŋa* (EMek)
 tobacco fury-3SG
 tobacco intoxication OR: strong tobacco
- 3.60 *au painao* (EMek)
 man thief/theft
 thief, marauder

An everyday example shows that such expressions can contain items carrying the oblique case marker *-AI*:

- 3.61 *Kina ʔama-ŋ-ai, felō.* (EMek)
 day cold-3SG-OBL good
 When the day is cold it is good.

Kina ʔama-ŋ-ai felō is used as a greeting in EMek, the equivalent of the English ‘Good morning!’. *Kina ʔama-ŋ-ai* literally means: ‘in the cold [part] of the day’, i.e. the early morning.

In the next example we have a prototypically nominal root – ‘wallaby’ – acting as an adjective:

- 3.62 *Amuʔe faa-ŋa poŋu-ŋa.*¹⁵ (EMek)
 dog skin-3SG wallaby-3SG
 The dog’s colour is like a wallaby’s. (lit. The skin of the dog is ‘wallaby’.)

I would argue that this is not the case of a colour name, like English ‘peach’ or ‘teal’, where a noun has become an adjective, but is an adjectival use of a substantive noun. Compare:

- 3.63 *Maa-ŋa eŋo-ŋa.* (EMek)
 eye-3SG cockatoo-3SG
 He is looking around like a cockatoo. (lit. His eye is cockatoo.)

Measurement nouns often serve to *distance* the attribute from a person:

- 3.64 *Au kalō maeva.* (EMek)
 man length.3SG long
 (The) man is tall.
- 3.65 *Au kaŋā foaŋa.* (EMek)
 man dimension.3SG stout
 (The) man is fat.

Emotional and psychological states can be realised by attributional nouns, but are metaphorically distanced by substituting a body part for the person (Jones 1992):

- 3.66 *Ŋuā kupu-ŋa.* (EMek)
 heart block-3SG
 S/he is angry. (OR, lit. Her/his heart is blocked.)

¹⁵ *Poŋu* is the large wallaby of the open grasslands. *Maʔi* is the smaller bush wallaby.

(Note that *kupu* appears elsewhere as a noun meaning ‘undergrowth, obstruction’, as well as as a verb meaning ‘block’ or ‘be blocked’.) Expressions generated in this fashion can subsequently be rankshifted and ‘lexicalised’, as in the following:

- 3.67 *Isa papie ŋua-kupu-ŋa.* (EMek)
 she woman heart-block-3SG
 That woman was angry.

Finally it should be mentioned that there appears in the data something like predicate adjectives in English, appearing here in the focus slot immediately before the verb:

- 3.68 *Isa alō lopia e-ʔueŋe.* (EMek)
 S/he inside.3SG good 3SG-rise
 S/he is feeling good. (lit. His/her inside rises/rose good/well.)

3.1.3 RELATIONAL PREDICATIONS

Relational predications typically depend on purely relational terms that are themselves members of closed systems of meanings.¹⁶ Kinship systems are the prime example of this phenomenon, in Mekeo and in other languages. Systems of part-whole relations such as the parts of a house, the parts of a tree or the parts of the body are no less cultural in origin. There are different possible ways of dividing up the human body conceptually. Thus *age*, *ake* in Mekeo corresponds to both ‘mouth’ and ‘jaw’ in English. As we shall see, there are also some other, minor systems in which membership is either optional or provisional. And non-systemic items from the general vocabulary frequently also function as heads of relational predications.

The predication of relational terms like ‘mother of’ or ‘uncle of’ or ‘head of’ differs from the predication of class membership (identificational predications) or of some attribute (attribitional predications) in that there is a third term involved in each equation, linking the other two somewhat like a transitive verb. This third term is the relator (a kind of predicator) and this must be marked for agreement with one of the other two terms.¹⁷

- 3.69 *Eŋa'ina isa ŋau-ŋa.* (EMek)
 that s/he child-3SG
 That is her child.

The third term – the relator – institutes a transitive type of relation between the other two, establishing their functions – the first topic corresponding to the subject of a verb, the second topic to its object. The relator (which corresponds to a verb in virtue of its predicative function, its final position and its status as syntactic head) is marked for the person and number of the second topic, or object. The structure of a relational predication can be shown as follows:

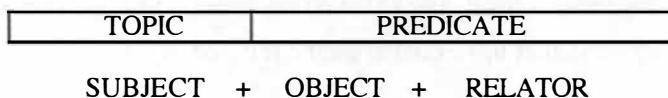


FIGURE 19: STRUCTURE OF A RELATIONAL PREDICATION

¹⁶ Relational predications are what is usually discussed as inalienable or direct possession. Since they often form closed subsystems (e.g. kin terms), such relations may sometimes be called ‘systemic’ (a term that is in this context quite unconnected with the school of systemic linguistics).

¹⁷ Both of which must be referential.

In contrast with verbal predications, the object of this construction never receives tonic salience. This is reserved for the relational term, the relator, which is always the focus.

Some simple examples (containing no rankshifted constituents) follow:

- | | SUBJECT | OBJECT | RELATOR | |
|------|--------------------|-------------|------------------------------|--------|
| 3.70 | <i>Isa</i> | <i>[lau</i> | <i>ama-u].</i> ¹⁸ | (EMek) |
| | s/he | I | father-1SG | |
| | He (is) my father. | | | |

With ellipsis of the object function:

- | | SUBJECT | RELATOR | |
|------|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------|
| 3.71 | <i>Iji</i> | <i>[ina-ma].</i> ¹⁹ | (WMek) |
| | I | mother-2SG | |
| | I (am) your mother. | | |

And, with ellipsis of the subject function, the predicate alone is encoded:

- | | OBJECT | RELATOR | |
|------|------------------------|----------------|--------|
| 3.72 | <i>Oai</i> | <i>ina-ma.</i> | (WMek) |
| | you | mother-2SG | |
| | (She is) your mother). | | |

This last example represents the kind of elliptical predication – a bare predicate – that so often functions as a group. A third person singular subject has been deleted, the original full underlying predicate being:

- | | | | |
|------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------|
| 3.73 | <i>Ida</i> | <i>[oai ina-ma].</i> | (WMek) |
| | s/he | you mother-2SG | |
| | She (is) your mother. | | |

I derive all determinate nouns from tripartite predications of this nature.²⁰ Thus *ima-u* ‘my hand’ (hand-1SG) derives from an underlying:

- | | | | |
|------|--------------------|---------------------|--------|
| 3.74 | <i>N̄a</i> | <i>[lau ima-u].</i> | (EMek) |
| | DX | I hand-1SG | |
| | That (is) my hand. | | |

Rankshifted predicates can occur freely as the subject or as the object of relational predications. Thus, in the next example, the current subject of *imā* is deleted, and *ama-u*, the current object, represents an original relator in another predication, now downranked:

- | | OBJECT | RELATOR | |
|------|--|-------------|--------|
| 3.75 | <i>Ama-u</i> | <i>imā.</i> | (EMek) |
| | father-1SG | hand.3SG | |
| | (That is) my father’s hand. (lit: (That is) my father) (That is) his hand!)) | | |

The full, underlying version of this example can be restored as follows:

¹⁸ Object and relator together form the predicate and are here bracketed together.

¹⁹ The full predication is assumed to be: *Iji* [oai ina-ma].

²⁰ Since first writing this I have discovered that Joindreau (1907/1968, §4.12, but especially subsection 4.123), had a similar analysis of Roro NPs, and saw the existence of underlying or deleted subject pronouns as a necessary hypothesis in order to explain the person/number agreement of the relational or determining suffixes on the head word.

**ŋaʔina [isa lau ama-u] ima-ŋa.*

That is, 'that [he I father-1SG] hand-3SG'. In the next example both subject and object are rankshifted relational predicates:

- 3.76 *Ia aji-na apagua-u agawā.* (NWMek)
 s/he younger-3SG elder-1SG spouse.3SG
 same-sex sibling cross-sex sibling
 Her/his younger same-sex sibling is my elder cross-sex sibling's spouse.

Assuming that *ia* is male (and that the ego of whom an elder sibling is posited is also male), the underlying structure can be represented (using S and O for Subject and Object, and indexing pronominal referents) as follows:

S	O	Relator		S	O	Relator		S	O	Relator
[ia _i	ia _j	aji-na]		[ia _k	iji	apagua-u]		[ia _i	ia _k	agawā]
[He is his	younger	brother]		[she is my	elder	sister]		[he is her	spouse]	

It is clear that any rankshifted predicate, whatever marking it carries, and whether as subject or object, will function as a third person singular(/third person plural) grammatical actant. For example, *afakua-u* 'my elder sister' (EMek) and *aki-mu apala-i* 'your naughty younger brothers' (EMek) will function after rankshift as third person singular and third person plural nominals respectively, despite their first person singular and second person plural marking. Thus, a new predicate (i.e. relator) will be marked for third person singular or third person plural.

In some utterances a deleted first or second person object can obscure this:

- 3.77 *Iji imi-u agawa-ma.* (WMek)
 I child-1SG spouse-2SG
 My child is your wife.

Here the relator carries a second person singular determining suffix (i.e. *not* third person singular), in agreement with a deleted *oai* (as in underlying *iji imi-u oai agawa-ma*) rather than in agreement with *imi-u* (which *is* third person singular). Compare:

- 3.78 *Iji imi-u agawā.* (WMek)
 I child-1SG spouse.3SG
 My child is his/her spouse.

When the objects are plural the relators are of course marked for *their* number (the objects') not that of the subjects. In the next example the subjects (as topics) have been dropped and all we can be sure of is that the objects are plural. Incidentally, there is no way of telling from the marking how many women/wives are at issue.

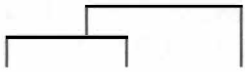
- 3.79 *Ida babie-tsi ai agawa-mi.* (WMek)
 they woman-3PL we.E spouse-1PL.E
 Their woman/women is/are our wife/wives.

It would not help even if the subjects were (redundantly) given, as these themselves are not distinctive for number. For example:

- 3.80 S O Relator S O Relator
 **Ida ida babie-tsi, ke ida ai agawa-mi.* (WMek)
 they they woman-3PL and they we.E spouse-1PL.E
 This/these is/are their woman/women and this/these is/are our wife/wives.

The number of *babie-tsi* in the above refers to the first *ida* – the possessor of the women – not to the women themselves.

Rankshifted predicates can also occur as topics of verbal predications:

- 3.81  (EMek:D)
 you renown-2SG noise.3SG 3SG-bad
 The noise of your acclaim is very great.

The predicate *aʔō* quite regularly takes third person singular marking (*pani-mu* is a third person singular topic), as does the verb word, since (*oi*) *pani-mu* is a third person singular subject-topic. (*Aʔo* means ‘noise’ rather than ‘loud’ or ‘loudness’ (though their are connotations of loudness). *Pani-mu aʔō* as a predication is ‘(That is) the noise of your renown’.²¹)

Plural number in Mekeo is – as already noted – strongly *marked*,²² and will not be overtly expressed unless the situation demands very explicit coding of number. Accordingly most noun topics are treated, morphosyntactically, as if they had common number (‘a form that disregards the distinction between singular and plural’ (Jespersen 1924/1977). They function morphosyntactically as *either* singular *or* plural, as the utterance situation demands. For example:

- 3.82 *ima-ʔa ofē* (EMek)
 hand-1PL.I nail.3SG
 fingernail(s) (lit. our hand its naio.)

In common parlance *imaʔa ofē* stands for ‘fingernails’, although both words are obligatorily marked for an essentially arbitrary person and number (*ima-ʔa* ‘our hand(s); *ofē* singular ‘hand’ rather than plural), the precise formal meaning therefore being: ‘The nail(s) of our hand’. [*Ofē* ‘nail’ gets its singular number from *ima* ‘hand’ – which is thus singular. The number of *ofe* itself is common – or unknown.] *Ima-ʔa ofe-ʔi* ‘The nail(s) of our hands’ is of course possible (i.e. with plural hands), but it would undoubtedly be regarded as extremely fussy in most contexts.

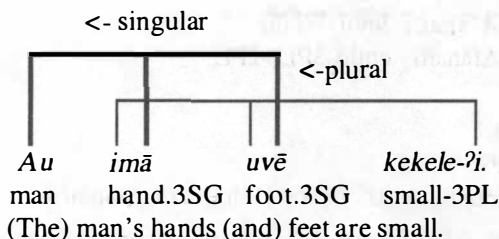
If it is necessary to be explicit about the plural number of a relational predicate, the other available strategy, frequently preferred by native speakers, is predication of another attribute:

21 Just as *kua-u aʔō*, ‘my nose its noise’ = ‘my snoring’, derives from the predication: ‘(That is) the noise of my nose’.

22 *Marked*, that is, in the technical sense introduced for this term by the Prague School and since widely adopted. I italicise this use of the word.

3.83

(EMek)



The new predicate can simply be the universal instantiator/relativiser *au-ŋa* (with plurals, *au-kia/au-ki* (NWMek), *au-tsi* (WMek, NMek), *au-ʔi/au-i* (EMek)) as in:

- 3.84 *Ima-ʔa ofē au-i.* (EMek)
 hand-1PL.I nail one -3PL
 Our fingernail(s) (are) the ones. OR: (the ones which are) our fingernails

Plural number can also be shown by the predication of *mako-ai*, *maʔo-ai*:

- 3.85 *Ineu bui-na mako-ai.* (NMek)
 bird feather-3SG many-OBL
 The bird has many feathers. (OR: all the bird's feathers)

In normal speech many groups with third person objects are left unmodified and without other expansion, and thus remain ultimately ambiguous as to number. Examples (from EMek) are:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>3.86 <i>eŋo pani-na</i>
 cockatoo wing-3SG
 (the) cockatoo's wing
 OR:
 cockatoo wings</p> | <p>3.87 <i>eŋo pani-ʔi</i>
 cockatoo wing-3PL
 (the) cockatoos' wing(s)
 OR:
 cockatoo wings</p> |
|---|--|
- <----->

The third person plural determining suffix *-ʔi* in example 3.87 refers primarily to *eŋo*, and only implicationally as it were to *pani*, its carrier. Note that the non-specific reading holds in both versions.

An added complication here in terms of agreement is the possibility of embedding a relational predication within an identificational predication:

- 3.88 *Lai Deo ŋau-ŋa.* (EMek)
 we.E God child-3SG
 We are God's children.
- 3.89 *Lai Deo ŋau-ŋa au-ʔa.* (EMek)
 we.E God child-3SG man-1PL
 We are followers of God's son.

The person and number of the term to be identified may be substituted for the person and number of the object of the embedded relational predicate, which is simply cancelled out and lost:

3.90

(EMek)

Underlying: *Oi [isa Afanaifi imoi -ʔi]-mi.*
 you (are) [they (are) Afanaifi child-3PL]-2PL

↓

Surface: *Oi Afanaifi imoi-mi.*
 you Afanaifi child-2PL

You (are) Afanaifi children. ALSO: O you children of Afanaifi!

This then is one way to derive phrases like *bauŋa babiau-tsi* (WMek) ‘(the) village people-3PL’, where the third person plural determining suffix on *babiau* agrees with a deleted *ida* ‘they’, which is the term being identified in a rankshifted identificational predication:

IDENTIFIED	IDENTIFIER.....
------------	-----------------

3.91 *Ida [ida ŋa bauŋa babiau-ŋa]-tsi.* (WMek)
 they [they that village people -3SG]-3PL

↓

ŋa bauŋa babiau-tsi
 that village people-3PL
 (the) people of that village

Village names and clan names are notionally either singular or plural. For this reason, we can have either of the following patterns of noun-verb agreement. Pepeo in the following refers to a village community:

3.92 *Pepeo e-pi-paini.*
 Pepeo 3SG-REC-fight
 Pepeo is fighting

3.93 *Pepeo ke-pi-paini.*
 Pepeo 3PL-REC-fight
 The Pepeo people are fighting

(EMek)

The word *βaβiau*, *babiau*, *papiiau* can also be interpreted as singular or plural. However, while this might explain *bauŋa babiau-tsi* (village people-3PL) as a case of simple agreement, in order to explain *oai bauŋa babiau-mi* (you village people-2PL) it is necessary to assume an underlying embedding of a relational predication such as was proposed for example 3.90 above.

In everyday Mekeo unmotivated redundancy is rare, and the ‘elliptical’ *Afanaifi imoi* ‘(The) Afanaifi child(ren)’, would often be preferred to either *Afanaifi imoi-na* or *Afanaifi imoi-(?)i*, while the exact person and number of this group would be shown (if necessary) by the person and number of the subject marker on the verb-word.

In order to demonstrate how relationships are predicated of things not intrinsically related, thereby enriching the lexical resources of the language, I first give an example (from a traditional story) of a kin-term used in a ‘classificatory’ sense, this time in the third person:

3.94 *Eŋo, afu-afu imoi-na.*
 cockatoo widow child-3SG

(EMek)

Cockatoo (OR: The cockatoo) (is the) widow’s child.²³

²³ *Eŋo* is here either generic (‘The cockatoo is a noisy bird/Cockatoos are noisy birds.’) or personified (‘Cockatoo was cunning.’). It is impossible to say which.

A rankshifted relational predication can always lose its subject-topic – topics being largely optional – before functioning as a constituent of a matrix predication:

- 3.95 *Afu-afu imoi-na, e-ŋopo-lei.* (EMek)
 widow child-3SG 3SG-fly-AT
 The widow's child flew away.

In the same way, a verbal predication like the following can be analysed as containing a reduced relational predication:

- 3.96 *Vafu ?o?olo-ŋa la-loŋo.* (EMek)
 darkness cock/chicken-3SG 1SG-hear/heard
 I hear/have heard the dawn rooster (lit. the cock of darkness).

I propose that the underlying predication is: *ŋaina [vafu ?o?olo-ŋa]* 'That('s) the dawn rooster'. This can be compared with an identificational predication: *ŋaina ?o?olo* 'That('s) a rooster', and the rankshifted expression: *ŋaina ?o?olo-ŋa* 'that rooster'.

The relational predications contained in examples 3.94 and 3.95 differ from previous examples of relational predications in that the speaker is in these cases predicating a nonce relation between two definite entities. The relator is a substantive noun, and prototypically so, but it is here treated structurally like an abstract relational term. The metaphor of a grammatical relation thus allows people to coin new naming expressions.

3.1.4 LOCATIVE-RELATIONAL PREDICATIONS

Space-time nominals represent a semantic sub-category of determinate nominals. They merit special treatment, however, by virtue of the fact that they have become largely grammaticalised. These spatial concept words – time is apparently a derivative concept, linguistically if not psychologically – had originally very concrete meanings. They named body parts or spatial aspects of objects in nature. Many have, in some of their uses, developed into rather more abstract terms, and now form a very useful class of semigrammatical functors, usually found as case-marked postpositions. Some (like EMek *aloŋai* 'extremely') have developed purely idiomatic uses.

Just like the other determinate-relational nouns described in the preceding sections, postpositional nouns always carry a determining suffix indicating the person and number of their 'object noun'. Space-time relations unmarked for case rarely occur as full predicates in independent predications, but they are commonly found as the heads of rankshifted predications. The entire rankshifted predication can thus function as one of the actants in a verbal or non-verbal matrix predication, i.e. as a group. This unit can now appear in a nominative, accusative or allative case role (Mekeo makes no such distinctions of course). Some examples follow:

- 3.97 *Alo-mu e-ŋama.*²⁴ (nominative)
 inside-2SG 3SG-burgeon
 You are happy. OR: Your heart/mind is 'joyful'.

²⁴ The term *ŋama* is almost impossible to gloss. It means at least 'swell, grow, come to fulfilment, be whole, be well, be happy'. 'Burgeon' is a compromise.

3.98 *Alo-u lo-pa-ŋama.* (accusative)
 inside-1SG 2SG-CAUS-burgeon
 You have made/make my heart 'joyful'.

3.99 *Aŋo alō ke-lao.* (allative)
 land/bush inside.3SG 3PL-go
 They have gone to the bush.

Compare the last example with this next one:

3.100 *Aŋo alō ke-koko.* (inessive)
 land/bush inside.3SG 3PL-enter
 They have gone into the bush.

Consistent with the classlessness of Mekeo bases, *ao*, *alo* 'inside' also functions as a common verb meaning 'go in, go out, cease' (semantically very similar to *gogo*, *koko* 'go in, disappear'). Note the two contradictory senses of the verb.

All told, the postpositional nouns are most frequently found as the heads of adverbial predications. They then carry an additional oblique case marking suffix (-*AI*) – in addition, that is, to a determining suffix – to show that the predication of which they are the head stands in a circumstantial relation to the predication in which it occurs. Indeed, when marked as oblique, these nouns are far more likely to occur as the predicate-heads of independent predications, with primarily deictic (locative or temporal) meaning. (A small number of postpositional nouns, having the specialised meanings of cause, reason, or purpose, can function as subordinating conjunctions, and these will be discussed in §8.3.2 below.)

Note that a third person singular determining suffix *-ŋa*, that has been 'swallowed', as in examples 3.99 and 3.100 above, resulting in word-final stress and compensatory lengthening of the final vowel, reappears as *ŋ* when the oblique case-marking suffix is added:

3.101 *E?a alo-ŋ-ai e-aŋu.* (EMek)
 house inside-3SG-OBL 3SG-sit
 S/he is sitting inside the house.

3.102 *Aŋo ao-ŋ-ai!* (WMek)
 bush inside-3SG-OBL
 (He/she/it is) in the bush!

The Mekeo oblique also covers ablative-type meanings, as in the next examples:

3.103 *Eka ao-ŋ-ai e-boa-lai.* (WMek)
 house inside-3SG-OBL 3SG-walk-AT
 S/he came out of the house.

3.104 *Alo-u-ai la-iva.* (EMek)
 inside-1SG-OBL 1SG-speak
 I speak/have spoken according to my heart.

Aloŋai(-na) has, as noted above, come to be used as an intensifier. As such, in its derived form, it can appear as a finite verb: *e-alonai* '3SG-excessive/terrific'. See §6.1.13.

I shall now give examples of some of the most commonly used postpositions, in some of their most common usages, proceeding in alphabetical order.

1. *Aa-ŋ-ai, laa-ŋ-ai* ‘top-3SG-OBL’ (< AA ‘top of anything’).

3.105 *Eka aa-ŋa e-aŋa.* (NMek)
 house top-3SG 3SG-burn
 The top of the house is burning/has burnt.

3.106 *Aŋo aa-ŋ-ai ge-aŋu-aŋu.* (EMek)
 land top-3SG-OBL 3PL-sit-sit
 They live/have lived in the high country.

3.107 *ʔuma pio laa-mu-ai e-kapa.* (EMek)
 pig cassowary top-2SG-OBL 3SG-do
 Your mortuary fast is at an end. (lit. (The chief) has passed pig and cassowary over you(r head).

2. *Age-ŋ-ai, ake-ŋ-ai* ‘mouth-3SG-OBL’ (< AGE ‘mouth of anything’).

3.108 *Afu akē e-poŋu.* (EMek)
 place mouth.3SG 3SG-full
 There is no room/space.

3.109 *Ubi agē bebelā ma maua ma?* (WMek)
 water mouth.3SG small INT large INT
 Is the mouth of the river narrow or is it wide?

3.110 *Ŋaŋa age-ŋ-ai i-aŋu-uga.* (WMek)
 canoe mouth-3SG-OBL 3SG-sit-enter
 S/he sat down (in the ‘hold’ of) the canoe.

3.111 *Eʔa ake-ŋ-ai e-pea-lai.* (EMek)
 house mouth-3SG-OBL 3SG-walk-DIST
 S/he went out the door of the house.

3. *Ao-ŋ-ai, alo-ŋ-ai* ‘inside-3SG-OBL’ (< AO ‘inside’).²⁵ See the examples given above.4. *Aŋo-ŋ-ai* ‘front-3SG-OBL’ (< AŊO ‘front, breast’).

3.112 *Lopia aŋo-i-ai e-aŋu-e.* (EMek)
 chief front-3PL-OBL 3SG-sit-CONT
 S/he is sitting in front of the chiefs.

3.113 *Aŋo-ka ibi-na' a-na-ao.* (WMek)
 front-1PL.I week-3SG FUT-1SG-go
 I will go next week (Sunday).

3.114 *Kopu aŋo-ŋ-ai gi-apa-e.* (WMek)
 clanhouse front-3SG-OBL 3PL-stand-CONT
 They are/were standing in front of the clan house.

5. *Ape-ŋ-ai, afe-ŋ-ai* ‘outside-3SG-OBL’ (< APE ‘far side, outer side’).

²⁵ In WMek especially (but also NWMek, NMek) one frequently hears *o-ŋ-ai* for *ao-ŋ-ai*.

- 3.115 *Afē mo-iva.* (EMek)
 outside.3SG IMP.2SG-speak
 Say the rest!
- 3.116 *Kupu afe-ŋ-ai e-ka-e.* (EMek)
 bush outside-3SG-OBL 3SG-lie-CNT
 It lies/is lying behind the bush/thicket.
- 3.117 *Ibi ape-ŋ-ai pa-boa.* (WMek)
 week outside-3SG-OBL OBLG.1SG-walk
 I should leave after next week/Sunday.
6. *Awani-n-ai, lavani-n-ai* ‘left-3SG-OBL’ (< *AWANI* ‘left-hand, clumsiness, bad luck’).
- 3.118 *Awani-u-ai i-aŋu-e.* (WMek)
 left-1SG-OBL 3SG-sit-CNT
 S/he sits/is sitting on my left.
- 3.119 *Ima lavani-n-ai e-kai.* (EMek)
 hand left-3SG-OBL 3SG-slip
 S/he slipped by on the left.
- 3.120 *Ifō kai-na-mo avani-na-mo.* (EMek)
 self.3SG right-3SG-just left-3SG-just
 It is up to him to work it out.
7. *βaβa-ŋ-ai, baba-ŋ-ai, papa-ŋ-ai* ‘underneath, at the bottom of’ (< *BABA* ‘bottom’).
- 3.121 *Au baba-ŋ-ai uwe gi-aka-baŋai-n-a.* (WMek)
 wood bottom-3SG-OBL vine 3PL-pull-cross-TH-3SG
 They pull the vine across beneath the wood.
- 3.122 *Iku papa-ŋ-ai e-ka-e.* (EMek)
 mountain bottom-3SG-OBL 3SG-lie-CNT
 It lies at the bottom of the mountain.
- 3.123 *Lau papa-ŋ-ai la-mia.* (EMek)
 I bottom-3SG-OBL 1SG-be
 I came bottom, last. OR: I was despised.
8. *Eβo-ŋ-ai, ebo-ŋ-ai, epo-ŋ-ai* ‘between, during’ (< *EBO* ‘interval’).
- 3.124 *Keaŋa epō e-maeva apala.* (EMek)
 path middle 3SG-long bad
 The path is very long.
- 3.125 *Kuku-ŋa ebō e-au-n-i-a.* (WMek)
 breast-3SG middle 3SG-hit-TH-PF-3SG
 He struck her between the breasts.
- 3.126 *Papiau epo-ʔi-ai e-inipai.* (EMek)
 people middle-3PL-OBL 3SG-collapse
 S/he collapsed in the middle of the people.

- 3.127 *Uabu ebo-ŋ-ai uma i-ao.* (WMek)
rain middle-3SG-OBL garden 3SG-go
S/he went to the garden during the rain.
9. *Iβuaina-ŋ-ai, ibuaina-ŋ-ai, ipuaina-ŋ-ai* ‘in the middle of’ (< *IBU* ‘middle’).
- 3.128 *Lobia ibuaina-ŋ-ai i-aŋu.* WMek
chief middle-3SG-OBL 3SG-sit
The chief sits/sat in the centre.
10. *Ina-ŋ-ai, inae-ŋ-ai* ‘in the centre of’ (< *INAE* ‘stomach, intestines’).
- 3.129 *Vei inae-ŋa ?e?ele ma akaikia ma?* (EMek)
water centre-3SG small INT large INT
Is the river narrow or wide?
- 3.130 *Aŋo inae-ŋ-ai ke-la?a-fou.* (EMek)
land centre-3SG-OBL 3PL-pull-together
They assemble/assembled in the middle of the village.
11. *Gai-n-ai, kai-n-ai*, also *gai-na-ŋ-ai, kai-na-ŋ-ai* (< *GAI* ‘side, way, direction towards; right side, right direction, correct, good; purpose’).
- 3.131 *ŋaina mo kaina-ŋ-ai puo a-isa.* (EMek)
that just side-3SG-OBL cause 1PL-see
Because it was near to there we saw it.
- 3.132 *Binauŋa gai-na gi-io.* (NWMek)
garden direction-3SG 3PL-go
They are going/have gone to the garden.
- 3.133 *Oi ?uma i-pua kai-n-ai.* (EMek)
you pig PASS-carry purpose-3SG-OBL
It’s your job to carry the pig.
- 3.134 *Iza gai-na a-gai.* (NMek)
s/he purpose-3SG 1SG-wait
I’m waiting/waited for her/him.
12. *Ke-ŋ-ai, ?e-ŋ-ai* ‘in the proximity of’ (< *KE* ‘side of, place of’).
- 3.135 *?e-u-ai e-ka-e.* (EMek)
side-1SG-OBL 3SG-lie-CNT
I have some. (lit. There is some at me.)
- 3.136 *Paul ke-ŋa mo-ao!* (WMek)
Paul side-3SG IMP.2SG-go
Go to Paul!
- 3.137 *Peto ke-ŋ-ai la-mai.* (NMek)
Peter side-3SG-OBL 1SG-come
I’ve come from Peter (Peter’s place).

13. *ʔe-ʔe-ŋ-ai*, EMek, ‘very near’ (< KE, as above).

- 3.138 *Atsiava ʔe-ʔe-ŋ-ai, imu a-ŋe-ʔau.* (EMek)
 midday near-RED-3SG-OBL rain FUT-3SG-fall
 It will rain close to midday.

14. *Koni-n-ai, ʔoni-n-ai* ‘at the tip of’ (< KONI ‘tip, peak’).

- 3.139 *Aŋo koni-n-ai e-mai.* (EMek)
 land tip-3SG-OBL 3SG-come
 S/he has come from the ends of our land.

- 3.140 *Ima-mu ʔoni-n-ai e-ka-e.* (EMek)
 hand-2SG tip-3SG-OBL 3SG-lie-CNT
 It is at the tip of your fingers.

- 3.141 *Iva ʔoni-n-ai e-mai.* (EMek)
 speech tip-3SG-OBL 3SG-come
 S/he has come at the merest hint (of an invitation).

15. *Koŋo-ŋ-ai, ʔoŋo-ŋ-ai* ‘under the protection of’ (< KOŋO ‘refuge, safe place’).

- 3.142 *Lai Sista James ʔoŋo-ŋ-ai a-kai.* (EMek)
 we.E Sister James protection-3SG-OBL 1PL-slip
 We got under the protection of Sister James.

16. *Kopu-ŋ-ai, kofu-ŋ-ai, ʔofu-ŋ-ai* ‘underneath, beneath’ (< KOPU ‘space underneath’).

- 3.143 *Imoi eʔa ʔofu-ŋ-ai ke-ʔopua.* (EMek)
 child house under-3SG-OBL 3PL-play
 The children are playing/played beneath the house.

- 3.144 *Eka kofu-ŋa fo-ŋe!* (NMek)
 house under-3SG OBLG.2SG-put
 Put it under the house!

17. *Maʔe-ŋ-ai, mabe-ŋ-ai, mape-ŋ-ai* ‘beside’ (< MABE ‘side, ribcage, ribs’).

- 3.145 *Tsitoa mape-ŋ-ai!* (EMek)
 store side-3SG-OBL
 It’s beside the store!

- 3.146 *Eka mabe-ŋ-ai ŋaŋa e-ba-aba.* (WMek)
 house side-3SG-OBL canoe 3SG-CA-stand
 He is building a/the canoe beside the house.

18. *Meke-ŋ-ai, meʔe-ŋ-ai* ‘at the side of, to one side of, from the side’ (< MEKE ‘cheek’).

- 3.147 *Ibiou meke-ŋ-ai e-gogo.* (WMek)
 girl side-3SG-OBL 3SG-enter
 The girl has strayed from the straight and narrow.

- 3.148 *Imoi koà meʔe-ŋa-mo e-iva.* (EMek)
 child like side-3SG-just 3SG-speak
 S/he spoke irrelevantly, like a child.

19. *Muni-ai, muni-n-ai* ‘behind, after, later’ (*MUNI* ‘back of something, space behind something’).

3.149 *Au eʔa muni-n-ai.* (EMek)

man house behind-3SG-OBL
The man is behind the house.

3.150 *Muni-ai a-la-lao.* (EMek)

behind-OBL FUT-1SG-go
I’ll go later.

3.151 *Muni-u-ai ne-ge-boa.* (WMek)

behind-1SG-OBL FUT-3PL-walk
They will walk behind me.

20. *Nie-ŋ-ai* ‘on the edge of’ (< *NIE* ‘tooth’).

3.152 *Lau e-u uma vei nie-ŋ-ai.* (EMek)

I POSS-1SG garden water edge-3SG-OBL
My garden is on the river-bank.

3.153 *Uŋa-uŋa gia nie-ŋ-ai i-aba-e.* (WMek)

sorcerer path edge-3SG-OBL 3SG-stand-CNT
The sorcerer stood at the edge of the path.

21. *Oŋo-ŋ-ai* ‘in the shade of, in the shelter of’ (< *OŋO* ‘shadow, shade’).

3.154 *Au oŋo-ŋ-ai ge-pi.* (WMek)

tree shade-3SG-OBL 3PL-sleep
They sleep/slept in the shade of the tree.

22. *Poki-n-ai, poji-n-ai, fotsi-n-ai, foʔi-n-ai* ‘at the base of’ (< *POKI* ‘base or foot of something, foundation’).

3.155 *Au-ma fotsi-na fo-iza.* (NMek)

foot-2SG base-3SG OBLG.2SG-see
Watch your step, look out for yourself.

3.156 *Lau ife-u foʔi-n-ai e-aŋu-e.* (EMek)

I foot-1SG base-3SG-OBL 3SG-sit-CNT
S/he belongs to my household.

23. *Foi-n-ai*, EMek, ‘under the house’ (< *POKI* ‘space under house used for storage’).

3.157 *Njaŋa foi-n-ai e-feu.* (EMek)

canoe under-3SG-OBL 3SG-sleep
S/he sleeps/slept under a canoe.

24. *Uu-ŋ-ai, uŋu-ŋ-ai* ‘at the bottom of, behind’ (< *UNU* ‘buttocks’).

3.158 *Uŋū lo-aŋu-e.* (EMek)

behind.3SG 2SG-sit-CNT
You are behind him.

- 3.159 *Lau uŋu-mi-ai a-la-koni.* (EMek)
 I behind-2PL-OBL FUT-1SG-push
 I will guide you from behind.

3.1.5 COMPARATIVE PREDICATIONS²⁶

Comparison in Mekeo²⁷ can be expressed periphrastically in three different ways, corresponding to Stassen's (1985) "conjoined comparative with antonymous predicates", his "conjoined comparative with positive-negative polarity" and, with some reservations, to his "exceed comparative". The first three examples illustrate these three constructions in order of mention:

- 3.160 *Ike-ŋa tsi-tsino, eke-ŋa maua.* (NWMek)
 this-TOP RD-small that-TOP big
 That is bigger than this. (lit. This is small, that is big.)
- 3.161 *Ŋaea au-ŋa belo aibaia, engaea au-ŋa belo.* (WMek)
 that one-3SG beautiful not that one-3SG beautiful
 That one is more/less beautiful than that one. (lit. That one is not beautiful, that one is beautiful.)
- 3.162 *Ina'ina maeva-ŋa kai, ina'ina mae-maeva-alonaina.* (EMek)
 this long-3SG ADV this RD-long-very
 This one is much longer than this one. (lit. This one is long but this one is very long.)

Besides the foregoing syntactic mechanisms for expressing comparisons, Mekeo employs the bases already listed in §2.2.1.6 to form comparative predications:

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| a) <i>go-ŋa, goà, koà</i> | true likeness |
| b) <i>ioi-na</i> | same, equal |
| c) <i>alai-na</i> | same, equal |
| d) <i>galai-na, kalai-na</i> | same, equal |
| e) <i>i-kobo, i-ʔopo (i-kobo-ŋa, i-ʔopo-ŋa)</i> | measure |
| f) <i>ikoi-na, ikui-na, iʔoi-na</i> | other |

The lexical root most often employed to express equivalence in Mekeo is *kobo, ʔopo* 'measure, test, try, sample'. This is usually used (in the three eastern dialects at least) in the doubly derived form of a nominalised verbal: *i-kobo-ŋa, i-ʔopo-ŋa* 'its being measured, its having been measured' > 'its measure or its measurement'. This is usually interpreted in Mekeo as meaning 'its equivalent, or equal'.

²⁶ The syntactic expression of comparative propositions has been shown by Stassen (1985), on the basis of cross-linguistic research, to be related to a number of syntactic variables. He associates the types of constructions found in Mekeo and Motu with languages that in general allow no deletion under identity across clauses and no deranking (= desententialisation) of clauses. These he calls "balancing languages".

²⁷ An interesting WMek term for competition is *age-ba-gua*, which possibly represents a generalisation of the EMek *ake e-pa-kua* 'contradict, rebut' (lit. 'make the mouth sore'). Nowadays, *uini* has been universally adopted (from English 'win'), as well as *ba-lutsi-n-a, pa-lutsi-n-a* 'beat, make lose' (based on English 'lose').

3.163 *Auke namò inema goà i-kobo-ŋa.* (WMek)
 dog this rat like NOM-measure-3SG
 This dog (is) like a rat. (lit. This dog (is) rat-like, (is) its measure.)

3.164 *Au namò iji goà i-kobo-u.* (WMek)
 man this me like NOM-measure-1SG
 (lit. This man (is) like me, (is) my measure.)

In NWMek the reciprocal prefix *pi*-²⁸ is used with *kobo* to form a different kind of nominal: *pi-kobo* ‘reciprocal measure’.

3.165 *Au ike pi-kobo iu go.* (NWMek)
 man this REC-measure me like
 This man, comparatively speaking, (is) like me.

Examples with *go*, *goà*, *koà*²⁹ alone abound. Here are just a few examples:

3.166 *A goà an-a-oma?* (WMek)
 what like FUT-1SG-DNT
 How shall I do/say/purpose?

In the next example *kai-na-ŋ-ai* translates as ‘nearby, close by’:

3.167 *Kai-na-ŋ-ai mo koa a-isa.* (EMek)
 direction-3SG-3SG-OBL just like 1PL-see
 We saw it as if it were just close by.

Note that in this last example the pronunciation was *koa*, not *koà*. There are in EMek a series of expressions that play on the meaning ‘truth, true likeness’:

3.168 *koa-ŋa-ŋa-mo koa-ŋa* (EMek)
 true-3SG-3SG-just true-3SG
 the very same

3.169 *Mauni-u koa-ŋa-ŋa-mo koa-ŋa ŋa-pa-ŋeŋe-lao!* (EMek)
 life-1SG true-3SG-3SG-just true-3SG IMP.3SG-CA-crawl-go
 I wish my life would carry on just as it is!

The next example contains an *I*-marked passive participle (see §5.5.2 below), as well as a more unusual compound comprising one typically nominal and one typically verbal root, but functioning as a nominal:

3.170 *Oi i-isa-mu ?afa-ŋeŋe koà, ?ia-mu.* (EMek:D)
 you PASS-see-2SG hang.on-crawl like dear-2SG
 Your looks are enough to make one creep/crawl, my dear.

Difference is expressed by means of *ikoi-na*, *ikui-na*, *i?oi-na*, as in:

²⁸ There is some difficulty with this *pi*- as in NWMek one expects *bi*- or *βi*-; the reciprocal prefix is in fact only rarely found in NWMek texts.

²⁹ The etymology of this item is confused. It probably represents a merger of a root meaning ‘true’ (cf. Kuni *doka*, Roro *toha*, *toa* ‘true’; Lala *doka-doka* ‘definitely’) with the adverbial particle *GO* meaning ‘still, yet’ (cf. Motu *do*, *do-hore*, Lala *do’o*, Balawaia, *rogħo*). In this section we can say that we are dealing with *GO*¹ (‘true likeness’). See §8.2.5 and the various sub-sections in §8.3.2 below for *GO*² meaning ‘yet’ and ‘if, when’.

3.171 *pina ikui-na ikui-na* (WMek)
feather different-3SG different-3SG
different kinds of feathers

3.172 *A?iva i?oi-na o-mai-s-ei-na.* (EMek)
knife different-3SG 2PL-bring-TH-TRT-SG
Bring a different knife.

Ikoi-na, ikui-na, i?oi-na are also used to mean ‘elsewhere’ (e.g. *I?oi-na-ŋa-ai e-aŋu-e* ‘S/he is (staying) somewhere else’). EMek also has *ava* meaning ‘different’.

3.1.6 POSSESSION/OWNERSHIP

Possession proper – that is to say the ownership of alienable property – is expressed in Mekeo by means of the diamorpheme *E-*, which has very variable realisations including zero (see §2.2.1.4). This is optionally preceded by a free or bound pronoun, but obligatorily suffixed with a pronominal suffix to show the person and number of the possessor. The word so formed is a possessive predicate (see Table 17 and Table 18 above for the full range of forms). That is, it *may* function as the focus of the predication, thus taking the main, tonic stress:

	TOPIC	TOPIC.....	FOCUS	
	TOPIC	TOPIC	FOCUS	Coda
3.173	<i>Eŋa?i-na,</i>	<i>lau</i>	<i>e-u</i>	<i>fo?ama.</i>
	that	I	POSS-1SG	food
	That is my (vegetable) food.			

Even when ‘food’ has been introduced as new information – a new topic – it may be mentioned again in the coda.

3.174 *Eŋa?i-na fo?ama, lau e-u fo?ama.* (EMek)
that food I POSS-1SG food
That food is my food.

The negative is expressed by means of the existential negators *maini, aibaia, laa’i*:

3.175 *E-u fo?ama laa’i.* (EMek)
POSS-1SG food not
I have no food. (lit. To me food not.)

3.176 *Ineina e-u laa’i.* (EMek)
axe POSS-1SG not
I have no axe(s). (lit. Axe to me not.)

3.177 *Afai³⁰ au-’i vei e-’i laa’i ipauma.* (EMek)
Afai man-3PL water POSS-3PL not ITS
The Afai people have very little water.

The following examples from 3.178 to 3.193 are to illustrate the range of possessive constructions, and morphosyntactic contrasts between the dialects. They also show how

³⁰ Afai/Afatsi is cognate with Gabadi; the village, now reduced to a few houses, has a strong historical connection with Gabadi, and may even be the geographical source of some at least of the present-day Gabadi speakers.

possession is questioned, with different kinds of demonstratives, and how different segments of these questions can be topicalised – or not:

- 3.178 *Inā auŋa, isa e-ŋa eʔa-ai e-aŋu.* (EMek)
 mother.3SG TOP she POSS-3SG house-OBL 3SG-sit
 His mother, she was living in her house.
- 3.179 *Inaina, isa-e-ŋa ma?* (EMek)
 this s/he/they-POSS-3SG INT?
 Is this his/hers/theirs.³¹
- 3.180 *Oi-e-mu eʔa, alaʔina?* (EMek)
 2SG-POSS-2SG house which
 Your house, which one is it?

The immediately following two examples also illustrate alternative cliticisation processes within the same dialect:

- 3.181 *Oai-ma eka, agaea?* (WMek)
 2SG-POSS.2SG house which
 Your house, which one is it?
- 3.182 *Namo, oai ma-eka make.* (WMek)
 this you POSS.2SG-house perhaps
 This is your house, is it?

A range of other examples is given below:

- 3.183 *Oi ama-ka auŋa, gabà?* (NWMek)
 you POSS.2SG-house TOP which
 Your house now, which one is it?
- 3.184 *Agea eka, iza na-eka?* (NMek)
 which house s/he POSS.3SG-house
 Which house is his house?
- 3.185 *Agai auŋa, iza tsia-eka?* (NMek)
 which TOP s/he/they POSS.3PL-house
 Which one is their house?
- 3.186 *Iza, tsia eka abaŋa auŋa, inae.* (NMek)
 they POSS.3PL house big TOP here
 Their big house is here.
- 3.187 *Ike eka, iu-ai.* (NWMek)
 this house I-POSS.1SG
 This house is mine.
- 3.188 *Eka maua goa eke, gai ia na-ka?* (NWMek)
 house big like that who s/he POSS.3SG-house
 That biggish house, whose is it?

³¹ Note that *isa* here like all third person pronouns can have a singular or a plural reading. It is the determining suffix *-ŋa* '3SG' (which contrasts with *-(?)i* '3PL') which retrospectively determines its number. I do not normally show in glosses that third person pronominals can in fact take a plural meaning, as this is not usually relevant to other points being made, but in this section I emphasise that they are in fact ambiguous.

- 3.189 *Eʔa akaikia ŋaʔina auŋa, kai-s-au i-e-ŋa eʔa?* (EMek)
 house big that TOP who-B-man s/he-POSS-3SG house
 That biggish house, whose is it?
- 3.190 *Inaʔina auŋa, iʔa ʔa eʔa.* (EMek)
 this TOP we.I POSS.1PL.I house
 This one is our house.
- 3.191 *Namo auŋa, ai mia-eka.* (WMek)
 this TOP we.E 1PL-house
 This one is *our* house.
- 3.192 *Ai eka, namo.* (WMek)
 we.E house this
 This is *our* house.

The last example illustrates what appears to be a new type of construction, with the possessum simply following possessor.³² This is regarded by some speakers as substandard but is popular with the young.

- 3.193 *Isa amuʔe e-aŋa-i-s-au.* (EMek)
 s/he/they dog 3SG-bite-PF-B-1SG
 His/her/their dog bit me.³³

Possession can also be expressed by means of the locative pronoun *KE-* (realised as *ke*, *ʔe*; see §2.2.1.7 above), which means something like ‘location, place’:

- 3.194 *Ke-u-ai pokama mako.* (WMek)
 LOC-1SG-OBL food much.
 I have lots of food.³⁴

The negative is again expressed by means of the existential negators:

- 3.195 *ʔe-u-ai foʔama laaʔi.* (EMek)
 LOC-1SG-OBL food not
 I have no food about me/in the house.

This construction can be verbalised by means of the verbal predicate *ga-e*, *ka-e* ‘lie-CNT’ (= ‘be’) in the third person singular:

- 3.196 *Ke-mu-ai moni e-ga-e-ŋa ma?* (WMek)
 LOC-2SG-OBL money 3SG-lie-CNT-3SG INT
 Do you have any money (on you)?

In which case the negative is expressed by a negative verb:

³² It was noted above (for relational predications) that, when a third person singular determining suffix *-ŋa* has been dropped, the compensatory lengthening of the stem-final vowel is often very weakly pronounced. A new unmarked possessive construction of the kind just exemplified means that alienable possession and relational predication will merge, structurally, in some contexts. Groups like *ida agawa* ‘s/he spouse’ (WMek) may thus be given an alienable interpretation, where ‘spouse’ is construed as property, a commodity for use, rather than a relation.

³³ This could also be taken to mean: ‘Him (= the dog), that dog, it bit me’.

³⁴ Literally ‘Location-me-at food not’ – while 3.175 above would be ‘Of-me food not.’ The possessive particles can never carry the oblique case marker: ***e-u-ai*.

- 3.197 *Ke-tsi-ai moni ai-d-e-ga-e.* (WMek)
 LOC-3PL-OBL money NEG-B-3SG-lie-CNT
 They have no money.

Possession can also be expressed by verbalising the possessum (\pm the causative prefix *BA*):

- 3.198 *Ke-fo²ama ke-²efu.*³⁵ (EMek)
 3PL-food 3PL-valuables
 They have food, they have valuables

- 3.199 *Ge-ba-pokama.* (WMek)
 3PL-CA-food
 They have/own food

Another way of expressing possession is (to anticipate §3.3.1 below) with the relational predicate *MEI*:

- 3.200 *I-fau mei η ou- η a.* (EMek)
 PASS-plant with rule-3SG
 Planting has rules.

Emphatic possession is often nowadays expressed by means of relational predications based on the term: *a β u*, *abu*, *apu* ‘portion, share, property’.

- 3.201 *η aeake iji abu-u!* (WMek)
 this I property-1SG
 This belongs to me!

The emphatic personal pronoun is also used to express exclusive possession:

- 3.202 *Ia ipo na- η a η a.* (NWMek)
 s/he self.3SG 3SG-canoe
 It is his/her own canoe.

3.1.7 RECURSIVE DETERMINATION

Recursive determination means recursive rightward predication and is the sole mechanism for syntactic expansion on the non-verbal level of grammar. It is not very common in conversational discourse, but it is certainly productive.

The object-focus of the following verbal instruction, for example, represents a doubly rankshifted/embedded predicate:

- F..... Core
 T.. F1.....
 T..... F2..... Core
 3.203 *Au kakaepa foa η a o-kapu- η a.* (EMek)
 tree straight stout 2PL-seek-3SG
 Look for a straight and a stout tree!

The first embedded predication is: ‘(The) tree (is) straight’ (*kakaepa- η a*). The second predication is: ‘[(The) tree (is) straight] > [(The) straight tree] (is) stout’ (*foa η a*).

³⁵ Both tokens of the prefix *ke-* are 3PL subject markers on finite state verbs.

The same process, whereby one can add successive nominal predications together to form complex strings, can be seen in operation in the following example, where the last member of the string is functioning as the *main* predicate (P = predicate):

- 3.204 [[[oʔolo uŋu-ŋa] kelo-ŋa] akā] kofi-na] (EMek)
 P1 P2 P3 P4 P5
 chicken tail-3SG white-3SG name.3SG 'kofi'-3SG
 The white tail-feathers of the chicken are called the 'kofi'. (lit. (This is:)
 the chicken, its tail(feathers), its white(ness), its name, its 'kofi'.)

A final example is of a rankshifted identificational predicate:

- 3.205 goba-goba nagu-nagu-ŋa nirikani-na (WMek)
 brideprice.payment cook-RED-3SG talk-3SG
 the discussion about the feast for the brideprice payment

It is sometimes suggested that certain languages, related to or similar to Mekeo, do not tolerate strings of 'adjectival' modifiers of different kinds, or even of the same kind.³⁶ This is not the case for Mekeo at any rate.

3.2 MARKED NOMINAL PREDICATIONS

When a deictic, or a quantifier, functions as the predicate of a nominal predication, I regard this as a marked predicate. These are in effect pro-nominal items. In particular, they assume that the hearer can see and identify the referent. A deictic, or a quantifier, thus represents definite (although limited) information, and thus old information, and it begs definition or expansion in terms of new and more detailed information. As a predicate, however, it is presented *as* defining information, and this only occurs naturally in response to a WHICH question (in the case of deictics), or a HOW MUCH/MANY question (in the case of quantifiers).

Marked predicates correspond – after rankshift – to relativised topics.

3.2.1 DEICTIC PREDICATES

These are quite common. They occur in identificational predications when the denotation is given but the reference is not. They are also the main source of rankshifted groups in verbal predications.³⁷

- 3.206 Amuʔe eŋaʔi-na. (EMek)
 dog that-3SG
 That's the dog. (lit. (The) dog is that (one).)

The above utterance would be the reponse to a question: 'Which dog do you mean?' The next example might be in answer to the question: 'Which one is your father?'

³⁶ See for example Petrie (1980:27) on Roro: "Adjectives apparently occur in no special order relative to each other, although adjective strings are uncommon, and felt to be awkward to handle" (emphasis added).

³⁷ That is, groups with the form: N + DX outnumber those with the form: DX + N.

- 3.207 *Ama-u ida.* (WMek)
 father-1SG he
 That one is my father. (lit. My father is him.)

Now after rankshift these ‘inverted’ predicates function as marked topic:

- 3.208 *Au eḡaʔi-na e-kapa-i-s-a.* (EMek)
 man that-3SG 3SG-do-PF-B-3SG
 That is the man who did it. (lit: (The) man (who is) that (one) did it.)
- 3.209 *Au eḡaʔi-na fauni-na.* (EMek)
 man that -3SG good-3SG.ASS
 Now *that* is an upright fellow. (lit: That man (the man who is that one) is fine/upright.)

The final syllable on the predicate is the third person singular determining suffix functioning here as a predicate marker (and glossed ASS for ‘assertion’). This is the same suffix found on the demonstrative pronouns, where it has become fossilised.

When the deictic pronoun functions as a topic the predicate usually carries the determining/predicate-marking suffix, except in NWMek (this is not obligatory in the eastern dialects, but the marker does not count as emphatic/assertive there, as it does in NWMek):

- 3.210 *Ike auke* (NWMek)
Inaia auke-ḡa. (WMek)
Namo auke-ḡa. (WMek)
Inaina amuʔe-ḡa. (EMek)
 this dog-3SG.ASS
 This (*is* a) dog.
- 3.211 *Naba ibiao-tsi belo-tsi.* (WMek)
 that girl-3PL good/beautiful-3PL
 Those girls are beautiful.

When a deictic pronoun functioning as a topic is followed by *auḡa* many utterances yield two different readings (note contrasting stress):

- 3.212 *eḡaina auḡa!* (EMek)
 that TOP
 that now!
- 3.213 *eḡaina àu-ḡa* (EMek)
 that man-3SG
 that man

3.2.2 PREDICATING QUANTITY

This kind of predication is most appropriate in the context of enumerating items, where the nature of the items being enumerated is known/given. It also occurs in response to the question: ‘How many X are there?’ The numeral can never be preposed, and groups can be analysed as rankshifted predications. Some examples follow:

- 3.214 *Olanitsi aḡao-mo.* (EMek)
 orange one-just
 here's only one orange. (lit. (The) orange is one only.)
- 3.215 *Koḡa ima.* (EMek)
 coconut five
 There are five coconuts. (lit. (The) coconuts are five.)
- 3.216 A: *Oleole pika?* (EMek)
 mirror how.many?
 How many mirrors are there?
 B: *Oleole ikaka ḡua!*
 mirror parcel two
 There are two parcels of mirrors! (lit. The mirrors are two parcels!)

The variety and uses of rankshifted predications can be illustrated as follows. In the course of a short story about three youths and two sets of three young girls, the reference was made in the following way to the different sets (EMek):

- 3.217 *iviao oiso*
 girl three
 Three girls... (indefinite)
- 3.218 *iviao oiso*
 girl three
 The three girls... (definite)
- 3.219 *iviao oiso'i i'oi-'i*
 girl three-3PL other-3PL
 The other three girls... (definite, contrastive)
- 3.220 *iviao'i oiso auḡa*
 girl-3PL three TOP
 Now the three girls... (definite, contrastive, marked topic)

The three youths were referred to twice as *o'oe oiso* (lit. 'youth three') and thereafter as *au'i oiso* (man-3PL three, i.e. 'the men/the ones three'). The latter form suggests a doubly rankshifted construction with *au-'i* (and *iviao-'i* above) representing an erstwhile predicate:

- 3.221 *Eḡai-'i au-'i.* (EMek)
 that-3PL man-3PL
 They (were) men.

See Lean (1986) for some notes on the counting system. Meanwhile, here are some predications with indefinite quantities:

- 3.222 *Babiau mako.* (WMek)
 people many
 There are many people (there). OR: (The) people are many.
- 3.223 *Aḡo-mu afa.* (EMek)
 noise-2SG little
 You're very quiet.

- 3.224 *Goŋa afa-ka-ŋa-mo*.³⁸ (NMek)
 coconut little-one-3SG-just
 There are only a few coconuts. OR: (The) coconuts are just a few.

After rankshift and with ellipsis we have utterances like:

- 3.225 *Ava'aŋa-mo ma-ani-?opo-ŋai-n-a*. (EMek)
 little-just IMP.1SG-eat-try-RTR-TH-3SG
 Let me eat a little (of it).

In WMek there is a distinction between liquids and solids:

- 3.226 *Mae tsilá*. OR: *Mae tsilo-ŋa-mo*. (WMek)
 areca.nut little.3SG OR: areca.nut little.3SG.just
 The areca nut is little/a little.
- 3.227 *Kopi kalatsi-na-mo* (WMek)
 coffee little.drop-3SG-just
 The coffee is just a little drop.

I will just mention here that even a prototypically nominal word like *mako*, *ma?o* appears as a finite verb, e.g. EMek *e-ma?o*, *e-pa-ma?o* 'be many'.

3.3 COORDINATION OF NOMINALS: APPOSITION

Relators are of two kinds, predicative and non-predicative. *MEI*, described in the first sub-section below, can function predicatively. However, the constructions described in the second and third sub-sections represent the only phrase-type constructions in Mekeo grammar. That is to say that they are exocentric constructions. They can never have predicative force. And they exemplify the appositional relation.³⁹

3.3.1 THE RELATIONAL PREDICATE *MEI*

Although *MEI* does not often occur in its predicative function, the fact that it has one is indisputable, and hence all other instances of *MEI* can be analysed as rankshifted predications.⁴⁰

- 3.228 *Au mei agawā*. (WMek)
 man with spouse.3SG
 The man is with (or 'has') his wife. OR: a/the man with his wife
- 3.229 *Kavapu mei vino-ŋa!* (EMek)
 bottle with wine-3SG
 The bottle is full of wine. OR: a/the bottle of wine

The primarily predicative use of *MEI* can be seen very clearly in the following example (which is repeated further below to illustrate other points):

³⁸ One also hears *afa-kao-ŋa-mo*. Compare Gabadi *ka-mo-na* 'one', *ka* 'any', 'one', *ka* 'any', Motu, *ta*, *ta-mo-na* 'one'. I take *ka(-o)* to be a reflex of PWCP **ka(-mo)*, as in PWCP **ka-mo-na* 'one'.

³⁹ In the sense of mere juxtaposition, without dependency. See Matthews (1981:220ff.).

⁴⁰ It is worth pointing out that Lister-Turner and Clark (1954b:102) translate Motu *mai* as 'have' (e.g. *Ia mai ena ira* 'He has an axe').

- 3.230 *I-fau mei ŋou-ŋa.* (EMek)
 NOM-plant with law-3SG
 Planting has its rules.

However, in most usages the predication is clearly rankshifted and embedded:

- 3.231 *Mei apepe-mu lo-mai.* (EMek)
 with tears-2SG 2SG-come
 You have come in tears.

MEI can be applied iteratively to construct a list. The successive nouns refer back to the initial subject-topic, a clear demonstration of dependency, and something which would not happen were the construction simply coordinative (as in the next section):

- 3.232 *Au mei isō mei kiapu-ŋa e-lao.* (EMek)
 man with spear.3SG with cloth-3SG 3SG-go
 Armed and clothed, the man left.

Constructions with *MEI* contrast with the two relational possibilities:

- a) *kavapu mei vino-ŋa* a bottle full of wine
 b) *kavapu vino-ŋa* wine from a bottle; bottled wine
 c) *vino kavapu-ŋa* a wine-bottle

The *MEI* construction contrasts with the *POU* construction to be described in §3.3.3. I anticipate a little to illustrate this:

- 3.233 *Ida mei agawā e-mai.* (WMek)
 he with spouse.3SG 3SG-come
 He came, with his wife.
- 3.234 *Ida agawā po ge-mai.* (WMek)
 he spouse.3SG together 3PL-come
 He and his wife came.

Two examples of a different kind of construction with *MEI* are listed in Desnoës. Here *MEI* seems to function like the possessive particle *E-* (§3.1.6):

- 3.235 *papie me-ŋa imoi* (EMek:D)
 woman with-3SG child
 a pregnant woman (lit. a/the woman with her child)
- 3.236 *Oi me-mu imoi ina-e-mo mo-aŋu-e!* (EMek:D)
 you with-2SG child here-CNT-just IMP.2SG-sit-CNT
 You stay sitting here with your child!

Some more or less fixed expressions from EMek are:

- a) *au mei ifō* a single man, a widower (a man with himself)
 b) *imoi mei ani-na* an adolescent boy (a boy with his testicles)
 c) *mekoi mei faa-ŋa* sweet potatoes in their jackets (lit. with his/her skin)

Joindreau (1907:9) analysed Roro *mai* (cognate with Mekeo *MEI* and identical in its functions) as a preposition, and he noted that it posits a unique relation, i.e. neither possession nor determination, between the two nominal expressions. This is equally true of Mekeo *MEI*.

3.3.2 NOMINAL CONJUNCTIONS AND CONJOINED NOMINALS

Conjoined nominals represent coordinative structures. They are the only inherently non-predicative constructions in Mekeo grammar. That is, they can never be or have been predicates, not even identificational predicates.

The standard coordinating structure in Mekeo is a *list*. Intonation makes it quite clear that that is what it is. Story titles naming two or more people are of this order:

3.237 *Ikuaba, Kaiaba.* (EMek)

A list can represent a single argument and a single function in a verbal predication:

3.238 *Aniani, kokou, foa ga-ani-a.* (NMek)
yam taro banana 1PL-eat-3SG
We ate [yams, taro (and) bananas].

However, to emphasise the additive relation one may add the short form of *GAI*: *ge, ke*.

3.239 *aniani, ge kokou, ge foa* (NMek)
yams, and taro, and bananas

The conjunction frequently appears (as in English) only before the last item in a list. In eliciting the same sentence across all four dialects it emerged that dialects other than EMek favour compound conjunctions:

3.240 *Ajimai, kokou, bai-ge poa ga-ani-a.* (NWMek)
Kukui, kokou, ηae-gai poa ga-ani-a. (WMek)
Aniani, kokou, ηai-gai foa ga-ani-a. (NMek)
Lama, ?o?ou, ke o'o a-ani-a. (EMek)
yams taro and/then bananas 1PL-eat-3SG
We ate yams, taro and bananas.

The uncertainty particle *MA* functions to express open-ended 'or', as in:

3.241 *Ŋaigai kuma ma kokolo, eka belo a-ida...* (WMek)
then pig INT chicken house good 1SG-see
When I see maybe pigs or chickens, or a good house...

Disjunction is also expressed by means of *MA*:

3.242 *Madang ma, Rabaul, ai-d-a-loŋo.* (WMek)
Madang INT Rabaul NEG-B-1SG-know
Either Madang or Rabaul, I don't know which.

Sometimes *MA* is repeated after each alternative, for symmetry and with no change in meaning:

3.243 *Madang ma, Rabaul ma, ai-d-a-loŋo.* (WMek)

An alternative to *MA* in the modern language is *O* (apparently from English 'or'), but *O* is not disjunctive:

3.244 *Madang o Rabaul, ai-d-a-loŋo.* (WMek)
Madang or Rabaul NEG-B-1SG-know
Madang or Rabaul (or somewhere else entirely), I don't know.

There is finally the use of *IA* to join nominals in a list. This particle often accretes to the following nominal, and takes the word stress:

- 3.245 *Lau, ià-Polo, ià-Peto, ià-Karolo, Inauauni fa-lao.* (EMek)
 I and-Paul and-Peter and-Charles Inauauni OBLG.1PL-go
 Paul and Peter and Charles and I wish to go to Inauauni.

3.3.3 LIMITING PARTICLES

These adnominal particles (which were listed in §2.2.3.4 above) function exceptionally to create phrases, not groups, i.e. exocentric and inherently non-predicative NPs. They are always in construction with at least one nominal expression, and have a special bond with the noun they immediately follow. However, they modify this noun *adverbially* – they having meaning only in relation to some finite verb. The nominal constructions formed in this way represent arguments of a verb, and depend on it for their sentential function.

The list given in §2.2.3.4 is repeated here for convenience, and divided into semantically grouped sets of items:

<i>mu, mo</i>	just, only, alone, enough
<i>baia, baida, paiza, paisa</i>	merely, only, purely, certainly
<i>iaga, idawa, izawa, isava</i>	also, and (<i>iaga</i> is NWMek only)
<i>gaia~gaia-ke</i>	also, too (WMek, NMek)
<i>gugu, pou, fou</i>	together (<i>gugu</i> is NWMek only)

A few examples will illustrate the kind of syntagm that results from the combination of a nominal argument of a verb with a limiting adverbial:

- 3.246 [*Deo mo*] *ga-obolaŋa.* (WMek)
 God just 1PL-think
 We thought only of God.
- 3.247 [*Itsi gaia*], *kofi ma-inu.* (NMek)
 I also coffee IMP.1SG-drink
 I want to drink coffee too.
- 3.248 [*Isa isafa*] *moni fe-afi-a.* (EMek)
 s/he also money OBLG.3SG-take-3SG
 S/he also should receive money.

There is a tendency for the limiting/focussing adverbials to agglutinate to the nominals, as enclitics or even suffixes. This is evident from the continuous pitch contour with which they are spoken.

The last item, *POU*, is the exception in that it functions as a kind of unmarked oblique postposition to one nominal, relating it to another nominal. Like the marked postpositions it acts as the head of the group it helps to form, and can function as a kind of pro-form:

- 3.249 [*Faupunju, Fata fou*], *ke-mai.* (EMek)
 Faupunju father together 3PL-come
 Faupunju and Father together they came.

- 3.250 *Fou ke-mai.* (EMek)
 together 3PL-come
 They (have) come together.

It will be noticed that the subject of the verb is plural after a *POU*-phrase, reflecting the combined number of the arguments.

- 3.251 *Fou a-pi-maŋaka.* (EMek)
 together 1PL-REC-familiar
 We are used to each other.

- 3.252 *Abala mo iji po a-aŋu-e.* (WMek)
 Abala just I together 1PL-sit-CNT
 Only Abala lives with me.

Notice that *POU* functions adverbially, like an oblique case-marked postposition or an oblique pro-form.

- 3.253 *Po ge-mai mako-ai ge-mai.* (WMek)
 together 3PL-come all-OBL 3PL-come
 They came together; they all came.

POU does not usually function as a predicate, but apparently it can do so:

- 3.254 *Kania-mai fou-ŋa.*⁴¹ (EMek:D)
 head-1PL.E together-3SG
 We are of the same age.

It very frequently occurs as an adverbial co-verb (see Chapter 6):

- 3.255 *Au iʔoina, au iʔoina fou* (EMek)
 wood other wood other together
mo-oŋe-fou-a.
 IMP.2SG-put-come.together-3SG
 Put (one piece of) wood together with another.

Unfortunately I do not have enough information on NWMek *gugu* to say whether it is like *POU* or like the focusing adverbials.

3.4 NEGATION IN NOMINAL PREDICATIONS

Nominal predications can be negated by means of the operator *A'I* (all dialects have [a'i] or [a:ɪ], with either a very weak glottal stop or a very slight pause), which corresponds to English 'non-' or 'un-'.

- 3.256 *Tsi a'i mekia-ŋa!* (EMek)
 tea NEG sweet-ASS
 The tea is unsweet!

However, *A'I* can be used predicatively. Thus, on plunging a knife into the flank of a pig:

⁴¹ The third person singular determining suffix is clearly functioning here as a predicate marker.

- 3.257 *A'i oʔo!* (EMek)
 NEG fat
 It is not fat! (OR: There is no fat!)

However, the correct analysis of this utterance is: '(This pig is) not fat!' The predicate is *a'i oʔo*, not *oʔo*.

A'I can also be used in imperative utterances:

- 3.258 *A'i keke-mu-mo!* (EMek)
 NEG noise-2SG-just
 Be quiet! (lit. (Be) not noisy!)

However negative nominal predications ordinarily take *MAINI*, *AIBAIA* or *LAA'I* in the slot a verb would normally occupy, at the end of the predication:

- 3.259 *Ike paiβo maini.* (NWMek)
 this snake not
 This is not a snake.
- 3.260 *βea-βea ike βade-βade maini ge βea gaβa-gaβa.* (NWMek)
 walk-RED this easy-RED not but walk make-RED
 This walking is not easy, it is hard.
- 3.261 *Bi-poŋe au-ŋa aibaia!* (WMek)
 deceit man-3SG not
 He is not a deceitful man!
- 3.262 *Ida au-ŋa ina-u aibaia.* (WMek)
 s/he one-3SG mother-1SG not
 S/he is not my mother.
- 3.263 *Eŋaia au-ŋa faibo aibaiza.* (NMek)
 that one-3SG snake not
 That is not a snake.

A predicate marking suffix, as in example 3.264 below, does not go with a negative predicator, whose scope is normally an embedded predication. If an embedded predication is being negated, assertive emphasis on that (affirmative) predication is illogical.

- 3.264 *Tsi mekia(*-ŋa), laa'i.* (EMek)
 tea sweet-ASS not
 The tea is not sweet.

This would amount to saying: 'It is not a fact that (The tea is *definitely* sweet!)

MAINI, *AIBAIA* and *LAA'I* also function as existential negators:

- 3.265 *Ina-e paibo aibaia.* (WMek)
 here snake not
 There are no snakes here.
- 3.266 *Ke-ŋ-ai kelokini maini.* (NWMek)
 LOC-3SG-OBL kerosine not
 S/he has no kerosene.

- 3.267 *Kina maʔo laaʔi.* (EMek)
 time much not
 There's not much time.

3.5 EMBEDDING: RANKSHIFTED // NON-RANKSHIFTED PREDICATES

Nominal predications may be embedded in a matrix predication either with or without rankshift. The first example illustrates a complex nominal predication which has been both rankshifted and embedded. The nominal predication is built up in two stages:

- 3.268 *Isa lau ina-u.* (EMek)
 s/he I mother-1SG
 She is my mother.
- 3.269 *Isa ina-u avakuā.* (EMek)
 s/he mother-1SG elder.sibling.3SG
 She is my mother's elder sister.

The two predications above, when combined, yield the complex nominal predication embedded as *ina-u avakuā*, in the following verbal predication:

- 3.270 *Lau, ina-u avakuā, fai la-isa.* (EMek)
 I mother-1SG elder.sibling.3SG yesterday 1SG-see.3SG
 I saw my mother's elder sister yesterday.

It is possible to take the embedded predication to mean 'She is/was my mother's elder sister' (i.e. a parenthetical predication); but on the whole a rankshifted reading seems more likely here. On the other hand, it is difficult *not* to give a predicative reading to the same string when embedded in the following verbal predication:

- 3.271 *Papie, ina-u avakuā, fai la-isa.* (EMek)
 woman mother-1SG elder.sibling.3SG yesterday 1SG-see.3SG
 The woman, she is my mother's elder sister, I saw her yesterday.

The alternative to a predicative reading here is an appositive reading, with *papie* and *ina-u avakuā* simply referring twice to the same argument of the verb, and this is possible too. The speaker would thus be specifying the woman, in order to remove any indeterminacy, with a descriptive group in apposition to the first nominal.⁴²

The context of an utterance will very often suggest a preferred reading. In the following (from a story), the dog and the cat are announcing that they will save the day by finding fire. I give two alternative glosses:

- 3.272 *Isa auni-ʔa fou, aŋ-a-vai.*⁴³ (EMek)
 we.I two-1PL together FUT-1PL-go
 We, the two us, we will go./It is us, the two of us are together, we will go.

Pause after a nominal or a string normally suggests a predicative reading. The pauses in the above lead me to prefer the second (predicative) reading. As noted in §1.3.3.4.4, intonation

⁴² Hale (1983) has pointed out that such ambiguity is probably a predictable feature of non-configurational languages.

⁴³ The verb *wai*, *vai*, *fai* actually means 'go to your place, go near/with you'. I cannot see why it is used here.

detailed by Mühlhäusler to explain the deep structures of nominal compounds in New Guinea Pidgin serve equally to explicate the underlying structure of Mekeo determining predications. But in Mekeo they remain just that – predications – and, even after rankshift and/or topicalisation and/or embedding they retain their original syntagmatic structure.

Following Schachter (1973) I would say that Mekeo prefers to coin endless defining expressions – Schachter’s relative clauses – rather than to use fixed denotations or ‘names’.⁴⁷ This accounts for the paucity of stereotypical role-based nouns for people.

Bach (1968) has proposed to derive all nouns from underlying defining relative clauses, in which case one could say that Mekeo surface structure reflects the first stage in a universal process of nounation.

Research into the grammar of Oceanic languages has been much hampered by the metaphor of possession (see §2.1.2.1.1 above). I argue that nominals do not ‘belong to’ other nominals, as things belong to people – they are either determinate by virtue of their relations to other nominals (themselves determinate or otherwise) or not determinate. Problems involved in attempting to apply the terminology of ownership to grammatical relations, problems which have obscured the description of semantic subordination as well as of possessive constructions properly speaking in grammars of other Oceanic languages, can here be shelved.

In this grammar, the terms ‘possession’ and ‘possessive construction’ have been restricted to what is usually (and somewhat redundantly) called ‘alienable’ or ‘dominant’ or ‘active manipulative’⁴⁸ possession, i.e. the actual ownership of some thing by some person (where ‘ownership’ means the right and the ability to dispose of that which is owned).⁴⁹ ‘Inalienable possession’, so-called, which is sometimes also labelled ‘direct possession’ (e.g. by Lynch 1982), is treated here as a syntactic relation that functions to foreground – initially to predicate – some aspect or area of a given/known topic. The nature of the real-world relations holding between the referents of the topic and predicate in such constructions is extremely variable (as pointed out by Pawley 1973:153; and see Lynch 1982 and Mühlhäusler 1979 for similar views). *In any case, these meanings are represented by two very different syntactic constructions.*

47 Jespersen (1924:139) had this to say of the ‘nominal style’: “When we express by means of nouns what is generally expressed by finite verbs, our language becomes not only more abstract, but more abstruse, owing among other things to the fact that in the verbal substantive some of the life-giving elements of the verb (time, mood, person) disappear.”

48 See Lynch (1982:245), where the term is attributed to T. Crowley.

49 There might in fact be some question as to whether it was appropriate to treat this construction in a chapter on nominal categories. I have elsewhere analysed the possessive particle as a semi-verbal preposition. There is in fact no reason to distinguish between a nominal predicate and a non-finite verbal predicate, since they both represent an intermediate class.

CHAPTER 4

THE LEXICOGRAMMAR OF VERBAL PREDICATES

In Mekeo, almost any lexical base can function as a finite verb. This includes bases that represent apparently time-stable phenomena, entities that are typically – even in Mekeo – expressed as nouns. Only excluded are deictic expressions such as time adverbials, pronouns and proper names. Furthermore, every lexical root incorporates a specific process dynamic that specifies the number and kind of core arguments that it will take when functioning as a verb, as well as what derivations it can take. This results in a complex system of verb classes.

The verb, together with the affixes which encode actants and functions, and its marking for tense, aspect and mood, has traditionally been called the verb phrase. It can more accurately be called the verb word. The Mekeo verb phrase, or verb word, is itself an exocentric construction, but it usually functions as the head of an endocentric predication. That is to say that the verb word has the same syntactic distribution as the entire predication. However, it can function as a predication in its own right. In a head-marking language like Mekeo the verb word with its incorporated arguments constitutes a complete syntactic unit, which will be referred to in discourse-pragmatic terms as the verbal predicate.

The fact that Mekeo is a verb-final head-marking language, combined with the fact that there is (as we saw above) no case marking of nominals, means that the syntactic specifications for all nominal participants remain in suspension (as it were) until the end of the sentence is reached. Pre-verbal word order is free, in the sense that it is determined solely by discourse-pragmatic considerations. Essentially, the hearer is given an unordered list of external topics rather than an ordered set of case-linked nominals. These are followed at last by the verb word.

These matters are pursued in Chapter 7, where I examine fully determined verbal predications in which each argument of the verbal predicate is represented by free (determinate or non-determinate) nominals.¹ In this chapter I examine the morphological and semantic components of the verbal predicate.

¹ I distinguish between a complete predication and an expanded predication, much as Schütz does for Fijian. Schütz (1986, Chapter 30) speaks of fully “specified” actors and goals, as opposed to those only “signalled” or “expressed” by means of pronominal clitics.

4.1 BASIC STRUCTURE OF THE VERB WORD

A finite verb form is any lexical base which carries a subject-marking prefix, since marking for tense, aspect and mood (the determining categories of finiteness) are superimposed upon this lexical base.

There are two basic tenses: future and non-future. There are two basic aspects: imperfective and perfective. Aspect can be expressed in two different ways. It can be expressed by a system of stress marking/unmarking on the subject-indexing prefix of intransitive verbs.² However, on transitive verbs it is shown by a morphological system of contrastive object marking (but in the third person singular only). Aspect (habitual) is also expressed via reduplication of the lexical base. The interaction of aspect with tense is described in §4.2, §4.2.1. and §4.2.2.

An intentional mood constitutes a subordinate and subjunctive category of meanings – corresponding to two paradigms which I label obligative and imperative.

These are controlled by the superordinate auxiliary verb *OMA* (which is described in §4.2.4). There is also a tentative or dubitative mood that is here called hypothetical.

There is a system of object-marking suffixes which can be analysed as a thematic consonant plus an optional perfective aspect marker plus an object-indexing pronominal morpheme, as has lately been suggested for Fijian (Pawley 1986). This can be represented as: -(C)I/-(C)∅ plus person/number. I refer to these suffixes, in their entirety, as object markers or OMs. The thematic consonants recall the system of thematic consonants described by Arms (1973, 1974) for Standard Fijian. These consonants enable us to establish a macrofunctional classification for all typically transitive verbs, allotting them to spheres of human/cultural activity.³

As already noted, the Mekeo verb word contains an obligatory subject function and an optional object function as well as marking for tense, aspect and mood. The constituent structure of the simple verb word, with all obligatory and optional components (the latter indicated by bracketing), is given below, based on a WMek example: *Anabájináia*.⁴

(+ TM (+ B)) + Person/Number (+ MOD) + BASE ((+ TH) + PF) + Person/Number							
A-	n-	a-	ba-	jina	-∅-	-i	-a.
FUT	B-	1SG-	CA-	shine	-TH	-PF	-3SG
I will show him/her.							

FIGURE 20: CONSTITUENT STRUCTURE OF THE VERB WORD (1)

The base can be simple, consisting of a single root verb, or complex, consisting of several such roots. The base is the nucleus of the verb phrase. Note that NEG, when present, follows TM and precedes any B. The Person/Number-marking morpheme that is obligatorily prefixed to all verbs can be called the subject marker (SM). The verb endings which are made

² This contrast may be confined to intransitive verbs with human agents.

³ See §1.3.4.3 above, and the various subsections in §4.3.3 below.

⁴ The primary word stress and any secondary word stresses are marked with acute accents. The last stress on any given word is the primary one.

up – analytically – of + TH + PF + Person/Number generally function as an unanalytic unit and together make up the object marker (OM).⁵

Figure 16 illustrates the place of NEG in the above configuration of functions, using the expression (from NMek): *Fáizobálfúá!*

(+ TM (+ NEG) (+ B)) + Person/ (+ MOD) + BASE ((+ TH) + PF) + Person/Number								
F-	ai-	z-	o-	ba-	lifú	-∅-	-∅-	-a!
OBLG-	NEG-	B-	2SG-	CA-	wrong	TH	-PF	-3SG
Don't spoil it!								

FIGURE 21: CONSTITUENT STRUCTURE OF THE VERB WORD (2)

Remote transitive verbs present a somewhat different pattern of constituency, in that they potentially carry double transitivity marking, as illustrated here, with an EMek example: *Kemáni?iáini?i.*

(+ TM (+ B))+ Person/Number + BASE (+ (RTR-/ŋ/) (+ PF)+ Person/Number						
∅-	∅-	Ke-	mani?i	-ai-n	-i	-?i.
		3PL-	fear	-RTR-TH	-PF	-3PL
They fear(ed) them.						

FIGURE 22: CONSTITUENT STRUCTURE OF THE VERB WORD (3)

In the next section I describe the basic systems that operate at key places in the structures just outlined.

4.1.1 BASIC SYSTEMS OF THE VERB WORD

It seems probable that all lexical bases, as well as most quantifiers and intensifiers, can appear as finite intransitive verbs.⁶ As such they appear with a subject-marking prefix (a subject marker, or SM) attached to a verbal root or stem. The structure of these minimal, intransitive verb forms, with *unmarked*⁷ person, tense, aspect and mood, can be shown abstractly as follows (following Schütz 1986):

⁵ Semantically speaking, information about manner and degree of transitivity *interacts with* information about the definiteness and specificity of the object, and it is this interaction that is expressed by the OM as a whole.

⁶ It seems probable that all 'typically transitive' verbs also function as intransitives. Most verbs can be found functioning intransitively upon occasion at least in my texts. The intransitive form is thus not only unmarked but also in this other sense 'basic'; I claim that every verbal base is able to occur in the frame given above, in the text.

⁷ The concept of Praguean *markedness* is an essential tool in explaining certain of the morphological marking systems of Mekeo grammar. The main criterion of *markedness*, in the sense in which I use it here, is that the meaning of one member of an opposition (the *unmarked* member) can encompass the meaning of the other member (the *marked* member), which is thus *neutralised* in all but *marked* utterances. It should therefore be borne in mind that 'marking' can have two separate meanings in this grammar, one semantic and one morphological. When used in the former sense the word will be italicised. See Comrie (1976:111-122) for a pertinent discussion.

SM	Verb
e-	BASE

FIGURE 23: MINIMAL STRUCTURE OF AN INTRANSITIVE CORE

This form of the prefix (usually *e-* in EMek, but sometimes *i-* before vowels) marks ‘the third person’, which can be regarded as the unmarked member of the person-number paradigm to which it belongs. It alternates with other morphemes in that paradigm, each of which shows a different person/number combination (§4.1.2 below). These morphemes, with this combination of features, realise the grammatical subject of the verb – which is its one indispensable function – and the features help to identify the referent of that function. Every verbally functioning base is thus obligatorily preposed by its subject, which is affixed to it if not indeed incorporated within it, and which is minimally realised as a morpheme marked for person and number.⁸

The different paradigmatic systems operating at ‘SM’, and making the verb itself *marked* or *unmarked* in terms of tense-aspect-mood (TAM), can be shown as follows:

TENSE: non-future future	<--- marked
ASPECT: imperfective perfective	<--- marked
MOOD: indicative obligative imperative hypothetical	<-- marked
PERSON: third second first	<--marked
NUMBER: singular common plural	<--- marked
e-	BASE

FIGURE 24: SYSTEMS OPERATING ON THE SUBJECT MARKER

The basic or underlying⁹ structure of transitive verbatations is now shown:

⁸ This morpheme (and the syntactic function it encodes) is what constitutes the base not merely as a predicate but as a verbal predicate.

⁹ Certain transitive verbs do not take an overt OM, or do so only in perfective aspect. See §4.3.3.6 below.

SM	Verb	OM
e-	BASE	-C(-i)-a

FIGURE 25: MINIMAL STRUCTURE OF A TRANSITIVE CORE

The object marker (or OM) indexes the object of the verb, an optional syntactic function as compared to the subject marker (which is obligatory), along with information about the degree of transitivity (which is usually realised as perfective aspect), the manner of an action and the nature of an effect (realised by thematic consonants or the absence of same). The set of paradigmatic systems that operates at ‘OM’ can be shown as follows:

		THEMATIC CLASS
	marked -->	ASPECT: imperfective perfective
	marked --> 	PERSON: third second first
	marked -->	NUMBER: singular common plural
e-	BASE	-C(-i)-a

FIGURE 26: SYSTEMS OPERATING ON THE OBJECT MARKER

As noted above, the verbal base can be expanded by means of nuclear juncture, whereby two or more verbal roots combine and thus come to share the set of core arguments (corresponding to the grammatical functions) proper to the main verb. There are different kinds of verbal roots, and some of these can occur only as co-verbs; in other words they never function as main or independent verbs. These matters are discussed in some detail in Chapter 6.

4.1.2 BASIC SYSTEMS OF ROLE-MARKING AFFIXES

As already noted, any base functioning as a verb carries an obligatory subject-indexing prefix (the subject marker, or SM). The maximally ‘unmarked’ forms of the subject marker are non-future, imperfective, indicative (= realis/non-subjunctive). The person of the subject is obligatorily indexed by the SM. The number of the subject is obligatorily marked for first and second persons, optionally for the third. The systems of subject-marking morphemes for the four dialects are given here:

TABLE 37: SYSTEMS OF SUBJECT-MARKING PREFIXES

Number/Person	NWMek	NMek	WMek	EMek
1SG	<i>a-</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>la-</i>
2SG	<i>o-</i>	<i>o-</i>	<i>o-</i>	<i>lo-</i>
3SG	<i>e-</i>	<i>e-</i>	<i>e-</i> <i>i-</i>	<i>e-</i> <i>i-</i>
1PL.I	<i>ga-</i>	<i>ga-</i>	<i>ga-</i>	<i>a-</i>
1PL.E	<i>ga-</i>	<i>ga-</i>	<i>ga-</i>	<i>a-</i>
2PL	<i>go-</i>	<i>go-</i>	<i>go-</i>	<i>o-</i>
3PL	<i>ge-</i>	<i>ge-</i>	<i>ge-</i>	<i>ke-</i>

It is worth displaying the uniformity of the three western dialects at this point in the grammar, as this will contrast nicely with the situation that pertains once TM-marking and/or the negative operator are introduced. The only complication here is a morphophonemic change to third person singular in NWMek and WMek before roots in /a-/ and /o-/ and /i-/:

NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek	English
<i>e-mai</i>	<i>e-mai</i>	<i>e-mai</i>	<i>e-mai</i>	s/he comes/came
<i>a-io</i>	<i>i-ao</i>	<i>e-ao</i>	<i>e-lao</i>	s/he goes/went
<i>i-oβo</i>	<i>i-obo</i>	<i>e-obo</i>	<i>e-opo</i>	it is/was broken
<i>a-ida</i>	<i>i-ida</i>	<i>e-iza</i>	<i>e-isa</i>	s/he sees/saw

The third person ‘singular’ in fact stands for common number. The plural is only used when – usually for pragmatic reasons – it becomes necessary to specify a plural subject. There are no semantic restrictions on this principle – such that, for example, the third person plural is required when the subject is animate or human. The next two (EMek) examples will illustrate this:

- 4.1 *Inawi a-pa-pua-oka-i-ʔi,* *e-pua-kani-n-a.* (EMek)
 Inawi 1PL-CA-carry-disperse-PF-3PL 3SG-carry-flee-TH-3SG
 We made the Inawi run off in all directions, they fled.

The above example illustrates the use of a third person singular SM for a referent previously explicitly encoded as plural. The person/number marker on the first verb is co-referential with the SM of the second, yet one is plural and the other singular. This sentence incidentally illustrates the use of a referentially ‘empty’ OM (on the second verb). Much more will be said about this latter feature below (see especially §4.3.3.7).

- 4.2 *Maʔa vei inae-ŋa-ai e-apa-apua.* (EMek)
 fish river stomach-3SG-OBL 3SG-stand-very
 There are many fish in the depths of the river.

When the speaker feels – again for pragmatic reasons – that the plural nature of the subject needs to be emphasised, semantic considerations do not affect his decision. Inanimate objects, abstract concepts and imaginary concepts can all be encoded by plural SMs just as easily as by singular, if the speaker so desires:

- 4.3 *Vei-vei, aŋa-poku, oka, ke-mekia apala.* (EMek)
 mango angapoku shellfish 3PL-sweet bad
 Mangoes, angapoku fruit and shellfish are very 'sweet'.
- 4.4 *Veʔa inē ke-àpala.* (EMek)
 stringbag hole.3SG 3PL-bad
 (The) stringbag is full of holes.
- 4.5 *?auni papie ke-pua-lei-a.* (EMek)
 spirit woman 3PL-carry-away-3SG
 (The) spirits carried off (the) woman.

Many – but not all – transitive verbs carry an obligatory object-marking suffix (§4.1 above). This object marker, when present, is obligatorily indexed for the person of the object relation and, for first and second persons, for number; for the third person, plural number is optionally marked (another way to say this is that the third person number system consists of common and plural number). It has been suggested for closely related languages, in particular Motu,¹⁰ that with animate objects, or with specific objects, the singular/plural distinction is obligatory. This is not the case in Mekeo. Access to the object-marking slot is hierarchically ordered to the extent that an indirect object (recipient, or dative case role) outranks a direct object, as does the controlled agent (causee O) of a causative verb (where the object is not normally signalled). The basic systems of object-marking morphemes for the different dialects are as follows:

TABLE 38: SYSTEMS OF OBJECT MARKING SUFFIXES

Number/Person	NWMek	NMek	WMek	EMek
1SG	-u	-au	-au	-au
2SG	-o	-o	-o	-o
3SG	-a	-a	-a	-a
1PL.I	-ka	-ka	-ka	-ʔa
1PL.E	-mi	-mi	-mai	-mai
2PL	-mi	-mi	-mi	-mi
3PL	-ki, -kia	-tsi	-tsi	-(?)i

Homophony as between the first person plural exclusive and second person plural in NWMek and NMek seems to represent the incipient monophthongisation of [ai] in these two dialects; this phenomenon is not confined to grammatical morphemes but pervades the general lexicon as well. Optional number in the third person is illustrated by the following examples:

- 4.6 *Apu abala-tsi ma ge-ma gi-ida-tsi ge-manitsi?* (WMek)
 place bad-3PL INT 3PL-DNT 3PL-see-3PL 3PL-fear.3PL
 Did they see and fear what they thought were bad places?
- 4.7 *Kuma gi-aka-lai eka ge-biau-kapo-ŋai-n-i-tsi.* (WMek)
 pig 3PL-draw-AT house 3PL-run-toss-RTR-TH-PF-3PL
 The pigs drew near and bowled the houses over.

¹⁰ See for example Pawley (1977:10-12).

- 4.8 *Inei ke-ŋopo-kae ɲaina la-aa-kae la-isa-isa-ʔi.* (EMek)
 bird 3PL-jump-rise that 1SG-glance-rise 1SG-see-RED-3PL
 Birds flew up thus I glanced upward and was able to see them.

Note that in the first of these examples the plurally marked object is both inanimate and clearly non-specific.

Third person singular forms of TR verbs appear to be sensitive to tense-aspect (perfect-perfective versus imperfective). An opposition is set up at this point in the TR paradigms between the presence and the absence of the suffixal morpheme *-I* (which I shall refer to as the perfective aspect marker: PF) before the object-marking morpheme:

IMPERFECTIVE: *-a* // PERFECTIVE: *-i-a*

Informants invariably translated this opposition in terms of present (tense) versus past (tense):

- 4.9 *Imi eɲani i-au-n-i-a, bai-ge i-au-ŋ-a.* (WMek)
 child yesterday 3SG-hit-TH-PF-3SG now-and 3SG-hit-TH-3SG
 S/he hit the child yesterday and now s/he is hitting it.

For other persons and numbers the opposition does not apply: the normal forms of all other OMs include the perfective aspect marker. The morpheme here labelled PF thus appears to signal the conflation of the semantic categories of definiteness (of the O) and perfectiveness (of the action), a conflation that occurs quite commonly throughout the languages of the world.¹¹ Recall, however, that this contrast operates only at third person singular. The speech-act participants (i.e. first and second person, singular and plural) are, by definition, definite; in other words, their exophoric referents are immediately identifiable in the context of the utterance situation. This would seem to imply that the VPs in which they occur are also – obligatorily – perfective in aspect. (An alternative explanation is proposed below, in §4.2.1)

The apparently asymmetrical conjugation of the OM – in a VP meaning ‘s/he is hitting/has hit X’ – is given here (for NWMek only) to illustrate the general paradigm:

TABLE 39: IMPERFECTIVE // PERFECTIVE OBJECT MARKING (1)

	IMPERFECTIVE	PERFECTIVE
O:1SG		<i>i-u-ŋ-i-u</i>
O:2SG		<i>i-u-ŋ-i-o</i>
O:3SG	<i>i-u-ŋ-a</i>	<i>i-u-ŋ-i-a</i>
O:1PL.I		<i>i-u-ŋ-i-ka</i>
O:1PL.E		<i>i-u-ŋ-i-mi</i>
O:2PL		<i>i-u-ŋ-i-mi</i>
O:3PL		<i>i-u-ŋ-i-ki (-kia)</i>

One can at present only speculate as to the origins of this asymmetry. A detailed comparative study of object marking across all the languages of Central and South-East Papua would undoubtedly enable us to construct a strong hypothesis. In the meantime it is

¹¹ Hopper and Thompson (1980:279) found “dozens of languages in which perfectivity correlates morphosyntactically with the definiteness of the direct O”. The authors then go on to develop the complex concept of “definiteness/referentiality” (p.288) under the general heading of “O-Individuation”.

worth noting that, in the case of the plural endings, where the actual object-marking suffixes are, in all dialects, consonant-initial (only EMek exhibits some irregularities), the *-i* incidentally serves the purely phonotactic function of separating the initial consonant of the suffix from the buffer or 'thematic' consonant that is so often also present, thus avoiding consonant clusters (the thematic consonant is *-ŋ* in the example just given; the actual TH is often prescribed for a given verb).¹² However, the vowel may have been inherited either as a transitivity marker or as part of the pronominal suffix.¹³

On the other hand, we can more economically account for the imperfective OM *-ŋa* as the third person singular relational suffix functioning here, exceptionally, to mark imperfective aspect for the most used person/number combination.¹⁴

Whatever the case may be, there is a real semantic opposition at the third person singular (and only here). And, while we can carry on speaking in terms of an opposition between imperfective and perfective aspect (for third person singular only!), I suspect that what we are really dealing with is a contrast between a non-referential place-holder that marks a transitive effort (on the part of the agent), but does not necessarily imply a transitive effect, and a fully transitive verb, with a fully affected object. I shall elaborate upon this in connection with the different transitivity types described in §4.3.2 and §4.3.3. There are, for example, the phenomena of zero object-marking (§4.3.3.6), obligatory object-marking and 'empty' objects (§4.3.3.7). Briefly, some transitive verb forms in Mekeo do not take a third person singular object marker, and thus cannot be marked for aspect. These will be called the Zero-O forms:

- 4.10 *E-ŋa iva la-loŋo.* (EMek)
 POSS-3SG speech 1SG-hear/know
 I hear/have heard his words.
- 4.11 *Aina-u lo-pa-fua.* (EMek)
 ear-1SG 2SG-CA-end
 You deafen/have deafened me.

Others have *-i* as part of the verb root these too fail to distinguish aspects:

- 4.12 *E-ani-a.* S/he eats X; s/he ate/has eaten X. (EMek)
- 4.13 *E-afi-a.* S/he takes X; s/he took/has taken X. (EMek)

Other verbs, that are chiefly perhaps P-verbs (patient-oriented verbs), take a third person singular object marker (perfective or imperfective) when there is no available referent in the 'frame' of the utterance situation. This I call an empty OM, or an empty O:

- 4.14 *Ke-kani-n-i-a.* They fled+TH+PF+3SG. (EMek)

¹² In Kuni an [-i] or [-j] is also associated with past tense OMs (Egidi 1914:84), though it also appears for 'euphonic' reasons elsewhere. In Roro *-n* functions as a generalised TH and the only *-i* occurs – by euphony? – before the second person singular and second person plural OMs *-o* and *-mi*: *-n-i-o*, *-n-i-mi* (note, however, that past, present and future tenses are differentiated in Roro, being marked on SMs).

¹³ See Ross (1981) where an original free pronoun of the form **idi* meaning 'they', is proposed for Proto West Central Papuan (alongside **ia* 's/he/they'). And Arms (1974:177-179) suggests that the Fijian transitivity marker was in fact once a free pronominal article.

¹⁴ Note that a very similar phenomenon has occurred in modern Farsi, where a third person singular possessive suffix functions – optionally – to mark a third person singular object on a TR verb. In Farsi subjects are normally marked on the verb, but not objects.

There is some danger of confusing these verbs with the reflexive use of ordinary verbs with third person singular subjects, but exemplary cases confirm the existence of empty OMs (see §4.3.3.7). Some other common verbs only take an object marker when the aspect is perfective:

- 4.15a. *Gagaba e-gaba?* What is s/he making/doing? (WMek)
 b. *Pupū e-gaba.* S/he is doing her/his hair. (WMek)
 c. *Pupū e-gaba-i-a.* S/he has done her/his hair. (WMek)

There is also some danger of confusing these latter verbs with certain root verbs that end in a vowel and which take compensatory lengthening of that vowel (in place of an imperfective third person singular OM).

- 4.16a. *I-aṅā.* She/he/it is biting it. (EMek)
 b. *I-aṅa-i-s-a.* She/he/it has bitten her/him/it. (EMek)
 c. *Mo-keā.* Adze it! (EMek)

The compensatory lengthening can be very weakly expressed, and is frequently very difficult to hear. The problem here for the hearer is to distinguish between zero-O, genuine ellipsis and lax pronunciation. Ellipsis can be illustrated briefly as follows:

- 4.17 *Koṅa e-fio-i-s-a...* (EMek)
 coconut 3SG-catch-PF-B-3SG
“I?oina a-lo-pa-?ua-lai-s-a a-la-fio.”
 different FUT-2SG-CA-fall-away-B-3SG FUT-1SG-catch
 He caught the coconut. “You (will) throw another and I will catch.”

The first token of ‘catch’ bears PF marking on the OM, while the second has Zero-O marking.

An added twist to this somewhat complicated situation is the fact that *third person singular OMs* which follow the remote transitive suffix *-AI* never appear with the transitivity-marking *-i*, while OMs for the other persons and numbers *obligatorily* take it, thus appearing to be *doubly marked* for transitivity (as in e.g. *Ke-mani?i-ai-n-i-?i* ‘They feared them’).

The full range of formal possibilities for third person singular object marking, including the remote transitive forms, are as follows:¹⁵

TABLE 40: IMPERFECTIVE // PERFECTIVE OBJECT MARKING (2)

IMPERFECTIVE:	-∅	-v̄	-a	-C-a	-ai-n-a
PERFECTIVE:	-∅	-i-v̄	i-a	-C-i-a	-ai-n-a

The thematic consonants (TH) are: /ŋ/, /B/, /G/ and /∅/. In EMek these are reflected as /ŋ, n/, /p/, /k/ and /∅/. These have ‘expressive’ meaning in as much as each selects for a different kind of action or activity (a ‘macrofunction’), different both in terms of input by the agent (manner of execution) and in terms of the nature of the effect, which can be seen in terms of

¹⁵ It should be noted that the mere presence of an OM (as opposed to -∅) does not – as it does in Fijian – signal a specific as opposed to a non-specific semantic object. Nor does the presence of an OM signal definiteness/specificity of the object. Examples already given demonstrate this.

degree of transitivity, ranging from high (/ŋ, n/) to low (∅) according to the order of my listing.¹⁶ These are discussed in detail in §4.3.3.

Some important morphophonemic rules operate in connection with the prefixation of tense/mood markers to the subject-role marking morphemes. The most important of these is in connection with the assimilation/dissimilation of vowels. Tense/mood markers are always themselves prefixed to the role-marking prefixes, which are in turn inseparable from the verbally functioning root. Where a tense/mood marking prefix ends in *-a* – which is usually the case – it will merge with the vowel of the pronominal prefix. In all such cases the final *-a* of the tense/mood marker assimilates to the vowel of the role-marker, which predominates whatever it may be. See Appendix 4 (especially 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4) for examples.

Intransitive verbs *may* be marked for the same tense–aspect opposition as shown on third person singular OMs of transitive verbs.¹⁷ However, this is accomplished suprasegmentally, by means of alternate stress patterns. That is to say that normal stress, on the penultimate syllable of the ITR verb root, signals perfect-perfective while fronted stress, usually on the subject marker, signals imperfective and possibly progressive aspect.

4.1.3 NEGATION OF THE VERB PHRASE

Verbal predicates are regularly negated by a negative prefix. This prefix precedes the person/number marking prefix, from which it is in most cases separated by a buffer consonant (WMek *d*, NMek *z*). Figure 21 above also illustrates this, for NMek. In EMek an *l* which has accreted to first and second person singular subject markers, singular and plural, serves this function,¹⁸ while the 3PL subject marker is *ke-* and at third person singular there is a clear hiatus or pause before *e-*.¹⁹ In the other dialects an intrusive buffer consonant is found in this position:

- | | | |
|--------|--------------------------|---------|
| 4.18a. | <i>A-e-a-mai.</i> | (NWMek) |
| b. | <i>Ai-d-a-mai.</i> | (WMek) |
| c. | <i>Ai-z-a-mai.</i> | (NMek) |
| d. | <i>A-l-a-mai.</i> | (EMek) |
| | NEG-(B-)1SG-come | |
| | I did not/have not come. | |

¹⁶ Certain phonological preferences certainly seem to emerge, and it could be suggested that these consonants are in fact largely determined by phonological conditions. For example, verb roots ending in *-i* tend to have zero TH marking, simply taking the pronominal suffix: *-ani-a* 'eat'; *api-a*, *afi-a* 'hold, grab, take'. But counter-examples can almost always be found: *ŋani-n-a* 'slash', *kani-n-a*, *?ani-n-a* 'prod, poke', etc.). One still worrying case, however, is that of roots ending in *-o*: these rarely take /ŋ, n/ as TH, no matter what the meaning of the verb.

¹⁷ Note that this is optional for intransitive verbs. The non-marking of the perfect-perfective/imperfective opposition is in fact the *unmarked* case, while marking is *marked*.

¹⁸ This seems to be a function of a westward-spreading sound change. It is also attested in Motu. The sound change has been documented by Lynch (1978a).

¹⁹ *A...e-mai* 'S/he does not come' (or, 'is not coming').

The nuclear layer negative operator, which I tentatively reconstruct for PMek as */aʔi/,²⁰ has the EMek reflex /a/ and the NWMek reflex /a/ or /ae/, while in WMek and NMek it has merely lost the glottal stop and continues as /ai/.

According to the rule given in the preceding section, there would have been assimilation of NEG to the role-marker – especially in EMek – if these had not been separated by a buffer consonant (B for short). Each of the dialects has one of these buffers: NWMek [e], WMek [d], NMek [z] and EMek [s].

As for the intrusive buffer consonants, NMek [z] and EMek [s] are present in all the specified phonological environments, i.e. /i_a and /i_o),²¹ while WMek [d] is still in the process of spreading through the lexicon, in the same phonological environments as are specified for NMek and EMek.

The negative morpheme is (as shown in Figure 20) infixes between the tense/mood marker and the role-marker: TM-NEG-RM. Since TM always ends in (underlying) -a, the negative morpheme usually fuses with that prefix (as well as with the vowel of the subject marking prefix in NWMek). For this reason I give full negative paradigms for all tenses and moods of selected verbs in Appendix 4 where, although the verbs given are somewhat irregular, one can study most of the environments that occur with regular verbs. *Aʔi as a nuclear layer negative “can modify either nucleus in core-layer junctures...but must modify both verbs in a nuclear-level juncture” (Foley and Van Valin 1984:192).

The verb ‘go’ (PMek *ao) is a good example. The paradigms presented in Appendix 4 provide ample illustration but, for convenience, here are four short examples:

- | | | |
|--------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 4.19a. | <i>A-e-io.</i> | (NWMek) ²² |
| b. | <i>Ai-j-i-ao.</i> | (WMek) ²³ |
| c. | <i>Ai-z-e-ao.</i> | (NMek) |
| d. | <i>A-e-lao.</i> | (EMek) |
- NEG-(B)-3SG-go
S/he has not gone.

4.1.4 SYNTACTIC RELATIONS AND SEMANTIC ROLES

The verbal root or stem – that is, the root or stem that is functioning as a verb – can be indexed for a maximum of two syntactic relations. One of these relations is indexed by the pronominal prefix and the other by the pronominal suffix. These two relations are the primary syntactic functions of Mekeo grammar, and I shall refer to them as subject and object, respectively.²⁴

²⁰ It corresponds to Motu *asi*. Ross (pers.comm.) has PCP **ati*.

²¹ This form of consonantal intrusion represents a new standard in these dialects. It is never omitted in the writing of native speakers. However, mission printers ignore this fact in all their publications.

²² In NWMek the full phrase is *Maini a-e-io*.

²³ Note that [d] becomes a palatal affricate [dʒ] before [i]. WMek [ao] is often realised as [o]: *aijio* ‘S/he has not gone’.

²⁴ They correspond, for all practical purposes, to the core semantic *roles* of Actor and Undergoer in Role-Reference Grammar.

Now the events to be represented by verb words frequently involve more than two obligatory or core actants, marked on the verb. In causative situations, for example, three arguments are grammatically entailed though not all are marked on the verb. The nature of the process (or action) entails a minimum number of participant roles, all of which are marked *across derivations* of the verb. The sum of these inner actants I call the grammatical valency of the verb (V). For example, a ditransitive verb phrase (as too a derived causative verb) has two morphologically marked syntactic relations, but three obligatory inner actants. It thus has a grammatical valency of three (which can be written V3). Meanwhile, the root itself indexes a scene,²⁵ and a kind of process, or manner of action.

Any number of circumstantial actants may be implicated or entailed by the pragmatics of the scene (the whole situation which is represented or suggested by the verbal root or stem). These are things like instrument, source and medium, as well as the locative-relational nouns. The hypothetical sum of all the actual and potential actants will be called the pragmatic valency of a root (PrV): a stock of real-world entities upon which the speaker can draw at will to fill the roles of inner and outer actants. Circumstantial or outer actants can be formally distinguished from inner actants by their ability to function *either* as core arguments coded on the verb word *or* as oblique nominals – inner actants can never function as obliques. Aspects of the scene such as are represented by locative and temporal deictics are peripheral circumstants.

In order to modulate the transitivity roles of the actants chosen to fulfil the subject and object functions, the speaker can choose from a numerable repertoire of morphosyntactic mechanisms. These all involve the addition of affixes to the verb word. One set of morphemes follows the subject-marking prefix and precedes the verbal nucleus (root/stem), i.e. BA, BI or a pre-verb – these modulate the involvement of the *subject* in the process or event. Following the verbal nucleus and preceding the object-marking suffix come representatives of a second set of affixes that modulates the involvement of the *object*. This latter set follows the remote but precedes the close transitivity marker, and consists (as shown earlier) of a range of ‘thematic’ consonants, plus the options of empty O and zero object-marking. The combination of thematic consonants with the close transitivity marker and the pronominal suffixes produces the complex morphemes I call object markers (OM).²⁶ The full range of possibilities is represented below, with modulatory constituents typeset in bold:

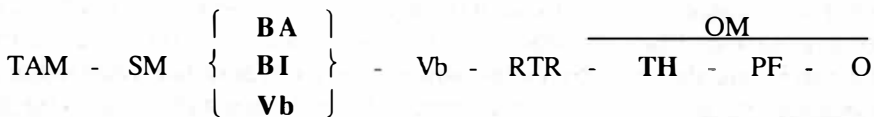


FIGURE 27: CONSTITUENT STRUCTURE OF THE VERB WORD (4)

Transitivity is regarded here (after Hopper and Thompson 1980) as “the effective carrying over of an activity” from a subject to an object, a transposition of energy that involves a

²⁵ I take the term “scene” from Fillmore (1977) and use it as a term of the grammar in preference to ‘frame’ or ‘schema’ (which suggest a fixed set of coordinates). This term has also been adopted by Lichtenberk (1988).

²⁶ These morphosyntactically realised modulations and transformations no doubt help to compensate for the lack of clearly marked case roles.

degree of “co-variance” between these two grammatical functions,²⁷ situated at either end of the transitivity axis. But transitivity is, more importantly, in part an expressive phenomenon, determined by discourse-pragmatic strategies and speaker emphasis, rather than an objective measure of the ‘degree of impact’. However, whichever actant is chosen to function as the syntactic subject will represent the controller of the process/event, this being the central case relation in the semantics of any verb (central CR for short).

I thus recognise one CR as indispensable to the ‘case frame’ of every verb, and identify this with the CR of the subject of the intransitively functioning verb root. In Mekeo, the actant chosen to fill subject position always functions as the controller of the process/event, it outranks all the other actants in terms of control (a key concept throughout many of the systems of the grammar). It should be noted that the semantics of control are contributed to an actant by virtue of the syntactic function it performs. In terms of traditional case grammar and mainstream western semantics any such actant will have a quite separate characterisation as Agent, Instrument, Experiencer, Beneficiary, Goal or even Patient, in terms of some ‘objectively’ represented scene, and these terms will also have their uses in our analysis.

I shall also refer to the obligatory CR in Mekeo as an agent.²⁸ It should be clear that this agent is not necessarily human or conscious or even animate.²⁹ As noted above (§1.3.4.1) it merely represents the source of a sustained inputting of energy – which may presumably be halted at any moment. This is discussed again in §4.2.1 in connection with imperfective aspect. It is this that makes the agent the controlling actant, as well as the deontic source, the source of ‘responsibility’ (see §4.2.4 below, and compare Givón 1984:89, fn.6, on responsibility).³⁰

It should be emphasised that transitive modulation, on subject or object, represents a choice on the part of the speaker. This grammar differs crucially on this point from grammars that presuppose a ‘dictionary’ – an abstract lexicon – with prescriptive entries (e.g. case frames for verbal predicates).³¹ This approach follows Fillmore (1977) who in his revision of case-grammar argues that a lexical root merely evokes a ‘scene’ from life, and that a given speaker is free to ‘perspectivize’ that scene in whatever way s/he wishes. The hearer is of

27 Grammatical functions are subject and object, while deep syntactic relations are subject, object and indirect object (IO). Deep syntactic relations create syntactic bonds between non-verbal ‘topics’ and the verb word.

28 It would be a complete misnomer to follow Starosta (1988) in labelling it as Patient.

29 It may be worth pointing out that Chafe’s version of case grammar, where an agent is defined in terms of the semantic feature ‘potent’ (something which “has the power to do something, has a force of its own”; Chafe 1970:109), allows for inanimate nouns to have that feature. In Chafe’s verb-centered approach, if the verb is an action verb or an action-process verb, the subject of that verb will be an agent – whatever the animacy or inanimacy of the noun which realises that subject (see Chafe 1970:155).

30 Pagotto (1992) has recently argued that the Oceanic languages in general focus on Agents, and strive to ensure that these will remain in the position of Subject/Actor of the verb. Such languages have tended to incorporate strategies “to ensure the primacy of the Agent in the argument structure of the newly accusative Oceanic verb” (Pagotto 1992:264-265). One such strategy is “a constraint...on transitive verb sources of causative verbs”, in which connection see §5.2.5 below.

31 Since I am borrowing certain important devices from RRG (e.g. the layered structure of the clause) it is all the more important that I specify those theoretical points on which I part company with Foley and Van Valin, and this is one of them. For FVV (1984:32) “the token-specific semantics” of actor and undergoer are “a function of the nature of the predicate and, to a lesser extent, the inherent lexical content of the NP argument serving as actor”. This is inherent in their acceptance of lexical decomposition *à la* Dowty, Gruber and Jackendoff, a concept which may apply usefully to some languages but does not to Mekeo.

course equally free, and only pragmatic constraints help to ensure that a compatible interpretation will be arrived at. Even the choice of actant for the polar roles on the transitivity axis is frequently open, as many Mekeo verbs can select for subject as well as for object. *E-mauni*, for instance, which can be glossed as ‘3SG-life’, can mean either ‘S/he gives/gave birth’ or ‘S/he is/was born’. And *e-pau, e-fau* ‘3SG-thrust in’, can mean either ‘S/he stabs/plants/implants’ or ‘S/he, it, is stabbed/planted with something’ or ‘S/he, it, is implanted in something’. It selects its subject unpredictably from the entire *scene* (see further below in this section, and then §5.5.2, §6.1.4, §6.1.5 and §6.1.8 for more on this verb; the question of intransitive subject selection verbs is addressed in §4.3.4).

Most Mekeo verbs are suggestive more of a certain manner of execution than of any necessary effect upon the object. The process or action is by far the main preoccupation, not the result. But this process (or action) is bi-directional, it has an orientation towards the subject and one towards the object. And these two aspects of the transaction can not always be separated out – a discrete input and a coherent result. In Mekeo, the thematic consonant of the *object* marker says something (somewhat surprisingly) about the *subject’s* commitment to the action, and the manner in which this is carried out: deliberate or perfunctory, creative or destructive, and so on. In the same way, prefixes like *BA-* and *BI-* that follow the subject marker alter the way in which the object is perceived as being affected, and influence the choice of OM.

Above and beyond the morphological specification of ‘affects’ and ‘effects’, the Mekeo roots themselves possess a core semantic specification, such that a certain root will usually prefer a certain thematic consonant and disfavour others (at least without an adverbial buffer, which supplies its own semantic). Thus the indispensable core meaning, the *essential* meaning, of *pau, fau* is simply a manner of ‘thrusting or being thrust (in)’. Whether this ‘thrusting’ results in ‘piercing’ or ‘inserting’ or ‘planting’ or ‘stabbing’ of someone or something, or *by* or *with* someone or something, is only later revealed by the nature of the morphological modulations, after the SM and before the verbal nucleus or on the OM.

The grammar of subject modulation goes beyond a list of the affixes (*BA-*, *BI-*, etc.) to involve types of transitivity, i.e. verb classes, and will be treated in detail below. The basic thematic and transitivity modulations on the OM are numerable and their meanings specifiable. I list them here along with very approximate semantic specifications, dependent upon how the different THs combine with different varieties of the transitive suffix. (Note that there is more detailed outline of the thematic consonants and their meanings in §1.3.4.3 above. And there is a series of very much fuller discussions, along with numerous illustrations, in the appropriate subsections of §4.3.3 below.)

<u>TH</u>	<u>Object Case-Role</u>	<u>Manner Specification</u>
a) -∅	agentive//cut/displaced O	: action easy to effortless
b) -N	passive, impacted O	: action physical and strenuous
c) -B	lightly/briefly affected O	: action deft, perfunctory, curt
d) -G	brusquely affected O	: action aggressive/dispersive

<u>TR</u>	<u>Object Case-Role</u>	<u>Manner Specification</u>
a) <i>-i</i>	definite/specific O	: action perfect-perfective
b) <i>-lai</i>	targeted O, unaffected	: action atelic (goalless)
c) <i>-ai-n</i>	obliquely affected O	: action figurative, affective
d) <i>-l-ai-n</i>	confective O	: action extended (in space/time)
e) <i>-ŋ-ai-n</i>	psychological O	: action difficult, complex
f) <i>-∅</i>	indefinite/non-specific O	: action 'implicit'

These are the object 'cases' – the roles in which we may cast chosen actants functioning as syntactic 'object of the verb'.³²

The possibilities for object CRs are briefly illustrated below, with approximate semantic specifications, and also possible combinations of the different THs with transitivity marking. The examples are all from EMek. As noted above, these different suffixes are all dealt with in much more detail in the appropriate subsections below:

IMPERFECTIVE		PERFECTIVE	
1) <i>e-ʔafo-a</i>	S/he throws it.	<i>e-ʔafo-i-a</i>	S/he threw it.
2) <i>e-au-ŋ-a</i>	S/he hits it.	<i>e-au-n-i-a</i>	S/he hit it.
3) <i>e-iki-p-a</i>	S/he pinches it.	<i>e-iki-p-i-a</i>	S/he pinched it.
4) <i>e-pepe-k-a</i>	S/he squeezes it.	<i>e-pepe-k-i-a</i>	S/he squeezed it.
5) <i>e-ʔafo-lai-a</i>	S/he threw it away	<i>e-ʔafo-lai-a</i>	S/he threw it away.
6) <i>e-maniʔi-ai-n-a</i>	S/he fears it.	<i>e-maniʔi-ai-n-a</i>	S/he feared it.
7) <i>e-pua-lai-n-a</i>	S/he carries it away.	<i>e-pua-lai-n-a</i>	S/he carried it away.
8) <i>e-pua-ŋai-n-a</i>	S/he 'bears' it.	<i>e-pua-ŋai-n-a</i>	S/he 'bore' it.
9) <i>e-pua</i>	S/he carries (it).	<i>e-pua-i-s-a</i>	S/he carried it.

As noted above, the 'case' of the subject is always that of agent. This is discussed in §4.1.4 and §4.2.1 below.

This grammar goes a step further than Foley and Van Valin in conflating grammatical relations with semantic roles.³³ Following Starosta (1982:4), I have "placed the primary burden of identifying case relations on grammatical criteria". Different kinds of object marker (OM) stand for different kinds of semantic role – i.e., for actants cast in different semantic roles. The object marker corresponds with the semantic role *in which the actant is cast*. The subject CR is always the same, being preordained by the grammar – the subject is the highest level controller, or, in my terms, the agent. One result of this approach is that what are *semantically* identifiable as different CRs fall together in Mekeo. Thus what some case grammarians call Instrument, Theme, Stimulus, and so on may all, upon occasion, be expressed by the same OM. This will be illustrated in passing below. As the aforementioned concepts are not formally recognised in Mekeo they cannot be regarded as having any place in this grammar, and any conceptual difficulties experienced by (say) an English-speaking linguist are, objectively speaking, irrelevant.

³² It would be possible to add to this basic list of object case-roles if we took into account the quasi-grammaticised functioning of certain adverbial verbs in nuclear juncture (to be discussed in §6.1).

³³ "Thus, actor and undergoer, the two arguments of a transitive predication, have both semantic and syntactic significance. In an important sense they constitute an interface between syntactic relations such as subject and semantic relations such as case roles or thematic relations." (FVV 1984:32)

In brief, syntactic *and* semantic relations are defined, for Mekeo, in terms of surface structure. The sum of all these formally marked relations equals the sum of the semantic roles recognised by and in this grammar and this language. The actant chosen to be the subject relation corresponds to the referent of the subject-marking prefix, and is always – automatically – treated as the highest ranking actant on the scale of agentivity (= control) in that clause. The nature of the object relation, on the other hand, is not semantically fixed. This relation can, moreover, be assumed by any of a number of competing actants, and it can *theoretically* be encoded in a number of different ways (in practice the verb favours, and disfavors, different kinds of marking, and thus different kinds of objects). The object functions here as a kind of ‘focus’, comparable to the ‘subject’ focus of Philippine type languages (see Pawley and Reid 1980). It can also be described as a pragmatic or referential peak, to borrow an early term of RRG, being ‘determined’ in more kinds of ways than is the subject.³⁴

4.1.5 SYNTACTIC SYSTEMS AND VERB CLASSES

The classification of verb types – which derives from the fact that roots functioning as verbs are *not* free as to their syntactic behaviour and role-potential – is based on a general division between action verbs and process verbs. This coincides by and large with the distinction (first made by Arms in the field of Fijian studies) between actor-oriented and patient-oriented verbs (A-verbs and P-verbs for short). It also corresponds – approximately – to the division made by Boas and Deloria between active verbs and stative verbs in Amerindian languages, terms which have recently been adopted by Schütz (1986) for his description of Fijian grammar.

The essential feature of such a system is that, instead of treating each alternant of a given verb as a separate configuration of roles and functions, with a separate lexical entry, each root is described as a semantic unit with a specifiable range of alternants. Roots are then arranged in classes, in terms of the functional configurations they can host, and the semantic roles that can fill those functional slots.

Assigning purely structural functions to the segments *S* and *O* (i.e. subject-of-verb and object-of-verb), and treating transitive and intransitive verbs alike in this respect, these structural functions can be given different semantic specifications according to the verb class to which the verb stem belongs – that is, *according to the process dynamic under which they operate*:

CAUSATIVITY:		TRANSITIVITY:	
<i>S</i>	= Causer	<i>S</i>	= Actor
<i>O</i>	= Causee/Actor	(<i>O</i>)	= Target

FIGURE 28: SEMANTIC SPECIFICATION OF THE VERBAL FUNCTIONS

This looks like the kind of ‘split’ system that has been described for Lakhota and Acheh.³⁵ But in Mekeo, unlike these other languages, the split is not recognised in surface structure, the syntactic function *S* being realised by a single set of subject-marking prefixes

³⁴ The reader is referred to Foley (1976), Foley and Van Valin (1977) and Van Valin and Foley (1980) in this last connection.

³⁵ See Merlan (1985) for a discussion of split-marked intransitive verbs (i.e. an overt split).

which thus, morphologically, conflate the two semantic roles of Causer (including Self-causer)³⁶ and Actor. I have arrived at a general classification of all the Mekeo verbs on the basis of the above split. The classes can be justified by appeal to certain syntactic-derivational tests or 'reactances'.³⁷ I first present a general schema of labelled verb classes, and subsequently describe the tests:

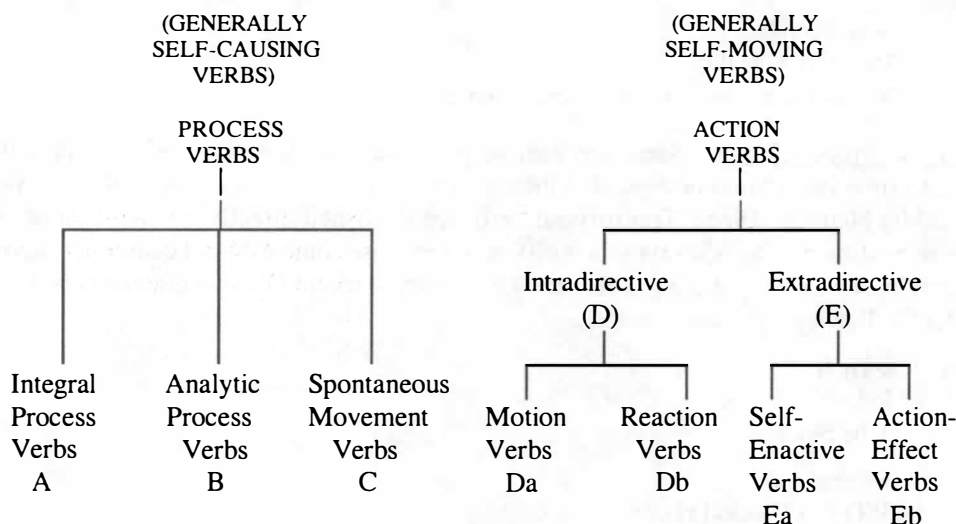


FIGURE 29: MAJOR MEKEO VERB CLASSES

The class of Intradirective Motion Verbs in fact divides up into three sub-classes, as follows:

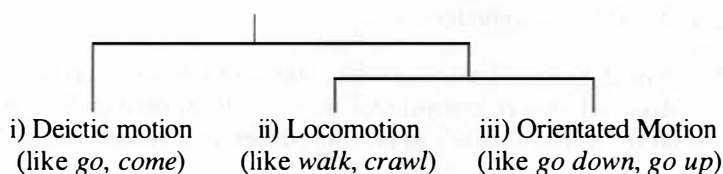


FIGURE 30: CLASSES OF MOTION VERBS

There is some cross-over between the Verbs of Spontaneous Movement and the Verbs of Orientated Motion, and between verbs of Orientated Motion and verbs of Deictic Motion. Thus *gibo*, *jibo*, *tsibo*, *kipo* 'float downstream, go down', which can for general purposes be classified as a verb of orientated motion, can also sometimes function as a Verb of Deictic Motion, in which case it can take the comitative//causative suffix *-AI* (see §4.3.1.4.3 and §4.3.1.6 below), or it can be treated as a Verb of Spontaneous Movement, in which case it cannot take *-AI*.

A: Integral Process Verbs. The process involved cannot be analysed into a reflexive (self-causing or self-affecting) transitive process. They can be transitivised, in that they can

³⁶ A Self-causer is usually a non-human not to say a non-animate actant but, as I have argued above and in Jones (1993b), this is not a relevant distinction in Mekeo where all subjects are treated as agents.

³⁷ *Reactances* is a term used by Whorf to signify collocational or syntactic constraints on the behaviour of certain lexical items. These often reveal 'cryptotypic' or covert grammatical categories. The semantic roles thus have grammatical/syntactic underpinning in the differential grammatical behaviour of the verbal roots – they are not a priori constructs.

undergo causativisation with *BA-*. These verbs are equivalent to Arms' de-adjectival (and de-nominal) statives.

Example: *e-faʔa*
 3SG-big.ITR
 X be big

e-pa-faʔa-∅
 3SG-CA-big-3SG
 X make something big, rear (child, animal)

B: Analytic Process Verbs. Some intransitive processes are viewed as reflexive or self-causing. Certain verbs thus correspond in their own way to the class of introverted *reflexives* identified by Haiman (1985). Transitivity is accomplished directly, by addition of an OM, or derivationally, by addition of a prefix. In either case some external causer acts upon the originally self-causing subject. These are the P-verbs of recent Oceanic grammars and are equivalent to Pawley's B-class statives.

Example: *e-kupu*
 3SG-block.ITR
 X be blocked

e-kupu-ŋ-a
 3SG-CA.block-TH-3SG
 s/he blocks/blocked something

e-pa-kupu-a
 3SG-CA-block-3SG
 X have someone block something

C: Spontaneous Movement Verbs. These normally take an inanimate subject, and can be analysed as intracausatives. However, transitivity is accomplished derivationally only, by addition of both a prefix and a suffix, and this introduces an external causer. They are a class of P-verbs.

Example: *e-ŋoŋo*
 3SG-budge.ITR
 it budges/budged

e-pa-ŋoŋo-∅
 3SG-CA-budge-3SG
 s/he makes/made it budge

e-pa-ŋoŋo-lei-a
 3SG-CA-budge-AT-3SG
 s/he gets/got rid of it

D: Intradirective Action Verbs. These normally take a human subject. The actor and the undergoer are one and the same – that is to say, they are 'self-directing'. These are the A-verbs of the literature (= Pawley's A-class statives). There are two sub-classes:

- a) Motion Verbs.
- b) Reaction Verbs.

Examples:

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| a) | <i>e-mai</i>
3SG-come.ITR
s/he comes, has come | <i>e-mai-ei-n-a</i>
3SG-come-RTR-TH-3SG
S/he brings/brought him/her/it |
| b) | <i>e-a?a</i>
3SG-wake/laugh.ITR
s/he laughs/laughed | <i>e-a?a-l-ai-n-a</i>
3SG-laugh-B-RTR-TH-3SG
s/he laughs/laughed at someone/something |

The above verbs are usually transitivity by addition of the suffix *-AI*, but they also take *BA-*. Deictic motion verbs have to be distinguished from both verbs of locomotion and verbs of orientated motion.

E: Extradirective Action Verbs. These are action verbs, with visible effects. The action/activity of extradirective verbs is directed outward, away from the source, but it is atelic until the verb is transitivity. There are two sub-classes:

- Self-enactive Verbs, where the actor visibly activates (mobilises or agitates) him/herself or some part of him/herself
- Action-Effect Verbs, where the effect of the action is delayed or distanced by the use of some external agent or instrumentality. Transitivity is accomplished simply by adding an OM, whereby the objectless activity is assigned an object or goal.

Examples:

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| a) | <i>e-?afo</i>
3SG-toss.ITR
s/he shakes/shook him/herself | <i>e-?afo-a³⁸</i>
3SG-toss-3SG
s/he throws something |
| | <i>e-pa-?afo-?afo</i>
3SG-CA-toss-RED
s/he shakes/shook him/her-self, or some part of him/herself | |
| b) | <i>e-au</i>
3SG-hit.ITR
s/he fights/fought | <i>e-au-ŋ-a</i>
3SG-hit-TH-3SG
s/he hits him/her/it |

If we display these derivational possibilities in a grid we can see at a glance that two classes of verbs (B and E) are distinguished from the other three classes of verbs (A, C and D) by virtue of the fact that they can function as underived causatives/transitives, without any additional morphology beside an object marker (the thematic consonants will be discussed below). That is, analytic process verbs and both categories of extradirectives form *underived* causatives/transitives, the others do not:

38 The verbs in these two sub-classes (E(a) and E(b)) have marked perfective-imperfective forms, e.g. PF *e-?afo-i-a*. Only the imperfective form is given here.

	OCCURS AS INTRANSITIVE	FORMS UNDERIVED TRANSITIVE	FORMS DERIVED TRANSITIVE with BA ³⁹
A:	<i>e-faʔa</i>	—	<i>e-pa-faʔa</i>
B:	<i>e-kupu</i>	<i>e-kupu-ŋ-a</i>	<i>e-pa-kupu-a</i>
C:	<i>e-ŋoŋo</i>	—	<i>e-pa-ŋoŋo-a</i>
Da:	<i>e-mai</i>	—	<i>e-ma-ei-n-a</i>
Db:	<i>e-aʔa</i>	—	<i>e-aʔa-l-ai-n-a</i>
Ea:	<i>e-ʔafo</i>	<i>e-ʔafo-a</i>	<i>e-pa-ʔafo-ʔafo</i>
Eb:	<i>e-au</i>	<i>e-au-ŋ-a</i>	—

Regarding category Da, there are some common verbs of motion that do take causative BA-, i.e. the verbs of orientated motion, just as some verbs of motion do take an object. Exceptions and sub-classes will be described below.

The system of verb classification set out above can, as already noted, be justified in terms of formal reactances. A network of criterial reactances is set out in the following chart:

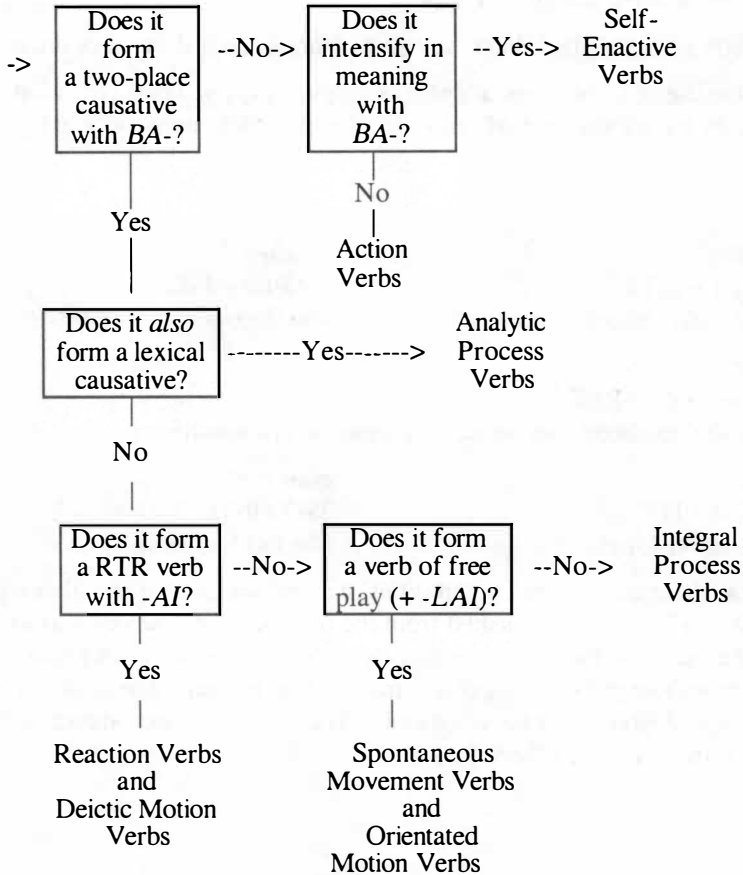


FIGURE 31: CRITERIAL TESTS FOR THE MAJOR VERB CLASSES

39 With causative/intensive/similitive meaning according to the class of the root verb.

Often a complex nucleus will have two competing interpretations, depending on whether the hearer regards it as more or less grammaticalised. This is discussed in more detail in §6.1 and §6.2.

The grammatical operators that function at the level of the nucleus are primarily aspect, direction and manner. That is to say that these may not differ for each of the roots in nuclear juncture: the core as a whole chooses once in each category. There is also a specialised nuclear layer negator (see §4.1.3 above and §6.1.14 below).

4.2 CATEGORIES OF INFLECTIONAL MEANING

This is an area of the grammar in which the dialects of Mekeo differ substantially from one another.

Mekeo seems to have inherited five ‘basic’, morphologically defined affirmative paradigms in accordance with which all lexical roots functioning as verbs may be conjugated.⁴¹ All four dialects have in addition inherited or developed two systems to express aspect (and relative tense).⁴² There is a) a system of using contrastively placed word stress to distinguish perfect-perfective tense-aspect from imperfective aspect,⁴³ and b) a system confined to the third person singular of transitive verbs, where perfect tense and perfective aspect are distinguished from imperfective aspect by the presence or absence of the morpheme *-i* (here called the perfective aspect marker). This distinction operates on only one of the above-mentioned morphological paradigms: non-future. If we count these two differentially defined paradigms, we can say that all four dialects possess six non-derived verbal paradigms (I have listed two derived paradigms for NWMek, as will be seen below).

In East Mekeo there are six affirmative but only four negative paradigms. This asymmetry is partly a function of the semantics of different affirmative paradigms, but it is more concretely an effect of the morphonology of the tense-aspect-mood marking morphemes, the agglutinated negative operator, and the subject-marking morphemes upon which the former are superimposed. There are in effect no regularly formed negative paradigms for two of the affirmative paradigms. In North Mekeo and West Mekeo and North-West Mekeo, however, where the phonological conditions are somewhat different, one of these missing paradigms has survived – the future negative – so that there are five regularly formed negative paradigms in all. I could find no trace of a negative imperative in any dialect. There is no apparent reason for this – one can indeed artificially generate one in accordance with the rules of Mekeo morphology and using existing linguistic resources:

41 These correspond to the five paradigms of Motu that rely on tense-aspect-mood prefixes, rather than on aspectual suffixes like *-mu* and *-va*, or adverbial particles like *vada*. The names of these five Motuan paradigms, as given in Lister-Turner and Clark (1954b) are a) Simple Present = Simple Past (two identical paradigms redundantly listed here), b) Simple Future, c) Near Future, d) Subjunctive Mood, e) Imperative Mood.

42 This is what Comrie (1985a) calls absolute-relative tense, including past-perfect and future-perfect. Unlike Comrie I do not exclude the *present*-perfect from this category – on the grounds that the time of the speech situation coincides with the absolute time of present, and that (in European languages at any rate) it behaves irregularly, often taking on specialised meanings. I attribute the latter to its logical equivalence with the simple past tense (Comrie 1985a), and its consequent availability for specialised uses.

43 This opposition is applied in the main to intransitive verbs. To what extent it works with transitive verbs needs to be investigated further.

WMek ***M-ai-d-o-ao!* ‘Do not go!’ Motu has such a paradigm, but it seems never to have existed in Mekeo.

The basic affirmative paradigms constitute a closed semantic system that can be shown diagrammatically as follows (the situation in NWMek is more complex):

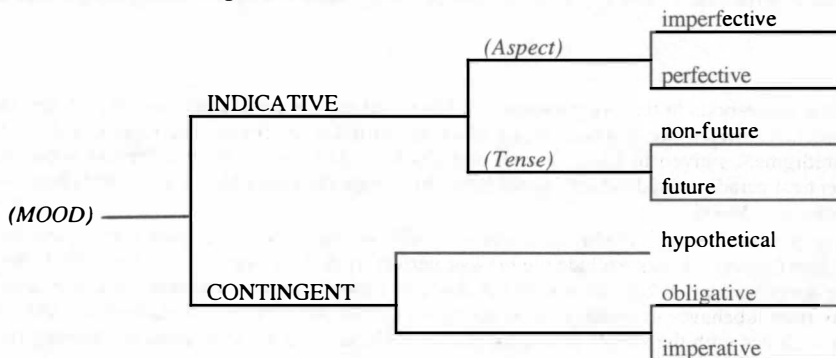
INDICATIVE MOOD		CONTINGENT MOODS		
TENSE		hypothetical mood	INTENTIONAL MOODS	
non-future	future		obligative	imperative
ASPECT				
imperfective	perfective			

FIGURE 33: THE MEKEO TENSE-MOOD-ASPECT SYSTEM⁴⁴

Tense and Aspect interact to form four tense-aspect combinations. The intentional moods⁴⁵ are essentially subjunctive moods and are subordinated to the intentional verb *OMA*. When they appear in what are apparently independent clauses, the superordinate verb of intention has to be supplied by the hearer. Accurate interpretation of the utterance depends on the supplied person/number and conjugation of that verb. The hypothetical mood, on the other hand, occurs only in independent clauses. NWMek has, besides, a desiderative mood, and some of the shared moods are realised slightly differently in that dialect or have different meanings (see §4.2.5 below).

I treat habitual/progressive aspect, which is expressed by full reduplication of the verbal root rather than by any affixed morphemes, separately from the perfective/imperfective system (see §6.1.1 below). Reduplication adds to the complexity of the verbal nucleus, and such verbs are treated as having a complex nucleus. Moreover, the perfective/imperfective system interacts with relative (or perfect) tense, while reduplication represents an independent layer of meaning that can be combined with any other aspect or tense. It is a

⁴⁴ This can also be represented as a network of systems, i.e. options, that are of ever-increasing ‘delicacy’ as one moves from left to right (as in SFL):



⁴⁵ Van Goethem (n.d.) suggested labelling the irrealis paradigms Potential Mood. My obligative is his Optative. He recognised that the imperative, but not the obligative was a subjunctive.

lexical mechanism, and I treat the meaning of replicated or prolonged action as *incorporated* in the lexical nucleus.

4.2.1 ASPECT: PERFECT-PERFECTIVE/IMPERFECTIVE

Comrie (1976:12) rigorously differentiates between ‘perfect’ and ‘perfective’ (following the accepted usage in Slavic linguistics of these two terms):

The term ‘perfective’ contrasts with ‘imperfective’, and denotes a situation viewed in its entirety, without regard to internal temporal constituency; the term [present] ‘perfect’ refers to a past situation which has present relevance, for instance the present result of a past event (*his arm has been broken*).

Elsewhere, Comrie (1976:52) states that the perfect “expresses a relation between two time points”. ‘Perfect’ thus refers to a tense-combination rather than to an aspect. In fact both terms are needed to account for the facts of Mekeo grammar, where systems of tense and aspect intersect, yet where perfect and perfective meanings sometimes seem to blend together.

As noted above (end of §4.1), perfective aspect is differently marked for intransitive and transitive verbs in Mekeo. Intransitive verbs take *marked* stress on the subject-marking prefix in order to signal imperfective aspect:

- 4.23 *Alano e-mài, kai Fata è-mai.* (EMek)
 Alan 3SG-come.PF but Father 3SG.IPF-come
 Alan has come; but Father is (still, momentarily) coming.

E-mài clearly realises (here) a perfect time-relation, (i.e. a ‘relative’ tense), which is superimposed on perfective aspect; whereas *è-mai* clearly represents an imperfective and moreover an imperfective or indeed progressive aspect.⁴⁶ Normal word stress in Mekeo falls on the penultimate syllable of the word – as happens here with perfective aspect (which is thus *unmarked*). Note that the progressive-imperfective aspect can apply to all persons and numbers of the SM, which is quite different from what happens with transitive verbs where the aspectual contrast only applies at third person singular.

Transitive verbs for their part exhibit a contrast in the third person singular based on presence or absence of the transitivity marker *-i* before the object indexing *-a*. High transitivity thus corresponds – fairly predictably – with perfectivity:

- 4.24 *Amuʔe e-au-ŋ-a, fai isava e-au-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 dog 3SG-hit-TH-3SG yesterday also 3SG-hit -TH-PF-3SG
 S/he is hitting the dog, s/he hit it yesterday too.

High transitivity also implies that the object is definite or – at least – referential. First and second person objects are inherently definite, in as much as their identity as speech act participants can be exophorically ascertained.

⁴⁶ This kind of prosodic opposition is also found in Roro, where stress on the SM seems to be an unmarked condition of the future and present tenses: “In the conjugation of bisyllabic verbs it has to be noted that in the present and future tenses of the indicative the stress is always on the verbal particle” (Joindreau 1907/1968:24). A similar rule applies in Kuni, according to Eschlimann (1935), who also notes that, when the object is expressed before the verb, the ‘accent’ seems to fall back on to the verb root (as for example in *luma ka-dà* ‘house I-go’, as opposed to *kà-da* ‘I-go’).

The defective paradigms of the imperfective/perfective aspects of a transitive verb were illustrated in §4.1.2 above. This remarkable situation can perhaps be explained in terms of neutralisation and ‘markedness assimilation’ (see Haiman 1975). Third person singular is generally accepted by linguists to be the least *marked* person (see for example Benveniste 1966 and Watkins 1962). Now, taking perfective to be the *marked* value of the aspectual opposition – it is certainly the formally marked value – we can state the rule as follows:

- a) marked aspect (perfective) assimilates to *marked* person (first, second)
- b) unmarked aspect (imperfective) assimilates to *unmarked* person (third)

a) and b) thus represent the *unmarked* equations. For certain verbs, however, we occasionally do find morphologically unmarked tokens of first and second person OMs (e.g. on EMek *ia* ‘see, look’: *e-ia-o* ‘s/he saw you’). And perfective third person singular objects are of course common enough (although not permitted, interestingly, after the suffix of remote transitivity, as noted in §4.1.2 above).

With regard to the precise meaning of the Mekeo perfective, I wish to argue that it functions as a relative tense,⁴⁷ thus expressing not only the fact that an action or process is viewed in its entirety but the added information that this has already reached completion and that the result is viewed as being somehow relevant to the present of the speaker,⁴⁸ or at any rate to some absolute reference point in time. This perfect-perfective aspect usually further implies a) a highly individuated O, and b) a high level of affectedness of this O. These terms are taken straight from Hopper and Thompson (1980). The semantic properties there listed as heightening the “distinctness” or “degree of individuation” of an O include “proper, human, animate; referential, definite”, which are precisely the properties that (it is suggested) motivate obligatory perfective aspect marking for verbs with first and second person Os in Mekeo.⁴⁹

Imperfective aspect is in some ways *unmarked* (i.e. it is formally unmarked, and it corresponds in an obvious sort of way to the negatively defined non-future tense), but in one way it must be regarded as definitely *marked*, that is in terms of its infrequency of use. This applies less to transitive than to intransitive verbs, though it is probably true to say that the perfective aspect is the ‘preferred’ aspect. But in the case of intransitive verbs it would be difficult to deny that imperfective tokens are statistically rare – a stressed subject marker is certainly *marked*; that is to say, it puts a special emphasis on the progressive and incomplete

⁴⁷ Latterly ‘relative tense’ is often given an extremely strict interpretation and is contrasted with ‘absolute–relative’ time relations. Comrie (1985a) excludes the present-perfect time relation (such as is expressed in my example 4.23 above) from his class of absolute–relative tenses due to the fact that (among other things) it is logically equivalent to a simple past tense. I argue that this is precisely why it often takes on specialised functions, as in English, or replaces the simple past, as in colloquial French and German.

⁴⁸ This interpretation corresponds to that given by Fr Joindreau for his Roro “past tense” (in Bluhme’s translation), as it does to that put forward by Fr Egidi for the “*passé indicatif*” in Kuni. “The past tense is used to express that something has been done and accomplished... It also serves to express the actual possession of a quality or a state which is not so much the result of a present action as of an acquisition accomplished in the past” (Joindreau 1907:7). Compare Egidi: “*Le verbe à Kuni sert très rarement à indiquer un état; il indique généralement l’action qui commence cet état*” (1913:984). The Motu tense-aspect system appears not to resemble this state of affairs very closely at all, relying heavily on aspectual suffixes, adverbs of time, etc.

⁴⁹ Properties that are disregarded here are: ‘concrete; singular; count’. I disregard ‘singular’ and ‘count’ because, as we saw, the unmarked number of Mekeo nouns is ‘common’. And I disregard ‘concrete’ because, as argued I elsewhere, this is not a meaningful concept in Mekeo culture.

nature of the event being described, and, iconically speaking, upon the input phase of that event, the part played by the agent, as realised by the subject-marking prefix.

The above generalisations may need to be modified for certain classes or sub-classes of verbs. It may be the case, for example, that certain process verbs – corresponding to adjectival nouns, substantive or non-substantive, that are more usually used with impersonal subjects – are *inherently* imperfective rather than perfective. They *can* occur with a *marked* fronted stress,⁵⁰ but do so more rarely than, say, verbs of motion. However, the mere fact that they could have been realised as nominal rather than verbal predicates emphasises that they have here been treated at least initially as *processes*, whether these are now being viewed as completed (perfect-perfective) or uncompleted (progressive-imperfective).

In general, the subjects of Mekeo imperfective verbs are ideally if not actually animate, and indeed *responsible* (see my discussion of the verb *OMA* and deontic modality in §1.4.4 and §4.2.4). This last explains the reluctance with which the Mekeo attribute antisocial mental processes directly to a human subject. As I have demonstrated at length elsewhere (Jones 1993b), antisocial or reprehensible emotions are always attributed to some internal ‘organ’ (e.g. the *ɲua*). As Comrie has it (1976:13), imperfective verbs “require a continual input of energy”. And, one might add – for the Mekeo – an ongoing *commitment* by some controlling agent.

As explained in §1.3.4.1 and §4.1.4 above, the subject slot is always occupied by the highest-level Controller of the event. Thus an element of control is unavoidably – indeed systematically – attributed to all subjects.⁵¹ And while this factor scarcely needs emphasising in the case of transitive verbs, where the affectedness of the object is more in question, it is the degree of control that varies between imperfective and perfective uses of intransitive verbs.

To complete this account of aspect in Mekeo it is necessary to add that Brown (1955:7) reported two aspect-marking suffixes, which according to him signified continuous aspect: *-mu* (present continuous) and *-ga* (past continuous).⁵² His examples (with my interlinear glosses) are:

- 4.25 *Oi gaβaŋu o-gaβa-gaβa-mu?* (NWMek:B)
 you what 2SG-do-RED-PRESENT.CNT
 What are you doing?

⁵⁰ See Jones (1992) ‘Nouns and verbs of ‘visceral’ reaction’, for some further discussion.

⁵¹ This may be seen as anthropomorphism, but even English has elements of this. Jespersen (1933:116) has noted that with verbs of motion and change, when these are used intransitively, “we very often think of a thing as moved of itself or through an inward impulse”. The reader is referred back to the discussion in §4.1.4.

⁵² Motu is the only other AN language to possess anything similar, i.e. a pair of continuous aspect markers: *-mu* (present continuous) and *-va* (past continuous). Ray (1926) suggested that these had been innovated under the influence of the Koita (NAN) tense-marking suffixes, which do not however resemble the Motu suffixes in form. However, Kuni has a ‘past imperfect’ marking suffix *-na* (Egidi 1913:985), and Lala has a present-continuous aspect-marking particle *eva*, and the perfect-aspect marker *ani* (Clunn and Kolia 1977:23). Meanwhile Balawaia has a formally unrelated three-term system marking continuous, completed and habitual aspects (Kolia 1975:133). Nevertheless, in view of the formal similarities of the Motu aspect markers cited above with those attributed to NWMek by Brown, the influence of Motu-speaking pastors must be at least suspected.

4.26 *Ia oi i-iua-n-i-o-mu.* (NWMek:B)
 s/he you 3SG-speak-TH-PF-2SG-PRESENT.CNT
 He is calling you.

4.27 *-kapo-kapo-ga.* (NWMek:B)
 -throw-RED-PAST.CNT
 (X) was sowing.

There is no trace of these aspect markers anywhere in my data. (The *-ŋu* of *gaβa-ŋu* – which I did record – remains unexplained.)

Brown (1955:7) also reports a pre-verbal perfect-aspect marking particle *aβa*:

4.28 *Nau-mu aβa e-mae.* (NWMek:B)
 child-2SG PERFECT 3SG-die
 Your child has died (already).

There is no trace of *aβa* in my data.⁵³

4.2.2 MARKED TENSE: FUTURE

The portmanteau prefixes that realise future tense plus person and number can be analysed into the linear constituents: *Tense + Person/Number*. The unanalysed prefixes can be shown as follows:

TABLE 41: FUTURE TENSE – SUBJECT-MARKING MORPHEMES

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	<i>na-</i>	<i>ana-</i>	<i>ana-</i>	<i>ala-</i>
2SG	<i>no-</i>	<i>ano-</i>	<i>ano-</i>	<i>alo-</i>
3SG	<i>ne-</i>	<i>ane-</i>	<i>ane-</i>	<i>aŋe-</i>
1PL.I	<i>naga-</i>	<i>naga-</i>	<i>aga-</i>	<i>aŋa-</i>
1PL.E	<i>naga-</i>	<i>naga-</i>	<i>aga-</i>	<i>aŋa-</i>
2PL	<i>nogo-</i>	<i>nogo-</i>	<i>ago-</i>	<i>aŋo-</i>
3PL	<i>nege-</i>	<i>nege-</i>	<i>age-</i>	<i>ake-</i>

It will be observed that the vowel of the subject marking morpheme (which is as shown in Table 37 above) assimilates to the vowel of the tense marker, which I take to be /a/. I tentatively reconstruct the full tense marker as **ana-* rather than ***na-* on the basis of the WMek and NMek paradigms.⁵⁴ Kuni and Lala seem to have preserved a Proto KMR aspect-marking particle as the free discourse markers *ana*, *ane* and *ani* (see footnote), and this may represent the beginnings of the Mekeo future.

⁵³ Roro has the pre-verbal particle *aβaha* 'already' (often shortened to *aβa*), which may be related to *βaha-βanai* 'formerly'. Again I suspect interference due to fairly recent contact.

⁵⁴ Ross reconstructs Proto Papuan Tip **na-* (future tense prefixal morpheme). The Mekeo evidence points towards an underlying **ana-*, though the picture is complicated by the presence of buffer consonants ([n] and [l]). The presence of a mood- or aspect-marking proclitic particle *ana*, *ane*, *ani* in both Kuni and Lala (meaning 'just having X-ed' or 'being just about to X') suggest that the Mekeo proto-future morpheme be reconstructed as **anV-*. See Eschlimann (1935) for Kuni *ana*, *ane* and Clunn and Kolia (1977) for Lala *ani*.

The future tense can be purely predictive (the ‘uncoloured’ future) or it can take on a number of subjective nuances. It is used in at least the following functions.

i) It can represent (function to express) an offer:

- 4.29 *A-la-pitsi-n-a a-la-peni-o.* (EMek)
 FUT-1SG-shoot-TH-3SG FUT-1SG-give-2SG
 I will shoot (one/it?) and I will give (it) (to) you.
 (US: Two hunters have started a flock of Goura pigeons from cover.)

ii) It can represent a wish, or a promise:

- 4.30 *A-ŋa-isa-ʔa puŋu!* (EMek)
 FUT-1PL-see-1PL.I again
 We’ll meet again. (lit. We’ll see us again.)
- 4.31 *Namò mulamula an-e-ba-belo-i-o.* (WMek)
 this medicine FUT-3SG-CA-good-PF-2SG
 This medicine will make you well.
- 4.32 *Uabu namò ika ka-uma an-e-ba-iji-a.* (WMek)
 rain this we 1PL.I-garden FUT-3SG-CA-grow-3SG
 This rain will make our garden grow.

iii) It can represent a warning:

- 4.33 *A-ŋe-ŋa-i-s-o* (EMek)
 FUT-3SG-bite-PF-B-2SG
 It will bite you!

iv) The future tense in this next example (which we will meet again further below) represents a forecast or prediction (or a ‘prophecy’) pure and simple:

- 4.34 *Oi o-ŋau au-mi, e-mi piau* (EMek)
 you 2PL-infant person-2PL POSS-2PL running
a-ŋe-mafu-mafu.
 FUT-3SG-bad-RED
 You who are pregnant (‘having infants’) your running will be bad.

v) In ‘adverb clauses of time’ – which I treat as relative or instantiated clauses – the future tense is freely employed. This is of course the case in French and in many other languages, but not in English.⁵⁵ As English is in this respect somewhat inadequate, additional, more literal, glosses are provided.

- 4.35 *Aiza a-no-iza alà koà aizama a-lo-au-ŋ-a?* (NMek)
 sago FUT-2SG-see what like time FUT-2SG-hit-TH-3SG
 How will you know when to cut the sago (tree)?
 (lit. (The) sago (tree) you-will-see, what like time you-will-hit?)

⁵⁵ In German this usage persists in the written language (the written register) but is no longer acceptable in the spoken language (informal register) where the English usage is followed.

- 4.36 *a-ne-pua aizama* (NMek)
 FUT-3SG-fruit time
 when it fruits (lit. it-will-fruit time)

Aizama (**aiama*) translates as a time adverbial: ‘when’, ‘at the time when’.

vi) In the next very colloquial text (the speaker is a teenager) the subject is not at once obvious. It is from the narrative of a flight to the summit of Mount Yule in a helicopter. The first two tokens of the future tense represent the protasis of a conditional clause, and ‘When you will...’ in the gloss actually means ‘If you were to...’; the third and fourth future tense verbs represent the conditional apodosis (as in English ‘you would...’):

- 4.37 *A-lo-lao a-lo-ake aisama kepo* (EMek)
 FUT-2SG-go FUT-2SG-go.down time rock
laa-ŋ-ai a-lo-ake a-lo-isa.
 top-3SG-OBL FUT-2SG-go.down FUT-2SG-see
 If you went up there and came down to land you would see you
 would land on bare rock. (lit. You will go you will descend time,
 rocks on you will descend you will see.)

The Mekeo future tense operates, as just shown, to express many of the same functions as the English future with *will*. It does not, however, appear to be used to express requests. This is a function of the intentional moods with *OMA* (see §4.2.4). The Mekeo frequently employ the obligative mood or the hypothetical mood to discuss future events, a fact remarked by the early mission linguists:

les Mekeo traitent rarement comme certain un futur éloigné dépendant de leur volonté, et ils l’expriment ordinairement par ‘fa, afa’

(remark attributed by Fr Hubert van Laamsweerde to Desnoës)

As the missionaries emphasised, the Mekeo future tense is fundamentally a *true* future. It initially at least denotes a completely ‘uncoloured’ prediction about future time. Since Mekeo has a hypothetical paradigm, as well as two intentional moods, one might think that no shades of mood, modality or modulation⁵⁶ would need to intrude upon the purely predictive sense of the future tense. This tense is indeed very common in all texts in a ‘pure’ form, in its ‘prophetic’ use (notably in divination). But it also tends to take on (as I have shown above) a variety of subjective and illocutionary functions. Underlying them all is a subjective certitude and indeed sometimes a determination such as is expressed in English by the future with *going to*.

The future tense can also function (as we just saw) to represent a condition (i.e. to express one particular kind of hypothetical situation), and thus doubles up in translation for both ‘will’ and ‘would’. And, like all the other paradigms, the future paradigm can be transposed into the past, and used to express *the future in the past*. As this is important for the analysis of the tense-aspect, I give one example here:

⁵⁶ The terms ‘modality’ and ‘modulation’, as here used, are from Halliday (see especially Halliday 1970a). Modality represents “the speaker’s assessment of the probability of what he is saying, or the extent to which he regards it as self-evident”. Modulation denotes any of a variety of external and internal constraints upon action (permission, obligation, etc.) and corresponds to what Foley and Van Valin (1984:213) call ‘status’ (after Whorf). It also corresponds to what I shall call deontic mood.

- 4.38 *Ga-mai ape-mi-ai ne-ge-gaba-i-a ma?* (WMek)
 1PL-come back-1PL-OBL FUT-3PL-do-PF-3SG INT
 Would they have done it after we left?

There is no regularly formed negative paradigm for the future tense in EMek. Instead the negative forms of the hypothetical mood are used, with future meaning. In WMek and NMek the regularly formed future does occur but the negative forms of the hypothetical paradigm seem to be generally preferred. Since 'might not' is logically equivalent to 'might', the hypothetical negative paradigm seems to be largely superfluous in its original meaning, and thus available to replace the regularly formed future negative. This does not, of course, explain why such substitution should occur. In EMek, however, it seems clear that the regularly formed future negative paradigm falls together with some forms of the future affirmative and with the non-future negative. This happens because the EMek future marker is realised as [a] (< *na, *ana) and the EMek negative operator is also realised as [a] (< *a'i). Thus 'FUT-NEG-1SG-go' gives ***a-a-la-lao*, which does not occur, but if it did would be hard to keep apart from 'FUT-1SG-go', which is *a-la-lao*, and 'NEG-NFUT.1SG-go', which is also *a-la-lao*. Use of the regularly formed future negative seems to be effectively ruled out in EMek by this chance homophony.⁵⁷ But it should be noted that this principle does not, apparently, rule out either of the homophonous non-future negative or future affirmative paradigms, perhaps because their actual uses are kept apart by the pragmatics of the situation. WMek and NMek have *two* paradigms for FUT-NEG, while NWMek uses the negative forms of the desiderative paradigm (also used as a prohibitive) to which the suffix *-ŋa* is added.⁵⁸

Here in any case are the systems of prefixes for all of the available future negative paradigms (the affirmative sources of the negative paradigms are noted in brackets):

TABLE 42: FUTURE TENSE – THE NEGATIVE PARADIGMS

	NWMek		WMek	NMek		EMek
	(DESID)	(FUT)	(HYP)	(FUT)	(HYP)	(HYP)
1SG	<i>paea-</i>	<i>naida-</i>	<i>napaida-</i>	<i>naiza-</i>	<i>afaiza-</i>	<i>afala-</i>
2SG	<i>pa-</i>	<i>naido-</i>	<i>napaido-</i>	<i>naizo-</i>	<i>afaizo-</i>	<i>afalo-</i>
3SG	<i>pae-</i>	<i>naide-</i>	<i>napaide-</i>	<i>naize-</i>	<i>afaize-</i>	<i>afa-e</i>
1PL.I	<i>pagaea-</i>	<i>naiga-</i>	<i>napaiga-</i>	<i>naiga-</i>	<i>afaiga-</i>	<i>afala-</i>
1PL.E	<i>pagaea-</i>	<i>naiga-</i>	<i>napaiga-</i>	<i>naiga-</i>	<i>afaiga-</i>	<i>afala-</i>
2PL	<i>pago-</i>	<i>naigo-</i>	<i>napaigo-</i>	<i>naigo-</i>	<i>afaigo-</i>	<i>afalo-</i>
3PL	<i>page-</i>	<i>naige-</i>	<i>napaige-</i>	<i>naige-</i>	<i>afaige-</i>	<i>afake-</i>

57 The question I cannot answer is why the two morphemes are not kept separate by a buffer consonant (e.g. *ŋ*), as happens in the other dialects. One can envisage EMek ***a-la-la-lao* 'NEG-FUT-1SG-go', corresponding to WMek *na-ai-za-ao*, also 'NEG-FUT-1SG-go'. (Another possibility is that the NFUT-NEG paradigm *is* in fact a FUT-NEG paradigm, a substitution that regularly occurs in NWMek in imperfective aspect.)

58 Brown (1955:7), however, has recorded the third person forms of a regular future negative paradigm, supplied no doubt by native pastors engaged on gospel translations. These are: third person singular *nae-*, third person plural *napae-*. I collected no examples of this paradigm, but should point out that it was only after some months in the relevant areas that I became aware that a regular FUT-NEG paradigm existed for WMek and NMek, so little is it in fact used.

It is hard to say why the hypothetical negative is preferred over the future negative in WMek and NMek, but such is the case. The former is of course more ‘heavily marked’ than the latter, and thus replicates the semantic markedness of NEG. WMek *naidao* ‘I will not go’ is only minimally distinguished from *aidao* ‘I do/did not go’ (the same goes for NMek *naizao*, and *aizao*). However, a functional explanation is also possible. It will be seen below (§4.2.3) that the hypothetical mood functions importantly to *warn* people of impending danger (or of ‘dire’ consequences). This may have been the main function of the future negative, and the hypothetical negative seemed to fulfil this particular function best.

Be all that as it may, I shall now illustrate some typical uses of the future negative in everyday speech.

- 4.39 *Napai-d-e-gaina.* (WMek)
 FUT.NEG-B-3SG-suffice
 It won’t be enough./It won’t work.
- 4.40 *Afa-e-kaina.*⁵⁹ (EMek)
 FUT.NEG-3SG-suffice
 It won’t be enough./It won’t work.
- 4.41 *Ŋaŋa afai-e-fufu.*⁶⁰ (NMek)
 canoe FUT.NEG-3SG-sink
 The canoe won’t sink.
- 4.42 *Afai-a-kaŋeŋe.* (NMek)
 FUT.NEG-1SG-forget.
 I won’t forget.

In the next example it seems to express a complaint about someone’s deliberate obtuseness – a refusal to listen/heed – rather than a prediction based on past experience:

- 4.43 *Aina-u afa-lo-afi-a.* (EMek; D)
 voice-1SG FUT.NEG-2SG-take-3SG
 You won’t listen to me (lit. my voice, what I say).

Notice that in English the simple future tense with ‘will’ and ‘won’t’ is also used to describe customary and/or deliberate behaviour. However, it is here as if some semantic cross-over had occurred between the simple future and the intentional mood.

Another example (which may contain either a real conditional or, as the co-text suggests, a remote conditional) comes from NWMek:

- 4.44 *Iu na-io oi ina-mu pa-e-gauβi-ŋa.*⁶¹
 I FUT.1SG-go you stomach-2SG FUT.NEG-3SG-block-ITS
 If I go, you won’t be angry?/If I went, you wouldn’t be angry?

59 This is pronounced [afa’ekaina], with a very distinct hiatus between *afa* and *e*. Pawley (pers.comm.) speaks of an extra ‘pulse of sound’.

60 Note that this speaker does not have the intrusive [z]. Most people say [afaizefufu]. The same applies to 4.42.

61 This phrase corresponds to EMek *ŋua -kupu*, WMek, NMek *ŋua -gobu* ‘heart -block’ (i.e. “be angry”). Brown (1955:23) has *-gaubei*. Can this be cognate with *-gobu*, *-kupu* ‘block, close’?

4.2.3 THE HYPOTHETICAL MOOD

This mood contrasts with the future tense. It is in fact a very tentative way of talking about future possibilities. The speaker may choose this mood out of politeness to an interlocutor, not wishing to pre-empt any decisions. At the same time, the speaker seems to be requesting some clarification or commitment from the hearer in using this mood. This interrogative nuance questions the intentions of the hearer rather than his/her knowledge of the facts. Examples can be translated as 'I do not know whether...' or, better, 'Do you know whether...?' (or 'Do you think X *should* be the case?').⁶²

As already noted, the negative of 'might' is still 'might'. It is perhaps for this reason that the negative paradigm of the hypothetical mood can be so easily spared to stand in for the future negative which is formally non-existent in EMek. In the other dialects there are in effect two future negative paradigms, as the hypothetical negative has only this meaning (see last section).

Here are the systems of prefixes that occur in the hypothetical mood:

TABLE 43: HYPOTHETICAL MOOD – SUBJECT-MARKING MORPHEMES

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	<i>napa-</i>	<i>napa-</i>	<i>afa-</i>	<i>afa-</i>
2SG	<i>nopo-</i>	<i>napo-</i>	<i>afo-</i>	<i>afo-</i>
3SG	<i>nepe-</i>	<i>nape-</i>	<i>afe-</i>	<i>afe-</i>
1PL.I	<i>napa</i> ⁶³	<i>napa-</i>	<i>afa-</i>	<i>afa-</i>
1PL.E	<i>napa-</i>	<i>napa-</i>	<i>afa-</i>	<i>afa-</i>
2PL	<i>nopo-</i>	<i>napo-</i>	<i>afɛ-</i>	<i>afo-</i>
3PL	<i>nepege-</i>	<i>napege-</i>	<i>afege-</i>	<i>afeke-</i>

It is at least possible that NWMek, WMek *NAPA* (HYP) is made up of *NA-* for *ANA-* (FUT) and *PA-* (OBLG).⁶⁴ But I shall refrain from hyphenating it since it invariably functions as a unitary morpheme (with assimilation resulting in vowel harmony).

The following examples illustrate some uses of this paradigm:

- 4.45 *Eŋa-mo ma-vai ma-lao kai, afo-lou ma?* (EMek)
 that-just IMP.1SG-go IMP.1SG-go but HYP.2SG-quarrel INT
 I want to go that way past you but you might quarrel with me, what?
 OR: I want to go that way past you but – would you quarrel with me?

⁶² Brown (1955:7) has 1PL.I, 1PL.E *napaga-* and 2PL *nopogo-*.

⁶³ This analysis is borne out by comparison with the more analytic equivalent in Kuni. EMek *afe-lao* (HYP.3SG-go) 's/he might go' corresponds to *ka fe da* in that language. Egidi (1913:985) has described Kuni *ka* as an "*adverbe indéfini*", but it can often be glossed as INT (for interrogative): *Ka i mai?* 'Has s/he come?'. However, on the basis of WMek and NMek evidence I have reconstructed Proto Mekeo **napa~*napV-*(HYP). See Appendix 4.

⁶⁴ Ross (1983) reconstructs Proto Papuan Tip **na-* (future tense prefixal morpheme) and **bV-* (remoteness marking prefixal morpheme).

- 4.46 *Miaṅai-n-ai napo-kani-bun-i-o.* (WMek)
 shame-3SG-OBL HYP.2SG-strike-finish-PF-2SG
 You might kill yourself out of shame (lit. do yourself a fatal injury).
 OR: Is it possible that you could kill yourself out of shame?
- 4.47 *Napam-ao make nap-ai-d-a-ao make* (WMek)
 HYP.1SG-go maybe FUT-NEG-B-1SG-go maybe
ai-d-a-oṅo.
 NEG-B-1SG-know
 I might go and I might not go, I just don't know.

Notice that the hypothetical mood contrasts here with the future negative, which is of course the regularly formed negative of the hypothetical paradigm (see §4.2.2 above). In fact HYP + FUT.NEG is a very common concatenation of TM-markings, but FUT + FUT.NEG is also common. However, *maʔe*, *make* 'maybe'⁶⁵ does not combine with FUT.

- 4.48 *Keṅa e-kae-kae, afa-ʔua-lai.* (EMek)
 path 3SG-slip -RED HYP-bend-away
 The path is slippery, we might fall
- 4.49 *Napo-kualai poka!* (WMek)
 HYP.2SG-fall LEST
 Careful! You might fall!

Above the hypothetical mood functions to express a warning. In the next example it expresses a hope. In either case the hearer's 'opinion' is solicited.

- 4.50 *Imeṅa-ai fo-uma-puṅu-a afe-ṅea.* (EMek)
 hot.water-OBL OBLG.2SG-roast-finish-3SG HYP.3SG-disappear
 You should scald them off with hot water, (that way) they might disappear (– who knows?).
 [Someone is talking about getting rid of some weeds.]

Finally, the hypothetical can express a condition (and function as a threat):

- 4.51 *Afa-kafa-i-o afo-kala afo-oṅoṅo.* (EMek)
 HYP.1SG-insult-PF-2SG HYP.2SG-wither HYP.2SG-dry
 If I insulted you, you would wither and dry up (with shame).

4.2.4 THE DECLARATIVE AND INTERROGATIVE FUNCTIONS: FORMS AND FUNCTIONS OF OMA

The interpersonal component of Mekeo grammar is in effect the domain of the subordinating verb of uttering and intending: *OMA*. This verb is commonly used as a simple but very generalised 'verb of verbalisation', in order to report actual utterances of all kinds. However, in a related but far more important role, *OMA* functions to ascribe the underlying psychological intention behind what are essentially prescriptive verb forms to some linguistic agent. *OMA* in this role 'governs' the two intentional moods, and it identifies the deontic source of the obligations or imperatives that are expressed by verbs in one or other of these moods.

⁶⁵ The base *maʔe*, *make* can also mean 'after' in some utterances, especially in NWMek.

To put all this in human terms, the Mekeo do not tolerate (or even comprehend) unassigned directives or imperatives. Their culture is jealously egalitarian, and their language reflects this fact. Mekeo 'pride' does not easily submit to orders, let alone orders that are not attributed to some interpersonal source; the eternal underlying question for the Mekeo – to which *OMA* supplies an answer of sorts – is simply: 'Who says so?'⁶⁶

OMA basically functions to supply the person and number of the deontic source. Beyond that it may assume any tense form and may even be realised in one of the intentional moods, in which case one is obliged to postulate a 'deeper' token of the same verb in order to interpret the conjugated form. The person and number of the source comprise the requisite information for successful interaction, identifying in this way one or the other of the speech act participants (SAPs) present to the utterance situation (US) or, as the only alternative, specifying some absent third person source. An obligative/imperative verb form with a first person source translates as a wish, or a 'command', while an obligative/imperative verb form with a second person source translates as a question or a request (in accordance with the 'asymmetry of person' to be demonstrated in §4.2.4). One might speculate as to whether such third person sources could be equated with actual functionaries or factions in the village (a sorcerer, a chief, a relative, or the community of adult males on the clubhouse, for example). However, these matters will not be pursued here.

The paradigms of *OMA* are displayed in full in §4.2.4.2 below. But first (in §4.2.4.1) I give the systems of mood-marking prefixes (obligative and imperative) which 'depend' – as subjunctives on the conjugation of *OMA*.

4.2.4.1 SYSTEMS OF MOOD-MARKING PREFIXES

The full systems of mood-marking prefixes for the imperative and obligative paradigms of the verb across the four dialects can be displayed as follows:

TABLE 44: IMPERATIVE MOOD MARKING PREFIXES

I Imperative:

	NWMek	WMek/NMek/EMek
1SG	<i>ma-</i>	<i>ma-</i>
2SG	<i>mo-</i>	<i>mo-</i>
3SG	<i>na- †</i>	<i>ŋa-</i>
1PL.I	<i>ama-</i>	<i>ama-</i>
1PL.E	<i>ama-</i>	<i>ama-</i>
2PL	<i>go-</i>	<i>o-*</i>
3PL	<i>ga-</i>	<i>gaŋa-, keŋa-</i>

⁶⁶ The interested reader should consult Hau'ofa (1981) and Stephen (1987) for fuller information about East Mekeo social structure and culture, Mosko (1985) on the North Mekeo, and Lyons (1977) for a theoretical discussion of deontic modality.

† Brown records *me-* here, which is formally predictable and which indeed corresponds with Kuni *me-*, *mi-* (in a paradigm described as “conditional and optative” in Egidi 1913:985). Roro too has *me-* in the imperative third person singular. But I have not myself heard this in NWMek.⁶⁷

* *Amo-* can also be heard for the imperative second person plural. Kuni has *mo-* here, Roro has *tomo-*. The second person plural *o-* and *go-* (NWMek) fall together with the simple non-future tense forms, but these are the generally preferred forms in ‘imperative’ function. Note that the third person plural form *keŋa-* is EMek only.

TABLE 45: OBLIGATIVE MOOD MARKING PREFIXES

II Obligative:

	NWMek		WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	<i>pa-..ŋa</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>pa-</i>	<i>fa-</i>	<i>fa-</i>
2SG	<i>po-..ŋa</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>po-</i>	<i>fo-</i>	<i>fo-</i>
3SG	<i>pe-..ŋa</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>pe-</i>	<i>fe-</i>	<i>fe-</i>
1PL.I	<i>pa-..ŋa</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>pa-</i>	<i>fa-</i>	<i>fa-</i>
1PL.E	<i>pa-..ŋa</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>pa-</i>	<i>fa-</i>	<i>fa-</i>
2PL	<i>po-..ŋa</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>po-</i>	<i>fo-</i>	<i>fo-</i>
3PL	<i>pege-..ŋa</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>pege-</i>	<i>fege-</i>	<i>feke-</i>

The redundantly marked character of the NWMek paradigm is made necessary by the use of the simpler forms of the prefixes with a ‘desiderative’ meaning (see §4.2.5 below).

4.2.4.2 PARADIGMS OF *OMA*

The superordinate verb of uttering or intending – *OMA* – plays a key role in the grammar of the intentional and hypothetical moods in Mekeo. These latter have to be interpreted as subordinate or subjunctive verb forms, governed by some overt or underlying token of *OMA*.

The forms of the conjugation of *OMA* are slightly unpredictable due to assimilation of the vowels of the prefixes to the initial *o-* of the root.⁶⁸ The non-future tense paradigms look like this:

⁶⁷ The Fijian particle *me* is called by Dixon (1988b) a “relator” and warrants a whole chapter in his book on Boumaa Fijian. This *me* functions in some ways just like Mekeo *ŋa-* and Roro/Kuni *me-*, and is there glossed: SHOULD [BE].

⁶⁸ Motu *to-ma* and Kuni, Lala *ko*, also meaning ‘intend, mean, say’, suggest a separate origin for each of the two syllables of the ‘base’, but in Mekeo they are treated as inseparable. I have suggested elsewhere (Jones 1992) that **to* might have a NAN origin. For example, Fuyughe has *to!* ‘speak!’ (2SG, subjunctive/imperative). As regards AN languages, I have to date been able to trace cognates of this morpheme only in the other languages of WCP (Roro, incidentally, has *homa*).

TABLE 46: NON-FUTURE TENSE PARADIGMS OF OMA

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	<i>aoma</i>	<i>aoma</i>	<i>aoma</i>	<i>laoma</i>
2SG	<i>oma</i>	<i>oma</i>	<i>oma</i>	<i>loma</i>
3SG	<i>ema</i>	<i>ema</i>	<i>ema</i>	<i>eoma</i>
1PL.I	<i>gaoma</i>	<i>gaoma</i>	<i>gaoma</i>	<i>aoma</i>
1PL.E	<i>gaoma</i>	<i>gaoma</i>	<i>gaoma</i>	<i>aoma</i>
2PL	<i>goma</i>	<i>goma</i>	<i>goma</i>	<i>oma</i>
3PL	<i>gema</i>	<i>gema</i>	<i>gema</i>	<i>keoma</i>

TABLE 47: FUTURE TENSE PARADIGMS FOR OMA

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	<i>enaoma</i>	<i>anaoma</i>	<i>anaoma</i>	<i>alaoma</i>
2SG	<i>enoma</i>	<i>anoma</i>	<i>anoma</i>	<i>aloma</i>
3SG	<i>enema</i>	<i>anema</i>	<i>anema</i>	<i>aɲeoma</i>
1PL.I	<i>nagaoma</i>	<i>nagaoma</i>	<i>agaoma</i>	<i>aɲaoma</i>
1PL.E	<i>nagaoma</i>	<i>nagaoma</i>	<i>agaoma</i>	<i>aɲaoma</i>
2PL	<i>nogoma</i>	<i>nagoma</i>	<i>agoma</i>	<i>aɲoma</i>
3PL	<i>nigema</i>	<i>negema</i>	<i>agema</i>	<i>akeoma</i>

TABLE 48: OBLIGATIVE MOOD PARADIGMS FOR OMA

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	<i>paomaɲa ke</i>	<i>pamaoma</i>	<i>famaoma</i>	<i>faoma</i>
2SG	<i>pomaɲa ke</i>	<i>poma</i>	<i>foma</i>	<i>foma</i>
3SG	<i>pemaɲa ke</i>	<i>pema</i>	<i>fema</i>	<i>feoma</i>
1PL.I	<i>paomaɲa ke</i>	<i>pamaoma</i>	<i>famaoma</i>	<i>faoma</i>
1PL.E	<i>paomaɲa ke</i>	<i>pamaoma</i>	<i>famaoma</i>	<i>faoma</i>
2PL	<i>pagomaɲa ke</i>	<i>poma</i>	<i>foma</i>	<i>foma</i>
3PL	<i>pagemaɲa ke</i>	<i>pegema</i>	<i>fegema</i>	<i>fekeoma</i>

TABLE 49: IMPERATIVE MOOD PARADIGMS FOR OMA

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	<i>maoma</i>	<i>maoma</i>	<i>maoma</i>	<i>maoma</i>
2SG	<i>moma</i>	<i>moma</i>	<i>moma</i>	<i>moma</i>
3SG	<i>naema</i>	<i>naoma</i>	<i>naoma</i>	<i>ŋaoma</i>
1PL.I	<i>amaoma</i>	<i>amaoma</i>	<i>amaoma</i>	<i>amaoma</i>
1PL.E	<i>amaoma</i>	<i>amaoma</i>	<i>amaoma</i>	<i>amaoma</i>
2PL	<i>goma</i>	<i>oma</i>	<i>oma</i>	<i>oma</i>
3PL	<i>gaoma</i>	<i>gaŋaoma</i>	<i>gaŋaoma</i>	<i>keŋaoma</i>

TABLE 50: HYPOTHETICAL PARADIGMS FOR OMA

	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1SG	<i>napaoma</i>	<i>napaoma</i>	<i>afaoma</i>	<i>afalaoma</i>
2SG	<i>nopoma</i>	<i>napoma</i>	<i>afoma</i>	<i>afoloma</i>
3SG	<i>napema</i>	<i>napema</i>	<i>afema</i>	<i>afa-eoma</i>
1PL.I	<i>napaoma</i>	<i>napaoma</i>	<i>afaoma</i>	<i>afaoma</i>
1PL.E	<i>napaoma</i>	<i>napaoma</i>	<i>afaoma</i>	<i>afaoma</i>
2PL	<i>nopogoma</i>	<i>napoma</i>	<i>afoma</i>	<i>afoma</i>
3PL	<i>napagema</i>	<i>napegema</i>	<i>afegema</i>	<i>afakeoma</i>

4.2.4.3 OMA AS MAIN VERB

As a main verb *OMA* can take on the meaning of almost any other verb. It is in effect a pro-verb, and has to be translated in an ad hoc way, depending on the context. There are often several competing translations:

- 4.52 *E! Oi a go-oma?* (WMek)
 hey you what 2PL-DNT
 'Hey! What do you want? OR: What are you doing?
- 4.53 *Ala a-la-oma?* (EMek)
 what FUT-1SG-DNT
 What shall I do? OR: What shall I say?
- 4.54 *Eŋaia-ke f-ai-z-oma!* (NMek)
 that-XCL OBLG-NEG-B-DNT
 Don't do that!
- 4.55 *Iviao kapakai ŋa ke-oma-oma?* (EMek)
 girl why thus 3PL-DNT-RED
 Why are the girls acting like that?

One of the main functions of *OMA* as a main verb is to report speech directly. It means 'utter' or 'say' in such sentences:

4.56 *Ina!* *i-oma.* (WMek)
 mother 3SG-DNT
 "Mother!" s/he said.

4.57 *Labau a-ke-oma-oma-ŋa,* *Tsiria ke-oma-oma.* (EMek)
 Labau NEG-3PL-say-RED-EMP Tsiria 3PL-DNT-RED
 They don't say Labau, they say Tsiria.⁶⁹

4.2.4.4 OMA AS SUPERORDINATE VERB

The verb *OMA* can govern indicative or intentional complements.

4.58 *A-ke-mai la-oma.* (EMek)
 FUT-3PL-come 1SG-DNT
 I think they will come.

4.59 *Poa pama-ani-a ga-oma.* (WMek)
 banana OBLG.1SG-eat-3SG 1PL-DNT
 We want to eat banana.

When a second person token of *OMA* governs a second person verb form the utterance has the sense of a question:⁷⁰

4.60 *Iji pama-ao o-oma.* (WMek)
 I OBLG.1SG-go 2SG-DNT
 Should I go?

4.61 *Loo fo-pa-aja lo-oma.* (EMek)
 fire 2SG-CA-burn 2SG-DNT
 Do you want to light the fire?

In the third person *OMA* is attributive (unless meaning 'say') or else represents a question. This question can be as to the motive of the agent or it can be impersonal. Compare the following:

4.62 *A ema e-mai?* (WMek)
 what 3SG.DNT 3SG-come
 Why (lit. wanting what) did s/he come?

4.63 *A ema e-mae?* (WMek)
 what 3SG.DNT 3SG-die
 What caused her to die?

In the third person plural *OMA* is often impersonal and translates the phrase 'It is said' (or 'people say'), in which case *society itself* can be seen to be functioning as the deontic source.

4.64 *Babie abala ge-ma.* (WMek)
 woman bad 3PL-DNT
 They say/think that the woman is bad.
 (OR: Public opinion is against the woman.)

⁶⁹ Labau is an old name for Yule Island while Tsiria is the Roro village on that island.

⁷⁰ As an epistemic verb *par excellence*, *OMA* cannot plausibly be attributed to another speaker.

Compare example 4.64 above with examples 4.92–4.94 below, which are from the same text. Meanwhile *OMA* can also take non-finite complements, as in the next examples:

4.65 *Ako pakai e-oma, ŋope e-oma.* (EMek)
 Ako love.magic 3SG-DNT fast 3SG-DNT
 Ako-is making love magic, he is fasting.

4.66 *Oita-mo e-oma.* (EMek)
 urination-just 3SG-DNT
 S/he just wants to urinate.

An interesting phenomenon occurs in the following two examples, where the governed verb is partially de-marked for number/person:

4.67 *Ani-na ga-ani a-ila ga-oma.* (WMek)
 death-3SG 1PL-die 1SG-urinate 1PL-DNT
 We're dying for a pee.

4.68 *Ima-mai ga-ba-aka-aka a-boa-lai ga-oma.* (WMek)
 hand-1PL.E 1PL-CA-pull-RED 1SG-walk-AT 1PL-DNT
 We put up our hands to go out.

In the above sentences we expect *ga-ila* and *ga-boalai* (first person plural) but the forms recorded are first person singular.

4.2.4.5 UNEXPRESSED *OMA*

The intentional moods are subjunctives, and they are governed by the superordinate verb *OMA*. Hence some form of *OMA* is presupposed by or can be postulated for any utterance in an intentional mood. If one takes the speaker's point of view as given, it is presupposed. If one places more importance upon the interpretive processing of the hearer, it is postulated. But some form of *OMA* – inflected for person, number, tense or mood – seems to be *implicated* in any interpretation of an intentional verb. Whether that underlying *OMA* is inflected for first, second or third person has critical implications for the interpretation of a verb in either of the intentional moods.

A declarative utterance about the speaker's own intentions necessitates a verb in the intentional mood, with first person subject-marking, and implicates an underlying first person singular token of *OMA*:

4.69 *Mitsi ma-ani-a.* (WMek)
 meat IMP.1SG-eat-3SG
 I want to eat (the) meat.

Given the above gloss, this utterance (or rather the hearer) has presupposed first person subject marking on underlying *OMA*: *a-oma* 'I intend' (1SG-DNT). The full utterance would be: *Mitsi ma-ani-a a-oma*. But someone could equally well have interpreted example 4.67 as a question and a request, as in:

4.70 *Mitsi ma-ani-a.* (WMek)
 meat IMP.1SG-eat-3SG
 May I eat (the) meat.

In this latter case, given the reading assigned, second person subject marking on *OMA* has been presupposed or postulated: *o-oma* ‘You intend’ (2SG-DNT), or *go-oma* ‘you (plural) intend’ (2PL-DNT). In other words, ‘Do you mind if...’ or ‘Do you want X to...’ There are no obligatory suprasegmental clues to these different interpretations.

A verb in an intentional mood with second person subject-marking can also have different interpretations:

- 4.71 *Fo-mai.* (EMek)
 OBLG.2SG-come
 Will you come? Presumes *lo-oma* (2SG-DNT)
 OR: You should come. Presumes *la-oma, ke-oma*
 (2SG-DNT, 3PL-DNT)

Should one assume a token of *OMA* with *third person singular* subject marking *e-oma* (3SG-DNT) then the meaning would be: ‘Someone wants/would like you/me/her/him/it to...’. And should one assume a token of *OMA* with *third person plural* subject marking (3PL-DNT) then the meaning would be: ‘People want/would like you/me/her/him/it to...’ or ‘Everyone wants/would like you/me/her/him/it to...’.

A token of a verb in an intentional mood with third person subject-marking can similarly be given declarative, interrogative and impersonal interpretations:

- 4.72 *Fe-mai.* (EMek)
 OBLG.3SG-come
 You should come. Presumes *la-oma, ge-ma*
 (2SG-DNT, 3PL-DNT)
 Will you come? Presumes *lo-oma* (2SG-DNT)

Any utterance in an intentional mood can be given alternative interpretations according to person, number and indeed mood of the overt or underlying token of *OMA* which is attributed to the speaker. Note that *OMA* can itself be inflected for either of the intentional moods, *and* it may be negative, possibilities that further complicate the interpretation of elliptical utterances.⁷¹ This phenomenon is further illustrated in §2.4.6 and §4.2.4.7 below.

4.2.4.6 THE IMPERATIVE MOOD

The imperative mood (so-called) expresses strong desire or subjectively imposed obligation. It is used to give strong recommendations, which function in place of direct orders, requests, suggestions and so on in Mekeo society. However, the verb *OMA* – spoken or unspoken – can lend a given utterance any of these nuances.

The second person singular and second person plural imperative verb forms can be exemplified as follows:

- 4.73 *Mo-apa-?au!* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-stand-go.away
 Move over!

⁷¹ The present hypothesis of the subjunctivity of the two intentional moods and of an underlying *OMA* needs to be tested with native speaker informants.

- 4.74 *Moiβa mo-iβi-n-a!* (NWMek)
 fire IMP.2SG-blow-TH-3SG
 Blow (the) fire!

In these examples the deontic source – DNT – is unspecified, but one must assume it is first person singular, i.e. *a-oma* ‘I intend, want, you to...’. In the following examples DNT is overtly marked.

- 4.75 *Mà-io mà-ila-a-oma.* (NWMek)
 IMP.1SG-go IMP.1SG-urinate-1SG-DNT
 I must go and urinate.

- 4.76 *Ika ama-io ga-oma.* (NWMek)
 1PL.I IMP.1PL-go 1PL-DNT
 Let’s go!

- 4.77 *Ipako mo-pa-vei-a la-oma,* (EMek)
 sago IMP.2SG-CA-water-3SG 1SG-DNT
ŋa-koà papiau maʔo fe-kai-na.
 that-like people many OBLG.3SG-suffice-3SG
 Water the sago, like that it should be enough for many people.

In example 4.75, after the second person singular imperative verb *mo-pa-vei-a* the verb *la-oma* is equivalent to a performative verb ‘I order’, whereas after the obligative verb *fe-kai-na* the underlying *la-oma* must be read as ‘I think it likely’.

The third person frequently concatenates with the first or second as in the following:

- 4.78 *Mo-gonoβ-a na-age.* (NWMek)
 IMP.2SG-immersed-TH-3SG IMP.3SG-go.down
 Swallow it down. (lit. Just swallow it (and) let it go down.)

- 4.79 *Au i-d-oŋe ŋa-mia-gai pam-ao.* (WMek)
 wood PASS-B-put IMP.3SG-be-but OBLG.1PL-go
 As soon as the wood has been put (in its place), we should go.
 (lit. Let the putting of the wood but be (done and) we should go.)

The imperative mood can also express strong obligation *in the past* :

- 4.80 *ʔuma lo-ani-a, maa-u-ai ŋa-iva-n-i-a* (EMek)
 pig 2SG-eat-3SG eye-1SG-OBL IMP.3SG-speak-TH-PF-3SG
ma-vai ma-ia-o afa fo-peni-au.
 IMP.1SG-go IMP.1SG-see-2SG little.bit OBLG.2SG-give-1SG
 You have eaten pork, one should have told me to my face so that I
 could have gone and seen you, you might have given me a little.

As Dixon (1979: fn.69) notes, “most languages restrict the subjects of imperatives to 2nd person pronouns”. But, as he further points out, this restriction operates essentially on the level of deep syntax. It is for this reason that languages like Malagasy and Maori, which do not impose this condition in surface structure, appear to be aberrant. These languages – like Mekeo – can have an apparently third person imperative. Yet whereas Maori, for instance, achieves this by passivising the verb, Mekeo has an analytic imperative that functions in all persons and numbers courtesy of the underlying verb *OMA*, which not only specifies a

deontic source to suit all needs but also operates along the lines of reported speech (here subordinated intention). *OMA* thus permits ‘analytic’ imperatives of all kinds.

4.2.4.7 THE OBLIGATIVE MOOD

The label ‘obligative’ may seem ill-chosen at first glance (e.g., see my first example below) but it has been adopted for the very good reason that the obligative mood is an inherently subordinate mood, a subjunctive in fact, and the verb form is thus subordinate to a deontic or obligating source (which may or may not be represented in surface structure by *OMA*).

Here are some examples of the obligative mood in the first and second person:

- 4.81 *Fo-uele ma? E, fa-uele*⁷² (EMek)
 OBLG.2SG-bathe INT yes OBLG.1SG-bathe
 Are you going to bathe? Yes, I’m going to bathe.

Fo-uele presupposes an underlying *lo-oma* ‘(Do) you mean/intend...?’, while *fa-uele* presupposes *la-oma* ‘I mean/intend...’. Alternative but wordy glosses here would be ‘Do you intend that you should swim?’ and ‘I intend that I should swim’.

In the next example the obligative mood is contrasted with the future tense:

- 4.82 *Oi kalautsi fo-afi-a, lai ŋaŋa* (EMek)
 you fish-spear OBLG.2SG-take-3SG we.E canoe
a-ŋa-poke.
 FUT-1PL-paddle
 You should take the fish-spear, we will paddle (the) canoe

In the next example the purposive nature of the obligative mood can be seen:

- 4.83 [*Meŋaua ke-kapa*] [*lipako fe-ke-ŋapu-k-a.*] (EMek)
 pounder 3PL-make sago OBLG-3PL-whip-TH-3SG
 They are making a sago-pounder so that they may pound sago.

In the third person the sense of the obligative mood translates somewhat differently:

- 4.84 *Fe-ŋope-ŋope-i-ʔa e-oma e-mai.* (EMek)
 OBLG.3SG-bind-RED-PF-1PL 3SG-DNT 3SG-come
 S/he came in order to (intending to) put us under an obligation/taboo.

Obligation in the past as well as the future is also expressed by means of this paradigm, e.g., in the third person:

- 4.85 *Kina maa-ŋa e-afi-alo, maa-ŋa* (EMek: D)
 sun eye-3SG 3SG-take-go.in eye-3SG
fe-afi-aa-kae
 OBLG.3SG-take-look.up-go.up
 The sun’s face went out, it should have shown itself.

Negative obligation in the past can also be expressed by means of this paradigm:

⁷² *Uele* seems to be a Fuyughe loan; Fuyughe *yuve* means ‘water’ and *yuv’ elele* is ‘to bathe’ (see Ray 1912:322).

- 4.86 *P-ai-d-o-gabā* *goà auja!* (WMek)
 OBLG-NEG-B-2SG-do like ASS
 You shouldn't have done it!
- 4.87 *P-ai-d-a-βini-o;* *gai, a-βini-o* (NWMek)
 OBLG-NEG-B-1SG-give-2SG but 1SG-give-2SG
 I should not have given (it) (to) you; but I gave (it) (to) you.

Sometimes the obligative mood is used to express hypothetical or conditional sentences (comparable to the extended use of the future tense in examples 4.37 and 4.38 above):

- 4.88 *Papiau imuni-ʔi* *fa-ani-a* *fa-isava.* (EMek: D)
 people spittle-3PL OBLG.1PL-eat-3SG OBLG.1PL-sick
 We might absorb people's aura and get sick.
 OR (more literally, and explicating the US): (If) we should absorb
 people's aura (by sleeping where they slept) we might get sick.

Imuni has the 'basic' meaning of 'spittle' and by extension it means, 'body dirt' in general (= *opu, ofu*) and thence 'invisible trace, aura'. It is very similar to *papa, fafa* 'shadow, aura, presence'.

4.2.4.8 OMA AS ADVERBIAL CO-VERB

OMA can also combine with another verbal base in nuclear juncture to form (compound verb words) complex predicates. In this case the subject of the main base functions as the subject of *OMA*, though the latter is still syntactically superordinate. The effect is in any case one of intentional-volitional action or activity. For example:

- 4.89 *Lako-mu lo-ŋapu-k-a* *ma ŋa e-faʔiʔi-oma.* (EMek:D)
 penis-2SG 2SG-whip-TH-3SG INT DX 3SG-thick-DNT
 Do you (Have you -ed) whip your penis that it should be being so thick.
 (NB: Either 'be being' or 'want to be' – *intention* is implied.)

In this function *OMA* can sometimes be translated as 'like'.⁷³ But as the first example shows, the meaning of 'intend' or 'want' is also implied.

- 4.90 *Kapa-ai-na-ai* *ŋa lo-iva-oma?* (EMek)
 thing-OBL-3SG-OBL thus 2SG-speak-DNT
 Why (from what) do you want to speak 'like' that?

The clause *a oma?, ala oma?*, which I gave in §2.2.5.1 above for 'how?', contains a non-finite *OMA* which corresponds to the adverbial *OMA* used in sentences like the following:

- 4.91 *Ala a-la-kapa-oma?* (EMek)
 what FUT-1SG-do-DNT
 How shall I do it? (*la-oma lo-oma*)
 How am I supposed to do it? (*lo-oma*)

In the next example I illustrate a very common impersonal use of *OMA* in combination with an explicit 'they say' (compare 4.64 above).

⁷³ This is standard practice with Motu, for example, where *toma* has many of the same functions as Mekeo *OMA*.

4.92 *Babie abala e-gaba-i-a, ŋa gi-oabi-oma.* (WMek)
 woman bad 3SG-do-PF-3SG that 3PL-say-DNT
 The woman did wrong, that's what they say/think.

4.93 *Eŋa puō e-mae eŋa ke-iva-oma.* (EMek)
 that cause.3SG 3SG-die that 3PL-say-DNT
 That's why she died, that's what they say/think.

A similar verbal expression, possibly based on the preformative *I-* (see §5.5 below), is illustrated in example 4.94:

4.94 *Eŋaea buo-ŋ-ai e-mae, ŋa-i-oabi-oma.* (WMek)
 that cause-3SG-OBL 3SG-die DX-PASS-say-DNT
 That is why s/he died, so it is said and thought.

4.95 *Fata e-iva-oma, ŋa-mo la-kapa-oma.* (EMek)
 Father 3SG-say-DNT DX-just 1SG-do-DNT
 I do just as Father says/wants.

Adverbial co-verbs are treated as such, in more detail, in §6.1 below.

4.2.5 A NOTE ON NWMEK USAGE

Although NWMEk exhibits the same basic paradigms as the other three dialects, some of these have specialised forms (with extra marking) and specialised functions that only partially correspond with those of their counterparts in the other dialects. The following table sets out the main differences and the correspondences ('=' stands for 'corresponds to'):

TABLE 51: PARADIGMS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS IN NWMEK

<u>Eastern dialects</u>		<u>NWMEk</u>
	NEGATIVE INDICATIVE FORMS	
Non-future negative	=	Unmarked negative: Present
	=	Marked negative: Past (marked with preverbal <i>maini</i>)
	OBLIGATIVE	
Obligative mood	=	Imperative mood
	=	Desiderative mood
	=	Intentional mood (with <i>-ŋa ke</i>)
OBLG + NEG	=	Future/non-future negative
	HYPOTHETICAL	
Hypothetical mood	=	Hypothetical mood (rare)
	=	Suppletive forms with <i>make</i>

The the two NWMek non-future negative paradigms – which correspond to a single negative paradigm in all other dialects – are illustrated briefly below.

The unmarked negative expresses present tense:

- 4.96 *Iu ae-a-oŋo.* (NWMek)
 I NEG-1SG-hear
 I do not hear it.

The marked negative with maini expresses past tense:

- 4.97 *Iu maini ae-a-oŋo.* (NWMek)
 I not NEG-1SG-hear
 I did not hear it.

Obligative marking usually signals a desiderative mood:

- 4.98 *Ika pa-io.* (NWMek)
 we.I OBLG.1SG-go
 We want to go.
- 4.99 *Olanitsi pa-ani-a.* (NWMek)
 orange OBLG.1SG-eat-3SG
 I want to eat (an) orange.

OBLG.NEG has a future as well as a present (or at least non-future) meaning:

- 4.100 *Iu p-ae-a-oŋo.* (NWMek)
 I OBLG-NEG-1SG-hear
 I do not/ will not hear.
- 4.101 *Ia p-ae-a-gai-n-a-ŋa.* (NWMek)
 s/he OBLG.NEG-3SG-suffice-TH-3SG-CNT
 It's not all right. OR: It will not do.

The use of the OBLG marking must have some semantic bearing on this function but I cannot as yet specify this more closely.

The following utterance exemplifies the imperative paradigm, which corresponds approximately in meaning to the eastern *obligative* paradigm:

- 4.102 *Ama-io ga-oma.* (NWMek)
 IMP.1PL-go 1PL-DNT
 We should (like to) go.

The NWMek obligative with *OMA* sometimes expresses meanings similar to those expressed by the obligative in the other dialects, but it is a little clumsy or *marked*:

- 4.103 *Pama-ao ga-oma.* (WMek)
 OBLG.1PL-go 1PL-DNT
 We intend that we should go.

The *unmarked* equivalent to example 4.103 is 4.102. The morphologically marked equivalent to 4.103 has a different, more exclamatory and more conditional meaning:

- 4.104 *Pa-ga-io-ŋa ke.* (NWMek)
 OBLG-1PL-go-CNT XCL
 Gosh, we would like to go (implying: But it's not possible.)

The regular hypothetical paradigm does occur:

- 4.105 *Napa-mai; napa-mai-ŋa.* (NWMek)
 HYP.1PL-come HYP.1PL-come-CNT
 We might come; we certainly might come.

But there are also periphrastic forms of the hypothetical, like the following, which can be used in place of the regular hypothetical verb forms:

- 4.106 *Na-mai make; biga pa-ga-mai-ŋa.* (NWMek)
 FUT-come maybe some OBLG-1PL-come-CNT
 Perhaps I will come; I *may* come.

Much more work needs to be done on the NWMek verb forms but a fuller and more precise account cannot be attempted within the parameters of this study, and with the amounts of data presently to hand.

4.3 CATEGORIES OF LEXICAL-VERBAL MEANING

Roots functioning as verbs fall into a number of fixed classes according to the derivations to which they subscribe, and those to which they do not. The largest division of verbal roots is that between process verbs and action verbs (see Figure 29 in §4.1.5 above for an overview). Process verbs are intracausative (or primarily self-causing) verbs. Action verbs divide into intradirective and extradirective verbs according to whether or not they take a goal or a target. Intransitive process verbs typically take inanimate subjects, while intransitive action verbs most typically take human subjects. The derivations of process verbs can best be described in terms of a system of causativity and control. The derivations of action verbs are best described in terms of the system of transitivity, properly so-called.

Process verbs are of three kinds: integral process verbs (which are inherently intransitive but which can be causativised with *BA-*), analytic process verbs (which can function as direct causative verbs when suffixed with a transitivity marker, but which can also be causativised with *BA-*), and spontaneous motion verbs (which are intracausative verbs that can be causativised with *BA-*). Action verbs divide into two main classes: intradirective verbs (which are inherently intransitive)⁷⁴ and extradirective verbs (which are typically transitive, or at least outward directed).

Further minor divisions also exist, and there is a degree of crossover in that some kinds of motion verbs sometimes behave like intracausatives. This relatively elaborate classification of process types, in terms of the two systems of transitivity or causativity and the operations that these suggest or permit, can be seen as compensating in certain ways for the absence of a noun-verb dichotomy.

⁷⁴ 'Intradirective' is a term coined by Wilson (1973). It was then taken up by Pawley and others, including Harrison (1982), who expanded its use somewhat. See below for further detail.

4.3.1 CLASSES OF ROOT VERBS

Certain classes of verbs can be described as inherently (or prototypically) intransitive. But all verbs occur upon occasion as intransitives, and hence it is on a classification of intransitive root verbs that I base this description of verb classes. The classes of intransitive roots are described and illustrated in this section. Verbs of problematic transitivity such as verbs of perception, cognition, reaction, interaction and verbalisation, and Cognate-O verbs and verbs of uncontrolled process are described in §4.3.2. Classes of action-effect verbs, which take thematic marking to realise different transitivity functions, are described separately and illustrated at length in §4.3.3, along with Zero-O verbs, Empty-O verbs, 'Reflexives' and verbs with Doubled-Os. (Verbal derivations are described in Chapter 5.)

The semantic classes outlined here (and in §4.1.5) are illustrated in the following sections. A main section is devoted to each of the three subdivisions of the intracausative class, and then the action verbs are dealt with under two main headings (intradirective verbs and extradirective verbs), with sub-divisions in sub-sections.

4.3.1.1 INTRACAUSATIVE VERBS: INTEGRAL PROCESS

This class includes all those verbs now ordinarily called statives,⁷⁵ but whose subject in Mekeo is an Agent.

Verbs in this class can be divided into two subcategories: verbs of being (or 'maintenance of state') and verbs of becoming (or 'change of state'). These all form transitive verbs with the causative prefix *BA-*. However, the verbs thus formed by the latter category are distinct in that they do not carry an OM. The verbs in the former category can be further subdivided on semantic grounds into evaluative verbs, descriptive verbs and behavioural verbs. However, these divisions seem to have no formal distinctions, and merely function to organise the data for comparative purposes. Typical members of each of these classes are listed below:

A: MAINTENANCE OF STATE

Evaluative verbs:

loβia, belo, velo, felò 'good'; *lobia, lopia* 'good, excellent'; *mapu, mafu* 'bad'; *lipu, lifu* 'spoil'; *poga, foga, feka* 'rotten'; *aiwa, aiva, aifa* 'ripe'; *mijia, mitsia, mekia* 'sweet, tasty, good'; *lipu(-lipu), lifu(-lifu)*, 'bad, disorderly'; *gia, tsia kia* 'bad, naughty'...⁷⁶

Descriptive verbs:

paewa, faewa 'crooked'; *kobaina, ?opaina* 'straight'; *pokoa, kukupa, fokoa, fo?oa*, 'short'; *maeoa, maewa, maeva* 'long'; *miu, miau, meu* 'heavy'; *kakaŋa, bagaiŋai, isapu*, 'hot'; *kama-kama, gegea, kekea* 'cold'; *muni, bou, poŋu~pou* 'full'; *maini* 'empty'; *lopaŋa, laopaŋa, laofaŋa* 'yellow'; *uma-uma, omu, umu, umuŋa* 'black'; *gagaiŋa, kelo-ŋa* 'white'; *bito-ŋa, pito-ŋa (-piko)* 'red'; *kabula, kapula* 'strong'; *aboge, apoke* 'weak'; *kapua, kafua, ?afua*, 'thick'; *maniβi, manibi, manipi* 'thin'...

⁷⁵ Schütz (1986:126-130) traces the term, in relation to Fijian, to Arms through Pawley. It is certainly true that Pawley (1973) assured it great currency in Oceanic linguistics.

⁷⁶ The last example has hypocoristic overtones.

Behavioural verbs:

aaje, ba-kuma, kafoko, kafoʔo ‘be crazy, foolish, stupid’; *ope/lope, lofe/ofe* ‘curl, be curled, coiled’; *maigi, idawa, izava, isafa* ‘sick’; *moje-moje* ‘be avid, importunate’; *kekeŋa, aiba, aipa* ‘be furious’; *kekepa, kekefa, ʔeʔefa* ‘be irritable’; *maje-maje* ‘be calm, equanimous’; *ŋape-ŋape, ŋafe-ŋafe* ‘be kind, considerate’; *megu, meku* ‘be affable, reserved’; *kiβuŋa, tsibuŋa, kipuŋa* ‘be violently angry’; *ma-maŋo, maŋo* ‘be circumspect, cautious’...

B: CHANGE OF STATE⁷⁷

<i>ao, alo</i>	‘go inside, go out, be extinguished, finished off’ (esp. but not only of <i>fire</i>)
<i>bu, pu</i>	‘come up against an obstacle, come to a halt’
<i>mae</i>	‘be dying, die, be dead’
<i>paga, faka</i>	‘spill, leak’
<i>paka, faka, faʔa</i>	‘be(come) big’
<i>pua, fua</i>	‘end, be finished’

The verb *paga, faka* ‘spill (of liquid), leak (of vessels, containers)’, is particularly interesting as it is a subject selection intransitive verb (discussed in §4.3.4 below). It could almost be included in the following section as a verb of analytic process, like *uga, uka* ‘enter, insert, enclose, don’, except for the fact it is strictly intransitive.

- 4.107 *Letsio e-alo.* (EMek)
radio 3SG-inside
The radio is off.
- 4.108 *Vei e-faka.* (EMek)
gourd 3SG-leak
The gourd is leaking.⁷⁸ OR: The water is leaking.
- 4.109 *Laapa, akē e-poŋu, afe-faka.* (EMek)
basin mouth.3SG 3SG-full HYP.3SG-spill
The basin is full, it might spill.

The above intransitive verbs have derived transitive forms with the causative prefix *BA-* (as will be described in detail in §5.2.2). Such verbs do not take an object-marking suffix. Some examples follow:

- 4.110 *Lanepa mo-ba-alo.* (WMek)
lamp IMP.2SG-CA-inside
Turn out the lamp.
- 4.111 *Tsi fo-lo-pa-vaka.* (EMek)
tea OBLG-2SG-CA-spill
Don’t spill the tea.

The adjectival verbs function as nominal predicates (with or without the predicate marker *-ŋa*) as frequently as they do as verbs. As verbs they express a progressive aspect. Thus

⁷⁷ Some of these may ultimately have to be assigned to other classes of intracausative verbs.

⁷⁸ The word form *vei* represents a homonym that means, alternatively, ‘water’ and ‘gourd’.

contrasting with the nominal predication: *maa-ŋa bito-ŋa* (WMek) meaning ‘his/her eyes/face (is/are) red’ there is the verbal predication:

- 4.112 *Maa-ŋa e-bito.* (WMek)
 eye/face-3SG 3SG-red
 His/her eyes/face is/are (becoming?) red.

A number of these roots are said in mission grammars to have no verbal function, but this does not appear to be true (§2.1.2.3.5 above). *Maua*, *akaikia* ‘big’ and *kino* (*tsitsino*), *bebela*, *ʔeʔele* ‘small’ and *abaea*, *abala*, *apala* ‘bad’ are generally used as non-verbal predicates (i.e. as adjectival nouns), but some of these at least *are* used occasionally as verbs.

- 4.113 *Aina-mi e-apala.* (EMek:D)
 voice-2PL 3SG-bad
 You are making too much noise.
- 4.114 *Au e-maua.* (WMek)
 man 3SG-big
 The man became great.

By way of contrast to change-of-state verbs, the evaluative, descriptive and behavioural verbs do take object markers after being transitivity with *BA-*:

- 4.115 *Lo-pa-kafoʔo-n-i-au.* (EMek)
 2SG-CA-stupid-TH-PF-1SG
 You have made a fool out of me.
- 4.116 *Pepa p-ai-d-o-ba-lipu-a.* (WMek)
 paper OBLG-NEG-B-2SG-CA-bad-3SG
 Don’t ruin the paper.
- 4.117 *A-ŋe-pa-isafa-n-i-o.* (EMek)
 FUT-3SG-CA-sick-TH-PF-2SG
 It will make you sick.

4.3.1.2 INTRACAUSATIVE VERBS: ANALYTIC PROCESS

Verbs of analytic process form direct causatives with the addition of an OM and they also form derived or indirect causatives with the addition of the causative prefix *BA-*. They are ‘transitive/intransitive verbs’. The intransitive subject is typically non-human and inanimate, and the process described is one of movement or change-of-state while the subject remains in place. The process may in fact be invisible to an observer.

Most members of this verb class pass a simple formal test: prefixed with *I-* they do not form an agentless passive, as do the extradirective verbs, but a nominal stem that lexicalises one of the participant roles, such as the instrument or the result of the verb. The exact meaning of these derived nominals can not be predicted from the semantics of the root, being determined by usage alone. This is discussed in more detail in §5.5 below. While a large

number of very common verbs fall quite predictably⁷⁹ and unproblematically into this category, the inclusion of others is counter-intuitive.

A good example of a canonical verb of analytic process is *gabū, kapu* 'be plucked':

4.118 *Kaniā e-kapu.* (EMek)
 head.3SG 3SG-plucked/bald
 His head is bald/has been plucked of hair.

4.119 *Kaniā la-kapu-i-a.* (EMek)
 head.3SG 1SG-pluck-PF-3SG
 I plucked his head.

Another common verb of this class is the homonymous *gabū, kapu* 'seek':

4.120 *Loo e-kapu.* (EMek)
 fire 3SG-seeK
 Fire is sought.

4.121 *Ga-gaba go-gabu-ŋ-a?* (WMek)
 what 2PL-seeK-TH-3SG
 What are you looking for?/What do you seek?

Another analytic process verb is *maje* 'be smooth':

4.122 *?afu e-maje.* (EMek)
 floor 3SG-smooth
 The floor is smooth.

4.123 *?afu la-maje-i-s-a.* (EMek)
 floor 1SG-smooth-PF-B-3SG
 I smoothed/planned the floor.

Another analytic process verb is *gobu, kupu* 'be blocked, closed':

4.124 *Keaŋa e-kupu.* (EMek)
 track 3SG-blocked, closed
 (The) track is blocked, closed.

4.125 *E-maniki buo, pou e-gubu-n-i-a.*⁸⁰ (WMek)
 3SG-'fear' cause 'door' 3SG-block-TH-PF-3SG
 Since he was afraid, he blocked the entrance.

In the second of each of the above pairs of examples a typically human agent has outranked, and displaced, a typically inanimate agent,⁸¹ which now appears as the object of the verb. In the case of *gabū, kapu* 'pluck', the object is marked as being only surface-

⁷⁹ I say 'predictably', but it is in fact remarkable that membership of this pan-Oceanic verb class should be so different from one language to another. (See Foley 1976:156-200, for a comparison of these classes in Fijian, Tagalog and Tongan.)

⁸⁰ There is some possibility of my being mistaken here as *bou* does not stand in the same semantic relationship towards *gubu* as *keaŋa* does towards *kupu*. *Bou, pou* signifies the screen (and the pandanus of which it is made) which is used to block the entrance to a house, and is hence an 'instrument'. In example 4.124 no 'instrument' is mentioned, but as *gubu, kupu* 'originally' meant 'undergrowth, thick vegetation', one can picture the track as 'being' vegetation (or 'blocking itself with vegetation').

⁸¹ As previously noted, the subject function carries with it unavoidable connotations of agentivity, even when the semantic subject is inanimate.

affected by *-a* (indicative of semi-transitive effect), while with *gubu, kupu* 'block', the object marker *-ŋ-a* signals a fully affected object ('patient-of-change').

Another cardinal analytic process verb is *ope/lope, ofe/lofe*⁸² 'twist, curl, coil, turn in on itself'. As with many verbs, the situation becomes complicated by the frequent presence of a dummy OM, or a reflexive OM, or the absence of an expected OM:

- 4.126 *Upe ŋa-ŋau-ŋa e-lofe.* (EMek)
 taro.shoot RD-leaf-3SG 3SG-curl
 The leaf of the taro shoot (is) curled, curling.
- 4.127 *Amu?e e-lofe-i-a.* (EMek)
 dog 3SG-turn-PF-3SG.RFX
 The dog curled itself up.
- 4.128 *Oko ke-lofe.* (EMek)
 cane 3PL-twist
 They twist(ed) a cane.

The following are some other common transitive/intransitive verbs:

<i>aŋa</i>	burn, roast, cook
<i>papa, fafa</i>	be split
<i>pau, fau</i>	be implanted
<i>pobu, fopu</i>	pour
<i>uga, uka</i>	be enclosed
<i>aka, la?a</i>	draw
<i>bua, pua</i>	bear
<i>ula</i>	be in flight, swarm
<i>gauai, kauai</i>	be surprised

All of these intransitive root verbs form direct two-place causatives through the addition of an OM.

4.3.1.3 INTRACAUSATIVE VERBS: SPONTANEOUS MOVEMENT

This class of intracausative verbs is at least as large as that of the analytic process verbs. Verbs of spontaneous movement typically take inanimate subjects, as with the analytic process verbs, but these too involve movement in situ. These verbs differ from the analytic process intracausatives in that they do not form direct (non-derived) causatives. They do form derived two-place causatives with *BA-*. And they form verbs of free play with *-LAI* (§5.1.1), which can also be causativised with *BA-*.

A list of common roots that belong to this class is given here:

- a) *ŋoŋo* budge, shift; fall from rest, rise from rest
 b) *ŋeŋe* move to the side, hence 'avoid' (transitive)

⁸² As with *oŋo/loŋo* 'hear/know' the different forms, with and without initial *l-*, are variously specialised in the various dialects.

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| c) | <i>ɲipa, ɲifa</i>
<i>ripa, rifa, lifa</i> | spring back, recoil, flip
(variants). |
| d) | <i>pugi, fugi, fuki</i> | emerge with difficulty |
| e) | <i>ɲoe</i> | become detached, dislocated |
| f) | <i>ɲubu, ɲupu</i> | become undone, untied |
| g) | <i>gia, kia</i> | recoil, pop up |
| h) | <i>kua, ?ua</i> | bend over, droop, hang |
| i) | <i>gai, kai</i> | move |

The following are examples of spontaneous motion verbs in sentences:

- | | | |
|-------|--|--------|
| 4.129 | <i>enia e-kia au-ɲa</i> | (EMek) |
| | grass.skirt 3SG-recoil one-3SG
a grass-skirt that bounces up | |
| 4.130 | <i>Kia-kia e-kia-lei e-ɲifa-lei.</i> | (EMek) |
| | prawn 3SG-recoil-AT 3SG-spring-AT
The prawns shoot off, they shoot away. | |
| 4.131 | <i>Aɲuma fo-ba-tsia-lei-tsi.</i> | (NMek) |
| | fly OBLG.2SG-CA-recoil-AT-3PL
You should chase the flies away. | |
| 4.132 | <i>?uma paa e-afi-rifa e-?ua-lai.</i> | (EMek) |
| | pig trap 3SG-take-spring 3SG-hang-AT
The pig sprang the trap and it fell. | |
| 4.133 | <i>Maa-mu e-fuki.</i> | (EMek) |
| | eye-2SG 3SG-emerge
Your eyes are protruding. | |
| 4.134 | <i>Maa-ɲa e-aa-fuki-peni-au.</i> | (EMek) |
| | eye-3SG 3SG-gaze-emerge-give-1SG
He made big eyes at me. | |
| 4.135 | <i>A-e-ɲoɲo koà.</i> | (EMek) |
| | NEG-3SG-budge yet
S/he hasn't budged yet. | |

4.3.1.4 VERBS OF INTRADIRECTIVE MOTION/MENTAL PROCESS

A very useful broad category is that of the 'intradirective' verbs, a category which was first recognised and named by Wilson (1973) and which was then promoted by Pawley (also 1973) in his programmatic survey of Oceanic grammar. Pawley referred to them as A-verbs. Harrison's (1982:191) extended definition of intradirectives will be used here (the emphasis is mine):

Intradirective predications are those in which a state/location or a change of state/location arises or is maintained within the entity in the state/location or undergoing the change of state/location. Cardinal intradirectives (motion, stance and inherent reciprocal predications), then, are those in which the entity in question is both controller and undergoer.

There are two main classes of intradirective in Mekeo, verbs of motion and verbs of mental process. Both classes are formally distinguished by the fact that they can take the remote transitivity marking suffix *-(C)AI*. The former then take a confective or causative reading, the latter a reflective reading.

4.3.1.4.1 VERBS OF ASSUMING A POSTURE/STANCE

This class of verbs is morphologically distinguished by the fact that its members can all take the suffix of continuative aspect: *-e* (all dialects). They are commonly used *without* the *-e* to express the assumption of a position or stance. When used *with* the *-e* they function as existential verbs or to express location. Note that the basic meaning is the deliberate, agentive entry into a position. This is why these verbs are classed as intradirectives, i.e. as a sub-class of motion verbs. The following inventory may not be exhaustive.

a) *ga, ka* ‘lie, be, remain, not be (yet)’

4.136 (*Aka-ai* >) *akai e-ka-ka* (EMek)
(distance-OBL) outside 3SG-lie-lie
S/he is waiting outside.

4.137 *Gebo abala-tsi-mo ge-ga-e.* (WMek)
stone bad-3PL-only 3PL-lie-CNT
There are/were only bad stones.

The compound ending *-ga-e-ŋa*, *-ka-e-ŋa*, with the emphatically topicalising *-ŋa*, is frequently used to emphasise, or signify redundantly, that the state of affairs is progressive (or certain). A semantically negative sense is noted in Desnoës for this item (along with the affirmative usage). I did not note this negative usage myself, but reproduce one of Desnoës’ examples as 4.139 below).

4.138 *Tsitsi e-ka-e-ŋa.* (EMek)
game.meat 3SG-lie-CNT-TOP
There is/remains meat.

4.139 *Ŋaku e-ka-e-ŋa.* (EMek: D)
feast (=cook) 3SG-lie-CNT-TOP
The feast is (still) far off. (OR: ..is *not yet*)

Note the common colloquial uses of *e-ga-e*, *e-ka-e* to mean ‘It’s enough/sufficient’ > ‘It’s OK’ and hence ‘Don’t worry!’.

b) *aju* ‘sit, rest, reside, exist (humans, spirits, God)’

4.140 *Atsiva maua ŋa-e i-aju.* (WMek)
knife big DX-LOC 3SG-sit
The big knife is sitting there.

4.141 *Deo e-aju-e ma?* (EMek)
God 3SG-sit-CNT INT
Does God exist?

4.142 *Maib-ai e-aju-e-ŋa* (WMek)
Maipa-OBL 3SG-sit-CNT-TOP
S/he lives (permanently) in Maipa OR: It is a fact that s/he lives in Maipa.

This verb is used in a common enquiry about the state of a person's health, of which there are two forms, one emphatic:

- 4.143 *O-aŋu-e ma? O-aŋu-e-ŋa ma?* (WMek)
 2SG-sit-CNT INT 2SG-sit-CNT-TOP INT
 Are you well? Are you really well?

The latter phrase is often used not as a real question but as a salutation: *o-aŋu-e-ŋa!*

c) *aba, apa* 'stand, exist (animals and things)'

- 4.144 *Ineina ŋa-e i-aba.* (WMek)
 axe DX-LOC 3SG-stand
 The axe is standing there.
- 4.145 *Kaapa ke-apa-e ma?* (EMek)
 snake 3PL-stand-CNT INT
 Are/were there snakes?

d) *iko, iʔo* 'perch, squat; be perched; be bent down/over; exist (insects, animals)'

- 4.146 *Upe e-iʔo-iʔo.* (EMek)
 taro 3SG-bent-RED
 The taro is bent down/over.
- 4.147 *Papie e-iʔo-e e-pineuŋa.* (EMek)
 woman 3SG-squat-CNT 3SG-work
 (The) woman is squatting (and) working.
 OR: The woman is working squatting down.
- 4.148 *Keeva maʔo ke-iʔo.* (EMek)
 ants many 3PL-exist
 There are many ants.

e) *omu* 'lie face down, belly down, hug the ground'

- 4.149 *Kaapa fui-fui-ai e-omu.* (EMek)
 snake snag-RED-OBL 3SG-lie
 The snake has stretched out on the snag.
- 4.150 *Amuʔe e-omu-e.* (EMek)
 dog 3SG-lie-CNT
 The dog is lying on its belly.

The next two verbs in this section differ somewhat from those just listed in that they express relational states, a complex concept made up of contiguity plus connectedness, or the absence of these.

f) *aŋa* 'be connected, attached, touching, touch, articulate'

- 4.151 *Ŋaaŋa e-aŋa.* (EMek)
 canoe 3SG-touch
 The canoe has touched/is touching (shore).

g) *ŋoe* 'be disconnected, disarticulated, detached'

- 4.152 *Ima-u aiō e-ŋoe-ŋoe.* (EMek)
 hand-1SG neck.3SG 3SG-dislocated
 My wrist is/was dislocated.

The verbal phrase *-aŋa-lei*, *-aŋa-lai* ‘touch-away’, expresses much the same idea as *ŋoe*, but also translates as ‘be open’ (e.g. a door). The form *-ba-aŋa-lei-a*, *-pa-aŋa-lai-a* means ‘open something’ (TR).

- h) *mia* ‘be, become, come to be (X)’ (See §6.2.1 below.)

- 4.153 *Apala e-mia.* (EMek)
 bad 3SG-be
 It is/has become bad.

Other stative type verbs that can sometimes be found with the continuative aspect marker, but only in a certain meaning, are the following:

- i) *aka, a?a* ‘wake, be awake, smile, laugh’

- 4.154 *E-a?a-e.* (EMek)
 3SG-wake-CNT
 S/he is awake.

- j) *mauni* ‘be alive, living, lively’

- 4.155 *E-mauni-e.* (all dialects)
 3SG-alive-CNT
 S/he is alive/living.

4.3.1.4.2 VERBS OF DEICTIC MOTION

The three basic verbs of (human) motion form a closed deictic system which can be represented in outline as follows:

- a) *movement towards speaker*
- b) *movement away from speaker*
- c) *movement towards hearer*

The forms of the three Mekeo verbs are:

- a) ‘come’ All dialects: *mai*
- b) ‘go’ NWMek *io*; WMek *ao, o*; NMek *ao*; EMek *lao*
- c) ‘go...’ NWMek, WMek, NMek *oai, wai*; EMek *vai, fai*

The first two of these three verbs translate as ‘come’ and ‘go’ respectively, while the last (diamorphemic *WAI*) means roughly ‘go along with you (= the hearer)’, ‘go in your (= the hearer’s) direction’ or ‘go to your (= the hearer’s) place’. All these verbs can take the suffix of remote transitivity, *-AI*, which gives them a confective or causative meaning. They form extremely common transitive verbs in this manner:

- a) *mai-ai-n-a, mai-z-ai-n-a, mai-s-ei-n-a* bring here (with one)
- b) *io-ai-n-a, ao-ai-n-a, o-ai-n-a, lao-ai-n-a* take away (with one)
- c) *oai-ai-n-a, wai-ai-n-a, vai-ai-n-a* take away with you, to your place, village

I illustrate ‘come’/‘go’ with the exchanges that typically occur when passing someone on a path:

- 4.156 *A-w-o?* (WMek)
 what-B-go
 Where are you going?
- 4.157 *Nabà! Iji nabà Ameaga a-ao.* (WMek)
 that I that Ameaka 1SG-go
 That way! I’m going that way to Ameaka.
- 4.158 *Gaba-ai o-mai?* (WMek)
 what-OBL 2SG-come
 Where have you come from?
- 4.159 *N̄ae a-mai! Agupa-ai a-mai.* (WMek)
 there 1SG-come Akufa-OBL 1SG-come
 I’ve come from there!, I’ve come from Akufa.

WAI usually means ‘go with you’ or ‘go to, in the direction of your village’. The ordinary expression of farewell, said by those staying to those departing, is:

- 4.160 *Oi-s-o-fai!* (EMek)
 you-B-2SG-go...
 Off you go!
- 4.161 *Ika a-wai.* (WMek)
 we.I 1PL-go...
 We are going along with you/to your place.

However, this verb can also be used in the third person:

- 4.162 *Saimon ŋa-bauŋa e-wai.* (WMek)
 Simon POSS.3SG-village 3SG-go...
 Simon has gone to his village.

It is suggested in Desnoës that *WAI* is used if the addressee can be expected or persuaded to take a close interest in the journey under discussion:

- 4.163 *?oŋopu lo-pa-aŋa, ma?a e-vai-vai-mo* (EMek:D)
 net 2SG-CA-touch fish 3SG-go-RED-just
e-veni-veni.
 3SG-swarm-RED
 You’ve set the net and the fish are absolutely swarming into it.

One might suggest glossing *WAI* here as ‘homing’ (to ‘home’, as of pigeons). But more generally it seems to mean going in a predestined way:

- 4.164 *Ipi mo-afi-ŋeŋei-n-i-a ŋa-vai* (EMek)
 bark IMP.2SG-take-spread-TH-PF-3SG IMP.3SG-go...
ma-isa.
 IMP.1SG-see
 Spread the barkcloth so that it rolls itself out so I can see it.

4.3.1.4.3 VERBS OF ORIENTATED MOTION

There are a large number of verbs of orientated or directional motion, many of which seem to be basically orientated to the flow of the rivers away from the mountains and towards the sea, or very generally from north(-east) to south(-west).

- a) *gae, kae* go upriver, go up, rise
- b) *giβo, jibo, tsibo, kipo* go downriver, go down, descend⁸³
- c) *age, ake* flow, go down

In myths and legends the dead go downriver to the coast for burial. The sun *rises* in the east and rivers *flow down* to the 'west'. These verbs form the following transitives with *-AI*:

- d) *gae-ai-n-a, kae-ai-n-a* take up, make go up
- e) *giβo-ai-n-a, jibo-ai-n-a, tsibo-ai-n-a, kipo-ai-n-a* take down, make go down
- f) *age-ai-n-a, ake-ai-n-a* take down, make go down

The concept of entering things and places has an important metaphoric role in Mekeo thought:

- g) *gogo, koko* 'enter, go in' (e.g. to the bush: 'go bush')
- h) *uga, uka* 'go in', but also 'put in' and 'put on, don' (see §4.3.4)
- i) *ao, alo* 'go inside' (= 'go out' or 'be extinguished' of fire)

There are several much-used verbs to describe movement back or backwards: turning and returning.

- j) *mue* turn around; turn back (*e-mue e-mai* 's/he returned')
- k) *muni* go back, follow, go after, come next
- l) *gua, kua* retreat from a position

There is a very hard-working verb that functions in numerous idioms:

- m) *βaŋai, baŋai, paŋai* 'go across, over' or to 'pass by' (also 'be excellent')

4.165 *Alo-u e-paŋai, a-la-mue.* (EMek)
inside-1SG 3SG-cross FUT-1SG-return
I've changed my mind, I will return.

4.166 *Afaŋaifi, Aŋapuŋe e-paŋai-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
Afaŋaifi Saint.Joseph.River 3SG-cross-RTR-TH-3SG
(The people of) Afaŋaifi have crossed the Saint Joseph River.

A common verb that denotes movement in some specific but unspecified direction is:

- n) *gai, kai* 'go/come, move'⁸⁴

⁸³ 'Stop!' in Mekeo is *mo-aβa-gibo, mo-aba-jibo, mo-aba-tsibo, mo-apa-kipo*, which translates literally as 'Stand down!'.
⁸⁴ There is a certain amount of crossover between the verbs of spontaneous movement and verbs of orientated motion. Membership ultimately depends on the sense in which the verb is used. Spontaneous movements are rarely prolonged while motion generally is.

- 4.167 *Ke-kai-lao ke-kai-mai.* (EMek)
 3PL-move-go 3PL-move-come
 They came and they went.

Verbs of this kind often take the atelic suffix *-lei*, *-lai* to describe aimless or unterminated motion. Thus one has *gai-lai*, *kai-lai* 'go out, move out, stand out, stick out':

- 4.168 *Ala lo-oma lo-kai-lai aŋoma lo-lao?* (EMek)
 what 2SG-DNT 2SG-move-AT far 2SG-go
 Why do you distance yourself?

The causativised verb *ba-gai-lai-a*, *pa-kai-lai-a* means 'extend something, offer something'

There are a number of monosyllabic verbal roots that signify motion that is unspecified for direction or manner. Two of the most common of these are given here:

- o) *e-* move, budge
 p) *u-* move

These, like *GAI*, usually occur in combination with another root and are tentatively included here.

4.3.1.4.4 VERBS OF LOCOMOTION

There are a large number of verbs that specify the manner of locomotion. These typically take human or at least animate subjects. Certain of the more common items are frequently found carrying the atelic suffix *-LAI* (AT):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| a) <i>βea, boa, pea</i> | walk |
| <i>βea-lai, boa-lai, pea-lai</i> | depart, arrive, walk about aimlessly; go out |
| b) <i>biu, biau, beau, piau</i> | run |
| c) <i>ŋoβo, ŋobo, ŋopo</i> | jump, spring, fly |
| <i>ŋoβo-lei, ŋobo-lei, ŋopo-lei</i> | fly off/away |
| d) <i>kue, ?ue</i> | rise from seated position; crouch, squat |
| e) <i>kue-ŋe, ?ue-ŋe</i> | rise |
| f) <i>kue-ŋe-gae, ?ue-ŋe-kae</i> | rise up, get up |
| g) <i>kaŋa, ?aŋa</i> | crawl on all fours, like an animal |
| h) <i>kaŋa-au, ?aŋa-au</i> | climb, climb upward |
| i) <i>kaŋa-au-gae, ?aŋa-au-kae</i> | climb up, climb up high |
| j) <i>ŋewa, ŋeva</i> | dance, pivot, turn around |
| k) <i>aka-, a?a-</i> | walk (in composition only) |
| l) <i>ao-</i> in EMek means | go, walk (usually in composition) |

These verbs are not commonly found with object marking but there seems to be no rule that prohibits this:

- 4.169 *?e-u alo-ŋ-ai lo-pea-i-a lo-mai.* (EMek)
 LOC-1SG inside-3SG-OBL 2SG-walk-PF-3SG 2SG-come
 You passed through my garden coming here.

- 4.170 *Auŋama e-aŋa-i-s-a, ifa alō* (EMek)
 Papuan.Black 3SG-bite-PF-B-3SG blood inside.3SG
e-piau-n-i-a.
 3SG-run-TH-PF-3SG
 A Papuan Black (snake) bit him, the blood ran into his insides.

Desnoës lists another (EMek) verb *piau-a* meaning '(go to) invite someone to a feast'.

The suffix of free play *-LAI* applies easily to verbs of locomotion. This is described in detail below, but I give one example here:

- 4.171 *Oufa-ai lo-ŋopo-lei-a.* (EMek)
 ditch-OBL 2SG-jump-AT-3SG
 You jumped over the ditch.

A group of specialised co-verbs express the speed at which a movement is executed. These often appear as Vb2 or Vb3 in nuclear juncture, and somewhat less commonly as full verbs in a chain. They are frequently found functioning as unmarked adverbials (see §2.3.2). The main ones are listed here for convenient reference:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| i) <i>pia-goā, fia-koā</i> | be quick, make haste |
| ii) <i>ba-gai, pa-kai</i> | be slow and careful, go slowly and carefully |
| iii) <i>ŋoa-ŋoa</i> | be quick, make haste |
| iv) <i>baŋa-baŋa, paŋa-paŋa</i> | be quick, make haste |
| v) <i>ba-avi-avi, pa-avi-avi</i> | be quick, make haste |

4.3.1.4.5 VERBS OF MENTAL PROCESS

These are classified as intradirectives because the controller is identical with the undergoer and, as will be shown in §5.3, they behave very like deictic motion verbs as far as derivations go. I divide these verbs into a number of categories in §4.3.2, on mainly semantic grounds, where I look at their capacity to take transitive object marking, as well as at some alternative, idiomatic strategies for the realisation of the same concepts.

A. Perception

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| a) <i>oβo, obo, opo</i> | sense, perceive |
| b) <i>ia/ia-n-a, ida/ido-ŋ-a, iza/izo-ŋ-a, isa</i> | see ⁸⁵ |
| c) <i>oŋo, loŋo</i> | hear, sense, perceive, know |

B. Cognition

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a) <i>oβo, obo, opo</i> | think |
| b) <i>oβoŋa, obolaŋa, opolaŋa</i> | think of, remember |
| c) <i>oŋo, loŋo</i> | know |
| d) <i>igipa, ijipa, itsifa, ikifa</i> | know how, understand, be clever |
| e) <i>maa-ŋa</i> ⁸⁶ | covet, envy |

⁸⁵ EMek has no overtly transitive variant for 'see'.

⁸⁶ Compare with *maa* 'eye'.

C. Physical Sensation

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| a) <i>au-</i> ... | (= 'body' ... process verb) |
| b) <i>pa-, faa-</i> ... | (= 'skin' ... process verb) |
| c) <i>ina-, inae-</i> ... | (= 'stomach' ... process verb) |
| d) <i>poŋa-, foŋa-</i> ... | (= 'smell' ... <i>oŋo</i> or <i>obo, obo, opo</i>) |
| e) <i>ŋamu-</i> ... | (= 'root > taste' ... <i>oŋo</i> or <i>obo, obo, opo</i>) |
| f) <i>lauba-, laupa-</i> ... | (= 'aura' ... <i>oŋo</i> or <i>obo, obo, opo</i>) |
| g) <i>papa-, fafa-</i> ... | (= 'shadow, aura' ... <i>oŋo</i> or <i>obo, obo, opo</i>) |

All of the above abstract nominals are obligatorily determined (i.e. suffixed) in relation to some topic/subject noun. They then become the objects of transitive verbs of perception. The following verbs express aspects of the interpersonal component:

D. Reaction/Interaction

- | | |
|---|--|
| a) <i>maniki, maniʔi</i> (ITR, RTR) | be fearful, be fearsome |
| b) <i>igege, apepe</i> (ITR, RTR) | weep, cry |
| c) <i>koŋa</i> (ITR, RTR) | be angry |
| d) <i>aka, aʔa</i> (ITR, RTR) | laugh |
| e) <i>ŋua-gobu, ŋua-kupu</i> (ITR, RTR) | be secretly furious, bear a grudge ⁸⁷ |
| f) <i>ŋua-gae, ŋua-kae</i> (ITR, RTR) | be happy, excited |

E. Verbalisation

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| a) <i>kaβi, oabi, iva/ifa</i> (ITR, TR) | say, speak |
| b) <i>inaga, inaka</i> (ITR) | utter |
| c) <i>kaβikaβi, ninikani, niniʔani</i> (ITR) | chat, converse |
| d) <i>βai-n-a, bai-n-a, pai-n-a</i> (TR) | tell, recount, order, reprimand |
| e) <i>oma</i> | say (or mean) (see §4.2.4) |

Verbs of verbalisation are essentially intransitive (and intradirective). Some verbs of verbalisation can be seen as verbs of reaction/interaction (and behave as such):

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| f) <i>bako, pako</i> (TR) | bewail |
| g) <i>aŋa-aŋa</i> (ITR, RTR) | cry, wail, quarrel |

4.3.1.5 VERBS OF EXTRADIRECTIVE ACTION

Extradirective verbs are inherently *active*. That is, they involve bodily activity on the part of a typically human subject, in situ rather than in motion. They describe the exercise of an outward-directed force. Extradirective action contrasts with intradirective action in that here the process does not necessarily begin and end with the main actant.

The first class of extradirective verbs are not obligatorily transitive, even in a semantic sense. The agent attempts to go beyond itself, to act *at* or *towards* or *through* other entities, and in some cases to act upon or to control them. The affected entity may be, initially, the

⁸⁷ I have no details for NWMek, where this particular cultural 'reaction' was discouraged by the LMS pastors, and may now represent a 'borrowing back' (from WMek) in this use.

body or a part of the body of the initiating agent, in which case the verb is neither transitive nor intransitive but is functioning as a kind of ‘middle voice’ verb.⁸⁸ These are verbs like the English ‘toss, swing, shake’. But they are verbs that ‘await an object’, and are very easily transitivised (by addition of an OM). They work upon themselves only while waiting to work upon something beyond themselves. I call these self-enactive extradirectives.

The second class of extradirective verbs is *primarily* transitive, in the sense that the actions described cannot be conceptualised except as operating on some external object. The object is semantically implicated. These are verbs with meanings like ‘hit, break, cut, plant, uproot’. Their targets can usually be characterised as Themes or Patients since they undergo displacement at least and frequently some more lasting transformation. These targets may not be marked in certain utterances, in which case they function as surface intransitives. I shall refer to these verbs as action-effect verbs.

Numerous verbs that one might expect to find in a class of obligatory transitives, verbs for ‘push, pull, take’, belong to other classes. These processes are in fact conceptualised as primarily intransitive and self-causing. They have common transitive forms and uses. But in Mekeo they have equally important intransitive meanings. They form a group parallel to the transitivised-detransitivised motion verbs in *-AI* (*ao-ai-n-a*, *lao-ai-n-a* ‘take, betake oneself’, *mai-ei-n-a* ‘bring, bring oneself’) which will be described in §5.3.

The syntactic test for an extradirective verb is that – when transitivised – it is an object or target that is added to the semantics of the indexed scene (just as the OM is added to the intransitively functioning base).⁸⁹ These verbs thus contrast with the analytic intracausatives, which add a new agentive subject upon transitivisation, demoting the agent-undergoer of the intransitive verb form from subject to object position. These semantic equations can be represented in Dixon’s notation (as shown above), so long as it is borne in mind that it is semantic roles that are being symbolised here, not forms:

Extradirective: $S = A$

Intracausative: $S = O$

Extradirectives correspond by and large to the class of verbs that Pawley (1973) called ‘obligatory transitives’. But, in Mekeo, while these verbs *may* function as transitive verbs they do not always do so.⁹⁰ All of these verbs also function, upon occasion, as intransitives.

4.3.1.5.1 SELF-ENACTIVE ACTION VERBS

For some potentially transitive verbs, the body of the subject of the verb functions as the instrument or medium of the action (in this they are similar to the intradirectives, but here no motion is involved).⁹¹ As intransitives they represent outwardly directed actions of which there is no apparent or obligatory goal, i.e. *activities* pure and simple. They can

⁸⁸ “The middle voice encodes reflexive and reciprocal situations, and also situations where the performer of the event is somehow affected by his own action directed at another participant, as in the Ancient Greek example: *louo-mai tas cheiras*, ‘I wash my hands’” (from Lichtenberk 1985a:36). Talmy (1985:93-95) has an interesting treatment of this phenomenon which he calls monadic personation. And compare Haiman (1985:170) on “*introverted predicates*”.

⁸⁹ In Halliday’s phrase, the process (= the action) is “directed at, or extended to” a second participant (the Goal or Patient; see Halliday 1985:103).

⁹⁰ Arms was dubious about the strength of Pawley’s claim (Arms 1974:42).

⁹¹ The potential existence of such a class is recognised on semantic grounds by Givón (1984:100), who suggests that the logically ‘locative’ external object will be coded as a patient.

be transitivity by the addition of an OM, usually just *-a*. They also often transitivity with *-LAI-a*.

Some common self-enactive extradirective verbs are listed below:

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|---|
| a) | <i>kapo, kafo, ?afo</i> | make throwing movement, toss |
| b) | <i>βiu, biu, piu</i> | make throwing movement, swing some part of body |
| c) | <i>gaβu, gabu, kapu</i> | seek |
| d) | <i>eoā, ewā/ŋewa, ŋeva/ŋefa</i> | turn, circle, spin, dance |
| e) | <i>gaβe, gabe, kape</i> | be torn free |
| f) | <i>βuβu, bubu, pupu</i> | be loose |
| g) | <i>ŋapa, ŋava, ŋafa</i> | make movement with foot |
| h) | <i>ŋaβu, ŋabu, ŋapu</i> | make whipping motion' |
| i) | <i>nini</i> | slip |

Here are examples of the different functions of *kapo, kafo, ?afo* 'toss':

- 4.172 *Ima-u e-kafo.* (NMek)
hand-1SG 3SG-swing
My hand swings.
- 4.173 *A?u e-?afo-?afo.* (EMek)
sea 3SG-toss-RED
The waves are hurling themselves.
- 4.174 *Inei pani-na e-pa-?afo-?afo.* (EMek)
bird wing-3SG 3SG-CA-swing-RED
The bird is beating its wings.
- 4.175 *Goŋa e-kafo-i-a.* (WMek)
coconut 3SG-swing-PF-3SG
S/he threw the coconut.

In the next example the same verb appears as an unsuffixed transitive verb, that is one with no OM, thereby expressing a non-salient, dispersed object:

- 4.176 *Ameku pua-ŋa e-?afo e-lao-ai-n-a.* (EMek:D)
wind seed-3SG 3SG-fling 3SG-go-RTR-TH-3SG
The wind blows the seeds along.

The next four examples illustrate compound and derived forms:

- 4.177 *Tsiabu e-kafo-i-a-jibo.* (WMek)
cloth 3SG-toss-PF-3SG-go.down
S/he tossed her/his shirt/skirt on the floor.
- 4.178 *Atsiwa e-kafo-baŋai-n-a.* (NMek)
knife 3SG-toss-go.across-TH-3SG
S/he threw the knife across.
- 4.179 *Gebo e-kafo-lei-a.* (WMek)
stone 3SG-toss-AT-3SG
S/he threw away the stone.

- 4.180 *Gebo e-kapo-ŋai-n-a* (WMek)
 stone 3SG-toss-RTR-TH-3SG
 S/he threw the stone forcefully.

Self-enactive verbs frequently appear as intransitives with the atelic suffix:

- 4.181 *Nie-u e-bubu-lei.* (WMek)
 tooth-1SG 3SG-loose-AT
 My teeth are loose.

But they alone can be transitivity in this form, and this is criterial:

- 4.182 *Puaŋa e-pupu-lei-a.* (EMek)
 fruit 3SG-loose-AT-3SG
 S/he plucked the fruit.

When transitivity with *BA-* they take an intensive rather than a causative interpretation (see §5.2.6 below).

Another common verb in this class is *ŋapa, ŋava, ŋafa* 'make any movement with foot'. I gloss it as 'kick' which is one of its core meanings:

- 4.183 *Fo-lo-ŋafa.* (EMek)
 OBLG.NEG-2SG-kick
 Don't kick! (lit. You should not kick.)
- 4.184 *Imoi e-pa-ŋafa apala.* (EMek)
 child 3SG-CA-kick bad
 The child is kicking madly.
- 4.185 *Pilipou e-ŋafa-uka.* (EMek)
 pants 3SG-kick-go.in
 He kicked his pants on.
- 4.186 *A-ŋapa-kapu-ŋ-a.* (WMek)
 1SG-kick-lack-TH-3SG
 I lost my footing.
- 4.187 *Kaapa la-ŋafa-api-i-a.* (EMek)
 snake 1SG-kick-press-PF-3SG
 I stood on it.

4.3.1.5.2 ACTION-EFFECT VERBS

This verb class divides up into numerous sub-classes according to the presence or absence or type of thematic consonant that a given root attracts. Each of these classes will be examined separately and in some detail in §4.3.3 below. Action-effect verbs can only take direct objects, unmediated by *-LAI*. They can be transitivity with *BA-* (§5.2.5). They readily combine with certain classes of following co-verbs, in nuclear juncture (§6.1.4). As just noted, the object marker usually includes a thematic consonant and the perfective aspect marker *-I*.

As previously mentioned, even such a prototypically transitive verb as *-u, -au* 'hit, strike, kill' *can* occur as an intransitive:

- 4.188 *Ima-mu ŋaŋa a-e-iku-iku-a lai a-au.* (EMek:D)
 hand-2SG club NEG-3SG-rub-RED-3SG we.E 1PL-strike
 Your hand has never touched a club, (but) *we* have struck (blows).
- 4.189 *Aina-mu e-au-au.* (NMek)
 voice-2SG 3SG-hit-RED
 You keep on talking.

Sometimes, too, this verb appears with an apparently non-referential OM (i.e. an ‘empty’ OM):

- 4.190 *Upa i-au-ŋ-a.* (WMek)
 sky 3SG-strike-TH-3SG
 (The) thunder rolls. (lit. (The) sky strikes (it).)

Even when these verbs function as transitives there is a *tendency*, as in Motu (Pawley 1973:135-136), to leave inanimate objects unmarked. But, as we shall see in §4.3.3.6, many Mekeo verbs tend to mark the object only in perfect-perfective aspect. Others again seem to leave the object unmarked for discourse-pragmatic reasons, even in PF aspect. It is probably impossible to say of any typically transitive verb, in Mekeo, that it can *never* appear as an intransitive. Intransitive, unreduplicated tokens of the most prototypically transitive verbs *do* occur. There is thus, in Mekeo, no class of ‘obligatory transitives’ in the strictest sense. All the verbs that, on semantic grounds, ought to belong to this class are in fact *optional* transitives.

Referring to Pawley’s (1973) schema of verb classes, it should be noted that his “spontaneous transitives” (verbs of perception, cognition, reaction, etc.) *do not* belong to the class of inherent or semantic transitives in Mekeo.⁹² However, a subclass of these verbs which function to single out (individuate) some object of desire or dislike do belong to this class (they belong, moreover, to the thematic class that realises ‘deliberate execution with concentrated effect’; see §4.3.3.1 below).

The action-effect verbs⁹³ ‘notionally’ require an object although they do not always express it:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| i) <i>ani(-a)</i> | eat |
| ii) <i>inu(-a, -p-a)</i> | drink |
| iii) <i>u(-ŋ-a), -au(-ŋ-a),</i> | hit, strike, kill |
| iv) <i>ao(-ŋ-a)</i> | squeeze, knead |
| v) <i>pupu(-ŋ-a), fufu(-ŋ-a)</i> | implant, bury |

As I list action-effect verbs fairly exhaustively below (§4.3.3.1) I will not add to the above sample here.

Note that most verbs of verbalisation fall into the class of action-effect verbs:

⁹² Nearly all of these verbs belong to a class of ‘obligatory’ transitives in Standard Fijian (Pawley 1973:135). I have, incidentally, distinguished between close transitives (short suffix) and remote transitives (long suffix) in making these statements, confining myself here to a consideration of the short forms only. Pawley does not make this distinction, at least in the relevant part of the 1973 paper.

⁹³ This class corresponds best with Pawley’s (1973) “optional transitives”.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| a) <i>kaβi</i> (<i>n-a</i>), <i>oabi</i> , (<i>-n-a</i>), <i>iva</i> (<i>ivā</i> , <i>iva-ŋ-a</i>) | speak, say ⁹⁴ |
| b) <i>βai</i> (<i>-n-a</i>), <i>bai</i> (<i>-n-a</i>), <i>pai</i> (<i>-n-a</i>) | tell, reprimand |
| c) <i>-ma</i> , <i>oma</i> (<i>-i-a</i>) | intend, mean, say |
| d) <i>βago</i> (<i>-ŋ-a</i>), <i>bago</i> (<i>-ŋ-a</i>), <i>pako</i> (<i>-ŋ-a</i>) | scream (as women do!) |
| e) <i>giβa</i> , <i>inaga</i> , <i>inaka</i> | utter, quote ITR |
| f) <i>kaβi-kaβi</i> , <i>nini-kani</i> , <i>nini-?ani</i> | talk, converse ITR |

Some examples are given here:

- 4.191 *Papie e-pako-apala.* (EMek)
 woman 3SG-scream-VERY
 The woman/women is/are screaming very loudly.
- 4.192 *Papie fo?ama ke-pako-ŋ-a.* (EMek)
 woman food 3PL-scream-TH-3SG
 The women are screaming (for the) (stolen) food.
- 4.193 *Mo-bai-n-a na-ao.* (WMek)
 MP.2SG-tell-TH-3SG IMP.3SG-go
 Tell him he should go.

4.3.1.6 SUMMARY OF DERIVATIONS

I will here anticipate somewhat in order to justify the above classification of verbs by listing the attested derivations for each of the verbs classes proposed:

LEGEND:

IP	=	Intracausative verbs of integral (unanalytic) process
AP	=	Intracausative verbs of analytic process
SM	=	Intracausative verbs of spontaneous movement
Mo	=	Intradirective verbs of directed/orientated motion
Mm	=	Intradirective verbs of manner of motion (locomotion)
Md	=	Intradirective verbs of deictic motion
R	=	Intradirective verbs of expressed reaction
S-E	=	Extradirective verbs of self-enactive action (O = Target)
A-E	=	Extradirective verbs of action + effect (O = Patient)

⁹⁴ I had thought that NWMek *kaβi* might be explicable as a borrowing from NMek where I have heard *kwabi*, for *kōa o-oabi* 'true 2SG.speak'(?), but Kuni has *-kavi* 'call out'. EMek *iva* seems to be related only to Motu *diba* 'know' via NWMek *-giba*. See fn.110 below for further details. Roro (Tsiria) has (?)*avi* 'say, speak', and *ki-kipa* 'talk, converse' (= Mekeo *nini-kani*, *nini-?ani*).

IP:	ITR			DURATIVE
	TR	<i>BA-V-ŋ-a</i>	V2*	
	ITR-ITS	<i>BA-V(-θ-a)</i>		
AP:	ITR			
	TR	<i>V-TH-a, V-θ-a</i>	causative*	
	TR	<i>BA-V-θ-a</i>	V2*	
SM:	ITR			
	ITR	<i>V-LAI</i>		
	TR	<i>BA-V-LAI-a*</i>		
95				
Mo:	ITR			
	ITR	<i>V-LAI</i>		
	TR	<i>V-(C)AI-n-a</i>		
	TR	<i>BA-V-θ-a</i>		
	TR	<i>BA-V-LAI-a*</i>		
Mm:	ITR			
	ITR	<i>V-LAI</i>		
	ITR-ITS	<i>BA-V(-θ-a)</i>		
	TR	<i>BA-V-LAI-a*</i>		
Md:	ITR			
	ITR	<i>BA-V</i>		
	TR	<i>V-(C)AI-n-a</i>		
R:	ITR			
	TR	<i>V-(C)AI-n-a</i>		
	TR	<i>BA-V-θ-a</i>		
S-E:	ITR			
	ITR-ITS	<i>BA-V(-θ-a)</i>		
	TR	<i>V-θ-a</i>		
	TR	<i>V-(C)AI-n-a</i>		
	ITR	<i>V-LAI</i>		
	TR	<i>V-LAI-a*</i>		
A-E:	ITR	rare		
	TR	<i>V-TH-a, V-θ-a</i>	transitive*	
	TR	<i>BA-V-θ-a (rare)</i>	V3*	PUNCTUAL

ITR = intransitive (or V1); TR = transitive (or V2); ITS = intensive; * = criterial feature. The suffixes are shown as 3SG OMs in -a.

95 The broken line indicates where an expected boundary between major classes would fall (i.e. between intracausative and intradirective verbs).

The column to the right of the above display, running from DURATIVE at the top to PUNCTUAL at the bottom, is meant to suggest that the different classes of verbs can be placed on a cline of real-time event speeds, stretching between durative process (or slow action) at one extreme and punctual change (or fast action) at the other.

4.3.2 VERBS OF PROBLEMATIC TRANSITIVITY

In the following sections I will discuss various categories of verbs in terms of the kinds of objects they (typically) take, the kind of process involved and the way in which these objects are affected (or not). These distinctions will of course be based on the morphosyntactic behaviour of the verb, in particular the presence or absence of an OM. I will be interested, also, in the problem of 'metaphorically affected' objects (as with verbs of perception, cognition, etc.), and of objects in problematic case roles ('indirect' objects, as well as non-patient, non-goal objects).

4.3.2.1 VERBS OF PERCEPTION

Mekeo does not distinguish between verbs of pure involuntary perception and verbs of deliberately directed attention. The distinction between 'see//hear' and 'look//listen' is not recognised. The situation is further complicated by the active-passive potential of some basic perception verbs. For example the verb 'see', which I represent here as the diamorpheme *IA*:

IA = s/he saw/sees, s/he looked/looks, s/he seemed/seems

The nominalised and by that token formally passivised form *I-IA*, realised as *īa*, *īda*, *īza*, *īsa* can mean *either* '(his/her/its) being seen' *or* '(his/her/its) look'.

I-IA is commonly used in place of a verbal predicate. Here, to illustrate the passive meaning of **īa* 'appearance, look', is an example from a NMek speaker (with *ala* for a showing EMek interference):

- 4.194 *Pua-ŋa i-izā alà koà?* (NMek)
 fruit-3SG NOM-look.3SG what like
 What does its fruit look like?
 [US: A youth is describing the correct time to fell sago palms.]

In this use *I-IA* is easily confused with *ika*, *i?a* 'resemblance', as in:

- 4.195 *I?a-mu e-?opo.* (EMek)
 appearance-2SG 3SG-try
 S/he is mimicking you.
- 4.196 *Oi-e-mu inei i?a-ŋa la-aŋu-e veia* (EMek:D)
 you-P-2SG bird appear-3SG 1SG-sit-CNT since
la-iŋoŋo i?a-u lo-?opo-?opo.
 1SG-sermon appear-1SG 2SG-try-RED
 Do you take me for your (pet) bird that you mimic me while
 I am preaching.

Other examples with *IA* 'see/look' are:

- 4.197 *Inaina amu?e, inema koà e-isa.* (EMek)
 this dog rat like 3SG-look
 This dog looks like a rat.
- 4.198 *Iza, itsi koà i-iza-u.* (NMek)
 s/he I/me like NOM-look-1SG
 He looks like me.

In WMek (where $e > i / _a, / _i$), *e-ida* 's/he sees/saw' is realised as *īda* (< *i-ida*).

The verb *IA* demands special attention as, due no doubt to its heavy functional load and consequent frequency of use, this verb has developed highly irregular paradigms (indeed double paradigms) in the three western dialects. These are illustrated in Appendix 4 below. The development of these paradigms seems to have a functional explanation. The simple form of this verb, unlike other semantically transitive verbs ending in /a/, never took the close transitivity marker *-i* to mark perfective aspect. One finds fragments of a paradigm without it in Desnoës, in what is now archaic EMek:

<i>e-ia-u</i>	3SG-see-1SG	s/he sees/saw me
<i>e-ia-o</i>	3SG-see-2SG	s/he sees/saw you
<i>e-ia-'i</i>	3SG-see-3PL	s/he sees them

The third person singular suffix *-a* assimilates to this verb and, moreover, one cannot easily hear any compensatory stress on the last syllable of the verb:

- 4.199 *Eḡaina au-ḡa lā-isa.* (EMek)
 that man-3SG 1SG-see
 I saw/have seen that man.

It may have been in an attempt to express perfective aspect that the use of reduplicated forms of this verb came to signify 'already' or 'ever/never' rather than habitual or frequentative aspect, as the following examples illustrate.

- 4.200 *A-!a-isa-isa-?i.* (EMek)
 NEG-1SG-see-RED-3PL
 I have never seen them.
- 4.201 *Ai-d-a-ij-ida-tsi.* (WMek)
 NEG-B-1SG-RD-see-3PL
 I have never seen them.

The third person singular form of the verb was, however, formally intransitive, and was accepted as such,⁹⁶ and a new paradigm with the thematic consonant *ḡ* was then innovated to perform its transitive functions:

- 4.202 *a-ia-n-a*⁹⁷ (NWMek)
a-ido-ḡ-a (WMek)
a-izo-ḡ-a (NMek)
 1SG-see-TH-3SG
 I see/saw her/him/it.

⁹⁶ 'Watkins' law' predicts that a whole paradigm will be brought into line with the third person singular form (see Watkins 1962).

⁹⁷ In NWMek [n] predominates over [ḡ] in a range of contexts yet to be determined.

These new verb forms⁹⁸ are able to take TR: *-i* to mark perfective aspect:

- 4.203 *Iu Labega au-kia ae-a-ia-n-i-ki.* (NWMek)
 I Lapeka man-3PL NEG-1SG-see-TH-PF-3PL
 I did not see the Lapeka men.
- 4.204 *Aoŋoa epo-ŋa-mo ido-n-i-a.* (WMek)
 Aongoa self-3SG-just 3SG.see-TH-PF-3SG
 Aongoa himself saw her/him/it.

However, the third person singular suffix has recently become fossilised and the forms more usually heard now are:

- 4.205 *Iji ida ai-d-a-idoŋa-i-tsi.* (WMek)
 I they NEG-B-1SG-see-PF-3PL
 I did not see them.
- 4.206 *Ida ida idoŋa.* (WMek)
 s/he s/he 3SG.see
 S/he saw her/him/it.

So the innovative suffix has in fact resolved nothing for third person singular and further change can perhaps be predicted on the basis of 'Watkins' law'.

Verbs of perception in general are not normally marked for third person objects:⁹⁹

- 4.207 *Ainā ai-d-oŋo.* (WMek)
 voice.3SG NEG-B-hear
 I didn't hear her/him.

In some cases a third person singular OM has become semi-fossilised:

- 4.208 *A-la-opolaŋa.* (EMek)
 NEG-1SG-think
 I can't remember.
- 4.209 *A-obolaŋa.* (WMek)
 1SG-think
 I think so.

This situation is reinforced by their frequent use as discourse markers like the English 'Look,...' and 'You see ...'.

- 4.210 *Mo-isa, ...* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-see
 Look,... OR: You see,...

It must be remembered that verbs of perception rarely take anything else but third person objects. The preferred mode of expression employs a determinate nominal:

⁹⁸ I have no direct evidence as to their antiquity but Brown (1955) lists only NWMek *ia* 'see'. Desnoës collating pre-War data of various dates and from varied sources lists NMek *io-ŋ-a* parallel to EMek *ia*.

⁹⁹ In Fijian the same kinds of verbs rank as 'obligatory transitives' (see Pawley 1973:135).

- 4.211 *Maa-mu la-isa.* (EMek)
 eye/face-2SG 1SG-see
 I see/saw you.

However, sometimes verbs of perception do take a third person OM, especially when this represents a plural object in a past event. Verbs like *IA* 'look/see' take plural object markers where they do not take singular object markers:

- 4.212 *La-aa-kae la-isa-isa-ʔi.* (EMek)
 1SG-look-up 1SG-see-RED-3PL
 I looked up (and) saw them.
 (US: Hunters have started a flock of birds.)

- 4.213 *Aina-ʔi la-loŋo-n-i-ʔi.* (EMek)
 voice-3PL 1SG-hear-TH-PF-3PL
 I heard them (their voices).

Another factor is added with the idiomatic/extended uses of verbs of perception:

- 4.214 *Aina-u a-lo-loŋo-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 voice-1SG NEG-2SG-hear-TH-PF-3SG
 You did not listen to (= heed) my voice.

The meaning of *loŋo* verges here upon 'recognise, acknowledge, accept' and it is this extended use of the verb that accounts for the presence of an OM.

The distinction between deliberately directing one's attention and involuntarily perceiving some object can be best expressed by means of a lexical choice. There are a number of root or stem verbs that describe different kinds of 'looking'. The EMek forms only are given here:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a) <i>ŋaŋai(-a)</i> | watch |
| b) <i>ŋopa(-i-a)</i> | notice |
| c) <i>ŋope(-i-a)</i> | observe, recognise, acknowledge |
| d) <i>ŋope-kae(-ai-n-a)</i> | pay attention to |
| e) <i>aŋo-uka(-i-a)</i> | examine (get to bottom of) |
| f) <i>ʔima(-i-a)</i> | watch carefully, mind, guard |

The verb *IA* 'see' itself acts in conjunction with numerous co-verbs to express specialised meanings. Again, the EMek forms only are given:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| a) <i>isa-ao-ŋ-a</i> | watch carefully, attentively
(<i>< ao</i> 'press on') |
| b) <i>isa-api-a</i> | watch closely from nearby
(<i>< api</i> 'be tight; press against; press together') |
| c) <i>isa-uki-n-a</i> | keep a vigil over
(<i>< uki</i> 'be physically close to; follow closely') |
| d) <i>isa-koa-ai-a</i> | peer through (a narrow opening)
(<i>< koa</i> 'pass through (a narrow opening)') |

- e) *isa-meʔe* look crossways at, look askance
(*< meʔe* ‘(be a) side, edge, cheek’)
- f) *isa-ŋea* see mistakenly, take for someone else
(*< ŋea* ‘be absent, missing; miss’)

The operations of the senses of smell and taste are usually expressed by means of determinate nominals that name a generalised sense-object (e.g. ‘smell’ or ‘taste’) and relate it to its source (by agreement), plus either a verb of generalised perception: *oβo*, *obo*, *opo* ‘sense, perceive, apprehend’, or the verb of knowing: *oŋo*, *loŋo*. The generic sense-object nominals are *poŋa*, *foŋa* ‘smell’, and *ŋamu* ‘taste’ (actually ‘root’). *Oŋo*, *loŋo* meaning ‘know’ will be dealt with again in §4.3.2.2 below. Note that *oβo*, *obo*, *opo* also occurs with non sense-object objects that are largely untranslatable, for example *lauβa*, *lauba*, *laupa* ‘presence, hint, intimation’.¹⁰⁰

- 4.215 *Laupa-ŋa la-opo-n-i-a.* (EMek)
presence-3SG 1SG-sense-TH-PF-3SG
I sensed his/her presence.

- 4.216 *Bapi i-aŋa -lai lauba-ŋa a-obo-n-i -a.* (WMek)
door 3SG-touch-away lauba-3SG 1SG-sense-TH-PF-3SG
I had an intimation of the door’s being open.

The base *oβo*, *obo*, *opo* also occurs as a cognate object (see §4.3.2.8 below for other examples of this construction):

- 4.217 *Feu opō a-la-opo pauma.* (EMek)
sleep sense.3SG NEG-1SG-sense properly
I don’t feel any great desire for sleep.

This is also the verb that one generally uses to describe touching things and the sense of touch:

- 4.218 *P-ai-d-o-api-obo-ŋai-n-a.* (WMek)
OBLG-NEG-B-2SG-take-sense-RTR-TH-3SG
You shouldn’t touch it.

Turning next to the sense of smell, we can say to someone, for instance:

- 4.219 *Poŋa mo-loŋo.* (WMek)
smell IMP.2SG-know
Smell (it)!

The word *poŋa* does not always carry overt concord-marking stress/length, but there may be underlying agreement.

4.3.2.2 VERBS OF COGNITION

Mekeo has a rich vocabulary of specialised bases for the representation of mental processes. The most important of these are listed below (those marked with an asterisk are ‘always’ treated as nominals and can only occur in construction with a verb):

¹⁰⁰ Other presumably extended meanings of *LAUBA* are ‘enjoyment, pleasure’.

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|---|
| a) | <i>oŋo, loŋo</i> | know |
| b) | <i>obo, oŋo</i> | thought; think |
| c) | <i>igipa, ijipa, itsifa, ikifa</i> | be intelligent, be skillful |
| d) | <i>oβoŋa, obolaŋa, opolaŋa</i> | remember, think |
| e) | <i>oŋe</i> | concept; imagination ¹⁰¹ |
| f) | <i>*aina</i> | voice, will |
| g) | <i>*ma-ŋoŋo</i> | traditional lore, precepts ¹⁰² (– used for ‘advice’) |
| h) | <i>aŋo-uga, aŋo-uka</i> | examine, find out |
| i) | <i>ŋoba, ŋopa</i> | consider, reflect; sense |

a) EMek *loŋo* does duty for ‘listen/hear’ as well as ‘know’, but in WMek and NMek two forms exist: *oŋo* and *loŋo*. I suspect that the EMek form with accreted *l* has only comparatively recently been borrowed in. Here some degree of specialisation seems to have occurred, with *oŋo* usually being preferred in the meaning ‘listen/hear’ and *loŋo* being reserved for the meaning ‘know’. NWMek has *oŋo* ‘listen/hear’ and ‘know’ (though *loŋo* ‘know’ is occasionally heard). Some examples follow:

- | | | |
|-------|----------------------------|---------|
| 4.220 | <i>Iu ae-a-oŋo.</i> | (NWMek) |
| | I NEG-B-1SG-hear/know | |
| | I didn’t hear/don’t know. | |
| 4.221 | <i>Itsi ai-z-a-oŋo.</i> | (NMek) |
| | I NEG-B-1SG-hear | |
| | I can’t hear. | |
| 4.222 | <i>Itsi ai-z-a-loŋo.</i> | (NMek) |
| | I NEG-B-1SG-know | |
| | I don’t know. | |
| 4.223 | <i>Lau a-la-loŋo.</i> | (EMek) |
| | I NEG-B-1SG-hear/know | |
| | I didn’t hear/don’t know. | |
| 4.224 | <i>Iji ai-d-a-oŋo-oŋo.</i> | (WMek) |
| | I NEG-B-1SG-hear-RED | |
| | I’ve never heard of it. | |

b) *Oβo, obo, oŋo* means ‘thought; to think about something’.¹⁰³ NWMek *oβ-oβo* means ‘trust, belief’. *Ob-obo, op-oŋo* in the other dialects means ‘think a lot, worry’. We also hear *obo-obo, oŋo-oŋo* for this.

- | | | |
|-------|-----------------------------|--------|
| 4.225 | <i>Obo-u e-pua.</i> | (WMek) |
| | think-1SG 3SG-finish | |
| | I don’t know what to think. | |

¹⁰¹ *Oŋe* seems to be a clear borrowing from the Eleman languages, where *ore* means ‘knowledge, understanding, ability, competence’ (Brown 1986). It has developed a quite special range of meanings in Mekeo (where *igipa*, etc. covers the range of meanings just noted for *ore*).

¹⁰² Compare EMek *inoŋo* ‘speech, sermon’, which seems however to be an Eleman borrowing (cf. Orokolo *iroro*, Toaripi *itoro* ‘speech, harangue; sermon’ – Brown 1986).

¹⁰³ It will be recalled that what may be the same root appeared in §4.3.2.1 as ‘sense’.

c) *Igipa, ijpa, itsifa, ikifa* means ‘cleverness; be clever’ with connotations that include ‘knowledge, intelligence, skills of all kinds’.

4.226 *Oi lo-ikifa apala.* (EMek)
 you 2SG-clever very
 You are very clever.

4.227 *?ifo ikifa e-peni-au.* (EMek)
 self.3SG knowledge 3SG-give-1SG
 S/he instructed me. OR: S/he taught me a lesson!

d) *Oβoŋa, obolaŋa, opolaŋa* means essentially ‘remember, think of’ and by extension only ‘think, consider’ (NWMek has *oβoŋa*, but prefers *oβ-oβo* in this use):

4.228 *Eŋai?ina fata-ŋa lo-opola-ŋ-a ma?* (EMek)
 that priest-3SG 2SG-think-TH-3SG INT
 Do you remember that priest?

4.229 *A-la-opola-n-i-a koà.* (EMek)
 NEG-1SG-think-TH-PF-3SG yet
 I haven’t remembered it yet.

e) *Oŋe* is another of those subjective/objective concepts in which Mekeo abounds. *Oŋe-u* (*oŋe*-1SG) in EMek means not only ‘my perception, what I am aware of at a given time, my consciousness of something, someone’ but also ‘someone else’s perception of me’. This crossover may explain the use of *oŋe* to mean ‘dream’ in NWMek. To ‘lose’ one’s *oŋe* is, in effect, to lose consciousness, but this expression is also used to mean ‘lose one’s presence of mind’. I gloss it (loosely) as ‘awareness’ in the following interlinear translations.

4.230 *Oŋe-u e-ŋea.* (EMek)
 awareness-1SG 3SG-lost
 I (have) lost my consciousness/concentration/composure.

There are numerous techniques especially designed to make someone *lose* their presence of mind:¹⁰⁴

4.231 *Oŋe-u o-ba-ŋea.* (WMek)
 awareness-1SG 2SG-CA-lost
 You (have) distracted me.

In NWMek *oŋe* means ‘dream’: *e-oŋe* ‘s/he dreams, has dreamed’. As a nominal it takes the possessive preposition *E*- rather than a determining suffix:

4.232 *Iu aia-oŋe maniki-na!* (NWMek)
 I POSS:1SG-dream fear-3SG
 My dream is/was fearful!

f) *Aina* is another key concept, and not a simple one. We seem to have a situation where one kind of extended meaning (*aina* = ‘ear’ > ‘obedience’) has merged with another (*aina* = ‘voice’ > ‘will’), largely thanks to chance homophony. While I would maintain that the two domains of meaning are cognitively separate, there are utterances where overlap and real ambiguity are unavoidable.

¹⁰⁴ These are used in the practice of sorcery, for example.

- 4.233 *Aina-u po-loŋo.* (WMek)
voice-1SG OBLG.2SG-hear
You should obey me. (lit. You should listen to my voice.)
- 4.234 *Aina-mu mo-pau-a.* (EMek)
ear-2SG IMP.2SG-direct-3SG
Prick up your ears, attend!
- 4.245 *aina-u-ai...* (all dialects)
voice-1SG-OBL
in my opinion...
- 4.236 *Gai-mo aina-ŋa-ai...* (WMek)
direction-just voice-3SG-OBL
In other words...

4.3.2.3 VERBS OF PHYSICAL SENSATION

Sensations are usually referred to a dummy third person singular subject. This is usually either *au* 'body' or *pa-paŋa*, *faa~faaŋa* 'skin/body'.

- 4.237 *Au-u e-ama.*¹⁰⁵ (all dialects)
body-1SG 3SG-cold
I am/feel cold.
- 4.238 *Faaŋa-u e-kie-kie.* (EMek)
skin-1SG 3SG-hurt-RED
I am in pain.

Ordinarily the affected body part is the subject:

- 4.239 *Ife-u e-kie-kie.* (EMek)
foot-1SG 3SG-hurt-RED
My foot hurts.
- 4.240 *Au e-jie-ji.*¹⁰⁶ (WMek)
foot.1SG 3SG-hurt-RED
My foot hurts.

Imau 'body' is rarely used in idioms, being reserved for descriptive discourse.

- 4.241 *inae-u e-kimu* (EMek)
inae-u e-tsiu (NMek)
ina-u e-jie (WMek)
ina-u e-gimu (NWMek)
stomach-1SG 3SG-bitter/hurt
I am hungry.

¹⁰⁵ *Ama* contrasts with *kama*, *?ama*; the former only applies to the human body, the latter to the environment in general.

¹⁰⁶ *Au* is a homonym in NWMek, WMek, NMek meaning both 'body' and 'foot'. EMek has *uve/ife* 'foot'.

- 4.242 *aiso-u e-kupu.* (EMek)
aizo-u e-gubu. (Mek)
aido-u e-gobu. (WMek)
aio-u e-goβu. (NWMek)
throat-1SG 3SG-close
I am thirsty.

Expressions formed with *ao*, *alo* are generally more metaphysical:

- 4.243 *Ao-u e-ŋama.* (WMek)
inside-1SG 3SG-burgeon
I am happy.

4.3.2.4 VERBS OF AFFECT AND EVALUATION

As these important expressions are idiomatic and amount to constructions rather than mere verbs I shall devote some space to their description.

'I like X' is expressed by a peculiar idiom that translates literally as 'I die its death'. There is no less dramatic way to speak about one's preferences, however mundane, but as the metaphor is dead – and can indeed only be disinterred by reference to Roro – one can speak Mekeo without ever accessing the etymology. The expression – which builds on the archaic word for a violent death: *ani* (Roro *ari*) – goes as follows:¹⁰⁷

- 4.244 *Ani-na la-ani (-a).* (EMek)
death-3SG 1SG-die (-3SG)
I die its death. (> I like it.)

Any doubts one might still entertain as to above etymology are largely set at rest by the existence of another, parallel expression that has much the same meaning but which is more transparent:

- 4.245 *Ani mae-ŋa ga-mae.* (WMek)
food death-3SG 1PL-die
We (nearly) died for want of food. OR: We were dying for food.

These expressions are used in very banal circumstances, and even in politeness formulae:

- 4.246 *Ani-na n-ai-d-o-ani goa aidama...* (WMek)
death-3SG FUT-NEG-B-2SG-die like time
If you don't/wouldn't mind...

Dislike is expressed by means of the intracausative verbal root *mapu*, *mafu* 'be bad, be wrong, be ill-formed'. From this base we get *ba-mapu-a*, *pa-mafu-a* 'despise, condemn, regard, treat as bad, make bad'

- 4.247 *I-ani-na e-mafu.* (EMek)
PASS-eat-3SG 3SG-bad
(The) taste is/was bad.

¹⁰⁷ Desnoës records *ani* in its original meaning. Roro has: *ari-na na-ari* 'like, love'. *Ari* in Roro means 'sickness, death, agony'. However, note that Motu *kari* means 'desire'.

- 4.248 *Iji laitsi a-ba-mapu-a.* (WMek)
 I rice 1SG-CA-bad-3SG
 I hate rice.

Other common idioms is formed from *au* 'body' and *ao, alo* 'inside' (see last section):

- 4.249 *I-au e-lao.* (EMek)
 INF-body 3SG-go¹⁰⁸
 It suits me. OR: I like it.

- 4.250 *Alo-u e-lao.* (EMek)
 inside-1SG 3SG-go
 It suits me. OR: I like it.

- 4.251 *Awaka ini-na i-au ai-j-i-ao.* (WMek)
 betel.pepper matter-3SG INF-body NEG-B-3SG-go
 I don't like the betel pepper business.

Emotional reactions or affects are usually treated in the same way as physical reactions: the feeling is attributed to a concrete part of the anatomy, one of a number of distinct 'organs'. The chief of these is the *ɲua*.¹⁰⁹ The *ɲua* is in fact a composite organ, is situated in the chest and abdomen and represents the seat of the 'visceral' emotions.

- 4.252 *Nua-u e-kupu.* (EMek)
 heart-1SG 3SG-close
 I am angry. (lit. My heart is closed.)

The *ao, alo* is literally the 'inside'. This is sometimes the equivalent of our 'mind'. To it are attributed moods, as well as intelligence and stupidity.

- 4.253 *Alo-mu e-fufu.* (EMek)
 inside-2SG 3SG-blocked
 You're sad. OR: You're stupid.

4.3.2.5 VERBS OF VERBALISATION

These verbs are essentially intransitive and belong, as noted above, to the general class of intradirectives. The most common of them are examined here in turn.

- a) *kaβi, oabi, iva~ifa*¹¹⁰ speak, talk, say

The roots *kaβi, oabi, iva* signify speech in its most general sense. It also translates most of the more mystical senses of 'word' in English, few of which are lost on the Mekeo. There is a basic cultural contrast between 'true speech' and 'false, deceitful speech'. The former is

¹⁰⁸ Glossing the *i-* as infinitive is less than satisfactory, but for now I assume that this is the same preformative *I-* that I describe in §5.5 below.

¹⁰⁹ As already noted above I have devoted a separate paper to this topic (Jones 1992).

¹¹⁰ The root *liva* 'speak' can probably be reconstructed for Proto Papuan Tip as it occurs not only in the Kilivila/Louisiades languages in this meaning but also throughout the languages of the Suauic branch of the Nuclear Papuan Tip cluster, where *liva* 'speak' typically contrasts with *tiba, siba* 'know'. Lala has *luva* 'speak' but is alone with East Mekeo in the Central Papuan family in having a reflex of **liva*. Motu has *diba* 'know', but no reflex of **liva*. Mekeo, however, has *i-kipa, i-jipa, i-tsifa, i-kifa* 'knowledge, skill', corresponding to Motu *i-diba* 'knowledge'. Roro has *kavi* 'speak', while 'know' is *iovina*.

called, in EMek, *iva-ŋome* ‘speech-base’ (speech that issues from the source and foundation of culture), *iva-ani-na* ‘speech-kernel-its’ (speech that represents the inner core of meaning), *iva-aŋa*, and so on. The latter is usually described as *βi-poŋe*, *bi-poŋe*, *pi-poŋe* ‘(reciprocal) deception, lies’. A court case is described as *iva a-pa-kai-a* ‘we make the words, the speaking, proper’ (EMek). The transitive verb form *iwa-ŋ-a*, *iva-ŋ-a* means ‘call someone’.¹¹¹

b) *inaga, inaka* say = utter

The root *inaga, inaka* occurs only as a verb. It introduces reported speech, usually direct or quoted speech, which always follows *i-inaga, e-inaka*.

c) *oma* say, intend, mean

This verb was discussed briefly in §1.4.4 and its main functions were illustrated in §4.2.4 above. It is the verb of *intending*, the deontic source for the two intentional (or subjunctive) moods. It is also commonly used, *after* quoted speech (whether directly or indirectly reported), to mean ‘s/he said’, or ‘s/he uttered’, or ‘s/he meant, intended, wanted’.

The three verbs described above are often used together, as in the following example that can only be somewhat inadequately glossed in English:

4.254 *E-iva e-inaka: ŋa-mai e-oma.* (EMek)
 3SG-speak 3SG-utter IMP.3SG-come 3SG-say
 S/he took voice and said: “Let him/her come!”, said s/he.

d) *βai, bai, pai (-n-a)* tell, order, recount
 (*and*: ‘tell off, attack, accuse’)

This verb signifies ‘instruct’ rather than ‘inform’. The indirect human objects of this verb are assumed to be in error of their ways, in need of correction and perhaps remonstrance. But it is also the ordinary verb of commanding or ‘telling’:

4.255 *Iva ani-na mo-pai-n-i-au!* (EMek)
 speech kernel-3SG IMP.2SG-tell-TH-PF-1SG
 Tell me the truth!

4.256 *Mo-bai-n-a ŋa-ao!* (WMek)
 IMP.2SG-tell-TH-3SG IMP.3SG.go
 Tell him/her s/he must go.

e) *ninikani, niniani* ‘talk, chat, discuss’ (< *nini-kani, nini-ani*)

4.257 *Papiau ivi-e?a-ŋa-ai ke-niniani.* (EMek)
 people sing-house-3SG-OBL 3PL-talk
 The people are talking/debating in the church.

4.258 *Epo a-ninikani-ai-n-a.* (WMek)
 together 1PL-talk-RTR-TH-3SG
 Let us discuss it together.

The two roots that form this common verb are on occasion separated:

¹¹¹ NWMek has *iwa-ŋ-a*, as do WMek and NMek, in the meaning ‘call someone’, but these dialects employ *kaf̥i* and *oabi* respectively for ‘speak’.

- 4.259 *Ibiao babie nini-tsi ge-kani-n-a aidama* (WMek)
 girl woman tale-3PL 3PL-stir-TH-3SG time
maa-tsi i-aka.
 face-3PL 3SG-laugh
 When (the) girls and (the) women chat their faces shine.

4.3.2.6 VERBS OF INTERACTION

By verbs of interaction is meant *descriptive* speech act verbs (as opposed to reportative speech act verbs like *say, tell*). Some of these verbs are performatives, and when used in the first person singular present tense can constitute the act that they describe. Others describe the manner or result of an act of verbalisation. The first group listed below is concerned with acceptance and rejection, requesting and refusal:

<i>noi(-n)-a</i>	request something
<i>uŋe-β-a, uŋe-b-a, uŋe-p-a</i>	accept
<i>umaga, umaka</i>	refuse gift, reject
<i>βoi-n-a, boi-n-a, poi-n-a</i>	refuse to give

Other verbs like *aŋoa* ‘incite to sorcery attack, be a party to a planned sorcery attack’ are not verbs of verbalisation but pure verbs of interaction. The meanings of many of the verbs listed above in §4.3.1.4.5, §4.3.2.1, §4.3.2.2, §4.3.2.3, §4.3.2.4 and §4.3.2.5 need much more detailed study. They are all too easily glossed with English words that only imperfectly capture their true culture-specific meaning.

There is a very large number of locutions, based based on *iwa, iva* ‘speak’, which describe speech acts and/or speech events. Some locutions are on the way to being lexicalised, as verbs. While they must await a thorough study at some later time, a grammar of Mekeo would be incomplete without some mention of these locutions. A sampling of these idioms is given here (EMek forms):

<i>iva ke-pakai-a</i>	judge (lit. make the words right/proper/correct) ¹¹²
-----------------------	---

Verbs based on *iwa, iva* ‘speak’ include the following (EMek forms):

<i>iva-?opo</i>	compare (ITR)
<i>iva-epoŋania</i>	speak in riddles (ITR)
<i>iva-kipuŋa</i>	speak angrily (ITR)
<i>iva-ŋea</i>	speak mistakenly
<i>iva-ŋai-n-a</i>	acclaim, praise (TR)
<i>iva-paŋai-n-a</i>	translate (TR)
<i>iva-apu-a</i>	stop by speaking (TR)

There are less of these compounds in the other dialects. In WMek and NMek they are usually based on *oabi* ‘speak’ although the EMek forms are frequently borrowed with some modification of the consonantal phonemes (I do not have any examples at all based on NWMek *giβa*).

¹¹² The nominal meanings of *iva* include ‘word(s), speech, speaking, utterance’.

4.3.2.7 VERBS OF INHERENT RECIPROACITY/REFLEXIVITY

The prime example of an inherently reflexive verb is *uele* ‘wash oneself, bathe’, which as noted elsewhere may represent a Fuyughe borrowing.¹¹³

- 4.260 *Fa-lao fa-uele.* (EMek)
 OBLG.1SG-go OBLG.1SG-bathe
 I want to go and wash myself (bathe).

This closely resembles an intracausative verb or a verb of integral process, being transitivised/causativised with *BA-*, but differs in that it (but not they) can take a reflexive pronoun:

- 4.261 *Anipo la-pa-uele-p-i-a, mopio* (EMek:D)
 nose.ornament 1SG-CA-wash-TH-PF-3SG shell.necklace
la-pa-uele-p-i-a, ?ifo-u la-uele.
 1SG-CA-wash-TH-PF-3SG own-1SG 1SG-wash
 I washed (my) nose ornament, I washed (my) shell necklace, I wash(ed) myself.
 (US: ritual washing in juice of *aŋeŋe/?aŋeŋe*, a charm for seducing women.)

Inherently reciprocal verbs are somewhat more common and are always marked. That is, they carry the reciprocal prefix *BI-* and – *markedly* – take no person/number-marking morpheme; the morpheme *-C-I* is however always attached to the verb root/stem.¹¹⁴ A common example is *bi-bai-ni, pi-pai-ni* ‘fight (one another)’, which normally occurs with a plural SM. NWMek, incidentally, expresses this concept by reduplication of the verb root: *gi-uk-uku* (for *gi-oku-oku*; *oku* means ‘fight’ (transitive) in NWMek while its cognates mean ‘be angry about; quarrel with’ in the other dialects). The semantics of habitual aspect here seem to overlap with those of reciprocity. Desnoës, for example, notes that EMek *pi-pai-ni*, or *pi-paini*, can also have a habitual reading:

- 4.262 *E-pi-paini apala.* (EMek:D)
 3SG-REC-fight very
 He is a great fighter. OR: He habitually fights.

In the other dialects *bi-baini, pi-paini* can sometimes function like a verb of reaction, transitivising with the co-verb *BENI*:

- 4.263 *E-bi-baini-bini-au.* (WMek)
 3SG-REC-fight-give-1SG
 S/he fights/fought me.

However, there is no verb ***bai-n-a, **pai-n-a* ‘fight, attack’, from which we can productively derive *bi-baini, pi-paini* (see discussion at end of §4.3.4) That is why I classify this verb as an inherently reciprocal verb.¹¹⁵ More productive uses of reciprocal *BI-* are illustrated in §5.4.1 below (and compare ‘cooperative’ *BI-* in §5.4.5).

¹¹³ Note that Roro also has *uere*, or *uhere* ‘bathe’, while Kuni has *ue* in the same meaning.

¹¹⁴ This *-I* has been glossed throughout as PF (perfective aspect marker), but in this word-final environment *-I* has no aspect marking function.

¹¹⁵ A verb *bai-n-a, pai-n-a* does indeed exist, but it means ‘scold, accuse’, as well as merely ‘tell’, which is its most common meaning (see §4.3.2.5).

4.3.2.8 VERBS WITH COGNATE OBJECTS

This kind of construction occurs throughout the Oceanic family of languages but does not always carry the same significance. It has generally received only passing attention.¹¹⁶ Some of its uses in Mekeo are illustrated in this section.

The most common example of this kind of construction is provided by the two main expressions for ‘liking/loving’ someone or something.

- 4.264 *Mae mae-ŋa a-mae.* (WMek)
 areca.nut death-3SG 1SG-die
 I’m dying the death of areca nut.

Mae-ŋa (where 3SG-*ŋa* agrees with *mae* ‘areca nut’) is of course ambiguous as between the two different interpretations: ‘the death that (lack of) areca nut causes’ and ‘the death that areca nut suffers’. I imagine that the original metaphor was meant to express total empathy and implied the semantics of the second underlying gloss – it thus produced sentences like ‘I will die in the place of (someone whom I hold dear)’ (or ‘I suffer for (someone)’):

- 4.265 *Oi ani-mu la-ani.* (EMek)
 you death-2SG 1SG-die
 I love you. (lit. I die your death.)
- 4.266 *Maria ŋeoa aŋi-na i-ani-ani-ŋa* (NWMek)
 Mary dance death-3SG 3SG-die-RED-EMP
 Mary likes dancing.

The extended use of the metaphor in modern colloquial Mekeo quite clearly implies that the first of the above glosses is the one that is current and productive. For example:

- 4.267 *Ani mae-ŋa la-mae.* (EMek)
 food death-3SG 1SG-die
 I’m dying for want of food. (lit. I’m dying the death of food.)

However, the following (from Desnoës – the gloss is my translation of his French) probably exemplifies the original type of idiom:

- 4.268 *Mani?i-na la-mani?i.* (EMek)
 fear-3SG 1SG-fear
 I am afraid for him/her. (lit. I fear (with) his/her fear.)
 NOT: I am afraid of him/her.¹¹⁷

I might suggest that *maniki*, *mani?i* is an example of a double-sided concept (like birth), in that the emotion described belongs in part to the stimulus and in part to the experiencer (it thus belongs with the ‘subject selection verbs’ described in §4.3.4).

Another kind of idiom with cognate objects is exemplified by *gai-na e-gai*, *kai-na e-kai*, which represents the common expression ‘S/he waits for X’.

- 4.269 *A-gai gai-na go-gai?* (WMek)
 what-person sake-3SG 2PL-wait
 Who are you waiting for?

¹¹⁶ Lichtenberk (1982:272-275) has discussed cognate objects in Manam, and Taylor (1970:117-120) has touched upon this phenomenon in Motu.

¹¹⁷ I am not in fact confident that this same expression could not occur with the latter meaning.

Gai, kai means ‘(right) direction, (right) side’ and by extension *gai-na, kai-na* can mean ‘for someone’s sake; because of someone, something’. But this expression for ‘wait’ can only represent a deliberate trope, a stylistic flourish, inspired by the homophony (which I have compounded by choosing an utterance containing *a-gai* ‘who?’) as much as by the possible metaphor involved. It has the deliberately pleonastic ring of ‘I dreamed me a dream’. Compare some other spontaneous utterances involving cognate object constructions:

4.270 *Ala aipa lo-aipa?* (EMek)

what anger 2SG-anger

Why are you angry? (lit. With what anger are you angry?)

4.271 *Nio a-pa-nio aisama...* (EMek)

snare 1PL-CA-snare time

When we set snares... (lit. When we noose nooses...)

4.272 *Naea babiau-tsi auŋa ga-gaba kau-ŋa ge-kau.* (WMek)

DX people-3PL TOP RD-what doing-3SG 3PL-do

Those people now, what are they getting up to?

I have tried to capture the hint of deprecation and suspiciousness with the colloquial trope included in this last gloss.

The idioms just discussed are perhaps atypical of the cognate object expressions in general. The next example probably captures the essential nature of cognate object verbs as currently used by the Mekeo:

4.273 *Koŋa a-ŋ-e-pelo, koŋa kapu-ŋa a-ŋa-kapu.* (EMek)

coconut FUT-TH-3SG-stunt coconut search-3SG FUT-1PL-seek

The coconuts will be stunted, we will (have to) go on a coconut hunt.

Gabu, kapu means ‘seek, search for, look for’ and *gabu-gabu, kapu-kapu* means ‘hunting’, or just ‘searching’, depending on the context. The unmarked version of the above predication (cognate object verbs are always marked) would have been:

4.274 *Koŋa a-ŋa-kapu-ŋ-a.* (EMek)

coconut FUT-1PL-seek-TH-3SG

We will look for coconuts.

The version with the cognate object connotes a long and arduous expedition, something that example 4.274 does not. In other words, the nominalisation and ‘objectification’ of the process serves to constitute it in the hearer’s mind as a complex and prolonged endeavour, lending it in short durative aspect – an effect that is reinforced by the repetition of the root in the verb itself. Here is an example (EMek) that illustrates the productivity of this process in Mekeo (*-iva-ŋai-n-a* is a transitive verb based on *iva* ‘speech; speak’, and it means essentially ‘praise-3SG’):

4.275 *[Oi-e-mu moʔoa pa-iva-ŋai-na]* (EMek)

you-POSS-2SG catfish CA-speech-RTR-3SG

[lo-pa-iva-ŋai-n-a]

2SG-CA-speak-RTR-TH-3SG

[You are endlessly singing] [the praises of your catfish]

NOT SIMPLY: You are boasting about your catfish.

The *formal* or *ceremonious* nature of a nominalised cognate object is illustrated in the following (where the EMek root *iva* occurs in the extended meaning of ‘accusation’ and where the verb *-iva-ŋ-a* (PF: *-iva-n-i-a*) ‘call (3SG)’ appears meaning ‘accuse (3SG)’):

- 4.276 *Iva-u lo-iva-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 word-1SG 2SG-speak-TH-PF-3SG
 You have accused me justly. (lit. You have spoken my word
 (the word that pertains to me).)

Example 4.271 above (repeated here as 4.277) is another example with an apparently redundant cognate object:

- 4.277 *Nio a-pa-nio aisama...* (EMek)
 snare 1PL-CA-snare time
 When we (want to) go out setting snares...

4.3.2.9 VERBS OF UNCONTROLLED PROCESS¹¹⁸

There is a large number of bases in Mekeo that express a failure of control on the part of an agent. That is to say, they signify actions that have gone awry. Or, as co-verbs, they signal that the action described by the main predicate has been unsuccessful, has missed its mark, or has been idle, fruitless or foolish. When functioning as simple intransitive verbs they have meanings like ‘disappear, become lost, go astray’. Most can be classed as intracausatives. When functioning as transitive verbs, alone or as parts of complex verbs, these bases have (or add) meanings like ‘make disappear, lose, miss, fail to achieve’. The transitivity of such verbs is clearly compromised by the definitional non-attainment of their objects. The semantic status of these objects – their ‘case role’ – is thus in considerable doubt. The number of such verbs, their syntactic specialisation as auxiliaries and their semantic similarities – difficult as these may be to put into words – put significant pressure on the linguist to treat this entire category of expression as a grammatical one.

I shall begin by illustrating the meanings and uses of a couple of EMek verbs as typical of the category:

- a) *fuke* be plain, simple, blank, empty, idle, delayed, vain, frustrated,
 undecorated, ordinary, foolish, stupid
- b) *ŋopu* be idle, inert, inactive, lacking, in need of

I now give some examples in use along with a variety of rather intuitive glosses in which I try to capture the precise nuances of the originals. First, *fuke*:

- 4.278 *Ivi-mo a-lo-fuke-fuke.*
 Sunday-just FUT-2SG-*fuke*-RED
 You will have to wait (idly) for some weeks. OR: ...pass some weeks idly.
- 4.279 *Ŋava a-la-pa-pa-fuke.*
 moon/month FUT-1SG-CA-CA-*fuke*
 I will pass/waste/squander away a few weeks.

¹¹⁸ A number of papers have been written on what are called ‘inconsequential’ verbs in Papuan languages (e.g. Haiman 1988, on Hua) but the semantics of these verbs is apparently quite different from and more complex than that of the verbs to be discussed here.

- 4.280 *Apu ke-pa-fuke-i-a-mo.*
gourd 3PL-CA-*fuke*-PF-3SG-just
They left the gourd plain/undecorated.
- 4.281 *E-pa-fuke-i-a-mo.*
3SG-CA-*fuke*-PF-3SG-just
S/he did nothing (special, out of the ordinary).
- 4.282 *E-ka-fuke-i-a-mo.*
3SG-lie(?)-*fuke*-PF-3SG-just
S/he did not know what to do.
- 4.283 *Aŋo la-pa-fuke-i-a-mo.*
bush 1SG-CA-*fuke*-PF-3SG-just
I went all through the bush without finding any game/for nothing.
- 4.284 *Alō e-fuke*
inside/mind.3SG 3SG-*fuke*
His/her mind is vacant/empty. OR: S/he is stupid, inexperienced.

No single English word suggests itself as a satisfactory gloss for *puge*, *fuke*, even in a single use. The problem becomes even more acute when it comes to differentiating such verbs from one another. The verb *ŋopu* is illustrated next:

- 4.285 *Ŋua-mu ŋopu-ŋa ma?*
heart-2SG *ŋopu*-3SG INT
Are you at ease with yourself? (lit. Is your heart pure/untroubled/still?)
- 4.286 *ŋoʔoae, iviao, ima-ʔi e-ŋopu.*
youth girl hand-3PL 3SG-*ŋopu*
The young men and women are lazy/have idle hands.
- 4.287 *Ima-u e-ŋopu.*
hand-1SG 3SG-*ŋopu*
I am innocent. OR: My hand/s is/are clean.

Clearly the metaphorical extensions of *ŋopu* differ from those of *fuke*, but how different are the central meanings of the two roots?

The most heavily worked of all these roots is perhaps *aaŋe*, which as a co-verb adds meanings like ‘for nothing, aimlessly, pointlessly’ to the central predicate. In NWMek, as a main verb, it means ‘be crazy’. This root forms such common compounds as: *pea-aaŋe* ‘walk about idly, stroll about’, while in the form *-aaŋe-mo* (all dialects) it is found suffixed to all sorts of predicates to add the meaning of ‘idly’, or ‘in vain’.

Another key verb of non-attainment is *ŋea* ‘miss/be missed, lose/be lost’

- 4.288 *A-ba-ŋea.* (WMek, NMek)
1SG-CA-miss
I lost it.

I here present a fullish list of EMek verbal bases that function to express processes and actions that somehow ‘fail’ or involve loss of something. Some only occur as co-verbs, or only with a causative prefix, as indicated by the hyphen:

a) <i>aaŋe</i>	be idle, vain, crazy
b) <i>?afu</i>	lack something, be deprived, have nothing
c) <i>-ai-po</i>	be violent and in vain
d) <i>fofo</i>	be stupid, be in vain
e) <i>foŋe(-a(-ŋa))</i>	have no outcome; lack success
f) <i>fua</i>	be finished, ruined
g) <i>fuke</i>	be empty, void, vain; pass idly, waste
h) <i>maini(-n-i-a)</i>	be idle, empty
i) <i>moŋu</i>	come free, break off
j) <i>mou</i>	be broken, cut, snapped
k) <i>ŋea</i>	be missed/miss, be lost/lose
l) <i>ŋopo</i>	vanish, disappear
m) <i>-ŋopu</i>	be idle, inert, in need of something
n) <i>ŋufa</i>	come loose, come undone
o) <i>oŋu</i>	lack expected result, lack consequences
p) <i>-pai(-a)</i>	disappear, make vanish
q) <i>-pai-na</i>	empty

Other verbs with a negative connotations are *gobu*, *kupu* ‘be blocked, closed’, *pupu*, *fufu* ‘be blocked, *ao*, *alo* ‘be out, go out, finish, stop’, *gogo*, *koko* ‘go in, disappear’.

The important transitive functions of the above verbs are illustrated at length in §6.1.12 below.

4.3.3 TYPICALLY TRANSITIVE VERBS (ACTION-PROCESS)

The ‘classes’ of verbs that emerge as groupings based on favoured thematic consonants are not absolutely airtight in the sense that a given root may *never* occur with or without a certain thematic consonant (TH). Nor are the categories that emerge from the data at once semantically transparent. However, upon closer examination culture-specific meanings emerge. On the whole, the TH classes seem to correspond to macrofunctional classes of endeavour, cultural domains whose general character is suggested by the section titles. The more concrete nature of each macrofunction – the range of actual operations represented by a given TH – will be enlarged upon separately in each section.

4.3.3.1 VERBS OF DELIBERATE EXECUTION (CONCENTRATED EFFECT)

TH: -Ŋ

These are prototypically – rather than typically – transitive verbs, with a human subject and a ‘patient-of-change’ object (see Givón 1984:96). The object not only undergoes a change of state/situation, but its pragmatic status and value – in other words, its cultural definition, its *use* – are irrevocably altered. An uprooted taro or a plucked breadfruit, for example, has been radically transformed; from having been a living, growing entity, independent of man, it has become an owned commodity destined for human consumption. Similarly, a woven vine or pounded sago take on a new use-value. This value is still high, if

not higher than before, but it is a use-value now; and the state implied is that of a dead or at least inert object.

The verbs in this domain are not merely 'deliberate'¹¹⁹ (*and thus imply a human agent*), but they involve a sustained and concentrated exercise of physical force (or mental attention). In sum total, they describe the cultural domain of 'work', which may be regarded as a macrofunction in the sense in which Halliday employs the term: a class of pragmatic, or extralinguistic, functions that has been encoded in the language.

I shall now attempt to subcategorise the verbs that take TH: -*ŋ* in terms of their meanings, and the sphere of daily life in which these meanings have meaning. The prototypical domain of 'work' in a horticultural society is gardening, so as one might expect this field of activity is well represented. But a distinction is consistently made in Mekeo between operations involving physical exertion and an entirely passive object, on the one hand, and those that do not call for so much concentrated effort, and which deal with less passive objects *or* do not produce objects of use, on the other. These latter operations are represented in the next section (§4.3.3.2) since they typically take zero TH and the semitransitive OM -*a*. The former belong in this section. For example:

VERBS OF PLANTING AND HARVESTING

<i>boi-n-a, poi-n-a</i>	till; plant; uproot, as taro
<i>iwi-n-a, ivi-n-a</i>	dig, delve; dig up, as sweet potatoes
<i>oŋo-ŋ-a</i>	harvest singly, as taro, yams
<i>pau-ŋ-a, fau-ŋ-a</i>	implant, plant, impale; stab, wound
<i>pūu-ŋ-a, fuu-ŋ-a</i>	uproot, take from ground singly (taro, yams)
<i>ani-n-a, vani-n-a</i>	dig (ground); dig up (plants)
<i>ŋupu-ŋ-a, ŋufu-ŋ-a</i>	rip up, pull up

Oŋo-ŋ-a also occurs with zero-TH and *oŋo-ŋ-a* 'harvest individual tubers' contrasts with *oŋo-a* 'harvest completely, gather up all plants, for example sweet potatoes'. The first verb describes effects of single, focused actions on specific individuated objects (and suggests the exertion of uprooting large tubers) while the second describes a diffuse activity, without any suggestion of specific objects or great exertion.

The next subclass fits fairly well into the general category, with connotations of hard work and concentrated effect.

VERBS OF BEATING AND POUNDING

<i>u-ŋ-a, au-ŋ-a</i>	strike, beat, hit
<i>gu-ŋ-a, ku-ŋ-a</i>	pound, pack down, compress
<i>o-ŋ-a</i>	pound (sago)

Another area of concentrated work is the vital activity of weaving and plaiting, an activity that produces most of the fibre-based objects and materials upon which village life depends. The job of weaving/plaiting does not require much physical effort, but it does require concentrated effort and it produces highly individuated artefacts.

¹¹⁹ It is tempting to identify this class of verbs with Pawley's class of "deliberate transitives", but that class is much wider than the present one (see Pawley 1973).

VERBS OF WEAVING AND PLAITING

<i>ao-ŋ-a</i>	weave, squeeze, pound (sago)
<i>bau-ŋ-a, pau-ŋ-a</i>	interweave
<i>gai-n-a, kai-n-a</i>	sew up
<i>gau-ŋ-a, kau-ŋ-a</i>	make a mat, etc., weave (> make, do)
<i>gu-ŋ-a, ku-ŋ-a</i>	weave
<i>pai-n-a, fai-n-a</i>	knot, tie a knot

The next subcategory seems to dwell upon the concentrated physical effort and focal effect of piercing, poking, and so on. Whereas the object is not now transformed into an item to be used, the action described normatively involves *the use of a tool* that has itself been 'worked'.

VERBS OF PIERCING AND PICKING

<i>o-ŋ-a</i>	pierce as with a spear, 'pick' plants, put up shoots
<i>gani-n-a, kani-n-a</i>	pierce; burst; wound; hurt
<i>kani-n-a, ?ani-n-a</i>	prick, prod; poke
<i>pigu-ŋ-a, fiku-ŋ-a</i>	pierce with a punching, twisting motion

Verbs of tossing and throwing with TH: -ŋ form another set. The verbs in this set all suggest the exertion of throwing a solid or heavy object, tipping it over or casting it aside.

VERBS OF TOSSING AND THROWING

<i>biu-ŋ-a, piu-ŋ-a</i>	throw
<i>pobu-ŋ-a, fopu-ŋ-a</i>	throw, toss, pour, spill, invert, upturn
<i>pou-ŋ-a, fou-ŋ-a</i>	throw at
<i>ipu-ŋ-a, ifu-ŋ-a</i>	throw back earth
<i>tsibu-ŋ-a, ?ipu-ŋ-a</i>	throw/push back bushes

These verbs of throwing contrast with verbs of throwing which take the bare OM -a and which therefore belong in the next section. Those belonging in the above set imply a reasonably heavy missile and a degree of effort. For example, a spear:

- 4.289 *Io ke-piu-ŋ-a.* (EMek)
 spear 3PL-throw-TH-3SG
 They throw a/the spear.

The verb *biu-ŋ-a, piu-ŋ-a* contrasts with the derived verb *biu-lei-a, piu-lei-a* 'throw (something light) away'.

The following verbs of cutting and value-adding (e.g. peeling vegetables; clearing ground; notching a tool) also contrast with a set of verbs of cutting, splitting and dividing, which take zero TH and are therefore described in the next section, when the object either disintegrates and disappears or is only lightly affected. Although a worked cutting tool is used in all the actions described by the following verbs, the semantic focus of these verbs, which take /ŋ/, is on the production of an item with a new use-value. Those given in §4.3.3.2 emphasise the process of cutting, not the product.

VERBS OF CUTTING APART, DIVIDING, SCRAPING, DEMOLISHING

<i>ŋani-n-a</i>	slash clear, clear ground
<i>ŋau-ŋ-a</i>	cut grass, clear ground
<i>kaki-n-a, ?a?i-n-a</i>	scratch out, erase, get rid of
<i>ai-n-a</i>	scrape, as with <i>oka</i> shell-knife
<i>kepu-ŋ-a, ?epu-ŋ-a</i>	peel, scrape
<i>mani-n-a</i>	serrate (a shell)
<i>kai-n-a, ?ai-n-a</i>	cut, as with <i>oka</i> shell-knife

The following set probably represents the most telling subclass of verbs within this general domain of meaning. The verbs here all signify or imply the mental selection of a single object from among many. So although no physical exertion is called for, the act of selection itself seems to be sufficient to dictate this choice of thematic consonant and constitutes a *grammatical metaphor* derived from concentrated physical operations.

VERBS OF FOCUSED ATTENTION

<i>ari-ai-n-a</i>	desire, want (Roro loan)
<i>boa-lai-n-a, pea-lai-n-a</i>	follow, target, attain
<i>gabū-ŋ-a, kapu-ŋ-a</i>	look for, seek, hunt
<i>gina-ŋ-a, kina-ŋ-a</i>	choose
<i>gubu-ŋ-a, kupu-ŋ-a</i>	close off, reserve
<i>komo-ia-gai-n-a, ?omo-ia-kai-n-a</i>	single out
<i>iwa-ŋ-a, iva-ŋ-a</i>	call someone, address someone, accuse someone
<i>ma-ŋ-a, maa-ŋ-a</i>	desire, want
<i>ŋaŋai-n-a</i>	stare, gaze at; look for something
<i>ŋoi-n-a</i>	request something, beg for something
<i>paa-ŋ-a, faa-ŋ-a</i>	desire, want
<i>paki-n-a, fa?i-n-a</i>	mark as private property
<i>puŋu-ŋ-a, fuŋu-ŋ-a</i>	desire something urgently

Finally, it should be pointed out that – predictably – when the above verbs occur in causative derivations (e.g. prefixed with *BA-* or a causative pre-verb like *pau-/fau-*, *au-*, *ai-*, *api-/afi-*, etc.) they take the semitransitive OM *-a*. In this they are like the great majority of causativised verbs. Two examples are:

<i>ba-boi-a, pa-poi-a</i>	loosen soil around plant; <i>enable</i> its uprooting
<i>api-pobu-a, afi-fopu-a</i>	make spring up, fall down

Similarly, when the verb is followed by a co-verb in nuclear juncture, the OM is ordinarily a bare *-a*. For example:

<i>biu-au-a, piu-au-a</i>	throw up at
<i>pau-abu-a, fau-apu-a</i>	plug, block an opening, channel

And of course, the atelic suffix *-lei*, *-lai* always takes *-a* (e.g., *-biu-lei-a*, *-piu-lei-a* ‘throw away; *-pobu-lei-a*, *-fopu-lei-a* ‘cause to fall over’; *-pau-lei-a*, *-fau-lei-a* ‘knock something off by inserting something under it’). In the next section I look at root verbs – often very similar in basic meaning – that take TH: *-Ø*

4.3.3.2 SEMITRANSITIVE VERBS

TH: - \emptyset ¹²⁰

These are verbs with either a) a surface-affected object, b) a process-affected object, c) an instrumentally affected object, or d) an autonomous, indirectly affected agentive object. These four semantic subclasses may appear at first glance to be rather ill-assorted. What they share – crucially, for Mekeo grammar – is a judgement that the impact on the object is, for one reason or another, mild. The object's essential nature remains untouched, or unaltered. In each case the object retains its autonomy, remains a wholly separate entity, independent of the subject-agent acting upon it, undergoing only some slight modification to its superficialities (action-effect verbs), or to its direction, its goals (derived causative verbs and some analytic process verbs).

Objects indexed by bare-*a* are always lightly affected (surface-affected) compared with the 'patient-of-change' object described in the last section. These verbs often merely modify the disposition or location of an object, though sometimes causing a qualitative transformation in this object. Typical verbs in this category are

<i>api-a, a<i>f</i>i-a</i>	grab, take, hold
<i>abi-a, a<i>p</i>i-a</i>	dig (hole)
<i>abu-a, a<i>p</i>u-a</i>	close, block
<i>ani-a</i>	eat
<i>inu-a</i>	drink
<i>kapo-a, kafo-a, ?afo-a</i>	throw (something light)

Many verbs with roots/stems ending in *-a* only show the third person singular object marker by way of compensatory length (variably realised), or after the *-I* of perfective aspect, where one has *-a-ia* (EMek *-a-isa*, NMek *-a-iza*). Most of these can be distinguished from verbs which take an underlying TH: *-Ń* by the form of the OM in perfective aspect (which becomes in 3SG either *-a-ia* or *-a-nia*). These should not be confused with zero-O verbs (which have no underlying OM, and no OM in perfective aspect), and they have to be included here:

<i>ŋaŋā(-ia)</i>	heat
<i>gobā(-ia), kopā(-ia)</i>	tie, attach, trap, hang (with a noose)
<i>pobā(-ia), fopā(-i-a)</i>	cook in stones

These three verbs are intracausative verbs of analytic process, that is to say there is an agent case-role inherent in their process dynamic, and it is this agent that assumes the object function when an external causer takes over the subject function.

It is necessary to distinguish agentive objects like the above from surface-affected objects since it is the former, and not the latter, that provide a link with the objects of derived causatives (with *BA-*) which also take bare *-a*. A causee is classed as a comparatively autonomous agent in its own right – syntactically but not semantically demoted – to which

¹²⁰ A more accurate label might be: Verbs of Arrested Transitivity. The process itself is generally semantically more salient or 'in focus' than the object.

(or to whom) the execution of an action/process is delegated by some new and superordinate causer-agent. The Mekeo agentive object (autonomous object, enactive object) corresponds in some ways to Givón's (1984:88) 'dative' (or 'recipient') which is defined as the conscious goal of an action. However, the Mekeo agentive object is always autonomous and self-driven, and not actually conscious or even animate.

A very few verbs appear with *either* TH: -Ø or TH: -N, with a corresponding difference in meaning. *Oŋo-a/oŋo-ŋ-a* (see last section) is one. *Ŋoi* 'beg' is another:

4.290 *E-ŋoi-a e-mai-mai-ei-n-a.* (EMek:D)
 3SG-beg-3SG 3SG-come-RED-RTR-TH-3SG
 She keeps/kept on begging.

4.291 *Kuku e-ŋoi-n-a.* (EMek)
 tobacco 3SG-beg-TH-3SG
 S/he begs/is begging for tobacco.

Note that in the first of these two examples, 4.290, the OM is either empty of reference or refers to some (non-specific?) person from whom the tobacco is begged. In the latter event it can be compared with typically 'ditransitive' verbs (§4.3.3.3).

The following verbs all represent actions and effects mediated by the use of an instrument (i.e. a tool). An effect is indirectly procured. The physical integrity of the object is breached, *either* affecting it only lightly *or* resulting in its entire disintegration.¹²¹ However, it seems to me that the semantic focus is on *the process of guiding the tool* rather than the effect procured.

VERBS OF CHOPPING, CUTTING, SPLITTING, DIVIDING

<i>pola(-i-a), fola(-i-a)</i>	cut lengthwise
<i>pou-a, fou-a</i>	cut across
<i>gobi-a, kopi-a</i>	scrape, peel, plane
<i>aŋa (-i-a)</i>	chop, cut down trees, clear land
<i>iwa(-i-a), iva(-i-a)</i>	cut up (e.g. pigs)
<i>pake(-i-a), vake(-i-a), va?e(-i-a)</i>	cut in slices, pieces ¹²²
<i>ŋeba(-i-a), ŋepa(-i-a)</i>	split
<i>papa(-i-a), fafa(-i-a)</i>	split (wood)
<i>kema(-i-a), ?ema(-i-a)</i>	make a small cut

Verbs ending in *-a*, *-o* and *-u* take *-i-a* in third person singular in perfective aspect but take compensatory length in third person singular in imperfective aspect. For example:

4.292 *Aufo la-fafā.* (EMek)
 firewood 1SG-split
 I split/am splitting the firewood.

¹²¹ Compare Milner (1981).

¹²² Compare Roro *pae* 'cut up'. This calls Mekeo /k/, /ʔ/ into question.

4.3.3.3 TYPICALLY 'DI-TRANSITIVE' VERBS

TH: - \emptyset

Ditransitive verbs occur only in ditransitive predications. By ditransitive predications are meant predications in which a supernumerary non oblique-marked actant appears. By 'supernumerary' is meant 'in addition to those represented by the subject and object functions'.¹²³ Since this third actant is always agentive, and usually also human, such predications contain at least one agentive actant apart from the subject. This third actant is always indexed by the object-marking suffix on the verb, blocking the patient from this function-slot. Such VPs are regarded as trivalent (V3), and the function filled by the new actant indexed by the OM is referred to as the indirect object (IO) function.¹²⁴

When the indirect object refers to a human recipient (as is usually the case) it can be seen as expressing a dative case role. But – more importantly – it can also be identified with the causee of a causative VP. There is in fact only one root ditransitive in Mekeo: *BENI* 'give'. I treat this verb as being strictly equivalent to *BA-API* 'CA-take' in its underlying syntactic structure (and process dynamics). All other ditransitive verbs are overtly causative.

Ditransitive verbs normally take no thematic consonant, resulting in the kind of object role-marker which I called semitransitive in §4.3.3.2. This expresses the essential non-affectedness and the partial autonomy of the indirect object. Some typical ditransitive verbs across the four dialects are:

a)	<i>βini-a</i>	<i>bini-a</i>	<i>bini-a</i>	<i>peni-a</i>	give
b)	<i>βa-api-a</i>	<i>ba-api-a</i>	<i>ba-api-a</i>	<i>pa-afi-a</i>	give
c)	<i>βa-gina(-i-a)</i>	<i>ba-jina(-i-a)</i>	<i>ba-tsina(-i-a)</i>	<i>pa-kina(-i-a)</i>	show
d)	<i>βa-iobi-n-a</i>	<i>ba-loŋo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>ba-loŋo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>pa-loŋo-ŋ-a</i>	inform

Here are some examples of sentences with the above verbs:

- 4.293 *Babie Peto mae e-bini-a.* (NWMek)
 woman Peter betel.nut 3SG-give -3SG
 (The) woman gave Peter betel nut.
- 4.294 *Babie imi abala-tsi igipa alaka e-bini-tsi.* (WMek)
 woman child bad-3PL knowledge one 3SG-give-3PL
 The woman gave the children a hiding (lit. a lesson).
- 4.295 *Kai ipako e-pa-afi-o?* (EMek)
 who sago 3SG-CA-take-2SG
 Who gave you (the) sago?
- 4.296 *Papie imoi ke-pa-afi-a.* (EMek)
 woman child 3PL-CA-take-3SG
 They begot a child on the woman.

¹²³ Clearly, all ditransitive verbs are here being analysed either as derived causative verbs or as lexicalised causatives.

¹²⁴ In positing this function I depart from what is the increasingly common practice, as linguists apply very rigorous criteria to the setting up of syntactic relations other than subject and (direct) object. IO is in many languages found to be internally unjustifiable. See for example Lichtenberk (1983:159-161) on Manam. And see Comrie (1981:60-64).

- 4.297 *Moni tsilā ne-ge-bini-aŋe-n-i-tsi-mo.* (WMek)
 money little FUT-3PL-give-be.free-TH-PF-3PL-just
 They will make them a present of a little money.
- 4.298 *Oai-ŋa, gia po-ba-jina-i-au.* (WMek)
 you-TOP path OBLG.2SG-CA-show-PF-3SG
 You, you should show me the path.
- 4.299 *Kina a-ŋe-paŋai koa aisama fo-pa-loŋo-n-i-au.* (EMek)
 time FUT-3SG-pass like time OBLG.2SG-CA-know-TH-PF-1SG
 If it looks like the time will be up you must let me know.

It is clear from several of the above examples that OM agreement is with the dative/recipient role and not the patient.

Foley and Olson (1985) point out that in some languages ditransitive verbs can take only an indefinite object. If the object is definite, core juncture has to be employed (a form of verb serialisation to be described in §8.1), and the definite argument appears as the direct object of an independent verb. This is not the case in Mekeo, where root di-transitives like *βini*, *bini*, *peni* 'give' take definite *or* indefinite arguments.

The class of ditransitive verb words includes not only derived causatives with *BA-*, but also more complex verbal nuclei (see §6.1 below) such as the following which has *BENI* acting as an adverbial co-verb:

e) *βa-kani-βini-a, ba-kani-bini-a, ba-kani-bini-a, pa-?ani-peni-a* 'ask someone about something'

- 4.300 *Agā a-la-loŋo, Aoŋoa an-a-ba-kani-bini-a.* (WMek)
 name.3SG NEG-1SG-know Aongoa FUT-1SG-CA-touch-give-3SG
 I do not know his/her name, I will ask Aongoa.

That the OM in fact indexes the indirect object (dative/recipient) and not the direct object is demonstrated again in the following two examples:

- 4.301 *Fai la-pa-?ani-peni-o.* (EMek)
 yesterday 1SG-CA-touch-give-2SG
 I asked you yesterday.
- 4.302 *Imi tsina-maa-ŋa e-ba-kani-bini-au.* (NMek)
 child day-face-3SG 3SG-CA-touch-give-1SG
 (The) child asked me the time.

If one wishes to have the theme as the direct object one has to alter the verb stem, replacing *-BINI* with the remote transitive suffix *-AI*.¹²⁵ In that case the verb takes the RTR OM with TH: *-N*:

f) *βa-kani-ai-n-a, ba-kani-ai-n-a, ba-kani-ai-n-a, pa-?ani-ai-n-a* 'ask about'

Here is an example of this verb in use:

- 4.303 *Imi, itsi, tsina-maa-ŋa e-ba-kani-ai-n-a.* (NMek)
 child I day-face-3SG 3SG-CA-touch-RTR-TH-3SG
 (The) child asked me the time.

¹²⁵ Note that this operation may not apply to all ditransitive verbs.

The status of *imi* and *itsi* ‘child’ and ‘I’, as appositional ‘attributes’ of the verb, i.e. wholly ungoverned by it, is clearly shown in this last example with its marked pauses. Note however that *itsi* here could never take oblique case marking, it is still a ‘core argument’ of the verb, bound to it as securely as either the subject or the direct object (*tsina-maa-ŋa*). Direct objects generally take TH: *-ŋ* while indirect objects take TH: *∅*. Indirect object is thus a syntactic relation in Mekeo, as such are defined in a head-final head-marking language. It is (within the limits of the system) morphologically recognised. But it is specifically a product of the intersection of the two systems of causativity and transitivity, in the form of a derivation or juncture¹²⁶ which causativises a transitive action-effect verb (rather than a process verb) and thereby increases the valency of the resulting predicate.

A last example formed from *mia* ‘be, become’ is:

g) *ba-mia(-i-a)*, *ba-mia(-i-a)*, *pa-mia(-i-a)* ‘make someone out to be something’

4.304 *Bifoŋe e-ba-mia-i-au.* (NMek)

liar 3SG-CA-become-PF-1SG

S/he made me out a liar.

4.3.3.4 VERBS OF DEFT/PERFUNCTORY EXECUTION (SURFACE AFFECT)

TH: *-B*

The object-marking suffixes of these verbs decompose into the thematic consonant *-B* [β/b/p] and the person and number indexing object marker. These suffixes have the third person singular perfective forms *-β-i-a*, *-b-i-a*, *-p-i-a*. The third person singular imperfective form is strikingly similar, in form and function, to the Tolai “effective particle” described by Mosel (1984:131-132).¹²⁷ In Mekeo it describes deft, sometimes unpremeditated and frequently perfunctory actions, as well as sudden events.¹²⁸ The object of the verb is also in some way deprecated or ‘belittled’ by the careless speed of the action – it is as if one were saying that the getting of something was easy, or the elimination of something (repugnant?) was swift. For example:

4.305 *Oala alō lo-nio-p-a.* (EMek)

pipe inside.3SG 2SG-insert-TH-3SG

You (deftly) scrape out the (bamboo) pipe.

(*Nio* is actually ‘insert’, but *nio-p-a* means ‘scrape out, clean out the inside of something’.)

4.306 *Iji goŋa a-ogo-b-i-a.* (WMek)

I coconut(s) 1SG-husk-TH-PF-3SG

I husked coconuts.

An semantically disparate example of a derived causative verb with *-B* (reproduced from above) is the following:

¹²⁶ Juncture is a key concept and is discussed at length in Chapters 6 and 8 below.

¹²⁷ There is some slight irregularity in the sound correspondences. One would expect Tolai *v* in initial position, corresponding to the POC lenis **p* (but Tolai has *-p* in *final* position). If this similarity does represent cognation one would of course be justified in reconstructing final **-pa* for Proto Oceanic.

¹²⁸ In Tolai “the basic function of *pa* is to indicate that the action denoted by the verb leads up to a terminal point, which implies that it is of short duration and that its end is known” (Mosel 1984:131). This may be a case of shared sound-symbolism rather than cognation, a concept that is rapidly gaining respectability (see Blust 1988; Nothofer 1990).

- 4.307 *Otsi vei la-pa-inu-p-a.* (EMek)
 horse water 1SG-CA-drink-TH-3SG
 I water the horse. (lit. I cause the horse to drink water.)

Those verbs that take TH: *B* are listed below according to the semantic sets into which they seem, intuitively, to fall.

APPROPRIATE SOMETHING WITH LITTLE EFFORT

<i>ako-p-a</i>	draw (water), scoop out (earth)
<i>uŋe-p-a</i>	get, obtain
<i>uke-p-a</i>	accept
<i>?u-p-a,</i>	suck at/on
<i>?u?u-p-a</i>	suck repeatedly at/on
<i>koe-p-a</i>	collect, gather
<i>ŋaŋo-p-a</i>	collect, accumulate
<i>ino-p-a</i>	fish (a river)
<i>koyo-p-a</i>	swallow off, immerse, submerge (TR)
<i>inu-p-a</i>	drink off

ELIMINATE UNWANTED MATERIAL

<i>kalo-p-a</i>	sweep up
<i>nio-p-a</i>	scrape out
<i>ŋau-p-a</i>	pour out
<i>iki-p-a</i>	pinch, nip; pick off, peel away
<i>oko-p-a</i>	husk (coconuts), splinter (wood)
<i>kaŋo-p-a</i>	shave, pluck hairs out (with fibre)
<i>uŋa-au-p-a</i>	throw up, vomit over?
<i>uŋa-p-a</i>	vomit something up

UNCLASSIFIED VERBS

<i>lee-p-a</i>	divide up (?)
<i>le-p-a</i>	slice up
<i>kaŋe-p-a</i>	level off
<i>?io-p-a</i>	jab into (a hole, opening), insert
<i>ni?i-p-a</i>	tap on
<i>ŋoa-p-a</i>	embrace/kiss (impulsively?)
<i>ŋoŋo-p-a</i>	dry (meat, by smoking it – no effort called for)
<i>u?u-p-a</i>	hoist onto back (or shoulder); shoulder something smartly
<i>ŋoa-p-a</i>	contradict, shut someone up (smartly?)
<i>ŋoo-p-a</i>	nurture, give food to, feed up

TWO VERBS WITH NON-HUMAN AGENTS

<i>uu-p-a</i>	submerge, cover (sudden flood)
<i>uŋu-p-a</i>	disgust someone, cause sudden nausea

Note the following causativised verb words:

<i>ŋaŋo-p-a</i>	collect, accumulate
<i>pa-ŋaŋo-p-a</i>	make accumulate
<i>inu-a</i>	drink
<i>pa-inu-p-a</i>	make drink

Compare the following nominal expressions:

<i>ma-aŋe-pa</i>	abandoned, alone
<i>i-aŋe-pa</i>	orphan

4.3.3.5 VERBS OF DECISIVE EXECUTION (DISPERSIVE EFFECT)

TH: -G

This thematic consonant seems to be rather more productive than /B/ above, and contrasts in an instructive fashion with the even more productive transitive suffix *-lei-a*, *-lai-a* (see §5.1.2 below).

The third person singular object marker formed with /G/, i.e. *-g-a* or *-k-a*, corresponds to the shortened, assimilatory form of *oga*, *oka* ‘disperse, scatter, wreck, destroy’, and *uga*, *uka* ‘go in, put in, put on’, when these occur (as they frequently do) as the final verbs in a complex verb word (see examples in §6.1.6 and §6.1.11 below). Perhaps by reason of this homophony – and especially under the influence of *-oka* (> *-ka*) – verbs with the thematic consonant /G/ are felt to signify moderately violent actions, possibly involving wild or reckless movements on the part of the agent. The object of these verbs is usually either a) driven away or scattered (i.e. ultimately ‘lost’), or b) energetically (when not violently) ‘reworked’. Verbs in /G/ contrast finely with verbs in *-lei-a*, *-lai-a* (for which see §5.1.2).

The following EMek verbs have been intuitively and provisionally subcategorised:

VERBS OF KNEADING/TWISTING/THRASHING

<i>poŋo-k-a</i>	squeeze by pummelling/pounding/pressing
<i>pepe-k-a</i>	squeeze in hand
<i>fio-k-a</i>	twist
<i>au-po-ŋa-k-a</i>	crack someone over the head
<i>ŋapu-k-a</i>	whip, thrash, flail (idiomatically: ‘whip something up, scoop something up’)

VERBS OF UNDOING/DETACHING/SCATTERING

<i>ŋupu-k-a</i>	untie
<i>pupu-k-a</i>	scrape the grain off a cob of corn
<i>ŋeŋe-k-a</i>	separate in strips; trim edge
<i>pa-pue-k-a</i>	pick scab off sore
<i>pugo-k-a</i>	flush out game with hullabaloo
<i>?u-k-a</i>	suck out(?)

Contrast the following serial verbs with *-oka*, *-uka* with the above. Note that in PF aspect these end in *-ka-i-s-a* (not *-k-i-a*).

<i>ŋapu-oka</i>	dust off
<i>?afo-ka (-oka)</i>	throw away, scatter
<i>piau-ka (-oka)</i>	run off (thoughtlessly, recklessly?)
<i>fopu-ka (-uka)</i>	pour into
<i>fau-ka (-uka)</i>	implant into

The verb *ŋapu-oka* ‘dust off’ contrasts nicely with *ŋapu-ka* ‘whip, thrash, flail’, above, and demonstrates that all (EMek) verbs in *-ka* are not to be interpreted as derivatives with *-oka*.

Note that ‘adjectives’ in *-ga*, *-ka* seem to connote wildness or roughness, impropriety and, on the part of the speaker, repugnance :

<i>pui-ka</i>	hairy, bristly
<i>ini-ka</i>	thorny
<i>vei-ka</i>	wet
<i>fapu-ka</i>	having a weak spot, having a gap ¹²⁹
<i>ŋapu-ka</i>	clumsy, stupid (See the verb <i>ŋapu-ka</i> above. The idea here seems to be ‘wildly threshing’)

4.3.3.6 ZERO-O MARKING

Semantically transitive verbs frequently occur in transitive sentences without an object marking suffix. This means that there is no formal expression of transitivity (and certainly no cross-referencing with the topic nominal that can be discourse-pragmatically identified as direct object of the verb). This construction has to be carefully distinguished from suprasegmental marking where compensatory length indexes third person singular:

4.308	<i>Pieni fo-fo?a-ŋa mo-keā!</i>	(EMek)
	bamboo RD-knot-3SG IMP.2SG-adze.3SG	
	Adze the knots off the bamboo!	

Marking by lengthening the final vowel is in fact often absent in ordinary unmonitored speech, or is so weak as to be imperceptible. An example of a Zero-O verb stem where no trace of lengthening ever appears is *βa-aβa*, *ba-aba*, *pa-apa* ‘build’ (lit. ‘make stand’) as in the following:

4.309	<i>Ipau an-a-aŋa eka an-a-ba-aba.</i>	(WMek)
	post FUT-1SG-chop house FUT-1SG-CA-stand	
	I will cut a long post and build a house.	

The imperfective third person singular transitive marking of *aŋa* ‘chop’, for example, is *aŋā*. However, the semi-grammaticalised causative verb *ba-aba*, *pa-apa*¹³⁰ ‘build’ never takes compensatory length (***pa-apā*).¹³¹ The perfective third person singular transitive

¹²⁹ This word is also used to refer to the mound of soft earth around a fallen tree.

¹³⁰ This verb is written and spoken as if it were *baba*, *papa*. Native speakers do not normally analyse it, but informants have confirmed my break-down.

¹³¹ It may be that vowel assimilation across morpheme boundaries (especially perhaps where *a + a > a*) inhibits the appearance of compensatory length on the final syllable.

marking of *aŋa* ‘chop’ is *aŋa-i-a* in WMek (EMek *aŋa-i-s-a*) while *ba-aba*, *pa-apa* ‘build’ has no perfective object marker at all (Zero-O):

- 4.310 *Eka a-ba-aba a-ida.* (WMek)
 house 1SG-CA-stand 1SG-see
 I see (that) I have built a house.

Future tense and the causative derivation of the second verb (inherently an intransitive motion/posture verb) in example 4.309 above go some way towards explaining the absence of any OM, perfective or imperfective, in the above example. Some very general rules can be formulated:

- Derived causative verbs (with *BA-*) do take an OM when derived from intracausative and intradirective verbs, but not when derived from inherently intransitive verbs of integral process (as here).
- Transitive verbs in the future tense *can* take an OM indicating perfective aspect, but it is comparatively rare for them to do so.
- Fully reduplicated verbs of habitual-repetitive action-effect can take an OM, and they frequently do so.
- Verbs in the obligative mood almost never take an OM. Imperative verbs rarely¹³² take an OM.

The following examples illustrate d):

- 4.311 *Aŋoa pa-gabu-gabu!* (WMek)
 land OBLG.1SG-pluck-RED
 I should clear the land!
- 4.312 *Tsitsi mo-afi-kai-nini!* (EMek)
 meat IMP.2SG-take-clean-slip
 Clean the meat!
- 4.313 *Apu mo-kefa!*¹³³ (EMek)
 lime IMP.2SG-chew
 Suck (the) lime!

Zero-O marking is confined to the third person singular. It sometimes signifies that an O is non-definite and non-specific:

- 4.314 *?o?ou, aŋe, lama ke-oŋo.* (EMek)
 taro taro.sp. yams 3PL-gather
 They gather/are gathering taro, Chinese taro and yams.

Zero-O also appears, predictably perhaps, in ‘tenseless’ predications:

- 4.315 *Ŋaŋoi o-kea aisama...* (EMek)
 new.garden 2PL-cut time
 Whenever you clear a new garden...

¹³² The fact that they sometimes do seems more in need of explanation.

¹³³ It is quite easy to hear that there is no compensatory stress on the final *-a*, as in *mo-kefā!* (which can occasionally be heard). The root *-gepa*, *-kefa* actually means ‘allow to dissolve by mixing with saliva behind the lower lip’.

Even more predictably perhaps, verbs with cognate objects sometimes – but not always¹³⁴ – dispense with an OM:

4.316 *Kukui gabu-gabu-ŋa ga-gabu.* (WMek)
 wild.yam seek-RED-3SG 1PL-seek
 We are looking for wild yams.

4.317 *Iva-ŋome paia maa-mi-ai*¹³⁵ *la-iva.* (EMek)
 speak-source sheer face-2PL-OBL 1SG-speak
 I simply speak the truth to your face.

BUT:

4.318 *Iva-aŋa la-iva-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 speak-touch 1SG-speak-TH-PF-3SG
 I told the truth.

Whatever its motivation may be, Zero-O marking frequently results in ambiguity, particularly with regard to the syntactic relations/bonds that pertain between cataphoric nouns and the verbal head in a given predication. Compare the following two examples (both from Desnoës; *nio* is ‘noose’ and ‘snare’):

<-?

4.319 *(Isa) inei nio-ai e-kopa-∅.* (EMek)
 s/he bird snare-OBL 3SG-tie-∅
 He took a bird in (his) snare.

4.320 *Papie nio-ai e-kopa.* (EMek)
 woman noose-OBL 3SG-tie
 A/the woman hung herself with a noose.

In example 4.319 not only is there no OM to signal V2 but the actual subject *isa* does not appear in surface structure, so at first glance (or on first hearing) one cannot say whether the SM of the verb refers to *inei* or, as here, to a deleted nominal representing the actor. The evidence of 4.320 confirms that a reading whereby the bird snared itself would be quite acceptable. In any case, one would expect *e-kopa-i-s-a* in 4.319 since the sense is clearly perfective (and *e-kopa-i-s-a* is attested elsewhere). The indefiniteness of the O (‘a bird, some bird’) may negate the perfectivity of the process being described and precludes here not merely the PF marker *-i* but also the third person singular OM *-a*, which together signal definiteness.

Now, in Fijian, the absence of object-marking suffixes is taken to signal noun incorporation (see for instance Milner 1972:26-27). Hopper and Thompson (1984:711) note that in noun incorporation the N “invariably loses the ability to take determiners”. Pawley

¹³⁴ Cognate objects are often regarded as ‘empty’, and redundant, objects. Lichtenberk in any case notes that they are low on the scale of ‘individuation’ (1982:273). In Manam they are not cross-indexed on the verb.

¹³⁵ The expression ‘to the face of...’ or ‘before the face of...’ is idiomatic and here redundant. In other situations it can mean ‘openly’ or ‘blatantly’ or ‘accusingly’.

(1977) has pointed out that the role-marking affixes in Oceanic languages function as determiners. Hence it seems possible to label this phenomenon ('Zero-O') an incipient form of noun incorporation. Mithun (1984:872-873) discusses a very similar situation in Turkish, in connection with "the spontaneous appearance of NI". One of the main functions of Type I incorporation is, according to Mithun (1984:872-873), "to background objects to qualifying status".¹³⁶ This seemingly fits the Mekeo case – nouns that do not represent ongoing 'topics' or 'props' of the discourse are morphosyntactically demoted – and we can perhaps recognise here the beginnings of noun incorporation. But, in a language where nouns have in any case low categoriality, this process can never be as important as in a dependent-marked language where nominal arguments *are* marked for such factors as definiteness. What does appear to happen is the full incorporation or *lexicalisation* of actants/circumstants to create semantically complex root verbs:

- 4.321 *La-kefa, ava?a o-peni-au ma-ani-a!* (EMek)
 1SG-suck.lime betel.pepper 2PL-give-1SG IMP.1SG-eat-3SG
 I have sucked (lime), give me betel pepper to chew!

A more critical question here is the status of the syntactic bonds that are held to unite nominal functions and their governing role markers on the verb.¹³⁷ We have, again, a situation where no principled decision can be made by the hearer as to the identity of the referents that fulfill the verbal functions. The syntactic bonds cannot be 'discovered'. For example, in this next example, where is the subject?

- 4.322 *Inei pani-na e-?afo.* (EMek)
 bird wing-3SG 3SG-shake
 The bird shakes/shook its wing. OR: The bird's wing shakes/shook.

Since *kapo*, *kafo*, *?afo* 'fling, shake, swing' is a self-enactive verb, and can here be transitive (with Zero-O)¹³⁸ or intransitive, it is impossible to say whether one of the two nominal arguments in this sentence is the subject-of-the-verb and the other the object-of-the-verb or whether [*inei pani-na*] is an embedded predicate that functions altogether as the subject. There is nothing in the sentence to help one decide whether *pani-na* (a determinate noun, incidentally) is meant as a backgrounded object or (as the head of [*inei pani-na*]) as a foregrounded agentive subject.¹³⁹

4.3.3.7 EMPTY O ~ REFLEXIVE O

A dummy object marker is not an unusual feature in Oceanic languages. It is not, however, a phenomenon that has been granted much theoretical attention by linguists.¹⁴⁰ In this section, I shall look at the occurrence and distribution of such OMs in Mekeo and

¹³⁶ Mithun (1984:859) notes importantly that this process does not necessarily imply that such nouns are indefinite or non-specific, only that they are *unmarked* for such things.

¹³⁷ I have followed Nichols (1986:57) in assuming that abstract syntactic relations do exist in head-marked languages, linking nominal dependents to their head (a *unilateral* relation).

¹³⁸ This verb regularly takes the 'non-patientive' type OM: *-a*, imperfective. *-i-a*, perfective.

¹³⁹ Grammatical ambiguity of this kind has traditionally been resolved by having recourse to deep structure (Lyons 1977:402-403).

¹⁴⁰ Supernumerary dative objects have received attention in work on Australian languages. And Simpson (1991:414-417) finds it necessary to postulate a "pleonastic external object" as a verbal function in the grammatical representation of the Warlpiri conative. She compares this to the English 'it' in expressions like *car* it and *bike* it (which often seems to have a propositional rather than a concrete referent).

investigate their significance. I shall in particular examine the possibility of explaining them as reflexive Os.

A clear example of an apparently superfluous OM is contained in the following sentence fragment, where it is carried by the intransitive verb of motion : *kani* ‘flee’.

- 4.323 *Aia-vai o-kani-n-i-a.* (EMek:D)
 1PL-go.to.you 2PL-flee-TH-PF-3SG
 We approached you (and) you fled.

The empty O also appears in set expressions such as *e-gai-n-a*, *e-kai-n-a* ‘be all right, be adequate, suffice’ where the OM is thoroughly fossilised:

- 4.324 *Aia-lao-mai a-ida a-ne-gai-n-a.* (WMek)
 POSS.1SG-go-come 1SG-see FUT-3SG-suffice-TH-3SG
 When I see/consider my way-of-life, it is adequate. (OR: it will do.)

Then again an empty O occurs as a fossilised affix in certain verbs, such as ‘think’:

- 4.325 *Ai-d-a-obolaŋa.*¹⁴¹ (WMek)
 NEG-B-1SG-think.TH.3SG
 I don’t (know what to) think.

I can perhaps put this usage into perspective by comparing it with some examples of reflexively marked verbs, that is verb words where the OM is indisputably coreferential with the SM:

- 4.326 *Au, ida epō, i-aŋa-i-a.* (WMek)
 man he/him self.3SG 3SG-cut-PF-3SG
 The man cut himself. (lit. The man, he himself, he cut him.)
- 4.327 *Papie ke-kiki-ʔi.*¹⁴² (EMek)
 woman 3PL-clean-3PL
 The women cleansed themselves.

Example 4.326 above is extremely explicit – in a situation where the pragmatic context tended to disambiguate reference a speaker would simply say:

- 4.328 *Au, i-aŋa-i-a.* (EMek)
 man 3SG-cut-PF-3SG
 The man, he cut him.

I should reiterate at this point that the phenomenon of empty Os is confined to third person singular OMs. And in this connection, while the last example is ambiguous as it stands (in that third person singular can usually refer to a number of things in any given situation and may have a propositional referent – see footnote 139) a first or second person object would not be ambiguous at all, and a third person plural OM would be less ambiguous than a third person singular one. It is perhaps the ambiguity of typical third person singular OMs that has encouraged their being seen as emphatic transitivity markers.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ This stem may in fact contain a double layer of fossilised third person singular OMs: *OBO* + *-la* + *-ŋa* (where *ŋ* represents an infrequently occurring variant of *ŋʌ*).

¹⁴² The word *kiki* (also *kikia*) has ritual implications (and may be derived from *kia* ‘dry’).

¹⁴³ In §6.1.8 below I examine the grammaticalisation of the third person singular OM as an adverbial suffix of manner.

In this next example, it is hard to tell which OMs are reflexive and which are empty:

- 4.329 *O-fafa-i-a, o-eʔa-i-mi, aufa pa-apa o-apa,* (EMek:D)
 2PL-split-PF-3SG 2PL-share-PF-2PL each CA-stand 2PL-stand
a-ke-au-apala-n-i-mi
 FUT-3PL-hit-bad-TH-PF-2PL
 (If) you split up, (if) you distribute yourselves, each one standing in
 his (own) place, they will beat you badly.

In example 4.329 the second verb, *eka, eʔa* ‘share, distribute, divide’ is clearly reflexive. However, what about *fafa* ‘split’? One might want to read this OM as ‘standing in for’ either a) the group of people, seen as a third person singular entity, or b) the second person plural referent of the regularly marked OM *-mi*. On the other hand, the OM may represent a pleonastic external object.¹⁴⁴

The next two examples are based on the intracausative verb of analytic process: *ŋeba, ŋepa* ‘split’. The first example illustrates a transitive use with a real object, the second the same verb with an empty O:

- 4.330 *Koŋa mo-ŋepā.* (EMek)
 coconut IMP.2SG-split.3SG
 Split the coconut.
- 4.331 *Kulua aoi-na e-ŋepa-i-a.* (EMek)
 frog egg-3SG 3SG-split-PF-3SG
 The frog’s eggs hatched.

In example 4.331 above, a reflexive meaning for the third person singular OM seems possible: ‘The eggs hatched themselves’. The third person singular SM expresses common number.¹⁴⁵

Other comparable examples, from diverse (EMek) sources, are:

- 4.332 *Inapa e-kupu-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 design 3SG-close-TH-PF-3SG
 (The) design ‘formed’ (or ‘closed itself’).
- 4.333 *ʔufa e-pa-umu-a.* (EMek)
 sky 3SG-CA-charcoal-3SG
 (The) sky darkened (it/itself).
- 4.334 *Keaŋa e-fopu-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 path 3SG-collapse-TH-PF-3SG
 (The) path (has become) blocked/has ‘fallen in on itself’.
- 4.335 *Lo-pua-faeva-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 2SG-bear-crooked-TH-PF-3SG
 You are walking (have walked) crookedly.

¹⁴⁴ Compare Simpson (1991) on pleonastic objects in Warlpiri.

¹⁴⁵ Jespersen (as pointed out by Haiman 1985:144-145; and see Jespersen 1949:330) deals with a similar construction in English, and notes how seemingly gratuitous reflexives impart a nuance of volition to inanimate agents. Thus ‘the eggs hatched themselves’ compares with ‘the rope snagged itself’.

- 4.336 *Auni-ʔa a-pa-ʔe-a.* (EMek)
 pair-1PLI 1PL-CA-lie.on.side-3SG
 We laid ourselves on our sides.

It is possibly worth reiterating here that educated English-speaking Mekeo explain the difference between the two verb forms *e-kapa* (3SG-do/make) and *e-kapa-i-s-a* (3SG-do/make-PF-B-3SG) as between present (tense~time) and past (tense~time). Yet the *-a* clearly has its place in the paradigm of the person-marking suffixes (§4.1.2 above).¹⁴⁶

An example of an empty subject occurs in the following:

- 4.337 *Papiau maʔo ke-kou-e e-ʔumina.* (EMek)
 people much 3PL-mass-CNT 3SG-darkness
 The people were massing, it became dark (with people).

The SM of *ʔumina* has no referent in the scene described (I do not believe that it cross-refers to *papiau* ‘people’). There is a small number of impersonal verbs similar to this one: *E-ŋani* ‘It became day’ (or ‘day broke’); *E-ŋapi-ŋapi* ‘It became afternoon/evening’. It is possible that the subject is exophoric: *kina* ‘sun, day’.

The following interchange shows how a pragmatic theme can be conserved across turns. Tobacco, which was mentioned only as the dependent in a relational construction in the first turn, but which is a central preoccupation of the interlocutors, provides the relevant denotation for the two OMs in the third turn:

4.338

- A: *Sikis kina ke-peni-mai – kuku moni-na!* (EMek)
 six kina 3PL-give-1PL tobacco money-3SG
 They gave us six kina – tobacco money!
- B: *Three kina one hour, ke two hours, a sikis kina.*
- A: *Ŋapi-ŋapi mo aŋa’o-mo aŋa’o-mo a-ava-i-s-a a-ani-a.*
 night-RED just one-just one-just 1PL-buy-PF-B-3SG 1PL-eat-3SG
 In the evening one by one we bought it and smoked it.

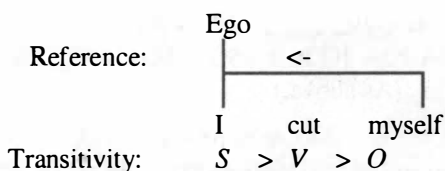
There is no rule whereby the OMs of *a-ava-i-s-a* and *a-ani-a* *must* refer to *kuku*. Only pragmatically – by invoking the implicatures of the scene – does one settle on *kuku* as the only sensible candidate for the object role.¹⁴⁷

4.3.3.8 ‘REFLEXIVE’ VERBS WITH *IPO*

The problem with *IPO* in a head-marking language is that it cannot be readily ascertained whether it is ‘in apposition to’ the subject or the object of a reflexive verb, or to neither, or both. A ‘reflexive pronoun’, as such, usually represents the object function (or relation) of a verb, and *refers back* (anaphorically) to the subject of the predication, with which it is pragmatically coreferential:

¹⁴⁶ See §4.2.1 above for a possible solution. At the same time it should be pointed out that empty OMs occur as part of an adverbial suffix to be discussed in §6.1.8 below.

¹⁴⁷ This provides us with an excellent example of how a stereotypical *scene* functions to provide the hearer with candidates for case roles. It is possible that the looseness of cohesion illustrated here provides models for completely non-referential OMs (see §4.3.3.7).



However, if the verb is intransitive, it will be *in apposition to* a subject nominal, to which it again refers back: 'I myself went'. In Mekeo, while pragmatic coreference is not in doubt, the grammatical 'function' and the axis of relation *is*.

The above considerations render the term 'reflexive pronoun' of dubious value. Lichtenberk (1983:306-310), finding a very similar situation in Manam, opted for the term "emphatic pronominal forms".¹⁴⁸ This solution works well enough so long as the verb is intransitive:

4.339 *Iu ipo-u a-io.* (NWMek)
 I self.1SG 1SG-go
 I myself went. OR: I went alone.

4.340 *Ifō e-opo.* (EMek)
 self.3SG 3SG-break
 It broke by itself.

Here there is only one grammatical function/relation which *IPO*, at times redundantly, signals. However, as soon as we take a transitive verb, and a traditionally 'reflexive' *use* of such a verb, it is by no means clear with which syntactic function/relation the reflexive pronoun in fact 'agrees':

4.341 *Lau ifo-u la-aŋa-aŋe-n-i-au-mo.* (EMek)
 I self-1SG 1SG-cut-vain-TH-PF-1SG-just
 I cut me (myself) OR: I (myself) cut me.

Although *ifo-u* is here in the position of an unmarked object nominal, and *lau* in the position of an unmarked subject, neither by its form alone signals that function (*lau* can be subject or object), and word order is not a good guide in cases of doubt. It is clear that these two nominals *lau* and *ifo-u* are here in an appositive relationship, not only with both the subject marker and the object marker on the verb, but with each other. They in themselves represent neither the subject function *nor* the object function of the verb (the role markers do that), they simply, and indeed doubly, restrict its reference. And the pragmatic referent of the subject and object role markers is one and the same. The role markers are thus *both* coreferential with *lau*, which represents the predication topic, not a grammatical relation. This topic pronoun is then qualified by the limiting (rather than reflexive) pronoun *ifo-u*, functioning as a restated topic. The sentence is best rendered: 'I, *only me*, I cut me'.

Elicited equivalents of the above sentence in other dialects can employ somewhat different strategies:

4.342 *Iji epo-u ai-d-a-ba-ŋome-au a-aŋa-i-au.* (WMek)
 I self-1SG NEG-B-1SG-CA-base-1SG 1SG-cut-PF-1S
 I cut myself without meaning to. (lit. I, myself, I did not intend me,
 I cut me.)

¹⁴⁸ Lichtenberk actually glosses Manam *rube-* as 'alone, by X's self'.

- 4.343 *Itsi ifo-u ai-z-a-pa-ŋome-ai-z-au a-aŋa-i-au.* (NMek)
 I self-1SG NEG-B-1SG-CA-base-RTR-B-1SG 1SG-cut-PF-1SG
 I cut myself without meaning to. (As above.)

The preoccupation with limiting the reference of the topic nominal is evident, in the context of a marked circumstance. The added meaning of unintentionality is no doubt an attempt to make the proposition plausible.

In other examples, with transitive but semantically *non-reflexive* verbs, the appositive or non-syntactically bound nature of the emphatic pronoun is clearly seen:

- 4.344 *Ifo-mu ipeli lo-faa-n-i-a.*¹⁴⁹ (EMek)
 self-2SG hell 2SG-choose-TH-PF-3SG
 You – and you alone – have chosen hell.
- 4.345 *Iji epo-u a-api-a-mai.* (WMek)
 I self-1SG 1SG-take-3SG-come
 I *alone* have brought it (here).

As in Manam, the limiting pronoun is frequently further limited by the addition of the particle *-mo* ‘just, only’, when it can be translated as ‘on...’s own’:

- 4.346 *Isa ?ifo-ŋa-mo e-mai.* (EMek)
 s/he self-3SG-just 3SG-come
 S/he came on his/her own.
- 4.347 *Oi efo-ma-mo mo-mai* (NMek)
 you self-2SG-just IMP.2SG-come
 You come on your own.

A properly adverbial use of *IPO* is in

- 4.348 *Ama-aŋu-?ifo.* (EMek)
 IMP.1PL-sit-alone
 Let us sit alone.

Finally, here are some examples where *IPO* appears as a verb (intransitive and transitive):

- 4.349 *Lopia e-?ifo, aŋoa, kapa, ?ifo e-?ifo-lei-n-a.* (EMek:D)
 chief 3SG-self earth thing self 3SG-own-RTR-TH-3SG
 (The) chief is unique/rare, on his own he owns everything on earth.
- 4.350 *Oi-mo keŋa-pa-?ifo-i-o.* (EMek:D)
 you-just IMP.3PL-CA-own-PF-2SG
 They should consider you alone (as chief).
- 4.351 *Gabai ma-ba-boa-epo-i-o?* (WMek)
 where OBLG.1SG-CA-walk-self-PF-2SG
 Where can I walk you alone?

¹⁴⁹ Note that the glottal stop appears only inconsistently on EMek (*?ifo*). It is indeed historically unmotivated judging by the other dialects.

4.3.3.9 VERBS WITH DOUBLED OBJECT FUNCTION

There are a number of verbs that have two pragmatic candidates (two actants pragmatically implicated in the scene) competing on an equal footing for the O function. Such verbs are often accompanied by nominal topics representing both actants. The verb itself in such predications bears an OM marked for singular number. Examples are

- 4.352 *Kopi tsuka mo-uu-ai-pini-a.* (EMek)
 coffee sugar IMP.2SG-flood-twirl-twist-3SG
 Mix some sugar into the coffee.
- 4.353 *Koŋa eŋefa mo-uu-ai-pini-a.* (EMek)
 coconut red.ochre IMP.2SG-flood-twirl-twist-3SG
 Mix the coconut (oil) with the red ochre.
- 4.354 *Koŋa eŋefa mo-la[?]a-[?]eva-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 coconut red.ochre IMP.2SG-draw-pour-TH-PF-3SG
 Pour coconut (oil) over the red ochre.

A more everyday example is:

- 4.355 *Ma-ake, laapa vei afā* (EMek)
 IMP.1SG-go.down rubber(basin) water some.3SG
ma-pa-lolo.
 IMP.1SG-CA-flow
 I must go down and pour some water into the basin.

One could here choose a different verb stem (a complex verbal nucleus), and use an oblique nominal, instead of doubling the object functions. The following very nearly paraphrases examples 4.355 above:

- 4.356 *Ma-ake laapa-ai vei afā* (EMek)
 IMP.1SG-go.down rubber(basin)-OBL water some.3SG
ma-pa-[?]eva-uka.
 IMP.1SG-CA-pour-enter.
 I must go down and pour some water into the basin.

Desnoës gives the following simile containing doubled objects:

- 4.357 *Ei-ei faaŋa-mu a-ke-pa-kia-n-i-a* (EMek:D)
 mosquito skin/body-2SG FUT-3PL-CA-sprinkle-TH-PF-3SG¹⁵⁰
koa.
 like
 It is as if they had sprinkled your skin/body with mosquitoes.

This contrasts with the following, where an oblique nominal encodes one of the two potential objects – the medium:

- 4.358 *Laitsi koŋa-ai mo-pa-kia.* (EMek)
 rice coconut-OBL IMP.2SG-CA-be.sprinkled
 Sprinkle the rice with (grated) coconut.

¹⁵⁰ The future-perfective is used to express an impossible condition in the past.

Doubled O, with two separately referential objects, is not a common phenomenon across texts, and it occurs with a semantically predictable range of verbs.¹⁵¹ However, it ranks as important evidence for my analysis of the verb as having incorporated arguments/functions. Jelinek (1984:50) predicted that, in pronominal argument languages like Warlpiri, discontinuous constituents would be allowed: "Since nominals are not arguments or bi-uniquely related to arguments, more than one nominal may be adjoined to a single argument". This statement could be taken to sanction multiple topics bound to the same function, as described in this section.

I exclude rankshifted nominal predications from this section, although on my analysis these would consist of two distinct nominal arguments, the topic and the predicate, with separate referents. However, these too support the case that Jelinek (1984) made for pronominal argument languages. Discontinuous topics similar to those used in the Warlpiri argumentation (e.g. by Hale 1983) can be illustrated as follows:

- 4.359 *Nae-tsi, ini-tsi, au-ai ge-ŋobo-lei-a au-tsi,* (WMek)
 that-3PL bird-3PL tree-OBL 3PL-fly-AT-3SG one-3PL
a-biji-n-i-tsi.
 1SG-shoot-TH-PF-3PL
 Those, the birds, the ones that flew out of the tree, I shot (at?) them.¹⁵²

4.3.4 SUBJECT SELECTION VERBS

A small subset of verbs are formally intransitive but describe transitive events and can encode either their agents or patients as subjects.¹⁵³ In this description these are called *true* subject selection verbs.

A canonical example of a true subject selection verb is *mauni* (all dialects):

- 4.360 *e-mauni* she gives birth :: *e-mauni* s/he is born

There is no principled way in which to decide which meaning of *mauni* is more basic. Two unelicited examples follow:

- 4.361 *Bai ŋa-mauni e-ma aidama...* (WMek)
 now IMP.3SG-bear 3SG-DNT time
 Now when she was ready to give birth...
 (lit. When she wanted to give birth...)
- 4.362 *Itsi a-mauni auŋa, ifo-u-mo ma a-mauni,* (NMek)
 I 1SG-bear TOP self-1SG-just INT 1SG-bear

¹⁵¹ For example, verbs of mixing, filling, cleaning, throwing, and putting or placing are predictable in this construction.

¹⁵² This reading depends entirely upon the placement of the pauses (indicated by the commas). With different pause placement one could have: 'Those birds, they flew out of the tree, (the/those) ones, I shot them.' Compare examples 8.130 and 8.131 below.

¹⁵³ A similar class has been recognised for Ponapean, where such verbs are called 'neutral' (the other two verb classes are called 'active' and 'resultative'). See Jacobs (1976:119). A class of 'labile' verbs was recognised in languages such as Lezgian, though Melcuk (1988) questions that analysis.

o papiau autsina ma ga-mauni?
 or person two INT 1PL-bear
 When I was born, was I born on my own or was I born together
 with someone else? (lit. ...were we born two people?)

There are not a great many true subject selection verbs, and lack of data does not always allow them to be identified clearly. Other verbs that definitely function in this manner are:

maniki, mani?i be afraid, be fearsome
paga, faka spill (of liquid), leak (of vessel)

Maniki, mani?i is illustrated above in §4.3.2.7 (example 4.268). Two more examples follow here:

4.363 *Imoi e-mani?i e-pia-piau e-fiakoa.* (EMek)
 child 3SG-fear 3SG-RD-run 3SG-hurry
 The child was afraid and ran off in a hurry.

4.364 *?uma mei pa?o e-mani?i-pauma.* (EMek)
 pig with tusk.3SG 3SG-fear-excess
 A pig with tusks is very frightening.

Some examples of *paka, faka* 'spill, leak' follow:

4.365 *Vei e-a?ama e-faka.* (EMek:D)
 gourd 3SG-cracked 3SG-leak
 The gourd is cracked (and) it is leaking.

4.366 *Mo-isa, vei a-?e-faka.* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-see water FUT-3SG-spill
 Look out, the water is going to spill.

There is another class of verbs, that are typically intracausative verbs of analytic process, but which do not take object-marking in imperfective aspect. These forms cannot easily be told apart from the intransitive forms. Therefore, like intransitive subject selection verbs, they may have an agent or a patient as subject but they carry no OM and sometimes have no apparent object in the immediate context. These may be called *false* subject selection verbs.

Uga, uka 'go in, put in', which is a transitive verb, will serve to illustrate a false subject selection verb (examples are from Desnoës):

- 4.367a. *E?a lo-ùka.* You enter (the) house.
 b. *Ava?a lo-ùka.* You put in (the) pepper.
 c. *Kiapu lo-ùka.* You put on (a/the) shirt.
 d. *Fo?ama lo-ùka.* You ingest (the) food.
 attribute 2SG-UGA You enclose/are enclosed...O.

In none of the above examples do we have any indication of the precise CR fulfilled by the nominal. In no case is there an OM. There is no marked stress on the final vowel of *uka*. In what can only be considered as the *marked absence* of object marking, we cannot identify the role played by the subject of the verb, i.e. whether it is an intradirective agent or an intracausative agent. On formal grounds, example examples 4.367a can be interpreted to mean *either* 'you put the house in' *or* 'you put something into the house'. Example 4.367d could easily mean either 'you put the food into something' or 'you put something into the

food'. Example 4.367dc could be taken to mean 'you go into the bag'. It is only possible to interpret such utterances pragmatically, using one's knowledge of the world and of the immediate situation.

In perfect-perfective aspect all except the first verb above would become *lo-uka-i-s-a* 'you put in – PF – B – 3SG', *if* there were in fact an underlying object. But this is not a test one can easily apply in practice, and the absence of all surface O-marking in imperfective aspect is a problem for the classification.

Some other members of this class are the following:

<i>api, afi</i>	be taken, take, take something
<i>βua, bua, pua</i>	be carried, carry, bear
<i>ia, ida, iza, isa</i>	look/see
<i>goβa, goba, kopa</i>	be attached, hung, attach, hang?
<i>ηoβe, ηobe, ηope</i>	be tied up, tie up

Some examples follow:

- 4.368 *Isa e-afi-mo.* (EMek)
s/he 3SG-take-just
S/he only takes.
- 4.369 *Loo e-afi-mo.* (EMek)
fire 3SG-take-just
The fire is just catching/taking.
- 4.370 *Potsi e-afi-me?e.* (EMek)
boss 3SG-take-side
The boss stood/is standing to one side.
- 4.371 *Potsi Polo e-afi-me?e.* (EMek)
boss Paul 3SG-take-side
The boss took Paul to one side.
- 4.372 *Umu e-pua.* (EMek)
charcoal 3SG-bear
S/he is carrying charcoal.¹⁵⁴
- 4.373 *O-o e-pua.* (EMek)
banana 3SG-bear
The bananas are 'bearing'.¹⁵⁵

Note that when the topic nominals are deleted from the above examples, the verbal predicates functioning alone, as reduced predications, are indistinguishable from true subject selection verbs.

In view of the unusual morphological structure of *mauni*, the full range of its forms/derivations is shown below, together with those of the analogous root *maini*:

¹⁵⁴ People paint themselves with charcoal during a period of mourning.

¹⁵⁵ *O-o* is the fruit; the tree is *kui* (NWMek, WMek, NMek *gu*).

4.374	<i>mau</i>	be preserved, conserved, alive, well
	<i>mau(-a)</i>	safely (adverbial verb form)
	<i>pa-mau-a</i>	preserve, conserve, give rise to
	<i>pa-mau-ŋ-a</i>	make safe, make well, make exist; bear (child)
	<i>mau-n-i</i>	be lively, alive; be born; be pregnant; give birth
	<i>mau-n-i-ai-n-a</i>	have something from birth; have abundantly
	<i>mau-n-i-peni-a</i>	be born like, take after someone

These forms compare with one other verb: *maini* (all dialects).

4.375	<i>mai</i>	be far (apart)
	<i>mai(-a)</i>	from a distance; without (something)
	<i>pa-mai-n-a</i>	make something empty; make something lack something
	<i>mai-n-i</i>	be empty; bare; naked; used up; worthless; pointless

These two verbs are unusual in that they end in *-ni*, or *-n-i*, which looks like thematic /N/ followed by the perfective aspect marker (i.e. a close transitive suffix) without a pronominal person/number marker. There are no active/transitive forms ***mau-ŋ-a*, ***mai-n-a* in Mekeo, of which *mauni* and *maini* could be derivations.

The above two verbs can be compared with *bi-baini*, *pi-paini* ‘REC-fight’, which contains the same final *-ni*.¹⁵⁶ Note that the third person singular OM of the related verb *bai-n-a*, *pai-n-a* ‘tell, scold’ (as well as that of all RTR verbs in *-ai-n-a*), ‘blocks’ the perfective aspect marker *-i*, present in all other persons and numbers. Two morphologically comparable verbs are *βini*, *bini*, *peni* ‘give’¹⁵⁷ and *ani* ‘eat’ (this can probably be analysed into a root **a* ‘eat’ plus *-n-i* (compare Roro *ana* ‘eat’)).

¹⁵⁶ These verbs may be related to the Fijian ‘passives’ discussed at such length in the literature. These verb forms, in Fijian, lack a true object marker but bear the Oceanic transitive morpheme *-i*, often preceded by a thematic consonant: *-C-i*. The subject marker encodes the ‘semantic object’ (see Pawley 1986 for a fairly up-to-the-minute account of the discussion). It would thus perhaps be possible to explain *mauni*, *maini* as fossilised forms. Certainly, when they are transitivised/causativised, these Mekeo verbs take a regular imperfective OM in *-C-a*, going to perfect-perfective *-C-i-a*. However, such an explanation ignores the rules of the synchronic grammar. There is moreover no evidence that the Mekeo subject selection verbs are derived from active verbs, indeed quite the contrary (this was a key criterion of Schütz and Nawadra (1972) in deciding that the Fijian verb forms in *-C-i* were in fact not passives at all). On the contrary, as we saw, the Mekeo forms provide the basis for transitive derivations. This is not the case in – for example – Roro, where the cognate verb form *mauri* can only have an active reading: ‘she bore him/her, caused him/her to be born’. But this does not affect our arguments in and for Mekeo.

¹⁵⁷ It has been suggested that the POC prepositional verb **pani* (of which Mekeo *BENI* ‘give’ is a reflex) decomposes “at some pre-POC stage” into a preposition **pa* plus **ni* (Ross 1988:118). Ross further suggests that this **ni* may derive from another POC prepositional verb **ni* (which he glosses as: “instrumental, confective, reffective”).

CHAPTER 5

THE LEXICOGRAMMAR OF DERIVED VERB FORMS

In this Chapter I describe the uses of a number of inherited affixes that function to modify the role structure of verbally functioning roots. The affix can transitive or detransitivise a verb, it can intensify an action or process, or signal reciprocity of action, it can signal entry into the system of causativity in which a higher agent controls a lower, or it can add a similitive/simulative nuance to an intransitive verb.

The first of these affixes is the atelic co-verb *-LAI*, which can be realised as *-lai* or *-lei*, regardless of dialect. The second is the causative prefix *BA-*, traditionally so-called, which reflects POC **pa/paka*, and which is realised, according to dialect, as *βa-*, *ba-* or *pa-*. The third is the remote transitive suffix (widely so-called, and I continue here in this usage): *-(C)AI*. This reflects POC **aki(ni)* and can be realised as either *-ei* or *-ai*. The fourth is the reciprocal prefix *BI-* (a reflex of POC **pi-*) which is realised, according to the dialect, as *βi-*, *bi-*, or *pi-*. The fifth is the preformative *I-*, which is often called the instrumental prefix in grammars of other Oceanic languages (e.g. Fijian).

As elsewhere in this study, a diamorphemic notation is used. The interlinear glosses reflect the most general function of a morpheme rather than its actual function in use, which is in any case often hard to specify. Thus *-LAI* will be glossed AT (for atelic), *BA-* will be glossed CA (for 'causative prefix'), *AI-* will be glossed RTR (for 'remote transitive suffix'), and *BI-* will be glossed REC (for 'reciprocal prefix'). The preformative *I-*, presents more problems, and will be glossed variously as NOM ('nominaliser'), INF ('infinitiviser') or PASS ('passiviser').

5.1 THE SUFFIXED VERB *-LAI*

5.1.1 VERBS OF FREE PLAY WITH *-LAI*

The suffix *-LAI* (realised freely as *-lai*, or *-lei*) is attached to intransitive verbs to form derived intransitive verbs. There is a free verbal form of this root, meaning 'reach, arrive'.¹ However, the suffixed form is much more common, and this adds a nuance of free play or non-directed action/motion to verbs of certain classes. Verbs with *-LAI* can be transitive by the simple addition of a pronominal object-marking suffix, unmediated by thematic consonants or by the perfective aspect-marking morpheme *-I*. Transitive forms are described in §5.1.2. The transitivity of such verbs is – as will be seen – atelic. The action/motion of the subject-agent never reaches (or is seen to reach) its goal.

¹ The Mekeo suffix *-LAI* and the free verb *LAI* are almost certainly to be identified with the Motu suffix *-lasi* meaning 'out, outside' and the free verb *lasi* 'arrive, come out' in Motu, respectively.

Intransitively used, *-LAI* indicates that the activity described has no external object or goal, and that the subject-agent is engaged in extradirective action or motion. That is – to refer back to a distinction made in §4.1.5 – the subject-agent is itself the experiencer and the medium of either a) motion (in which case they are represented as moving away from some starting point), or b) action (in which case the action is represented as being directed away from the subject-agent).

This suffix is mainly applied i) to verbs of locomotion (§4.3.1.4.4), ii) to verbs of spontaneous movement (§4.3.1.3), and iii) to self-enactive action verbs (§4.3.1.5.1). Note that *it does not apply to verbs of motion proper* which are in themselves directional.

Verbs of locomotion which form derivatives with *-LAI* are listed first:

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|---|
| a) | <i>βea, boa, pea</i> | walk |
| | <i>boa-lai, pea-lai</i> | depart, walk about, proceed, arrive at |
| b) | <i>ηοβο, ηοβο, ηοπο</i> | fly, spring, jump |
| | <i>ηοβο-lei, ηοβο-lei, ηοπο-lei</i> | fly away, escape; spring out |
| c) | <i>gai, kai</i> | come/go, move in right direction ² |
| | <i>gai-lai, kai-lai</i> | leave, emerge, be in front, stand out |

Some examples with *boa-lai, pea-lai*³ follow. This is a very common verb form which can mean *either* ‘go out, leave, depart’ *or* ‘arrive, reach’ *or* ‘walk about aimlessly, go for a stroll’, or even ‘proceed formally, as in a procession’.

- 5.1 *Afagua-u e-boa-lai.* (NMek)
big.brother-1SG 3SG-walk-AT
My big brother (lit. elder cross-sex sibling) has left/gone out.
- 5.2 *A aidama-η-ai na-ga-boa-lai?* (WMek)
what time-3SG-OBL FUT-1PL-walk-AT
At what time shall we arrive?
- 5.3 *Isa e?-ai (< e?a-ai) e-pea-lai.* (EMek)
S/he house-OBL 3SG-walk-AT
S/he went out of the house.

Some examples of other verbs with *-LAI* are:

- 5.4 *Kulua e-ηοπο-lei.* (EMek)
frog 3SG-jump-AT
The frog jumped away.
- 5.5 *Ineu ge-ηοβο-lei.* (NMek)
bird 3PL-fly-AT
The birds flew away.

² One of the non-verbal meanings of *gai, kai* is ‘direction, right direction, right hand side’. As a verb, it also means ‘be fitting, suit’.

³ NWMek has *βua-lai, βoa-lai*, but I suspect this is a recent borrowing from WMek. Brown (1955:17) records *βea* ‘walk’ and *βei* ‘appear, go out’ (sic; NWMek forms of words frequently resemble EMek forms rather than WMek, NMek forms: *βea, peal/boa, boa*). The reduplicated NWMek form *βea-βea* fulfils many of the same functions as the forms with *-LAI*.

5.6 *Lo-ʔue lo-kai-lei aŋoma lo-lao.* (EMek)
 2SG-stand.up 2SG-move-AT far 2SG-go
 You're getting up to leave, you're going far.

5.7 *ge-gai-lei au-tsi* (WMek)
 3PL-move-AT man-3PL
 (those) men who stand out
 (those) men who step forward

Turning now to the verbs of spontaneous movement, here is a sample:

- | | | |
|----|--|--|
| a) | <i>kua, ʔua</i>
<i>kua-lai, ʔua-lai</i> | hang, droop, bend, stoop, wilt
drop, fall |
| b) | <i>ŋipa, ŋifa</i>
<i>ŋipa-lei, ŋifa-lei</i> | recoil, jerk, twitch
spring out |
| c) | <i>ŋeβu, ŋebu, ŋepu</i>
<i>ŋebu-lei, ŋepu-lei</i> | pass with difficulty
emerge from something with difficulty |
| d) | <i>βugi, bugi, puki</i>
<i>bugi-lei, puki-lei</i> | pass with difficulty
emerge with difficulty |
| e) | <i>aŋa</i>
<i>aŋa-lai</i> | touch, barely touch
cease to touch; be open |
| f) | <i>ŋoŋo</i>
<i>ŋoŋo-lai</i> | budge
be displaced, move out of place |
| g) | <i>ŋuβu, ŋubu, ŋupu</i>
<i>ŋubu-lei, ŋupu-lei</i> | come undone, be detached, untied
be loose, be strewn all over the place |

Some examples follow. A more or less lexicalised verb of spontaneous movement with *-LAI* is the verb for 'fall (from a height)': *kua-lai, ʔua-lai*:⁴

5.8 *Imoi a-ŋe-ʔua-lai!* (EMek)
 child FUT-3SG-drop-AT
 (The) child will fall!

This stem is based on the intransitive root verb *kua, ʔua* which covers a range of meanings such as 'hang down, bend over, wilt'. For example:

5.9 *Au e-kua.* (EMek)
 tree(s) 3SG-hang.down
 The trees are hanging down.

Another common verb based on a verb of spontaneous movement is *aŋa-lai* 'touch away', which also means 'be open':

5.10 *Paavi e-aŋa-lai.* (EMek)
 door 3SG-touch-AT
 The door is open.

⁴ Brown recorded NWMek *-kua-rai*, which looks very much like a WMek or a Roro loan. The [r] makes it seem likely that this was borrowed from Roro. There is some evidence in fact that WMek, NMek *kua-lai* is a calque on the EMek verb form.

The root verb on which *ŋa-lai* is based behaves as follows:

- 5.11 *Paavi e-ŋa.* (EMek)
 door 3SG-touch
 The door is (just) closed (lit. touching).

Finally, some self-enactive action verbs that commonly take *-LAI* are given:

- a) *kapo, kafo, ?afo* make throwing movement, shake, swing, toss
kapo-lai, kafo-lai, ?afo-lai swing (body part) outwards
- b) *βiu, biu, piu* make throwing movement, swing some part of body
biu-lei, piu-lai throw body part outward, aimed away from self
- c) *gaβu, gabu, kapu* search for, seek, hunt
gabu-lei, kapu-lei cast about
- d) *βuβu, bubu, pupu* be loose
bubu-lei, pupu-lei fall out (e.g. teeth)
- e) *ŋapa, ŋafa, ŋava* make movement with foot
ŋapa-lei, ŋafa-lai, ŋava-lai kick out, kick up
- f) *ŋaβu, ŋabu, ŋapu* make whipping motion'
ŋabu-lei, ŋapu-lei whip away from self
- g) *ewa, ŋewa, ŋeva* spin, turn, circle, dance
ewa-lei, ŋewa-lei, ŋeva-lei dart out, radiate

The following examples illustrate the root and derived forms of selected verbs:

- 5.12 *Nie-u e-pupu.* (EMek)
 tooth-1SG 3SG-move
 My tooth/teeth are moving.
- 5.13 *Nie-u e-pupu-lei.* (EMek)
 tooth-1SG 3SG-move-AT
 My teeth are falling out.
- 5.14 *Ima-u e-?afo.* (EMek)
 hand-1SG 3SG-swing
 My hand is swinging/dangling.
- 5.15 *Otsi kaniā e-?afo-lei.* (EMek)
 horse head.3SG 3SG-swing-AT
 The horse's head pulled(swung) away.
- 5.16 *Otsi e-ŋafa-lei.* (EMek)
 horse 3SG-kick-AT
 The horse kicked out.

5.1.2 TRANSITIVE VERBS OF ATELIC ACTION WITH *-LAI-a*

Used in transitive predications, the suffix *-LAI* signifies that an action is not terminated by attainment of a goal or by affecting some patient-of-change. It emphasises the extradirective nature of the action, which is directed away from the subject-agent and towards a goal that is never quite attained. To adapt a term used by Hopper and Thompson (1976, 1980), it describes non-telic or atelic actions. To develop their concept of transitivity as an axis or continuum, extending from the actor to the object, we can say that the emphasis here is on the actor's end of that continuum, the action itself and its manner, rather than any effect.

Self-enactive action verbs with *-LAI* are transitivity by the simple addition of the semitransitive object marker *-a* (note that the *-I* of perfect-perfective aspect would be lost through assimilation to the final *-i* of the suffix, but I argue against its presence here anyway). Some examples follow, based on the self-enactive verbs *ŋapa, ŋafa* 'kick, make any movement of leg or foot' and *kapo, kafo, ?afo* 'toss, shake oneself, or any part of oneself':

- 5.17 *Amu?e e-ŋafa-lai-a.* (EMek)
 dog 3SG-kick-AT-3SG
 S/he kicked the dog away.

The idea here is not: 'S/he kicked the dog and it ran away', but rather: 'S/he kicked out at the dog' or perhaps even: 'S/he caused the dog to run away by kicking out'. The fact is that *ŋapa, ŋafa*, although basically a self-enactive intransitive verb, contains a germ of transitivity, in the form of a *reflexive* nuance (which is in this case 'kick-like'). The OM of the transitive alternant encodes a dative-type case role. Meanwhile, in the next example, the pipe might be thought of as a concomitant, participating in the motion of swinging the arm, rather than as a theme or patient:

- 5.18 *Oala a-kafo-lei-a.* (NMek)
 pipe 1SG-toss-AT-3SG
 I threw a/the pipe (far) away.

The verb *kapo, kafo, ?afo* is (as noted above) a self-enactive verb and is frequently found meaning 'toss, wave, shake oneself'.⁵ Example 5.18 can be compared with 5.19 below, where the same root verb is used intransitively (and with 5.14 above).

- 5.19 *Kaniā e-?afo-?afo.* (EMek)
 head-13SG 3SG-swing-RED
 Her/his/its head is swinging/tossing.

I here list WMek and EMek transitive forms of common self-enactive verbs:

- a) *kapo-lei-a, ?afo-lei-a* throw away
- b) *biu-lei-a, piu-lei-a* throw away
- c) *ewa-lei-a, ŋeva-lei-a* irradiate, pierce at a distance
- d) *gabu-lei-a, kapu-lei-a* find
- e) *ŋapa-lei-a, ŋafa-lei-a* kick out at
- f) *bubu-lei-a, pupu-lei-a* pluck (without stem)
- g) *gabe-lei-a, kape-lei-a* pluck (with stem)

⁵ Verbs of action-effect do not normally take *-LAI-a*. However, in 1983 I recorded the expression: *Mo-au-lai-s-a* 'Hit it out' (i.e. '...off the side!') used by young English speaking Mekeo who were playing billiards.

It may not be a rule of the grammar, but there is a definite tendency (statistically verifiable) to avoid using human (first or second person) objects with transitive verbs in this class.

Verbs of spontaneous movement that take intransitive *-LAI* are transitivity with *BA-*. I here list some examples (my data on NWMek are not sufficient to allow me to include it in this generalisation):

<i>ηau,</i>	swim, flow
<i>ηau-lei</i>	swim away, flow away
<i>ba-ηau-lei-a, pa-ηau-lei-a</i>	make something flow out, pour
<i>aηa</i>	touch
<i>aηa-lai</i>	touch away, be open
<i>ba-aηa-lai-a, pa-aηa-lai-a</i>	make something open
<i>kua, ?ua</i>	hang, droop, drop
<i>kua-lai, ?ua-lai</i>	fall away, drop away
<i>ba-kua-lai-a, pa-?ua-lai-s-a</i>	make something fall, drop something
<i>ηoβo, ηobo, ηopo</i>	jump, spring, fly
<i>ηobo-lei, ηopo-lei</i>	jump off/away, fly off
<i>ba-ηobo-lei-a, pa-ηopo-lei-a</i>	make fly away, cause to escape, miss
<i>pugi, fugi, fuki</i>	pass with difficulty
<i>puki-lei, fuki-lei</i>	emerge with difficulty
<i>ba-pugi-lei-a, pa-fuki-lei-a</i>	force out with difficulty

A number of causitivated verbs with *-lei-OM*, *-lai-OM* will now be illustrated. Probably the most common of all these is the verb for ‘drop (from a height)’, ‘make fall’, or ‘throw down’, which is regularly formed with *BA-* (CA):

- 5.20 *Oai goηa po-ba-kua-lai-a.* (WMek)
 you coconut OBLG.2SG-CA-fall-AT-3SG
 You should throw down a/the coconut.
- 5.21 *Ama-u la-pa-meanjai-n-a la-pa-ηopo-lei-a.* (EMek:D)
 father-1SG 1SG-CA-shame-TH-3SG 1SG-CA-spring-AT-3SG
 I shamed my father and caused him to run away.
- 5.22 *Paavi fo-pa-aηa-lai-a.* (EMek)
 door OBLG.2SG-CA-touch-AT-3SG
 You should open the door.
- 5.23 *Imoi lo-pa-fuki-lei-a.* (EMek)
 child 2SG-CA-pass-AT-3SG
 You had an illegitimate child.

The suffix *-LAI* is almost certainly related to the independent verb *LAI* ‘go out; go towards, arrive, reach’. A common idiom with this verb follows:

5.24 *Kou e-lai*.⁶

(EMek)

flood 3SG-reach

The flood has arrived.

5.1.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON *-LAI*

The suffix *-LAI* in Mekeo – as also the verb *LAI* (realised as *lei, lai*) – has been taken to correspond to the verb *lasi* in Motu,⁷ as noted in §5.1.1 above. That is, they are both held to represent reflexes of the same inherited root. Their meanings are, as the data shows, very similar.⁸ However, interesting as this fact is, nothing hangs on it. The Mekeo suffix *-LAI* marks an atelic derivation of typically intransitive verbs that expresses movements, actions or motions without effects, i.e. an element of free play.

Tokens of *-LAI* are rare in NWMek texts. This could lead one to hypothesise that subsequent to the loss of initial phoneme /l/ the entire morpheme merged with the verb stem and effectively ‘disappeared’.⁹ The status of /l/ in WMek and NMek is uncertain in some lexical items and one thing that suggests that *kua-lai* at any rate may have been calqued on an EMek verb form is the fact that the transitive form of the verb in WMek and NMek is *kua-lai-ŋ-a*, which contrasts with the EMek form where an intrusive *s* signals the prior absence of a TH: *?ua-lai-s-a* (< *?ua-lai-a*, still in restricted use).

5.2 THE PREFIX *BA-*

The prefix *BA-* (realised as *βa-*, *ba-* or *pa-*) essentially expresses three kinds of meaning: a) causation, b) simulation, and c) intensification.

Reactances of the different verb classes with *BA-* are summarised here in the form of a table. The meanings produced are listed according to verb class.

-
- 6 For which, incidentally, WMek and NMek have (respectively) *ubi e-gou* and *ifi e-gou* ‘(The) water has flooded’.
- 7 Fijian has the verb *laki* (variant *lai*) meaning ‘go towards’ (Milner 1956). Wurm and Wilson (1975) list Proto Ambonese *lesi* ‘excel, outdo’ (recalling Motu *lasi-a-tao* ‘overtake’) which indicates a form/function match of some antiquity.
- 8 Motu *lasi* is primarily a verb (meaning ‘go/come out, arrive’). But it *can* function adverbially, i.e. as a following co-verb in a serial verb construction. When it does occur as part of a compound verb, it follows the object marker (e.g. *e-veri-a-lasi*, ‘3SG-pull-3SG-out’) and we can speak of core level cosubordination. However, when it occurs as a verbal suffix in Mekeo it precedes the object marker (e.g. EMek *e-la²a-lai-a* ‘3SG-pull-out-3SG’) and we have nuclear level cosubordination. In the former case (the Motu example) the 3SG object is an argument of *veri* but not of *lasi*. In the latter case, however, two verbal roots functioning as one compound lexical verb control a single set of arguments: the subject is subject of *la²a-lai* (not just *la²a*) as the object is the object of *la²a-lai* (and not just *la²a*). The above labels relate to the theory of syntactic layers developed by Foley and Van Valin in the context of Role and Reference Grammar (RRG). I explain these terms in Section 8.1 below. I also discuss the theory of juncture (more particularly nuclear juncture) in §6.1.
- 9 Proto Mekeo – or some dialects of it – seems to have gone through a general lowering of /l/ to /ɛ/, along with some dialects of Kuni (where /l/ went to /y/ or /ɛ/). Restoration of the lateral approximant in medial environments in EMek was accompanied by *l*-accretion (that is, in EMek but not the other dialects). This process also occurred in Motu, especially before /a/. (See Lynch 1978a, 1980 for an account of *l*-accretion in Motu.)

TABLE 52: FUNCTIONS OF *BA*- ACCORDING TO VERB CLASS

Verb Class			Function
<i>BA</i> -	+	Integral Process Verb	Simulative // Causative
<i>BA</i> -	+	Analytic Process Verb	Causative only
<i>BA</i> -	+	Spontaneous Movement Verb	Causative // Intensive
<i>BA</i> -	+	Deictic Motion Verb	_____10
<i>BA</i> -	+	Locomotion Verb	Intensive // Causative
<i>BA</i> -	+	Directional Motion Verb	Causative // Intensive
<i>BA</i> -	+	Reaction Verb	Causative
<i>BA</i> -	+	Self-Enactive Verb	Intensive-Simulative
<i>BA</i> -	+	Action-Effect Verb	Causative ¹¹

The prefix *BA*- also combines with certain other affixes in complex derivations, as will be illustrated in §5.2.3 and §5.2.6 below.

5.2.1 INTRACAUSATIVE VERBS: INTEGRAL PROCESS

Some of the integral process verbs, when prefixed with *BA*-, take an exclusively causative interpretation.¹² Some examples follow:

5.25 *paka, faka, fa?a* 'big; stout, fat'
E-pa-fa?a-i-au. (EMek)

3SG-CA-big-PF-1SG

S/he brought me up. (lit. S/he caused me to be/become big)

5.26 *maua, akaikia* 'large'
Ia eka e-βa-maua-n-i-a. (NWMek)

s/he house 3SG-CA-large-TH-PF-3SG

S/he enlarged the house.

5.27 *βaβie, babie, papie* 'be a woman (adult)'
E-ba-babize-n-i-a. (NMek)

3SG-CA-woman-TH-PF-3SG

He caused her to become a woman.

5.28 *βuɲu, buɲu, puɲu* 'be finished, exhausted'
Ova-mu a-lo-pa-puɲu-ɲai-n-a! (EMek)

back-2SG FUT-2SG-CA-finish-RTR-TH-3SG

You'll ruin your back!

¹⁰ It does not seem that the deictic motion verbs like 'go' and 'come' can take *BA*-. These normally transitive with the remote transitive suffix *-(C)AI*. See §5.3.1 for details.

¹¹ This is the only inherently transitive class of verbs, although they may also occur intransitively.

¹² These correspond to Harrison's de-adjectival and de-nominal statives (Harrison 1982:195-196), and the first of these two groups corresponds to Pawley's A-class statives (Pawley 1973:128-129). Harrison predicts that these verbs will select for a causative semantic with *BA*-.

- 5.29 *lipu, lifu* 'be spoilt'
Mino-tsi e-ba-lipu-a. (WMek)
 brain-3PL 3SG-CA-spoilt-3SG
 S/he upset them. (lit. S/he spoilt their minds.)
- 5.30 *βoŋu, bou, poŋu* 'be full'
Kavapu fo-pa-poŋu-a! (EMek)
 bottle OBLG.2SG-CA-full-3SG
 Fill the bottle!

However, many intransitive verbs with *BA*- clearly do *not* take a causative reading. As a sub-type these could be called 'de-nominal' verbs. They take on an imitative or simulative meaning:

- 5.31 *ŋoŋo* 'be Roro' (tribe)
Ke-pa-ŋoŋo. (EMek)
 3PL-CA-Roro
 They are speaking the Roro language. OR: They are acting like Roros.
 OR: They are pretending to be Roros.
- 5.32 *umu* 'be charcoal'
Imoi e-mauni aisama e-pa-umu-a. (EMek:D)
 child 3SG-birth time 3SG-CA-charcoal-3SG
 When a baby is born it is black (like charcoal).
- 5.33 *kapoko, kafoʔo* 'be crazy'
P-ai-d-o-ba-kapoko. (WMek)
 OBLG-NEG-B-2SG-CA-crazy
 You should not act crazy.
- 5.34 *upu, ufu* 'be swollen (as a sore)'
Imi e-ba-upu. (WMek)
 child 3SG-CA-swollen
 The child is grotesquely fat.

It is sometimes unclear whether the subject of a given verb is to be identified as the causer of a true causative and hence transitive verb, or with the actor of an intransitive intensive-simulative verb. It is consequently sometimes difficult to tell whether an OM has reference, reflexive reference or is referentially 'empty'. For example:

- 5.35 *Ao-'i ia-ʔi ke-pa-ŋau-a.* (EMek)
 egg-3PL some-3PL 3PL-CA-young-3SG
 They hatched some eggs OR: Some eggs hatched (themselves).
- 5.36 *Paa-ŋa e-ba-umu-a.* (WMek)
 skin-3SG 3SG-CA-charcoal-3SG
 S/he blackens her/his skin. OR: Her/his skin really looks black.

Note that considerations of animacy do exclude 'skin' and 'eggs' from the subject-agent function in Mekeo. Meanwhile, Van Lamsweerde (1940) notes that the following sentence has two readings:

- 5.37 *Nau-u la-pa-mae-a.* (EMek)
 offspring.1SG 1SG-CA-die-3SG
 I killed my son. OR: I lost my son.

There are also examples of integral process verbs with *BA-* where the meaning is simultaneously simulative and inchoative. However, the distinction between inchoative and simulative uses may be the projection of a distinction from western semantics onto what is a single class of meanings for the Mekeo. It is, for example, not at all easy to say whether the following examples are simulative or inchoative:

- 5.38 *oki-oki, oji-oji, otsi-otsi, oʔi-oʔi* ‘be a tadpole’
Kulua aoi-na e-ɲepa-i-a e-pa-oʔi-oʔi-a. (EMek:D)
 frog egg-3SG 3SG-split-PF-3SG 3SG-CA-tadpole-RED-3SG
 The frog’s egg(s) split (open and) became tadpoles.
- 5.39 *kelo* ‘be white’ (all dialects)
poe, foe ‘be white/be an egret’
E-pa-kelo-n-i-a; e-pa-foe. (EMek)
 3SG-CA-white-TH-PF-3SG 3SG-CA-egret
 S/he became white; s/he became (white like) an egret.
- 5.40 *βani, bani, pani* ‘be a wing; have a wing’
Boku.boku e-pa-pani-a. (EMek)
 termite 3SG-CA-wing-3SG
 The termites ‘grew’ wings.

This last example leads us nicely into the possessive function of *BA-*, as illustrated by the following examples:

- 5.41 *kamu-kamu, ʔamu-ʔamu* ‘property, belongings, household goods’
kepu, kefu, ʔefu ‘traditional wealth, valuables’
Ai-d-a-ba-kamu-kamu; ai-d-a-ba-kepu. (WMek)
 NEG-B-1SG-CA-property-RED NEG-B-1SG-CA-wealth
 I have no property; I have no valuables.
- 5.42 *pokama, fokama, foʔama* ‘vegetable food’
Afa-pa-foʔama. (EMek)
 HYP.1PL-CA-food
 We might get/have some food.

To ‘have’ property, to ‘get’ food, to ‘grow’ wings, to ‘become’ white like an egret, to ‘act’ crazy, to ‘act like’ a Roro, all represent a similar kind of process or action, however we define it. It is, probably, the inchoative aspect of all the above examples that most comprehensively accounts for their formal identity. This term captures the general notion of entities *becoming* like other entities, or *becoming* something other than they were.¹³ However, I continue to use ‘simulative’ as a blanket term for all these kinds of meanings.

¹³ In the light of this it is difficult to agree with Ross (1988:391) that “in POC...the inchoative element seems to have become lost.” His PAN “causative-inchoative” reconstructed prefix **pa-ka-* may have a descendent in Mekeo.

Many of the Mekeo integral process verbs correspond to the patient-oriented P-verbs of other exemplary Oceanic languages.¹⁴ The next example, *mae* ‘be dead, die’, for instance, is represented by a P-verb in Fijian. This can form a purely causative derivation with *BA-* (as in example 5.37 above):

- 5.43 *mae* ‘be ill, die, be dead’
Kina e-pa-mae-s-au. (EMek)
 sun 3SG-CA-die-B-1SG
 The sun has killed/is killing me.

BA- sometimes seems to imply ‘let, permit’ or ‘leave alone’, as in:

- 5.44 *Koŋa la-pa-fofou-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 coconut 1SG-CA-intact-TH-PF-3SG
 I left the coconut intact. OR: I let the coconut be intact.

Causative verbs can of course occur as imperatives:

- 5.45 *Mo-ba-laŋai-n-i-au.* (WMek)
 IMP.2SG-CA-ease-TH-PF-me
 Help me. (lit. Make me easy.)

An example of a third person imperative built on a causative verb is:

- 5.46 *Iva-ʔi aʔa-ʔi alo-mu ŋa-pa-ŋea e-oma.* (EMek)
 speak-3PL laugh-3PL mind-2SG IMP-CA-absent 3SG-DNT
 She means her words and laughter to drive you to distraction.’

Ŋa-pa-ŋea translates in isolation as: ‘let it (= them) make it (= your mind) absent’, while *e-oma* is ‘she means’ or ‘she wants’. The verb *βa-ŋea*, *ba-ŋea*, *pa-ŋea* also means ‘lose’ (TR).

5.2.2 INTRACAUSATIVE VERBS: ANALYTIC PROCESS

Analytic process verbs in Mekeo correspond by and large to Fijian P-verbs: the undergoer subject of an intransitive verb corresponds in a semantic sense to the object of the same verb when transitivised. The analytic process verbs have, as we saw above (§4.3.1.2), the capacity to function as direct causatives. However, they also yield derived causatives with *BA-*:

- 5.47 *Ŋua-u lo-pa-kupu-a.* (EMek)
 heart-1SG 2SG-CA-close-3SG
 You made me angry. (lit. You caused my heart to become closed.)

The above appears to be a kind of indirect causative – one cannot directly close someone else’s heart, the event must be mediated by some external agency (in this case the owner of the heart) – and in this it contrasts with the next example which seems to express a direct causative process:

- 5.48 *Pou e-kupu-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 door 3SG-close-TH-PF-3SG
 S/he closed the door. (lit. S/he caused the door to close.)

¹⁴ The equivalent of Pawley’s B-class statives (1973).

There is often little real difference in meaning between such derived and underived causatives based on analytic process verbs. They can both be described as direct implicative causatives (both being implicative in that the effect is *entailed* by the cause). No external mediation is necessarily involved. A derived form encodes a semi-agentive causee, however, while the underived form does not.

The presence of thematic *N* in examples with IC verbs (such as 5.48) seems to break with Haiman's predictions about the iconic parsimony of direct causatives, as compared with the iconic markedness of indirect (mediated) causatives,¹⁵ but accords with the thematic expression of inert, directly affected objects (see §4.3.3.1 above). The *BA-* verb predictably takes the semitransitive third person singular pronominal suffix *-a* (§4.3.3.2 above), which marks an agentive, semi-autonomous causee. (There are, however, exceptions to this 'rule'.)

The root *kani*, *?ani* basically signifies aggressive/energetic contact (compare the root *aŋa* which signifies non-aggressive contact, described in the next section). As a verb it functions intracausatively, but whether behaving as an underived lexical causative or as a derived causative its object is by definition inert and the thematic consonant is accordingly always /ŋ/:

5.49 *Aŋoa la-?ani-n-a.* (EMek)
ground 1SG-bump-TH-3SG
I hit the ground with a bump.

5.50 *Puse vej-ai a-?ani-n-a.* (EMek)
bag water-OBL 1PL-dunk-TH-3SG
We dunked the bag in the river.

5.51 *Ima keke?e la-pa-?ani-n-a.* (EMek)
hand finger 1SG-CA-bump-TH-3SG
I 'touched' fingers. (lit. I bumped my fingers together.)

An IC verb that takes TH: *B* is *ŋaŋo* 'accumulate, coagulate':

5.52 *Auo a-pa-ŋaŋo-p-a.* (EMek)
firewood 1PL-CA-accumulate-TH-3SG
We piled up the firewood.

However, the great majority of analytic intracausative verbs when causativised take *-∅* (or ZERO-O) in the OM. The following exemplars appear in their WMek, EMek forms only:

- | | | | | |
|----|-------------------|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| a) | <i>ŋobe, ŋope</i> | bind, be bound | : | <i>ba-ŋope(-i-a), pa-ŋope(-i-a)</i> |
| b) | <i>aŋa</i> | bite, be bitten | : | <i>ba-aŋa, pa-aŋa</i> |
| c) | <i>aŋa</i> | burn, cook, be burned, cooked | : | <i>ba-aŋa, pa-aŋa</i> |

On the evidence of Fijian (see Harrison 1982:96; Arms 1974:82) one could expect analytic process verbs – *qua* P-verbs – to partake in an *act semantic* whereby the effect of the prefix is to 'tighten' or 'intensify' the original meaning of the root. Yet, as with the verbs of integral process, this expectation is not fulfilled. Analytic process verbs with *BA-* resemble the action-effect verbs (§5.2.5 below) in that they can *only* take a causative interpretation.

The direct object of an analytic process verb, when causativised with *BA-*, is still this self-causing agent. The next sentence is an example. The issue is confused by the presence of an

¹⁵ Haiman (1985) argues that formal markedness corresponds by and large to conceptual complexity.

actor, the dog. But the self-causing agent of an IC verb (the pig) takes precedence over a causee (the dog) as object of that verb:

- 5.53 *?uma afaukoŋapai amu?e-ai e-pa-aŋa-θ* (EMek:D)
 pig medium.pig dog-OBL 3SG-CA-seize-3SG
e-mai-ei-n-a.
 3SG-come-RTR-TH-3SG
 S/he had the dog seize the medium-sized pig, and (s/he, it) fetched it.

However, the actor appears as an oblique (nominal) topic. An oblique nominal is excluded from fulfilling a core function of the verb (see §1.8). Since *aŋa* is an intracausative verb of analytic process, the initial subject was/is the pig (compare *?uma e-aŋa* ‘The pig is/was caught’). A causative derivation with *BA-*, which introduces a new causer, demotes the pig to a self-causing causee in object function. *E-pa-aŋa-* is better glossed ‘S/he had the pig get/become caught’ (i.e. by the dog). Another, similar example follows:

- 5.54 *βaβie auke e-βa-goŋo-β-i-a.* (NWMek)
 woman dog 3SG-CA-drown-TH-PF-3SG
 The woman drowned the dog.

This last example is included here because NWMek *-goŋo-β-a* actually means ‘swallow something’. So the clause has to be analysed as meaning ‘The woman made the dog swallow (water)’. In the other dialects one has *goŋo, koŋo* ‘drown, submerge’ and one says *ba-goŋo, pa-koŋo* for ‘drown’ (transitive).

There are several examples of an apparently reduplicated *BA-* in the data.¹⁶ When this occurs the outermost *BA-* seems to add a primarily inchoative or conative meaning to the prior derivation with causatively functioning *BA-*. The following two examples come from the same text:

- 5.55 *Ido ga-ba-aŋa.* (WMek)
 fire 1PL-CA-burn
 We lit (the) fire. (lit. We made (the) fire burn.)
- 5.56 *Ido ga-ba-ba-aŋa.* (WMek)
 fire 1PL-CA-CA-burn
 We tried to make the fire burn.

Fuller contexts for examples 5.55 and 5.56 make their respective meanings clear:

- 5.57 *Bai mo ke ga-age ido ga-ba-ba-aŋa, ŋa-mó*
 now just XCL 1PL-descend fire 1PL-CA-CA-burn DX-just
ŋa-oma ga-oma ma, gai e-age ido e-ba-aŋa.
 IMP.3SG-DNT 1PL-DNT INT but 3SG-descend fire 3SG-CA-burn.
 Just at that instant we got down (from the platform) and started trying to make the fire burn, that was what we wanted to happen anyway, but then he got down and made it burn.

Here is a last example of doubled *BA-* from NWMek, where the outer *BA-* adds a nuance of politeness to the imperative:

¹⁶ NWMek forms a kind of gerund, with agent focus, with *BA-*. When applied to stems that already carry *BA-* this gives reduplicated *BA-*. This is illustrated in §5.2.8.

- 5.58 *Paki-age mo-ba-ba-abu-a.* (NWMek)
 door IMP.2SG-CA-CA-close-3SG
 Try and close the door.

5.2.3 INTRACAUSATIVE VERBS: SPONTANEOUS MOVEMENT

An exemplary verb of spontaneous movement – although a bare minimum of movement is actually implied – is the word meaning ‘touch’: *aŋa*. *BA-* functions to causativise the root verb, as also the derived verb of free play with *-LAI*:

- 5.59 *Ŋaŋa i-aŋa.* (WMek)
 canoe 3SG-touch
 The canoe touched (the bank).
- 5.60 *Koŋoŋu a-ba-aŋa.* (NMek)
 net 1SG-CA-touch
 I set the (fishing-)net.
- 5.61 *Paavi e-aŋa-lai.* (EMek)
 door 3SG-touch-AT
 The door is open.
- 5.62 *Paavi e-pa-aŋa-lai-s-a.* (EMek)
 door 3SG-CA-touch-AT-B-3SG
 S/he opened the door.

A lexicalised verb in this category is EMek *pa-?ua-lai-s-a* ‘drop’, based on the stem *?ua-lai* ‘fall’ (which is in turn based on the root *kua*, *?ua* ‘hang, droop’):

- 5.63 *Koŋa ma-pa-?ua-lai-s-a.* (EMek)
 coconut IMP.1SG-CA-hang-AT-B-3SG
 I want to drop a coconut.
- 5.64 *Mo-isa-felo, fo-?ua-lai fo?a.* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-see-good OBLG.2SG-hang-AT LEST
 Be careful you don’t fall! (lit. Look well, lest you fall.)
- 5.65 *Mo-?ua, mo-?ua-kipo!* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-hang IMP.2SG-hang-go.down
 Put your back into it! (lit. Bend over, bend down!)

However, *BA-* also occurs with verbs of this class to intensify the meaning:

- 5.66 *E-pa-?ua-?ua.* (EMek)
 3SG-CA-hang-RED
 S/he walks/walked bent over.

5.2.4 INTRADIRECTIVE VERBS

Apart from the verbs of rest, which form a special sub-class, there appears to be a statistical ‘reluctance’ to apply the causative prefix to verbs of deictic motion (which normally transitivise with *-(CAI)*). However, there are sufficient examples in texts to indicate the existence of a range of complex derivations. Here is one example:

- 5.67 *Imoi-mo aŋu?a-ʔi a-ŋo-pa-lao-peni-ʔi...* (EMek:D)
 child-just young-3PL FUT-2PL-CA-go-give-3PL
 If you act like (become?) young children...

Pa-lao-a (or *pa-lau-a*) is given by Desnoës as meaning ‘let escape’ but it cannot be definitely interpreted as being based on *ao, lao* ‘go’. Verbs of locomotion sometimes take *BA-*, but usually with an intensive reading:

- 5.68 *Amuʔe e-pa-pea-apala.* (EMek)
 dog 3SG-CA-walk-bad
 The dog is extremely nimble. (lit. The dog walks very badly.)¹⁷

BA- here serves to intensify the meaning of *pea* ‘walk’. In the following example, however, with *biau, piau* ‘run’, it functions unambiguously to causativise the verb:¹⁸

- 5.69 *Imu upe e-pa-piau-au-a.* (EMek)
 rain taro 3SG-CA-run-up-3SG
 The rain made the taro shoots grow.

Directional verbs of motion transitivity with *-AI*, as will be shown in §5.3, but also take a causativising *BA-*, taking either an intensive or a causative meaning:

- 5.70 *Kainamu ke-pa-koko.* (EMek)
 mosquito.net 3PL-CA-enter
 They went to bed. (lit. They went into their mosquito nets.)
- 5.71 *Kainamu-ai ke-pa-koko-ʔi.* (EMek)
 mosquito.net-OBL 3PL-CA-enter-3PL
 They sent them to bed. (lit. They made them go into their mosquito nets.)¹⁹

By way of contrast, the meaning of *gogo-ai-n-a, koko-ai-n-a* is more direct: ‘insert’. In the same way, the indirectness of *βa-age, ba-age, pa-ake* ‘make go down, drop’ contrasts with *age-ai-n-a, ake-ai-n-a* ‘bring, take down, down’ (see §5.3.1).

In this next example *giβo, gibo, kipo* functions – irregularly, perhaps – like a verb of spontaneous motion forming a complex derivation with *BA-* and *-LAI*:

- 5.72 *Nʔaŋa ke-pa-kipo-lai-s-a.* (EMek)
 canoe 3PL-CA-go.down-AT-B-3SG
 They floated the canoe down the river.

Verbs of rest (or stance) are very receptive to prefixation with *BA-*, and can take on only a causative meaning, as in the following examples:

- 5.73 *Iji aia-eka an-a-ba-aba ŋae!* (WMek)
 I POSS.1SG-house FUT-1SG-CA-stand there
 I will build my house there!
- 5.74 *Lau-e-u kainamo afe-ŋa-ai la-pa-apa-i-a* (EMek)
 I-POSS.1SG mosquito.net out-3SG-OBL 1SG-CA-stand-TR-3SG
 I put up my mosquito net outside/behind.

¹⁷ *ABALA* ‘bad/badly’ is used idiomatically to mean ‘good/well’, as well as to intensify meaning.

¹⁸ Comparing Mekeo with Fijian one is struck by the reluctance of these verbs of deictic motion to form causative verbs with *BA-*.

¹⁹ Note use of OBL for goal of motion verb.

5.75 *Nau-u a?ama-ai la-pa-aŋu-a.* (EMek)
 young-1SG verandah-OBL 1SG-CA-sit-3SG
 I placed my baby on the verandah.

5.76 *O?oae oiso, ina-?i, ŋaŋa-ai ke-pa-ka-uka.* (EMek)
 youth three mother-3PL canoe-OBL 3PL-CA-lie-go/put.in
 The three youths placed their mother/made their mother lie in the canoe.

Verbs of reaction do take *BA-*, with a causative meaning, although some are apparently more receptive to it than others:

5.77 *E-pa-mani?i-n-i-au.* (EMek)
 3SG-CA-fear-TH-PF-1SG
 S/he made me afraid.

Compare examples 5.113 and 5.114 in §5.3.3 below. There are no examples of other verbs of reaction taking *BA-* in the data. They normally transitivity with *-(C)AI* (see §5.3.). Note also that *maniki*, *mani?i* alone among these is a subject selection verb, capable of meaning both 'be afraid' and 'be fearsome' (§4.3.4.).

5.2.5 EXTRADIRECTIVE VERBS

As we saw above (§4.3.1.5) extradirective action verbs (A-verbs, actor-oriented verbs) are of two sorts. Verbs of the first sort, when taking the prefix *BA-*, do not select the cause semantic.²⁰ These are the self-enactive action verbs, verbs where the agent (or some part of the agent) acts as medium or instrument. These verbs normally transitivity with *-LAI + OM* and they take either an intensive or a simulative interpretation with *BA-*.

5.78 *Ima-u e-pa-?afo.* (EMek)
 hand-1SG 3SG-CA-swing
 My hand is loose/dislocated.

5.79 *Inei pani-na e-pa-?afo-?afo.* (EMek)
 bird wing-3SG 3SG-CA-toss-RED
 The bird's wing is flapping.

5.80 *Au-u e-ba-ŋapa.* (WMek)
 foot-1SG 3SG-CA-kick
 My foot kicks/kicked.

In the next example an unspecified patient of self-enactive process remains unexpressed. The direct object indexes the causee, which is represented within the predication as a nominal topic. The OM is affixed to an ordinarily intransitive verb word that means 'seeking; hunting' (with habitual aspect signalled by reduplication):

5.81 *Au, amu?e e-pa-kapu-kapu-ŋ-a.* (EMek:D)
 man dog 3SG-CA-see-RED-TH-3SG
 The man set the dog to hunt.

There is nothing in the grammar of this predication to indicate that *amu?e* is the causee (i.e. is coreferential with the OM *-ŋ-a*) rather than the patient. (By the same token, nothing

²⁰ And thus do not comply with Harrison's predictions based on Fijian (see §5.2.9 and §5.2.10 below for Harrison on the act semantic versus the cause semantic).

indicates that *au* is coreferential with the SM.) Nor do the semantics of the situation help us here, as they do for some utterances. Here the *pragmatics* of the situation – the cultural situation – are called upon to explicate the semantics of the verb.

In some sentences, of course, the direct object of the verb is in fact both causee and patient. These are sentences containing intracausative verbs of analytic process. See example 5.53 in §5.2.2 above.

I turn now to extradirective verbs of the non-self-enactive sort – that is, action–effect verbs, or *typically transitive verbs*. When these are prefixed with *BA-* the meaning is normally causative, and the OM normally represents the causee. Mekeo cannot encode the erstwhile *patient* of a transitive verb that has been causativised, at least not as an affixally marked argument of the verb. This demoted participant does not usually get any mention at all, even as a free nominal topic. For example, the verb *ANI* ‘eat’ can be causativised with *BA-*, and the simple sentence given as 5.82 below can take three different readings. The OM indexes the recipient. In none of these uses is a patient necessarily expressed:

- 5.82 *Imi a-ba-ani-tsi.* (WMek)
 child 1SG-CA-eat-3PL
 I fed the children./I brought up the children./I poisoned the children.

However, as example 1.60 in §1.6.2.3 demonstrates, a patient *may* be expressed in such a sentence. And in the next example too (repeated from an earlier section) the object is similarly expressed, as a free nominal, unindexed on the verb:

- 5.83 *Otsi vei la-pa-inu-p-i-a.* (EMek)
 horse water 1SG-CA-drink-TH-PF-3SG
 I made (make) the horse drink water.

The demoted object of the verb – the patient of the process – is represented here by *vei* ‘water’, while the third person singular OM refers to *otsi* ‘horse’, the causee.

Similarly in the next example, with the causativised form of the typically transitive verb *api, afi* ‘hold, take’, the patient is realised as a free nominal topic:²¹

- 5.84 *Moni a-la-pa-afi-o.* (EMek)
 money FUT-1SG-CA-take-2SG
 I will give you money. OR: I will see that you get money.²²

However, with a number of other transitive verbs that have been causativised with *BA-*, the OM continues to index the patient, there being no causee. In these cases *BA-* has selected for the act semantic and functions to intensify the agency of the subject.

The following examples are from EMek:²³

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| <i>Faaja ke-pepe-k-a.</i> | They pinch his/her skin/flesh. ²⁴ |
| <i>Faaja ke-pa-pepe-k-a.</i> | They pinch his/her skin/flesh thoroughly. |

²¹ Note that this verb is ditransitive, i.e. the scene it implicates contains at least three actants, or arguments. After causativisation there are in principle at least *four* such actants.

²² With regard to the second gloss, it should be remarked that verbs with *BA-* are not necessarily or even generally more indirect in meaning than analytic intracausative verbs when functioning transitively.

²³ This data is particularly interesting in the light of Pagotto’s theory (mentioned above, §4.1.4, fn.29).

²⁴ This refers to a type of massage.

Fo-pea-uki-n-a. You should follow him/her.

Fo-pa-pea-uki-n-a. You should follow him/her closely.

The verb *pepe-k-a* is clearly transitive in view of the (3SG) OM. The verb *pea* ‘walk’ is primarily an intransitive action verb, but it can be used transitively: *Aŋo la-pea-i-a* ‘I trod the earth.’ However, the adverbial co-verb *-uki-n-a* is apparently *only* transitive.

5.2.6 VERBS WITH *BA-* AND *-AI-n-a*

A small number of common verb words are doubly causativised, for example *ba-kani-ai-n-a*, *pa-?ani-ai-n-a* ‘ask about someone.’

- 5.85 *Ama-mu la-pa-?ani-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
 father-2SG 1SG-CA-bump-RTR-TH-3SG
 I am asking/have asked about your father.

Note that it is ‘father’ that is the object of the verb, not the addressee. This contrasts with the following:

- 5.86 *Ama-mu a-ba-kani-bini-a.* (EMek)
 father-2SG 1SG-CA-bump-give-3SG
 I am asking/have asked your father (about something).

Another example, repeated from §5.2.1 above, illustrates the redundant but apparently intensive function of *BA-* in such constructions:

- 5.87 *Ova-mu a-lo-pa-puŋu-ŋ-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
 back-2SG FUT-2SG-CA-finish-TH-RTR-TH-3SG
 You will ruin your back.

In WMek and NMek the verb for ‘drop something’ appears, irregularly in the light of other dialects, as *ba-kua-lai-n-a*, with TH: *N*.²⁵

5.2.7 POSSESSIVE USE OF *BA-*

This function is illustrated again here, in the context of *BA-* based derivations, for the convenience of the reader. The examples have already been given above, in §3.1.6.

- 5.88 *kamu-kamu, ?amu-?amu* ‘property, belongings; household goods’
kepu, kefu, ?efu ‘traditional wealth; valuables’
Ai-d-a-ba-kamu-kamu; *ai-d-a-ba-kepu.* (WMek)
 NEG-B-1SG-CA-property-RED NEG-B-1SG-CA-wealth
 I have no property; I have no valuables
- 5.89 *pokama, fokama, fo?ama* ‘vegetable food’
Afa-pa-fo?ama. (EMek)
 HYP.1PL-CA-food
 We might have/get some food.

²⁵ This may represent a borrowing from a Roro dialect.

5.2.8 A SUBJECTIVE GERUND WITH BA- IN NWMek

Drawing upon Brown's materials more than my own,²⁶ one can identify a specifically NWMek use of BA- (I use :B after the dialect name to indicate when the source of an example is Brown). Upon the root for 'know, knowledge' NWMek builds the following stems:

<i>ioβi</i>	know, knowledge
<i>βa-ioβi</i>	inform, informing
<i>βa-βa-ioβi</i>	teach, teaching

As the glosses indicate, these forms are verb stems as well as gerunds:

<i>E-ioβi-n-a</i>	S/he knows it.
<i>E-βa-ioβi-n-a</i>	S/he informs him/her.
<i>E-βa-βa-ioβi-n-a</i>	S/he teaches him/her.

As gerunds they can be used as follows:

- 5.90 *Iesu ke, ia-na βa-ioβi au-kia iaηuo* (NWMek:B)
 Jesus TOP s/he-POSS CA-know man-3PL two
e-ila-i-kia.
 3SG-send-PF-3SG
 Jesus sent his two disciples.
- 5.91 *Ia βa-βa-ioβi au-ηa.* (NWMek)
 s/he CA-CA-know man(person)-3SG
 S/he is a teacher.

5.2.9 THE CAUSE SEMANTIC IN MEKEO

Causativisation in Mekeo may be seen as a valency-increasing device (see Foley and Van Valin 1984:197ff.) through which a new actor (causer, controller) is introduced into the predication. The original actor, or undergoer, is demoted from subject position and becomes the causee, marked as direct object of the verb. The general morpho-syntactic rules for the causative transformation can be shown (following Pawley and Reid 1980) as:

[EXTERNAL CONTROLLER]	>	NEW SUBJECT
OLD SUBJECT	>	NEW DIRECT OBJECT
OLD DIRECT OBJECT	>	(OBLIQUE ARGUMENT?)

Note that in Mekeo the demoted subject – the new direct object – often (though not always) retains a high level of agentivity or control (see Comrie 1981:167-168, 174-175).²⁷ This is chiefly signalled by the absence of a thematic consonant or of the OM. But often the meaning alone makes it clear that the cooperation of the causee is required:

²⁶ I should again draw the reader's attention to the possibility of Police Motu and/or Roro interference here. As already noted, Brown used Motu, Roro and Police Motu-speaking Toaripi helpers and multilingual pastors.

²⁷ Comrie (1981:167) notes that the degree of control retained by the causee varies considerably from language to language and, within a language, from one construction to another: "In many languages...differences along this continuum can be expressed by varying the case of the causee".

- 5.92 Papiāu, auni-ʔi, e-ʔi lopia ke-pa-mia-ʔi. (EMek)
 people pair-3PL POSS-3PL chief 3PL-CA-be-3PL
 The people made them be/become their chiefs.

The object of a causative verb is in fact formally identified with other lightly affected or autonomous objects and behaves as what one might call an Agent-Patient. The formal – i.e. morphosyntactic – bases for this intuition are the following:

- a) The derived causatives with *BA-* contrast with frozen lexical causatives in the lexicon (§4.3.1.2), and these encode the conceptual distance of indirect causation as opposed to the directness of what Shibatani (1972) called “manipulative” causatives. Both Comrie (1981:165-166) and Haiman (1985:107-108) concur that the more indirect (or analytic) a causative construction is, the more the causee will be felt to be in control. The causee acts at the behest of the causer, but still retains some of the autonomy of an Agent.
- b) The object of a causative verb is marked by the semi-transitive OM: *-a*. As we saw in §4.3.3.2, the simple third person singular suffix is reserved for dative objects (which of course are prototypically human, and thus represent the pinnacle of the control hierarchy) as well as for other lightly affected transitive objects. This OM contrasts, as we saw, with a number of others which combine with thematic consonants to define classes of non-agentive objects (if not classes of verbs) which typically *lack* control. And as we saw in §4.3.1.2, lexical causatives usually take this latter kind of OM, typically with *N*).

The agentivity of the causee is – paradoxically – enhanced by the fact that Mekeo, with other Oceanic languages, has no restriction such that the causee of a derived causative construction *must be animate*. Such a restriction is shared by many of the world’s languages, from Japanese and Korean to Cebuano (AN) (see Comrie 1981:166; and Wolff 1967:297). One consequence of this restriction (noted by Haiman, 1985:108), is that “where the causee is inanimate or unconscious, the analytic causative suggests that the causer has magical powers”. But this “imputation of magical powers” is avoided in Mekeo precisely by the lack of a grammatical distinction between animate and inanimate causees. All *-a* marked causees retain a relatively high degree of autonomy and inherent control to the causee, even when this role is being filled by that we would classify as an inanimate object.²⁸ This ‘self-driven’ element in inanimate causees in Mekeo may strike the linguist as anthropomorphic and animistic – as does the volitional nuance inescapable with imperfective process verbs (see §4.2.1 above) – but it emerges clearly from the systems of formal contrasts.

Turning now to the fate of the original direct object of the transitivised verb, Mekeo grammar (and Oceanic grammar in general) is somewhat unusual by universal standards (Comrie 1981:168-169) in that the direct object of an action-effect verb (representing the Theme or Patient of the action) is not encoded on the derived verb. It *may* however be represented in the clause as an unmarked nominal topic. However, since presence versus absence of full nominals as well as the order of these generally reflects the discourse-pragmatic status of these elements (i.e. their relative newness/importance) rather than their grammatical function or semantic role, one can in such cases only identify the semantic object on pragmatic grounds. Only exceptionally do we find the semantic object distinguished with oblique case marking (see example 5.53 in §5.2.2 above). The object-marking suffix on the

²⁸ The self-causing (i.e. reflexive) semantics of the intracausative verbs, especially the analytic intracausatives, is essentially what underpins this agentivity/control of inanimate causees.

causative verb phrase in Mekeo always indexes the demoted Agent, now the causee. This ‘loss’ of the semantic object in Mekeo is symptomatic of a special interest in transitivity as an ongoing process – and in the control thereof – and a general lack of interest in the effect.

The Mekeo data can profitably be reviewed in the light of certain observations made by Harrison (1982) concerning the different functions of *vaka-* in Fijian.²⁹ Harrison noted that *vaka-* generally occurred in a causative function a) on certain A-verbs (that is, agent-oriented verbs, not to be confused with Pawley’s A-class statives) such as *gunu* ‘drink’, and b) on ‘de-adjectival’ and ‘de-nominal’ statives (which correspond to Pawley’s A-class statives). In Harrison’s terms these “participate in the cause semantic”. On the other hand, *vaka-* occurs in a primarily intensive function on P-verbs (that is, patient-oriented verbs, probably including Pawley’s B-class statives),³⁰ and as an example Harrison gives the “root causative” verb *kau* ‘be carried’ (1982:196). Many A-verbs also are intensified rather than causativised by the addition of this prefix. They undergo what Arms (1974:82) called “a semantic tightening”. Harrison would say that they thus partake in the act semantic. The Mekeo data do not mesh with these findings.

5.2.10 THE ACT SEMANTIC AND THE CAUSE SEMANTIC IN POC

The POC prefix **paka-* (in all its varied realisations in living Oceanic languages) was long considered to be a purely causative morpheme. It was Grace (1969) who reconstructed POC **paka-* and this was functionally defined by Pawley (1973:128) as a prefix that formed causative transitive verbs from intransitive verbs with undergoer subjects. In other words, Oceanic intransitive verbs that formed transitives with the help of this prefix could be regarded as constituting a separate sub-class of stative verbs (Pawley’s A-class statives).

It was Arms (1974) who first showed by means of a detailed study of the Bauan (Standard Fijian) verb that the facts of the matter were much more complex, and that the causativising function of **paka* was possibly but one of its (inherited) uses. Pawley has always taken the position that the derivational potential of a verb is in fact predictable from the semantics of the base (its class or sub-class); but Harrison (1982) is to my knowledge the first to explore in any detail verb class restrictions on the causative application of **paka*, as well as on its non-causative applications. His work on **paka-* was incidental to an examination, across a range of Micronesian as well as Melanesian languages, of restrictions on **aki(ni)* (for which see the following section). He began by noting that reflexes of **paka-* (as well as those of **aki(ni)*) have a wide variety of semantic functions, and that these can usefully be subsumed under two operational headings (following Arms 1974): the cause semantic and the act semantic. As a result of his cross-linguistic analysis Harrison suggested that POC **paka-* originally operated within the act semantic, to intensify the actorhood of the subject. The causative functions of this prefix thus represent, for Harrison, a secondary development.

It has more recently been suggested by Ross (1988:391) that POC inherited two separate, specialised prefixes from PAN: **pa-* and **paka-*. PAN **pa-* formed causative verbs with an undergoer subject/pivot (cf. Tagalog *pa-luto* ‘(be) caused to be cooked’, Ivatan *pa-rahmet*

²⁹ Harrison is attempting to reconstruct the functions of POC **paka*, in what is essentially a comparative-historical paper, hence his interest in the different verb classes and their derivations in the modern Oceanic languages.

³⁰ Harrison (1982:196), in a discussion of Gilbertese, specifically states that “most statives (both physical and mental) follow the cause semantic”.

'become heavy'); while PAN **paka-* marked a causative inchoative ("PAN **ka-* apparently marked the inchoative"). "In POC, however, the inchoative element seems to have become lost and there was no apparent difference in function between POC **pa-* and POC **paka-*. Throughout most of the POC dialect chain, **paka-* seems to have been ousted by **pa-*...". These semantic reconstructions help to make sense of the divergent functions of Mekeo *BA-*, where (as already remarked) the inchoative meaning is common.

The prefix *-BA* when functioning in the act semantic does not so much increase the actorhood of the actor and/or the intensity of an action (see Harrison 1982:196). More usually, in Mekeo, it represents an inchoative or simulative process (or event) – for example *X becomes Y*, or *X becomes like Y*, or *X behaves like Y*. In the cause semantic *BA-* indicates that *X causes Y* to behave in a certain way, or to undergo some change of state, gradual or abrupt. There are, as we have seen, a class of problematic utterances which can be translated: *X treats some person/thing as Y*. I illustrate the possibilities again here, with a single verb phrase that permits several different interpretations (purely for convenience I continue to gloss *BA-* as *CA*) and thus appears to bridge the two semantic macrofunctions:

- 5.93 *E-pa-ekfaa*. (EMek)
3SG-CA-friend
- a. S/he makes/made (someone) into a friend.
(i.e. S/he causes/caused him/her to be/become a friend.)
 - b. S/he treats/treated (someone) like a friend.
 - c. S/he acts/acted like a friend. (i.e. intransitive)

The term 'simulative' as employed above is meant to suggest an element of volition, of *deliberate* simulation. It is precisely this that distinguishes it from the term 'similative' which I use below (§8.2.5) in connection with the postposition *GO* (realisations: *go, goa, koa*), and which I have borrowed, incidentally, from Lichtenberk (1983). (The latter term denotes, and I hope connotes, objective similarity, resemblance.)

5.3 THE REMOTE TRANSITIVE SUFFIX: *-AI*

The Mekeo post-nuclear verbal suffix *-AI* (realised as *-ei, -ai*) can be identified with the 'remote transitive' suffix, or the 'long transitive suffix', of Oceanic linguistics. The term remote transitive suffix (abbreviated to RTR) will be used here. However, while this label is retained, the Mekeo data has raised some considerable doubts as to its ultimate suitability.

There are in fact four distinct forms of this suffix, which can be represented abstractly as *-(C)AI*. The actual forms found can be diamorphemically represented as *-AI, -LAI, -ŃAI* and *-GAI* (the last is relatively rare).³¹ This suffix, as just shown, may contain an initial thematic consonant but it is always followed by the thematic consonant /ŋ/, which is always realised as *-n*, and this is nearly always followed by the perfective aspect marker *-i* (except in third person singular – see below), and always then by a pronominal suffix. This composite suffix can be represented as *-(C)AI-N(I)*. The component represented by *-(C)AI* will here be glossed as RTR. This *-(C)AI* will be used only to represent the transitive use of this suffix with its obligatory continuation (*-n(i)* + pronominal suffix). A following *-n* is in effect the diagnostic trait of true RTR as opposed to atelic *-LAI* and other morphemes.

³¹ The thematic consonants (apart from L) are those described in §1.3.4.3 and illustrated for the close transitive suffix in §4.3.3.

A typical example of a verbal predicate containing RTR follows:

- 5.94 *P-ai-d-o-maniki-ai-n-i-au!* (WMek)
 OBLG-NEG-B-2SG-fear-RTR-TH-PF-1SG
 You shouldn't be afraid of me!

Reflexes of these four forms are found in all dialects except NWMek (see §5.3.6), though probably with different frequencies of occurrence and shades of meaning in different areas. The analysis that follows is based chiefly on EMek, because of the disproportionately large amounts of EMek data available.

The four thematic variants of -(C)AI add distinct specifiable meanings to the different classes of verbs to which they are attached. Their potential for combining with a verb seems to be lexically determined in the last resort, but membership in a given verb class also carries with it certain restrictions on the forms of the suffix a verb may take, and delimits a predictable range of meanings for the derived verb forms.

A complication arises through the probable conflation of the AT -LAI (which was described in §5.1.1 above) with RTR -LAI (with thematic L). Transitivity forms of AT -LAI do not normally take a following thematic -n, but there are clear cases where AT -LAI is treated like RTR -(C)AI, and where it accordingly takes a following -n. For example, when the portion of a RTR verb word consisting of [Verb + -LAI] has independent meaning as an intransitive atelic verb there seems to be an excellent case for considering that this verb contains a conflation of AT -LAI and RTR -(C)AI. For example:

- 5.95 *Aŋ-e-pea-lai-n-i-o.* (EMek)
 FUT-3SG-walk-RTR-TH-PF-2SG
 He will follow you.

This appears to be based on the verb *pea-lai* (see above, §5.1.1), one of whose meanings is 'arrive at'. However, it has been adapted to this category (by the following -n) and will be treated as an example of RTR, but it will be written -LAI as opposed to -LAI.

Certain classes of verbs never take AT -LAI, so the RTR suffix is analysed as -LAI. This applies to the verbs of cognition/reaction/interaction, for example (§5.3.3 below). However, in some cases it seems likely that the meaning of RTR -LAI has been coloured by that of AT -LAI. Thus when a verb of reaction takes -LAI, the meaning seems to contain the components: [deliberate] and [adessive] ('motion towards'), which may derive from AT -LAI. For example:

- 5.96 *Gi-aka-lai-n-i-o.* (WMek)
 3PL-laugh-RTR-TH-PF-2SG
 They were laughing at you.

Apart from a few exceptions, RTR occurs only with three groups of verbs: verbs of motion, verbs of cognition/reaction/interaction, and verbs of extradirective action.

The main meanings of -(C)AI, and/or AT -LAI, are listed for the relevant verb classes below. Examples of each category are given in the sections indicated.

- a) For verbs of motion (§5.3.1, §5.3.2 and §5.3.5)

Only -AI and -LAI occur, and they have the same range of meanings:

- causative/confective meaning
- intracausative/reflexive meaning
- intensive/exhaustive meaning

b) For verbs of cognition/reaction/interaction (§5.3.3)

-AI signifies	deliberate <i>but reactive</i> action	with symbolic effect
-L-AI signifies	deliberate and proactive action	with symbolic effect
-GAI signifies	deliberate but perfunctory action	with symbolic effect
-ŃAI signifies	deliberate but reluctant action	with symbolic effect

c) Extradirective verbs (§5.3.4 and §5.3.5):

-AI signifies	deliberate action	with an unattained object
-L-AI signifies	deliberate action	with an unattained object
LAI signifies	deliberate action	with a confective effect
-GAI signifies	deliberate action	but perfunctory/effortless action
-ŃAI signifies	deliberate action	with an attained object, a stubborn object; effortful action

-ŃAI also suggests difficulty experienced in carrying out an action and obtaining an effect, or it suggests that the object is an obstacle of some sort.

The suffix -(C)AI always signals a kind of transitivity, but the effects are achieved by roundabout means rather than direct application of a force.

With motion verbs the underlying idea is causation – but causation through encouraging someone else to imitate one's own movements in a given direction, to follow one's example, hence to follow and accompany one. But with other verb types the transitivity involved is often metaphorical, indicating merely heightened kinesis, or directed/targetted activity of an expressive nature that is not intended to attain its object physically. Reactions are transitive in Mekeo, in that they are targeted at objects. Emotions too are projected *at* a goal. This transitivity can be *introverted* (Haiman's term). That is, it turns in on itself, and it is the internal process dynamic of the verb which is heightened and which may be regarded as being – on some level – reflexive, and intracausative in the sense defined above.³²

From my survey of the Mekeo data, it would appear that the remote transitive suffix, so-called for so long, would be better characterised, for Mekeo at least, as the suffix of symbolic transitivity. However, for present purposes the older label suffices.

As regards morphological form, the distinction between perfect/perfective and imperfective is neutralised as in the following examples:

- 5.97 *I-ao-ai-n-i-au.* (WMek)
 3SG-go-RTR-TH-PF-1SG
 S/he takes/took me (with her).
- 5.98 *I-ao-ai-n-a.* (WMek)
 3SG-go-RTR-TH-3SG
 S/he takes/took him/her/it (with him/her).

³² Compare the 'agentless passive' function that Harrison (1976; 1982:201-203) reconstructs for Micronesian **aki*. This is discussed in §5.3.7 below.

The full array of available forms is given in the table below.

TABLE 53: DEFECTIVE PARADIGMS IN REMOTE TRANSITIVITY

1SG	—	-ai-n-i-au
2SG	—	-ai-n-i-o
3SG	-ai-n-a	—
1PL.I	—	-ai-n-i-ka, -ai-n-i-ʔa
1PL.E	—	-ai-n-i-mi, -ai-n-i-mai
2PL	—	-ai-n-i-mi, -ai-n-i-mu
3PL	—	-ai-n-i-kia, -ai-n-i-ki, -ai-n-i-tsi, -ai-n-i-ʔi

This amounts to a single ‘irregular’ paradigm, and the conflation of perfective and imperfective aspects explains how the verbs *i-ao-ai-n-i-au* and *i-ao-ai-n-a* in examples 5.97 and 5.98 above can both be glossed as a past tense verb. Verb forms in **ai-n-i-a* simply do not occur and are consistently rejected by informants. Informants concur that the form *-ai-n-a* expresses both past/perfective and present/imperfective meanings in third person singular.

5.3.1 VERBS OF MOTION: CAUSATIVE~CONFECTIVE MEANINGS

Confective transitives with RTR are common in (Standard) Fijian, usually formed from verbs of stance or motion or from other A-verbs. As Harrison (1982:189) has it: “The object of a Fijian confective transitive is typically a *concomitant*, less frequently an *instrument* “. Pawley (1986) prefers the term “transportative” to confective, but his examples support this generalisation. In Mekeo, however, the object role of concomitant is far from clearly discernible. The object does not simply accompany a moving agent, it is ‘moved’. A purely causative characterisation of these verbs seems more generally appropriate.

The category of motion verbs taking *-AI* in Mekeo seems to include most of the verbs listed in §4.3.1.4.2 above. Attested derivations with *-ai/-ei* from the available texts are as follows (the glosses are tentative):

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|--|
| a) | <i>ao, lao</i> | go |
| | <i>ao-ai-n-a, lao-ai-n-a</i> | take O with (< go with) |
| b) | <i>mai</i> | come |
| | <i>mai-ei-n-a ~ mai-ai-n-a</i> | bring O with (< come with) |
| c) | <i>wai, vai</i> | go (to hearer) |
| | <i>wai-ai-n-a, vai-ai-n-a</i> | take O with (towards hearer or hearer’s village) |

The comitative meaning may indeed have been the original meaning of such motion verbs with RTR, but it is currently no more than an extra nuance – if that – at least as regards the three verbs just mentioned, which could be more correctly glossed ‘take’, ‘bring’ and ‘take (to/with hearer)’. As for the verbs that follow (orientated motion verbs from §4.3.1.4.3), they have a purely causative sense in the modern language (as also in Desnoës, some of whose examples go back to the 1890s):

- | | | |
|----|--|----------------------|
| d) | <i>giβo, gibo, kipo</i> | go down |
| | <i>giβo-ai-n-a, gibo-ai-n-a, kipo-ai-n-a</i> | make O go/float down |

- e) *age, ake* go down
age-ai-n-a, ake-ai-n-a make O go down
- f) *gae, kae* rise, go up
gae-ai-n-a, kae-ai-n-a make O rise up
- g) *lai~lei* reach, arrive
lai-ai-n-a go towards, think of; make O reach, arrive at
- h) *gogo, koko* enter
gogo-ai-n-a, koko-ai-n-a make O go in

Intransitive verbs of motion in nuclear juncture (see Chapter 6) can also be transitivised by means of *-AI*, as evidenced by:

- i) *kaŋa-au-ai-n-a, ?aŋa-au-ai-n-a* put O up, take O up
- j) *kaŋa-au-gae-ai-n-a, ?aŋa-au-kae-ai-n-a* make O climb up, hoist up

which are based on *kaŋa-au, ?aŋa-au* ‘crawl-go.up’, and *gae, kae* ‘rise, go up’. *Kaŋa-au-gae, ?aŋa-au-kae* means ‘climb up’. See example 5.101 below.

I shall first illustrate the purely causative use – that is, the non-confective use – of these verbs with *-ao-ai-n-a, -lao-ai-n-a* and *-mai-ai-n-a*, the everyday verbs of taking and bringing:

- 5.99 *Nao an-a-ao-ai-n-a.* (WMek)
 European FUT-1SG-go-RTR-TH-3SG
 I will take the European. [pronunciation: *anaoàina*]
- 5.100 *Tsiati mo-afsi-a mo-mai-ai-n-a.* (NMek)
 shirt IMP.2SG-take-3SG IMP.2SG-come-RTR-TH-3SG
 Bring the shirt here.

The use of *-AI* to causativise what are basically intransitive verbs seems to be limited to the class of motion verbs. But it turns these into very precise verbs of putting, with emphasis on the direction of movement:

- 5.101 *Loli mo-?aŋa.au-kae-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
 truck IMP.2SG-crawl.up-rise-RTR-TH-3SG
 Push up the truck.
- 5.102 *Eŋani ŋaŋa a-ke-kipo-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
 tomorrow canoe FUT-3PL-float.down-RTR-TH-3SG
 Tomorrow they will float the canoe down (the river).

Note that in Mekeo the simple verbs of motion cannot be transitivised – as they can in Fijian – by the simple addition of an object marker (indexing the goal). I should probably make the point here that, although these verbs are not confective in the same way that some Fijian verbs are confective (e.g. *cici-vaki* ‘run with something’), they do entail that the agent accompany the object of movement. And they contrast in this with the ‘derived’ causatives (with *BA-*), which do not have this entailment:

Finally there a verb of locomotion which takes *-LAI*: *pea* ‘walk’:

- k) *pea* ‘walk’
pea-lai-n-a ‘follow someone’

+ ACCOMPANY		- ACCOMPANY
<i>gibo-ai-n-a</i> }	} ‘float down’	<i>ba-gibo</i> }
<i>kipo-ai-n-a</i> }		<i>pa-kipo</i> }
		} ‘cause to float down’

Finally, having said that the confective/comitative case role is rare in Mekeo, it does occasionally appear fairly clearly in verbs with RTR:

- 5.103 *E-mauni-ai-n-a*. (EMek:D)
 3SG-live-RTR-TH-3SG
 S/he was born with (= at the same time as) him/her.

Like all the other verbs described in this section, *mauni-ai-n-a* also appears as an intransitive: *Imu e-mauni-ai-n-a* ‘It rains/has rained a lot’. This brings us to the next section.

5.3.2 VERBS OF MOTION: INTRACAUTATIVE-REFLEXIVE MEANINGS

A considerable number of the above-mentioned motion verbs with *-AI*, if not indeed all of them, seem to have developed – assuming for the moment that it was in fact a *secondary* development – a purely intransitive, that is an intradirective or intracausative, meaning. According to this (provisional) interpretation, derived transitives would have been rendered once again intransitive, while preserving the original transitivity suffix as well as the OM – not so much as a fossil, but rather as a sign of introverted causation, “a ‘trace’ of a suppressed/unexpressed causer” (as Harrison (1982:203) said of the agentless passive in Micronesian). Whatever the process was, verbs like *-ao-ai-n-a*, *-lao-ai-n-a* which we glossed above as ‘take O with’ (or more correctly ‘take’), are just as likely to be used intransitively, as illustrated here:

- 5.104 *Veʔe fo-lao-ai-n-a* *ma*. (EMek)
 Rarai OBLG.2SG-go-RTR-TH-3SG INT
 Will you (do you wish to) go as far as Rarai?

Notice that the gloss is not simply ‘to Rarai’ but ‘as far as Rarai’, indicating that the meaning of the verb is something like ‘reach’ or ‘betake yourself’ or perhaps (with a passive nuance) ‘be taken, by the impersonal force of circumstance’. The same usage is common with *mai-ei-n-a* and *wai-ai-n-a*, *vai-ai-n-a*:

- 5.105 *Vei e-mai-ei-n-a*. (EMek)
 water 3SG-come-RTR-TH-3SG
 (The) water (river) came (to here).
- 5.106 *Oi-mo ke-vai-ai-n-i-mi*. (EMek:D)
 you-just 3PL-go-RTR-TH-PF-2PL
 They go/have gone as far as you. (= They searched/investigated until they came to you.)

The last example shows that we are not dealing with an empty OM. The goal or target of the verb of motion is clearly indexed. This suggests that our glosses might be better rendered as ‘go to (as far as)’, ‘come to (as far as)’ and ‘go to ((as far as) the hearer)’; or as ‘approach X

(movement away from speaker)', 'approach X (movement towards speaker)', and 'approach X (movement towards hearer)'.³³

In some examples we do seem to have completely pleonastic, non-referential OMs:

- 5.107 *Vafoko-mo e-ɲani-mo ɲofa mamaɲa* (EMek:D)
tomorrow-just 3SG-dawn-just garden new.3SG

o-fou-ai-n-a, o-lapau-ai-n-a,
2PL-crowd-RTR-TH-3SG 2PL-pleasure-RTR-TH-3SG

o-mue-ai-n-a.
2PL-return-RTR-TH-3SG

Early every new day you rush off to (your) new garden, you are very happy, you keep returning (there).

A goal of a motion verb (like *ɲofa* here) is not normally indexed by an OM. But comparison with other similar examples shows that these OMs are indeed referential:

- 5.108 *Sakedote mai-mama-ɲa o-lapau-ai-n-i-ʔi,* (EMek:D)
priest come-new-3SG 2PL-pleasure-RTR-TH-PF-3PL

gofa mama-ɲa koá o-fou-ai-n-a,
garden new like 2PL-rush-RTR-TH-3SG

o-mue-ai-n-i-ʔi, o-kava-kava-l-ai-n-i-ʔi.
2PL-return-RTR-TH-PF-3PL 2PL-busy-RED-B-RTR-TH-PF-3PL

When the priests were newly come you were very happy (and), as you rush off to a new garden, you kept on returning to them, you kept busying yourselves with them.

In the gloss to the next example, which illustrates a complex verb word involving more than just motion, 'off' is used to capture the 'reflexive' nuance of an English phrase like 'run off with yourself':

- 5.109 *Ma'i e-piau-foɲe-ai-n-a.* (EMek:D)
wallaby 3SG-run-deceive-RTR-TH-3SG
(The) wallaby escaped. (lit. (The) wallaby ran off deceptively.)

Other motion verbs that are used intracausatively (as well as actively³⁴) are: *lai-ai-n-a*, *lei-ei-n-a* 'reach, arrive at', *biau-ai-n-a*, *piau-ai-n-a* 'run off 'with' oneself, itself', *biu-ai-n-a*, *piu-ai-n-a* 'hang', *kue-ɲe-ai-n-a*, *ʔue-ɲe-ai-n-a* 'get up', *akuni-ai-n-a*, *aʔuni-ai-n-a* 'rise high'. It is also important to notice that a number of these motion verbs with *-ai*, *-ei* have only metaphorical functions/meanings: EMek *kae-ai-n-a* seems to mean only 'be obsessed with, concentrate on'. (NB: EMek *kai-ai-n-a* means 'annoy, harangue'.) Clearly, these meanings are reflective/projective. Such are dealt with specifically in the next section.

I illustrate some more of these verbs here:

- 5.110 *Nɲuɲe e-piu-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
vine.sp. 3SG-sway-RTR-TH-3SG
(The) ngungue is hanging and swaying.

³³ Two other general verbs of 'arriving, reaching' are *gai-ai-n-a*, *kai-ai-n-a* and *lai-ai-n-a/lei-ei-n-a*.

³⁴ I do not have the data to show that every one of these verbs does in fact function actively (I have doubts, for example, about EMek *-kai-ai-n-a*).

- 5.111 *Oi kapaina lo-lai-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
 you what 2SG-reach-RTR-TH-3SG
 What are you thinking so deeply about?

Finally, there are examples of primarily nominal roots being suffixed with an unarguably intransitive, and here inchoative *-AI*:

- 5.112 *Afaʔaʔamo afo-au-ai-n-i-o.* (EMek)
 soon HYP.2SG-man-RTR-TH-PF-2SG
 You might soon become a (married) man.

5.3.3 VERBS OF COGNITION/REACTION/INTERACTION

These are all intradirective verbs, and they belong to the three semantic classes mentioned in the section title. They are found with one or another form of the RTR suffix. All of the thematic consonants are represented: *Ø*, *L*, *N* and *G*, though *G* is rare here as elsewhere. A few of these verbs take two forms of the RTR suffix, with contrasting meanings.

Verb forms with *-AI* generally describe a reaction on the part of the agent to some external phenomenon. They have a double meaning, in that on one level control by the agent is implicated, while on another level a feeling or a behaviour is represented as being a reaction to some external stimulus, which thereby controls the agent. Such a stimulus can be regarded as a cause or reason. On the first level the object of the verb is a kind of direct object, a target. On the second, the object of the verb represents a kind of indirect or oblique object. An example follows:

- a) *maniki, maniʔi* fear
maniki-ai-n-a, maniʔi-ai-n-a fear something, exhibit fear because of something³⁵

- 5.113 *Babie, paebo ge-manitsi-ai-n-i-tsi.* (WMek)
 woman snake 3PL-fear-RTR-TH-PF-3PL
 The women are afraid of the snakes.

The entity represented by the object of the verb is both an oblique stimulus and a direct albeit physically unaffected object. The stimulus causes, and in that sense controls, the response of the human agent.³⁶ But the agent is always *in some sense* in control. All of these verbs seem to be both proactive, projecting feelings at their objects/targets, as well as reactive, expressing reactions to external stimuli. The transitivity of such verbs is low in the sense that the *effect* on the object is weak or non-existent.

Since it is possible to use an imperative form of the verb, the activity represented is clearly to some extent under the control of the agent, and is to that extent proactive:

³⁵ "In reality *maniʔi* signifies a physical effect, so that it can be used of any emotion which produces this kind of effect, even if this is not fear. This word can be used for great surprise, great admiration; it can mean 'to be dumbfounded'." (Desnoës (1933), my own translation from the French.)

³⁶ The stimulus functions as what Farr et al. (1985) call an "enabling" cause or condition (as opposed to a *reason*). A causal relationship of this kind "leaves free choice in the hands of the participant in focus" (1985:140). Compare Schütz (1986:135-137), who speaks in terms of reasons.

5.114 *Fo-lo-mani?i-ai-n-i-au.* (EMek)

OBLG.NEG-2SG-fear-RTR-TH-PF-1SG

You should not fear me. OR: You should not be afraid of me.

I now list some other commonly occurring verbs of cognition and reaction (emotion, sensation, etc., etc.) which have derivatives only in *-AI*:

b) *loku, lo?u* be angry, quarrelsome
loku-ai-n-a, lo?u-ai-n-a be angry, quarrelsome, because of s.th./s.o.

c) *ɲua-gae, ɲua-kae* be excited, moved
ɲua-gae-ai-n-a, ɲua-kae-ai-n-a be excited, moved by/at something; desire³⁷

5.115 *Nuā e-kae.* (EMek)
 heart 3SG-rise
 S/he is excited/keen.

5.116 *Kapa fauŋi-na, la-ia, la-ɲua-kae-ai-n-a.* (EMek:D)
 thing good-3SG 1SG-see 1SG-heart-rise-RTR-TH-3SG
 (If) I see something good I become excited/keen.
 By extension: (If) I see something good I desire it.

d) *kaŋeŋe, ?aŋeŋe* be forgetful
kaŋeŋe-ai-n-a, ?aŋeŋe-ai-n-a forget something

5.117 *P-ai-d-o-kaŋeŋe-ai-n-i-au.* (WMek)
 OBLG-NEG-B-2SG-forget-RTR-TH-PF-1SG
 Don't forget me.

e) *oŋo, loŋo* hear, accept, know
oŋo-ai-n-a, loŋo-ai-n-a recognise, admit, approve, permit

f) *opueŋe, ofueŋe* be ashamed, be bitterly resentful
opueŋe-ai-n-a, ofueŋe-ai-n-a be angry/ashamed at something, resent something

g) *kabolo, ?apolo* be lazy, lethargic
kabolo-ai-n-a, ?apolo-ai-n-a be tired of something, be too lazy to do something

5.118 *Mary ɲeva e-?apolo-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
 Mary dance lazy-RTR-TH-3SG
 Mary is tired of dancing.

h) *boi, poi* fall down³⁸
boi-ai-n-a, poi-ai-n-a refuse to give something to someone, balk at a request

Speech act verbs of discussing, disputing, inquiring about, etc., form a semantic subclass of verbs that take only *-AI*. These verbs generally take a non-human object, and often an abstract object. The activity engaged in is a response to something that is represented as the object of the verb. Some examples are listed here:

³⁷ Desnoës lists fear, admiration, desire, obsession, love and passion as just some of the emotions that might be implicated by this verb form.

³⁸ This is the most probable source, from a number of homonyms.

- i) *nini-kani, nini-ani* talk, chat³⁹
nini-kani-ai-n-a, nini-ani-ai-n-a talk because of something, discuss something
- j) *biu, piu* swing, throw
biu-ai-n-a, piu-ai-n-a argue because of something, dispute something

The following derived verb form has two further derived forms:

- k) *ba-kani, pa-?ani* ask
ba-kani-ai-n-a, pa-?ani-ai-n-a ask *about* someone, something
ba-kani-bini-a, pa-?ani-peni-a ask someone a question

- 5.119 *Ina-u, Fata e-pa-?ani-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
 mother-1SG Father 3SG-CA-bump-RTR-TH-3SG
 My mother asked about Father.

- 5.120 *Ala lo-lao, la-pa-?ani-peni-o.* (EMek)
 what 2SG-go 1SG-CA-bump-give-2SG
 I asked you, where are you going.

The verb *loku, lo?u* 'be angry' also has a form with *BENI* 'give', which can be contrasted with its form with RTR:

- 5.121 *Ala lo-oma lo-lo?u-peni-au?* (EMek)
 what 2SG-DNT 2SG-angry-give-1SG
 Why are you angry with/at me.

These forms with *BENI* correspond to forms of other verbs with *-L-AI* (see below). It seems that these are alternative and roughly equivalent strategies.

Certain verbs can take only *-L-AI* and these can all be described as verbs of interaction. They sometimes take non-human objects, but their *prototypical* objects are human beings. They represent deliberate or at least conscious actions and attitudes, and these are usually *directed towards* other people. Some examples follow:

- a) *aka, a?a* be awake, be alert; laugh
aka-l-ai-n-a, a?a-l-ai-n-a laugh at O, mock⁴⁰

- 5.122 *Lau la-kafo?o paŋu, lo-isa-au lo-a?a-l-ai-n-i-au?* (EMek:D)
 I 1SG-mad DIS 2SG-see-1SG 2SG-laugh-B-RTR-TH-PF-3SG
 I'm mad, am I? – that you look at me and laugh at me?

- b) *maŋaga, maŋaka* be tame, be familiar with, habituated,
 accustomed to (ITR)
βa-maŋaga, ba-maŋaga, pa-maŋaka tame, habituate (TR)
βi-maŋaga, bi-maŋaga, pi-maŋaka be accustomed to, familiar with one another
 (ITR)
maŋaga-lai-n-a, maŋaga-lai-n-a,
maŋaka-lai-n-a be familiar towards, be habituated to

³⁹ Verbs of talking/discussing as well as asking build on a root *kani, *?ani, ani* meaning literally 'bump (into)'.

⁴⁰ C. Yoshimura (pers.comm.) has pointed out that whereas the Indonesian verb for 'laugh' is obligatorily marked as involuntary (with *ter-*), the Mekeo verb for 'laugh' is obligatorily marked as deliberate. Spontaneous laughter is devalued in Mekeo culture. See Wouk (1981) on Indonesian *ter-*; and see Hau-ofa (1981), Jones (1993a) on Mekeo emotions.

- 5.123 *Tsitsimalu-ai ge-ba-maṅaga-n-i-tsi.* (WMek)
 salt-OBL 3PL-CA-tame-TH-PF-3PL
 They tamed them with salt.⁴¹
- 5.124 *Fata e-maṅaga-lai-n-a.* (EMek)
 priest 3SG-tame-RTR-TH-3SG
 He behaves/behaved familiarly towards Father.
- 5.125 *Iji, ninikani an-a-maṅaga-lai-n-a.* (WMek)
 I talk FUT-1SG-tame-RTR-TH-3SG
 I will become used to speaking (in Mekeo).

The prototypically nominal root *lobia*, *lo pia* 'chief', also has derivations with both *-L-AI* and *BA-*:

- c) *lobia*, *lo pia* be a chief; be chiefly, good, fine
ba-lobia-ṅ-a, *pa-lo pia-ṅ-a* praise, honour, treat as a chief
lobia-lai-n-a, *lo pia-lai-n-a* be good towards someone
- 5.126 *Ala lo-oma, eṅa koà lo-lo pia-lai-n-i-au?* (EMek)
 what 2SG-DNT that likeness 2SG-good-RTR-TH-PF-1SG
 Why are you being nice to me like that?

The essential meaning of *-L-AI* in this verb is clearly one of symbolic action directed towards or at a *person*. One cannot be good to a thing. The next verb strongly tends to take human objects too. It represents a nuclear junct in which the first root is *afi* 'take, hold', while the second cannot as yet be identified :

- d) *api-aama*, *afi-aama-* trust, hope
api-aama-lai-n-a, *afi-aama-lai-n-a* trust in, hope in, count on someone
- 5.127 *Ke-afi-aama-lai-n-i-o.* (EMek)
 3PL-take-hope-RTR-TH-PF-2SG
 OR:
 3PL-take-hope-RTR-TH-PF-2SG
 They count(ed) on you.
 OR:
 They trust(ed) in you.

The next verb can take a thing as its object, though its real effect is perhaps upon the person who offers the thing that is refused:

- e) *umaga*, *umaka* ignore something, balk (at something); hence,
 despise, refuse
umaga-lei-n-a, *umaka-lei-n-a* spurn someone, show contempt towards someone
 (e.g. by refusing them or their offerings)
- 5.128 *Ani-ani ke-umaga-lei-n-a.* (WMek)
 food 3PL-refuse-RTR-TH-3SG
 They spurned the (offered) food.

⁴¹ On first contact, the missionaries used salt to woo the Mekeo.

- 5.129 *?o?oae, iviao e-umaka-lei-n-a.* (EMek)
 youth girl 3SG-refuse-RTR-TH-3SG
 (The) youth showed contempt towards the girl.
 Implying that: (The) youth refused (the) girl.

The last verb contrasts with *poi-ai-n-a* (see above), which seems to mean that the agent is in a certain state:

- 5.130 *Oi kuku lo-poi-ai-n-a, ?ua-mu* (EMek:D)
 you tobacco 2SG-refuse-RTR-TH-3SG heart-2SG
e-?inoka.
 3SG-hard
 You refuse (to give) tobacco, your heart is hard.

- f) *a?a-gae, a?a-kae* be bold, insist
a?a-gae-lai-n-a, a?a-kae-lai-n-a demand, insist on⁴²

- 5.131 *E-a?a-kae.* (EMek)
 3SG-cut-high
 S/he insists (that s/he is right); s/he is bold/brave.

- 5.132 *Imoi komunio ke-a?a-kae-lai-n-a.* (EMek:D)
 child communion 3PL-cut-high-RTR-TH-3SG
 The children demand communion insistently.

- g) *kobua, -?opua* be a toy, be playful, play
ba-kobua-?a, pa-?opua-?a play with something, make something 'play'
kobua-lai-n-a, ?opua-lai-n-a toy with someone, make fun of someone

- 5.133 *Fo-lo-pa-?opua-?a!* (EMek)
 OBLG.NEG-2SG-CA-toy-TH-3SG
 You shouldn't make a toy of it!

- 5.134 *Nao au-?a, ke-?opua-lai-n-a.* (EMek)
 foreigner man-3SG 3PL-play-RTR-TH-3SG
 They are amusing themselves with the foreigner.

With the next verb, *apepe* 'cry', which is an EMek verb only,⁴³ the semantic contrast between forms ending in *-AI* and those ending in *-L-AI* can be demonstrated clearly on the same base:

- h) *apepe* cry, weep
apepe-ai-n-a cry about something, cry because of something; bewail something
apepe-lai-n-a cry for, or to someone; wail at someone

There thus seems to be a fairly consistent distinction between verbs in *-AI*, which describe someone's deliberate response to some thing, or to some person, which can be viewed as the stimulus, and verbs in *-L-AI* which generally describe symbolic/affective behaviour which is deliberately directed *towards* or *at* a person. This distinction is only

⁴² Roro has *hara-tae* which enables us to identify the original meaning of this *a?a* (there are homonyms) as 'cut, chop'. *Kae* means 'rise, be high'.

⁴³ The other dialects have *igege* 'cry': ***igege-ai-n-a* is unattested in my data but may very well exist. [In Roro *abe-n-a* means 'laugh till one cries', as opposed to 'controlled laughter, mockery' which is *iriri-ai-n-a*.]

infrequently manifested as alternants of the same verb. The O of verbs with *-AI* can be human or it can be an inanimate object, but the O of verbs with *-LAI* is almost always human, a dative-type recipient or goal.

The next example seems to go against the general rule in that it neutralises the semantic distinction between *-AI* and *-LAI*. Here a verb with *-LAI* takes an inanimate O, or rather an abstract O:

- i) *epo, ?ifo* own, OR: be alone
epo-lai-n-a, ?ifo-lai-n-a have title to, have a claim on
epo-ai-n-a, ?ifo-ai-n-a appropriate

- 5.135 *Oi, lopia lo-?ifo-ai -n-a,* (EMek)
 you chiefship 2SG-own-RTR-TH-3SG
lo-?ifo-lai-n-a paŋu?
 2SG-own-RTR-TH-3SG DIS
 Do you imagine that you alone possess title to the chiefship?

An example of a verb that only occurs with *-ŊAI*⁴⁴ follows:

- a) *iwa-ŋai-n-a, iva-ŋai-n-a* praise someone, something

- 5.136 *Papie ifo-ʻi ke-iva-ŋai-n-i-ʻi.* (EMek)
 woman self-3PL 3PL-speak-RTR-TH-PF-3SG
 (The) women praise themselves. OR: (The) women sing their own praises.

The compound verb *iva-ŋai-n-a* also occurs with the prefix *BA-*:

- b) *ba-iwa-ŋai-n-a, pa-iva-ŋai-n-a* praise, sing praises of

- 5.137 *Oi-e-mu moʻoa pa-iva-ŋai-na* (EMek)
 you-POSS-2SG catfish CA-speak-RTR-3SG
lo-pa-iva-ŋai-n-a.
 2SG-CA-speak-RTR-TH-3SG
 You boast about your catfish. OR: You sing the praises of your catfish.

We also have an apparently tautological formation in the following verb:

- 5.138 *Kai lo-iva-ŋai-ai-n-a.*⁴⁵ (EMek)
 who 2SG-speak-RTR-RTR-TH-3SG
 Who are you praising?

The next example may preserve a contrast between *-LAI* and *-ŊAI*. This depends on an interpretation of the irregular ending *-laŋa* as fossilised *-LAI-n-a* (and incidentally raises the question of covert RTR verbs in general) but the verb in any case illustrates the use of *-ŊAI*

44 This suffix seems to correspond to Motu *-rai*; however, there is no apparent correspondence between the meanings that take these suffixes in the two languages. It corresponds fairly well in function to both *-laki* and *-raki* in Bauan Fijian (see Pawley 1986:88; however, note that in Bauan these suffixes also have a non-intensive function). Fijian *r*/Motu *r*/Mek *ŋ-n* is a regular correspondence.

45 The *-AI* in this verb phrase is distinct from another verbal *ai*, meaning 'around, surround'. For example:

Aŋuma e-au-ai-ai-n-i-au. (EMek)
 fly 3SG-hit-circle-RTR-TH-PF-1SG
 A fly buzzed around me.

with a verb of cognition. The general effect of *-ŃAI* can be described in terms of the semantic features [intensity] and/or [persistence]:

- c) *ob-obo, op-opo* think, worry (ITR) (*obo, opo* is 'mind, be thought, think')
- obo-Ńa, obo-laŃa, opo-laŃa* remember (something), think (about s.th.) (ITR/TR)
- obo-Ńai-n-a, opo-Ńai-n-a* concentrate upon something (TR/ITR)

The next verb does occur with both *-AI* and *-ŃAI*:⁴⁶

- d) *kapu, kafu, ?afu* absence; be absent, empty; be needy, need
- kapu-ai-n-a, kafu-ai-n-a,* need, lack, miss, want for something, be deprived
- ?afu-ai-n-a* of something, deprive oneself of something
- kapu-Ńai-n-a, -kafu-Ńai-n-a,* need, lack, miss, want for something, be
- ?afu-Ńai-n-a* deprived of something, deprive oneself of s.th.⁴⁷

The form with *-ŃAI* is only recorded as a co-verb. Compare the following three examples:

- 5.139 *Kapaina lo-?afu-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
 what 2SG-taboo-RTR-TH-3SG
 What do you lack/need?
- 5.140 *Lau kuku la-?afu-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
 I tobacco 1SG-need-RTR-TH-3SG
 I have no tobacco/I miss tobacco.
- 5.141 *La-la?a-?afu-Ńai-n-a.* (EMek:D)
 1SG-draw-need-RTR-TH-3SG
 I withdrew (from there).

The verb *kapu, kafu, ?afu* 'absence, need, etc.' should not be confused with *apu, afu* 'taboo'. The two meanings are close, and confusion can arise in EMek, where the glottal stop of *?afu* 'need' may be very weakly articulated, making it sound like *afu* 'taboo'.

- e) *apu, afu* taboo; be taboo
- βa-apu-a, ba-apu-a, ba-afu-a, pa-afu-a*:⁴⁸ taboo something to someone
- 5.142 *Fo?ama ke-pa-afu-i-o* (EMek)
 food 3PL-CA-taboo-PF-2SG
 They forbade you food.
- 5.143 *Gugu ba-afu-Ńa afa-kafu.* (NMek)
 tobacco CA-taboo-TH-3SG HYP.1SG-need
 I'm thinking of abstaining from tobacco.

⁴⁶ It is clear that without a thematic consonant, which acts simultaneously as a buffer, a bare *-AI* would readily assimilate to a preceding (root-final) *-a*, especially before *Ń* or *n*. This may very well be what happened in NWMek, where stem-final *-a(-Ń-a)* may in some cases represent fossilised *-ai(-n-a)*. This is sheer speculation at present. But taking the hypothesis one stage further, one could entertain the possibility of a stage of Mekeo when the thematic/buffer consonants had not as yet been innovated or borrowed (Lynch 1978a, for instance, argues that *l*-accretion spread from the Motu area eastward) and which has left a legacy of fossilised RTR suffixes masquerading as stem-final *-a*. The examples of *-lai, -Ńai* in the modern language would thus represent a 'second layer' of RTR suffixation.

⁴⁷ The forms with *-ŃAI* and *-AI* are here seemingly synonymous.

⁴⁸ I shall from here on instantiate examples of overtly causativised verbs (with *BA-*) if they can illuminate the set of contrasts or the range of RTR.

The next verb takes RTR with the thematic consonant *-G* (which corresponds to EMek /k/; see examples 5.51 and 5.52 in §5.3.4, and see §4.3.3.5 above):

- a) *aŋapu* be angry
 aŋapu-kai-n-a abuse someone (*k-ai*)
- 5.144 *Ŋau-ŋa* *e-aŋapu-kai-n-a*. (EMek)
 offspring-3SG 3SG-angry-RTR-TH-3SG
 S/he spoke angrily to (i.e. scolded) his/her son.

5.3.4 EXTRADIRECTIVE VERBS

Many self-enactive verbs and some action-effect verbs take one or two out of three versions of *-(C)AI*. These can be: *-AI*, *-LAI/-L-AI* or *-ŊAI*, but the latter is perhaps typical of this class of verb. There are as a result some larger sets of contrasting suffixes attached to the same root. These verbs all have ITR forms, as well as other transitive lexically determined derivations, as shown below:

- a) *bua, pua* bear (of tree, etc.); carry oneself, betake oneself (ITR)
- bua, pua* bear (fruit); carry something (TR) (PF+3SG.O: *bua-i-a, pua-i-s-a*)
- bua-lai, pua-lai* bring forth, multiply, proliferate (ITR)
- pua-ŋai* bring forth, multiply, proliferate (ITR)
- bua-bua, pua-pua* bring forth, multiply, proliferate (ITR)
- [The three derived forms above are said by informants to be equivalent!]
- ba-bua, pa-pua* bring forth, multiply, proliferate; write (ITR/TR)
- bua-lai-a, pua-lai-a* carry off, make disappear (TR(AT))
- pua-l-ai-n-a* carry with one, take (RTR)⁴⁹
- pua-ŋai-n-a* bear, tolerate, suffer (RTR)
- b) *api, aŋi* leave, depart (ITR)
- api-lai-n-a, aŋi-lai-n-a* leave, avoid, flee from someone (TR(AT?))
- (Approximate synonyms are EMek *pua-afu-ŋa* and *piau-ani-a*)
- c) *api-kobo, aŋi-?opo* try, compare (ITR/TR)
- api-kobo-ŋai-n-a, aŋi-?opo-ŋai-n-a* try something out (manually); test something in the hands (TR)
- d) *kapo(-a), ?afo(-a)* make tossing movement; toss, throw something (TR/TR) (PF, 3SG.O: *kapo(-i-a), ?afo(-i-a)*)
- ba-kapo, pa-?afo* toss violently, make toss (ITR/TR)
- kapo-lai-n-a, ?afo-lai-n-a* pelt (someone with something)
- kapo-ŋai-n-a, ?afo-ŋai-n-a* make O toss, shake O (TR)

⁴⁹ The existence of EMek *-pualai-n-a* 'spread out' complicates the issue.

- e) *biu(-ŋa), piu(-ŋa)* sway, swing, oscillate; fling something (ITR/TR)
ba-biu-a, pa-piu-a (make something) sway, swing (ITR/TR)
biu-ei-n-a, piu-ai-n-a hang (ITR) (also occurs as TR meaning ‘dispute something’)
- f) *ŋabu, ŋapu* make sweeping movements
ŋabu(-k-a), ŋapu(-k-a) whip something; sweep something up (TR)
ŋabu-ai-n-a, ŋapu-ai-n-a whip at something

The forms with *BA-* can be ITR or TR, i.e. can be given an ITR or a TR interpretation, depending on whether the act semantic or the cause semantic is invoked.

Different forms of *bua, pua* ‘bear’ are exemplified and contrasted below:

- 5.145 *Papie, veʔa e-pua-i-s-a.* (EMek)
 woman string.bag 3SG-bear-PF-B-3SG
 The woman carried the string bag.
- 5.146 *Kie-kie a-lo-pua-ŋai-n-a.* (EMek)
 pain-RED FUT-2SG-bear-RTR-TH-3SG
 You will bear the pain.

The notion of endurance is very clear in this last example. Different forms of *kapo, kafo, ʔafo* ‘toss’ are next contrasted:

- 5.147 *Gebo a-kapo-i-a.* (WMek)
 stone 1SG-toss-PF-3SG
 I threw the stone.
- 5.148 *Imi, auke e-kapo-lai-n-a.* (WMek)
 child dog 3SG-toss-RTR-TH-3SG
 The child pelted the dog.
- 5.149 *Imi ga-kapo-ŋai-n-a.* (WMek)
 child 1PL-throw-RTR-TH-3SG
 We knocked the child down.
- 5.150 *Eʔa e-koni-koni-ʔafo-ŋai-n-a.* (EMek)
 house 3SG-push-RED-toss-RTR-TH-3SG
 S/he shook the house by pushing against it.

In this last example *-ŊAI* adds an effortful meaning to the verb.

I next contrast the uses of the transitive and RTR forms of *ŋabu, ŋapu* ‘make sweeping movements’ which takes TH: *G* on the close transitive suffix, but TH: \emptyset with the RTR suffix:

- 5.151 *Imoi, mo-ŋapu-k-a.* (EMek)
 child IMP.2SG-whip-TH-3SG
 Whip the child.
- 5.152 *Ilovelove ke-afi-a, foʔama ke-ŋapu-ai-n-a.* (EMek:D)
 k.o.fronde 3PL-grab-3SG food 3PL-whip-RTR-TH-3SG
 They take hold of the *ilovelove* and whip at the food.

There are very few action-effect verbs which take RTR except when a) this has an intensive function only (see §5.3.5, example 5.158), or b) they head compound verbs formed with intransitive co-verbs. For example:

5.153 *Mave maʔo la-ua-ŋai-n-a.* (EMek)
 areca.nut much 1SG-chew-RTR-TH-3SG
 I chomp up quantities of areca nut.'

5.154 *La-au-ŋea-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
 1SG-hit-be.absent-RTR-TH-3SG
 I thrashed him.

The last verb, which I have from Desnoës only, does not fit easily into any of the above categories. It appears to be a verb of integral process.

g) *lafo* be disturbed
lafo-ai-n-a disturb, shake

5.155 *Kiapu vei-s-ai fo-lafo-ai-n-a.* (EMek: D)
 cloth water-B-OBL OBLG.2SG-disturb-RTR-TH-3SG
 Agitate the cloth in the water.

5.3.5 INTENSIVE/EXHAUSTIVE USE OF *-AI*

This appears to be an extended use of *AI-* but it deserves separate mention. It is best illustrated by the co-verb that adds the meaning of 'exhaustively, to completion' to a main verbal root: *kae, ʔafe* (which basically means 'collect').⁵⁰

5.156 *Laitsi la-ani-ʔafe.* (EMek)
 rice 1SG-eat-collect
 I eat/ate the rice up.

5.157 *Ke-mai-ʔafe-ai.* (EMek)
 3PL-come-collect-RTR
 They all came.

5.158 *La-ani-ʔafe-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
 1SG -eat -collect -RTR-TH-3SG
 I eat/ate it all up.

It seems clear that *-AI* in example 5.158 is *purely* intensive/exhaustive in function.

The independent transitive verb *kae-ai-n-a, ʔafe-ai-n-a* in the extended meaning 'finish, completely' (rather than the literal 'collect completely') is also fairly common.

Note that *aloŋaina*, which is also used as a following co-verb (adding the meanings 'well, much, often' to the stem), is derived from the oblique case marking suffix *-AI*, not the RTR suffix *-(C)AI*.

The intracausative-reflexive meanings illustrated in §5.3.2 often grade imperceptibly into a merely emphatic or intensive use of *-AI*. To show that *AI-* is productive in this purely intensive function I give two more examples:

⁵⁰ Roro *obo* 'collect' is used in a similar way, as an adverbial co-verb meaning 'exhaust, finish'.

5.159 *E-miau-ai-n-a* (EMek)
 3SG-heavy-RTR-TH-3SG
 S/he is very ill.

5.160 *Isa auni-ʔi ke-kipo-ai-n-a ke-apepe-ai-n-a* (EMek)
 they pair-3PL 3PL-float.down-RTR-TH-3SG 3PL-cry-RTR-TH-3SG
 The two of them, they floated on down and kept on crying.

Examples 5.7 and 5.8 above, from Desnoës, and 5.152 and 5.153 below, contain other examples of -(C)AI in an at least partially intensive function.

5.3.6 USES OF -AI IN NWMEK

Although this morpheme is in frequent use in all three of the eastern dialects of Mekeo, as well as in Roro (and I have found traces of it in Lala, Gabadi and Doura), NWMEk seems to have lost it.⁵¹ I put this down – tentatively – to phonetic attrition. The diphthong *ai* frequently goes to *e* or *i* in NWMEk, particularly in rapid speech (so that WMek *au-ai*, or *au-ae* (tree-OBL) ‘from, with, a/the tree’, corresponds to NWMEk *au-e*, *au-i*). It is clearly more difficult to keep *i* distinct, as a separate syllable, than it is *ai*. One can postulate the following developments in NWMEk: **maniki-ai-n-a* > **maniki-i-n-a* > NWMEk *maniki-n-a* ‘fear something’ NWMEk either uses the short transitive suffix, as illustrated, or employs a periphrastic construction using the co-verb *-bini* ‘give’.

However, Brown (1955) gives the following examples (all from his translation of St Mark’s Gospel; the morpheme-by-morpheme analysis is mine, the word breaks and the spelling are Brown’s):

5.161 *E-ŋua.kae-ai-n-i-kia au-kia na* (NWMEk:B)
 3SG-desire-RTR-TH-PF-3PL man-3PL TOP
e-iua-n-i-kia
 3SG-speech-TH-PF-3PL
 He called the men he desired.

The verb stem *ŋuagae* (literally ‘heart.rise’) translates ‘desire’ (in all dialects). Elsewhere, incidentally, Brown has the same verb stem without the RTR suffix:

5.162 *Piaku-ka e-ŋuagae-n-a* (NWMEk)
 chief-1PL 3SG-desire-TH-3SG
 Our Chief/Lord desires it.

It needs to be borne in mind that much of the translation work attributed to Brown was in fact done by pastors who spoke Roro, or Toaripi, or Motu (or several of these) as well as English, and who were accustomed to Bible translations in their own language(s). These people worked with native Mekeo-speaking helpers to translate Bible stories and texts. Brown himself had studied all of these languages (but particularly Motu and Toaripi, in which he had become proficient) before he studied NWMEk (his Kovio) and WMek (his Tati). The possibility of linguistic interference cannot be discounted, and indeed it seems likely under the circumstances.

⁵¹ NWMEk shares this loss with Kuni, which preserves only vestigial traces of the morpheme in question (**aki*) and has in fact developed alternative strategies for e.g. psychological verbs and verbs of reaction.

In the light of this, verbs listed by Brown (1955) in his dictionary that have an apparent RTR *-AI* invite close scrutiny. This is further warranted by the fact that verbs in the other dialects with an apparent RTR *-AI* frequently turn out, upon investigation, to have no such thing. For example *βa-laŋai-n-a*, *ba-laŋai-n-a*, *pa-laŋai-n-a* ‘help someone, assist someone’ looks at first glance like a RTR verb form, but in fact it is based on *laaŋai/laŋai* ‘relaxation, rest’.

Brown’s dictionary includes the following verbs, which have all been used in the translation of St. Mark’s Gospel:

<i>gubaina</i>	stretch out (arm, etc.)
<i>opuŋaina</i>	gather together (ITR)
<i>bauoŋaaina</i>	collect, gather
<i>guiŋoŋaina</i>	gather together (ITR)
<i>uoŋaina</i>	gather together (ITR)

The verb *gubaina* seems to correspond with EMek *kuu-pai-n-a* ‘hold out, offer’ (D) and does not therefore contain a token of RTR *-AI*. *Opuŋaina* may correspond with NMek *-kofuŋa-ŋ-a*, EMek *-?ofuŋa-ŋ-a* which functions as a co-verb only in those dialects. However, the NWMek form is not a regular correspondence, lacking an expected initial *g-*, and hence may in fact be a borrowing from Roro or elsewhere. The other three verbs are based on *-oŋai* which in EMek functions as an intransitive co-verb meaning ‘together, in a crowd’. Desnoës traces this item to Roro *o’onai* ‘tightly packed together’ (without suggesting that it is a Mekeo borrowing). There would again seem to be no firm evidence for RTR *-AI*, though the word may incorporate the oblique case marker *-AI*.

5.3.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON *-AI*

Verbs of motion that take *-AI* are either intransitive (with intensification of meaning) or they take a causative rather than the expected confective reading. Verbs of cognition/reaction/interaction that take *-(C)AI* have a direct O, which is semantically *both* a goal *and* a stimulus, and which they *affect* (not effect) by symbolic means. These verbs are simultaneously proactive and reactive. When the same verbs take *-L-AI* they have a direct *but unattained* O, again a goal which is never physically touched or altered. Extradirective action verbs often take *-ŊAI* and denote an intensified effort on the part of the actor.

The verbs that take reflexive meanings are (predictably) verbs of cognition and verbs of emotional or physical reaction. To quote Harrison: “The object of a [Fijian] reflexive transitive is typically a stimulus (source, cause, reason or beneficiary)” (Harrison 1982:191). As in Fijian, the O of these verbs can be classified semantically as a stimulus; that is to say that, in a presently dominant paradigm of Western science and semantics, every psychological effect entails a physical stimulus. However, the semantics of Mekeo are seriously misrepresented in terms of a stimulus–response model. In Mekeo, the agent is always in some sense responsible, in control, the initiator of the action/process. The O of *-AI* suffixed verbs is, besides, not formally distinct from the O of other transitive and semi-transitive verbs (OM is still *-n-a*). However, the situation *is* formally complex, as we run into an apparently systematic semantic distinction between verbs transitivity with *-AI* and those with *-LAI*, and then again those with *-ŊAI*.

The semantics of the suffix *-(C)AI* in Mekeo are considerably illuminated by Harrison's comparative studies of the corresponding morpheme for the Micronesian languages, and his subsequent work on Proto Oceanic reconstruction. "The most widespread of the functions of POC **aki(ni)* and its reflexes, and the only one reconstructible for all the lower order subgroups of Oceanic recognised here, is the one described by Arms (1974) as *confective/refective*" (Harrison 1982:189). But Harrison (1982:200) goes on to suggest that the original function of pre-POC **aki(ni)* was a purely causative one, from which the confective function 'had developed or was in the process of developing in the POC period'. He argues that POC **aki(ni)* functioned primarily in combination with A-verb intransitives (i.e. intradirective verbs) of two semantic classes: motion and stance verbs (which it causativised) and psychological reaction verbs (which acquired a reflective meaning). In both cases it increased the valency of the root verbs, allowing the addition of an agent-cause actant or a stimulus-cause actant, respectively.

Harrison goes on to reconstruct a Proto Micronesian suffix **aki* (which he derives, along with PMC verbal **akini*, from POC **aki(ni)*) with an apparently innovative function, in which it served to detransitivise transitive stems and so to produce what he calls an agentless passive construction. As we saw, many Mekeo verbs with *-(C)AI* perform functions comparable to this agentless passive. This is either an innovation (at whatever time-depth in Western Melanesian), or it suggests that the Micronesian agentless passive in fact represents an inherited intransitive use of POC or pre-POC **aki(ni)*, rather than a PMC innovation.

5.4 THE PREFIX *BI-*

The prefix *BI-* (which is, as already noted, realised as NWMek *βi-*, WMek, NMek *bi-*, and EMek *pi-*), frequently adds a reciprocal meaning to a verb, or a cooperative meaning. But it can also express either the plurality of the subject, or the repetition of the action/process expressed by the verbal stem (habitual-repetitive). It also occurs (often in combination with *-AI*) in a distributive or dispersive function, in which case the plurality of the subject is often implicated. And it can also have an intensifying function, which often appears as an overlay upon one of the other functions. Note that in some of the above functions it may detransitivise a transitive verb.

The different functions do not appear randomly as regards the classes of verbs to which they may apply. The typical distribution is, predictably perhaps, as follows:

TABLE 54: FUNCTIONS OF *BI-* FOR DIFFERENT VERB CLASSES

RECIPROCAL	—	Extradirective (i.e.TR)
COOPERATIVE	—	IC: Analytic Process
HABITUAL- REPETITIVE	— —	Intradirective Verbs (not Motion types)
DISTRIBUTIVE- INTENSIVE	— —	Intradirective and Intracausative Verbs

Each of the aforementioned functions is dealt with in a separate section below. But first, in order to demonstrate the difficulty of this task, let us look at a single EMek example of a

verb (and a potential utterance) with *BI-* that simultaneously permits a number of equally valid interpretations:⁵²

- 5.163 *Ke-pi-isa.* RECIPROCAL
3PL-REC-look
They look(ed) at one another.
- 5.164 *Ke-pi-isa.* REPETITIVE
3PL-REC-look
They keep/kept looking.
- 5.165 *Ke-pi-isa.* INTENSIVE
3PL-REC-look
They look(ed) attentively. OR: They watch(ed) closely.
- 5.166 *Ke-pi-isa.* DISTRIBUTIVE
3PL-REC-look
They look(ed) all around.

Even the situation of utterance would not always aid the hearer to interpret the speaker's intention correctly.

5.4.1 RECIPROCAL FUNCTION OF *BI-*

A straightforward example of reciprocal meaning would seem to be the notion of people 'meeting':

- 5.167 *Ineŋea-ai uŋa-uŋa au-'i fou a-pi-ʔao-ŋai.* (EMek)
track-OBL sorcerer man-3PL together 1PL-REC-press-INT
On the path I met some sorcerers.

Pi-ʔao-ŋai is the usual verb for 'meet' (i.e. it is a fully lexicalised compound). Another example of reciprocal meaning is encoded in *bi-ŋoa-bi, pi-ŋoa-pi* 'embrace'. This verb appears to contain two instances of *BI-*, but only one is a prefix and, while the other *-BI* looks like a suffix, it consists of a thematic *-B* and the perfective aspect marking suffix *-I*:

- 5.168 *Ke-pi-ŋoa-p-i.* (EMek)
3PL-REC-embrace-TH-PF(?)
They embraced each other.

The degree to which these words have become lexicalised – i.e. have lost reciprocal meaning proper – can be illustrated with *bi-baini, pi-paini* 'fight' ITR:

- 5.169 *Au autsina ge-bi-baini.* (WMek)
man two 3PL-REC-fight
(The) two men fought (each other).
- 5.170 *Ida iji e-bi-baini-bini-au.* (WMek)
s/he I 3SG-REC-fight-give-1SG
S/he fought me. OR: S/he attacked me.

⁵² For convenience, I use REC (for 'reciprocal') in all the interlineal glosses. I do not, however, mean to commit myself to the theory that this meaning is basic.

The last example is somewhat marked and probably translates better as ‘S/he attacked me’. *I-au-n-i-au* ‘S/he beat(s) me’ is a more natural (less marked) expression, and is in fact what was usually elicited for ‘S/he fought me’. NWMek seems to have no reflex of *BI-BAINI*, and indeed very little trace of *BI-* at all.⁵³ The expression that is employed in place of that in example 5.169 is:

- 5.171 *Au iaŋopu gi-oku.* (NWMek)
 man two 3PL-fight?
 (The) two men fought.

Example 5.170 translates unproblematically into NWMek as: *Ia iu i-u-n-i-a* (‘S/he me struck’).

I now turn to another typically reciprocal notion – the idea of ‘helping one another’ — and consider the same stimulus sentence as translated into EMek, NMek, WMek and NWMek, respectively:

- 5.172 *Eŋa`ina au-`i uma-ai (ifo-`i) ke-pi-pa-laŋai.* (EMek)
 that man-3PL garden-OBL (self-3PL) 3PL-REC-CA-ease
 Those men helped each other in a/the garden.’
- 5.173 *Au eŋaia au-tsi uma-ai ifo-tsi ge-ba-laŋai-n-i-tsi.* (NMek)
 man that one-3PL garden-OBL self-3PL 3PL-CA-ease-TH-PF-3PL
 It was those men who helped each other in a/the garden.
- 5.174 *Au ida tsia-uma-ai ge-bi-ba-laŋai.* (WMek)
 man they their-garden-OBL 3PL-REC-CA-ease
 (The) men helped each other in their garden.
- 5.175 *Au eke ipo-ki βinauŋa-ai ge-βa-laŋai-n-i-ki.* (NWMek)
 man that self-3PL garden-OBL 3PL-CA-ease-TH-PF-3PL
 Those men helped each other in a/the garden.

The first thing to notice is a tendency to insert *EPO* ‘self’, though WMek (and the optionality of *ifo-`i* in EMek) show that it is not regarded as obligatory. In both cases where *BI-* is absent the reflexive pronoun *EPO* is present (e.g. NMek and NWMek). The ‘rule’ seems to be that either *EPO* or *BI-* should be chosen to signal reciprocity; but in practice we get redundant double-marking with some degree of semantic bleaching or lexicalisation of *BI-*. In WMek we know that it is the men’s own garden (*ida tsia-uma*), and this may explain the absence of *ipo-tsi*. This fact was not contained in the target sentence: ‘Those men helped each other in the garden’. What is most interesting, however, is the evident possibility (in EMek at least) of leaving in the reciprocal suffix *BI-*, along with *EPO*. This seems to indicate the same kind of semantic bleaching that was exemplified by *bi-baini* in the WMek example 5.170 above). All told, there appears to be a movement towards the more analytic expression of reciprocity.

5.4.2 INTENSIVE FUNCTION OF *BI-*

The purely intensive function of *BI-* is represented – weakly – in the following examples:

⁵³ The only examples I have are *βi-βi-noi* ‘beg’ (cf. WMek *bi-noi* ‘beg’); possibly *pi-kobo* ‘like, likeness’ (cf. WMek *i-kobo-ŋa* ‘likeness’); the last is from Brown (1955): *bi-gua-gua*, which he glosses simply “v.t., to betray”.

- 5.176 *Bauŋa ge-bi-katsi.* (NMek)
village 3PL-REC-pillage
They pillaged (the) village.
- 5.177 *pi-ani-ani* (EMek)
REC-eat-RED
cannibal ogre
- 5.178 *Ge-bi-meke.* (WMek)
3PL-REC-cheek
They stare.

‘Cheek’ (*meke, meʔe*) seems to have certain metaphorical extensions in the realm of ‘honour, shame’. It also functions as a verb meaning a) to ‘put aside or sideways’, and b) to ‘regard attentively’. The original meaning of *-bi-meke, -pi-meʔe* seems to have been ‘spectate; look around, to the left and to the right’. But nowadays it means ‘stare (hard)’.

- 5.179 *bi-abu au-ŋa* (WMek)
REC-see(?) man-3SG
jealously watchful man(person)

Desnoës suggested the following derivation: *BI-IA-ABU* ‘REC-see-ITS’ (i.e. *BI-* + ‘see/look’ + ‘intensively’).

It also seems likely that examples 5.180–5.182 below contain an intensive as well as a repetitive meaning.

5.4.3 HABITUAL-REPETITIVE FUNCTION OF *BI-*

Certain verbal roots in themselves denote or suggest a repetitive kind of action. This can then be emphasised in one of several ways, such as addition of *BI-* or reduplication of the root:

- 5.180 *Ke-pi-niʔi. = Ke-niʔi-niʔi.* (EMek)
3PL-REC-tap 3PL-tap-RED
They tapped repeatedly.

Other examples where *BI-* seems to signal repetition are

- 5.181 *Bio e-bi-aba.* (WMek)
cassowary 3SG-REC-stand
The cassowary is/was drumming with its feet.
- 5.182 *Lo-pi-kaeŋai.* (EMek)
3PL-REC-quarrel
You quarrel(led)/argue(d) continually/frequently.

Note that *kaeŋai* does not exist as an independent verb. The next example is based on the verb *ŋoi* ‘request’. *BI-* adds the idea of habitual action or frequency:

- 5.183 *Go-bi-noi-abala.* (WMek)
2PL-REC-request-very
You are always/constantly asking for something.

In the next example we have an example where *BI-* is prefixed to a clearly transitive verb with confective *-AI* (no *-I-*) and adds a certain intensity to the verb, which means 'sweep s.th. along':

- 5.189 *Kou au e-u-fufu-n-i-ʔi* (EMek:D)
 flood tree 3SG-CA -drown-TH-PF-3PL
e-pi-kipo-ai-n-a.
 3SG-REC-go.down-RTR-TH-3SG
 The flood drowned the trees and swept 'it' downriver.

But the same verb form loses its transitive meaning in the following sentence, where it adds the nuance of plurality (of place and/or of the actant):

- 5.190 *Oala ke-pi-kipo-ai-n-a.* (EMek)
 pipe 3PL-REC-go.down-RTR-TH-3SG
 The pipes are all hanging down. OR: The pipes are hanging down all over.

Some more 'distributed' examples (all without *-I-*) are

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>pi-mou-ai-n-a</i> | be broken in many places |
| <i>pi-uki-ai-n-a</i> | grow everywhere |
| <i>pi-ufu-ai-n-a</i> | swell in many places |

The next example again recalls the reflexive-confective uses of *-AI* in §5.3.1, §5.3.2 and §5.3.3, but with connotations of plurality, not distribution:

- 5.191 *ʔauni ke-pi-kani-ai-n-a.* (EMek:D)
 spirit 3PL-REC-flee-RTR-TH-3SG
 (All) the spirits took themselves off.

It seems to be a case of confective *-AI* being used reflexively (as in §5.3.2 above), and the *BI-* functions to reinforce this reflexive nuance while adding connotations of number.

5.4.5 COOPERATIVE FUNCTION OF *BI-*

The only plausible examples I could find of *BI-* in this function are listed here. Some examples (such as the first two) could be assigned a reciprocal reading:

- 5.192 *Ge-bi-ai.* (WMek)
 3PL-REC-copulate
 They copulate(d).
- 5.193 *Ge-bi-kaonjai.* (NMek)
 3PL-REC-meet
 They meet/met.
- 5.194 *Keaŋa ke-pi-ŋeva.* (EMek)
 path 3PL-REC-twist
 The paths cross.
- 5.195 *Ama-u ina-u fou ke-pi-pajo.* (EMek:D)
 father-1SG mother-1SG together 3PL-REC-rouse
 My father and mother were roused/disturbed simultaneously.

The following was given as describing a similar situation to the above:

- 5.196 *La-pa-paŋo-i-'i.* (EMek:D)
 1SG-CA-shake.awake-PF-3PL
 I shook (attempted to shake) them awake.

The EMek verb *paŋo* does not seem to imply that the attempt to rouse someone from sleep actually succeeded, and it also renders 'disturb'.

5.4.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON *BI-*

On balance it appears from my data that, while one of the inherited meanings of *BI-* was almost certainly reciprocity of action,⁵⁴ its most general function in Mekeo today is to express either plurality of the subject or repetition of the action/process expressed by the verbal stem. The idea of repetition is easily extended to express intensity and distribution. The idea of repetition (in time) could in fact be semantically (and historically) prior to the idea of a simultaneously reciprocated action/process. The detransitivising function of *BI-* is also exploited in this grammar. But it has no causative uses (unless vestigially in its intensifying function), despite predictions based on Ross (1988, see below).

Ross (1988:284-285) suggests that there were in fact two co-existing forms of this prefix in POC: **paRi-* (after Pawley 1973:150-153) and **pa(k)i* (reconstructed by Ross), alongside a causative **pi-* (Ross 1988:391-392). Pawley glossed **paRi-* as a "reciprocal prefix" and Ross describes **pa(k)i* as a vaguely "cooperative" prefix,⁵⁵ but the evidence of Nakanai and the Are-Taupota chain (two "relic areas" in Ross's words), as well as other evidence from outside Oceanic, supports the existence of a separate causative prefix **pi-* whose reflexes, however, mostly fall together (e.g. in Nakanai *vi-*, a causative prefix) with those of reciprocal **paRi* and 'cooperative' **pa(k)i*. This may indeed be what has happened in Mekeo where POC **paRI ~ *pa(k)i* > NWMek *βi-*, WMek, NMek *bi-*, EMek *pi-*,⁵⁶ and where some of the functions of this prefix are still difficult to account for fully.

5.5 THE PREFORMATIVE *I-*

This prefix is apparently of PAN antiquity.⁵⁷ It appears in all the major linguistic groupings of the New Guinea Oceanic languages. There is an equivalent morpheme in the languages of Fiji (see Geraghty 1983:259-260; Dixon 1988b:191-195), as well as in Bugotu (Solomons) and Malo (Vanuatu), as pointed out by Churchward (1941:64-65). It is certainly found in some range of functions in all the languages of Central Papua.⁵⁸

Mekeo *I-* (all dialects) derives large numbers of nominalisations from verbally functioning roots. Two of its chief functions are a) to nominate the circumstantial actants of a process or event (that is, to encode the peripheral CRs as nominals), and b) to form active participles,

54 The usage illustrated in example 5.170 above is almost certainly innovative. The verb *BI-BAINI* means 'fight one another' (i.e. a true reciprocal) in most usages and in all dialects except NWMek.

55 Ross's (1988:284) actual gloss is "do (something) together".

56 Kuni and Roro, two very closely related and very conservative languages, both have *bai-*, or *βai-*; Doura has *vai-*; while Gabadi *he-* coincides with Motu *he-* (and is probably a loan).

57 It occurs in several Indonesian languages as an "instrumental marker" (Capell 1969:42).

58 Lister-Turner and Clark (1954a:19) label its most typical manifestation in Motu as an "Infinitive of Purpose" (see §5.5.2 for a comparable function in Mekeo).

comparable to the English gerunds ('gardening', 'pouring', etc.). These participles have subject focus. Both the above functions seem to be associated primarily with intracausative verbs of analytic process.

However, when *I-* is prefixed to what I have called extradirective verbs, particularly the class of action-effect verbs, one effect is c): passivisation. The *I-* form represents 'the being affected' of a semantic object (e.g. something's *being cooked*), rather than 'the affecting' by a semantic subject (e.g. *someone's cooking something*). These stems are in fact passive participles here,⁵⁹ although syntactically they function like other nominal topics (again, like some English gerunds). These passive participles encode a transitive event (with patient focus) and can be described as action nominals, after Comrie and Thompson (1985).

In fact all of these derived items function as nominals. That is to say, they can function as the topics of predications, and indeed as subjects or objects of transitive verbs. They can also be determined ('possessed') through suffixation, the passive participles (or action nominals) being obligatorily determinate. The nominated CRs and the active participles can also be possessed (in the proper sense of the word) by taking a preposed possessive particle. All of the above generalisations and/or restrictions are, as will be shown, explicable in terms of the lexicogrammar (i.e. the different classes of verbal roots).

It might be objected to the above statement of derivational preferences that intracausative verbs of analytic process can also function as transitives (through the addition of an OM), and that they should thus be capable of forming passive derivations too. However, it needs to be recalled here that the object of an intracausative verb of analytic process represents a demoted subject-agent. Passivisation would simply restore it to subject status. Nominalisation of such verbs ignores extraneous causers and puts the natural subject in focus.

It should be noted finally here that Mekeo preformative *I-* corresponds with Fijian preformative *i-* in that it also appears prefixed to the ordinal numbers.⁶⁰

5.5.1 NOMINALISING FUNCTIONS OF *I-*

Intracausative verbs of analytic process and some intradirective verbs yield a wide variety of nominals with *I-*, some nominating peripheral case roles while others function as participles to represent the process itself. I begin by illustrating the range of possibilities for an analytic intracausative with *uga, uka* 'enter, insert, enclose, don'. Desnoës illustrates three functions of *I-* forms of this verb:

- | | | |
|-----------------|--|---------|
| a) <i>i-uka</i> | i) 'fence, enclosure, container' | OBJECT |
| | ii) 'that which is to be introduced, inserted' | OBJECT |
| | iii) 'the fact/manner of being introduced, inserted' | PROCESS |

The item *i-uka*ⁱ⁾ corresponds to a simple nominal expression, naming a perceptible object, the goal. It objectifies or reifies a function of the verb (the 'enclosing' function) and in effect encodes a nonce case relation. The second item could be taken as suggesting a passive-type

⁵⁹ Joindreau (1907:8) notes the *passive meaning* of verbal *I-* forms in Roro.

⁶⁰ The Mekeo ordinals differ from those of the Fijian languages in always carrying a determining suffix (see §2.2.3.2 above for the forms). In Fijian, *i-* and the 'possessive suffixes' are in complementary distribution, and Geraghty (1983:259) suggests that historically *i-* prefixation has been replacing suffixation as a mark of semantic inalienability.

function, but this is not in fact the case. Verbs of analytic process never function as active transitive verbs with an agent and patient, they can only ever encode a causer and causee. Hence they cannot undergo passivisation. The item *i-uka*ⁱⁱ⁾ simply refers to or ‘names’ the thing that is (to be) introduced – it does not describe the process of its being introduced. For example:

- 5.197 *I-uka ʎa-uka-paŋai-n-i-a.* (EMek:D)
 NOM-enter IMP.3SG-enter-through-TH-PF-3SG
 Let him put in what has to be put in.

I-uka here names the object of the verb – abstractly, in terms of its actual function – and thereby contributes a new, unique and quite ad hoc CR to our repertoire of CRs, permitting us incidentally to expand the notional valency of the verb. Note that *i-uka* in example 5.197 implicates a semantic object of its own (its ‘goal’) in the V2 process already indexed by the transitive marking on the verb *uka-paŋai*. The situation as it is now described entails three instead of two actants. As for *i-uka*ⁱⁱ⁾ (as we can call it), this item is strictly comparable to many other derived nouns such as *i-moga*, *i-moka* ‘wrapped object; package, bundle’, *i-kobo*, *i-ʔopo* ‘trial, attempt’, and *i-gua-gua*, *i-kua-kua* ‘comb’.⁶¹

The item *i-uka*ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ definitely describes a process (in time) but it is an active (or affective) process. For example

- 5.198 *ʎava iʔi-na e-oŋe, papie i-uka-ŋa-ai e-uka.* (EMek)
 moon circle-3SG 3SG-put woman INF⁶²-enter-3SG-OBL 3SG-enter
 The moon had a halo, he entered women ‘after his manner of entering’.

I now illustrate the special functions of the *I-* forms derived from chiefly intracausative verbs by contrasting these with finite verb forms formed on the same root. I shall take another canonical verb of analytic process, *ope*, *love*, the glosses of which include at least ‘curve, curl, coil, spiral, roll, wrap, encircle, curl up/back, fold, wilt’:

- 5.199 *Kuku ma-love.* (EMek)
 obacco IMP.1SG.roll
 I want to roll a cigarette.
- 5.200 *Amuʔe e-love-i-a.* (EMek)
 dog 3SG-curl-PF-3SG
 The dog curled itself up.
 [This may be reflexive or a case of empty-O.]
- 5.201 *Upe ʎa-ŋau-ŋa e-love.* (EMek)
 taro.shoot RD-leaf-3SG 3SG-curl
 The taro leaves are curling up/have curled up.
- 5.202 *Upe ʎa-ŋau-ŋa e-love-love.* (EMek)
 taro.shoot RD-leaf-3SG 3SG-curl-RED
 The taro leaves are all curling up/have all curled up.

⁶¹ Van Lamsweerde (among others) tends to lump all such deverbal nouns together, labelling them “resultatives”; but, as we shall see, this is not a satisfactory description. These forms call for more than a blanket term.

⁶² I gloss the *I-* as INF, standing for infinitive (=non-finite), to distinguish it from the passivising *I-* that appears on true transitive verbs (see next section).

- 5.203 *Upe ɲa-ɲau-ɲa e-afi-love-love.* (EMek)
 taro.shoot RD-leaf-3SG 3SG-curl-RED
 The taro leaves are getting all curled up/have got all curled up.
- 5.204 *i-love aɲa'ɔ* (EMek)
 NOM-roll one
 one roll (of something; e.g. leaves, papers, mats)
- 5.205 *i-love-love* (EMek)
 NOM-curl-RED
 tanket variety
 (the leaves grow in a helicoid fashion from the stem)
- 5.206 *Upe ɲa-ɲau-ɲa e-i-love.* (EMek)
 taro.shoot RD-leaf-3SG 3SG-INF-curl
 The taro leaves are curled up.
 (That is, they are entering, or are already in, the state of being curled up.)

Intradirective verbs behave in much the same way as analytic intracausatives:

- 5.207 *Vei e-lolo.* (EMek)
 water 3SG-flow
 The water is flowing/has flowed.
- 5.208 *Vei e-i-lolo.* (EMek)
 water 3SG-INF-flow
 The water is clear.

Another verb that is very like *uga*, *uka* and *ope*, *love* – and a canonical intracausative in most Oceanic languages – is *gubu*, *kupu* ‘block, close’. It has the following nominal/participial uses:

- b) *i-gubu*, *i-kupu*
- ‘endogamous clan’
 - ‘something tabooed/reserved’ (e.g. a woman for a man)
 - ‘crowd, mass, blockage’
 - ‘the act or manner of blocking, closing, reserving’

Another intracausative verb is *oje* ‘put’ (and also ‘put out’, ‘bury’ and other more or less metaphoric meanings), which yields:

- c) *i-oje*, *i-d-oje*, *i-z-oje*, *i-s-oje*
- ‘fishing-net’ (like a hoop, with cane frame)
 - ‘something that has been put, put out (flowers), etc.’
 - ‘the act of putting (out), the act of paying.’

It can be seen that most of these items function to nominate or lexicalise ‘case relations’ (i.e. excluding the ‘process’ readings). We can in fact isolate a number of semantically distinct CRs – that is to say abstract CRs that can be distinguished in terms of the Western semantic tradition – but it must be remembered that these all name nonce functions/relations. I catalogue some of them here, using very ad hoc labels:

OBJECT OF RESULT:

- i-uka* ‘that which is (to be) closed off’, hence ‘enclosure’
i-moka ‘that which is (to be) wrapped’, hence ‘packet, bundle’
i-ʔufu ‘that which is (to be) bunched, bundled’, hence ‘packet, bundle’

<i>i-faja</i>	'packet, bunch, sago cooked in leaves' (from <i>faja</i> 'pack, bag')
<i>i-umi</i>	'envelope made of bark of a banana tree, for cooking e.g. fish'
<i>i-umi-umi</i>	'packet of any kind' (often made with bark of banana tree)
<i>i-uŋo</i>	'large packet of sago wrapped in <i>fifi</i> leaves and cane, for carrying'
<i>i-ʔova, i-ʔofa</i>	'bundle'
<i>i-ove</i>	'roll, packet' (for <i>i-ofe</i> , from <i>ofe</i> 'curl, roll up, twist')
<i>i-ove-ove</i>	'roll, packet'
<i>i-love</i>	'roll', also 'kind of belt' (for <i>i-lofe</i> , from <i>lofe</i> 'roll up, curl')
<i>i-ŋofe</i>	'leaves, bark, fibre for wrapping something' (from <i>ŋofe</i> 'wrap')
<i>i-ŋoa</i>	'heap, collection' (from <i>ŋoa</i> 'collect')
<i>i-ŋaŋo</i>	'accumulation' (from <i>ŋaŋo</i> 'accumulate')
<i>i-uka</i>	'enclosure, kind of fence'
<i>i-ʔepu</i>	'cleared path, space' (from <i>ʔepu</i> , 'peel, scrape, clean')
<i>i-fafa</i>	'splinter of wood for stirring food' (from <i>fafa</i> 'split')
<i>i-fai</i>	'marked as private/taboo by a knotted cord' (from <i>fai</i> 'knot, tie')
<i>i-kina</i>	'that which is (to be) chosen' (from <i>kina</i> 'choose')
<i>i-kupu</i>	'that which is (to be) closed off, restricted, or choked, massed, dense', and hence 'clan' and 'crowd'
<i>i-pa-keke</i>	'anything fried or for frying' (from <i>pa-keke</i> 'make crackle')
<i>i-pa-aŋa</i> ⁶³	'anything roasted or for roasting'
<i>i-ŋaku-ŋa</i>	'anything boiled or for boiling'

OBJECT OF INSERTION:

<i>i-uka</i>	'that which is (to be) introduced; that which goes in'
<i>i-fau</i>	'that which is (to be) implanted'
<i>i-fau-apu-ŋa</i>	'stopper for pot'
<i>i-koko</i>	'that which is (to be) pushed in' (e.g. 'nail')

OBJECT OF USE (INSTRUMENT):

<i>i-ʔou</i>	'boat-pole' < 'that which is (to be) used as a boat-pole'
<i>i-ua</i>	'lime-stick' (from <i>ua</i> 'chew')
<i>i-au</i>	'stick for knocking fruit down' (from <i>au-ŋ-a</i> 'hit, beat s.o./s.th.')
<i>i-kea</i>	'spool, bobbin, shuttle' (from <i>kea</i> 'insert self, slip in')
<i>i-pua</i>	'timber which supports/bears another' ⁶⁴
<i>i-kua-kua</i>	'comb' < 'that which is (to be) used as a comb'
<i>i-ʔamu-ʔamu</i>	'broom' (from <i>ʔamu-ŋ-a</i> 'sweep something')
<i>i-aŋa</i>	'kind of trap for pigs (see <i>aŋa</i> 'bite, touch, get, catch')
<i>i-ao</i>	'prop, support, bridge' (from <i>ao-ŋ-a</i> 'lean against, press against something')

⁶³ These last three items usually occur as heads of NPs with the patient-of-change as their topic-subject: *oŋoi i-pa-keke* 'fried breadfruit', *ipako ipa-aŋa* 'roasted sago'. Compare *mekoi i-ŋaku-ŋa* 'boiled sweet potatoes' (this is a passive, which the others are not, as *ŋaku* is an action-effect verb and belongs in §5.5.2).

⁶⁴ Used for the main beam in a roof and part of a fall-trap. From *bua, pua* 'bear'.

<i>i-lofo</i>	'cross-piece' (affixed to timber for ease of carrying', from <i>lofo</i> 'cross')
<i>i-laka</i>	'branch used to knock the dew off the bushes in one's path'
<i>i-la?a-la?a</i>	'rake' (from <i>la?a</i> 'pull')
<i>i-apu-apu</i>	'blanket < that which is (to be) used as a cover'
<i>i-ebe, i-epe</i>	'that which is (to be) used as a pincer' (hence a native 'scissors'); also <i>i-d-ebe, i-t-epe, i-s-epe</i> , from <i>ebe, epe</i> 'be pinched'

Some of the above terms are more thoroughly lexicalised than others. The former generally have concrete referents, the latter a more abstract denotation.⁶⁵ Some thoroughly fossilised nominals with *I-* (forms for all dialects) are:

<i>i-oni-oni, i-d-oni-oni,</i>	story, legend
<i>i-z-oni-oni, i-s-oni-oni</i>	
<i>i-biji, i-pitsi</i>	shotgun, carbine
<i>i-obi, i-opi</i>	loop of fibre used for climbing coconut trees ⁶⁶
<i>i-gini, i-jini, i-tsini, i-?ini</i>	walking stick
<i>i-ia</i>	face, appearance (from <i>*ia</i> 'see'; nowadays one also hears <i>īdā, īzā, īsā</i> ⁶⁷)
<i>i-kawa, i-?ava</i>	dam for catching fish
<i>i-?amala</i> (EMek)	opening: window, door
<i>i-pani, i-fani</i>	head-rest, pillow
<i>i-aŋe-ba, i-d-aŋe-ba, i-z-aŋe-ba,</i>	orphan
<i>i-s-aŋe-pa</i>	
<i>i-ba-ani, i-pa-ani</i>	poison
<i>i-ŋuŋu</i>	track left by so walking through the grass, bush

OBJECT OF ANALYSIS (?):

<i>i-?opo</i>	'that which is (to be) attempted, tried' — also 'the act of trying'
<i>i-?opo</i>	'that which is (to be) measured' (and hence 'measure, measurement') — also 'the act of measuring'
<i>i-luma</i>	'that which is (to be) measured' (hence 'measure, measurement'), — also 'the act of measuring'

Turning now to the process meaning of analytic intracausatives with *I-*, it is clear that an active participle can be predicated only of a subject, that is an agent-actor, not of an object. Otherwise said, these participles have subject-focus. Nominal expressions like *i-gubu, i-gobu, i-kupu*, meaning 'clan' or 'something forbidden' or even 'the act of closing/blocking/forbidding' are perfectly acceptable, and in these meanings can be made determinate ('his/her clan', 'his/her reserved/tabooed entity'), but they should not be misconstrued as having a passive meaning. This is precluded by the process dynamics of the verb. Thus

⁶⁵ It may be the case that some instrumental nouns at least have been derived from nouns of result over time.

⁶⁶ The loop is held between the feet and extends across the curvature of the tree, giving foothold.

⁶⁷ I am citing forms that are determined, with compensatory length, for third person singular.

****agē i-gobu-ŋa, **akē i-kupu-ŋa**, which would have to be glossed either as ‘the closing/blocking/tabooing of the mouth of someone/something *by someone*’, or ‘the mouth of someone/something has been closed/blocked/tabooed *by someone*’, is quite unacceptable. An active reading with subject-focus seems odd at first in English but *is* feasible:

- 5.209 *I-kupu ini-n-ai lo-ini fo-kapula.* (EMek:D)
 INF-close thorn-3SG-OBL 2SG-prick OBLG.2SG-strong
 If you ‘follow the way’ of sticking close together you will be strong.

Here *kupu* can be read as meaning ‘close ranks’. *Ini-n-ai-ini* is an idiom meaning ‘do something properly’, ‘follow the way of...’. *I-kupu* here is an active and an extradirective participle with an underlying agent-actor subject: ‘(someone’s) closing ranks’. The same goes for *i-oŋe* ‘putting, paying’⁶⁸, and *i-pau, i-fau* ‘planting’, in the next examples.

- 5.210 *Paio-ai i-fau mei ŋou-ŋa.* (EMek:D)
 border-OBL INF-plant with rule-3SG
 On (the) border (of the garden), planting (things) has rules.

The active participles also form intransitive process verbs: *e-ilove* ‘be rolled in a circle’, *e-ikupu* ‘be restricted, in a crowd’. They can take any tense-aspect or mood.

When an analytic intracausative has been transitivised with *BA-*, *then* it can be passivised. For example *-gai, -kai* is an intracausative verb meaning ‘be right, well, clean, proper’. And *-ba-gai-a, -pa-kai-a* means ‘make clean, proper; make straight (the law); heal’. This transitive verb *can* form passive participles, as in:

- 5.211 *Gia-ŋa i-ba-gai-na gi-ao.* (WMek)
 path-3SG PASS-CA-clean-3SG 3PL-go⁶⁹
 They have gone to clear the path.

Here ‘the path, its being made clean (by someone)’ is a rankshifted nominal predication functioning as the goal of a motion verb.

A verb of analytic process can be causativised, and then nominalised (not passivised), and can finally be reverbaised to function like any other finite verb, in any tense or mood:

- 5.212 *Ainā fe-i-pa-aŋa’au.* (EMek)
 voice.3SG OBLG.3SG-PASS-CA-obey
 His voice/commands should be obeyed.

This does not always happen, however.⁷⁰ Such verbs are rather rare in the everyday spoken language.

More commonly, complex nominal expressions are constructed with active participles, *but without a determining suffix*. A transitive verb retains its OM, as in:

⁶⁸ As in: *kawa i-oŋe, kawa i-d-oŋe, ʔava i-s-oŋe* ‘paying the price’ (*kawa, ʔava* is ‘price’).

⁶⁹ Note that *I-* is here glossed not as INF but as PASS, for passive. An actor-subject has been deleted, and the deverbal noun has patient-focus, as marked by the determining suffix. It still has an underlying external agent who is responsible for the effect. Passive participles are described in §5.5.2.

⁷⁰ In §5.5.3 I illustrate the possibilities for reverbaising nominalised intracausatives and some constraints on this process.

- 5.213 *Iva i-pa-kua-muni-a au-ŋa.* (EMek:D)
 word INF-CA-drop-back-3SG person-3SG
 S/he is someone who can give a sharp retort.
 (lit. (S/he is) the person who causes words to go back.)

In this example (above) *-a* is an OM (like *-ŋa/-n-i-a*) and contrasts with the determining suffix *-ŋa/-na*. *Iva i-pa-kua-muni-a* is an embedded clause whose subject has undergone ellipsis and whose verb has been deverbalised (i.e. made non-finite). The same thing happens in the following example with *oŋe* ‘put, put away’; but a problem here for our analysis is that *oŋe* is potentially a zero-object verb, and it is not evident from the utterance itself whether we have an underlying OM or an underlying determining suffix.

- 5.214 *Au i-d-oŋe ŋa-mia-gai, na-ga-ao.* (WMek)
 wood INF-B-put IMP.3SG-be-and FUT-IPL-go
 As soon as the wood is put (away), we will go.
 (lit. Let putting away the wood be (finished) and we will go.)

A lack of signals in surface structure makes problematic the analysis of utterances such as that in the above example. The choice between INF and PASS is, for example, unclear.

A verb which, despite certain appearances (and perhaps expectations), does *not* belong in this section is *-ani* ‘eat’. This is a transitive verb and, as one might expect, an extradirective. Nevertheless, when prefixed with *i-*, it can seem from some meanings to function like the intracausatives listed above:

- i-ani*
- i) ‘food, nourishment’
 - ii) ‘taste (of food)’
 - iii) ‘the fact or process of eating’

The item *i-ani*ⁱⁱ) for instance, meaning ‘taste’, looks like a nominated CR. However, *i-ani*ⁱⁱ) never occurs without a determining suffix (e.g. *i-ani-na* ‘its ‘taste’’) and must be interpreted as ‘the process of something’s being eaten’ (i.e. equivalent to *i-ani*ⁱⁱⁱ); it is in fact a passive participle, and hence the verb belongs with the extradirectives.

Compare:

- i-pa-ani*
- i) ‘fodder’
 - ii) ‘poison’
 - iii) ‘the fact or process of being fed’

5.5.2 ACTION NOMINALS WITH *I-*

Action-effect verbs, when de-finitised and prefixed with *I-*, yield determinate nominal expressions that I call action nominals. They are similar to passive participles. By determinate is meant that the resulting action nominal, no longer a finite verb, bears a determining suffix marked for the person and number of some patient-of-change object. As a passive, it has object-focus. It is *what has happened to some object* that is foregrounded by this participle. There is an underlying agent CR, but this agent cannot be encoded in the same clause. The exact nature of the object CR (as would have been shown by TH, or the absence of TH, or perhaps by a co-verb) cannot be shown.

Here are three uses of a typical action nominal:

- a) *i-u-ŋa, i-d-au-ŋa, i-z-au-ŋa, i-s-au-ŋa* (for earlier *i-au-ŋa*)
- i) ‘that which has been struck’, e.g. a pig
 - ii) ‘that which will be struck’, e.g. a pig
 - iii) ‘the striking of someone, something’, i.e. ‘the killing (of a pig)’

Meanings i) and ii) are illustrated by the following:

- 5.215 *?uma i-s-au-ŋa kapā?* (EMek)
 pig PASS-B-strike-3SG what.3SG
 Which is the pig which was/will be killed?

Meaning iii) is illustrated by the following example:

- 5.216 *Kuma i-d-au-ŋa e-mai.* (EMek)
 pig PASS-B-strike-3SG 3SG-come
 S/he came to kill the pig. (i.e. ‘for the killing of the pig’)

Compare the above with the equivalent forms of two other extradirective verbs:

- b) *i-ŋagu-ŋa, i-ŋaku-ŋa*
- i) ‘That which has been cooked’, e.g. sweet potatoes
 - ii) ‘that which will be cooked’
 - iii) ‘the cooking of something’
- c) *i-api-na, i-s-afi-na* (for earlier *i-afi-na*)
- i) ‘That which has been taken’
 - ii) ‘That which will be taken’
 - iii) ‘The taking of something’

The action nominal so formed is a passive by the functional criteria of clausal topic assignment (a non-agent argument replaces the original agent as topic) and impersonalisation (suppression of the original agent). However, the question of the ‘detransitivisation’ of an originally active clause is less clear-cut.⁷¹ Mekeo action nominals differ from (for example) Roro action nominals in that they can be conjugated according to two paradigms: the paradigm of determining suffixes, which express an ‘inalienable’ relation, and the paradigm of verbal suffixes expressing transitivity (and hence perfective//imperfective aspect) and person and number.⁷² In the first conjugation *-ŋa* must be interpreted as a detransitivising relational (i.e. determining) suffix. In the second conjugation it must be interpreted as imperfective *-ŋa* and thus contrasts with perfective *-n-i-a*. As just noted, neighbouring languages do not share this feature – only Mekeo has transitive verb forms after *i-*.⁷³ Here is an example of a perfectly marked action nominal:

⁷¹ These three “functional domains” of passives are proposed by Givón (1982:143).

⁷² Note that the object-marking paradigm of a Mekeo transitive verb, as illustrated in §4.1.2 and §4.2.1 above, neutralises the perfective//imperfective aspectual distinction for all first and second person objects. This may have motivated the double conjugation here, which enables a speaker to preserve the distinction in all persons. Motu seems to have a similar system (see Taylor 1970a:145).

⁷³ The use of the morpheme *-i-*, which is usually thought to mark transitivity, with passive meaning as here, is reminiscent of the Maori passive suffix. Passive is recognised as the *unmarked* transitive sentence type in Maori (see Clark 1973, and Chung 1976, *passim*), statistically far more common than active in narrative texts.

5.217 *?uma i-s-au-n-i-a* (EMek)

pig PASS-B-hit-TH -PF-3SG

The pig has/had been hit/killed. OR: the pig's being hit/killed-PF

OR: the pig's having been hit/killed

When an action nominal is embedded in a verbal predication, i.e. depends on a finite verb, this finite main verb 'governs' the tense-aspect of the action nominal (i.e. the action nominal must agree with it). However, the tense-aspect of the action nominal can influence our interpretation of the tense-aspect of the finite verb when this is intransitive:

5.218 *I-kapu -mu la-mai.* (EMek)

PASS-search-2SG 1SG-come

I (have) come to look for you. OR: I (have) come in search of you.

5.219 *I-kapu-n-i-o la-mai.* (EMek)

INF-search-TH-PF-2SG 1SG-come

I came to look for you.

In example 5.218 the finite verb signals perfective aspect (by virtue of unmarked stress on *-mâi*) but because of the imperfective aspect of the action nominal one has to interpret the coming as recent – the looking/searching is yet to be done. In 5.219 on the other hand, the action nominal is in perfective aspect, so the finite verb must be interpreted as having reference to a more remote past. In other words, the 'real time' of the finite verb must always be taken to *precede* the 'real time' of the action nominal.

Having said this, it is necessary to stress that the main function of passivised verbs is to nominalise an activity while dispensing entirely with the agent. This results in a construction in which the patient (ex-object) is the subject-topic. Such constructions often function in their entirety (in the form of rankshifted/embedded clauses) as arguments of other verbs, and especially as goals of motion verbs:

5.220 *Naku i-biu-ŋa e-ao.* (NMek)

fishhook PASS-throw-3SG 3SG-go

S/he's gone to cast a hook.

5.221 *Naku i-af^o74 e-lao.* (EMek)

fishhook PASS-throw(-3SG) 3SG-go

S/he's gone to cast a hook.

One of the main functions of action nominals based on action-effect verbs is to express reduced purpose clauses, as illustrated here.⁷⁵ There appears to be a grammatical constraint such that a coreferential subject in an embedded purpose clause must be deleted, and this is accomplished by the operation I here call passivisation. The agentless passives which result can – in Mekeo – be transitive or intransitive. But note how the subject of examples 5.218 and 5.219 re-emerges in the determining suffix on the relativising pronoun *au-* in a relative construction:

⁷⁴ Notice that we here have *i-af^o* for an expected *i-?af^o*.

⁷⁵ Taylor recognises this function for what he calls "infinitives" with *i-* in Motu. He calls *i-* the "infinitive complementizer". An infinitive complement can only occur after a few verbs in Motu, in particular *ura* 'want'. In Mekeo it often appears after verbs of motion. The subject of the infinitive is – in both languages – deleted under condition of being coreferential with the subject of the matrix clause. See Taylor (1970a:144-149).

- 5.222 *Oi, i-kapu-n-i-o au-'i ke-mai.* (EMek)
 you PASS-search-TH-PF-2SG man-3PL 3PL-come
 The men who (have/had) searched for you have come.

Some verbs – chiefly action-effect verbs – form action nominals that function as rankshifted topics in purpose constructions such as the following:

- 5.223 *i-d-ani-na maka-ŋa* (WMek)
 PASS-B-eat-3SG fish-3SG
 fish to be eaten OR: fish for eating

- 5.224 *i-inu-ŋa ivi-na* (NMek)
 PASS-drink-3SG water-3SG
 water to be drunk OR: water for drinking

However, the same meanings appear to be more readily expressed as follows (at least in EMek):

- 5.225 *inu-inu vei-na* (EMek)
 drink-RED water-3SG
 drinking water

5.5.3 REVERBALISING PARTICIPLES WITH I-

Mekeo permits the reverbalisation of participles within certain predictable limits (compare 5.206 and 5.208 above). That is to say they are again given a subject function, which in turn is capable of carrying all the usual marking for tense and mood. However, there can be no object marker, nor of course any form of determining suffix (since it is now functioning as a verb).

Since an action nominal has as its focus the ex-object of a true transitive verbatation, i.e. a patient, it is impossible to promote this entity to an inherently agentive function, such as the subject is in Mekeo. Thus we do not find that these passive participles are reverbalised. On the other hand, the active participles derived from intracausative verbs of analytic process can be reverbalised without any difficulty. Their original subject was agentive and (as we saw above) even when demoted to object function this actant retained a considerable degree of agentivity or 'control'. Thus its repromotion to subject presents no semantic problem.

The active participle may appear as a finite verb, in any tense or mood⁷⁶ but apparently only in the third person. This last circumstance is no doubt due to the fact that intracausative verbs of analytic process typically do not take human subjects – they usually have inanimate subjects (which cannot function as speech act participants).

- 5.226 *Aka ke-i-pa-pua.*⁷⁷ (EMek)
 name 3PL-PASS-CA-bear
 Their names were written down.

⁷⁶ The degree to which this construction may have been fostered by the mission publicists (via native catechists trying to translate the English passive) needs to be considered. Examples 5.226–5.228 illustrate this kind of thing – they are all from religious publications. But such 'interference' would have commenced very soon after contact (1896), and is consequently very difficult to establish.

⁷⁷ The stem *βa-βua, ba-bua, pa-pua* does duty for 'write' as well as for 'mark, carve a design' in all dialects.

- 5.227 *Barabbas ŋa-i-ŋupu ke-oma* (EMek)
 Barrabas IMP.3SG-PASS-free 3PL-DNT
 They wanted Barabbas freed.
- 5.228 *Lo-iva-n-i-a auŋa ala a-ŋe-i-kapa-oma?* (EMek)
 2SG-speak-TH-PF-3SG TOP what FUT-3SG-PASS-do-INT
 That which you have said, how will it be accomplished?
- 5.229 *?oporoŋo fe-i-fau.* (EMek)
 post OBLG.3SG-PASS-plant
 A/the post should be planted.

The apparent rule against first and second person subjects seems to be compounded and reinforced when dealing with verbs in the intentional moods. The intentional moods are subjunctive moods, and verbs in either of the two intentional moods (obligative and imperative) are, as we saw, subordinated to and governed by the deontic verb *OMA*. This verb locates the intentionality of an utterance, and the ultimate control of the verb, with some first or second person agent. (A third person subject at the level of *OMA* is unsatisfactory, and must be subordinated to a further *OMA* with a first or second person subject.) Since the essential purpose of *I-* is to eliminate the source of control, there is a contradiction in attempting to reintroduce a control source through use of an intentional mood.

The 'rule' can be illustrated conveniently by the impossibility of the following example:

- 5.230 ***Fa-i-aŋa-mauni-?a.* (EMek)
 OBLG.1PL-INF-touch-safe-1PL
 We should (like to) be saved.

This would mean something like: 'We wish to be saved as though we do not wish to be saved.' Meanwhile the next example occurs in the newest prayer book and is, one presumes, acceptable to Mekeo speakers:

- 5.231 *Lalau-?a fe-ke-i-aŋa-mauni-'i.* (EMek)
 soul-1PL OBLG-3PL-INF-touch-safe-3PL
 Our souls should be saved.

This example is presumably short for: *Lalau-?a fe-ke-i-aŋa-mauni-'i a-oma* (where *a-oma* = 1PL-DNT), that is 'We should like that our souls should be saved.'

Finally, a special agentive nominal construction can be exemplified with the stem *aŋa-mau*, which consists of the analytic intracausative *aŋa* 'touch, hold' and the integral process verb *mau* 'be alive, well, safe'. The stem *aŋa-mau* is thus not a passive participle, and as explained above (§5.5.1 and §5.5.2) it should not carry a determining suffix (here *-ŋa*) agreeing with some understood patient-of-change object.⁷⁸

- 5.232 *Lalau-?a i-aŋa-mau-ŋa.* (EMek)
 soul-1PL INF-touch-safe-3SG
 Our Saviour OR: The Saviour of our Souls.

In fact the expression given here can be interpreted as short for the identificational predication: *Isa [lalau-?a i-aŋa-mau]-ŋa* 'S/he (is) the saviour of our souls.' This analysis will explain the use of INF in the glosses above.

⁷⁸ As a nominalised verb form it might legitimately have carried a first person plural suffix in agreement with an understood *lai* 'we(excl.)' or *ikalisa* 'we(incl.)'

5.5.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON *I-*

The prefixation of *I-* to intracausative verbs of analytic process yields nominal expressions that lexicalise one or other of the CRs (i.e. actants or circumstants) implicated by the pragmatic valency of the root. The two main categories of nominals here are instrumental nouns and nouns of result. These two groups of words account for most instances of *I-* prefixation in Mekeo.

There is also a substantial number of active participles, with subject-focus, which are formed in the same way and which are in frequent use.

The prefixation of *I-* to transitive extradirective verbs (particularly to the class of action-effect verbs) yields passivised action nominals with object-focus. These retain marking for transitivity (or kinesis) and improvise marking for the fundamental tense-aspect distinction (imperfective//perfective). They cannot, however, take negative marking.⁷⁹ These action nominals can be regarded as passive participles. Passive participals function importantly to express purpose clauses, in the future, the present or the past, as is also the case in Motu.

The active participles can be reverbalsed to function as doubly derived verbs in any tense or mood, but (apparently) only with the third person subjects.

5.6 NON-FINITE VERB FORMS

5.6.1 VERBS AS UNDERIVED ABSTRACT NOUNS

The kind of ‘deverbal’ nouns we are talking about here function as topics of verbal clauses, they can be possessed by means of possessive predicates (§2.2.1.4), and they can function as the goal of a motion verb.

5.233 *Ina'ina pea e-pakai laa'i, e-meau.* (EMek)

this walk 3SG-easy not 3SG-heavy
This walking isn't easy, it's hard

5.234 *βea-βea ike βade-βade maini ge, βea gaβa-gaβa.* (NWMek)

walk-RED this easy-RED not but walk hard-RED
This walking isn't easy, it's hard.

5.235 *E-mi piau a-ŋe-mafu-mafu.* (EMek)

POSS-2PL run FUT-3SG-bad-RED
Your running will be poor, will suffer.

5.236 *Gabu-gabu i-o.* (WMek)

hunt-RED 3SG-go
He has gone hunting.

5.237 *Vei akō la-lao.* (EMek)

water draw.3SG 1SG-go
I am going to draw water.

Non-finite verb forms frequently carry a determining suffix, which indexes an agent, actor and/or undergoer:

⁷⁹ See Comrie and Thompson (1985:360-368) for a cross-linguistic account of the verbal categories that may be lost or retained by action nominals.

5.238 *Poi-na oiso auŋa.* (EMek)
 fall-3SG three ASS
 He fell three times.

5.239 *Iva-ʔi aʔa-ʔi apala.* (EMek)
 speak-3PL laugh-3PL bad
 Their talking and laughing is awful.

Verbs function to form nominal expressions like the following:

5.240 *inu-nu ui-na* (NWMek)
 drink-RD water-3SG
 drinking water

5.241 *inu-inu vei-na* (EMek)
 drink-RED water-3SG
 drinking water

A ‘deverbal noun’ can also be used as an attribute:

5.242 *ba-kapoko nibi-tsi* (WMek)
 CA-crazy dream-3PL
 nightmares

5.243 *Lau feu-papau au-u, oi feu-ʔafai au-mu.* (EMek)
 I sleep-doze man-1SG you sleep-thick man-2SG
 I am a light sleeper, you are a heavy sleeper.

5.244 *au bainao* (WMek)
 man steal
 a thief, a robber

5.6.2 DURATIVE ASPECT WITH -ŋA(-AI)

Although the durative meaning seems to be established, -ŋa (all dialects) also adds emphasis.⁸⁰ However, I shall gloss it as DUR for durative:

5.245 *Toma⁸¹ ge-aba-e-ŋa!* (NMek)
 large.leech 3PL-stand-CNT-DUR
 There are large leeches there!

5.246 *Tsuka e-ka-e-ŋa ma?* (EMek)
 sugar 3SG-lie-CNT-DUR INT
 Is there any sugar remaining?

This morpheme occurs – as we have seen – on expressions used in greetings:

5.247 *O-aŋu-e-ŋa ma?* (WMek)
 2SG-sit-CNT-DUR INT
 Are you well?

⁸⁰ Fr A. Boudaud, a French missionary priest who is fluent in WMek, informs me that there is also a nuance of ‘idleness’ (“*oisiveté*”), and perhaps a slightly dismissive nuance, attached to this suffix, i.e. *i-aŋu-e-ŋa* (3SG-sit-CNT-DUR) ‘S/he is just sitting there’.

⁸¹ For expected *goma* (EMek has *koma*, but also the variant *toma*).

A prime example of the durative use of *-ŋa* is in *mia-ŋa-ai* ‘while, during’:

- 5.248 *Oai naba go-ida-ida mia-ŋ-ai, ida ge-gani.* (WMek)
 you that 2PL-see -RED during they 3PL-flee
 While you were watching that, they fled.

There is a related morpheme in NWMek where it is often associated with negative verb forms and seems to function more as an emphatic morpheme:

- 5.249 *Iu pae-io-ŋa!* (NWMek)
 I OBLG.NEG.1SG-go-DUR
 I am not going!

- 5.250 *Ia pae-gaina-ŋa!* (NWMek)
 s/he OBLG.NEG.3SG-suffice-DUR
 It’s not going to be enough!

This usage may have something to do with the fact that NEG has fused with the other morphemes incorporated in the SM. But it also occurs on affirmative verbs:

- 5.251 *Maria ŋeoa aŋi-na i-ani-ŋa.* (NWMek)
 Maria dance death-3SG 3SG-die-DUR
 Maria likes dancing.

5.6.3 THE PREFIX *MA-*

This rather rare morpheme is found prefixed to a number of typically verbal roots and stems, forming resultative participles that act as attributes or (with oblique case marking) as adverbials. An example of the former usage follows:

- 5.252 *ma-afu e?a* (EMek)
 COM-taboo house
 a/the tabooed house

Other possible examples are *ma-lele* ‘writing, letter, education’ (< *lele* ‘draw lines’), *ma-lolo* ‘clear’ (< *-lolo* ‘flow’), and *ma-ŋoŋo* ‘instruction, advice, lore’ (cf. *i-ŋoŋo* ‘speech, sermon, homily’).⁸² *Maula* and *maŋea*, two words for ‘famine, dearth, need’ could be analysable as *ma-ula*, *ma-ŋea*, where *ula* means ‘need’ and *ŋea* means ‘absence’.

Adverbial uses of *MA*-marked roots are slightly more common. An example from NWMek (from Brown 1955:9) is the oblique case marked stem *ma-βa-aŋa-ai* (COM-CA-touch-OBL – my analysis) meaning ‘openly’. Brown (1955:27) also gives *maβa* ‘open, be open’. However, in 1984 and 1986 I recorded and confirmed *e-βa-aŋa-i-a/e-βa-aŋa-e-a* ‘S/he opened it’.

Desnoës records a single very interesting text from EMek – an interchange – with a prepositional (!) *ma* meaning ‘like’:

⁸² I propose deriving *ŋoŋo* (for which incidentally Desnoës has no entry) from **ŋou-ŋou*. *ŋou* means ‘mark, sign; rule, custom, law; traditional lore; symbolic meaning.’

5.253 Q: *ʔuma, ue afu-ŋa alà koà?*
pig foot place-3SG what like?
What were the pig's foot-prints like?

A: *Maania. Ma oŋe, ma koŋa laa'i.*
middling like female MA male NEG
Middling. Like (a) female, not like (a) male.

CHAPTER 6

THE LEXICOGRAMMAR OF COMPLEX VERBAL PREDICATES

A verbal predicate can undergo a certain degree of internal expansion without losing its unitary status. Modification of the verbal nucleus occurs through agglutination of one or more typically verbal roots. This is what I term nuclear juncture (following FVV 1984). “It is a single unit, and all core and peripheral arguments are arguments of this complex nuclear element” (1984:188). The valency of the verbal predicate is a sum of the valencies of the roots that combine. However, the number and arrangement of the participant functions/roles of these verbs – technically called *juncts* – can vary for certain classes of verbs, and these may be combined in a number of different patterns. Nuclear juncture is described in more detail in §6.1, and the different patterns of function/role rearrangement are illustrated below in §6.1.2 to §6.1.5.

A verbal predicate may also be modified periphrastically with regard to aspect. This involves verb serialisation, or core juncture, with the aspect-defining verb following the main verb (core juncture is defined in §8.1). There are variations in the degree of grammaticalisation of these aspectual verbs. They form a restricted (if not a completely closed) set, and are described in §6.2.

Finally, speaker comment can be expressed on simple or complex verbal predicates, as well as entire predications, by means of a set of particles that are here called discourse markers. In fact these function as reduced predicates. They are described in §6.3.

6.1 COMPLEX NUCLEAR STRUCTURES

Nuclear juncture signifies the conjoining of two or more verbal roots to form a complex verb form – a complex nucleus – that shares a single argument or set of arguments and makes a single choice for tense, mood and aspect. This complex verbal predicate can only be negated in its entirety.

A complex nucleus has internal structure. This internal structure will be detailed in the following sections, but it can be stated in summary form here. Any nuclear juncture consists of at least two slots, one of which is *open* as to the class of verb that may fill it while the other is *restricted* in this sense.¹ The open slot is usually the one immediately following the subject marker. The verb filling the open slot is the ‘main’ verb, the head of the juncture. I refer to

¹ Section 6.1 is in its entirety based on the theory of juncture set forth in Foley and Olson (1985:37-47).

the verbs filling the restricted slots as co-verbs, or sometimes as adverbial verbs. These often belong to specifiabile classes (e.g. motion verbs). Every member of a juncture is a junct.

The vast majority of nuclear junctures consist of two root verbs. If a root verb were either TR or ITR, this would yield a limited number of possible combinations. However, very few Mekeo root verbs are invariably transitive, even in the semantic sense of having an implied object. Even prototypical action-effect verbs can occur as semantic intransitives, i.e. with no underlying object (e.g. from EMek: *ŋuā e-au* ‘his/her heart is hitting’ = ‘beating’). Intracausative verbs of analytic process and self-enactive action verbs may also be, on different occasions of use, transitive or intransitive.

Since the meaning of a particular nuclear juncture depends on the valency of the root verbs *in this particular use*, the description below is phrased in terms of actual valencies. Roots are described as V1 or V2, *as revealed by the meaning of the verb in a particular use*, that is to say by the presence or absence of nominal arguments (overt or underlying) in the predication. For instance, if there is an object argument in the predication – or implied by the predicate – then at least one of the junct is functioning transitively. The different function/role combinations are illustrated in §6.1.2 to §6.1.5.

Reduplicated verbal roots are included in this section as they represent one kind of complex nucleus, and are not dissimilar to intransitive verbs conjoined with directional co-verbs, stance co-verbs and other intransitive verbs, which also modify aspect.

6.1.1 REDUPLICATION: HABITUAL–PROGRESSIVE ASPECT

As in some other Oceanic languages,² reduplication of the verbal root functions to signal habitual and/or progressive aspect. In Mekeo this appears to be by far its main function. Naturally many verbs of disposition take this form:

- | | | |
|-----|--|--------|
| 6.1 | <i>Lo-moŋe-moŋe.</i>
2SG-avid-RED
You are (habitually) avid/importunate. | (EMek) |
| 6.2 | <i>E-ŋafe-ŋafe e-lao-lao.</i>
3SG-kind-RED 3SG-go-RED
S/he is always (being) kind. | (EMek) |

However, many different kinds of verbs commonly appear in reduplicated form. Those immediately following represent reduplicated forms of *intransitive verbs* that have become (to a greater or lesser extent) lexicalised and/or grammaticalised:

- | | | |
|------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| i) | <i>ao-ao, lao-lao</i> | continue, keep going, keep on |
| ii) | <i>mai-mai</i> | keep coming |
| iii) | <i>βua-βua, bua-bua, pua-pua</i> | be fruitful, pullulate, multiply |
| iv) | <i>βea-βea, boa-boa, pea-pea</i> | walk continuously or habitually |
| v) | <i>oβo-oβo, obo-obo, opo-opo</i> | think, consider, worry |

As illustrated in example 6.2 above, EMek *lao-lao* functions – in core coordinate juncture – as an aspect marker. Another example follows:

² As is certainly the case in Motu (see Taylor 1970a).

- 6.3 *Lo-pi-noi lo-lao-lao.* (EMek)
 2SG-REC-beg 2SG-go-RED
 You are always begging.

Some common action-effect verbs that occur frequently in reduplicated form are listed below:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| i) <i>ani-ani(-a)</i> | eat, smoke ³ |
| ii) <i>inu-inu(-a)</i> | drink |
| iii) <i>kamu-kamu(-a), ?amu-?amu(-a)</i> | sweep |
| iv) <i>gabu-gabu, kapu-kapu</i> | go hunting |
| v) <i>ino-ino</i> | go fishing |

Note that the first three of these can signal repetitive aspect, rather than habitual or durative aspect. They can also, in their reduplicated forms, be transitive. The last two are never transitive, and in this resemble the vast majority of verbs formed by reduplication, whether these are derived from transitive or intransitive root verbs. These last two verbs cannot, apparently, signal repetitive but only durative aspect. The verbs of hunting and fishing can thus be classed with the verbs of disposition mentioned above (= habitual behaviour).

As well as the foregoing productively reduplicated verbs there is a fairly large set of verbs consisting of 'frozen' reduplications. These have no unreduced forms:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| a) <i>jie-ji, tsie-tsie, kie-kie</i> | hurt |
| b) <i>aŋ-aŋa (< aŋa-aŋa)</i> | cry out, shout, argue |
| c) <i>gemu-gemu, kemu-kemu</i> | drizzle |

The actions described by the above verbs are inherently repetitive, and thus the meaning is necessarily continuous or progressive.

A large number of intransitive roots expressing integral process have optionally reduplicated forms, often with a different nuance of meaning:

- | | | | |
|---------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|
| a) <i>mua</i> | be wet | <i>mua-mua</i> | be soaked |
| b) <i>vei</i> | be wet, watery | <i>vei-vei</i> | be juicy |
| c) <i>fuo</i> | ... ⁴ | <i>fuo-fuo</i> | mildewed |
| d) <i>moa</i> | be sticky | <i>moa-moa</i> | sticky, gluey |

Many of these reduplicated verb forms have a dispositional meaning as well as a concrete one. Thus *mua-mua* means 'weak, slack, soft' when used of a person.

The formation of intransitive verbs from transitive verbs is one of the main functions of full reduplication in Motu, according to Taylor (1970b). This may have been one of its original functions in Mekeo but, as noted above, transitive forms of some reduplicated verbs do occur:

- 6.4 *Iji gugu ai-d-a-ani-ani-a.* (WMek)
 I tobacco NEG-B-1SG-eat-RED-3SG
 I do not smoke. (lit. I do not eat tobacco.)

³ The word for 'eat' is used in Mekeo, as in Tok Pisin, for 'smoke (tobacco)' (e.g. *Kuku e-ani-ani-a* 'S/he smokes/is a smoker').

⁴ Certain roots do not occur in unreduced form.

6.5 *Jesu au 4,000 e-pa-ani-ani-ʔi.* (EMek)
 Jesus man 4,000 3SG-CAUS-eat-RED-3PL
 Jesus feeds/fed 4,000 people.

6.6 *Pi-pike-ai gania-tsi ge-gaʔo-gaʔo-b-a.* (WMek)
 RD-pike-OBL head-3PL 3PL-pluck-RED-TH-3SG
 They used to shave their heads with broken glass.⁵

Note that *pi-pike* is itself an example of partial leftward reduplication based on *pike*, originally a fibre used in plucking beards, hair by hair; reduplication functions here to indicate that we are not talking about ‘true’ *pike* but a substitute for *pike*, something *pike-like*. The word for Christian ‘prayer’ is similarly a reduplicated form of the word meaning ‘spell’: *meʔa-meʔa*. But this is a function of nominal reduplication rather than of verbal reduplication which rarely has any depreciative function.

Reduplication, like the cognate object constructions, above and beyond its grammatical functions may be a part of the expressive aspect of language, of linguistic *style*. A couple of somewhat longer examples will I hope illustrate this point:

6.7 *Ke-ʔumi-ʔumi, foʔama foʔama ke-ani-fu-fuke,* (EMek:D)
 3PL-weak-RED food food 3PL-eat -RD-vain
ʔava ʔinipo-mo a-ke-fuke-fuke.
 month year-just FUT-3PL-pass.in.vain-RED
 They are chronically weak, they eat heaps of food to no avail,
 they will waste whole months and years.

6.8 *Kania-mu ke-kaʔo-kaʔo-p-a e-fuka-fukaʔo-apua.* (EMek:D)
 head-2SG 3PL-shave-RED-TH-3SG 3SG-RD-smooth-very
 They shaved his head scrupulously and deftly, it is really really smooth.

This piling up of fully and partially reduplicated roots, with the repetition of a nominal topic (in example 6.7) as well as the doubling up of roots within the verb stem, is no doubt a grammatical resource here signalling habitude, abundance and repetition, but the persistence with which these particular speakers exploit it makes it seem more an expression of the depth of their emotional reactions: pity or awe (as in 6.7) and, perhaps, admiration (as in 6.8).⁶ The listing of time words *ʔava* and *ʔinipo* (‘month’ and ‘year’) in 6.7 contributes to the overall effect.

Leftward reduplication of the prefix *BA-* appears to function in an exactly equivalent way to reduplication of the root verb.

6.9 *ʔava a-lo-fuke-fuke > ʔava a-lo-pa-pa-fuke.* (EMek)
 month FUT-2SG-pass-RED month FUT-2SG-CAUS-RED-pass
 You will wait for some months.

Sometimes a reduplicated verb clearly refers to repetitive/progressive aspect rather than habitual aspect:

⁵ The pragmatics of the cultural situation – not the verb form – make it clear that this statement must be interpreted as past habitual.

⁶ See Leech and Short (1981:247) on expressive repetition: “repetition is expressive in that it gives emphasis or emotive heightening to the repeated meaning”. It is “a kind of aesthetic counterbalance” to the principles of elegant variation and reduction of form (or ellipsis). Koch (1983) is a study of the rhetorical uses of repetition in modern written Arabic.

6.10 *Ido a-kau-kau-ai-n-a-gai, uabu i-age.* (WMek)
 fire 1SG-poke-RED-RTR-TH-3SG-ADV rain 3SG-fall
 While I was poking (fiddling with) the fire, the rain fell.

Partial leftward reduplication (RD) is also sometimes used to express habitual aspect:

6.11 *Lo-isa-isava.* (EMek)
 2SG-RD-sick
 You are always sick.

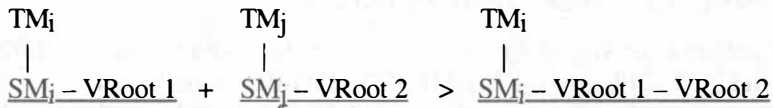
It sometimes, however, simply serves to intensify the meaning of a verb:

6.12 *Ifi-mu e-mae-maeva-apua.* (EMek)
 vine-2SG 3SG-RD-long-very
 Your vine is very, very long.
 (This is an example of obscene badinage.)

Note that these reduplicated and partially reduplicated verbs are not examples of nuclear juncture, to which we now turn.

6.1.2 NJ, PATTERN I: VERBV₁ + VERBV₁ⁿ [i.e. ITR + ITRⁿ]

A common type of nuclear junct formed with intransitive root verbs (integral process verbs and intradirectives) can be represented schematically as follows (where TM stands for tense-mood and SM represents the subject marker):



Otherwise put, SM_j/TM_j is assimilated to SM_i/TM_i. The lexicogrammatical structure of a verb in which a combination of verbal roots all govern the same SM/TM⁷, and where the first root functions as the head of this verbal nucleus, can be represented graphically as follows:

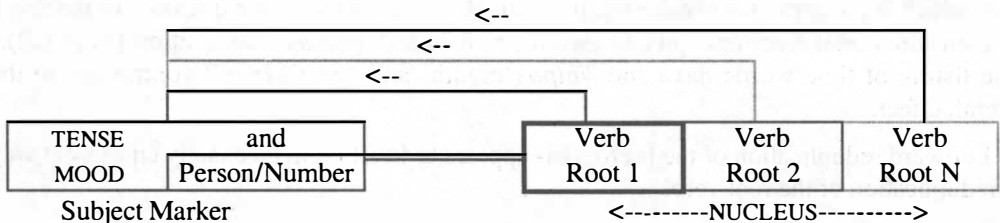


FIGURE 34: NUCLEAR JUNCTURE (1)

Directional verbs enter readily into nuclear juncture,⁸ as intransitive co-verbs, as one would expect on cross-linguistic evidence. The meanings of the resulting compound verbs

⁷ Within the predicate or head is the domain of syntactic relations proper (as opposed to syntactic bonds). Here a root verb not only subcategorises but actually governs its obligatory arguments (see Jelinek 1984; Nichols 1986). The arrows in the diagram are to indicate the direction of government. Dotted lines indicate a) an optional root and b) weak government. The concept of weak government allows for the relatively grammaticalised status of the secondary roots, which only govern the core subject by virtue of their links to the first, dominant root.

⁸ As one expects on cross-linguistic evidence (see Foley and Olson 1985:41).

are, however, not always predictable from the meanings of the component verbs. The formulae are fully lexicalised. Here is a small sample:

a) STAND + GO DOWN > 'stop, halt'

6.13 *Mo-aba-tsibo!*
IMP.2SG-stand-go.down
Stop!

b) LOOK.UP + RISE > 'look up'

6.14 *La-aa-kae.*
1SG-look.up-go.up
I looked up.

c) TURN + COME > 'turn in this direction'

6.15 *Mo-ai-mai.*
IMP.2SG-turn-come
Turn this way!

d) STAND + BE.FAR

6.16 *Fo-aba-kau!*
OBLG.2SG-stand-be.far
Move over!

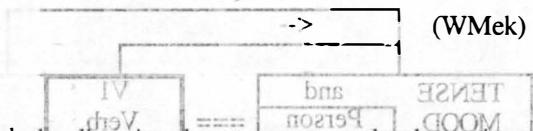
Intracausative verbs of analytic process occur commonly as intransitive co-verbs in nuclear juncture. In the next two examples ABA 'stand', a verb of posture/stance (a subclass of motion verbs) which is extremely productive in the formation of complex nuclei, combines with IC verbs in an intransitive use:

a) STAND + SHINE > 'appear'

6.17 *Aa-u i-aba-jina.*
e.s.s.sibling-1SG 3SG-stand-shine
My elder same-sex sibling appeared.

b) STAND + SPLIT > 'stand legs apart'

6.18 *I-aba-pola.*
3SG-stand-split
S/he stood with legs apart.



There are a number of verbs in which the directional root appears to be the main one, e.g. *nua-gae, nua-kae* 'be pleasurably excited'. However, this has to be analysed as: HEART + RISE; it is usually found as a topic-predicate construction: *Nua e-kae* 'His/her heart rose'. It is only somewhat rarely that the expression is verbalised: *E-nua-kae*. This can be transitivity by means of the RTR suffix: *E-nua-kae-ai-na* 'She admires/desires X'. *Nua* rarely (if ever) appears as a verb, and it does not warrant a process interpretation in this verb form.

Some more examples of nuclear junct based on intradirective verbs follow:

i) *oabi-pou-a, -fou-a, iva-fou-a* speak + be known : make public¹⁰

⁹ This structure applies to all nuclear junct, not just those with directional roots.
¹⁰ This form is found in EMek, NMek only. NMek has the locution *pou-ja e-kap*, while WMek has *pou-ja i-oabi*.

- ii) *gai-po(-a), fo(-a), kai-fou(-a)* : unite, agree with one another¹¹
- iii) *lou-gibo, -jibo, -tsibo, -ki o* : bend + light down(-river) : bend over, wilt

A relatively small group of verbs consist of *three* intradirective verbs, usually verbs of locomotion or of directed motion, combined in nuclear juncture :

- a) *kaŋa-au-gae, ʔaŋa-au-kae* crawl + go.up + rise : climb up¹²
- b) *aŋu-au-gae, aŋu-au-kae* sit + go.up + rise : sit high up
- c) *aŋu-gua-muni, aŋu-kua-muni* sit + go.back + be.behind : sit facing backwards

Most compounds made up of intransitive roots remain intransitive, but some verbs of this type can function as transitive verbs. Number i) above is one example. One other example follows:

6.19 *La-kai-oŋo-i-o.* 'no (EMek)
 (EMek) 1SG-move-shadow-PF-2SG
 I shelter you.¹³

True transitives are – as mentioned earlier – easy to confuse with pseudo transitives with an empty O. One example is particularly relevant here (see i) above):

6.20 *Mo-apa-fou-a!* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG- stand-together-3SG¹⁴
 Keep together!

6.1.3 NJ PATTERN II: VERBV1⁽ⁿ⁾ + VERBV2 (TR) + ITR⁽ⁿ⁾ + TR]

The second pattern of combined valencies is: VerbV1⁽ⁿ⁾ + VerbV2. This is the least productive type of nuclear juncture in Mekeo, relying upon a relatively closed set of specialised transitivity co-verbs in the final slot. There is usually only a single ITR verb before this, in the closed slot, though this may be followed by a second. A diagrammatic representation of the structure of a typical nucleus, and syntactic relations within this nucleus, follows:

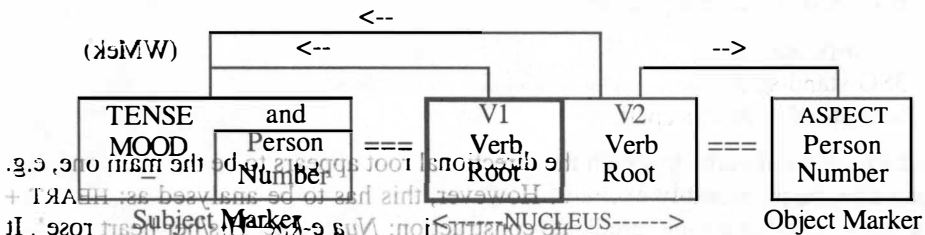


FIGURE 3.5. NUCLEAR JUNCTURE (2)

In this kind of juncture both roots govern the SM + TM equally, and the subject of the second is deleted under identity with the subject of the first. However, only the second root

11 The OM on this verb is 'empty' (of reference). Compare example 6.20 below. Section 4.3.3.7 above dealt with this topic.
 12 The equivalent in WMeK, NMeK usage is *ba-abi-gae*, for *ba-api-gae* (CA-take-go.up).
 13 This example is an addition by Van Lamsweerde, to Desnoës, who gave only ITR examples. Van Lamsweerde is confident that the verb is used transitively.
 14 An example of a referentially empty OM. See §4.3.3.7 above.

(the transitively functioning root) governs the OM. The first root is the head of the nucleus, and the second root functions to transitivise it.

A problem for the analysis lies in the fact that certain verbal roots appear only as parts of complex nuclei, and are thus hard to classify as to transitivity. However, since they function to transitivise an intransitive root, as shown by the presence of an overt object, they can be regarded as transitive co-verbs. In fact they usually take an OM.

Some typical examples of this kind of juncture follow:

- 6.21 ITR + TR *E-apa-ao-ŋ-a.* (EMek)
3SG-stand-press-TH-3SG
S/he crushed it underfoot.
- 6.22 ITR + TR *E-pua-ao-ŋ-a.* (EMek)
3SG-think-press-TH-3SG
S/he thinks about her/him/it.
- 6.23 ITR + TR *E-ka-uki-n-a.* (EMek)
3SG-lie-pursue-TH-3SG
S/he lay against her/him.

The next two examples are difficult to classify as the co-verbs also have intransitive uses:

- 6.24 ITR + TR(?) *E-aŋu-api-a.* (EMek)
3SG-sit-press-3SG
S/he held it fast by sitting on it.
- 6.25 ITR + TR(?) *Loo e-?ua-apu-a.* (EMek)
fire 3SG-hang-close-3SG
S/he bent and blocked the fire.

In example 6.25 *kua*, *?ua* is an intradirective verb of spontaneous movement. *Abu*, *apu* functions both as an intensifying co-verb and a co-verb of effect, but it may in fact be an intracausative verb of analytic process meaning '(be) closed; close'.

The root *kine*, *jine*, *tsine*, *?ine* 'crush' (in example 6.26 below) only ever appears as a co-verb. There is no OM on the verb, but because of its overall transitive meaning the co-verb must be interpreted as transitive (*aŋu* is only ever intransitive).

- 6.26 ITR + TR *E-aŋu-?ine.* (EMek)
3SG-sit-crush
She crushed it by sitting on it.

Nuclear junct containing *BENI* 'give' as a co-verb belong to this class of verbs, since *BENI* is TR, and in fact DTR. Some examples follow:

- 6.27 ITR + DTR *E-kai-peni-au.* (EMek)
3SG-move-give-1SG
S/he approached me.

The next example shows that two intransitive roots may occur prior to the transitivising co-verb:

- 6.28 ITR + ITR + DTR *Maa-mu lo-aa-fuki-peni-au.* (EMek)
eye-2SG 2SG-look-pop.out-give-1SG
You gave me the eye.

The last example can be represented as: V1+ V1 + V3. *Pugi, fugi, fuki* ‘pop out, emerge with difficulty through a small opening’ is in fact an intracausative verb of spontaneous movement.

A last example, from a WMek narrative text, contains a self-enactive action verb (*kapo*) in transitive function:

6.29 *Eka , kopu, ge-biau-kapo-ηai-n-i-tsi.* (WMek)
 house clan.house 3PL-run-throw-RTR-TH-PF-3PL
 They bowled over the houses and clan houses.

6.1.4 NJ, PATTERN III: VERBV2 + VERBV1ⁿ [i.e. TR + ITRⁿ]

In this pattern a transitively functioning verb combines with one or more following intransitives. This is by far the most common pattern. It generally has a causative meaning, in the sense that the agent/actor of the first verb causes the agent of the second verb to be in a certain condition. It can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

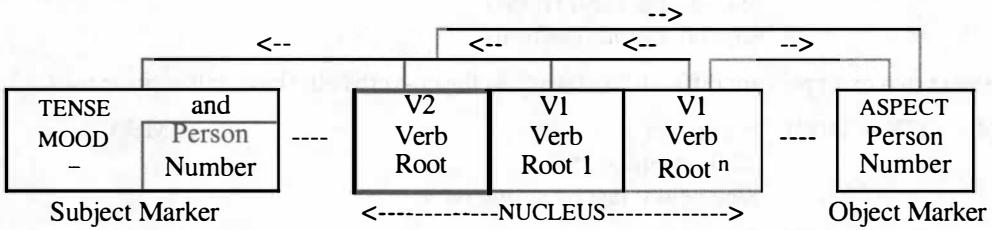
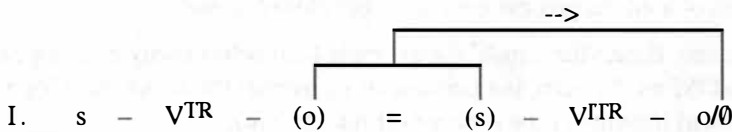
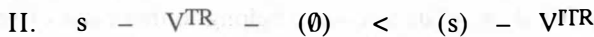


FIGURE 36: NUCLEAR JUNCTURE (3)

The final root verb of the nucleus *may* bear an OM since the nucleus is, as a whole, transitive. The referent indexed by the OM will be the demoted subject-agent of the ITR co-verb. This can also be represented as a formula:



However, the combined process dynamics of the verbal roots may result in a ZERO-O verb. In this case the second junct has an underlying subject rather than an unexpressed object. This too can be represented as a formula:



Some examples of verbs *with* OMs (Formula I) follow first:

6.30 *Ue fo-fai-iki-n-a.*¹⁵ (EMek)
 vine OBLG.2SG-tie-pick-TH-3SG
 Tie a knot in the vine so that one can undo it (easily).

¹⁵ Compare this example with example 6.38 below. *Igi, iki* is usually transitive, and takes the thematic consonant *B*: *igi-β-a, igi-b-a, iki-p-a* ‘pinch something’.

- 6.31 *A-la-afi-fau-i-o.* (EMek)
 FUT-1SG-take-implant-PF-2SG.
 I will hold you fast (lit. like a post implanted in the ground).
- 6.32 *Mo-afi-au-a!* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-take-up-3SG
 Take it up/off!
- 6.33 *I-au-buŋu-a.* (WMek)
 3SG-hit-exhaust-3SG
 S/he is beating him/her/it to death.

These verbs function like verbs with the atelic suffix *-LAI* (see §5.1 above). One more example is given here for comparison with example 6.32 above:

- 6.34 *Mo-afi-lai-s-a!* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-take-off-B-3SG
 Lift it off!

Other directional verbs like *age*, *ake* ‘descend’ and *uga*, *uka* ‘go in’, frequently function as following co-verbs in this kind of predicate, but these never take an OM. Nuclear junct of this type realise Formula II above:

- 6.35 *Mo-piu-ake!*¹⁶ (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-throw-go.down
 Throw (it) down!
- 6.36 *Po-biu-uga* *pani-ai!* (WMek)
 OBLG.2SG-throw-go.in pan-OBL
 Throw (it) into the pan!

The next example is based on *pau*, *fau* ‘stab, implant’, which is classified as an intransitive verb of analytic process. It here functions as an *intransitive* verb:

- 6.37 *E-fau-kipo.* (EMek)
 3SG-plant-go.down
 He halted.

The last example does not fit the formula being illustrated here: TR + ITR. This is because the use of *pau*, *fau* is intransitive – not that the verb itself is inherently intransitive. IC verbs of this kind, in their intransitive function, can also express the result of a transitive verb/action. In that case they occur in the second, restricted slot:

- 6.38 *Kuga po-pai-ŋupa.* (WMek)
 vine OBLG.2SG-tie.knot-come undone
 Tie the vine in a knot so that it will undo (easily).
- 6.39 *Oŋa lo-kaŋu-mu²a.* (EMek)
 sore 2SG-touch-abrade
 You broke the sore (scab?) by touching it.

The verbs in the last two examples bear no OMs but this is here due to the fact that they are in imperfective aspect. In perfective aspect they can take OMs:

¹⁶ This is frequently pronounced *buage*, *puake*, i.e. as an unanalysed root.

- 6.40 *Lo-kani lo-au-au-mu?a-i-o.* (EMek)
 2SG-flee 2SG-hit-RED-abrade-PF-2SG
 When you fled you grazed yourself repeatedly.
- 6.41 *E-bitsi-abala-n-i-a.* (NMek)
 3SG-shoot.gun-bad-TH-PF-3SG
 S/he missed (it).
- 6.42 *I-aka-tsitsi-n-a.* (WMek)
 3SG-pull-tear-TH-3SG
 S/he is tearing it by pulling it.

The question remains as to whether presence versus absence of the OM is lexically determined. Certainly, certain verbs occur more frequently in perfective aspect in the form that FVV (1984) call core cosubordinate juncture:

- 6.43 *I-au-n-i-a-buŋu.* (WMek)
 3SG-hit-TH-PF-3SG-exhaust
 S/he beat him/her/it to death.
- 6.44 *I-au-buŋu-i-a.* (WMek)
 3SG-hit-exhaust-PF-3SG
 S/he beat him/her/it to death.

The root *kiki*, *tsitsi*, *?ʔi* ‘tear’, in example 6.42 above, actually functions as an analytic intracausative verb, i.e. it can function as a lexical causative: *i-tsitsi-n-a* ‘s/he tears it’. *Muka*, *mu?a* ‘be crushed’, in 6.39, functions solely as an (unanalytic) integral process verb.

6.1.5 NJ, PATTERN IV: VERBV2 + VERBV2 [i.e. TR + TR]

Junctures made up of two transitively functioning verbs are rare. The problem again is that when certain kinds of transitive-intransitive verbs are included in a nuclear juncture, only the meaning of the whole verb in a context of use can decide the number and pattern of functions/roles. There are no infallible morphological clues.

The internal structure of a nuclear juncture where two verbal roots are both functioning transitively can be shown as follows:

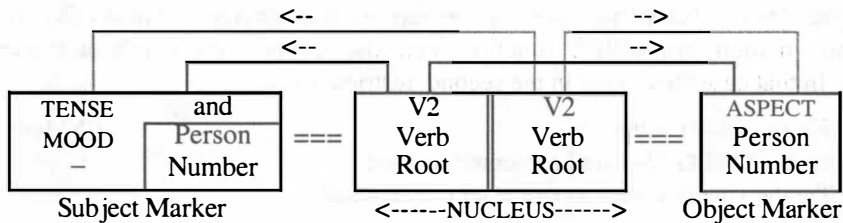
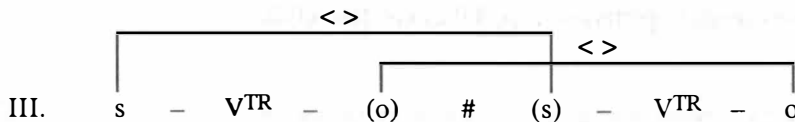


FIGURE 37: NUCLEAR JUNCTURE (4)

This can also be shown as a formula, in which two subject-agents are coreferential and two object-patients are coreferential, one of each being deleted under identity:



Some examples of this pattern are presented below:

- 6.45 TR + TR *E-laʔa-fifiu-a.* (EMek)
 3SG-pull-stretch-3SG
 S/he is pulling and stretching it.
- 6.46 TR + TR *E-afi-fio-k-i-a.* (EMek)
 3SG-take-twist-TH-PF-3SG
 S/he grabbed and twisted it.
- 6.47 TR + TR *Fufu-mu la-au-fifi-a.* (EMek)
 hair-2SG 1SG-hit-rub-3SG
 I patted and rubbed your hair.

Junctures made up of two transitively functioning verbs are not very common. This is partly because there are so few invariably transitive verbs in Mekeo.

The pattern is next illustrated with junct containing intracausative verbs of analytic process, which may be transitive or intransitive. The root *pau*, *fau* signifies 'stab, plant, be planted', and *gani*, *kani* means 'pierce, be pierced, burst':

- 6.48 IC + IC *E-pau-gani-n-a.* (WMek)
 3SG-prick-pierce-TH-3SG
 S/he burst it by pricking.

It is not absolutely clear whether this complex predicate should be interpreted to mean 'S/he stabbed it and s/he burst it' (i.e. TR + TR) or 'S/he stabbed it and it burst' (i.e. TR + ITR). The latter interpretation realises Formula II above (§6.1.4).

Other examples containing two IC verbs or a mixture of extradirective verbs and IC verbs follow. The glosses are tentative:¹⁷

- 6.49 IC + IC *E-pau-kiki-n-a.* (NWMek)
 3SG-stab-tear-TH-3SG
 S/he hacked it. (lit. S/he stabbed it and tore it.
 OR: S/he stabbed it and it tore.)
- 6.50 SE + IC *E-ŋava-api-a.* (EMek)
 3SG-kick-press-3SG
 S/he crushed it with her foot.
 (i.e. S/he stamped on it and crushed it.
 OR: S/he stamped/kicked and crushed it.)
- 6.51 AE + IC *Koŋa e-iki-moŋu-a.* (EMek)
 coconut 3SG-pinch-break-3SG
 S/he pinched the coconut (stem) and it broke.
- 6.52 IC-IC *Imoi a-e-kaŋa-mogu.* (EMek)
 child NEG-3SG-touch-detach
 The child won't leave (the breast).

¹⁷ SE stands for self-enactive action verbs (TR/ITR), AE stands for action-effect verbs (usually TR), and IC stands for analytic process verbs (TR/ITR).

6.1.6 PRE-VERBS OF MOTION/MOVEMENT

This is another category of specialised roots, usually consisting of a single vocalic syllable. Although functioning as the main verb in the nucleus (filling the open slot) they must be followed by a co-verb. In themselves indicating only a very generalised notion of movement, their co-verb specifies the manner or direction of this movement:

- a) *e* 'movement...'
- 6.53 *Imoi e-e-lei.* (EMek)
child 3SG-move-AT
The child has fallen.
- 6.54 *Afu-ŋa-mo lo-e-uka.* (EMek)
place-3SG-just 2SG-move-enter
You have moved back into the same place.
OR: You have become as you were.
- b) *o* 'movement...'
- 6.55 *Alo-u afa-e-o-mue.* (EMek)
inside-1SG NEG.FUT-3SG-move-turn
My mind will not change (direction).
- 6.56 *Papie apala, aŋo alo-ŋa-aio e-o-pini.* (EMek)
woman bad, bush inside-3SG-OBL 3SG-move-tangle
The woman is no good, she goes about in the bush (with men).
- c) *ka, ?a* 'go, walk, move'
- 6.57 *E-?a-lao e-?a-mai.* (EMek)
3SG-move-go 3SG-move-come
S/he comes and goes.

6.1.7 CAUSATIVE PRE-VERBS

A number of the most common verbs – mostly transitive – have been quasi-grammaticalised to the extent that as pre-verbs in nuclear juncture they can behave exactly like the causative prefix *BA-*. Some flavour of their original sense nonetheless lingers, giving such compound verbs a more complex meaning than 'uncoloured' causatives with *BA-*.

- a) *u, au* 'hit, strike' TR (ITR)
- 6.58 *Keaŋa ke-au-?amala.* (EMek)
path 3PL-CA-open
They are opening the road.
- 6.59 *A-la-au-efo-i-o.* (EMek)
FUT-1SG-CA-turn.over-PF-2SG
I'll turn you over/upside down.

In the next example *au* functions like intensive/simulative *BA-*:

- 6.60 *Matsitsi e-au-fafa koà.* (EMek)
match 3SG-CA-split like
The match looks as if it will split.

- b) *api, afi* 'hold, grasp, take' ITR/TR
- 6.61 *Upe ŋa-ŋau-ŋa e-afi-lofe-lofe.* (EMek)
 taro.shoot RD-leaf-3SG 3SG-take-curl-RED
 The taro shoots went and curled in on themselves.
- 6.62 *Imoi kofi ke-afi-fuki-lei-a.* (EMek)
 child coffee 3PL-take-pass-AT-3SG
 The children squeezed out the coffee beans.

The next causal operator may represent either a borrowing from Roro (where 'take' is *ai*) or a degraded form of the previous verb, *api, afi* (of which it is in either case a reflex).

- c) *ai* 'take'
- 6.63 *Lopilopi e-ai-ofa, e-ai-pea-ai.* (EMek)
 duck 3SG-CA-open 3SG-CA-split-???
 S/he opened the duck, s/he split it open.
- d) *pau, fau* 'stab, plant, pierce' (ITR)TR
- 6.64 *Au-ŋa inē e-pau-abu-a.* (WMek)
 tree-3SG hole.3SG 3SG-CA-close-3SG
 S/he closed the hole in the tree.

The idea of thrusting or piercing remains close beneath the surface:

- 6.65 *Akē mo-fau-mala.* (EMek)
 mouth.3SG IMP.2SG-CA-open
 Open it. (*akē* means 'mouth of something')
- e) *βua, bua, pua* 'bear, carry' ITR/TR
- 6.66 *La-pua-?afu-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 1SG-bear-finish-TH-PF-3SG
 I left it behind.
- f) *guni, goni, koni* 'push' TR
- 6.67 *Lo-koni-piau-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 2SG-CA-run-TH-PF-3SG
 You made him/her run (away) OR: You chased him/her (away).
- g) *ŋapa, ŋafa* 'kick, make any movement with the foot' ITR/TR
- 6.68 *Lo-ŋafa-piau-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 2SG-kick-run-TH-PF-3SG
 You made him/her run (away).

6.1.8 THE ADVERBIAL SUFFIX OF MANNER (-N)-I-A(-MO)

This suffix is most probably made up of (-TH +) PF-empty O (+ *mo* 'just'),¹⁸ but its actual *use* is distinctly adverbial.

¹⁸ An alternative derivation is suggested by the presence in Motu of an invariable postposition *amo* 'from'. I have found no overt trace of this morpheme in other WCP languages.

This suffix is most probably made up of (-TH +) PF-empty O (+ *mo* 'just'),¹⁸ but its actual *use* is distinctly adverbial.

One effect of the suffix *-n-i-a* is of course to move the main word stress rightward so that it falls on the last syllable of the (last) verbal root – though sometimes it falls on the *-i*, the transitivity marker. Affixation of *-mo* causes the stress to fall on a now penultimate *-a*, giving the whole string a unitary and quite distinctive character, and distinguishing it from the empty O of §4.3.3.7. (It may even be that the adverbial character of the third person singular OM is paramount in Mekeo, and that its anaphoric or pronominal functions are of secondary importance.)¹⁹

The root *kea* 'slice into/under' and by extension 'clear (bush)' has yielded fossilised *keaŋa* 'path, road'. This item combines with the adverbial suffix *-nia(-mo)* to form a composite adverbial suffix meaning 'continuously, coherently':

- 6.69 *Lo-iva-keaŋa-n-i-à-mo.* (EMek)
 2SG-speak-path-TH-PF-3SG-just
 You speak fluently/consecutively.
- 6.70 *Mo-iva-pola-i-à-mo* *ŋa-lao,* (EMek:D)
 IMP.2SG-speak-follow-PF-3SG-just²⁰ IMP.3SG-go
mo-iva keaŋa koà mo-pa-ʔoi-a.
 IMP.2SG-speak path like IMP.2SG-CA-flat(?) -3SG.²¹
 Speaking methodically, let it go (forth), speak as though you were making a path.

The following two examples amount to a minimal pair. They both contain a verb of extradirective action followed by the verbal root *fafa* 'split, be split, be parted, be separated'.

- 6.71 *Koŋa ke-fau-fafà-i-a.*²² (EMek:D)
 coconut 3PL-plant-apart-PF-3SG
 They planted the coconuts apart.
- 6.72 *Upi ke-oŋe-fafa-i-à-mo, e-ŋeŋema.* (EMek:D)
 upi-feathers 3PL-put-apart-PF-3SG-just 3SG-having.openings
 Having placed/placing the *upi* feathers at intervals, one can see through.

Example 6.72 draws attention to the *manner* of the placing (and indeed to the fact that the openness of the feathers is contingent upon this). In other words, *-iamo* subordinates and adverbialises the whole predication.

Turning to the *n*-marked variant (*-n-iamo*), here is another example that illustrates much the same nuance of preconditionality:

¹⁸ An alternative derivation is suggested by the presence in Motu of an invariable postposition *amo* 'from'. I have found no overt trace of this morpheme in other WCP languages.

¹⁹ See Pawley (1977:4) for a suggestion that an important function of pronominal determiners in Oceanic languages "in addition to their role as carriers of referential information" has been to protect the entire system of case, role and transitivity marking from "erosion and assimilation, and structural ambiguity".

²⁰ More precisely, *βola, bola, pola* means 'follow a path'.

²¹ The derived verb *pa-ʔoi-a* in EMek means 'beat (grass etc.) flat', e.g. before cutting.

²² Modern EMek would be *ke-au-fafà-i-s-a* (and *ke-oŋe-fafa-i-s-à-mo*) with intrusive [s]. Compare example 4.129 above (in §4.3.3.7) with its apparently pleonastic object.

- 6.73 *Ipako ke-ʔuʔu-n-i-a-mo ke-mai.* (EMek)
 sago 3PL-measure-TH-PF-3SG-just 3PL-come
 Having just measured up the sago (trunk) they came.

In the next example we find *ipauma* ‘excellent, excellence’ functioning as an adverbial co-verb (as the resultant verb word is so long I have marked all the primary/secondary word stresses). The suffix *-niamo* here simply emphasises the *adverbial* nature of *ipauma*:

- 6.74 *ʔoʔoae iviao e-akavà-i-pà-umà-n-i-à-mo.*²³ (EMek)
 youth girl 3SG-spouse-PASS-CA-fine-TH-PF-3SG-just
 (The) youth married the girl *properly*.

Some other examples (all from EMek) will help to demonstrate that the third person singular suffix is essentially unmotivated (non-referring) when incorporated in this suffix:

- 6.75 *Mo-iva-aina-ʔau-n-i-à-mo.*²⁴ (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-speak-proud-TH-PF-3SG-just
 (You) must speak proudly.
- 6.76 *ʔuma fo-pa-nipa fe-ŋufi-n-i-a foʔa.* (EMek)
 pig OBLG.2SG-CA-wrap OBLG.3SG-rot-TH-PF-3SG LEST
 Wrap the pig (meat) in case it rots.
- 6.77 *E-iva-ŋa-ŋafe-i-à-mo.* (EMek)
 3SG-speak-RD-kind-PF-3SG-just
 S/he always speaks/spoke kindly.

The use of *-niamo* seems to be on the increase in the EMek dialect today. The following example (a back translation from English) has a very ‘modern’ ring:

- 6.78 *Ala-kapa-ipauma-n-i-à-mo.*²⁵ (EMek)
 FUT.1SG-do-extreme-TH-PF-3SG-just
 I will definitely do it.

Two examples that seem to contain double object marking follow here:

- 6.79 *Isa e-kapa-patài-s-a-n-i-à-mo.*²⁶ (EMek)
 s/he 3SG-do-proper-B-3SG-TH-PF-3SG-just
 S/he did it slowly/properly.
- 6.80 *Imoi eʔele fo-àfi-patài-s-a-n-i-à-mo.* (EMek)
 child small OBLG.2SG-hold-proper-B-3SG-TH-PF-3SG-just
 Hold the small child carefully.

To conclude, attention is drawn to the composition of the common time word: *aoniàmo* ‘always, forever’. Desnoës gave only the co-verb *-aonia* ‘always, constantly’. This can be accounted for as *ao* ‘go, walk’ (in EMek apparently a doublet of *lao* ‘go’) followed by adverbial *-nia*, *-niamo*. Incidentally, in modern EMek *aoniamo* comes before the verb:

23 I have here marked the secondary word stresses as well as the main one on -à.

24 EMek *aina-ʔau* means literally either ‘voice-high’ or ‘ear-hard’, and metaphorically ‘proud, pride’. WMek has *aina-kau*.

25 I was given *ala-kapa-koa-n-i-à-mo* as being synonymous with this utterance.

26 The [t] in *patai* is for expected /k/, a substitution common in the language of women.

- 6.81 *Lai aoniàmo alo-ŋama a-afi-a.* (EMek)
 We.E always happiness 1PL-take/hold-3SG
We are always happy.

6.1.9 THE ADVERBIAL SUFFIX *-ANI*

This adverbial verb – of POC antiquity – essentially means ‘leave, go away from speaker’.²⁷ In Mekeo it functions like a weakened co-verb – in core cosubordinate juncture – to add a case role to the main verb: a ‘source’ of movement. It is not in fact very different from certain other following co-verbs such as have been described above, but this root does not appear alone.

The verb *biau, piau* ‘run’ often has a rather weak meaning, equivalent to ‘go’. The complex predicate *biw-ani-, piau-ani-* has come to be used for ‘leave behind’:

- 6.82 *E-u a?iva la-piau-ani-a.* (EMek)
 POSS-1SG knife 1SG-run-leave-3SG
 I left my knife (behind). OR: I went away and left my knife.

The next example illustrates an adversative (or malefactive) function of *-ANI*:

- 6.83 *Ama-u e-mae-ani-au.* (EMek)
 father-1SG 3SG-die-leave-1SG
 My father died and left me. OR: My father ‘died on me’.

The next example seems to demonstrate the lexical conjunction of two actions that would be in reality both separate and consecutive: *ke-au-ani-a* ‘they cut (the sago palm down) and left it’:

- 6.84 *Ipako ke-au-ani-a, ke-?u?u-n-i-a-mo ke-mai.* (EMek)²⁸
 sago 3PL-hit-leave-3SG 3PL-mark-TH-PF-3SG-just 3PL-come
 They cut and left the sago palm, they simply marked it and came.

6.1.10 THE ADVERBIAL SUFFIX *-BENI*

This adverbial suffix is almost certainly, in the light of its uses (see below), related to the verb *BENI* ‘give’.²⁹

The exact meaning of the object case-role marked by verbs ending in *-BENI* is not always easy to convey. It is very similar to that of the remote or symbolic object of certain groups of *-(C)AI* derived verbs, an object of affective behaviour or an object of recourse. The underlying idea is perhaps ‘movement towards’ someone or, less commonly, something.³⁰

- 6.85 *Imoi, kaapa e-aŋa-i-s-a, papie* (EMek)
 child snake 3SG-bite-PF-B-3SG woman

27 Mekeo *-ANI* corresponds to Motu *tani* (as for example in *e-raka-tani-a* ‘3SG-walk-away from-3SG’ or ‘3SG-leave.behind-3SG’).

28 *-ANI* may in this example encode some extended or bleached meaning.

29 This root, or stem, is of Austronesian antiquity, having been reconstructed as PAN **beRey*, etc. (different versions abound). Pawley and others reconstruct POC **pani*, functioning as a prepositional verb.

30 Pawley (1973) concluded that POC **pani* marked ‘motion to an inanimate goal’.

uŋauŋa ke-pako-peni-a.
 sorceror 3PL-scream-arrive-3SG
 A/the snake bit a/the child, (the) women scream ‘for’ (the) sorceror.
 [cf. the French *à l’adresse de*]

- 6.86 *Ke-apepe-peni-a.* (EMek)
 3PL-cry-arrive-3SG
 They cry ‘on his account’.

There is also of course the ‘lexicalised’ verb form: *βakani-βini-a, ba-kani-bini-a, pa-?ani-peni-a* ‘ask someone a question, inquire of someone’. This contrasts (as we saw) with *ba-kani-ai-n-a, pa-?ani-ai-n-a* ‘ask about someone, something’. (Compare examples 5.120 and 5.121 in §5.3.3 above).

6.1.11 CO-VERBS OF MANNER/AFFECT/EFFECT

These co-verbs have become grammaticalised to the extent that they have lost their independence. Some are now rarely if ever found except as co-verbs.³¹ Note that it is only in this – the degree of grammaticalisation – that these verbs differ from full verbs in nuclear juncture.

One fully grammaticalised co-verb is *-bo, -po* ‘break’:

*au-bo-ŋ-a, au-po-ŋ-a*³² hit (and) break TR
aŋa-bo-ŋ-a, aŋa-po-ŋ-a (> *-aa-po-ŋ-a*) cut (and) break TR
pai-bo-ŋ-a, fai-bo-ŋ-a, fai-po-ŋ-a snap (and) break TR

There are also fully specialised directionals (or motion adverbials):

au(-a) ‘up, off’ TR/ITR

- 6.87 *Mo-apsi-au-a.* (WMek)
 IMP.2SG-take-off-3SG
 Take/lift it off.

u(-a) ‘separate’ ITR/TR

- 6.88 *Ue mo-itsi-u-a.* (NMek)
 vine IMP.2SG-pinch-separate-3SG
 Pinch apart the vine.

ugi-n-a, uji-n-a, utsi-n-a, uki-n-a ‘pursue, approach TR’

- 6.89 *E-ka-utsi-n-a.* (NMek)
 3SG-lie-approach-TH-3SG
 S/he lay up against her/him/it.

But in a more general way main verbs are modified by other verbs:

³¹ It must be borne in mind that in a great many cases such specialisation is only partial (or statistically verifiable).

³² I have no equivalent for NWMek. Desnoës (or Van Lamsweerde) suggests that the final *-ŋa* may in fact belong to the root as much as to the OM, and invokes Roro *bo’a-n-a* ‘strike’ (Motu has *bota-i-a*). EMek also has *-au-po-ŋa-k-a* ‘crack (e.g. head) (TR)’. Compare the Mekeo ITR verb *obo, opo* ‘break, be broken’.

- 6.90 *E-ŋani-ua.* (EMek)
 3SG-cut-chew
 S/he cut it by chewing.

This last example can be regarded as a nonce formation, i.e. as two main verbs in nuclear juncture. It *contrasts with* the following, where the co-verb *oga, oka* ‘disperse’ represents a well established and quasi-grammaticalised adverbial co-verb:

- 6.91 *E-ŋani-oka.* (EMek)
 3SG-cut-disperse
 S/he cut it loose.

Here are some more examples of complex verb forms with *oga, oka*, which often takes on connotations of plurality and/or repetition:

- 6.92 *Papiau ke-kani-kani-oka.* (EMek)
 people 3PL-flee-RED-disperse
 The people all dispersed in different directions.
- 6.93 *Koŋa mo-afi-oka.* (EMek)
 coconut IMP.2SG-take-disperse
 Take all the coconuts.

Oga, oka can, however, function as an independent or main verb, in which event it often implies destruction, annihilation, and so on:

- 6.94 *?uŋo ŋa-ŋau-ŋa e-oka.* (EMek)
 cotton.tree RD-leaf-3SG 3SG-disperse
 The leaves of the cotton tree have (all) died.
- 6.95 *Biotou ke-oka-i?a-i?a.* (EMek)
 Biotou 3PL-disperse-ITS-RED
 The people of Biotou have all perished.

The ominous tones disappear, however, with *oka-ŋaj* (EMek):

- 6.96 *Aina-mi e-oka-ŋaj-apala.* (EMek)
 voice-2PL 3SG-spread-ITS-very
 Your voice(s) is/are audible all over.

Finally I wish to mention the root *βu, buu, puu/puŋu*. This can now be used as a free adverbial particle meaning ‘again’, but seems to be related to the co-verb *-buŋu(-a), -puŋu(-a)* ‘do exhaustively, drastically, mortally’, which is found in *-au-buŋu-a, -au-puŋu-a* ‘beat badly, beat to death, kill’. Possibly through being used in core co-subordinate juncture (as the second or ‘hanging’ verb) it seems to have developed an unusual degree of syntactic freedom along with a new, adverbial meaning:

- 6.97 *Aŋa-isa-?a puŋu.* (EMek)
 FUT.1PL-see-1PL again
 We will see one another again.
- 6.98 *Na-io βu.* (NWMek)
 FUT.1SG-go again
 I will go again.

The expression for being tired, exhausted, ‘beat’, ‘finished’, may represent an intermediate stage of this development:

- 6.99 *La-afi-puŋu.* (EMek)
 1SG-take-finish
 I am tired/exhausted.

It is not a big step from ‘finish, complete, do exhaustively’ to ‘do again, do repeatedly’. Another expression with intransitive *-au-puŋu* is *imu e-au-puŋu* ‘the rain pours/poured down’. But this co-verb is more commonly used with transitive main verbs. Finally, an example of causativised *puŋu* follows (given as 5.87 above):

- 6.100 *Ova-mu a-lo-pa-puŋu-ŋai-n-a.* (EMek)
 back-2SG FUT-2SG-CA-finish-ITS-TH-3SG
 You will break your back.

I complete this section with a list of verbs that are commonly employed as adverbial co-verbs:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| a) <i>oga, oka</i> | disperse, scatter |
| b) <i>βuŋu, buŋu, puŋu (-a)</i> | be finished |
| c) <i>nini (-a)</i> | be in line |
| d) <i>pupu, fufu (-n-i-a)</i> | immerse, submerge |
| e) <i>βini, bini, pini (-a)</i> | be twisted, complicated |
| f) <i>gigi, kiki (-a)</i> | slip into |
| g) <i>ŋeŋe (-a)</i> | persevere |
| h) <i>ŋee-ŋee (-a)</i> | step by step |
| i) <i>ŋuŋu (-a)</i> | unite |
| j) <i>au-a</i> | go up |
| k) <i>?u-a</i> | be firm |
| l) <i>api-a</i> | press |
| m) <i>apu-a</i> | close |
| n) <i>po(-a), fou(-a)</i> | be together |
| o) <i>βo-ŋa, bo-ŋ-a, po-ŋ-a</i> | break |
| p) <i>u-a</i> | depart |
| q) <i>gigi, kiki</i> | firm, fast, (not) at all ³³ |

6.1.12 CO-VERBS OF UNCONTROLLED PROCESS

This class of verbs is recognised on semantic grounds alone. They describe what happens when an actor (animate or inanimate) loses or relinquishes control of an action or a process, as when something goes amiss, comes loose, vanishes.

Transitive and intransitive verbs of non-attainment, or failure, or occultation, like ‘fudge, waste, spoil, miss, lose’, seem to fulfil an important discourse function in Mekeo. Transitive verbs of non-attainment are built on intransitive verbs of uncontrolled process. When these

³³ This item sometimes functions as a free particle. It reinforces negatives, functioning like Kuni *baka*, or English ‘at all’ (cf. French *du tout*).

latter verbs occur as following co-verbs in nuclear juncture, they modify the meaning of a transitive main verb with overtones of ineffectuality, failure, uselessness, or pointlessness. A list of intransitive root verbs in this class is repeated here from §4.3.2.9:

a)	<i>aaŋe</i>	be idle, vain, crazy
b)	<i>ŋea</i>	be missed/miss, be lost/lose
c)	<i>kapu, kafu, ?afu</i>	be deprived of something, lack something, have nothing
d)	<i>apu, afu</i>	be forbidden or taboo, be renounced, lacking
e)	<i>kapu, kafu, ?afu</i>	be lacking, deprived, absent, useless, failed
f)	<i>ŋopu, ŋobu</i>	be idle, inert, in need of something
g)	<i>moŋu</i>	be undone, break in pieces
h)	<i>oŋu</i>	be lacking, be due
i)	<i>poŋea, foŋea(-ŋ-a)</i>	fail, be unsuccessful, be deceived
j)	<i>puge, fuge, fuke</i>	be empty, void, vain, pass idly, waste
k)	<i>maini(-n-i-a)</i>	be idle, empty, exhaust
l)	<i>ŋupa, ŋufa</i>	come loose, come untied
m)	<i>aifo, aibo, aipo</i>	do wildly
n)	<i>βai-na, bai-na, pai-na</i>	away, off, up
o)	<i>popo, fofo</i>	be stupid, silly, wrong
p)	<i>pua, fua</i>	be finished, ruined
q)	<i>mou</i>	be broken, cut, snapped
r)	<i>ŋoβo, ŋobo, ŋopo</i>	vanish, disappear

(The verb *gaŋe, kaŋe* ‘miss, graze’ does not incidentally lend itself to ‘co-verbal’ usage.)

The following examples illustrate verbs of uncontrolled process in nuclear juncture and especially their use to express the *failure* or the *futility* of actions or of processes:

- 6.101 *Lo-aŋu-ŋopu-ŋopu, lo-fa?a-apala.* (EMek)
 2SG-sit-ŋopu-RED 2SG-fat-bad
 You habitually sit idly, you are getting fat.
- 6.102 *Tsipula-a^β4 e-pineuŋa-aaŋe.* (EMek)
 prison-OBL 3SG-work-idle
 He works aimlessly/undeservedly in prison.
 [US: The man is claimed to be innocent.]
- 6.103 *Bubukele e-bini-aŋe-n-i-au-mo.* (WMek)
 pawpaw 3SG-give-idle-TH-PF-1SG-just
 S/he gave me a pawpaw for free, as a present.
- 6.104 *A?iva la-peni-oŋu-i-o.* (EMek:D)
 knife 1SG-give-lack-PF-2SG
 I give/gave you the knife for nothing.

34 This is cognate with Motu *dibura* ‘darkness; prison’, and may be a loanword.

- 6.105 *Iakiaki lo-ʔafo-aŋe-n-i-a.*³⁵ (EMek:D)
club 2SG-throw-idle-TH-PF-3SG
You laid about yourself indiscriminately with the club.
- 6.106 *Lo-pa-uŋu-fofo-i-au.* (EMek)
2SG-CA-???-pointless-PF-1SG
You accuse me pointlessly.
- 6.107 *Mateo ipitsi e-pua-ʔafu-ŋ-a.* (EMek)
Matthew shotgun 3SG-bear-loss-TH-3SG
Matthew left the shotgun behind.
- 6.108 *Iji au-u a-ŋapa-kapu-ŋ-a.* (WMek)
I foot-1SG 1SG-kick-loss-TH-3SG
I lost my footing.
- 6.109 *Lau la-isa-gea-i-s-o.* (EMek)
I 1SG-see-miss-PF-B-2SG
I took you for someone else. OR: I didn't recognise you.
- 6.110 *Koŋa mo-fio mo-pa-ina-moŋu-a.* (EMek)
coconut IMP.2SG-grab IMP.2SG-CA-twist-detach-3SG
Get a coconut by twisting it free.
- 6.111 *Mo-paini-foŋea-n-i-ʔi.* (EMek)
IMP.2SG-call-deceit-TH-PF-3PL
Call them as a joke, as a trick.
- 6.112 *Aŋo la-pa-fuke-i-a-mo.* (EMek)
bush 1SG-CA-plain-PF-3SG-just
I searched the bush with no success.
- 6.113 *Lo-iva-maini-n-i-a.* (EMek)
2SG-speak-empty-TH-PF-3SG
You speak/spoke for nothing.

This whole semantic domain needs much further study.

6.1.13 CO-VERBS OF INTENSITY

These types of verbs, when functioning intransitively as unanalytic process verbs, are often used in evaluative predications: 'It is good', 'It is bad':

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| a) <i>e-loβia, e-lobia, e-lobzia, e-lopia</i> | He/She/It is good, excellent. |
| b) <i>e-belo, e-velo, e-felò</i> | He/She/It is good. |
| c) <i>e-aβaea, i-abala, e-apala</i> | He/She/It is bad. |
| d) <i>i-ulalu, e-ulalu</i> | He/She/It is poor, wretched. |

The same verbs, used transitively, take on other meanings, as in the following:

35 Continuation: *aane-ʔi lo-au-n-i-ʔi* 'You hit the innocent, the blameless'.

- 6.114 *La-pa-lopia-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 1SG-chief-TH-PF-3SG
 I have praised him/her/it.
- 6.115 *Buka o-abala-n-i-a.* (WMek)
 book 2SG-bad-TH-PF-3SG
 You have spoiled the book.

Turning to their co-verbal uses, we have countless utterances like the following:

- 6.116 *Imi e-biau-lobia.* (WMek)
 child 3SG-run-good
 The child ran/has run well.
- 6.117 *Agoa e-paku-paku-apala.* (EMek)
 land 3SG-bump-RED-bad
 The ground is really very bumpy.
- 6.118 *Au auṅa e-biau-ulalu.* (WMek)
 man TOP 3SG-run-poor
 The man now, he ran like blazes.
- 6.119 *E-kapa-lopia-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 3SG-do-well-TH-PF-3SG
 S/he did it well.
- 6.120 *Ina-mi e-tsimabelo-ai-mi.* (WMek)
 mother-2PL 3SG-mind-good-RTR-1PL/2PL
 Your mother looked after us/you well.
- 6.121 *Gugu i-ani-abala-n-i-a.* (WMek)
 tobacco 3SG-eat-bad-TH-PF-3SG
 S/he smokes a terrible amount of tobacco.

The most common and the most neutral intensifiers are *i-ba-uma*, *i-pa-uma* and *alogaína* (< *alogaína* 'inside-3SG-OBL-3SG', with double determination).

- 6.122 *Fokama e-alogaí.³⁶* (NMek)
 food 3SG-very.much
 There's tons of food.
- 6.123 *La-afi-puṅu-alogaína.* (EMek)
 1SG-take-finish-very.much
 I am very tired.
- 6.124 *Keke e-alo-pauma; e-alo-eṅakai.* (EMek)
 uproar 3SG-inside-properly 3SG-stop-properly
 The noise has stopped completely; it has died out completely.
- 6.125 *Moni aibi-ba-bauma.* (WMek)
 money none-RD-properly
 There's no money at all.

³⁶ Another use is in WMek *o-ba-alogaína-n-a* 'you exaggerate, you go too far'.

- 6.126 *Moni laa 'i-pauma.* (EMek)
 money none-properly
 There's no money at all.

I finish this section with examples of some of the less common intensifiers, along with tentative glosses:

- 6.127 *Iviao fauni-na ηama.*³⁷ (EMek)
 girl nice-3SG perfect
 The girl is exquisitely 'nice'.
- 6.128 *E-aipa-kapa-kapa.* (EMek)
 3SG-rage-do/make/thing-RED
 S/he is really furious.
- 6.129 *Mekoi e-kaηa-laa 'i.* (EMek)
 Sweet.potato 3SG-shrivel-not
 The sweet potato is really shrivelled up.
- 6.130 *E-moni-baηai-n-a.* (WMek)
 3SG-money-cross-TH-3SG
 S/he has stacks of money.
- 6.131 *Eka maua koko!* (NWMek)
 house big ITS
 The house is really big!

A very productive adverbial co-verb in all dialects is *kae*, *?afe* 'collect', used transitively or intransitively, and often with the RTR suffix *-AI*, to mean 'exhaustively':

- 6.132 *Ma-oabi-kae-n-i-a-mo.* (WMek)
 IMP.1SG-speak-collect-TH-PF-3SG-just
 I want to tell absolutely everything.
- 6.133 *Ke-mai-?afe-ai.* (EMek)
 3PL-come-collect-ITS
 They all came, every one.
- 6.134 *La-ani-?afe-ai-n-i-?i.* (EMek)
 1SG-eat-collect-ITS-TH-PF-3PL
 I eat/ate them all up.

The co-verb in this last use is quasi-aspectual in function, signifying perfectivity. (I illustrated this use of RTR in §5.3.5 above.)

I append the following list of verbs that appear commonly as intensifying co-verbs. Much in this area of language represents 'slang' (or 'fashions of speaking') and usage can be expected to change rapidly:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a) <i>lobia, lopia(-n-i-a-mo)</i> | be fine |
| b) <i>abala, apala(-n-i-a-mo)</i> | be bad, wretched |
| c) <i>uma</i> | be plentiful, prope |
| d) <i>ba-uma, pa-uma[i-]</i> | be very plentiful, proper |

³⁷ The basic meaning of *ηama* seems to be 'burgeon, grow, become whole'.

e) <i>aloŋai(-n-a)</i>	be excellent (EMek in origin)
f) <i>ulalu</i>	be poor, wretched
g) <i>eŋakai</i>	properly
h) <i>ku-a, ?u-a (-?u?u-a)</i>	vigorously, completely
i) <i>kui, ?ui</i>	firmly
j) <i>ŋuŋu-e(-ŋa)</i>	completely
k) <i>folome(-ŋa)</i>	be pretty, beautiful (EMek)
l) <i>falaka-uma</i>	be pretty, beautiful (EMek)
m) <i>gigi(-a), kiki(-a)</i>	properly
n) <i>i?a, i?a-i?a</i>	well (EMek only)
o) <i>ifukaina</i>	properly (EMek only)
p) <i>gaba-gaba, kapa-kapa</i>	extremely
q) <i>ŋama</i>	be luxuriant, plentiful
r) <i>laa'i</i>	not (EMek only)
s) <i>baŋai, paŋai</i>	go across, cross over
t) <i>buŋu, puŋu(-a)</i>	be extreme, terminal (to excess)
u) <i>-fari</i>	excellent

6.1.14 NEGATION: THE THREE OPERATORS

There are three negative operators in Mekeo. The first two are nuclear layer operators and differ only in degree of agglutination. That is to say that they seem to be cognate. One functions (very exceptionally) as a proclitic particle negating (denying) nominal predicates, while the other is a prefix that appears on the verb word and thus negates verbal predicates. In both cases the entire nucleus is negated, so that in the case of nuclear juncture the whole of the compound verb is negated. The third is an independent existential negator and operates at the periphery of the predication to negate the entire core which may of course be simple or complex.³⁸

A. Proclitic negative:

- 6.135 *A'i po?a.* (EMek)
not much
(It's) not much.
- 6.136 *A'i fo?ama-mu-mo, a'i kapa-mu-mo lo-aŋu-e.* (EMek)
not food-SG-just not thing-2SG-just 2SG-sit-CNT
You sit there, you have no food, you have nothing.
- 6.137 *A'i ina-ma, a'i ama-ma.* (WMek)
not mother-2SG not father-2SG
You have no mother, you have no father.

³⁸ See FVV (1984:192) for a pertinent discussion.

B. Prefixal negative:

I shall take the common phrase ‘I don’t know’ in each dialect in turn, in order to show how the negative prefix assimilates or does not assimilate (thanks to buffer consonants: B) to the subject-role marking prefix:

- 6.138a. *Iu aeaŋo.* (< ai-a-ŋo) (NWMek)
 I not.know
- b. *Iji ai-d-a-loŋo.* (< ai-a-loŋo) (WMek)
 I NEG-B-1SG-know
- c. *Itsi ai-z-a-loŋo.* (< ai-z-a-loŋo) (NMek)
 I NEG-B-1SG-know
- d. *Lau a-la-loŋo.* (EMek)
 I NEG-1SG-know

C. Existential negative:

I shall again take the same target sentence in each of the dialects in turn: ‘There is no sugar’.

- 6.139a. *Tsuga maini.* (NWMek)
 sugar not
- b. *Tsuga aibaia.* (WMek, NMek)
 sugar not
- c. *Tsuka laa’i.* (EMek)
 sugar not

I have heard *aibaiza* from NMek speakers, and *aibaida* from some WMek speaker, but the intrusive consonant has not spread as yet in a regular way to this lexical environment.

6.2 PERIPHRASTIC ASPECTUAL/AUXILIARY VERBS

These are quasi-grammaticalised following verbs. They can function like *MIA* in §6.2.1 to predicate a state of some topic nominal, acting as carriers for TM marking (the predicated state providing the reference of the subject marker). The functions of *MIA* are thus largely copular. Or they can follow a finite verb, in nuclear juncture or in core coordinate juncture (for which see §8.1), like EMek *lao* in §6.2.2 or PUA in §6.2.3. In this latter case they dominate the ‘main’ verb in a way that normal co-verbs do not, and give precise definition to its its relative tense, or ‘external’ aspect.³⁹

Foley and Van Valin (1984:208-212) have noted the frequent use of serial verb constructions to express aspect, which is a nuclear level operator. Such verbs “are not verbs in nuclear juncture, but rather an aspectual operator realised by a verb stem and a predicate within its scope” (1984:210). Examples 6.164 and 6.165 in §6.2.3 illustrate how a following verb with its own subject marker can fulfil this function.

³⁹ ‘Relative tense’ is the correct term for e.g. the English present perfect which describes the relation of an event to the time of the utterance (Comrie 1976:52). It says nothing about “the internal temporal constituency of a situation” (Comrie 1976:3), which is how aspect proper is normally defined. See §4.2.1 above (fn.) for further remarks regarding Comrie 1985a.

6.2.1 THE VERB *MIA* 'be, become'

This verb literally signifies 'be, become'.⁴⁰ It is a periphrastic alternative to a simple process verb, and is used to signal a more gradual and a more extended process of being/becoming.

- 6.140 *Kuma paka a-ne-mia.* (WMek)
 pig large FUT-3SG-be
 (The) pig will be/become large.

But the verb *MIA* can also be used to mean 'happen, occur, eventuate', as in this next example:

- 6.141 *Mae e-mia.* (EMek)
 death 3SG-be
 A death has occurred. OR: There has been a death.

The verb *MIA* is sometimes followed by an exclamatory/hortatory *e!*,⁴¹ as in

- 6.142 *Mae e-mia e!* (EMek)
 death 3SG-be XCL
 My God, there's been a death! OR: — There's been a death – how about that?

The causative use of *MIA* (*βa-mia*, *ba-mia*, *pa-mia*) is also common. It could perhaps, in this use, be glossed as 'bring it about' or 'cause to occur':

- 6.143 *Awa i-d-oŋe biga a-no-ba-mia?* (WMek)
 price NOM-B-put some FUT-2SG-CA-be
 How many payments will you cause to be made?
- 6.144 *Iji jiogai e-ba-mia-i-au.* (WMek)
 I stupid 3SG-CA-be-PF-1SG
 S/he is making a fool out of me.

The next example, from WMek, illustrates a very common trope that can perhaps best be translated as: 'cause to become non-existing' or, more colloquially, 'get rid of'.

- 6.145 *Iji kama-kama nam aibaia a-na-ba-mia.* (WMek)
 I rubbish-RED this none FUT-1SG-CA-be
 I will (want to?) get rid of this rubbish.

The verb *MIA* can also be used transitively, with the addition of the perfective aspect marking suffix *-I*, as the next examples show:

⁴⁰ Roro *mia* means 'sit, rest, remain'. EMek *mia-mia* means 'feast, get-together, sing-sing' (which of course involves a lot of sitting). Mekeo also has *ŋagu-ŋagu*, *ŋaku-ŋaku* 'feast', which is a reduplication of the verb for 'cook'.

⁴¹ Another enclitic *-e* may indeed be cognate with the continuative *-e* of §4.3.1.4.1 above. However, it is usually glossed as 'much many, plenty':

Mā'a e-mia-e kuja!
 fish 3SG-???-? indeed!

The fish are/have become abundant indeed!

Note that *e-miae* (? *e-mia-e*) means 'used, used up, useless'. But this may be another verb entirely.

6.146 *Kuku la-mia-i-a.* (EMek)
 tobacco 1SG-be-PF-3SG
 I received tobacco.

6.147 *Faanja-mu, fifi, ?oua fa-mia-i-o.* (EMek)
 skin/body-2SG leaf.sp leaf.sp OBLG.1SG-be-PF-2SG
 I will treat you gently. (lit. I will treat you (your skin) like *fifi* and *?oua*.)

The next sentence contains an example of a preconditional predication with switch mood (see §8.2.3 below for a description of preconditional adsubordination).

6.148 *Au i-d-ŋe ŋa-mia-gai, pama-ao.* (WMek)
 wood PASS-B-put IMP.3SG-become-after OBLG.1PL-go
 Let us go as soon as the wood has been put away.
 (lit. The-putting-of-the-wood-let-it-be after, we should go.)

The predicate *e-mia* can also have a specialised function. It signifies literally ‘it happened’, but actually signals that something *could* happen, or is near happening. It can introduce an imminent possibility or describe a narrow escape:

6.149 *E-mia fa-?ua-lai.* (EMek)
 3SG-be OBLG.1SG-drop-away
 I nearly fell.

The verb *MIA* fulfils an extremely important role in the expression of conditional propositions: *go po-mia* (and *go po-mio*), *goa pe-mia*, *koa fe-mia*, literally ‘It should be true’, or ‘Imagine it were true’. This is discussed in more detail in §8.3.2.8 below. But here are two examples by way of a preview:

6.150 *Isa ŋa-lao koa fe-mia, lau isava* (EMek)
 S/he IMP.3SG-go true OBLG.3SG-be I also
fa-lao.
 OBLG.1SG-go
 If s/he goes, I will go too.

6.151 *Iu agia-u n-a-io go po-mio,* (NWMek)
 I friend-1SG FUT-1SG-go true OBLG.2SG-be
iu aga a-io na-oma.
 I also 1SG-go FUT.1SG-DNT
 If my friend goes, I will go too.

Finally, *MIA* marked for third person singular and oblique case – i.e. *mia-ŋa-ai* (> *mia-ŋ-ai*) – functions as a postposition meaning ‘while, during’ (see §5.6.2):

6.152 *Ida ge-ŋagu-ŋagu mia-ŋ-ai a-pe.* (WMek)
 they 3PL-cook -RED be-3SG-OBL 1SG-sleep
 While they were cooking I slept.

6.2.2 THE EMEK VERB *lao* ‘go, go on, become’

This verb has numerous ‘extended’ uses in the EMek dialect (whether these are duplicated in the other dialects is something that awaits further study, but the EMek accreted *l* gives it a

certain advantage for word formation). Not all of these uses can be called ‘auxiliary’ but they represent very common idioms and need to be included in the grammar.

Reduplicated, as *e-lao-lao*, this verb signifies progressive aspect and, by extension, ‘later on’. The use of this verb form for the expression of progressive aspect seems a clear extension of meaning, beginning with sentences like 6.153:

- 6.153 *Lau Imuŋa la-lao-lao.* (EMek)
 I Imunga 1SG-go-RED
 I visit Imunga frequently.
- 6.154 *E-pea-pea e-lao-lao.* (EMek)
 3SG-walk-RED 3SG-go-RED
 S/he went on walking.
- 6.155 *La-mai la-ani-a e-lao-lao la-isava.* (EMek)
 1SG-come 1SG-eat-3SG 3SG-go-RED 1SG-sick
 I came and ate it and later on I got sick.

As an adverbial co-verb (in nuclear juncture) *lao* can also function to express continuous/progressive aspect:

- 6.156 *A-isa-lao.* (EMek)
 1PL-see-go
 We cannot (could not) stop looking at it.

With *-mai* it functions to express ‘to-ing and fro-ing’ movements:

- 6.157 *Alo-u e-lao e-mai.* (EMek)
 inside-1SG 3SG-go 3SG-come
 My mind is/was troubled.
- 6.158 *E-iva-lao e-iva-mai-mo.* (EMek)
 3SG-speak-go 3SG-speak-come-just
 Now he says one thing, now another.

The verb *lao*, in conjunction with an oblique NP, can also mean ‘become that NP’:

- 6.159 *Imoi papie ŋau-ŋ-ai fe-lao.* (EMek:D)
 child woman offspring-3SG-OBL OBLG.3SG-go
 The child should become like a son/daughter to the woman.

Note that *pa-lao-ŋa* means ‘regard as’ or ‘treat as’, and *pa-lao-peni-a* means ‘become like’ or ‘imitate’ or, sometimes, ‘give to’:

- 6.160 *Kafo^o-ai lo-pa-lao-n-i-au.* (EMek:D)
 crazy-OBL 2SG-CA-go-TH-PF-1SG
 You treat/regard me as crazy.
- 6.161 *Imoi-mo aŋu^a-[?]i aŋ-o-pa-lao-peni-[?]i.* (EMek:D)
 child-just young-3PL FUT-2PL-CA-go-give-3PL
 You will imitate the little children.

A more important, that is, a grammatical use of *-lao* (and *pa-lao*) has the non-finite verb form functioning exactly like *pau*, *fau* ‘sake; honour’, that is to say it expresses reason or purpose (compare §8.3.2.11 below).

- 6.162 *Kuku lao-ŋa, ŋaku lao-ŋa, maʔa ke-mai-ei-n-a.* (EMek:D)
 tobacco sake-3SG hook sake-3SG fish 3PL-come-RTR-TH-3SG
 They bring fish for hooks and tobacco.
- 6.163 *Oi lo-aŋu-e, lau pa-lao-mu la-mai.* (EMek:D)
 you 2SG-sit-CNT I CA-go-2SG 1SG-come
 You are sitting there, (and) for your ‘sake’ I have come.

Finally the verb *io, ao, lao* is used in all dialects to mean ‘ago’:

- 6.164 *Jina oido i-ao a-ida.* (WMek)
 day few 3SG-go 1SG-see
 I saw (him/her/it) a few days ago.

6.2.3 THE VERB *pua* ‘finish’

The verb *-pua, -fua* ‘finish, end’ is used to signal perfect aspect, or relative tense: ‘When s/he had X-ed, s/he X-ed’, ‘When s/he will have X-ed, s/he will X’. It is often used in conjunction with *AIAMA*.

- 6.165 *La-iva la-fua.* (EMek)
 1SG-speak 1SG-finish
 I have finished speaking.
- 6.166 *A-oabi e-pua.* (WMek)
 1SG-speak 3SG-finish
 I have spoken, it is finished.
- 6.167 *E-pua, boa biga go-ba-mia?* (WMek)
 3SG-finish walk some 2PL-CA-be
 Well then, all told, how many trips did you make?
- 6.168 *?uma ŋaina ke-oŋe-uka e-fua, afu-mi-mo* (EMek)
 pig that 3PL-put-enter 3SG-finish place-1PL-just
a-mue a-mai.
 1PL-turn 1PL-come
 When they had put that pig in (the canoe) we came back to our place.

We also find this verb functioning as a co-verb:

- 6.169 *Lo-foŋe-fua-i-au.* (EMek)
 2SG-deceive-finish-PF-1SG
 You have deceived me for the last time.

And as a cognate noun object:

- 6.170 *Fua-ŋa-ai lo-fua.* (EMek)
 finish-3SG-OBL 2SG-finish
 You have reached the end of the line (lit. the/your end).

This verb can also be used to express the meaning of ‘still, not yet’:

- 6.171 *Ge-bina-binauŋa, a-e-pua.* (WMek)
 3PL-RD-work NEG-3SG-finish
 They are still working.

The phrase *ae-a-pua*, *ai-d-e-pua*, *ai-z-e-fua*, *a-e-fua* can be supplemented with *go*, *goà*, *koà* ‘yet’:

- 6.172 *Ge-bina-binauŋa*, *a-e-pua* *goà*. (WMek)
 3PL-RD-work NEG-3SG-finish like/yet
 They are not finished working yet.

Referring back to §6.1 (and anticipating §8.1), we can say that examples like 6.165 and 6.166 exemplify core level juncture, where two independent verbal cores combine to express a single event. Here the singular SM on the second verb refers back to the entire event represented by the first verb. Example 6.171 exemplifies nuclear juncture, with the verb stem *e-pua* functioning as an aspect marker equivalent to English ‘still’. The lack of agreement between the SM of *e-pua* (third person singular) with that of the main verb (*ge-* third person plural) again suggests that the entire event is the subject of the second verb or that the second SM is a dummy. Meanwhile 6.172 is another example of core juncture, where the second junct has its own aspect marker: *koà*.

6.2.4 THE VERB *gau-gau* ‘precede’

This (usually partially or fully reduplicated) root means ‘be first’ but is used to express relative tense, and functions much like English ‘already’ (or ‘before’).

- 6.173 *Isa e-kau-kau*. (EMek)
 s/he 3SG-precede-RED
 S/he was first.
- 6.174 *Isa e-mai kau-kau* (EMek)
 s/he 3SG-come precede-RED
 S/he came first.
- 6.175 *Kapa a-lo-mai kau-kau*. (EMek)
 thing NEG-2SG-come precede-RED
 Why didn’t you come before?
- 6.176 *Kua iafi e-pa-kau-kau, e-uai-n-i-a*. (EMek)
 nose taking 3SG-CA-precede-RED 3SG-precede-TH-PF-3SG
 The vanguard goes ahead, it goes first.
- 6.177 *Pe Vitale faaŋa-ŋa-ai mo-ina-ka-kau-a*. (EMek)
 Père Vitale skin-3SG-OBL IMP.2SG-start-RD-first-3SG
 Start with Father Vitale.

6.2.5 THE VERB *gaina* ‘be enough’

This verb can probably be analysed as *gai-n-a*, *kai-n-a*, that is *gai*, *kai* ‘be fitting’ plus a thematic consonant and a person/number marking morpheme. In its literal meaning it means ‘suffice, suit’. According to whether it is being used literally or in a semi-grammaticalised sense the meaning of an utterance may be ambiguous:

- 6.178 *Ai-d-e-gai-n-i-au*. (WMek)
 NEG-B-3SG-suffice-TH-PF-1SG
 It is/was not enough for me. OR: I was not able to do it.

In the third person singular the meaning is usually impersonal and non-literal:

- 6.179 *Afa-e-kai-n-a.* (EMek)
 FUT.NEG-3SG-suffice-TH-3SG-TH-3SG
 It won't work./It's no good./I can't do it.

The SM here refers to an event in its entirety:

- 6.180 *Au e-avi-a-kae a-e-kai-n-a.* (EMek)
 tree 3SG-take-3SG-rise NEG-3SG-suffice-TH-3SG
 S/he cannot lift the tree.

It appears in its literal sense in the following sentences from Desnoës:

- 6.181 *Ipako ma-pa-vei-a la-oma,* (EMek:D)
 sago IMP.1SG-CA-water-3SG 1SG-DNT
ŋa-koa papiau maʔo fe-kai-n-i-ʔi.
 that-like people many OBLG.3SG-suffice-TH-PF-3PL
 I want to water the sago, that way it will be enough for many people.
- 6.182 *Mula-mula a-e-kai-n-i-au.* (EMek:D)
 medicine-RED NEG-3SG-suffice-TH-PF-1SG
 The medicine was not (strong) enough to cure me.
 OR: The medicine did not suit me.

The verb does not appear in the extended (grammaticalised) sense in Desnoës (unless the last example be counted) so this usage may represent a comparatively recent development.

6.2.6 CONTINUATIVE: *gege*

The word *gege*, *keke* can sometimes mean 'again' and sometimes 'but'. In EMek it functions as a finite verb meaning 'continue' or 'keep on doing'

- 6.183 *Lapau-mo e-keke-mo ke-lao-lao.* (EMek:D)
 Yule.Is.-just 3SG-continue-just 3PL-go-go
 They keep going to Yule Island.
- 6.184 *Kapa-kai e-keke-mo e-keke lo-pea-pea.* (EMek:D)
 what-way 3SG-continue-just 3SG-continue 2SG-walk-RED
 Why do you persist in walking?

6.3 DISCOURSE MARKERS

Illocutionary force is often expressed in Mekeo by means of syntactic interpolations, exclamations even, that sometimes have the force and substance of predications. The predications so encoded represent comments on (or evaluations of) the main -PF or sentence. This has been described elsewhere as 'speaker comment' (Halliday 1970a). They have also been treated as reduced sentences, which is the approach adopted here.⁴²

⁴² The equivalents of the discourse markers in Mekeo are often to be found subsumed under treatments of postverbal particles in the grammars of other Oceanic languages (e.g. Fijian).

Discourse markers can occur in two general functions (to be described in more detail in §7.1.4): a) modifying an argument, or b) modifying a predicate. Unlike other constituents they can follow a main verbal predicate. They can be classified according to whether they do or do not take full word stress in their normal functions.

- + word stress: *BAIA, LAKOAI/ŃABUA, GŃA, PAI, MAKE, MOKE* and *MO*
(in adversative function).
- word stress: *PANŃU, MA, MO* (in its limiting meaning).
- +/- word stress: *KE* and *TSIA*.

MA, MO, KE and *TSIA* can modify a topic/argument in a verbal predication, and incidentally focus it.

PANŃU, BAIA, LAKOAI/ŃABUA, GUNŃA, PAI generally modify a predicate.

6.3.1 UNCERTAINTY PARTICLE: *MA*

The particle *MA* is often the only overt signal of interrogative mood (INT). As such it only operates to form yes/no interrogatives. It never appears with an interrogative pro-form. It is in itself not exactly an interrogative marker (that is to say it does not call for a response), but signals uncertainty, doubt, ignorance, and so on, and focuses this in a given linguistic area (its 'scope'). Often it can be translated as 'maybe' or 'perhaps'. Sometimes it functions like 'if', marking a conditional predication.⁴³ Sometimes it corresponds to the predicate: 'I do not know' (which is often added, redundantly perhaps, to a predication containing *MA*).

Let us first consider *MA* in its common interrogative function:

6.185 *Oai o-mai ma?* (NMek, WMek)
you 2SG-come INT
Are you coming?

6.186 *Tsiabu e-tsitsi ma ma-izoŃa.* (NMek)
cloth 3SG-tear INT IMP.1SG-see
Is the cloth torn? Let me see! OR: Let me see if the cloth is torn!

As noted above, *MA* sometimes functions to mark a -PF as conditional:

6.187 *Ibiou ida-tsi ma Ńuā e-gae.* (WMek)
girl 3SG.see-3PL INT heart.3SG 3SG-rise
If he sees girls his spirits rise. OR Whenever he sees girls his spirits rise.

A number of examples that illustrate the possibilities for restricting the scope of *MA* now follow. Here *MA* simultaneously focuses the part of the expression in its scope:

6.188 *E-kua-lai ma tsia, buō ai-d-e-mai?* (WMek)
3SG-drop-AT INT wretch cause.3SG NEG-B-3SG-come
Is it that he fell, the poor fellow, and therefore did not come?

The following two contrasting examples illustrate the possibility of defining the focus of a question narrowly:

⁴³ Compare Haiman (1978).

6.189 *I-aŋ-aŋa auŋa, Agupa ma auke?* (WMek)
 3SG-RD-cry TOP Akufa INT dog
 Is that a dog from *Akufa* that is howling?

6.190 *I-aŋ-aŋa auŋa, Agupa auke ma?* (WMek)
 3SG-RD-cry TOP Akufa dog INT
 Is that *a dog* from *Akufa* that is howling?

The particle floats away from the predicate that is questioned in some sentences:

6.191 *Oi ?unia-mu ma e-pa-kua,* (EMek:D)
 you bone-2SG INT 3SG-CA-sore
mae-ŋa lo-fufu-ŋ-a?
 death-3SG 2SG-want-TH-3SG
 Did he ‘hurt’ you, that you desire his death?

In the following it focuses the predicate adjectives that follow the verb word:

6.192 *Mae i-iji, belo ma, abala ma?* (WMek)
 areca.nut 3SG-grow good INT bad INT
 Is the areca nut growing well or poorly?

As noted above, *MA* can occur in combination with the ‘clause comment clause’: ‘I do not know’.

6.193 *A-la-lao ma, afa-la-lao ma, a-la-loŋo.* (EMek)
 FUT-1SG-go INT FUT.NEG-1SG-go INT NEG-1SG-know
 I will go? – I will not go? – I don’t know. OR: – I do not know whether I will go or not.

Three tokens of *MA* can occur in the same utterance:

6.194 *Vei aŋama ma e-faka,* (EMek)
 gourd cracked INT 3SG-leak
ma lo-pa-fini-pea ma e-faka?
 INT 2SG-CA-crush-split INT 3SG-leak
 Is the gourd leaking because it is cracked or is it leaking because you have crushed it and split it?

Other examples of *MA* are scattered throughout this document, but see especially example 6.253 in §5.6.3 above.

6.3.2 JUST: *MO*

The discourse functions of the particle *MO*, realised as *mo* or *mu* (the latter is especially common in the west) deserve a much more detailed treatment than we can here afford it. The functions it performs are many and subtle, but these divide up according to whether *MO* takes word stress or not. Without word stress *MO* occurs mainly as an enclitic particle. It then acts as a limiting particle and means ‘just; only, alone’:

6.195 *Oi po-aŋu-mu, ma-io.* (NWMek)
 you OBLG.2SG-sit-just IMP.1SG-go
 You just sit (here), I must go.

6.196 *Poa mo ga-ani-ani.* (WMek)
 banana just 1PL-eat-RED
 We eat only (=nothing but) bananas.

6.197 *Lau-mo la-mai.* (EMek)
 I-just 1SG-come
 I alone came. OR: Only I came.

MO simultaneously focuses its host. The above can also be read as: ‘As for me, I came’. Sometimes the focusing function is uppermost:

6.198 *E?ele mo loli, akaikia mo trak.* (EMek)
 small *MO* lorry big *MO* truck
 A little one is a lorry, a big one is a truck.

With word stress, *MO* can sometimes be translated with ‘any’ or ‘some’, but it still has a limiting function:

6.199 *Mo laa’i.* (EMek)
MO not
 That’s all. OR: There isn’t any more.

Sometimes stressed *MO* translates as ‘enough’ (in which case it is equivalent to *mo?e*, *moke*, for which see the next section but one, but less emphatic!):

6.200 *Mo lo-iva!* (EMek)
 enough 2SG-speak
 You have said enough!

There is a strong tendency for enclitic *MO* to become an affix, with consequent reassignment of word stress:

6.201 *Mae an-ani-à-mo, ge n-ai-d-a-ua.* (WMek)
 betelnut FUT-1SG.eat-3SG-just but FUT-NEG-B-1SG-chew
 I will just eat betelnut but I will not chew (e.g. with lime).

In the last example *mo* had a concessive function (reduplicated by *ge*). In the next it can have two functions, depending on the pronunciation. Without word stress and pronounced as an enclitic it becomes in effect a conditional conjunction:

6.202 *Oi lo-lao mo, a?ava la-peni-o.* (EMek:D)
 you 2SG-go just betel 1SG-give-2SG
 You just go (and) I’ll give you betel. OR: If you go I’ll give you betel.

Pronounced *with* word stress, and preceded and followed by a pause, however, the meaning is more like ‘but’ (and the interpretation of temporal is also affected):

6.203 *Oi lo-lao, mò, ?ava la-peni-o.* (EMek:D)
 you 2SG-go just betel 1SG-give-2SG
 You have gone, but I gave you betel.

In some sentences *MO* fills the object slot and represents the focus of new information in a verbal predicate. Sentence 6.200, *Mo lo-iva!*, is one example. The following is another:

(EMek)

-
- 6.204 *Mekoi mò o-api-au-a, mo-ʔee.*
 sweetpotato enough 2SG-dig-up-3SG 2SG.IMP-pull.up
 You have dug enough (around the) sweet-potatoes, pull (them) up.
 [(As for the) sweet potatoes, enough you have dug...]

MO here takes the tonic accent, which suggests that it functions as the head of a secondary predication (*Mekoi mò* ‘The sweet potatoes are enough’) which itself, in its entirety, now fills the object slot in the matrix predication (and corefers with the third person singular OM -a).

Bau-mo, bai-mo, pau-mo (which is based on *bau, bai, pau* ‘now’) means ‘just now, a short while ago’, but it can also mean ‘nearly, almost’:

- 6.205 *Pau-mo pio la-isa.* (EMek)
 now-just cassowary 1SG-see.3SG
 I saw a cassowary just now.
- 6.206 *Bai -mo a-kua-lai.* (WMek)
 now-nearly 1SG-drop-AT
 I nearly fell.

Gai-mo, kai-mo functions in a similar way to signal very recent events.

- 6.207 *Gai-mo bio a-ida.* (WMek)
 but-just cassowary 1SG-see.3SG
 I have just seen a cassowary.

6.3.3 PERHAPS: *make*

This is realised as *make, maʔe/mae*. NWMek *make* means ‘after’, and also ‘maybe, perhaps’,⁴⁴ but in WMek, NMek and EMek this item only has the latter meanings,⁴⁵ although it can sometimes be glossed as ‘How about...?’ or ‘What if...?’. It seems to be composed of the uncertainty marker *MA* (§6.3.1) and the exclamatory particle *KE!*, which can also function as a discourse marker (§6.3.10 below).

- 6.208 *Komo fai maʔe!* (EMek)
 Shush fain maybe
 Come on, would you please shut up! OR: How about keeping quiet?

Make, maʔe also signals interrogative mood, but a more tentative kind of interrogative than with *ma*:

- 6.209 *Imoi fafa-ŋa a-lo-opo-n-i-a maʔe?* (EMek)
 child aura-3SG NEG-2SG-sense-TH-PF-3SG perhaps
 Perhaps you did not notice the child?

This interrogative nuance helps enable *make, maʔe* to function to soften requests, somewhat like ‘please’ in English:

⁴⁴ *Make-ŋa-mo* means ‘just now’ and ‘soon’ in NWMek.

⁴⁵ Although in EMek *maʔe* (or *o-maʔe*) forms a number of time deictics with *-MO*.

- 6.210 *Apa-ŋa-mo mo-bini-au make.* (WMek)
 some-3SG-just IMP.2SG-give-1SG perhaps
 You must give me some (of that), perhaps. OR: Please give me some (of that).

In NWMek *make* sometimes fulfills the interrogative function of *MA*:

- 6.211 *I-io Biopaŋa-ai make Kuni make.* (NWMek)
 3SG-go Pioufa-OBL INT Kuni INT
 Did he go to Pioufa or to Kuni?
 OR: I don't know whether he went to Pioufa or to Kuni.

Moʔe maʔe means 'Who knows!' or 'Maybe!' in EMek:

- 6.212 *Moʔe maʔe a-la-lao.* (EMek)
 MOKE MAKE FUT-1SG-go
 I may go, who knows!

6.3.4 JUST SO: *MOKE*

MOKE is realised as *moke*, *moʔe*. It is apparently another composite item, made up of *mo* and *ʔe!*, *ke!* The result is an emphatic *MO* that I gloss as 'just so':

- 6.213 *Mo-aŋu-aŋe-moʔe!* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-sit-be.in.vain-just.so
 Sit completely still!
- 6.214 *Pau moʔe la-mauni.* (EMek)
 now just.so 1SG-life
 I have *just* now given birth.
- 6.215 *Imoi pau moʔe e-mauni.*⁴⁶ (EMek)
 child now just.so 3SG-life
 The/a young child was born *just* now!

Bai-mo, *pau-mo* means, as we saw above, 'just now' (= 'a short while ago'). The additional meaning of *moʔe* seems to be purely emphatic. In the following example *MO* would do nearly as well:

- 6.216 *Ŋa moʔe!* (EMek)
 that just.so
 That is exactly it!

WMek *namo*, *ŋamo* 'this' seems to be a fairly recent innovation formed from *ŋa* + *mo*.

EMek *moʔe* also functions to mean 'Enough!' and, by extension, 'Stop!' I have also recorded *moʔo*, as in:

- 6.217 *Moʔo!* (EMek)
 Enough! Hold on! Let us see!

In the NMek villages I recorded a different idiom:

⁴⁶ It will be recalled that *mauni* is a subject-selection verb (§4.3.4).

- 6.218 *I-ake!* (NMek)
 3SG-descend
 Stop! Enough!

There is also a longer prefixed EMek form of *moʔe*: *ka-moʔe*. This expresses certainty.

- 6.219 *Lau a-la-magiʔ⁴⁷ ka-moʔe.* (EMek:D)
 I NEG-1SG-fear certain
 I am certainly *not* afraid!
- 6.220 *Moʔe ka-moʔe.* (EMek)
 perhaps certain
 Very well!

As noted above, in combination with *make*, *maʔe* the particle *moʔe* yields the common EMek disclaimer:

- 6.221 *Moʔe maʔe!* (EMek)
 Perhaps! OR: Who knows!

6.3.5 DISCREDITATIVE PARTICLE: *BANU*

This particle is realised variously as *banu*, *pama*, *paŋu*.⁴⁸ It is as if one were to add: ‘What a ridiculous idea!’, as an aside, immediately after stating a proposition. But it also contributes the effect of an incredulous rhetorical question to any statement: ‘Could anyone be so foolish as to believe that?’ This is a force that I will call discreditative.⁴⁹

- 6.222 *Lau la-kafoʔo paŋu, lo-isa-au* (EMek)
 I 1SG-crazy DIS 2SG-see-1SG
lo-aʔa-lai-n-i-au?
 2SG-laugh-RTR-TH-PF-3SG
 Do you think I’m crazy, (that) you look at me (and) laugh at me?

The first part of the above sentence would be spoken in English with an intonation expressive of heavy sarcasm – as if the speaker, in fact, thought the addressee must be crazy to act in such a way. Some other examples follow:

- 6.223 *Itsi a-izoga-i-a pama!* (NMek)
 I 1SG-see-3SG DIS
 Are you suggesting that I have seen him/her/it – that is ridiculous!
- 6.224 *Iviao fauŋi-na ŋama paŋu akā* (EMek:D)
 girl good-3DSG burgeon DIS name.3SG
a-lo-apo-apo.
 NEG-2SG-leave-RED
 Is the girl so very beautiful, that you cannot stop discussing her?

⁴⁷ Desnoës preserves the velar nasal in an environment (*/_i*) where it is no longer found.

⁴⁸ Desnoës (or van Lamsweerde) relates this item to *pau* ‘now’. Compare Roro *baru* which means both ‘now’ and ‘by any chance’. NMek *pama* might thus be *pau* + *MA*.

⁴⁹ The term ‘dubitative’ is not quite emphatic enough here. ‘Derisative’ might be even more apt than ‘discreditative’.

- 6.225 *?uma auŋo?oi paŋu la-au-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 pig huge DIS 1SG-hit-TH-PF-3SG
 Do you imagine I shot a huge pig?
 OR: Surely you do not imagine I hit a huge pig.
- 6.226 *Ima-mu e-ŋopu paŋu.* (EMek)
 hand-2SG 3SG-‘pure’ DIS
 Do you imagine your hand is clean?
 OR: You surely do not imagine your hand is clean
- 6.227 *Otsi kaoni afa-e-ani-a paŋu?* (EMek)
 horse corn HYP.NEG-3SG-eat-3SG DIS
 Are you telling me the horse won’t eat corn?

6.3.6 FAIN: PAI

This marker signals a wish or desire and means something like the obsolete English ‘fain’, as in ‘I would fain ...’ It usually takes full word stress. Examples are:

- 6.228 *Ma-afi-a fai!* (EMek)
 IMP.1SG-hold-3SG fain
 I really want to have it! OR: If only I could have it!
- 6.229 *E-u kapa fai ŋa-mia!* (EMek:D)
 POSS-1SG thing fain IMP.3SG-become
 Let it be mine!
- 6.230 *Komo fai!* (EMek)
 shush fain
 Oh hush! OR: For goodness’ sake hush!
- 6.231 *Kuma gaŋa-mai-pai* (WMek)
 pig IMP.3PL-come-fain
 May the pigs come!

To show that this marker does not only function as a ‘performative’ expression I give the next two example which are clearly descriptive, assertions – desire is attributed to the hearer:

- 6.232 *Inei fai a-lo-mia.* (EMek:D)
 bird fain FUT-2SG-be(come)
 You really want to become a bird.
- 6.233 *Mo-piau fai koa lo-mia.* (EMek:D)
 IMP.2SG-run fain like 2SG-become
 You look as if you really wanted to fly.

6.3.7 SHEER, MERE: BAIA, MAINI

BAIA and *MAINI* both mean ‘sheer’ or ‘mere’ or ‘only’, and by extension ‘pure’ or ‘purely’. The utterance situation dictates very various English translations.

- 6.234 *Oi ?apolo-mu paia.* (EMek:D)
 you laziness-2SG sheer
 You are completely/nothing but lazy.
- 6.235 *Na paia e-faa-n-i-a.* (EMek:D)
 that sheer 3SG-want-TH-PF-3SG
 That alone is what she wants OR: S/he just wants that.
- 6.236 *Favoko imu a-ŋe-au paia.* (EMek)
 tomorrow rain FUT-3SG-hit sheer
 It will definitely rain tomorrow.
- 6.237 *Isa ifo-ŋa-mo paia e-mai.* (EMek)
 s/he self -3SG-just merely 3SG-come
 S/he came completely on his/her own.
- 6.238 *Eŋae au laa'i, kepo maini.* (EMek)
 there tree not rock mere
 There were no trees, there was nothing but rock there.
- 6.239 *Imi pa-ŋa maini.* (WMek)
 child skin-3SG mere
 The child was naked.

6.3.8 INDEED: *ŋàbua* (WMek) *làkoa* (EMek)

The emphatic functions of these two items are roughly equivalent. They emphasise that a fact is clearly given or presupposed. They translate as adverbial phrases like 'of course' and 'indeed'.

- 6.240 *E-pupu ŋàbua.* (WMek)
 3SG-hair indeed
 He has lots of (head-)hair.
- 6.241 *Lau la-loŋo làkoa.* (EMek)
 I 1SG-know indeed
 Of course I know!

EMek also has *ka-mo?e* in a very similar function – see §6.3.4 above. Desnoës records what he suggests is a shortened form of *là-koa*: *Le!*

6.3.9 SURELY: *GUNJA*

The function of this item is to emphasise that a proposition is certainly true.

- 6.242 *Fa?a e-fa?a kai e-pea-pea kuŋa!* (EMek)
 big 3SG-big but 3SG-walk-RED ITS
 It's true he's fat but he can certainly walk!
- 6.243 *E-piau laa'i kuŋa!* (EMek)
 3SG-run not ITS
 S/he runs like the wind.

6.3.10 SURPRISE: *KE*

This is realised as: *ke*, *tse*, *ke*. It often appears unexpectedly as *ke* in NMek, WMek, NWMek. It is essentially an exclamation that also functions as a discourse marker. As an exclamation it indicates surprise and perhaps admiration, while as a discourse marker it emphasises the speaker's certainty about the truth of a statement, or an identification. As we saw above, it seems to occur in combination with *MO* and *MA*, as well as on its own:

6.244 *Ke!* (EMek)
Gosh!

6.245 *Naea ke!* (WMek)
That's the one!

6.246 *La-loŋo ke!* (EMek)
1SG-know XCL
But I know! OR: Don't I know!

Desnoës reports a longer and accordingly more emphatic form:

6.247 *Lau la-iava keŋa.*⁵⁰ (EMek)
I 1SG-know indeed
I am indeed ill.

6.248 *Naea ke an-a-api-a!* (WMek)
that XCL FUT-1SG-take-3SG
That's the one I will take!

6.249 *Itse-ke!* (NWMek)
that-XCL
This is the one! (Also: This one! OR: *Le voilà!*)⁵¹

6.250 *Ke oai?* (WMek)
and(?) you
What about you?

Desnoës suggests that *ke* is a shortened form of *ka-moʔe*.

6.3.11 PITY: *KIA*

KIA is realised as *tsia*, *?ia*. It can be used as a term of address or as a descriptive predicate. It connotes sometimes pity and sometimes affection.

6.251 *Oi akaikia-mu, ?ia-mu.* (EMek:D)
you big-2SG dear-2SG
You are a great man, my dear.

⁵⁰ Desnoës also records the older form of *isava* 'sick/ill', before *s*-intrusion.

⁵¹ Brown (1955) has 'therefore' as the meaning of *itia-ke*. *Ke* may be a recurrent formant for demonstratives (cf. NWMek *ike*, *eke* 'this', 'that', and WMek *naea-ke* 'This one!'; see the recognitive/confirmative and presentative demonstratives in §2.2.2 above; and see §7.4.3 below).

- 6.252 *Aŋe.faʔa-ʔià!* (EMek:D)
old.man-dear
The (poor) dear old man!⁵²
- 6.253 *Ŋa tsià!* (WMek)
DX PITY
Look at that poor wretch!
- 6.254 *Idà-tsia a ge-ma?* (WMek)
3PL-PITY what 3PL-DNT
What's wrong with those poor wretches?
OR: What do those poor wretches want?
- 6.255 *Nao tsià, a e-ma ai-d-e-mai.* (WMek)
white.man PITY what 3SG-DNT NEG-B-3SG-come
Why won't the poor white man come?

6.3.12 MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Just as *alaloŋo* ('I don't know') has become semilexicalised in EMek as a discourse marker signalling doubt or uncertainty, *ava-laa'i* 'some-not' has come to be used as a discourse-marking particle signalling 'it doesn't matter' or 'never mind'.⁵³ It has been borrowed into NMek and WMek as *awàlai* (a calque would have given the non-occurring ***apa-aibaia*). Examples are:

- 6.256 A: *La-ŋaŋapai.* (EMek)
1SG-stupid/clumsy
How stupid of me.
- B: *Ava laa'i ipauma.*
something not very
It's nothing at all.
- 6.257 *Alaka pama-ani-a, gai-mo awalai.* (WMek)
one IMP.1SG-eat-3SG but-just never.mind
I want(ed) to eat one but never mind.
- 6.258 *Ŋa-buo, oi awalai* (NWMek)
DX-cause you never.mind
Therefore don't you mind!

The predicate adjectives require some mention in this section, as they fill the same post-verbal slot as discourse markers. However, they are more like the adverbial co-verbs, in that they modify the predicate, not the entire predication.

⁵² Note the stress on the final syllable. Desnoës translates this as 'le pauvre cher vieux'.

⁵³ EMek has the expression *Kapa-aŋao laa'i* 'There is nothing' (lit. 'thing-one not') which is also used to mean 'It doesn't matter.' Similarly NMek, WMek have *gaba-alaka aibaia*. These expressions have not become lexicalised in the same way as *ava-laa'i*. The borrowing of the latter into the other dialects is an indication of its idiomatic status.

CHAPTER 7
FULLY DETERMINED VERBAL PREDICATIONS

A fully determined verbal predication is one in which the marked core actants *and* any inner actants (as entailed by the semantics of the verb) are fully specified through being represented by free nominals, or NPs, and one in which optional adverbial topics may be included so as to specify the circumstances of the event described.¹

As already explained in §1.3.3.2.1 and §1.3.3.2.3, the free nominals are all cataphors, and they are all topics. They may represent new information, and they may indeed constitute individual predicates, but they are presented by the speaker as agreed-upon background information, something that the hearer is not expected to challenge.² There is always one main topic. There may also be marked topics, with *auŋa*. There is always one main focus within the predicate, prosodically marked. However, all the information within the predicate is presented as new and/or important, and there may also be a minor focus, or several of these, with prosodic marking.

The subject of this chapter is grammar ‘outside the clause’ but ‘inside the predication’. As one might expect in a head-marked predication, constituents of the theme – the topics – are generally free to take on a variety of discourse-pragmatic functions. They are free, as Nichols (1986:114) put it, for “the grammaticalisation of discourse prominence and cohesion”. However, this freedom must not be exaggerated. Although the realm of syntax proper is strictly speaking internal to the verbal head, the system of grammatical relations set up there has rule-like reactances among any nominal topics which may precede it. These have to be “integrated” into the system of syntactic relations (Jelinek 1984).³ Since they depend upon the arguments of the verb for their grammatical functions, the bonds thereby set up are not surprisingly found to restrict the range of discourse-pragmatic functions available to them, or to dictate which of these is appropriate.

¹ As noted earlier, this approximately corresponds to what Schütz (1986) calls a fully “specified” sentence, except that he does not include adverbials.

² This freedom of nominal topics within a matrix predication is due to the essentially non-configurational nature of Mekeo, which is in turn due to the independence of the function-marked head. Hale (see especially 1983), along with other linguists, has described a similar situation for Warlpiri. A ‘main topic’ and a ‘marked topic’ here correspond to more traditional notions of a unique and/or clause-external sentential topic.

³ Jelinek (1984:61) incidentally called the nominals “adjuncts”, comparing their place in the syntax of a main clause to that of relative clauses. The function of relative clauses is in fact, according to Keenan (1976a), to restrict reference .

One thing that can be observed is the grammaticalisation of initial *place*, in that certain kinds of nominals, in initial position in the linear order of a fully determined predication, must correspond to one of a range of marked syntactic functions: subject or object of the verb.⁴ Contrariwise, the choice of a main topic (defined by initial position) entails the choice of the actant which it represents as one of the core arguments of the verb. The main topic can be either the subject or the object – only pragmatic considerations can determine which one it actually is.

Whereas the tendency across languages is for optional discourse-pragmatic functions to become grammaticalised over time, and to become obligatory syntactic functions,⁵ in Mekeo most syntactico-semantic functions can be used freely to express discourse prominence. Moreover, the mere presence of any non-head element in a predication is (more or less) optional – see §1.3.3.2.4 – and hence significant.

In order to display the intersection of syntactic functions with discourse-pragmatic functions, or merely prominence, topics and focuses are coded below for their syntactic functions with superscripts. They are also classified according to preciser discourse-pragmatic functions, which derive from their place in the linear order of an utterance, in combination with their prosodic marking (i.e. pitch contours).⁶

This chapter represents an attempt to systematise the description of the structure of predications in an essentially non-configurational, head-marking, head-final language. There are few precedents, and the approach taken is innovative.

7.1 SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC RELATIONS

In terms of the layered structure of the clause assumed in RRG, the nucleus and bound pronominal affixes coding core arguments are the obligatory constituents. Free nominals may be coreferential with the core arguments incorporated in the verb, but they are not syntactically required. They are, in this sense, optional and may be omitted without detriment to the underlying predication.⁷

However, nominals do have important semantic functions. Proper nouns and determinate nouns contribute exophoric and anaphoric reference, respectively, to third person function-markers. Since they precede the affixally marked head, they function cataphorically. Non-determinate class nouns contribute denotative meaning to denotatively ‘empty’ function-markers, and at least restrict the referential range of these affixes. All such free class nouns can thus be said to be acting as cataphoric classifiers.

4 Kuno (1976) describes grammatical aspects of the main topic in Japanese.

5 For example, a clausal topic typically grammaticalises as a subject (see Givón 1979a:83-85; 1984:135-138).

6 All the constituents of a matrix predication can be placed on a scale of ascribed importance, commonly referred to as ‘newness’. I assume that this is a scalar concept, although influential linguists such as Givón argue against this approach. Chafe (1987) has latterly adopted a notion of *relative newness* that belies a much-misquoted earlier intuition (Chafe 1976:30 and 35), according to which the new is anything which is not in the consciousness of the hearer at the time of the utterance (see §1.3.3.2.1 above, fn.100).

7 As Nichols (1986:107) remarks, dependents in a head-marked clause are (usually) optional additions, “included only for emphasis, focus, disambiguation, etc.” These remarks apply to nominal predications too, where an unmarked nominal topic is free in relation to the marked predicate.

Free first and second person pronouns – when present – are *in apposition to* the corresponding pronominal affixes, which as pronouns are independently referential. However, when it comes to verbs marked with third person affixes the situation is quite different. The affixal function-markers no longer represent incorporated pronouns (although they may well have originated as such) and have no independent reference.⁸ They are anaphors rather than pronouns,⁹ and as such they depend entirely upon topic nominals for reference. As noted above, determinate nouns contribute anaphoric reference (to their own antecedent) while non-determinate nouns contribute denotative meaning and more or less definite reference.¹⁰

Meanwhile, the co-referential function-markers on the head provide syntactic functions, retrospectively as it were, for the ‘floating nominal topics’.¹¹ This applies to first and second person pronouns as well as determinate or non-determinate nouns, since on their own these have no syntactic function.

In sum, third person affixes depend on free nominals for their denotation and (possibly) reference, while all free nominals depend on the affixes for their grammatical functions. Free nominals (aside from first and second person pronouns) are linked to the function-marking affixes by a reciprocal but asymmetric dependency, which creates a dual asymmetric bond between these two classes of items.

The basic syntactic structure of a Mekeo verbal predication, with incorporated arguments and optional free elements, can be represented in terms of layers, as follows:¹²

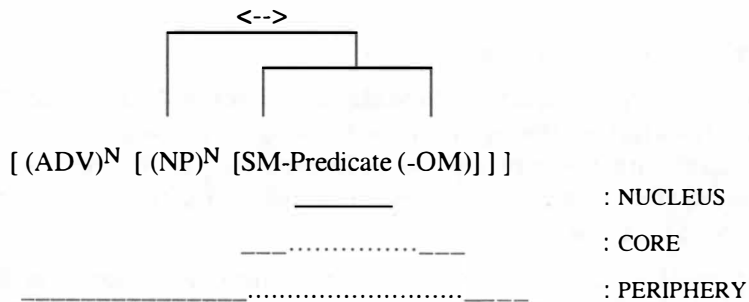


FIGURE 38: STRUCTURE OF A FULLY DETERMINED VERBAL PREDICATION

8 Unless there is a pragmatic referent, i.e. present to the utterance situation.
 9 To quote Van Valin (1985:382): “Pronominal anaphors do not have independent reference, whereas pure pronouns do”.
 10 Free nominals are frequently definite but indeterminately so. That is, it is not always easy to say to which of a number of possible candidates they refer.
 11 This expression is from Bresnan and Mchombo (1987:15), which is a description of headmarking in Chicheŵa, a Bantu language. These two authors make an important distinction between grammatical agreement and anaphoric agreement. Nominals which co-occur with incorporated pronouns (with the same referent) are optional and have no fixed place in the clause.
 12 This formula represents a modification of the one given by Van Valin (1985:399) for Lakhota, also a head-marking language. His formula is:
 (NP*) (PP*)_v [(AFF)-AFF-Predicate]_v

This bracketing does not capture the important fact that ADV (his PP) modifies the entire predication, including the free nominal cataphors (the NPs) of the core arguments (represented by his AFF, for affixes), not just the head. I note, however, that the formula given in FVV (1984:187) is much more like mine here.

The double-headed arrow here suggests the bilateral asymmetric dependence of affixes and NPs. The superscript ^N means only that the number of exemplars signified is indefinite, not limitless. Compare this representation with Figure 32 above.

The above syntactic functions assume semantic roles in a verbal predication. Nominal constituents may represent the following four semantic components of a scene:

A: CORE ACTANTS represent grammatical functions marked on the VP. Nominals in this category are morphosyntactically licensed

B: INNER ACTANTS represent functions implicated by but not marked on the VP. Nominals in this category are semantically licensed.

A and B, when present, constitute ADARGUMENTAL TOPICS (A-TOPICS). They must normally be referential, and they are generally realised as pronouns, nouns, conjoined nouns, or NPs (nominal groups).

C: OUTER or CIRCUMSTANTIAL ACTANTS represent potential actants that are pragmatically implicated in the scene. [As actants they can function only as TR-objects or ITR-subjects.] Nominals in this category are pragmatically licensed.

D: CIRCUMSTANTS represent aspects of the scene that never function as actants. Nominals in this category are again pragmatically licensed.

C and D, when present, constitute ADVERBIAL/ADSENTENTIAL TOPICS (S-TOPICS). They are normally realised as oblique-marked constituents in the case of C, or as goals of motion verbs,¹³ and deictics of time or place in the case of D.

What all of the above have in common, however, is that they can be topicalised. That is, they can function as marked topics, with following *auŋa*. They are therefore classified as *unmarked* topics in an unmarked predication. Together with conjunctions, modal particles and discourse markers, which cannot be topicalised, they make up the theme of a predication.

All of the above semantic components may co-occur in a single predication:

7.1 (EMek)

D	AC.....	AB.....
<i>Fai,</i>	<i>isa,</i>	<i>ʔufu</i>	<i>aŋo-ŋa-ai,</i>	<i>imoi, mave maʔo</i>
yesterday	s/he	clan.house	front-3SG-OBL	child areca.nut much

A-nucleus-A

e-peni-a.

3SG-give-3SG

Yesterday, in front of the clan-house, s/he gave the child a lot of areca nuts.

7.2 DISCOURSE-PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS

As outlined in §1.3.3.2.3, a verbal predication consists of an optional theme, which is made up of optional topics (plus some other optional items), and an obligatory predicate which includes one main focus.

¹³ There are also the 'extra' objects discussed in §4.3.3.9.

It will be recalled that 'topic' in this grammar refers to any nominal or verbal constituent of the theme. By being thematised it is being presented as part of the agreed-upon background information. It is also being presented by the speaker as something which is beyond dispute, i.e. as 'given'. A topic can be specific or non-specific, definite or indefinite, and may represent old information or even new information, since *given* here means simply that it is being presented as a background presupposition that will not normally be foregrounded (or focused) in the discourse that follows.

The leftmost A-TOPIC before a verb word is the main topic.

The rightmost A-TOPIC before a verb word, when this is pronounced with a falling pitch and is not followed by a pause, is the unmarked focus of new information. As focus it is asserted as new and somehow important. It is thus a candidate for next main topic or even a discourse topic across predications.

The structure¹⁴ of a verbal predication can be viewed as being made up of constituent places rather than constituents. There is a set of ordered places which are 'held open' either by the affixal function/role markers on the verb word, by the semantic implicatures of the verbal stem, or by general conventions.

The key to the functional code was given at the end of §1.3.3.3, along with typical suprasegmental realisations of different functions, but the list is repeated here for the reader's convenience. There are in fact three layers of functions:

- 1) On the first there is a division between: a) the adverbial (or adsentential) topic functions of specialised or oblique-marked bases, and b) the nominal (or adargumental) topic functions of determinate or non-determinate bases.
- 2) On the second level, the abovementioned items are ordered according to a combination of discourse-pragmatic principles and syntactic constraints, and take on second-order positionally determined functions such as main topic and focus.
- 3) On the third level, discourse-pragmatic overlay functions may apply to any of the preceding. These are things like marked and contrastive functions.

These discourse-pragmatic elements can be classified as follows:

- 1) First-order functions define inherent capacities of items according to syntactic function and meaning, and the presence or absence of oblique case-marking.

Adargumental topics:

- T : Nominal cataphors (determinate or non-determinate)
 T^{CR} : Co-relative predications

Adverbial/Adsentential topics:

- T^A : Time and place deictics
 T^O : Oblique-marked nominals including heads of NPs

¹⁴ This structure does not resemble the layered constituency of languages like English with independently motivated group structure. It is essentially flat.

2) The same items can specialise in terms of linear position *and/or* syntactic function.

- T^G : General or given topic – may be absent but marked on the verb word
- T^M : Main or initial nominal topic – must be marked on the verb word
- T^{Sub} : Subordinate topic – a topic in an embedded predication
- F : Sole focus, or one of a chain of verbal foci that precede F^M
- F^V : A verbal core functioning as a secondary focus
- F^M : Main focus, usually pre-verbal, but also at the end of a chain of F^Vs
- F^{Sub} : Subordinate focus (precedes F^M – may be a rankshifted predicate)
- F^{PV} : Post-verbal focus of new information

3) Any of the above can take on overlay functions.

- X^N : New topic
- X^T : Marked topic (with *auŋa*); marked focus
- X^C : Contrastive topic; contrastive focus

Both adverbial (adsentential) and nominal (adargumental) bases can function as a main topic or as a focus of new information, and their original inherent functions are then irrelevant.

The unmarked place order of the various syntactic functions can be represented as follows:

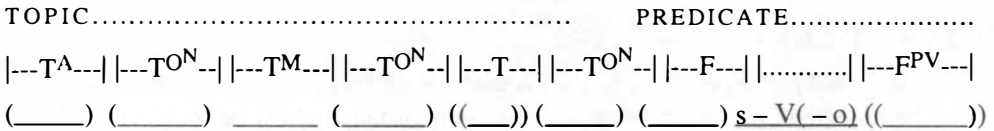


FIGURE 39: DISCOURSE-PRAGMATIC PLACE ORDER

There is one syntactic rule that holds for every predication. One of the core actants always take its reference either from T^G or T^M (or T^T) and vice versa:

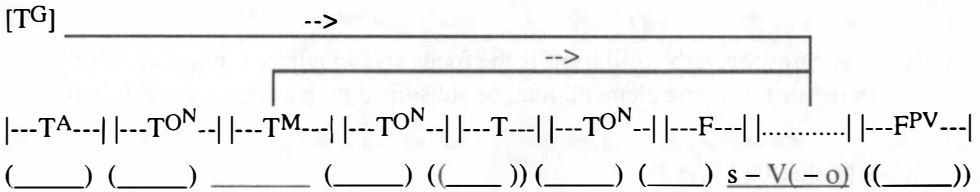


FIGURE 40: RULE OF COREFERENCE FOR MAIN TOPICS

A single predication can exemplify all of the above functions:

- 7.2 (EMek: constructed example)
- E-fua* (T^A), *?ama-ŋa-ai* (T^O), *ivi-e?a-ŋa-ai* (T^O), *Fata* (T^M),
 3SG-finish cold-3SG-OBL sing-house-3SG-OBL priest

ima-ŋa-ai (T^O), *buka* (T), *pakaisa-ŋa-ai-mo* (T^O) *imoi* (F) *e-peni-a* (V).
 hand-3SG-OBL book proper-3SG-OBL-just child 3SG-give-3SG
 Then, in the morning, in the church, the priest, with his (own) hands, slowly
 gave the book to the boy.

There is a hierarchy of access to the focus function. Any postverbal nominal item (goal of motion verb, predicate adjective, discourse marker) when present must be the focus. Otherwise the immediately preverbal nominal item will normally be the focus. The verbal core represents a slightly more marked choice for the focus function.

There is usually a general discourse topic – T^G – that need not be mentioned in each predication, but which may nevertheless be referenced by the core affixes. This may be a speech act participant ('I' or 'you') or a previously given topic that is provided with a chain of cohesive references, though not necessarily in every utterance.

As noted above, the chief identity rule is that T^M and T^T must co-refer to a core argument of a head word.¹⁵ Thus the following sentences are unacceptable:

- 7.3 ***Iji, babie e-mai.* (WMek)
 I woman 3SG-come
 I, the woman, s/he came.
- 7.4 ***Papie auŋa, oi lo-isa-u.* (EMek)
 woman TOP you 2SG-see-1SG
 As for the woman, you saw me.

RULES FOR THE FOCUS:

- 1) One word in the predicate functions as the main focus of new information. This may be co-extensive with the scope of assertion, or may merely be included in the scope of assertion.
- 2) When there is a post-verbal goal of motion, or a post-verbal predicate adjective, this must be the focus. A discourse marker following the verb *may* be the focus.
- 3) When there is no post-verbal topic the *unmarked* focus is the immediately pre-verbal element.
- 4) In either case the verb word itself is normally subsumed under the scope of assertion.
- 5) In some cases the verb word itself is the focus and an adjacent nominal, for example a preceding or following element, may be subsumed under the scope of assertion.

The focus cannot of course be topicalised, but like ordinary topics (and unlike marked topics) it can be questioned in place:

- 7.5 *Oai, auke ma o-au-n-i-a?* (WMek)
 you dog INT 2SG-hit-TH-PF-3SG
 You, did you hit the *dog*?

¹⁵ Note that T^T represents 'marked topic', i.e. a topic with the overlay function: *marked*. This is shown a X^T above.

RULES FOR TOPICS:

- 1) The only thing that can precede a main topic is an oblique topic or topics or a pragmatic topic standing for some circumstance such as a time deictic or a conjunction.
- 2) There may be either a) a main topic or b) an initial marked topic and this will always represent either the subject or the object of the verb. There may also be no topic. There may be more than one marked topic.
- 3) Regarding the syntactic status of unmarked topics, it is clear that they are not topics in the sense of sentence topics, or discourse topics. One criterial test for topics in this latter sense – and one which these topics fail – is that discourse topics can be questioned in place.

Any unmarked topic in a Mekeo predication (i.e. any cataphoric classifier, anchored or unanchored) can become a marked topic (TOPIC). That is, it can be presented as mutually given by means of the a-tonic *auŋa*.

7.6 *Auke auŋa, o-ida ma?* (WMek)
 dog TOP 2SG-see INT
 As for that dog (which we both know about), did you see it?

7.7 *Favoko auŋa, Fata e-mai.* (EMek)
 yesterday TOP priest 3SG-come
 Speaking of yesterday, Father came.

Unmarked topics can be questioned in place whereas marked topics cannot:

7.8 *Auke ma o-ida?* (WMek)
 dog INT 2SG-see
 Was it the dog that you saw?

7.9 ***Auke auŋa ma o-ida?* (WMek)
 dog TOP INT 2SG-see
 **As for the dog, was it a dog, that you saw?

Cross-linguistically, a generally accepted characteristic of topics is that they cannot be questioned, and in particular that they cannot be questioned in place (see Alsagoff 1991:7; Bresnan and Mchombo 1987:24). In Mekeo only the marked topics pass this test.¹⁶ Unmarked topics *can* be questioned in place. This highlights the fact that unmarked topics are presented for the approval of the hearer as agreed-upon information, and the hearer may accordingly challenge them. Marked topics are presented as the speaker's own choice of starting point, and the hearer cannot question this choice.

7.3 ADVERBIALEXPANSIONS: ADSENTENTIAL TOPICS

Adverbial expansions are of four kinds. They may be a) time deictics, they may be b) adverbial co-verbs, they may consist of c) oblique-marked nominals or locative-relational predications with oblique-marked classifier noun heads (corresponding to the postpositional phrases of some grammars), or they may consist of d) discourse markers or modal predicators, here treated as reduced predications used adverbially to express speaker comment.

¹⁶ Note that there may be several marked topics in a single predication.

Adverbial expansions – except for adverbial co-verbs in nuclear juncture – are analysed here as topics.¹⁷ Time deictics qualify as topics in so far as they set “a spatial temporal or individual framework...which limits the applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain” (Chafe 1976:50). In as much as I treat discourse markers as speech act adverbials, these also function as topics.¹⁸

Conjunctions are a special case. They are included in the theme, though not as adverbials.¹⁹ I illustrate their uses below in §7.3.6.

7.3.1 TIME ADVERBIALS

These were listed more or less exhaustively in §2.2.4, but with no indication of their discourse functions within the full predication. Here are some examples with the varying discourse status marked:

- | | | | | | |
|------|---------------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------|
| 7.10 | TA | TM | F | Core | |
| | <i>Wai,</i> | <i>ai,</i> | <i>Moku</i> | <i>ga-io.</i> | (NWMek) |
| | tomorrow | we.E | Moresby | 1PL-go | |
| | Tomorrow we go to Port Moresby. | | | | |
| 7.11 | TM | T | F | Core | |
| | <i>Ai,</i> | <i>afogo,</i> | <i>Moku</i> | <i>ga-ao</i> | (NMek) |
| | we.E | tomorrow | Moresby | 1PL-go | |
| | We tomorrow go to Port Moresby. | | | | |
| 7.12 | TM | T | F | Core | |
| | <i>Ai,</i> | <i>Moku,</i> | <i>apogo</i> | <i>ga-ao.</i> | (WMek) |
| | we.E | Moresby | tomorrow | 1PL-go | |
| | We go to Port Moresby tomorrow. | | | | |

In initial position a time adverbial often takes PC6: a low level tone.

A predicated time deictic can act as a subordinate focus to a FM:

- | | | | | |
|------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|--------|
| 7.13 | T | FSub | FM | |
| | <i>Lai,</i> | <i>maʔe-paŋu,</i> | <i>a-mai!</i> | (EMek) |
| | we.E | long.ago | 1PL-come | |
| | We came, long ago! | | | |

Oblique time expressions function in the same way as time words:

- | | | | | | |
|------|---------------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------|--------|
| 7.14 | TM | F----- | Core | | |
| | <i>Isa,</i> | <i>aŋo-ka</i> | <i>ibi-na-ai</i> | <i>an-e-mai.</i> | (WMek) |
| | s/he | front-1PL | week-3SG-OBL | FUT-3SG-come | |
| | S/he will come next week. | | | | |

¹⁷ This is proposed for adverbial clauses (in certain languages) by Thompson and Longacre (1985).

¹⁸ See Thompson and Longacre (1985) on “‘speech act’ adverbial clauses”.

¹⁹ Halliday (1985) includes conjunctions in the English theme, along with discourse markers and continuative particles like ‘well’.

- 7.15 TM-----| F Core
Muni-ʔa ivi-na muni-ai-s-ai, Epo la-lao. (EMek)
 back-1PL week-3SG back-OBL-B-OBL Bereina 1SG-go
 The week before last I went to Bereina.

Section 7.3.3 illustrates oblique nominals and oblique nominal predications.

7.3.2 ADVERBIAL CO-VERBS AND POST-VERBAL FOCUS

Adverbial co-verbs usually take the main word stress of the VP, and thus act as a kind of internal focus. They do so no doubt mechanically, as a result of their position towards the end of the verb word. They usually keep the normal word stress that they carry when unattached, on the penultimate syllable. When followed by an object-marking suffix, or by an adverbial suffix such as *-mo*, the main stress falls on their final syllable. And when they are followed by an empty adverbial suffix such as *-iamo*, or a predicate adjective, or a discourse marker that takes word stress, they will in fact take secondary stress. Normal stress can be illustrated, for various transitivity and causativity types, as follows:

- 7.16 *Lobiza e-aŋu-tsi*bo. (NMek)
 chief 3SG-sit-go.down
 The chief sat down.
- 7.17 *Loli e-ba-aba-ji*bo. (WMek)
 Truck 3SG-CA-stand-down
 S/he stopped the truck.
- 7.18 *Ŋaŋa mo-kea-pa-kai*. (EMek)
 canoe IMP.2SG-adze-CA-be.well
 Adze the canoe carefully.
- 7.19 *Vei mo-pa-ʔeva-uka*. (EMek)
 water IMP.2SG-CA-pour-go.in
 Pour water in.
- 7.20 *Papiau a-ke-opu-opu-muʔa-i-o*. (EMek)
 people FUT-3PL-tread-RED-crush-PF-2SG
 People will crush you underfoot.

With certain following elements, such as predicate adjectives, discourse markers and adverbial suffixes of manner, the stresses are transferred rightward onto the elements themselves:

- 7.21 TM |_____ FOCUS
*Loli e-ba-aba-ji*bo belo. (WMek)
 Truck 3SG-CA-stand-down good
 S/he stopped the truck well.
- 7.22 TM |_____ FOCUS
Vei, e-pa-ʔeva-uka lakoa. (EMek)
 water 3SG-CA-pour-go.in properly
 S/he pours/poured water in properly.

- 7.23 TM..... | _____ FOCUS
*Imoi ?e?ele, mo-afi-pa-tai-s-a-niamo.*²⁰ (EMek)
 child small IMP.2SG-take-CA-be.well-B-3SG-Adv.Manner
 Take/Hold the baby carefully.

The above examples support the argument that certain following elements are constituents of a suprasegmentally defined VP, taking what is in effect primary word stress on the penultimate syllable.

7.3.3 OBLIQUE NOMINALS AND NOMINAL PREDICATIONS

Class nouns (as opposed to classifier nouns) with oblique marking may be either free topics or the heads of nominal predications which have either been rankshifted and embedded, or simply embedded without rankshift, in a matrix predication.

- 7.24 F Core
E?a-ai e-aju. (EMek)
 house-OBL 3SG-sit
 S/he is sitting/sat in a/the house.
- 7.25 FSub FM
E?a-ai, e-feu. (EMek)
 house-OBL 3SG-sit
 S/he is in a/the house, (and) s/he is sleeping/slept.
- 7.26 F-----| Core
E?a ofu-ŋa-ai, e-feu. (EMek)
 house under-3SG-OBL 3SG-sleep
 She is underneath the house (and) s/he is sleeping/slept.
- 7.27 TM F-----| Core
Olanitsi, imoi ima-ŋa-ai e-?ua-lai. (EMek)
 orange child hand-3SG-OBL 3SG-bend-AT
 The orange falls/fell from the child's hand.
- 7.28 TM-----| F Core
*Imoi ima-ŋa-ai, olanitsi e-?ua-lai.*²¹ (EMek)
 child hand-3SG-OBL orange 3SG-bend-AT
 From the child's hand falls/fell the orange.

Meanwhile, the specialised class of locative-relational nouns has been listed fairly exhaustively in §2.1.2.2 above and illustrated in §3.1.4. All of the above function as adverbial or adsentential topics in expanded utterances, and it is this discourse function that I now illustrate.

As shown in §7.2 (Figures 39 and 40), there are three potential places of occurrence for TO: before or after TM, after optional T, and immediately before the verb word, as F. Each of these places may host a number of obliques. Examples will now be presented to illustrate

²⁰ The *tai* for expected *kai* represents an affectation of childishness. The *-a* following intrusive [s] is apparently a third person singular OM but so is the *-a* in *-niamo*.

²¹ This and the last four examples are constructed not recorded.

all of these possible places, with different kinds of oblique fillers. The first shows that more than one potential place can be filled at the same time:

- 7.29 *Ibi-jina-ŋa-ai, Saimon, uabu i-age* (WMek)
 sing-day-3SG-OBL Simon rain 3SG-descend
ao-ŋa-ai, Peto ŋa-kelotsini i-api-a.
 inside-3SG-OBL Peter 3SG-kerosene 3SG-take-3SG
 On Sunday, Simon, while it was raining, he picked up Peter's kerosene.

This sentence seems rather disjointed in English, but this is not the case in Mekeo, where longer utterances are routinely broken up into successive chunks by slight pauses and the onset of new PCs.

- 7.30 TM T⁰-----| F Core (WMek)
Saimon, loli ao-ŋ-ai, kelotsini e-ao-ai-n-a.
 Simon lorry inside-3SG-OBL kerosine 3SG-go-RTR-TH-3SG
 As for Simon, it was in the trunk that he took the kerosene.

The following example can have two readings, depending on the intonation:

- 7.31 TM T-----| T⁰-----| FOCUS (WMek)
 TM T-----| F-----| Core
Peto, kelotsini aoā, banika-ai i-api-lai-a.
 Peter kerosene price.3SG bank-OBL 3SG-take-AT-3SG
 Peter from the bank drew the price of the kerosene out. OR: Peter drew out the price of the kerosene from the bank.

The following example illustrates initial position for T⁰ but is also meant to illustrate the fact that, despite appearances, *aloŋai* does not function as an oblique but rather as an intensifier:

- 7.32 (WMek)
 T⁰-----| TM T F-----| Core
Ŋa aidama-ŋa-ai, Saimon, Peto, moni aloŋaai ai-d-e-bini-a.
 DX time-3SG-OBL Simon Peter money ITS NEG-B-3SG-give-3SG
 At that time, Simon, he did not give Peter a lot of money.
 OR: At that time, Simon, Peter did not give him a lot of money.

In initial position an oblique word or expression that expresses a circumstance or condition on the predicate typically takes PC7: a high level tone.

As already noted, a single predication can have adverbial fillers in all of the possible places (this example is repeated from 7.2 above):

- 7.33 (EMek: constructed example)
E-fua (T^A), ?ama-ŋa-ai (T⁰), ivi-e?a-ŋa-ai (T⁰), Fata (T^M),
 3SG-finish cold-3SG-OBL sing-house-3SG-OBL priest
ima-ŋa-ai (T⁰), buka (T), pakaisa-ŋa-ai-mo (T⁰) imoi (F) e-peni-a (V).
 hand-3SG-OBL book proper-3SG-OBL-just child 3SG-give-3SG
 Then, in the morning, in the church, the priest, with his (own) hands, slowly gave the book to the boy.

Finally, an example from a narrative text shows that up to three oblique predicates/topics can and do co-occur in certain kinds of discourse:

- 7.34 *Kuma-paŋa auŋa, bauŋa-ai, inae-ŋa-ai,* (WMek)
 pig-skin TOP village-OBL centre-3SG-OBL
ima-ŋa-ai, e-kua-lai.
 hand-3SG-OBL 3SG-bend-AT
 As for the pig-skin, it fell from her hands in the centre of the village.

These types of obliques add circumstantial actants and conditions to the scene. However, they also function to ‘pace’ the message, allowing the speaker to postpone the focus and thus to heighten the attention and sense of expectancy of the hearer(s). They thus provide the speaker with great communicative power.

Certain specialised oblique predication types are to be described in detail below (§8.3.2).

7.3.4 DISCOURSE MARKERS

The discourse markers have been illustrated in §6.3 above, and the slot in which they occur was discussed in §7.3.2 in connection with co-verbs and predicate adjectives, but the specific functions of discourse markers have not yet been looked at. Discourse markers are different from most other types of adverbial items and they resemble conjunctions in that they can occur in the post-verbal position. In so far as they represent reduced predications, they should represent *superordinate* predications. These superordinate predications can often be paraphrased in terms of the deontic auxiliary *OMA*. For example:

- 7.35 *La-iva-n-i-a paŋu.* (EMek)
 1SG-speak-TH-PF-3SG PANJU
 You don’t suppose that I said it, do you?

This can be expanded into either of the following complex predications with overt *OMA*:

- 7.36 *La-iva-n-i-a lo-oma fa-la-oma* (EMek)
 1SG-speak-TH-PF-3SG 2SG-DNT OBLG.NEG-1SG-DNT
 I hope it is not the case that you believe that I said it.

OR:

- 7.37 *La-iva-n-i-a a-lo-oma fa-oma* (EMek)
 1SG-speak-TH-PF-3SG NEG-2SG-DNT OBLG.1SG-DNT
 I hope that you don’t believe I said it.

The whole proposition could then be questioned, which would necessitate a further *lo-oma* (2SG-DNT) in a further expansion.

As briefly noted above (in §6.3), discourse markers can be classified in terms of a) their ability to appear pre-verbally in a verbal predication, to focus nominals and adverbials, and b) their propensity to carry full word stress. Discourse markers which appear pre-verbally are focusing particles like *MA* (illustrated in §6.3.1) and *MO* (illustrated in §6.3.2) and *TSIA*. Those which typically follow a predicate are *PANJU*, *BAIA*, *LAKOA/NABUA*, *GUNJA*, *PAI*.

When the discourse marker comes after the verb, the verb can represent known or given information. See the response in the next example:

- 7.38 Q: F Core
Kapa-mo lo-mai? (EMek)
 what-just 2SG-come
 Why have you come?

|_____F----|
 A: *La-mai paisa.*
 1SG-come SHEER
 I've just come, that's all.

However, the verb may in any case represent known/given information:

- 7.39 Q: F T
Gagaba i-oabi-oma. (WMek)
 what 3SG-speak-DNT
 What did he say?

|_____F---| Core
 A: *Nabà baia i-oabi-oma.*
 that SHEER 3SG-speak-DNT
 That is all he said.

BAIA (*baia, baia, paisa*) can function as an independent predication and an independent focus of new information:

- 7.40 T F F
Au apala, paisa. (EMek)
 man bad SHEER
 The man is completely bad.

Note that there is a telltale pause after the first predicate *apala*. The predicate can be left-dislocated, which produces a sequence of three foci:

- 7.41 F F F
Apala, paisa, au-ŋa. (EMek)
 bad SHEER man-3SG
 He is bad, completely, that man.

A discourse marker that only appears in post-predicative position is *GUNYA*:

- 7.42 T..... F.....
Ŋaina au-ŋa, e-ikifa kuŋa. (EMek)
 that man-3SG 3SG-knowledge ITS
 That man is certainly clever.

- 7.43 F.....
Kabula guŋa! (WMek)
 strength ITS
 S/he is *really* strong!

This cannot be rankshifted and embedded, and hence must be analysed as a focus marker:

- 7.44 ***Au kabula guŋa e-mai.* (WMek)
 man strength ITS 3SG-come
 The really strong man has come.

Limitations of space preclude a detailed description of each discourse marker in all its functions.

7.3.5 OBLIQUE ADVERBIAL PREDICATIONS

In this section I will illustrate the use of whole predications, in an adverbial function, to qualify a main predication. These are primarily predications with classifier noun heads bearing oblique case marking. Apart from the oblique marker *-AI* this construction is structurally identical to what I call co-relative predication, which is described and discussed in §8.3.1.2 below. However, these are adverbial or adsentential in function, that is oblique. They are here labelled T^{CR}. In §8.3.2 the whole class of oblique co-relative predications is described as to structure and function. In this Section varying degrees of discourse prominence are illustrated.

The syntactic function of these predications is entirely adverbial, or adsentential. Their discourse functions are the same as the oblique nominals and nominal predications described above, and they occur in the same three slots and with the same limitations. The classifier head does not normally take any stress, functioning as a coda to a verbal predicate. Some examples follow:

- 7.45 T F Coda
Fata, e-mai aisama... (EMek)
 Father 3SG-come time
 When the priest came...
- 7.46 T^{CR} TM FSub FM (EMek)
E-mai aisama, ina-u, eʔa-ai e-uʔe,
 3SG-come time mother-1SG house-OBL 3SG-squat
imoi e-pa-mauni-a
 child 3SG-CA-life-3SG
 When [the priest] came, my mother was squatting in the house
 giving birth to a child.
- 7.47 TM T^{CR} FOCUS Core (WMek)
Ina-u, imi e-mauni aidama, ipa mako
 mother-1SG child 3SG-life time blood much
e-ba-ŋea-i-a.
 3SG-CA-be.lost-PF-3SG
 My mother, when the child was born, she lost a lot of blood.

The third, immediately pre-verbal slot is not a potential place for T^{CR} as it blocks an A-TOPIC focus:

- 7.48 TM T T^{CR} F (NMek)
 ***Ina-u, ifa mako, imi e-mauni aizama, e-ba-ŋea.*
 mother-1SG blood much child 3SG-life time 3SG-CA-be.lost
 My mother lost a lot of blood when the child was born.

The existential negative particle is exceptionally the focus in the following:

- 7.49 *Ama-u, ifa, ofu-ŋa, eka ofu-ŋa-ai,* (NMek)
 father-1SG blood, dirt-3SG house under-3SG-OBL
aibaiza e-ba-mia.
 not 3SG-CA-become
 My father got rid of the blood and dirt underneath the house.

There are various other forms of adverbial predication, all of which are described as to structure and syntactic function in §8.3.2. An example of an adverbial predication expressing cause follows:

- 7.50 (EMek)
 |_____TM-----| T T-----| |_____F-----|²²
Isa e-isava puo, lau pau kina Moku afa-la-lao
 s/he 3SG-sick cause I now day Moresby FUT.NEG-1SG-go
 As s/he is sick I will not go to Port Moreby today.

It will be noted that the head word bears no overt marking. This is not always the case. And the adverbial predication can come after the verbal head. For example:

- 7.51 *Mogu-ai ge-mai, ida i-idawa buo-ŋa-ai.* (WMek)
 Moresby-OBL 3PL-come s/he 3SG-sick cause-3SG-OBL
 They came from Port Moresby because s/he is sick.
- 7.52 *Moku-ai ge-mai, isa e-isava puō.* (EMek)
 Moresby-OBL 3PL-come s/he 3SG-sick cause.3SG
 They came from Port Moresby because s/he is sick.

Again, with a cataphoric *puo*:

- 7.53 *Moku-ai ge-mai, puō, isa e-isava.* (EMek)
 Moresby-OBL 3SG-come cause.3SG s/he 3SG-sick
 They came from Port Moresby, because, s/he is sick.

7.3.6 CONJUNCTIONS

Conjunctions can only occur either at the beginning of a predication, as predication-preclitics, or at the end of a predication, as predication-enclitics. They thus mark the outer limits of a predication. They do not take a word stress:

- 7.54 CNJ T^T F Core (EMek)
Kai, oi-ŋa, ala a-lo-kapa-oma?
 but you-TOP what FUT-2SG-do-DNT
 But *you*, how will you do (that)?
- 7.55 T^M F(TA) Core CNJ (EMek)
Ai favoko a-ŋa-isa-ʔa kai.
 we.E tomorrow FUT-1PL-see-1PL but
 However, we'll see each other tomorrow.

²² The scope of assertion here is the entire predicate. [Moku a-] realises a pre-tonic pitch movement leading up to the focal movement on a negative operator internal to [fa-].

- 7.56 TM F(TA) Core CNJ F Core (EMek)
Ai favoko a-ŋa-isa-ʔa kai, isa a-ŋa-pai-n-a.
 we.E tomorrow FUT-1PL-see-1PL but s/he FUT-1PL-tell-TH-3SG
 After we've seen each other tomorrow, we'll tell him.

The meaning of *GAI* (here realised as *kai*) changes according to its position and the presence or absence of a following pause (see §8.2.1, 8.2.2 and §8.2.3 for details). In example 7.57 below, an embedded predication functions in its entirety as T^A:

- T^A
 TM FSub CoreSub CNJ FM
 7.57 *Iji, poa an-a-ani-a gai, an-a-mai.* (WMek)
 I banana FUT-1SG-eat-3SG but FUT-1SG-come
 As soon as I have eaten the banana(s) I will come.

Conjunctions are never stressed, but in certain circumstances they take a marked PC. This only occurs in the predication-initial slot. Such a conjunction typically takes PC4 (a low-to-high rising pitch), and is followed by a marked pause. The effect is similar to that of a marked topic:²³

- CNJ^T F Core
 7.58 *Kai, a a-ŋa-gaba-oma?* (WMek)
 but what FUT-1PL-do-like
But, how will we do (that)?

7.4 NOMINAL CATAPHORS: ADARGUMENTAL TOPICS

In as much as free nominals refer forward – cataphorically – to the incorporated core arguments of the head, these can be called cataphors. And as they are, moreover, ‘ungoverned’ by that head, we can refer to them as ungoverned cataphors.²⁴ Their actual syntactic roles remain ‘in suspension’, as it were, until the clause-final head is reached, and even then these are pragmatically assigned (by the hearer).

In Mekeo a maximum of two syntactic functions can be indexed on the core (that is, on the head), yet a number of verbal predicates have a grammatical valency of three (V3). Three cataphors cannot be represented on the Mekeo verb word, which only indexes a subject and an object function.²⁵ This was illustrated in §4.3.3.3 in connection with the ‘di-transitive’ verbs. Other verbs take extra actants (see §4.3.3.9) which again are not indexed on the verb word. Those nominals that *are* indexed I will call anchored cataphors, and those not so indexed unanchored cataphors.²⁶

These cataphors are, in terms of the structure of the message, topics. However, in Mekeo these cataphoric topics function more like contrastive topics than mutually agreed or resumptive topics. That is, they “are selected by the speaker apropos of thoughts which he

²³ Marked topics typically take PC3, so it is not the appropriate tone for T^T.

²⁴ See Nichols (1986:107-108) and Van Valin (1985, *passim*).

²⁵ As Haiman (1978:585) notes that it has been shown that left-dislocated topics do not necessarily have anaphors within the following clause.

²⁶ This use of the term cataphor is justified by the fact that all nominals await the assignation of semantic roles by either the presence *or the absence* of corresponding role/function markers on the verb word.

non-defining. However, when determinate or otherwise definite they fulfil an important specificational function, and then function like *defining* relative clauses. In this way, an anchored cataphor can function either to give a) merely denotative meaning, or b) referential meaning to the anaphors. The first use is not necessarily encoded on the nominal in question – the context alone can make it clear which use is in question:²⁹

- 7.62 *Ifiao ke-kapu-kapu.* (EMek; a) // b)
 girl.DF//IDF 3PL-see-RED
 They are hunting a girl/girls//the girl/the girls.

Definiteness, however, may be marked on the nominal:

- 7.63 *Ifiao-'i, lo-isa-'i?* (EMek; b)
 girl-3PL.DF 2SG-see-3PL
 Did you see the girls?
- 7.64 *Amā, o-ida?* (WMek; b)
 father.3SG 2SG-see
 Did you see his father?

Sometimes at least the number of the cataphor is determined by the anaphoric function-marker:

- 7.65 *Ibiao ge-mai.* (WMek)
 girl 3PL-come
 The girls came.

As example 7.64 illustrates, an anchored cataphor can be a determinate noun. This is in fact the head of a rankshifted nominal predication (of one kind or another; see Chapter 3 for the kinds). In such cases topics are normally deleted, as given information. The fully determined predication,

- T T F
 7.66 *Isa, lau ama-u.* (EMek)
 he I father-1SG
 He is my father.

may become – after rankshift – *lau ama-u*, as in:

- T..... F..... Core..... (EMek)
 7.67 *Lau ama-u, papie ŋa?ina e-akava-n-i-a.*
 I father-1SG woman that 3SG-marry-TH-PF-3SG
 My father married that woman.//That woman married my father.

Note that the rankshifted predication forms a syntagm that cannot be split up into topic and focus functions. What looks like apposition (*lau amau-u*) is here a ‘constructional relation’ (Matthews 1981:223).³⁰

The original predication in example 7.67 can be reduced further, to *ama-u*:

²⁹ Definiteness is discussed and various possibilities illustrated in §2.1.1.2.3.

³⁰ There is a strong tendency to retain the object pronoun of relational predications. This is I would argue *incorporated in the focus* (which is, essentially, the head word).

- 7.68 *Ama-u, e-au-n-i-au.* (EMek)
 father-1SG 3SG-hit-TH-PF-1SG
 My father hit/beat me.

Lau can re-emerge as a *new* topic:

- T F Core
 7.69 *Lau, ama-u e-au-n-i-au.* (EMek)
 I father-1SG 3SG-hit-TH-PF-1SG
 My father hit/beat me.

The intonation patterns on relational predications (such as in examples 7.66 and 7.67 above) as compared to those on separately derived arguments (as in 7.69) are usually distinctive.³¹ That is to say, [lau ama-u] ‘my father’ is spoken as a single unit, and with a single pitch contour, while [lau] [ama-u] ‘I, my father’ can be broken by a pause, and consists of two pitch contours (PC2 + PC1).

The chief exceptions here are attributional predications with non-substantive adjectival predicates (see §2.1.2.3.2 and §3.1.2 above). The original topic nominal becomes the head when the construction is embedded, after rankshift, in another predication. This means that the original topic cannot be deleted. But neither can the attributional noun be deleted, as it is definitional. It defines – or specifies – the new head. Take an undefined nominal:

- T/F F/Core.....
 7.70 *Ue gi-api-a ge-mai.* (WMek)
 vine 3PL-take-3SG 3SG-come
 They brought a/some vine/s.

This is not semantically equivalent to the defined nominal in

- F..... Core.....
 7.71 *Ue kàpua gi-api-a ge-mai.* (WMek)
 vine thick 3PL-take-3SG 3SG-come
 They brought a/some *thick* vine/s.

The attribute is obligatory, and indeed takes relatively more salient pitch and stress than *ue*. Topic and attribute are linked by a reciprocal dependency. This is not so in English, for example, where attributes are not always definitional.

A simple nominal can be interpreted as either the focus or not:³²

- F Coda
 T F
 772 *Papie(.) la-isa.* (EMek)
 woman 1SG-see
 I saw a/the woman. OR: I *saw* a/the woman.

But (in the absence of another nominal in the pre-verbal slot), an attributional construction will normally be interpreted as the focus. Indeed the more highly determined (or overtly

³¹ Thus [lau ama-u] in example 7.66 is realised with a single PC: PC1; [lau ama-u] in 7.67 is realised with a single PC: PC2; while [lau] [ama-u] in 7.69 is realised with two contours: PC2 (low-rising) followed by PC1 (high-falling).

³² Assuming that there is no perceptible pause between it and the verb word.

specified) a sole NP is, the greater the likelihood it, rather than the VP, will be interpreted as the focus of the predication:

- 7.73 F..... Coda
Babie belo a-ida (WMek)
 woman good 1SG-see
 I saw a beautiful woman.
- 7.74 F Coda
Inà-u a-ida. (WMek)
 mother-1SG 1SG-see
 I saw *my* mother.

7.4.2 UNANCHORED CATAPHORS

The main class of unanchored cataphors is that of the secondary, indirect grammatical objects entailed by ditransitive verbs (V3-verbs). Apart from the two verbs *BENI* 'give' and *BAIN(I)* 'tell someone about something' this can usually only mean derived causatives with *BA-* (derived, that is, from transitive action-effect verbs).

The unanchored cataphor always encodes the typically non-human theme (goal or patient) of the process. This has, as was shown in §4.3.3.3, no formal marking on the verb word (unless the verb word is or contains an IC verb). The typically human recipient, or beneficiary, or (in the case of CA derivations) causee, which is indexed by the OM on the verb word, can also appear as a free nominal, as can the causer/controller. So a 'full' predication would contain three nominals.

Word order is significant here. As noted in §1.3.3.2.3 above, the unmarked word order³³ for a ditransitive clause with all nominals present is

S + IO + O + s-V-io

Below I illustrate the variations upon this that are actually possible, and their consequences in terms of discourse-pragmatic functions. First, discourse-pragmatic functions for the unmarked configuration are shown:

- 7.75 TM T F Core
Pol babie mae e-bini-a (WMek)
 Paul woman betel.nut 3SG-give-3SG
 Paul gave the woman betel nut.

The above-represented utterance answers the question:

³³ Van Valin argues that head-marking languages are necessarily non-configurational, since "grammatical relations are a function of the inflection of the verb and not of structural configurations" (1985:406). And I have claimed above that in Mekeo the order of the nominal constituents of a predication is – largely – free. However, to be able to speak of marked versus unmarked word order one has to accept that one syntactic ordering of the elements represents a more basic structure than others and that this can be accessed via context-free citation forms. Such is the configuration represented in the text above. This yields 'default' interpretations of V3 utterances.

- 7.76 $\begin{matrix} \text{TM} & \text{T} & & \text{F} & & \text{Core} \\ \text{Pol} & \text{babie} & \text{gagaba} & \text{e-bini-a?} & & \end{matrix}$ (WMek)
 Paul woman what 3SG-give-3SG
 What did Paul give the woman?

The recipient can also be in focus:

- 7.77 $\begin{matrix} \text{TM} & \text{T} & & \text{F} & & \text{Core} \\ \text{Pol} & \text{mae} & \text{imi} & \text{e-bini-a.} & & \end{matrix}$ (WMek)
 Paul betel.nut child 3SG-give-3SG
 Paul gave betel nut to the child.

This answers the question:

- 7.78 $\begin{matrix} \text{TM} & \text{T} & & \text{F} & & \text{Core} \\ \text{Pol} & \text{mae} & \text{agai} & \text{e-bini-a?} & & \end{matrix}$ (WMek)
 Paul betel.nut who 3SG-give-3SG
 To whom did Paul give betel nut?

Note that this question can be phrased in such a way as to incorporate the noun 'betel nut' into the core:

- 7.79 $\begin{matrix} \text{T} & \text{P} & \dots\dots\dots & & & \\ \text{T} & \text{F} & \text{FSub} & \text{Core} & \dots\dots & \\ \text{Pol} & \text{kaisau} & \text{mafe} & \text{e-peni-a?} & & \end{matrix}$ (EMek)
 Paul who betel.nut 3SG-give-3SG
 To whom did Paul give betel nut?

This is not so much a case of noun incorporation as topic incorporation. There is an attempt to reduce the three nominal participants to two by incorporating one of them into the predicate, in a slot between the focus and the verbal core.³⁴ This is done by deciding that one of them is old information. In that way a single main topic and a single main focus can be manipulated as before.

- 7.80 $\begin{matrix} \text{T} & \text{F} & & \text{Core} & \dots\dots\dots & \\ \text{Aukai} & \text{gabaŋu} & \text{Peto} & \text{e-βini-a?} & & \end{matrix}$ (NWMek)
 Aukai what Peter 3SG-give-3SG
 What did Aukai give to Peter?

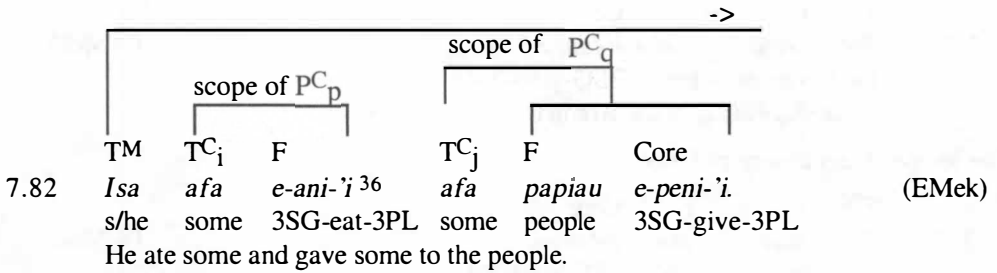
But the answer will still in all likelihood be:

- 7.81 $\begin{matrix} \text{T} & \text{T} & \text{F} & \text{Core} \\ \text{Aukai} & \text{Peto} & \text{maoe} & \text{e-βini-a.} & & \end{matrix}$ (NWMek)
 Aukai Peter betelnut 3SG-give-3SG
 Aukabai gave Peter betel nut.

Finally, here is a more complex example containing *BENI*, where we have a sentence (from a recorded text) made up of two contrastive predications (PC), each with a contrastive (sub-)topic³⁵ included within its scope:

³⁴ This represents a departure from Halim's rule for Balinese (Halim 1981, fn., §1.6.3), which does not permit anything to intrude between the focus and the verb.

³⁵ Contrastive topics are realised in English by Y-movement. See Givón (1990:752-753) for some discussion.

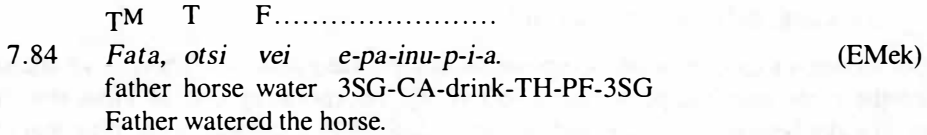
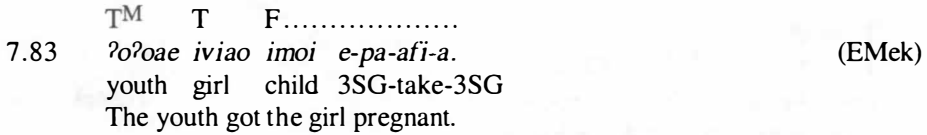


This whole utterance realises a single IP: // 6 / 31 / 1 / 31 //:

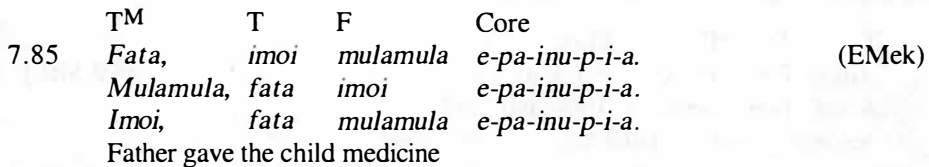
// 6 *Isa* / 3 *afa* 1 *e-ani-'i* / 1 *afa* / 3 *papiau* 1 *e-peni-'i* //

Note that the complex PC: 31 indicates that a predicate comes *in its entirety* within the scope of assertion. The expected (unmarked) pattern here would be PC 1 on a preverbal focus followed by a low posttonic segment extending over a verbal core.

Causativised transitive verbs with *BA-* operate in much the same way as *BENI*. The unmarked word order positions the impersonal theme of the process immediately before the verb:



In the above-described scenes the theme *is inherently such* and it falls naturally into a slot before the verbal predicate. It is in a sense ‘incorporated’ in the predicate. These ‘compound verbs’ receive marked stress on the verb word and function in toto as the focus of the predication. However, for other situations the word order can be varied according to the requirements of the discourse. To take another example from EMek, with the three actants *fata* ‘priest’, *imoi* ‘child’ and *mulamula* ‘medicine’, one can make the following three predications, all representing the same underlying proposition:



The main thing to notice is that TM is more like a *sentential* topic here than in predications with only two nominal participants. This seems to be a function of its distance from the verb word. More accurate translations of the three predications would be:

- ‘As for Father, he gave the child medicine.’
- ‘As for the medicine, Father gave it to the child.’
- ‘As for the child, Father gave it medicine.’

³⁶ The plural marker here refers to the food, envisaged perhaps as individual tubers.

At times there seems to be a tendency to reduce the predication to T + F + Verbal Core or even to F + Verbal Core³⁷ (where the core may in fact be a *chain* of verbal cores). This is certainly the case throughout large portions of narrative texts where a main protagonist, once introduced, will only subsequently be represented as the SM on consecutive verb words. Other participants will be introduced one by one, as nominals representing the subject or object function, but their roles will either lack continuity or they too will only appear subsequently as represented by a sub-chain of SMs. A nominal A-TOPIC is frequently preceded by an oblique nominal, or a time deictic functioning as an S-TOPIC. And there will be proportionately far more verb words than nominal expressions. This yields the formula:

$$T^O/T^A + T/F + \sqrt{N}^{38}$$

A check of the narrative texts in Appendix 5 will confirm that this formula accounts for much of that data.³⁹

However, *conversational texts* contain many predications with two or more full nominal arguments. Such predications also occur in narrative, at the beginning of a text (or a new section thereof) or as part of a reported conversation. Thus:

7.86

(NMek)

T ^G	T ^M	T	F.....
<i>Oi,</i>	<i>afagua-ga,</i> ⁴⁰	<i>au abala,</i>	<i>e-agaoa-n-i-a</i>
you	elder.sister-1PL	man bad	3SG-spouse-TH-PF-3SG
Coda	F	F	F
<i>buō,</i>	<i>fo-eme</i>	<i>fo-tsibo</i>	<i>fo-ao,</i>
cause.3SG	OBLG.2SG-return	OBLG.2SG-go.west	OBLG.2SG-go

FM

fo-tsibo.

OBLG.2SG-go.west

Since a bad man has married your elder sister you should return west.

(lit: You, your elder sister, a bad man, he married her, because of that, you should return, you should go west, you should go, you should *go west*.)

The above sentence is far from unusual. The point is important, as it is sometimes thought that 'languages that have extensive cross-referencing of subject and object in the verb may seldom or never include more than two free NPs in a clause' (Dixon 1989:99). It is sometimes suggested further that one argument per clause is normal for such languages.⁴¹ Not only is this not the case for Mekeo, but the richness of Mekeo discourse is a function of

³⁷ Dixon (1989:98-99) claims that this is the norm for head-marking languages.

³⁸ T^O means any oblique marked nominal, and T^A means an adverbially functioning nominal like a time deictic, which is here functioning as a topic.

³⁹ For present purposes I count two nominals 'coordinated' by means of a following *gugu, po, fou* (§2.2.3.4 and §3.3.3 above) as a single argument.

⁴⁰ The 1PL suffix here appears to be a form of 'polite' speech.

⁴¹ The argument then continues that such languages use serial verb constructions to introduce new arguments, often one new argument for each verb (compare Foley and Van Valin 1984:197-208). This is then linked to the claim that verbs in such languages can not take alternate syntactic frames – "alternative syntactic codings of a set of semantic roles" (Dixon 1989:98). This kind of implicational reasoning is not borne out by the Mekeo data. I have claimed that in Mekeo syntactic frames are not fixed, that the subcategorisation is weak, and (moreover) that for certain classes of verbs, especially the verbs of analytic process, alternation is regular.

the permutability of word order, and the possibilities inherent in an unfixed number of topic nominals.

7.4.3 EMPHATIC PARTICLES

A variety of short expressive particles occur in texts of all kinds, and in all kinds of positions. They occur chiefly in the theme, but they may also occur post-verbally, especially *auŋa*.⁴² These are largely derived from deictic particles, and have a wide variety of functions, often coloured by an original deictic use. However, they almost always lend emphasis to an utterance, or to some part of it, and they will therefore be referred to here as emphatic particles. They can be listed as follows:

	DEIXIS	'THERE'	'THIS'	'THIS-XCL'	TOP
NWMek	<i>ŋa</i> ***	<i>ŋae</i>	<i>itsie</i>	<i>itsie-ke</i>	<i>auŋa</i> *
WMek	<i>ŋa</i> ** <i>ke</i>	<i>ŋae</i>	<i>namo</i>	<i>ŋaea-ke</i>	<i>auŋa</i> **
NMek	<i>ŋa</i> ** <i>ke</i>	<i>ŋae</i>	<i>namo</i>	<i>ŋaia-ke</i>	<i>auŋa</i> **
EMek	<i>ŋa</i> *	<i>ŋae, eŋae</i>	<i>ina-mo(-?e)</i>	<i>ŋaina auŋa</i>	<i>auŋa</i> ***

The numbers of asterisks indicate very approximately the relative frequency of use of certain items across dialects. This is impressionistic as a statistical study has not as yet been carried out. The two particles *ŋa* and *auŋa* have specialised functions as 'marked-topic' markers, along with other functions. These other functions include anaphoric propositional reference, and generalised exophoric reference, but also interpersonal functions such as pacing the message and simply holding onto a turn while formulating a predication (they thus often represent hesitation markers). In §2.2.2.2 *ŋa* was described as a presentative deictic, and a set of recognitive-confirmative deictics was described. Some of those deictics function as emphatic particles, in the sense meant here, for example WMek *ŋaea-ke*, NMek *ŋaea-ke*.⁴³ Sometimes deictic and discourse-marking functions are hard to separate. See for example *ŋa* in the following (where it is followed by a recognitive use of *itsie*):

7.87 *Ama-ki e-mai, e-βakani:* (NWMek)
 father-3PL 3SG-come 3SG-ask

'Imi, ga-io en-e-ma.'
 child 1PL-go DX-3SG-DNT

O! Imi ŋa, itie, ia, oila e-io.
 Oh! child DX this he urinate 3SG-go
 Their father came and asked: 'Child, let us go,' he said.
 Oh! That child, him! He had gone to urinate.

⁴² I include *auŋa* here as its functions are not confined to topic marking.

⁴³ NWMek *itsie* looks very like the NWMek demonstrative pronoun *ike* 'this', and could derive from an emphatic pronunciation of this pronoun.

This contrasts with the following:

- 7.88 *Ŋa buo-ŋa-ai apa-ŋa-mo a-ob-obo* (WMek)
DX cause-3SG-OBL little-3SG-just 1SG-RD-think

goà ikobo-ŋa.

like same-3SG

Because of that I sort-of worry a bit.

The *ŋa* in example 7.87 is almost certainly a topic-marking particle, while that in 7.88 is clearly a pronoun. The latter use has resulted in the word *ŋa-buo* ‘therefore’ in NWMek, WMek and NMek. In the following *ŋa* occurs again as a pronoun:

- 7.89 *Kina maa-ŋa la-oŋe-ʔafeaina: ŋa e-oma.* (EMek)
clock face-3SG 1SG-put-complete DX 3SG-DNT
‘I’ve put in an hour’, s/he said.

EMek definitely prefers *auŋa* for marking topics:

- 7.90 *ʔuma ŋaina auŋa ke-pa-lifu-i-ʔi.* (EMek)
pig that TOP 3PL-CA-spoilt-PF-3PL
As for that pig, they spoilt it.

In other examples it seems to function either as a hesitation marker or as an anaphoric propositional deictic. I label it DX in the interlinear, but give it different glosses in the free translations:

- 7.91 *Ŋa, ai-d-a-obilana-belo goà.* (WMek)
DX NEG-B-1SG-think-good like
As for that, I don’t know very well at all.

- 7.92 *Ŋaŋa-ai la-uka-i-s-a, ŋa, isa, ŋae.* (EMek)
canoe-OBL 1SG-put.in-PF-B-3SG DX s/he that/there
I put it into the canoe, thus, that one, there.

- 7.93 *E-giʒa ŋa, ‘Enene ŋa maea-ŋa maini,* (NWMek)
3SG-speak DX path TOP long-3SG/ASS not
enene pokia-ŋa-mu.’
path short-3SG/ASS-just
So he spoke, ‘As for the path, it is not long at all, the path is quite short indeed.

In §8.3.2.3 (see examples 8.151 and 8.152) I discuss yet another function of *ŋa* in NWMek. It sometimes serves to encode an extra nuance of assertion (a function that *auŋa* can also perform in the other dialects). In fact this nuance colours some of the above NWMek examples.

WMek, NMek *namo* (< *ŋa-mo*) functions in just the same way. In the next example what I take to be the original expression (*ŋa-mo*) appears in an EMek text:

- 7.94 *Ke-ŋope-ŋope, e-fua, ŋa-mo* (EMek)
3PL-tie-RED 3SG-finish DX-just

a-pua-i-s-a a-mai.

1PL-bear-PF-B-3SG 1PL-come

When they had finished lashing (it), thus we carried it back.

In WMek and NMek today *namo*⁴⁴ functions as a demonstrative pronoun, but it also functions as a more generalised deictic, as in:

- 7.95 *Iji, namo an-a-ao.* (WMek)
 I DX FUT-1SG-go
 I will go this way (i.e. thus/like this).

Ke (not *ge*, which is the regular conjunction meaning ‘and’) seems to function as a conjunction but simultaneously as an exclamation in WMek and NMek:

- 7.96 *Ai ga-ao – ke oai?* (WMek)
 we.E 1PL-go XCL you
 We are going – what about you?
- 7.97 *Ke o-ao?* (WMek)
 XCL 2SG-go
 So, where are you going?

This leads on to a consideration of WMek, NMek *ηaea-ke*, *ηaea-ke*:

- 7.98 *Paa-ηa bito-ηa au-ηa, ηaea-ke!* (WMek)
 skin-3SG red-3SG one-3SG that-XCL
 The one with the red skin/coat, that one!
- 7.99 *Ŋaia-ke ge-oabi-oma!* (NMek)
 that-XCL 3PL-speak-DNT
 That is what they said!

This expression also occurs in NWMek, though rather less commonly:

- 7.100 *Pou-ηa ηaea-ke e-pua!* (NWMek)
 story-TOP thus-XCL 3SG-finish
 The story finishes like that!

These expressions are not simply deictics since they also function as interrogative pronouns:

- 7.101 *Ŋa e-ma?* (WMek)
 DX 3SG-DNT
 What’s up? (lit. What is that? OR: What does that mean?)
- 7.102 *Ŋaea-ke e-aŋaŋa?* (WMek)
 that-XCL 3SG-cry
 What is crying (in the bush)?

This exclamatory use of *ke* is (within unspecifiable limits) productive:

- 7.103 *E-ηa gaia-ke gaba mae-ηa.* (WMek)
 that also-XL thing die-3SG
 That is *also* a thing of death. (That is, something you could be killed for.)

Brown (1955) gives *itsie-ke* as ‘therefore’ but its actual functions are wider, and in fact contrast with *ηa-buo* meaning ‘therefore’, ‘because of that’:

⁴⁴ An [n] instead of an expected [ŋ] may record an original form: *inamo*. Compare EMek *inamo?e*.

- 7.104 *Ŋa-βuo, pou itsie-ke.* (NWMek)
 that-cause story that-XCL
 Because of that the story is thus!
- 7.105 *Pou, itsie go.*⁴⁵ (NWMek)
 story DX like
 The story was like this/that.

What can probably be called the core meaning of *itsie* – ‘thus’ – is clear from the following:

- 7.106 *βaige, itsie e-mai.* (NWMek)
 then thus 3SG-come
 Then, like that, he came.

Brown (1955:8) has suggested that, in NWMek, *ke* marks transitive subjects, while *ŋa* marks intransitive subjects. This would, if true, enable a hearer to recognise the grammatical case of the nominals in a transitive predication, i.e. to identify which nominal is the (transitive) subject and which the object. It is in fact quite rare, cross-linguistically, for all three grammatical relations (*S*, *A* and *O*) to be distinctively marked (see Anderson 1976). Examples given by Brown (B) are reproduced below:

- 7.107 *Ia ŋa a-e-loŋo.* (NWMek:B)
 s/he ITR.S NEG-3SG-know
 S/he does/did not know (how to).
- 7.108 *Uio ŋa e-babi-gae.* (NWMek:B)
 girl ITR.S 3SG-stand-rise
 The girl stood up.
- 7.109 *Piaku-ka ke e-ŋua-gae-n-a.*⁴⁶ (NWMek:B)
 chief-1PL TR.S 3SG-heart-rise-TH-3SG
 Our Lord desires/desired it.
- 7.110 *Ia ke uio imā e-api-a.* (NWMek:B)
 s/he TR.S girl hand.3SG 3SG-take-3SG
 He took the girl’s hand.

The system that Brown perceived in his data does not emerge from a study of my own fairly extensive texts. In this material *ŋa* is essentially an emphatic particle that sometimes has deictic functions (as it is in the other dialects). It can be used to foreground a particular topic or predicate. It is not tied to any particular *syntactic* function, such as transitive or intransitive subject, or transitive object. *Ke* is a common exclamatory particle in all dialects, and it too can function to express marked topicality or extra emphasis.

The system of subject marking described by Brown is identical to that which operates in Motu, where the markers are usually given as *ese*: transitive subject marker, and *na*: (optional) intransitive subject marker.⁴⁷ It must be recalled that Brown’s data consisted

⁴⁵ The single word *ike-go* ‘like this’ is found more commonly in this use.

⁴⁶ *Piaku* is cognate with Motu *biagu* ‘owner, master’. It does not appear in the other dialects.

⁴⁷ Taylor (1970a:49, fn.4).notes that “*na* may occur after a NP which is the subject of an intransitive verb, but this is more common in the Western Motu than the Eastern dialect”. This contrasts with Balawaia, where “In transitive and ditransitive sentences the subject is always marked by *-na* except in reciprocal and reflexive sentences” (Kolia 1975:113). Kolia further notes that *-na* is optional if the

largely of gospel stories, hymns, and so on, that had been translated into NWMek by non-Mekeo pastors from other parts of the country or by educated native speakers who had learned to speak other languages such as Toaripi and (especially) Motu⁴⁸ and who worked with native-speakers. However, his own data contains counter-examples to his proposal; for example, in Brown (1955:8) *na* marks an object.

It should be added that Brown (1955:29) later on, in his dictionary, describes *ŋa* simply as a subject marker “used when desired to stress subj. which it follows”.

The importance of such claims is that a typological classification of Mekeo as ergative-absolutive or nominative-accusative or something else entirely may hinge upon their accuracy. The Motu system has been a matter of discussion for some time.⁴⁹ If transitive subjects alone should prove to be obligatorily marked, while intransitive subjects and transitive objects remain unmarked (as is the case in Balawaia; see footnote 47), this would be an ergative system (where S = O, in terms of marking). However, there is no trace of such a system in any data I have studied.⁵⁰

7.4.4 COMPLEX CATAPHORS: NOMINAL PREDICATIONS

Predications containing rankshifted nominal predications are structurally more complex, and the suprasegmental structures thereby implicated are also more complex.

As shown in §7.4.1, the heads of rankshifted nominal predications, marked for agreement with their own subject or object, can function exactly like free nominals to specify or constrain the potential reference of a verbal affix.

	TM	(T)	F	Core	
7.111	<i>Papie,</i>	<i>(oi)</i>	<i>ina-mu</i>	<i>e-iva-ŋ-a.</i>	(EMek)
	woman	you	mother-2SG	3SG-speak-TH-3SG	
	The woman is calling your mother. ⁵¹				

The second person singular object of *ina-mu* is a topic, and is as such deletable. The focus of the embedded predication is simultaneously the focus of the matrix predication – to the extent that it is rankshifted it is only *active* as focus on the level of the matrix predication.

A third person topic/object is less likely to be deleted, and especially when this is in a nonce relationship with the predicate:

object is not expressed by a full nominal (1975:114). Tauberschmidt (1992) argues that Sinagoro (of which Balawaia is a dialect) has an ergative system of argument marking. Meanwhile, Dixon (1979), using data from Taylor, notes that Motu *na* can follow an object, or even *ese*. This suggests that Motu *na* may not be a function marker at all, at least not in eastern Motu. It may indeed be a topic marker like Mekeo *auŋa*.

48 Note that Motu already had a number of literary registers, such as the language of official government notices and that of Bible translations, etc.

49 In this connection see Anderson (1976:5) and Dixon (1979, fn.13).

50 This may indicate the presence of a syntactic isogloss running between West Central Papua and East Central Papua plus the Motu area, with ergative systems east of a certain line. The geographic limits of such ergative systems constitute a topic that needs urgent investigation.

51 In this example the woman *could* be interpreted (syntactically) as the object function rather than the subject function of the verb.

- 7.112 T..... F Core
 Foe *inā*, *Aifuifu* *e-ani-a*.⁵² (EMek)
 Egret mother.3SG female.cuscus 3SG-eat-3SG.
 He ate Cuscus, Egret's mother.

- 7.113 T F..... Core
Ajukabi, *iabu lauba-ŋa* *i-obo-n-i-a*. (WMek)
 Ajukabi heat feeling-3SG 3SG-perceive-TH-PF-3SG
 Ajukabi perceived the effects of the heat.

This is all the more so in the case of locative-relational predications:

- 7.114 F..... Core
Lama gufu-ŋa-ai *e-aŋu-au*. (EMek)
 yam foliage-3SG-OBL 3SG-sit-go.up
 He sat up on the foliage of the yam.

When the structure of a rankshifted nominal predication is substantially intact, the suprasegmental structure of the matrix predication may exhibit traces of an embedded predicative IP. This can be shown in terms of *two layers of structure*.

- T^M..... |-----F-----|
 T_{Sub} F_{Sub}
 7.115 *Iji*, *aia-eka*, *ani-na* *o-ani-a* *ma?* (WMek)
 I POSS.1SG-house death-3SG 2SG-die-3SG INT
 Do you like my house?

The next example represents an attributive predication. Since the subject-topic is the semantic head it cannot be dropped – but nor can the defining attribute. The discourse-pragmatic structure, as realised by suprasegmental structure, is here more complex.

- T^M F..... Core
 T^M T_{Sub} F_{Sub} Core
 7.116 *Papie*, *imoi apala* *e-au-ŋ-a*. (EMek)
 woman child bad 3SG-hit-TH-3SG
 The woman is beating the bad child.

Two other examples follow:

- T^A..... F..... Core
 T^A..... T_{Sub} F_{Sub} Core
 7.117 *Eŋa-e* *ao-ŋa-ai*, *idawa abala* *a-api-a*. (WMek)
 DX-LOC inside-3SG-OBL sick bad 1SG-take-3SG
 During that time, I became very ill.
- 7.118 T^M..... T^A T^A T T^A F..... (NMek)
 T_{Sub}..... F_{Sub}..... Core
Oabi uai-tsi *gaia mako-paisa* *ai* *bau* *ai-ga-oŋo*.
 word old-3PL also much-SHEER we.E now NEG-1PL-know
 Also we do not now know very many of the old words.

52 This is the title of a well-known story.

7.4.5 COMPLEX CATAPHORS: CO-RELATIVE PREDICATIONS

As noted above, co-relative predications function like nominal cataphors in the structure of a matrix predication. However, co-relative predications with instantiative heads ('general nouns') perform a specialised specificational function. In §8.3.1 and §8.3.2, I discuss the behaviour of co-relative predications in extended discourse, while here I look at their place in the structure of a predication, and contrast this with the functions of nominal cataphors.

- TM T..... F.....
 7.119 *Ivi aṅao, ke-loṅo au-ṅa, ke-ivi-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 song one 3PL-know one-3SG 3PL-sing-TH-PF-3SG
 They sang a song which they knew.

The co-relative predication may be spoken as a single PC, especially when functioning as the focus (PC1):

- F..... Core
 7.120 *Tsiabu a-kawa-i-a au-ṅa ma-uga-i-a.* (WMek)
 cloth 1SG-buy-PF-3SG one-3SG IMP.1SG-put.on-PF-3SG
 I want to wear the cloth which I bought.

A specificational co-relative predication functions to single out the exact member of a set which is relevant in the situation:

- T..... F
 7.121 *Enene pokoa au-ṅa, ena-ai!* (NWMek)
 path short one-3SG that-OBL
 The path which is the short one is there!
 (lit. The one which is the short path is there!)

Finally, here is an example of a determinate co-relative predication with a non-dummy (plural-marked) head:

- TM F
 TSub FSub
 TSub FSub
 7.122 *Kupu oṅoṅo-ʔi isa-ʔi e-afi-ʔi.* (EMek)
 grass dry-3PL some-3PL 3SG-take-3PL
 S/he took some bits of grass which were dry.

7.4.6 GOALS AND LOCATIONS AS ARGUMENTS

Goals of motion verbs are unmarked, and may come before or after the verb word. When they come before the verb word they represent an *unmarked* focus:

- TM F Core
 7.123 *Ai, Inapaṅa ga-ao.* (WMek)
 we.E Inaufangau 1PL-go
 We went to Inaufangau.

When they come after the verb word, they constitute a post-verbal focus, and this is similar to a cleft focus (§8.3.1.1 below). It is thus a *marked* focus. At the same time the verb

word itself, which is always followed by a pause, usually takes a marked pitch accent (typically PC6), and constitutes a kind of *marked topic*:

- 7.124 TT FPV.....|
A-ao, Melen Bai. (WMek)
 1SG-go Milne Bay
 I went to Milne Bay.

Expressions for lengths of time share this ability to follow the verb:

- 7.125 TM TT FPV.....|
Nait-iskadi, a-gaba-i-a, tsinibo oido. (WMek)
 night-study 1SG-do-PF-3SG year three
 I did three years of night study.

Locative goals of verbs of ‘putting’ and ‘placing’ take the oblique case with *-AI*:

- 7.126 F..... Core
*Ŋaŋa-ai mo-ba-ga-uga.*⁵³ (WMek)
 canoe-OBL IMP.2SG-CA-lie-go.in
 Lay him/her/it in the canoe.
- 7.127 TM..... F..... Core
Va?e au-pua-ŋa, vei-s-ai ke-uka. (EMek)
 cycad tree-fruit-3SG water-B-OBL 3PL-put.in
 They put the cycad fruits in the water.

Sometimes the same verb can express an action which involves putting an object in place and an action which merely involves reaching and affecting a goal. The goal of an action which leaves nothing in place is unmarked:

- 7.128 *Pio, mape-u e-fau-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 cassowary side-1SG 3SG-stab-TH-PF-3SG
 The cassowary wounded me in the side.

However, when the action results in something being put in place and left there the goal takes oblique case marking:

- 7.129 *Kokou, uma-ai ge-pau-n-i-a.* (WMek)
 taro garden-OBL 3PL-plant-TH-PF-3SG
 They planted taro in the garden.

7.5 APPOSITIVE NOMINALS

Repeated reference is sometimes made to the same entity by means of different nominal and/or pronominal items. This contrasts with the phenomenon where a number of non-coreferential nominals are in apposition to a single role- and function-marker on a verb.⁵⁴

In the following examples the nominals are coreferential:

⁵³ It will be recalled that *UGA* means ‘go in’ and also ‘put in’, and ‘put on’.

⁵⁴ See Matthews (1981:220-236) on apposition. Compare §4.3.3.9 above on Doubled Os, which are analysed as extra arguments of the verb.

- 7.130 *Pibi, au abao-tsi ŋa-meleki, eŋaea auŋa* (WMek)
 fern man old-3PL 3PL-plate that TOP
an-a-mai-ai-n-a.
 FUT-1SG-come-RTR-TH-3SG
 I will bring fern (leaves), the plates of the old people, those.
- 7.131 *E-βia enae. Au, Inaujina au-ŋa, aminia,* (NWMek)
 3SG-run there man Inaukina one-3SG one
loβia au-ŋa. Ke-ŋa-ai e-βia.
 chief one-3SG LOC-3SG-OBL 3SG-run
 He went there. (There was) a man, a man of Inaukina, one (man),
 a chiefly man. He went (to) him.

In the next example the nominals are non-coreferential:

- 7.132 *Ŋee, oo, e-fio-k-a.* (EMek:D)
 net pig-net 3SG-twist-TH-3SG
 S/he is twisting (cord belonging to) the *ŋee*, the *oo*.

The next example illustrates a chain of non-rankshifted predicative nominals, all referring to the same person:

- 7.133 *Fifiali, eŋo, aŋuma, papiau-papiau* (EMek:D)
 tramp cockatoo fly people-people
akavā-mo e-oma-ʔafe-ai-n-iʔi.
 spouse.3SG-just 3SG-DNT-collect-RTR-TH-3PL
 (She is) a tramp, (she is) a cockatoo, (she is) a fly, she thinks
 everyone is her husband.

Clearly the chaining of predicates as in example 7.133 represents quite a distinct phenomenon from that of appositive nominals illustrated in the examples further above. However, it is by no means always easy to hear the difference between a rankshifted predicate and a non-rankshifted nominal predicate.⁵⁵

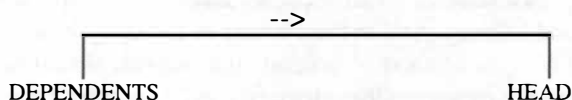
7.6 TRACKING SYNTACTIC BONDS

Syntactic bonds are, in a head-marking language, unilateral. That is, coreferential nominal arguments depend on head-marked traces, and not vice versa. Yet since the nominal arguments precede the head in time, functioning as topics or – as the focus of new information – as a part of the predicate, it is evident that *pragmatic* bonds or expectancies are also set up, and that account must be taken of these in any comprehensive grammar. NPs in fact represent rankshifted predications, and precede the main predicate not just as topic precedes comment but as members of a series (i.e. a clause chain), inferior in rank but belonging to the same functional category.

The dual syntactic and pragmatic structure of the grammar of Mekeo thus sets up a system of complimentary bonds and reciprocal dependencies that differ in kind (and direction) but function in tandem to generate a complex woof of structural cohesion:

⁵⁵ Hale (1983, fn.15) records the “trepidation” with which he approached the task in Warlpiri.

SYNTACTIC:



PRAGMATIC:

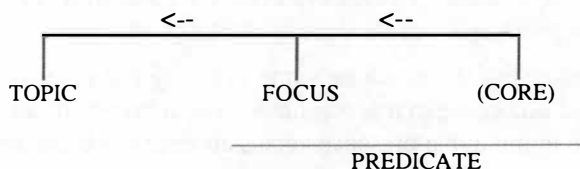


FIGURE 41: COMPLEMENTARY DEPENDENCIES

Now even an artificially ‘context-free’ sentence with an intracausative verb root (which can be either transitive or intransitive) can be construed in the light of the ‘scene’ indexed by the verb root and the denotation of the cataphors (i.e. the dependents or the topics). And when one attempts to do this the cataphoric pragmatic bonds in particular are revealed. Here is a cryptic monoclausal sentence from Desnoës:

7.134 *?uma ke-?ua.* (EMek:D)
 pig 3PL-root.with.snout

The root *?ua* denotes a kind of process in which the head (i.e. the nose or snout, or the horns, or simply the head itself) is used as an instrument to lever or toss objects or to plough up the ground. It also means, by extension, the stubborn pursuit and harassment of someone, as with complaints and accusations. The verb itself, by virtue of class membership, participates in the system of causativity and thus may or may not have an object. What is more, when it does have an object, this object may or may not be indexed on the verb word (Zero-O). The non-determinate cataphor *?uma* has common number and thus may or may not agree with the plural SM, just as it may or may not agree with a Zero-O. What is more, *?uma* may represent either the topic or the focus of the message (although intonation would in practice disambiguate its discourse-pragmatic function).

In spite of all the above factors, given the class of event denoted by the root *?ua*, and given the meaning of *?uma*, it is virtually⁵⁶ possible to rule out a non-specific human actant corresponding to the third person plural SM (since it is virtually possible to rule out the extended meaning of *?ua*). On the other hand, these same factors tend to force an interpretation in which pigs are doing something very characteristic of pigs: ‘The pigs forage with their snouts’. This is to say that the semantico-pragmatic specification of the cataphor substantively constrains the *syntactic* possibilities of the verbal predicate.

Similarly, with the following utterance, only one plausible scenario suggests itself:

7.135 *Ŋa e-mai ena, kuma i-u-ŋ-i-a.* (NWMek)
 thus 3SG-come there pig 3SG-hit-TH-PF-3SG
 So he came there and hit a pig

⁵⁶ I say ‘virtually’ because in the non-pragmatic realm of myth everything is possible, and myth *is* a register of Mekeo.

Hitting is not something pigs characteristically do, let alone hitting in the extended sense meant here (i.e. shooting and killing). And in the context of the story in which this sentence occurred we are so primed with the context of situation that we can almost predict the events before they unfold. We certainly recognise them instantly as ‘what must have happened’ (see §8.5.2.1 for more on this). Note that all our certainty disappears if we change one word:

- 7.136 *Ŋa e-mai ena, aki-na i-u-ŋ-i-a.* (NWMek)
 thus 3SG-come there younger.brother-3SG 3SG-hit-TH-PF-3SG
 So he came there and...his younger brother (lit. younger same-sex sibling).

It should be emphasised that this is not the same as saying that access to the core functions of the verb is regulated according to a semantic or even a pragmatic hierarchy. In the first place it has to be borne in mind that presence versus absence of object-marking is as much a purely lexical matter as anything else. Certain roots do not take an unmarked (i.e. imperfective) third person OM. Other roots optionally take an OM, or optionally show compensatory stress when the OM has been deleted. Other scholars have been able to account for similar situations in terms of hierarchies of access, made up either of semantic case-roles or of pragmatic (referential) prominence (e.g. Bruce 1979, 1984, and Lichtenberk 1983). Differential access in Mekeo can be explained in semantic terms only for causativised transitive verbs, where the agent of the transitive verb always becomes the object of the causative (the erstwhile object becoming an unexpressed indirect object). It does *not* depend on definiteness or specificity of reference. In Mekeo it is the perfective aspect of the verb, with its connotations of ‘high transitivity’ (and especially high kinesis),⁵⁷ that motivates presence versus absence of the OM. Perfective aspect, furthermore, implies the completion of the process named, but from the point of view of the agent. The extent of the affectedness of the target is relatively unimportant. This has been argued already in §4.2.1 above, but I give one more example here:

- 7.137 *Okafu amu?e a-e-ani-a e-koŋo-p-i-a-mo.* (EMek)
 python dog NEG-3SG-eat-3SG 3SG-swallow-TH-PF-3SG-just
 A python does not eat a dog, it just swallows it up.

Now here again there is nothing in the morphology or syntax of this sentence to tell us that it is the python that swallows the dog and not vice versa. ‘Python’ could be coreferential with the subject or object function of either or both of the two verbs – as could ‘dog’. It is only our knowledge of pythons and of dogs and of what usually happens in the world that enables us to ‘decode’ this utterance correctly.

This topic is pursued further in §8.1.6, §8.3.1.2 and §8.5 *passim*.

⁵⁷ Kinesis is one of the components into which transitivity is analysed by Hopper and Thompson (1980). It is the one of most important for the definition of perfectivity in Mekeo.

CHAPTER 8
THE SYNTAX OF CONJOINED VERBAL PREDICATIONS

Nuclear juncture, as we saw in §6.1, produces a single verbal core with a single shared set of arguments. There is only one set of functions (and actants). A single set of affixes index the core semantic relations at the same time as they signal choice of tense and mood. Core juncture, on the other hand, generates complex ‘serial’ structures, consisting of chains of notionally linked predicates which have separate marking for core functions as well as for core operators like tense and mood. These predicates must have at least one core argument in common (between adjoining members of the chain), and the same constraint on the selection of tense and mood applies to core juncture as applied to nuclear juncture. Tense, aspect and mood must be held identical for both junct. But because the marking of syntactic relations (functions, actants) occurs separately and, obviously, to some extent redundantly, on each verbal base, there is now the problem of establishing coreference, i.e. of identifying *shared* argument(s). Morphology is of little help as, for any given person, number is the only clue offered, and in the third person even that is optional (or, at any rate, discourse-pragmatically determined). In the absence of fixed word order and a case- or gender-marking system, many third person actants will be identically marked.

Core juncture of the kind just described is a form of core coordination (FVV 1984:245-248). On a higher level of propositional complexity, peripheral juncture joins core coordinate chains in peripheral coordination. Mekeo discourse above these levels is largely a matter of paratactic chains. And while the usual conventions of topic continuity (Dixon 1972; Li and Thompson 1979) normally enable us to follow the ‘plot’, there will in Mekeo always be a residue of uncertainty as to the semantic role structure of isolated events. One’s knowledge of the world – as a Mekeo – will help to elucidate this structure to the extent of proposing workable hypotheses, but only the speaker himself can ultimately arbitrate as to the underlying conceptualisation, the scene as he ‘saw’ it before he spoke.

Coordinate juncture is the mechanism that chiefly enables verb serialisation. Verbal predicates are chained in complex unitary sentence-level structures. It is at this level of syntax that indeterminacy of reference is most apparent in Mekeo. Other forms of juncture yet to be described entail:

- a) the coordination,
- b) the adsubordination, and
- c) the subordination and embedding of whole sentences.

Coordination and subordination are familiar concepts. Adsubordination is less so. Adsubordinate predications are subordinate but ‘adjoined’. They can be identified as subordinate by their carrying an enclitic, subordinating conjunction. However, they cannot be embedded.

8.1 FROM CORE TO PERIPHERAL JUNCTURE

Mekeo discourse is characterised by two loosely structured varieties of verb serialisation, based on forms of core juncture and peripheral juncture respectively. To say that these two forms of syntactic chaining are ‘loose’ means that what structure they possess is semantically and pragmatically rather than syntactically or morphologically determined. Unified pitch patterns and/or combinations of these add suprasegmental cohesion to such sentences.

The cohesion of short strings is largely achieved by means of core level juncture. Simple or complex verbal nuclei (i.e. verbal predicates) combine at this level when they share certain operators such as tense and mood. They should also share at least one core actant. This is to say that at least one function of each verb should be coreferential with some function of some other verb. More importantly, in Mekeo, is the constraint identified by Lord (1974): a following VP in core juncture is “always in some sense a further development, result or goal” of those preceding it. This constraint is crucial, as coreference can be difficult to determine and is not a wholly necessary (or criterial) condition of core juncture.

It is necessary to distinguish here between two different types of core level juncture (following Foley and Van Valin 1984, in most particulars). In the first type, which is called core cosubordination,¹ the different verb roots (of which there are rarely more than two) *must* have at least one argument in common, but one argument must be attached to one of the verbs only (i.e. it is not a function of the verb word in its entirety). In practice this often means that the subject argument is shared (the second verb losing its SM, and hence no longer marked as a finite verb), while the first verb takes an object (marked by a verb-internal OM) that is not shared by the second. As a consequence, the verb roots generally fuse into a single compound word.

Here are two common examples of core cosubordination

- 8.1 *Mo-api-a-mai.* (WMek)
 IMP.2SG-take-3SG-come
 Bring it here.
- 8.2 *Mo-afi-a-kae!* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-take-3SG-rise
 Lift it right up!

It will be seen from these examples that the nucleus of the verb is ‘split’ by the interpolation of a third person singular OM: (-i)-a. The SM of the second verb is deleted as coreferential with the SM of the first verb in example 8.1, while the SM of the second verb is deleted under coreference with the OM of the first verb in 8.2. This is a common construction in Motu and Kuni, but it is comparatively rare in Mekeo.

¹ Mekeo has comparatively few examples of core cosubordination, and (as I believe, along with Roro and Gabadi) differs in this regard from the more easterly members of the Central Papuan family (including, notably, Motu) which seem to favour this kind of construction. The topic needs to be thoroughly investigated.

In the second type of core juncture, which is called core coordination, there are two separate verbs or verb phrases. Each of these retains its own full set of affixes, and one VP follows the other. At least one of the arguments is shared between adjacent verbs. That is, one of the arguments indexed on any given verb is coreferential with one of the arguments indexed on some other verb(s) in a serial construction. It is again not always clear which role markers are coreferential with which, hence the importance of the pragmatic constraint stipulating that some logical relation should apply between the predicates.

Examples of core coordination are easier to find. The following expressions contrast clearly with the two above:

- 8.3 *Mo-api-a* *o-mai*² (WMek)
 IMP.2SG-take-3SG 2SG-come
 Bring it here! (lit. Take it (and) come!)
- 8.4 *Mo-afi-a* *ŋa-kae* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-take-3SG IMP.3SG-rise
 Lift it right up! (lit. Take it (and) let it rise!)

This leaves peripheral juncture. Verbs in core juncture are, as we saw, *constrained* by a given set of semantic-syntactic operators (as laid out in Figure 42). Tense and mood are the most important of these. Verbs in core juncture do not have independent options in these categories. But in peripheral juncture this constraint no longer holds. These operators can vary from verb to verb. At this level each verbal predicate may have an independent set of topics (S-TOPICS and A-TOPICS) as well as its own focus.

Thematic unity often provides the framework within which peripheral juncture is recognisable as such. This may be expressed by a single same-topic chain, as well as by a strong tendency towards continuity of cast (a fixed set of actants). An elaborated version of Lord's constraint can be applied: successive predications are always tied together by logical connections. A combination of all these factors lends sufficient coherence to this form of serialisation to warrant treating it as a (complex) *construction*. A peripheral junct can be defined as a sentence consisting of coordinate predications, which may be simple or complex (i.e. themselves sentences).

PJ, potentially at least, presents a hearer with major processing problems since, *on formal grounds*, it is frequently impossible to identify coreferential arguments across predications, which often contain several verb words each in core coordinate juncture. The problem is recognised by Foley and Van Valin (1984:194-197). Mekeo possesses none of the reference-tracking mechanisms that function in many languages to prevent confusion as to reference (see FVV 1984: Chapter 7, and Nichols 1986:112-114), or any strict syntactic or discourse constraints (see Comrie 1988). The Mekeo rely upon a certain empathy between interlocutors and shared familiarity with topics and referents to maintain meaning. Since topic chaining is an important cohesive device on all levels of discourse, this problem will re-present itself later in this study (viz. in 8.1.5 and 8.1.6 and in 8.5.1., 8.5.2 and 8.5.3).

A full listing of operators, and the layers on which they act in Mekeo, is given here (after Foley and Van Valin 1984, Chapter 5, *passim*). To the peripheral layer operators I add possible adjuncts (adverbs or actants) and arguments for each layer:

² The *mo...o-* subject-marking pattern is standard for core junctures in IMP.2SG. Mood is marked only once, as one might expect for core juncture.

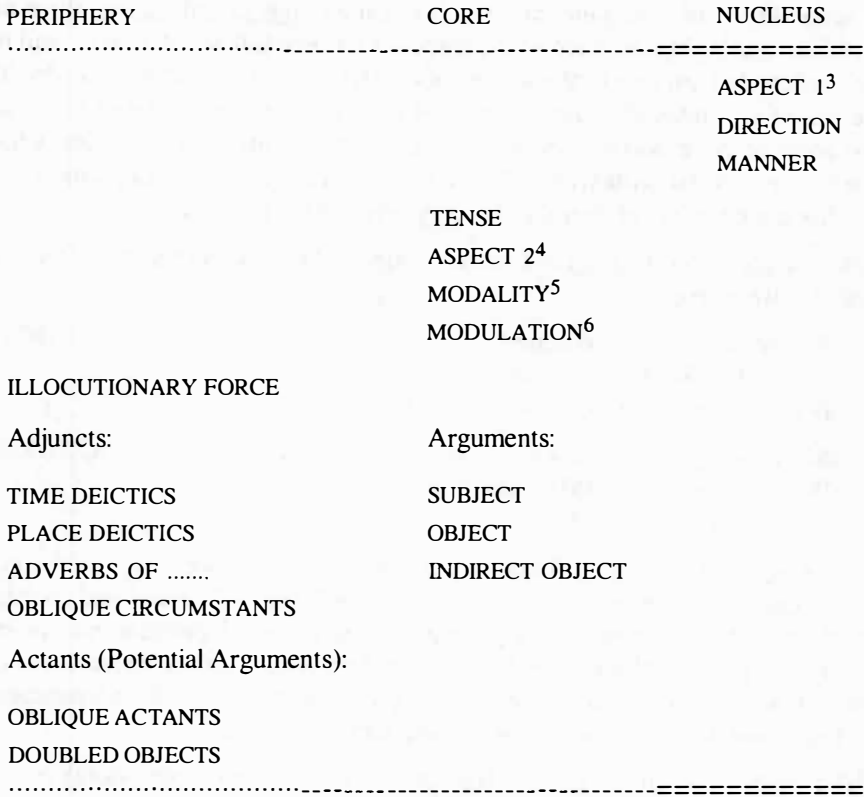


FIGURE 42: STRUCTURAL LAYERS AND THEIR OPERATORS

8.1.1 CORE COORDINATE JUNCTURE

This is perhaps the basic discourse level construction in Mekeo and deserves detailed exemplification. An example follows:

8.5 *I-u-ŋ-i-a* *e-mae.* (NWMek)
 3SG-hit-TH-PF-3SG 3SG-die
 He hit him and (he) died.

Note that there is, in principle, no way of telling which actant died, though our knowledge of the world plus the juxtaposition of ideas leads us to suppose that it was the patient of the first predicate. But, logically, it could just as well be the *agent* of the first predicate who struck someone and subsequently died. A more complex example follows.

8.6 *Ame, a?iva e-au-lou-a,* *Peto e-peni-a.* (EMek)
 Ame knife 3SG-CA-bend-3SG Peter 3SG-give-3SG
 Ame folded the knife (and) gave it Peter.

3 ASPECT1 refers to the possibility of marking habitual/progressive aspect on the nucleus by means of full or partial reduplication.
 4 ASPECT2 refers to the distinction between perfective and imperfective, marked on the core.
 5 My 'modality' = FVV's 'status' (it will be recalled that I follow Halliday in my use of the terms modality and modulation).
 6 My 'modulation' is equivalent to FVV's 'modality'. (See FVV 1984:213-215.)

This kind of construction generally has four criterial features:

- a) there is a shared argument (which can have a different function in each VP)
- b) tense and mood remain constant, as do the time and the place
- c) there is an optional pause between the two predicates⁷
- d) each successive predicate is felt to follow 'naturally' on from those preceding it⁸

The possibility of pause is predictable from the theory (see Olson 1981; noted in Foley and Van Valin 1984:246). In example 8.5 there is no pause. In example 8.6 there is. However, the intonation contour remains high across the pause, signalling incompleteness, only falling on *Peto* in example 8.6, which is the information focus of the last predicate in the series. When I say 'remains high' I do not mean that the pause is not marked at all in terms of pitch: there is in fact a slight fall-rise (the same 'tone' functions to signal incompleteness across clause boundaries in English). There is only one fall. In other words, there is only one main focus for the whole chain of predicates in coordinate juncture. The reader is referred back to §1.3.3.3 for an account of the basic pitch contours.

It is possible (though not common) to have core coordinate juncture in the absence of a shared actant. Unity of theme, logical consequentiality and a unified pitch contour define the following utterance as a unit:

- 8.7 *Matsi iu-ŋa fo-peni-au, fama-ani-a.* (NMek)
 wallaby tail-3SG OBLG.2SG-give-1SG OBLG.1PL-eat-3SG
 Give me the tail of the wallaby so as we may eat it.

Foley and Van Valin remark (1984:197-208) that one of the main functions of core juncture is to increase the valency of the core. I hesitate to say that this is what happens in a case like 8.6 above. We have certainly increased the total number of actants by addition of the ditransitive verb *-peni* 'give', but with core coordinate juncture we are not exactly dealing with a single (complex) core, we have two coordinate cores. The same applies to the last example 8.7, indeed more so. So we are not dealing with valency, which is a function of a single unitary nucleus. I will simply say that an added predicate may contribute a new actant to the shared periphery, and that the entire structure of the scene or the event is thereby 'enriched'. But such enrichment brings with it an increased risk of referential confusion or – as I prefer to say – indeterminacy. Consider this example:

- 8.8 *Au babie i-au-n-i-a e-biu-ani-a.* (WMek)
 man woman 3SG-hit-TH-PF-3SG 3SG-run-leave-3SG
- ? – (The) man hit (the) woman (and) ran away from her.
 - ? – (The) man hit (the) woman (and) she ran away from him.
 - ? – (The) woman hit (the) man (and) ran away from him.
 - ? – (The) woman hit (the) man (and) he ran away from her.

Any one of these four English sentences can be legitimately 'read off' from the Mekeo original. Nothing linguistic indicates which is the intended meaning. If the second predicate brought with it a new actant the situation would become even more complex, and more indeterminate:

⁷ Pause is symbolised by a comma. Note that there is an optional pause after each NP in Mekeo, where these function as topics (old/definite information).

⁸ Lord (1974).

- 8.9 *Au babie i-au-n-i-a ŋau-ŋa e-biu-ani-a.* (WMek)
 man woman 3SG-hit-TH-PF-3SG son-3SG 3SG-run-leave-3SG

Taking the unmarked reading '(The) man hit (the) woman' we get the following possibilities:

- (The) man (hit) the woman (and)
- a. his son ran away from her
 - b. her son ran away from her
 - c. his son ran away from him
 - d. her son ran away from him
 - e. he ran away from his son
 - f. she ran away from his son
 - g. he ran away from her son
 - h. she ran away from her son

Taking the slightly marked interpretation of the initial predicate,⁹ i.e. '(The) woman hit (the) man', we get another eight possible readings, or sixteen in all. This phenomenon can be compared with pro-drop in other languages (e.g. Lakhota), and even with conjunction reduction in English. But Mekeo is unusual in not having either any morphological tracking device (such as switch-reference, a case or gender system) or a syntactic rule (as in English conjunction reduction, where only same subjects are dropped) or a discourse convention (as in Serbo-Croatian, where a pro-dropped subject is normally identified with a topic; see Comrie 1988).

8.1.2 TYPES OF CORE COORDINATE JUNCTURE

Motion and stance verbs combine freely on the level of core coordinate juncture, either with one another, with other intransitive verbs or with transitive verbs.¹⁰ They can often be considered aspect markers. Some examples with ITR verbs follow:

- 8.10 *E-mue e-mai.* (WMek, NMek, EMek)
 3SG-turn 3SG-come
 S/he returned. OR: S/he came back.
- 8.11 *E-lao-lao e-mai-mai.* (EMek)
 3SG-go-RED 3SG-come-RED
 S/he kept going and coming.
- 8.12 *I-igege i-io i-io.* (NWMek)
 3SG-cry 3SG-go 3SG-go
 S/he kept on crying. (pronunciation: *igege io io*)
- 8.13 *Ke-pi-me²e ke-lao-lao.* (EMek)
 3PL-REC-side 3PL-go-RED
 They kept on staring.

Two process verbs in series, with coreferential subjects, can occur in core coordinate juncture:

⁹ Marginally 'marked' in that it has OSV word order.

¹⁰ This is predictable on cross-linguistic evidence (Foley and Olson 1985:48).

- 8.14 *E-poga e-poga.* (WMek)
 3SG-rot 3SG-smell
 It is rotting, it stinks.

Turning now to combinations that include transitive verbs, some more examples follow:

- 8.15 *E-afis-a¹¹ e-mai.* (NMek)
 3SG-take-3SG 3SG-come
 S/he brought it. (lit. S/he took it and came.)
- 8.16 *Mo-apa-api-a o-lao.* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-stand-tight-3SG 2PL-go
 Go, and stick close to him.

In the above two examples the subjects of both verbs are coreferential. In those that follow the object of the first verb corresponds to the subject of the second.

- 8.17 *Po-goni-n-a ŋa-ao.* (WMek)
 OBLG.2SG-push-TH-3SG IMP.3SG-go
 Push it across/over/back.
- 8.18 *Gi-u-ŋ-i-a gi-u-ŋ-i-a e-mae.* (NWMek)
 3PL-hit-TH-PF-3SG 3PL-hit-TH-PF-3SG 3SG-die
 They beat him to death.
- 8.19 *Mo-pai-n-i-au ma-loŋo.* (EMek)
 IMP.2SG-tell-TH-PF-1SG IMP.1SG-know
 Explain it to me so that I can understand it.

In the following example core actants are specified. It is the pragmatic consequentiality of the two events that constitutes the sentence as core juncture.

- 8.20 *Loo mo-pa-aŋa, laitsi ŋa-aŋa.* (EMek)
 fire IMP.2SG-CA-burn rice IMP.3SG-cook
 Light the fire, let the rice cook.

It is possible to contrast an affirmative with a negative verb in core coordinate juncture:

- 8.21 *Ifo-i-mo fa-ke-pea,* (EMek)
 self-3PL-just OBLG.NEG-3PL-walk
laa-fou-ai fe-ke-pea e-oma.
 draw-together-OBL OBLG-3PL-walk 3SG-DNT
 He said that they should not walk alone (but) that they should walk in company.

An intransitive process verb in series with a transitive action verb where the shared argument is the semantic undergoer – the patient – of both action and process is a syntactic structure that frequently comes to have a causative interpretation. Serial constructions of the form TR + ITR (where *O* (Verb1) > *S* (Verb2)) are indeed called “causative serial verb constructions” by Foley and Olson (1985:25-26).¹² This applies at the core level just as it did at the level of nuclear juncture (§6.1.4 above).

¹¹ Metathesis is increasingly common in this environment: *afsia* > *afisa*.

¹² Cross-linguistically, this kind of syntactic relation is less common than actor-sharing serialisations, and reinforces the characterisation of Mekeo as a patient-prominent language.

- 8.22 *A-ŋa-ai a-aba-au¹³ e-obo.* (WMek)
 top-3SG-OBL 1SG-stand-up 3SG-break
 I stood on it and it broke.

- 8.23 *Auo kina e-ŋaŋa-i-a e-kia-kia.* (EMek)
 firewood sun 3SG-heat-PF-3SG 3SG-dry-RED
 The sun heated the firewood (and) it became dry.
-

8.1.3 CORE COORDINATE CHAINS

Chaining of predicates in core coordinate juncture is an extremely common discourse phenomenon in Mekeo. Such chains are not without internal structure of their own, however.

Take the following example. In reply to the question: ‘How do you kill pigs?’, I received the answer given below. It should be noted that this sentence corresponds to a single tone group, with the option of a short pause after any of the verb words but an evident hiatus halfway through (marked by a comma below). The tone remains high throughout, falling only on the very last word. In it four actants are named (full NPs) and four verb words describe their interaction. I shall give it a word-for-word gloss in an attempt to convey the pace and rhythm of the original:

- 8.24 *Ai kuma ga-apsi-a ga-ao-ai-n-a,* (WMek)
 1PL.E pig 1PL-take-3SG 1PL-go-RTR-TH-3SG
au-ai ganiā ga-au-n-i-a e-mae.
 wood-OBL head-3SG 1PL-hit-TH-PF-3SG 3SG-die
 We, pig, we-grab-it, we-take-it, wood-with, head-its,
 we-hit-it it-dies.

The first three verbs share the same subject(-agent), while the subject of the fourth is the object of the first two. This last switch is an example of causative serialisation. The chain of predicates is broken somewhat with the introduction of a meronymic object: *ganiā* ‘its head’. But the anaphoric determining suffix links this (there is only one candidate) to its topic noun, *kuma*, and the pattern is restored. Tense-aspect and, more importantly, mood remain constant over all the verb words, and the events described form a natural real-world sequence. So I feel reasonably confident in analysing this as an example of chained coordinate junctures.

Now the periphery – reflecting the context of situation – is enriched towards the end of this chain with the addition of two actants: ‘wood’ and ‘head’. It is to be remarked that these were already ‘present to the scene’. The speaker has chosen to foreground these actants, to make them the focus of the message in order to answer the actual question:

¹³ Note the absence of an OM. The patient, which is by any account the topic of this utterance, appears very indirectly in surface structure, being indexed only on the locative-relational noun. Note that the causal VP is the focus (and not the resultant VP, which is the coda).

- 8.25 T T FV FV T^N F^M (WMek)
Ai, kuma, ga-apsi-a ga-ao-ai-n-a, au-ai ganiā
 We, pig, we-grab-it we-take-it, wood-with, head-its,
 Coda.....
ga-au-n-i-a e-mae.
 we-hit-it it-dies.

Notice that the message would have been equally grammatically expressed had the speaker merely said:

- 8.26 T^G T^M F^V F^V F^V F^M
Ai kuma ga-apsi-a ga-ao-ai-n-a ga-au-n-i-a e-mae.
 we pig we-grab-it we-take-it we-strike-it it-dies.

However, the point of the message is now different. In this last sentence the focus of information is the last verb word. This sentence answers the question: ‘What happens to the pig?’ But we have asked: ‘How is the pig killed?’ The answer – the focus of information – is now, precisely, the hitting of the pig on the head, and with a stick. And, just as the focus of a simple predication is always the actant that fills the immediately preverbal slot, this was placed precisely before the last (complex) predicate (or core juncture). The information structure of the chain thus enables us to view it as a single unit of structure.

8.1.4 CORE SUBORDINATION

This involves the embedding of an entire core, with independent periphery, as an argument of another core.¹⁴ In the following examples the object function of the main verb is realised by a verbal predication (the embedded predications that are functioning as arguments are enclosed in square brackets):

- 8.27 $\frac{S}{\text{Papiau isa-?i}}$ $\frac{O}{[aku e-?aŋa-au]}$ $\frac{V}{ke-isa.}$ (EMek)
 people some-3PL smoke 3SG-crawl-go.up 3PL-see.3SG
 Some people saw the smoke rise up.

The above (from a recorded text) exhibits an expanded predication embedded in another expanded predication. The topic of the embedded predication is only a sub-topic in the matrix predication. The embedded predication is bound on the left by the topic of the matrix predication (*papiau isa-?i*) and on the right by the matrix verb word (*ke-isa*). There can thus be no doubt that it is embedded. This does not apply to the following examples:

- 8.28 $\frac{O}{[E-ba-jina-i-a]}$ $\frac{V}{a-idoŋa.}$ (WMek)
 3SG-CA-shine-PF-3SG 1SG-see.3SG
 S/he showed it to her/him and I saw (them).
 OR: I saw her/him show it to her/him.

¹⁴ Foley and Van Valin (1984:251) point out that this is structurally a unique kind of construction since a higher level unit – a periphery – is embedded in a lower level unit. This is not to say that it is uncommon. Essentially: “The subordinate junct may contain higher level constituents and operators than the superordinate junct” (FVV 1984:251).

- 8.29 [Eɲaina fata-ŋa la-pai-n-i-o] (EMek)
 that priest-3SG 1SG-tell-TH-PF-2SG
 lo-opola-ŋ-a ma?
 2SG-remember-TH-3SG INT
 Do you remember the priest I told you about?
 OR: Do you remember my telling you about the priest?

In case of a third person singular OM on the main verb, it cannot easily be established whether there is a shared actant or whether the entire clause is being indexed by third person singular, and thus treated as an argument of the main verb (as shown by the alternate glosses to examples 8.27 and 8.28 above).

In examples like the following, where an argument of the subordinate predication is also an argument of the main predication, it is fairly clear that one core is functioning as a peripheral subordinate predication rather than as an embedded core:¹⁵

- 8.30 A-ido-ŋ-a-i-o o-gobu-n-i-a. (WMek)
 1SG-see-TH-?-PF-2SG 2SG-close-TH-PF-3SG
 I saw when/while you were closing OR: I saw you (were) closing.¹⁶
 (lit. I saw you, you were closing.)

A prototypical function of core subordination is in reporting discourse.¹⁷ For example:

- 8.31 Gainamo ma-ŋagu-a e-obola-ŋ-a. (WMek)
 mosquito.net IMP.1SG-cook-3SG 3SG-think-TH-3SG
 He remembered: I might scorch my mosquito net.

In the above example, the peripheral operators of tense and mood differ as between the matrix and the embedded predication. While they share an actant, the embedded predication has an independent argument.

8.1.5 PERIPHERAL JUNCTURE

Peripheral juncture occurs when separate cores – or chains of coordinate cores – with separate peripheries combine to form a complex sentence or, as is often the case in Mekeo, a paragraph-level discourse unit. “Peripheral junctures are the loosest type, and they have the weakest constraints on their formation” (FVV 1984:321). No two junct need have any common actants (or arguments), and sometimes they do not. But generally it is the continuity of cast and unity of location and time – what is sometimes called *dramatic unity* – that lends them semantic and pragmatic coherence.

The following example illustrates how a single sentence can encompass an entire episode from a longer story:

¹⁵ FVV (1984:255). Examples from English are adverbial clauses and *that*-clauses. According to FVV (p.255) these are constituents of the periphery.
¹⁶ I.e. this construction may be the equivalent of raising in other languages.
¹⁷ FVV in fact say that it is the reporting of *indirect* discourse. This can include both indirect reported speech and reported cognitive processes.

- 8.32 *Amo-io a-lo-piu-ŋ-a aŋ-e-mai.* (EMek:D)
 IMP.1PL-spear FUT-2SG-throw-TH-3SG FUT-3SG-come

a-la-pa-ŋea-mo aŋ-e-mai a-ŋe-lao
 FUT-1SG-CA-miss-just FUT-3SG-come FUT-3SG-go

aŋoa-mo lo-o-ŋ-a.
 ground-just 2SG-pierce-TH-3SG

Let us fight with spears, you will throw it (and) it will come (and) I will make it miss (and) it will come (and) it will go (and) it will just stick into the ground.

This is spoken as a single albeit complex tone group, or intonation pattern, where *aŋoa-mo* functions as a main sentential focus, and this in itself justifies treating it as a grammatical unit. Perhaps more significantly, it is spoken as a single breath group, with no pauses. Every VP before *aŋoa-mo* has a falling-low-rising intonation pattern (PC3) which clearly indicates its topic status. The crux of the message is that the spears all hit 'the ground', and this is precisely where the main stress and the high falling pitch occurs.

Peripheral juncture can be illustrated by any set of conjoined verbal predications. I here give an example of a coordinate predication:

- 8.33 *Babie e-mauni, ge, imi e-mae.* (WMek)
 woman 3SG-live/give birth and/but child 3SG-die
 The woman gave birth/lived, and/but, the child died.

It is primarily the situation of childbirth and its natural contingencies that provides a predictable periphery and gives unity and coherence to the sentence. In fact, without the conjunction it would constitute a core coordinate junct.

I next give an example consisting of an adsubordinate predication and a main predication (see §8.2.3 below for definitions):

- 8.34 *Bai, i-ao, meleki ai-j-i-api-a gai,* (WMek)
 now 3SG-go plate NEG-B-3SG-take-3SG and
pibi mo koua e-api-a e-mai.
 fern.sp. just banana.leaf 3SG-take-3SG 3SG-come
 Now she went but, not getting plates, she brought pibi leaves
 and banana leaves.

Again, the natural logic of events provides semantic cohesion to the sentence. Here the juxtaposition of affirmative and negative instances of the same verb add the logic of contrast. The sentence is spoken as a single IP, and as a single breath group.

An example of a subordinate clause follows:

- 8.35 *Foi ina-u e-ani-a puo,* (EMek)
 Eagle mother-1SG 3SG-eat-3SG cause
fo-au-puŋu-a la-oma.
 OBLG.2SG-hit-exhaust-3SG 1SG-DNT
 Since Eagle has eaten my mother, I want you to kill him.

I conclude this section by presenting an even longer stretch of language, which consists mainly of a string of motion/locomotion verbs in coordinate juncture. This is to illustrate both a) the typical length of such chains in uninhibited narrative discourse and b) the fact that the

peripheral operators – tense, mood and the central participants in the whole chain of events – *can* remain constant over a considerable stretch of language.¹⁸ The situation is one where a sleeping-platform has nearly caught fire (while the fire-minder was asleep on top of it) :

- 8.36 *E-ŋobo-lai-age* *ge*, [*gainamo ma-ŋagu-a* *e-obolaŋa,*]
 3SG-jump-AT-down but mosq.net IMP.1SG-cook-3SG 3SG-remember
- e-biau e-me e-ao e-kaŋa-au-gae, gainamo*
 3SG-run 3SG-turn 3SG-go 3SG-climb-up-rise mosq.net
- e-aka-mo-a e-kaŋo-lai-a e-biau e-lobe*
 3SG-pull-(?)-3SG 3SG-throw-AT-3SG 3SG-run 3SG-roll
- e-mai e-ao suage e-api-a.*
 3SG-come 3SG-go bag 3SG-take-3SG
- He jumped down, but he remembered that he might burn his mosquito net,
 he ran he turned around he went he climbed (back) up, he pulled down (?) the
 net he threw it down he ran he rolled (it) he came he went he grabbed (his) bag.

In this passage there are 14 verb words as against three nominals (*gainamo* occurs twice) and one adverbial conjunction. The topic – the actor – remains constant throughout. The location stays the same. The action develops, but not significantly – it can be seen as a single episode. *Suage* ‘bag’ is the main focus.¹⁹

8.1.6 PERIPHERAL JUNCTURE – TRACKING THE ACTANTS²⁰

In Mekeo, as noted above, there are none of the reference-tracking mechanisms listed by Foley and Van Valin (1984, Chapter 7), and none of the syntactic rules and discourse conventions listed by Comrie (1988). There is no switch-reference system such as can be found in many of the NAN Highlands languages (including those of the immediately neighbouring Goilalan family). There are also no gender or case systems. Switch function occurs *but is not tracked* (i.e. is not morphologically signalled).

This leaves inference. Mekeo belongs typologically, in terms of its reliance on inferential discourse strategies, with Thai and Japanese (FVV 1984:324). However, it lacks the sociolinguistic markers that can be exploited in some such Asian languages, in place of case and gender, as clues to coreference (e.g. honorifics). The honorifics do not in any case counterbalance a social bias towards elliptical speech in many Asian cultures, and it may be that the ‘failure’ of morphological coreference in Mekeo corresponds functionally to this bias. However, a Mekeo hearer must still impose some sort of *coherence* on heard discourse, and it is a shared background of culture, and an emphasis on situated discourse, that ensure that a mutual understanding between speaker and hearer – relative to a given text – will be reached.²¹

18 There is one interruption to this chain, an example of core cosubordination that I have already used, and this has been placed in square brackets.

19 *Suage* is a borrowing. The original was the Australian English ‘swag’.

20 FVV (1984:321) remark that monitoring coreference of core arguments across peripheral junctures “is a central function of the grammar of any language”.

21 In fact there are probably limits to the degree of explicitness that might be regarded as desirable or ‘functional’ in the context of Mekeo culture. As noted in Chapter 1, variability in the matter of interpretation is probably an asset in an environment where disputation is rife and rhetoric admired. Face, too, can be given or saved by keeping as many interpretations as possible open. I touch on these matters again in §8.5.

8.37 [Lapeka au-ŋa aminia] [ia a-ŋa] (NWMek)

Lapeka man-3SG one he e.s.s.sibling-3SG

[aji-na] [ia a-ŋa] agaoā
y.s.s.sibling-3SG he elder.brother-3SG spouse.3SG

[e-βa-ai-a]
3SG-CA-copulate-3SG

A Lapeka man, he was the elder brother, his younger brother copulated with his elder brother's wife.

Prosodic structure functions to segment and give meaning to this text, indicating the position of non-final juncture and identifying for instance [ia a-ŋa] as a non-rankshifted predication (PC4 + PC5)²² rather than a rankshifted predication as in [ia a-ŋa agaoā] (PC2). But suprasegmentals are not enough on their own to identify and disambiguate the actants (which is to say their realisations, as constituents of the predication). It is the cast itself – their inherent specifications and the interrelations implicated thereby – that compel the hearer to chose a certain interpretation over others. An elder brother, a younger brother and the elder brother's wife (especially a *story* about these actants) immediately set up certain expectations in the mind of a Mekeo. As Hau'ofa has demonstrated at some length, sibling rivalry (in the context of a social system where primogeniture is the general structural rule) is something of a preoccupation in Mekeo culture. Inherited seniority and the bitter resentment of that seniority by junior siblings is the subject-matter of countless true and mythical scenarios. Seduction of the elder brother's wife is indeed a motif in several important myths. This is what predisposes the hearer to chose the appropriate morphemic analysis of the core, represented pretheoretically as: [e-βaia]. This phonetic realisation could have any of the following *grammatically* feasible morphemic breakdowns:

- | | | | |
|----|------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| a) | <i>e βaia</i> | yes certainly | yes , certainly |
| b) | <i>e-βaia</i> | 3SG-beach | be shallow |
| c) | <i>e-βa-aia</i> | 3SG-sago | have (plenty of) sago |
| d) | <i>e-βa-ia</i> | 3SG-CA-see | make (someone) see (= seduce) |
| e) | <i>e-βa-ai-a</i> | 3SG-CA-copulate-3SG | copulate with someone forcibly |

The speaker having specified the participants in the scene, the hearer is unlikely to entertain any other breakdown than either d) and e). Note that both of these are equally appropriate to a story about this trio of participants – d) is often used as a circumlocution for e).

Another clear example of indeterminate coreference is contained the following sentence, from the same text just quoted above:

8.38 [ŋa-βuo [[na-u-ŋa] e-ma]] (NWMek)

[that-for [[FUT.1SG-hit-3SG] 3SG-DNT]]

[[e-βa-maniki-n-a] [e-βiu] [ina e-mai]]
[[3SG-CA-fear-TH-3SG] [3SG-run] [here 3SG-come]]

Because of that he said "I'll beat him", he scared him, he ran (away), he came here.

²² This pattern is basically interrogative, but here marks a 'subordinate' predication acting as an appositional or parenthetical *message*.

Once again, the suprasegmental structure of the utterance facilitates a felicitous analysis. But it is our knowledge (our surmise, our inference) about what has gone before that enables us to ‘decode’ this sentence, to know that it is the outraged elder brother who threatens (“I’ll beat him”) and frightens the younger brother, and that it is the guilty younger brother who flees. There is nothing whatsoever in the grammar of this sentence to tell us any of these things.

I have touched several times on the inherent predictability of the scene set by a verbal root. Here we have looked at the use of inference based on shared socio-cultural knowledge to elucidate and predict chains of events. In §8.5.3 I speculate on the social functions of this reliance on extralinguistic processes in order to interpret speech.

8.1.7 CORE COSUBORDINATE JUNCTURE

In core cosubordinate juncture two or more verb roots combine to form a compound verb word, but at least one of the roots retains a function marker of its own. Thus all function markers are not shared by a single compound nucleus, as in nuclear juncture (see §8.1). Although rare in comparison with core coordinate juncture, this kind of construction does occur, in texts as well as in conversation. In addition to the two quasi-lexicalised examples given above, some more occasional examples follow here:

8.39 *Au-ani-ani papa e-pua-i-s-a-kae.*²³ (EMek)
 man-eat-RED platform 3SG-carry-PF-B-3SG-rise
 The giant bore the platform upward.

8.40 *Eʔa e-fua aisama, inā e-pa-aŋu-a-koko.* (EMek)
 house 3SG-finish time mother.3SG 3SG-CA-sit-3SG-enter
 When the house was finished, he placed his mother in it.

The following example from the same text represents an unusual variant of a common verb, normally formed by nuclear juncture:

8.41 *Aao isa-ʔi ke-au-n-i-ʔi-puŋu ke-ŋoŋo-p-i-ʔi.* (EMek)
 cuscus some-3PL 3PL-hit-TH-PF-3PL-ITS 3PL-dry-TH-PF-3PL
 They killed a few cuscus (and) dried (the meat).

This contrasts with the more usual form:

8.42 *Aao isa-ʔi ke-au-puŋu-i-ʔi.* (EMek)
 cuscus some-3PL 3PL-hit-TH-PF-3PL
 They killed a few cuscus.

8.1.8 GRAMMATICAL IMPLICATIONS OF PERIPHERAL JUNCTURE

Although Mekeo is a predominantly head-marking language on the level of the predication, the morphological processes of clause linkage represent something of a departure from a consistently head-marking paradigm. Some adsubordinate and subordinate predications at least must be considered marked dependents. The precise clitic status of the conjunctions is critical here – whether they are enclitic or proclitic or neither.

²³ The situation is that the giant was underneath the platform.

Whole sentences can be joined – at their periphery – by coordinating conjunctions (as illustrated in §8.2).²⁴ There is as shown above an evident tendency for conjunctions to migrate leftwards, and to cliticise, eventually ‘subordinating’ the left-marginal predications. The *main* predication is headed by the rightmost, sentence-final verb word. This of course means that Mekeo has dependent-marking constructions *at this level*, and we are indeed faced with something of an anomaly. As Nichols (1986:109) has it, ‘consistently head-marking languages have no exocentric constructions’.

It will be recalled that *topic* marking is observed at lower levels of the grammar (e.g. the emphatic personal pronouns, so-called), and may represent an attempt to compensate on a discourse-pragmatic level for the indeterminacy consequent upon consistent head marking *at the syntactic level*. Thus both topic marking and right-dislocated classifier nouns would represent attempts to identify, to determine and to foreground actants that the role-markers on the verb word only weakly specify.²⁵

Relative clauses (or co-relative predications,²⁶ as I call them) are *subordinate* in the sense that they represent constituents of expanded predications, but they are *coordinate* in so far as, in a head-marking language, they stand in an appositive relation to the role-marking affixes on the verbal head. And co-relative nominal predications are, like all nominals, optional constituents of the predication. I treat adverbial predications as subordinate predications, if only because of their oblique case-marking. But adverbial predications in Mekeo are basically relative – or co-relative – predications.²⁷

Note that by subordinate predications I do not here mean grammatically reduced predications but rather a) co-relative predications with a nominal head (that is, predications that have been nominalised and embedded), b) oblique predications (that is, predications that have been nominalised, and embedded, and adverbialised), or c) governed predications (that is, predications whose mood is governed by that of a matrix predication). Predications that are not governed but which correspond to and repeat arguments of other predications – i.e. co-relative predications – also qualify as subordinate. As I noted above, all such nominalised predications can be regarded as being ‘in apposition to’ the incorporated arguments of a marked verbal head, and in that sense coordinate. However, as they have undergone a desententialisation process (i.e. been downranked), and can no longer function as independent predicates, we must on *this* ground treat them as subordinate.

Between coordinate and subordinate predications proper I have identified a class of constructions that I call adsubordinate (subordinate but ‘adjoined’; see Hale 1976, and Lehmann 1988). They are identified as subordinate by their carrying a predication enclitic subordinating conjunction. They cannot be embedded. (These predications in fact carry the leftward migrating clitics mentioned above.) This kind of juncture is typical of Warlpiri, another largely non-configurational language.

24 Coordinate structures do not represent the most favoured constructions. This is in spite of the fact that Stassen (1985) would classify Mekeo, along with Motu, as an essentially “balancing” language, with a preference for paratactic constructions at all levels. Note that at least on the level of verb serialisation, where coordinate juncture predominates, Stassen’s prediction holds.

25 As happens in relativisation (see §1.3.3.4.3 above). Right-dislocation is a feature of co-relative predications (for which see §8.3.1 below).

26 The term ‘co-relative’ was suggested by Haudry’s (1973) ‘correlative’ (which is also used), as reported in Lehmann (1988). See §8.3 for a description. (I discovered Downing’s 1973 use of the term rather later.)

27 As Taylor saw for Motu (1970b).

8.2 COORDINATION AND ADSUBORDINATION: THE CONJUNCTIONS

This section deals with the looser kinds of predicational linkage, whether such linkage be overtly signalled by the presence of a connective particle (syndetic linkage) or not so signalled (asyndetic linkage).²⁸ Coordination is here defined, following Lehmann (1988:182), as “a relation of sociation” combining two predication-level syntagms and forming a complex syntagm of the same type. The term adsubordination is used to describe the operation of ‘adjoining’ predications (as per Hale 1976):

One of the two clauses constituting the complex sentence contains a subordinative conjunction and may thus be identified as the subordinate clause. It has to either precede or follow the main clause. It cannot be embedded or have a syntactic function within the main clause. This is the faint beginning of hierarchical downgrading and subordination.

Lehmann (1988:185)

This is a very problematic area of the grammar, since one has to say either that a) certain key conjunctions covering a variety of meanings are not kept apart formally (i.e. are merged phonetically) in everyday speech, or that b) free variants of the one conjunction span a continuum of meanings from adversative through concessive to additive. The conjunction(s) in questions is (are): *gai* ~ *gae* ~ *ge*, *kai* ~ *kae* ~ *ke*. I shall adopt the second hypothesis here, and will talk for convenience’ sake of the diamorpheme *GAI*. I shall argue that additive conjunction blends by degrees into other semantic categories of predicational linkage. It becomes in the first instance what I call preconditional conjunction. The ‘mood’ thence becomes apprehensive, anticipating non-fulfilment of the (necessary) precondition; I call this tense preconditional conjunction. From there it develops into concessive conjunction, and thence into adversative conjunction. I shall further maintain that the precise interpretation to be given to the conjunction in a given sentence is decided by the “context-specific pragmatic overlay – namely a set of implicatures” (Levinson 1983:99).

The borderline between predication enclitic conjunctions and subordinating postpositions is hard to draw consistently, especially as the latter often appear without a determining suffix. An added problem that runs through this whole chapter is a tendency for postpositions to migrate from the subordinate predication to the head predication.²⁹ For example, compare a), b) and c):

- 8.43a. *Ida a-ido-ŋa buo-ŋa-ai, iji a-ao.* (WMek)
 her/him 1SG-see-3SG cause-3SG-OBL I 1SG-go
- b. *Ida a-ido-ŋa, eŋa buo iji a-ao.*
 her/him 1SG-see-3SG that cause I 1SG-go
- c. *Ida a-ido-ŋa, buo iji a-ao.*
 her/him 1SG-see-3SG cause I 1SG-go
 Because I saw him, I went.

Numerous examples of this will be found in the texts in §8.5.1.2 and in Appendix 5. As noted above I am working on the assumption that there is only one true conjunction: *GAI*. However, a predication enclitic particle *veia* (EMek) may be another (see §8.2.6). I also treat

²⁸ “In traditional grammar, these terms have normative-stylistic connotations. In particular, asyndesis is often understood as the absence of a linking device where one would be expected” (Lehmann 1988: fn.20).

²⁹ A dependent-marking tradition seems to be giving way to uniform head-marking patterns.

MA here as a conjunction, since it functions as such, though in fact it is primarily a mood-marking particle (§8.2.4). And *GO¹* in one of its uses belongs in this section (§8.2.5).³⁰

I suspect that more detailed analyses of texts across the four dialects will reveal interesting patterns of agreement and divergence between these on the level of discourse. A number of suggestive disparities in interclausal usage emerge in the following sections. However, such matters must await close attention at a later date.

8.2.1 CONSECUTIVE CHAINS – ADDITIVE CONJUNCTION: *GE, GAI* (1)

Additive conjunction is of two kinds across languages, and the two are often expressed by means of a single functor (e.g. English ‘and’). But, semantically speaking, we can distinguish between logical addition and consecutive or sequential addition. Logical addition is either atemporal or implies simultaneity. Consecutive addition reflects the temporal succession of events. In Mekeo, logical additions are frequently just *listed*, without any conjunction being added (we touched on this in relation to conjoined NPs in §3.3.2 above). And, since closely linked sequences of events are often expressed by means of core coordinate juncture or peripheral juncture, overt predication linkage is far from common even in narrative discourse. But logical or simultaneous additions *can* be clearly marked as such in Mekeo, by the use of an allophone of *GAI*. Additive-consecutive linkage can also be expressed explicitly (and incidentally distinguished from atemporal additions) by means of specialised compounds with *GAI*. For example, the complex item *ŋa-e-kai, ŋa-e-gai* ‘and then’ is a favoured narrative link in the eastern dialects (EMek, NMek, WMek), while NWMek has *bai-ge*³¹, also meaning ‘and then’. Additions are thus either overtly signalled (syndetic conjunction) or are simply meant to be ‘read’ as such and suitably interpreted based on the pragmatics of discourse in general or of the situation described (asyndetic conjunction).

I shall first illustrate asyndetic consecutive chains, chains which can of course *implicate* all sorts of logical modalities of predication linkage, but which I have chosen here to illustrate a constrained consecutive reading.

8.44 *E-ʔaŋa-au-kae, e-ʔaŋa-au-ake, e-lao.* (EMek)
 3SG-crawl-go.up 3SG-crawl-go.up 3SG-go
 S/he went up (and) went up (and) went.

8.45 *Babie i-aŋu, ai katsi g-ao.* (WMek)
 woman 3SG-sit we.E cards 1PL-go
 (The) woman sat (and)we went to cards.

In both of the above examples we are dealing with natural sequences of events, or events that are meant to be viewed as sequences. Whole narratives are told in this elliptical mode. To take a short text:

³⁰ I distinguish *GO¹* from *GO²*, which has however been contaminated semantically by *GO¹*. See below, §8.2.5, fn.40.

³¹ Note that EMek *pau-kai* is specialised in quite a different way and means ‘just now > very soon’.

- 8.46 *?ola ke-uma ke-pua ke-lao ke-piu-uka-mo* (EMek:D)
 arum 3PL-roast 3PL-carry 3PL-go 3PL-fling-insert-just

ke-mai.

3PL-come

They roast (the) arum (and) they carry (and) they go (and) they place it in (and) they come.

OR, FREELY:

They roast the arum, take it off with them and having thrown it (into the enclosed space), they return.

(This was the procedure traditionally followed in trapping the wild boar, a highly ritualised activity.)

Most narrative discourse depends primarily on asyndetic linkage, especially core coordinate juncture and peripheral juncture. However, syndetic consecutive chains are also quite common in narrative texts. Here is an elicited example in two dialects:

- 8.47 *Saimon poa i-ani-a, ηae-gai ηa-e eka i-ao.* (WMek)
 Simon banana 3SG-eat-3SG and-then there house 3SG-go
 Simon ate a/the banana and then went home.

- 8.48 *Saimon poa e-ani-a e-pua,* (NWMek)
 Simon banana 3SG-eat-3SG 3SG-finish

βai-ge ia na-ka gai-na e-io.

and-then he POSS.3SG-house direction-3SG 3SG-go

Simon finished eating a/the banana and then went to his house.

OR: When Simon had finished eating a/the banana he went to his house.

The extra aspectual overtone of 8.48, expressed by means of the verb *pua*, *fua* 'finish, end', is very common and can be added in a number of other ways. For example:

- 8.49 *Iko o'o e-ani-?afe-ai-n-a aisama,* (EMek)
 Iko banana 3SG-eat-up-RTR-TH-3SG time

e-ηa e?a e-lao.

POSS-3SG house 3SG-go

Iko ate up a/the banana and then went to his house.

OR: When Iko had eaten up a/the banana he went to his house.

The clearest signal of narrative linkage in EMek is *ηa-e-kai*. It is, however, a paragraph-level conjunction rather than an instrument of predication linkage.

A common predication-level substitute for the above-mentioned complex conjunctions is *ikiva*, *βau*, *bai*, *pau* 'now', or some formula based on this item (as opposed to the fully lexicalised NWMek *baige*). *Ge bau*, *ge bai*, for example, is a frequent narrative link in the western dialects:

- 8.50 *Ge bai paebo a-ida.* (WMek)
 and now snake 1SG-see
 And then I saw a snake.

- 8.51 *Nā-e ke bai ge-ime ge-mai.* (WMek)
 there and now 3PL-turn 3PL-come
 And then they came back.

Another paragraph-level narrative link is *ŋa aiama, ŋa aidama, ŋa aizama, ŋa aisama* ‘that time’. Another is *e-pua aidama, e-fua aizama, e-fua aisama*. Another is WMek *ŋaea auŋa*, NMek (*e*)*ŋaea auŋa*, EMek (*e*)*ŋaina auŋa*. For example,

- 8.52 *Ke pau ŋaea auŋa kai-s-au maomao³² e-uma-i-s-a?* (EMek)
 and now that TOP who-B-man *maomao* 3SG-burn-PF-B-3SG
 And now after that who exactly burned the *maomao*?

Turning now to asyndetic logical conjunction in the description of simultaneous events, we often hear examples like the following:

- 8.53 *Iu goŋa tino-ŋa-mo a-ani-a, iya aia i-ani-a.* (NWMek)
 I coconut little-3SG-just 1SG-eat-3SG s/he sago 3SG-eat-3SG
 I ate a little coconut (while) s/he ate sago.
- 8.54 *Uma ke-maisei-n-a ŋae, ŋae ŋaŋa kua e-koko.* (EMek)
 pig 3PL-bring-TH-3SG there there canoe nose 3SG-enter.
 They brought the pig there, there the canoe nosed in.

Predications like these are, however, very often explicitly (syndetically) linked, as in the next example, by means of the conjunction *GAI* (here *ge, ke*):

- 8.55 *Peto o’o e-ani-a ke lau lama la-ani-a.* (EMek)
 Peter banana 3SG-eat-3SG and I yam 1SG-eat-3SG
 Peter ate a/the banana and I ate a/the yam.
- 8.56 *Peto poa e-ani-a ge iu aŋimai a-ani-a.* (NWMek)
 Peter banana 3SG-eat-3SG and I yam 1SG-eat-3SG
 Peter ate a/the banana and I ate a/the yam.
- 8.57 *Mai e-apa-e e-pina-pinauŋa kai ?e-ŋa-mo* (EMek)
 wallaby 3SG-stand-CNT 3SG-RD-work and LOC-3SG-just
ke-lao.
 3PL-go
 A wallaby was (standing) there working and they went to him.

There is also a common NMek, WMek and NWMek expression, *gaia*, and *gaiake*, which has no reflex in EMek, but which must be mentioned in this section. It is almost certainly a reflex of *GAI* (and exclamatory *ke!*). It translates as ‘also’ or ‘too’, and is used adverbially.

- 8.58 *Iji gaiake an-a-ao.* (WMek)
 I too FUT-1SG-go
 I too will go.

This purely additive conjunction *ge, ke* is commonly seen in nominal time expressions such as the following:

32 *A maomao* is a special platform for smoking game over a fire.

- 8.59 *Tsina-maa-ŋa bani ke tsiloŋamo.* (NMek)
 time-face-3SG four and little
 (It's) four and a bit.

It is certainly not used wherever we would use an English 'and' (or 'but').

- 8.60 *Lo-lao-lao, keaja laa'i, alo-pu.* (EMek)
 1SG-go-RED path none NEG.2SG-end
 You were going along, and (then) there was no road, you halted.

The expected 'but' does not occur in this asyndetic chain after *lo-lao-lao*. And there would seem to be an underlying *puō* after *keaja laa'i*, making this a reason or cause predication.

8.2.2 ADVERSATIVE-CONCESSIVE CONJUNCTION: *GE, GAI* (2)

The adversative conjunction across WMek, NMek and EMek is identical with the additive conjunction in §8.2.1. It can appear as *gai, kai*³³ or as *ge, ke*. NWMek has *ma* and *a*,³⁴ as well as *gai, ge* (see Brown 1955:9), but these appear to be less common in my own data, where I generally find *ge*. This item also appears in reduplicated form as *ge-ge, ke-ke*.

A formal feature that makes it possible to consider the adversative function separately from the additive function of *GAI* is the fact that, as an adversative conjunction *GAI* always occurs either as a free conjunction, unattached to either of the linked predications, or as a predication-proclitic at the beginning of the following predication. These various possibilities are seen illustrated in the following examples:

- 8.61 *Kimu e-age-age ge Peto βinauŋa gai-na e-io.* (NWMek)
 rain 3SG-fall-RED but Peter garden direction-3SG 3SG-go
 It was raining, but Peter went towards the garden.
- 8.62 *Uabu i-age (,) gai-mo Peto uma i-ao.* (WMek)
 rain 3SG-fall but-just Peter garden 3SG-go
 It was raining, but Peter went to the garden.
- 8.63 *Imu e-au, kai Peto uma e-lao.* (EMek)
 rain 3SG-fall but Peter garden 3SG-go
 It was raining, but Peter went to the garden.

A reduplicated form of the same conjunction is found in the following, where it is clearly proclitic and clearly adversative in intent:

33 There appear to be few cognates of *gai, kai* in the other AN languages of West Central Papua, but compare Dobu *ga* 'and (temporal succession)' and *?ene-ga* 'and (logical succession)' (Capell 1969:57). Muyuw has adversative *gog*. Turning to NAN languages, Oroko has *kai* meaning 'and; also'; while neighbouring Toaripi has *ta* and *aea* (Roro has *haeamona* which is possibly related to Toaripi *aea* 'and'). To the east, Koita has *ge* 'and (then)'. Closer to home, the Fuyughe morpheme *ta; -ta* functions in precisely the same manner as the Mekeo conjunction, which can be postposed or preposed (*tu* would of course have been borrowed into EMek as */k/*, and thence into the other dialects as */g/*, if this is what happened). Fuyughe clause enclitic *-ta* means 'once; first; then', while a proclitic *ta* means 'but' (see Ray's 1912 translation of Fr Egidi's Fuyughe grammar sketch for more details).

34 The conjunction *ma* 'and' may well be a Motu borrowing.

- 8.64 *Ida ga-bai-n-i-a ηa-ηu ga-oma, gege* (WMek)
 s/he 1PL-tell-TH-PF-3SG IMP.3SG-sit 1PL-DNT 'but'
i-ao-bu.
 3SG-go-again
 We told him that he must stay, but he went back.

However, a token of *GE*, *GAI* such as that contained in the following unelicited example is rather harder to classify:³⁵

- 8.65 *Epo-mo a-pe ge ai-d-a-oma.* (WMek)
 self-just 1SG-sleep but NEG-B-1SG-DNT
 I slept alone and/but/although I saw nothing.

Since the delivery of this utterance was very rapid, the intonation contours were impossible to recognise clearly and the location of potential pause was nowhere overtly marked by an actual pause. In fact, by varying the placement of a hypothetical pause or pauses, we can postulate three different English readings (that is, three alternative *bracketings*, with *GAI* enclitic to the preceding predication, proclitic to the following, or unattached to either):

- [*Epo-mo a-pe*] [*ge ai-d-a-oma.*] I slept alone, but I saw nothing.
 [*Epo-mo a-pe ge*] [*ai-d-a-oma.*] Though I slept alone I saw nothing.
 [*Epo-mo a-pe*] *ge* [*ai-d-a-oma.*] I slept alone and I saw nothing.

In fact, in the given situation, these alternate readings are all semantically and pragmatically equivalent.

Concessive uses of *GAI*, which are semantically adversative, seem to entail its leftward migration:

- 8.66 *P-ai-d-a-bini-o gai, a-bini-o.* (WMek)
 OBLG-NEG-B-1SG-give-2SG but 1SG-give-2SG
 Although I should not have given it to you, I gave it to you.

So in this use the conjunction behaves just like *GAI* (3) (§8.2.3), of which it should perhaps be regarded as a variety.

8.2.3 PRECONDITIONAL CONJUNCTION: -*GE*, *GAI* (3) (ADSUBORDINATION)

Preconditional *GAI* is – by way of contrast with *GAI* (1) and *GAI* (2) – a predication enclitic coordinating conjunction. That is to say, it forms a part of the overall intonation pattern of the preconditional predication, albeit an unstressed coda thereof. The meaning expressed is that the event described in the antecedent was a necessary precondition for the event described in the consequent; only when the antecedent condition has been fulfilled – the action or process accomplished – is it possible for the consequent to occur.³⁶ In English we can use adverbials like 'as soon as', 'after' and 'once' to signal this function.

³⁵ The situation is that the speaker has been sleeping alone in the hopes of having an oracular dream. He has, however, been disappointed in these hopes.

³⁶ The nearest English equivalents of these preconditional clauses are the adverbial expressions called absolute constructions, which, as Stump (1985) points out, can have a concessive interpretation! See the next section for our development of this line of thought.

- 8.67 *Oi mo-apa-au kai koŋa* (EMek)
 you IMP.2SG-stand-up CND coconut
ma-pa-ʔua-lai-s-a
 IMP.1SG-CA-drop-AT-B-3SG
 As soon as you move aside I will drop the coconut.
- 8.68 *Vaiʔafu lo-mei, ʔuma fe-ani-a kai* (EMek:D)
 Vaiʔafu 2SG-shit pig OBLG.3SG-eat-3SG CNJ
fo-pea-lai.
 OBLG.2SG-walk-AT
 If you shit in Vaiʔafu make sure the pigs eat it before you leave.³⁷

In the above sentence *kai* could be translated as ‘only after’ or ‘first...’ And it is perhaps in this meaning that the item appears at the ends of utterances, in word-final position:

- 8.69 *Ama-apa afaŋa-mo a-laŋai kai.* (NMek)
 IMP.1PL-stand little-just 1PL-relax first
 Let’s stop and rest a little first.

The enclitic character of *GAI* (3) is well demonstrated by marked word stress (and elision) on the following:

- 8.70 *Pogò-ge an-e-mai.* (WMek)

FOR

- 8.71 *Àpogo ge an-e-mai.* (WMek)
 tomorrow first FUT-3SG-come
 S/he won’t come before tomorrow.

Penultimate stress is of course correct if *pogò-ge* is being treated as a word.

In Kuni it is a clause enclitic *-na*³⁸ which fulfils the function of marking preconditional antecedents (Egidi 1913:986), and in NWMek we find a rather similar usage. NWMek verb forms in the intentional mood end in *-ŋa* (and are sometimes followed by *ke*; Kuni *-na* may be related to *na-ke* ‘after’).

- 8.72 *Pae-kaŋeŋe-na!* (NWMek)
 OBLG.NEG.2SG-forget-and(?)
 Don’t forget!

Verbs of mental process like *kaŋeŋe* do not usually carry OMs.

Covert preconditional predications also occur, though perhaps not frequently. Here is an example of one such that is moreover embedded in the consequent:

³⁷ Vaiʔafu village is renowned for its sorcerers, and the most deadly kind of sorcery is performed by sorcerers who have managed to procure an intended victim’s body wastes.

³⁸ Do we not have a trace of this morpheme in some EMek usages? Even the 3SG IPF OM *-ŋa* could derive from this source (it does not exist in Kuni and is ‘irregular’ or ‘redundant’ in terms of the Mekeo paradigms, as was shown in an earlier chapter, forming a whole *defective* paradigm on its own).

- 8.73 (EMek:D)
-
- Auo kina e-ŋaŋa-i-a e-kia-kia o-mai-ei-n-a.
 (you) firewood sun 3SG-heat-PF-3SG 3SG-dry-RED 2SG-come-RTR-TH-3SG
 Bring (the) the firewood once the sun has heated and dried it out.

Or, with bracketing: [Oi [auo (kina e-ŋaŋa-i-a e-kia-kia [KAI]) o-mai-ei-n-a]]

8.2.4 DISJUNCTIVE CONJUNCTION

Disjunction, in Mekeo, appears either in questions or in professions of ignorance. Moreover, Mekeo resorts to disjunctive sentences where in English and other European languages a clausal pro-form would be used: 'Are you...or not'. This construction is signalled by ...*ma...ma*, that is multiple application of the uncertainty particle *MA* which, as earlier noted, can function as an interrogative marker. Some examples follow:

- 8.74 *Enene maea-ŋa ma pokoa ma?* (NWMek)
 path long-3SG INT short INT
 Is the path long or is it short?
- 8.75 *Mia-mia a-ŋe-mia ma, afa-e-mia ma* (EMek)
 feast FUT-3SG-be INT FUT.NEG-3SG-be INT
a-la-loŋo?
 NEG-1SG-know
 Will there be a feast or will there not be a feast, I do not know?

MAKE (realised as *make*, *maʔe*) functions in exactly the same way as *MA*:

- 8.76 *Foa make, kokou make na-ga-ani-ani.* (NMek)
 banana INT taro INT FUT-1PL-eat-RED
 We will eat either bananas or taro.

Nowadays the English word 'or' has been borrowed into the language as *o* (all dialects).³⁹ An example follows:

- 8.77 *Gebo belo-tsi-mo ge-ga-e o gebo abala-tsi?* (WMek)
 stone good-3PL-just 3PL-lie-CNT or stone bad-3PL
 Were there good stones there or bad stones?

This *o* is also used as a hesitation marker before a self-correction:

- 8.78 *Ibi alakaŋa-mo o, bai o, ibi autsina* (WMek)
 week one-just or now or week two
ao-ŋa-ai e-mae.
 inside-3SG-OBL 3SG-die
 Inside a week or, wait-now or, two weeks she died.

³⁹ It is often written with the English spelling as *or*.

8.2.5 SIMILATIVE (CAUSAL) CONJUNCTION: *GO*¹ (*goà*, *koà*)

Similative conjunction is accomplished by means of the same operator that was described above for comparative nominal predications in §2.2.1.6 and §3.1.5.⁴⁰ As a conjunction it joins two full verbal predications. It can in such cases be translated as: ‘as’, ‘as if’, or ‘as though’. It is essentially a postposition, and as noted in §2.2.1.6 above, there is a likelihood that the final *-a* of WMek, NMek *goà* and EMek *koà* represents a determining suffix (and compare NWMek *go-ŋa* ‘when, if’).⁴¹

8.79 *Iji a-gaba-i-a goà, ida i-kobo-ŋa e-gaba.* (WMek)
 I 1SG-do-PF-3SG like s/he PASS-equal-3SG 3SG-do
 S/he is doing the same as I did.

8.80 *Ifa-mai aŋao-mo koà lo-kapa.* (EMek)
 blood-1PL.E one-just like 2SG-do
 You act as if we were related.

The scope of *GO* is variable. This is to say that it is a focusing operator. Here is an example:

8.81 *Oi pikupa aŋo koà lo-aŋa.* (EMek)
 you anger bush like 2SG-cut
 You are angry, as though you were cutting down trees.

GO in fact seems to migrate toward some nominal argument of the complement, like *aŋo* in the example here, and focus it. Elliptical complements, reduced to a nominal argument, are very common. And *GO* then functions like a postposition rather than a conjunction.

8.82 *Oi pikupa koà lo-pi-me?e.* (EMek)
 you jealousy/anger like 2SG-REC-glance.sideways
 You are glancing sideways as if you were jealous.

8.2.6 REASON CONJUNCTIONS: (NWMek) *OLONO*, (WMek, NMek) *ŊOME*, (EMek) *VEIA*

Veia can usually be translated as ‘since’. There is a tendency for *ŋome* and *oloŋo* to precede the predications they qualify as causes, unlike *BUO* which always follows. However, *veia* usually follows. Some examples follow:

8.83 *Imu e-'au veia, uma afa-la-lao.* (EMek)
 rain 3SG-hang since garden OBLG.NEG-1SG-go
 Since it is raining I won't go to the garden.

⁴⁰ In §8.3.2.3 I introduce a homonymous diamorpheme and I shall distinguish these from now on by means of a superscript numeral. *GO*¹ is a similative conjunction (or perhaps more accurately a postposition) related to *GOA* ‘true likeness’, while *GO*² means ‘when, yet’.

⁴¹ Compare, too, Lichtenberk's description of a rather similar situation in Manam grammar (1983:528-529). The Manam similative postposition *bo?ana* also functions as a conjunction, and is also analysed as carrying “the 3SG adnominal suffix -Ø”.

- 8.84 *Auni-ʔa a-pi-kai veia, auni-ʔa fou ama-aŋu.* (EMek:D)
 pair-1PL.I 1PL.I-REC-suit since pair-1PL.I with IMP.1PL.I-sit
 Since we suit each other, let us sit together.
- 8.85 *Kapa e-meau-apala veia, oi afa'aja-mo lo-pua.* (EMek)
 thing 3SG-heavy-very since you a.little-just 2SG-carry
 Since (this) thing is heavy, you (could) carry it a bit.
- 8.86 *Ani-na laa'i veia, fo-lo-api-au-a.* (EMek)
 seed-3SG not since OBLG.NEG-2SG-dig-up-3SG
 As it has no body, do not pull it up.
- 8.87 *Pol eka-ai e-aŋu-e, ŋome uabu e-age.* (NMek)
 Paul house-OBL 3SG-sit-CNT cause rain 3SG-fall
 Paul stayed at home because it was raining.
- 8.88 *Pol eka o-ŋa-ai e-aŋu-e, oloŋo kimu* (NWMek)
 Paul house inside-3SG-OBL 3SG-sit-CNT cause rain
e-age-age.
 3SG-fall-RED
 Paul stayed at home because it was raining.

8.2.7 AN EXPOSITORY CONJUNCTION: AGA

This conjunction is essentially the word for 'name'. It functions mainly to elaborate upon or to explain some foregoing statement, or term, or to represent an assessment of a situation. The following examples illustrate some of its uses:

- 8.89 *Ke imi ida, aga katsia ao-ŋa imi-na buo,* (NMek)
 and child him name soil inside-3SG child-3SG cause
pilipo aibaia, tseti aibaia...
 pants not shirt not...
 And as for that child, *since* he was a child of the inner earth,
 he had no pants, no shirt...
- 8.90 *Ŋaaja a-poke-i-s-a a-paŋai a-lao.* (EMek)
 canoe 1PL-paddle-PF-B-3SG 1PL-cross 1PL-go
Aka ŋaaja i-poke a-la-loŋo puo,
 name canoe INF-paddle NEG-1SG-know cause
ke-fina-apa-i-s-au.
 3PL-scold-stand-PF-B-1SG
 We paddled the canoe across. *It seems* that, because I did not
 know how to paddle, they scolded me.

This conjunction is quite rare, and may represent a comparatively recent innovation. However, it occurs in all four dialects.

8.3 RELATIVE AND CO-RELATIVE PREDICATIONS

One construction more than any other dominates the syntax of Mekeo. This is, prototypically, a subordinate predication that functions, in apposition to a nominal topic (the domain noun), to specify which particular instance of the class denoted by the nominal is implicated in the main predication. I call this a *specificational predication*. This kind of construction has a dummy head and is co-relative both to its domain noun and to the co-referential function-marking affix on the verb word. They are unusual in that they are marked dependents in an overwhelmingly head-marking language.

A closely related construction type, equally central to the grammar, has a general noun as head and functions to determine some circumstance such as time or cause. These are unanchored in the sense that they are unindexed on the verb. Their head word is usually marked as oblique, and they thus function as adverbial constructions subordinate to a verb.⁴² In this a fully determined verbal predication is rankshifted and embedded and functions as the main topic, while the predicate is a general noun (naming an abstract aspect of the situation) which takes a determining suffix. The head noun is also frequently marked as oblique.

These constructions are endocentric, like nearly all other structures in the language. That is, they have the same distribution as their nominal head. They thus have the same distribution as a nominal topic. The original verbal head with its role-marking affixes is subordinated to the new nominal head, which is itself normally marked with a third person singular determining suffix (and, optionally, the oblique role-marking suffix *-AI*). However, in the overall structure of the sentence, where a main verb ordinarily functions as the head, they constitute marked dependents.

Functionally speaking, there are two main kinds of relative/co-relative constructions in Mekeo:

- a) specificational predications. These are relative both to a free nominal representing a core argument of a verb and an anaphoric affix on the verb itself, that is they are co-relative. They are in apposition to and dependent on the domain noun⁴³ but also cataphoric to and dependent on a main verb word.
- b) oblique circumstantial predications. These are relative in the sense that they define a circumstantial noun but adverbial in function, dependent on a verbal head.

There is also a third kind of construction, involving right-dislocation of an argument, which thus becomes a nominal head of the construction and carries a third person singular determining suffix. It is not very common, except in the cleft focus construction, which is rather rare in the texts. This is described in §8.3.1.1. I then illustrate specificational constructions at more length in §8.3.1.2. Oblique relative constructions are described, according to sub-type, in §8.3.2 *passim*.

⁴² I concur here with Taylor (1970b), who in his unpublished description of Motu defines this construction, which is common to both Motu and Mekeo, as a 'kind of' relative clause. Since I equate the head verb (with its functions) with a clause, I call this construction a co-relative predication (see below).

⁴³ The domain noun determines a class of objects, the domain of relativisation, and functions as the head of a restricting relative clause. See Keenan (1985:142).

8.3.1 APPOSITIONAL PREDICATIONS

Since I am treating the NPs in Mekeo as attributes of the verb, in apposition to its pronominal affixes, it is logical to treat nominalised predications as appositional attributes also. However, predications of this kind are usually also in apposition to domain nouns.⁴⁴ It is for this reason that I have labelled such clauses co-relative. Since Mekeo is head-final, their relationship to the verb word can be further defined as cataphoric and prospectively reference-restricting, like the free nominals. Like the free nominals, they have no grammatical function until such is retrospectively determined by co-referential function-markers on the verb – to which they themselves *look forward*. The fact that cross-reference is frequently difficult to establish, unambiguously, adds to the free-floating quality of the nominals in Mekeo, including nominalised predications.

Co-relative predications do, vestigially, reflect the kind of hierarchical access to relativisation that has been established as a universal by Keenan and Comrie (1977). However, it is manifest only as a restriction on the right-dislocation transformation, which (as in Motu) can be applied only to very small number of nouns, chiefly human or animate. On the other hand, anything at all can be ‘relativised’ (or foregrounded) by means of the dummy head *auŋa* (the topicalising particle, homonymous with *au-* ‘man-’ plus third person singular determining suffix *-ŋa*). Since *auŋa* is empty of lexical content, it is the predication of which it is the head that determines and specifies *it*. And the predication in its entirety then ‘determines’ the role marker on the verb, when this can be identified, by restricting its referential domain.

I find that in Mekeo it is possible to distinguish three distinct constructions, corresponding in a rough sort of way to Keenan’s (1985) classification of relative clauses as external or internal relatives, plus a kind of construction he calls *a correlative clause*. When I say that they correspond, I do not mean that they are adequately characterised in Keenan’s typology. The Mekeo relative predications can *all* be categorised as co-relative in a quite different sense to that used by Keenan. As a consequence of head marking, they function to define topics which in themselves anticipate grammatical functions realised as verbal affixes in the predication proper. They are thus ‘relative’ both to the cataphoric topic and to the anaphoric function marker.

Ignoring right-dislocation, there are three common discourse-pragmatic patterns of co-relative specification (assuming that all the core actants of a verb are represented by nominal cataphors). These can be represented summarily as follows:⁴⁵

⁴⁴ As noted above (§7.2.1), an appositional relation does not rule out a kind of dependency relation in which the dependent attribute is obligatory. See Matthews (1981:230). I call these ‘specificational attributes’.

⁴⁵ Superscript ^{CR} means that a given nominal argument, coreferential with a grammatical function, is *specified* by means of a co-relative predication.

a) ITR-Subject-defining predications:

(EMek)

Topic Predicate.....
 Predicate.....
 T/F<----->F Core
 S SCR s-V
*Ofu, e-ɲufu au-ɲa, e-fuɲe.*⁴⁶
 vine 3SG-thick one-3SG 3SG-flower
 The vine which is thick is flowering.

b) TR-Subject-defining predications:

(NMek)

Topic..... Predicate.....
 T<----->T, F Core
 S SCR O s-V-V-o
*Iviao, uma-ai e-binauɲa au-ɲa, ofu e-aka-ɲufu-a.*⁴⁷
 girl garden-OBL 3SG-work one-3SG vine 3SG-pull-tear-3SG
 The girl who was working in the garden tore the vine down.

c) TR-Object-defining predications:

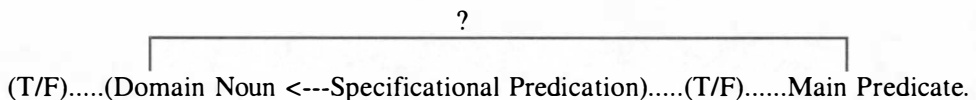
(WMek)

Topic Predicate.....
 T^M, F<----->F Core
 S O OCR s-V-V-o
Ibiao, opu, e-puɲe au-ɲa i-aka-ɲupu-a.
 girl vine 3SG-flower one-3SG 3SG-pull-tear-3SG
 The girl tore down the vine which was flowering.

FIGURE 43: DISCOURSE-PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS AND CO-REFERENCE

In a) and c) the co-relative predication may be in apposition to the focus and it is in this case *included in the predicate*. Together with its domain noun it constitutes a specificational focus (unless the verb word is itself the main focus).

Generally speaking, the domain noun is followed immediately by a co-relative predication (with a co-referential head) that *specifies* which one, out of various possible members of a class of referents, is actually being referred to. There may be other constituents (topics or a focus) preceding this construction or intervening between it and the head of the main/matrix predication, where a function marker (or possibly a determining suffix) *may* anchor it:



46 *Opu, ofu* represents five homonyms: a) 'vine (gen.)'; b) 'kangaroo rat (sp.)'; c) 'pool'; d) 'be withered'; e) 'human wastes' (important in magic).

47 *ɲupu, ɲufu* in fact represents three homonyms meaning a) 'be thick, dense', b) 'tear (off), pluck' (TH: -ɲ), and c) 'become dislodged, displaced'.

In the next section I look at right-dislocation. In a verb-final language like Mekeo this yields a cleft focus construction, prior to rankshift and embedding. The above patterns will be illustrated further and discussed in the sections that follow.

8.3.1.1 RIGHT-DISLOCATION

Right-dislocation is a syntactic derivation that involves placing one of the core arguments of a verb to the right of that verb, and suffixing it with a third person singular determining suffix (which is presumably in agreement with the clause as a whole). This leaves a gap in the original predication (which terminates with the verb word). The nominalised construction which results can now itself function as a core argument:

- 8.91 *Papie la-isa.* > *La-isa papie-ŋa...* (EMek)
 woman 1SG-see 1SG-see woman-3SG
 I saw a/the woman. The woman that I saw...

This kind of derivation can be better understood in the light of cleft predication⁴⁸ with *au-ŋa*:

- 8.92 *Papie e-mai, au-ŋa.* (EMek)
 woman 3SG-come one-3SG
 The woman who came is the one.

The topic predicate can be a marked topic, with *auŋa*:

- 8.93 *Papie, e-mai auŋa, au-ŋa.* (EMek)
 woman 3SG-come TOP one-3SG
 As for the woman who came, she is the one.

A cleft predication with *papie-ŋa* can be formed by embedding this cleft in another:

- 8.94 *E-mai au-ŋa, papie-ŋa.* (EMek)
 3SG-come one-3SG woman-3SG
 The one who came is the woman. OR: It is the woman (the one) who came.⁴⁹

Right-dislocated relative predications⁵⁰ with *auŋa* are superficially ambiguous as between an interpretation in terms of *au* 'man/one' + *-ŋa* '-3SG' and one in terms of unanalytic *auŋa*, which functions as a subordinating and topicalising particle:

- 8.95 *aŋ-e-mai au-ŋa* (EMek)
 FUT-3SG-come man-3SG
 the man who is going to come
 OR:
 FUT-3SG-come one-3SG
 the one who is going to come

⁴⁸ Prince (1978) attributes the term to Higgins (1971).

⁴⁹ This embedding has in fact yielded a co-relative predication of the kind to be discussed in the next section: *e-mai au-ŋa* 'the man/the one who came'.

⁵⁰ Note that these are not *co*-relative, since the domain noun has been gapped.

In fact this ambiguity would be resolved by stress. Lexical *au-ŋa* takes full word-stress, while grammatical *auŋa* cannot be stressed (the stress falls on the main verb root). Nonetheless this homonymy subverts the productive use of right-dislocation based on *au* = ‘man’. Right-dislocation based on *βaβie*, *babie*, *papie* ‘woman’ is, as I have shown above, much more acceptable:

- 8.96 *Iji, o-idoŋa babie-ŋa, a-loŋo.* (WMek)
 I 2SG-see.3SG woman-3SG 3SG-know
 I know the woman that you saw.

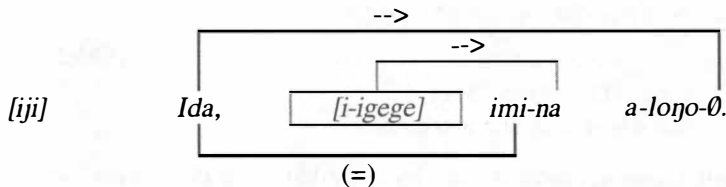
Other words that allow right-dislocation are *imi*, *imoi* ‘child’ and *auke*, *amu?e* ‘dog’:

- 8.97 *Ida, i-igege imi-na, a-loŋo.* (WMek)
 s/he 3SG-cry child-3SG 1SG-know
 I know the child who is/was crying.

- 8.98 *La-au-puŋu-a amu?e-ŋa, ŋa?ina lo-isa ma?* (EMek)
 1SG-hit-finish-3SG dog-3SG that 2SG-see INT
 Did you see that dog that I killed?
 (lit. The dog which I killed – did you see that (one)?)

Demonstrative pronouns such as *ŋa?ina* in example 8.98 are discussed in §8.5.2.1 below.

Co-reference patterns in example 8.97 above can be analysed as follows:



The determining suffix on *imi* ‘child’ agrees with ‘s/he-cried’ as a whole, not with any argument thereof. This applies to the third person singular suffix on *amu?e* in example 8.98, and to all other such suffixes in similar sentences.

It should be said here that right-dislocation as a relativisation strategy is of very limited occurrence.⁵¹ Usually the domain noun is left in place and the predication is given a new nominal head that is coreferential with the domain noun: *au-ŋa*. This construction is the subject of §8.3.1.2.

Resumptive right-dislocation with a pronoun is much more common.⁵² This involves topicalisation with *auŋa*. In the first example the (EMek) deictic *ŋa?ina* ‘that’ repeats or ‘resumes’ the topic (here the syntactic object) of the predication:

- 8.99 *vei, la-inu-a auŋa, ŋa?ina vei-na* (EMek)
 water 1SG-drink-3SG TOP that water-3SG
 the water, which I drank, that water

⁵¹ It is not absolutely clear from Taylor (1970b) what the exact extent of right-dislocation in Motu is, but (p.57) he quotes Lister-Turner and Clark, apparently with approval, to the effect that “a large range of nouns can be used in this way” (he later adds: “In fact any noun can!”).

⁵² Discourse-pragmatic functions of pronouns such as *ida* in example 8.97, *ŋa?ina* in 8.98, and *ŋa?ina* here are discussed again in §8.3.1.2 and §8.5.1.1.

There are also utterances where the deictic expression functions to definitise the domain noun cataphorically, in the light of a following (embedded) predication:

- 8.100 *Eŋaʔina fata-ŋa, la-bai-n-i-o,* (EMek)
 that priest-3SG 1SG-tell-TH-PF-2SG
lo-opolaŋa ma?
 2SG-remember.3SG INT
 Do you remember that priest (whom) I told you about?

In example 8.100 the determining predication (an embedded predication, *not* a co-relative predication), serves to reduce uncertainty as to who is the precise referent of the deictic (i.e. anaphoric) expression: *eŋaʔina fataŋa* ‘that/the priest’.

Right-dislocation is the basis for a cleft predication with a pronoun:

- 8.101 *E-mai babie-ŋa, ida.* (WMek)
 3SG-come woman-3SG she
 She is the woman who came.
- 8.102 *La-isa papie-ŋa, eŋaʔina.* (EMek)
 1SG-see woman-3SG that
 That is the woman that I saw. OR: The woman that I saw is that (one).

The topic can again be a marked topic, as in:

- 8.103 *La-isa papie-ŋa auŋa, eŋaʔina.* (EMek)
 1SG-see woman-3SG TOP that
 As for the woman that I saw, she is that (one).

One of the most productive uses of right-dislocation is probably in the construction of deverbal NPs such as the following:

- 8.104 *inu-inu vei-na* (EMek)
 drink-RED water-3SG
 water for drinking, drinking water
- 8.105 *i-z-ani-na maka-ŋa* (NMek)
 PASS-B-eat-3SG fish-3SG
 fish to be eaten

8.3.1.2 SPECIFICATIONAL CO-RELATIVE PREDICATIONS (OR: SUBORDINATION WITH *au-ŋa*)

This kind of co-relative construction is characterised by having a pronominal head: *au-ŋa*. This enclitic head refers back to and agrees with the first topic of an embedded predication. The first topic is the main topic (T^M). Thus in the following example *au-ŋa* ‘one-3SG’ must refer to *babie* ‘woman’:

- 8.106 *Babie, atsiwa i-awa-i-a au-ŋa, a-ida.* (WMek)
 woman knife 3SG-buy-PF-3SG one-3SG 1SG-see
 I saw the woman who bought the knife.

Similarly, *auŋa* must refer to *aʔiva* in the following:

- 8.107 *Aʔiva, papie e-ava-i-s-a au-ŋa, la-isa.* (EMek)
 knife woman 3SG-buy-PF-B-3SG one-3SG 1SG-see
 I saw the knife that the woman bought.

The primary function of this kind of construction is to specify the referent of the domain noun as one out of several possible referents, as is clear from a more literal translation of example 8.106 above: 'I saw the woman – the one who bought the knife'.

There is in implicit general topic (T^G) in the above examples: *iji, lau* 'I'. This must represent an argument of the matrix verb. When made explicit this pronoun has to be placed at the beginning of the entire sentence: *Iji, babie, atsiwa i-awa-i-a au-ŋa, a-ida; Lau, aʔiva, papie, e-ava-i-s-a auŋa, la-isa.*⁵³

The domain noun is the first/main topic in the co-relative predication which corresponds to a core argument of the embedded verb, but it simultaneously corresponds to a core argument of the verb in the matrix predication. The first topic of the subordinate predication is thus simultaneously a topic of the matrix predication:

- 8.108 TM (TMSub.... FSub.....) F (NMek)
 S O/S ----- $s-V$ $s-V(-o)$
- The.man [the.woman, [she-came that-one]] he-saw-her.
Au, babize, e-mai au-ŋa, e-iza-Ø.
 The man saw the woman who came.

The status given to this type of construction is a test of the analysis of Mekeo as a head-marking and non-configurational language, where there are no obligatory constituents outside the marked verb word.

If the domain noun is regarded as a constituent of the embedded predication, then this construction would be very similar to what Keenan (1985:161-163) calls an internal relative. However, an internal relative clause of the type described by Keenan has no nominal head. If the domain noun is regarded as a constituent of the matrix predication it is an external relative. However, the Mekeo co-relative predication *is* 'headed', internally, by *au-ŋa* (or *au-ki/a, au-tsi, au-'i* when plural), which is coreferential with a) the domain noun (T^M), b) a core argument of the embedded verbal predicate, and c) a core argument of the matrix verbal predicate. This nominal head also marks the construction as subordinate and nominal.⁵⁴

53 The CR predication rarely functions as focus (i.e. is rarely incorporated into the predicate). There is thus nearly always a pause after *au-ŋa*.

54 This point is important, as otherwise we should be dealing with co-relative clauses (as per Downing; see Keenan 1985:164) which can also have a distinctive marker. Nichols (pers.comm.) notes that this construction could be analysed as double-marked (following Platero's analysis of Navajo), as we have both the 'relative marker' *auŋa* in the RC (= relative clause) and deletion of the antecedent in the main clause. However, the domain noun is a constituent of *both* the main *and* the co-relative predication. Like all nominals in a verbal predication it is optional, and one cannot speak of deletion/gapping of an element which is optional. Nichols also suggests that *auŋa* could be viewed as a relative pronoun. However, *au* can be identified as a general noun (= English 'one'), marked with a determining suffix, which can function as a predicate: '*is the one*'. Further, its distance from the domain noun would make it a very unusual relative marker. (Compare Kosraean RCs where a general noun head comes at the beginning of the clause and a dependent determiner at the end; see Good 1989:168-172).

In fact it is more accurate to say that it is a syntagm consisting of [verbal predicate + *auŋa*] that is headed by *auŋa*, since the domain noun can be deleted like any other nominal topic:

- 8.109 *E-mai au-ŋa, e-iza.* (NMek)
 3SG-come one-3SG 3SG-see.3SG
 He saw the one who came.

The co-relativising use of *auŋa* contrasts with, but sometimes also merges with, the emphatic/assertive use of *auŋa*. This is because *au-ŋa* is always in origin a rankshifted predicate, although it can be fossilised to very varying degrees:

- 8.110 *E-mai auŋa.* (all dialects)
 3SG-come ASS
 It is a fact that s/he came. OR: S/he definitely came.
 OR: the one who came

As already noted, the anaphoric pro-nominal use of *au-ŋa* in a co-relative predication always refers back to the first nominal in the co-relative predication, the initial and *main* topic.⁵⁵ Thus there is no danger whatsoever of ambiguity in either of the following two constrasting examples:

- 8.111 *Auke, imi gi-aŋa-i-tsi au-tsi...* (WMek)
 dog child 3PL-bite-PF-3PL one-3PL
 The dogs that bit the children...
- 8.112 *Imi, auke gi-aŋa-i-tsi au-tsi...* (WMek)
 child dog 3PL-bite-PF-3PL one-3PL
 The children that bit the dogs...

This construction has a similar effect to specificational cleft sentences of the kind beginning 'X is/are the one(s) who...'. The two constructions just cited could be translated more literally as: 'The dogs are the ones that bit the children' and 'The children are the ones that bit the dogs.' Or again:

- 8.113 *Au au-ŋa, la-pai-n-i-o au-ŋa, e-mai.* (EMek)
 man one-3SG 1SG-speak-TH-PF-3SG one-3SG 3SG-come
 The man, the one (whom) I told you (about), he came.

Whatever nominal constitutes the domain noun for *au-ŋa* will also be coreferential with some core argument referent of the main verb in the matrix predication. And, should there be a general topic (T^G, explicit or implicit) it too must be coreferential with one of the marked arguments on the main verb. An example containing two same-number third person actants follows:

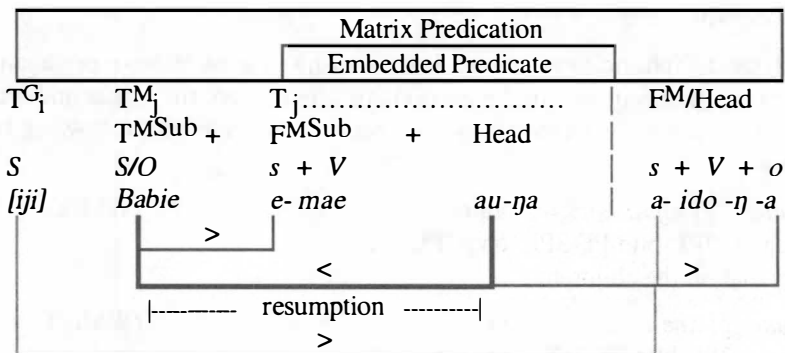
- 8.114 *Babie, imi gi-au-n-i-tsi au-tsi, tsuga ge-bini-tsi.* (WMek)
 woman child 3PL-hit-TH-PF-3PL one-3PL sugar 3PL-give-3PL
 The women, the ones who hit the children, gave them sugar.

⁵⁵ Taylor (1970b:55) noted the same of Motu. Because of this constraint the "high degree of ambiguity" that Keenan (1985:163) saw as characteristic of internal relative clauses does not hold for this Mekeo construction.

These are identification rules in the sense of Heath (1975)⁵⁶ and provide speakers (and hearers) of Mekeo with the only firm ground in terms of word order predictability and the firm identification of actants across functions.

The full array of semantic and syntactic bonds (and crossreferences) in a co-relative predication can be illustrated as follows, taking a naturally occurring WMek sentence in which the domain noun represents the subject function of the embedded predication and the object function of the matrix predication:

- 8.115 *Babie, e-mae au-ŋa, a-ido-ŋa.*⁵⁷ (WMek)
 woman 3SG-die one-3SG 1SG-see-3SG
 I saw (= knew) the woman who died.



The arrows (>) here indicate cataphoric reference and specification (i.e. unilateral bonds). Semantic dependencies operate in the opposite direction to the arrows. It is discourse-pragmatic structure that accounts for the patterns here. The head of the embedded predication seems to function as a resumptive topic, rementioning the domain noun *babie*. As argued above, *babie* is a constituent of both constructions.

((*Babie* - *e-mae auŋa*) - *a-ido-ŋa*)

Example 8.115 above contrasts with the following (also a naturally occurring sentence) where the domain noun represents the object function of the embedded predication and the object function of the matrix predication:

- 8.116 *Ivi aŋao ke-loŋo au-ŋa, ke-ivi-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 song one 3PL-know one-3SG 3PL-sing-TH-PF-3SG
 They sang a song which they knew.

56 Heath (1975:100) gives Equi-NP Deletion as an example from English of an identity rule which serves to disambiguate actants by signalling same-subject across a core juncture (where pronominal reference would be ambiguous). Heath notes further (p.101) that such rules apply across a much wider range of constructions in Turkish and Basque, which have only a single binary singular/plural opposition in the third person, and across an even wider range in Choctaw, with one undifferentiated third person category.

57 There are two forms of the verb to see in the three western dialects: *ida/idoŋa* (the latter has a fossilised third person singular suffix on top of which other object suffixes are added).

The analysis as can be set out as follows:

		Matrix Predication			
		Embedded Predicate			
TG_i	TM_j	T_j			F ^M /Head
	$TM_{Sub} +$	$F^{M}_{Sub} +$	Head		
<i>S</i>	<i>O/O</i>	<i>s + V + o</i>			<i>s + V + o</i>
[isa]	<i>Iva aŋao</i>	<i>ke-loŋo-∅</i>	<i>au-ŋa</i>		<i>ke-ivi-n-i-a</i>
		>			
		<			>
		----- resumption -----			
		>			

Finally, here are some longer (unelicited) texts to illustrate the frequency with which co-relative predicates with *au-ŋa* occur in fairly technical descriptive discourse:⁵⁸

8.117 *ʔola maa-ŋa mauni-na au-ŋa,* (EMek)
 arum face-3SG life-3SG one-3SG

ani-na laa'i veia, fo-lo-api-au-a.
 body-3SG not since OBLG-2SG-dig-up-3SG
 Don't dig up the arum which looks alive, as it has no body.

8.118 *Oʔou ke-fau-ŋa au-ŋa, maa-ŋa ke-oma;* (EMek)
 taro 3PL-plant-3SG one-3SG face-3SG 3PL-DNT

meʔe-ŋ-ai e-uki au-ŋa, uki-au ke-oma;
 side-3SG-OBL 3SG-grow one-3SG grow-up 3PL-DNT

epe-ai e-uki au-ŋa, fafa a-oma.
 epe-OBL 3SG-grow one-3SG shadow 1PL-DNT
 They call the taro that they plant *maaŋa*, and they call the one
 that grows from its side *ukiau*, and they call the one that grows
 from shoots *fafa*.

The frequency with which fossilised *au-ŋa* (as a topicaliser or a marker of emphasis or certainty) occurs in conversational discourse can be seen from the two texts in §8.5.1.4.

Turning to the question of which actants in which functions or roles have access to the TM slot in a corelative predication (see Keenan and Comrie 1977), it becomes even more clear that we are dealing with discourse-pragmatic configurations rather than syntactic constructions. There appear to be no syntactic or semantic restrictions as to which actants may be specified by means of a co-relative predication.

a) Domain: Recipient (indirect object)

8.119 *Babie, Peto mae e-bini-a au-ŋa, a-ida.* (WMek)
 woman Peter betel.nut 3SG-give-3SG one-3SG 1SG-see
 I saw the woman to whom Peter gave the betel nut.

⁵⁸ Which is precisely the register where we expect to find them in English.

- 8.120 *Papie eɲaina la-isa au-ŋa, Peto mafe* (EMek)
 woman that 1SG-see one-3SG Peter betel.nut

e-peni-a.

3SG-give-3SG

Peter gave the betel nut to the woman whom I saw.

b) Domain: Instrument

- 8.121 *Au eɲaina, la-isa au-ŋa, au e-afi-a,* (EMek)
 wood that 1SG-see one-3SG man 3SG-take-3SG

amu?e e-au-n-i-a.

dog 3SG-hit-TH-PF-3SG

I saw the wood with which the man beat the dog.

- 8.122 *Iu au, au i-api-a auke i-u-ŋ-a,*
 I wood man 3SG-take-3SG dog 3SG-hit-TH-3SG

ŋa a-ia-n-i-a.

that 1SG-see-TH-PF-3SG

I saw the wood with which the man beat the dog.

(NWMek)

c) Domain: Possessor

- 8.123 *Babie ŋa-auke gi-au-ŋ-a au-ŋa a-ida.* (WMek)
 woman 3SG-dog 3PL-hit-TH-3SG one-3SG 1SG-see
 I saw the woman whose dog the man beat.

- 8.124 *Papie eɲaina la-isa kai, au ŋaina, e-ŋa* (EMek)
 woman that 1SG-see but man that POSS-3SG

amu?e e-au-ŋ-a.

dog 3SG-hit-TH-3SG

I saw the woman whose dog the man beat.

- 8.125 *Iu gaβa-βaβie na-auke au i-u-ŋ-a-ŋa* (NWMek)
 I which-woman 3SG-dog man 3SG-hit-TH-3SG-3SG

a-ia-n-i-a.

1SG-see-TH-PF-3SG

I saw the woman whose dog the man beat.

These were all elicited as translations using relative clauses in English as prompts. They display the variety of means available to express reference restrictions on domain nouns. Some of these utterances, as in examples 8.121 and 8.122, involve linked predications (a form of peripheral coordination). The aim of the speaker there is to equate two separately specified actants, to show that they are one and the same person.

As regards co-relative predications with *au-ŋa*, there is a strictly comparable construction in Motu which Taylor names “*gau* substitution” (1970b:54-56).⁵⁹ He analyses *gau* as belonging to the matrix clause (rather than the relative clause)⁶⁰ where it ‘stands for’ the

⁵⁹ Motu *gau* ‘thing’ is cognate with Mekeo *au*, also ‘thing’.

⁶⁰ Taylor speaks of clauses where I speak of predications. In this grammar Taylor’s clause = VP or verb word.

domain noun. Taylor describes it as a ‘transformation’. This construction seems to occur in Motu on a much more restricted scale than in Mekeo.

A major difference with Motu is that in Mekeo *au-ŋa* definitely belongs to the (co-)relative predication/predicate. This is evident from the pronunciation, with no pause possible after the verbal predicate and before *au-ŋa*, which is in fact a ‘predicate-enclitic’. However, a pause may occur *after* the pronoun. Moreover, *au-ŋa* forms an integral part of the pitch contour which extends back over the preceding verb word, and which may include a nominal focus in its scope. *Au-ŋa* represents a continuation of this PC.

8.3.1.3 EMBEDDED VERBAL PREDICATIONS

Verbal predications may be embedded in matrix nominal or verbal predications. This is very like a concatenation of predicates, but actant topics are syntactically constrained in that they obey the rule whereby the main topic must represent a core argument of the matrix predicate.

The following are elicited examples from each of the four dialects. Not one of these contains an example of right-dislocation, while only the last contains *au-ŋa*. It seems clear that this is the preferred construction. Head-verbal cross-referencing always links one core argument to the predication-initial topic, as with the ‘internal-external relatives’ described above.

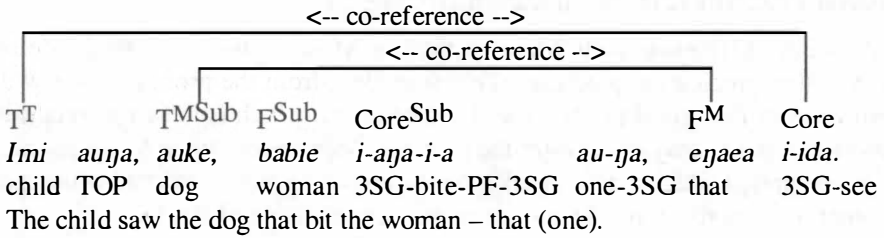
- 8.126 *Iu βaβie aminia βbasket e-βu-i-a-ge,* (NWMek)
 I woman one basket 3SG-bear-PF-3SG-CND
a-ia-n-i-a.
 1SG-see-TH-PF-3SG
 I saw a woman (who was) carrying a basket.
- 8.127 *Iji babie basket e-bua-i-a a-ida.* (WMek)
 I woman basket 3SG-bear-PF-B-3SG 1SG-see-3SG
 I saw a woman (who was) carrying a basket.
- 8.128 *Itsi babie aleka e-bua-i-z-a a-izo-ŋa.* (NMek)
 I woman basket 3SG-bear-PF-B-3SG 1SG-see-3SG
 I saw a woman (who was) carrying a basket.
- 8.129 *Papie aŋa’o la-isa au-ŋa, fe’a e-pua-i-s-a.* (EMek)
 woman one 1SG-see one-3SG basket 3SG-carry-PF-B-3SG
 I saw a woman (who was) carrying a basket.

The last example translates more literally as: ‘I saw a woman (and) she was carrying a basket’. If a comma/pause had been placed after *Papie aŋa’o*, then the translation would have to be: ‘A woman who(m) I saw was carrying a basket’.

When the main topic of the matrix predication is a full noun (i.e. not a pronoun), and when this is different from the main topic of the embedded predication, it is usually necessary to mark the former with empty *aŋa* (thus making it a *marked* topic). It is then possible to use a demonstrative pronoun in anaphoric function to hold a place for the actant encoded as the main topic of the embedded predication in the matrix predication, usually as the focus. The equation is: TMSub = FM. The embedded predication takes the ‘full’ relativising *au-ŋa*, which makes it a *co-relative* predication:

8.130

(WMek)

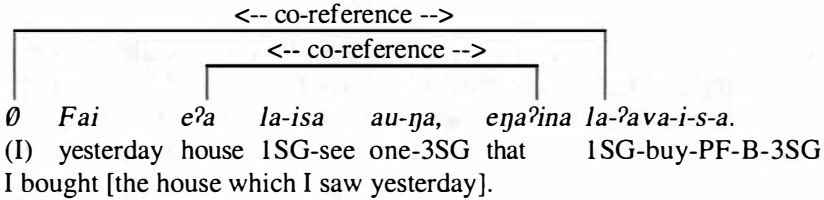


Here the resumptive pronoun *eŋaea* is probably indicative of the *length* of the embedded predication (i.e. the referential distance between *auke* and its anaphor).

The same remarks apply to the following, where the topic of the matrix predication is a deleted pronoun:

8.131

(EMek)



These embedded verbal predications are, as regards their function, rather like Keenan’s “correlative clauses”. They are not strictly speaking “relative clauses” since they are not marked as, nor do they function as, NPs. In fact they differ from Keenan’s (1985:163-164) definition of correlatives in being able to function as main/independent predications and in having no distinctive marker accompanying the domain noun. But they cannot be internal relative clauses as they are not NPs.⁶¹ I have already dealt with this syntactic phenomenon in §8.1.4 above, where I speak of core subordination (using Foley and Van Valin’s term) but I mention it here again because, in Keenan’s phrase, it is the ‘functional equivalent’ of a relative clause in many Mekeo sentences.

8.3.1.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The cataphoric determining (or reference-restricting) predications of Mekeo grammar correspond to relative clauses in other grammars. But this is to say nothing of their cognitive significance and, more important still, their discourse-pragmatic role in actual speech. They approximately correspond to a kind of pseudo-cleft clause in English, with a general noun as its head: ‘The drink, the one we *want*, is Watneys’.⁶² This has, I believe, been called a “specificational pseudo-cleft” construction (Prince 1978:fn.1, following Higgins 1971). There is a kind of widening of reference involved in *auŋa*, a kind of absolute classification of referents as *instances of some more general concept*, along with the reduplication of reference (or mention). Co-relative predications in Mekeo can be more precisely expressed in English

61 Both are restricted to verb-final languages. According to Downing (1973) correlative clauses are restricted to ‘loose’ verb-final ones (with alternative orders permitted).

62 ‘What we want is Watneys’ was a famous and very successful advertising slogan for an English beer. Halliday used it as an example of the focusing power of pseudo-clefts. Compare ‘We want Watneys’ (the original slogan).

as ‘the man, the one who went...’, ‘the basket, the one she took...’, ‘the woman, the one he married...’, etc., etc. (rather than simply ‘the man who...’, ‘the basket which...’, ‘the woman whom he...’).

The discourse-pragmatic function of such predications is in fact nothing other than the resumptive and contrastive specification of syntactic relations. ‘X, (not that one) *this* one!’ Mekeo discourse is replete with verbal juncture and predicational juncture. In the absence of reference-tracking mechanisms, the actants (or participants) of a particular predication are constantly in need of redefinition, re-specification. Which is precisely the role of this ubiquitous construction. It answers the question that must be constantly in the mind of the listener: ‘Which one?’

8.3.2 OBLIQUE CO-RELATIVE PREDICATIONS

These rankshifted and oblique case marked predications help to define the periphery of an event or a sequence of events: they include specifications of space, time, condition, reason, cause and purpose. They may even contain a metaphor (comparison and manner predications). They set “a spatial, temporal or individual framework...which limits the applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain” (Chafe 1976:50) and they are accordingly treated here as topics.

The subordinating postpositions were listed above in §2.1.2.1.3, where they were described as classifier nouns. This is a class of words that are, as Halliday and Hasan (1976:274-275) have remarked on the borderline between grammar and lexis. *AIAMA* and *GO* are included in this section, although they were not listed in §2.1.2.1.3 as classifier nouns, since they also function as postpositions.⁶³

8.3.2.1 LOCATIVE PREDICATIONS: *APU*

This is a common form of adverbial predication that yields nominal-type expressions.

- 8.132 *O-aŋu-aŋu abu-ŋa gabai?* (WMek)
 2SG-sit-RED place-3SG where
 Where do you live?

Here is an example of a non-rankshifted clause (i.e. a predication) with *APU*:

- 8.133 *Aŋu?a-ŋ-ai*⁶⁴ *la-?ua-lai, afu-ŋa.* (EMek)
 youth-3SG-OBL 1SG-hang-free place-3SG
 This is the place where I fell as a child.

A common nominal expression in the modern language is

- 8.134 *malele apu-ŋa* (WMek)
 writing/study place-3SG
 school

⁶³ One could in fact make a good case for treating *GO*¹ as a general noun. But *AIAMA* has no currency except as a subordinating postposition.

⁶⁴ The form *aŋu?a-u-ai* (youth-1SG-OBL) ‘in my youth’, would be more appropriate here.

8.3.2.2 TEMPORAL PREDICATIONS: *AIAMA*

This classifier *noun* translates as ‘time’ or ‘time when’. It is, as previously noted, probably made up of *AIA* ‘time when’ and *MA*, uncertainty particle functioning as an interrogative marker. It acts as the grammatical head of ‘relative’ predications defining the temporal parameters of other events.

- 8.135 *Fata e-mai aidama, iji bauŋa a-ao.* (WMek)
 Father 3SG-come time I village 1SG-go
 When Father came I went to the village.
 OR: When Father comes I will go to the village.
- 8.136 *A-ŋo-mai aisama, a-ŋa-nini’ani puŋu.* (EMek)
 FUT-2PL-come time FUT-1PL -talk again
 When you come we will talk again.
- 8.137 *Go-mai aidama babiau biga?* (WMek)
 2PL-come time people some
 When you came/arrived, how many people were there?

AIAMA, like some of the other postpositions we have seen, is not *usually* marked for the third person singular, as one would expect. On occasion, however, it bears compensatory length (*aisamā*, *aidamā*), and sometimes – for example, when carrying the oblique case marker – the suffix itself appears:

- 8.138 *ŋa aisama-ŋ-ai* (EMek)
 that time-3SG-OBL
 at that time

The meaning of ‘time when’ can be expressed ‘implicitly’ as in:

- 8.139 *Kui aŋu?a-ai lo-isa-ʔi...* (EMek)
 banana.tree young-OBL 2SG-see-3PL
 (When) you see the bananas when they are young...
- 8.140 *A-lo-lao, a-lo-isa.* (EMek)
 FUT-2SG-go FUT-2SG-see
 (When) you will go you will see.

NWMek seems to lack a reflex of *AIAMA*, and can express ‘time when’ by means of the clitic *-ŋa* (see §5.6.2 above):

- 8.141 *Ia e-mai-ŋa, Carlo i-io.* (NWMek)
 her/him 3SG-come-DUR Carlo 3SG-go
 When s/he had come, Carlo left.

NWMek also has the postposition *go-ŋa* ‘when’:

- 8.142 *Na-mai goŋa, moe po-βini-u.* (NWMek)
 FUT.1SG-come when betel.nut OBLG-give-1SG
 When I come, you must give me betel nut.

Desnoës has a note to the effect that *aiama* is used considerably less in Mekeo (i.e. EMek) than ‘when’ is in English. I would say from a perusal of my own texts that it is used considerably more in WMek and NMek than in the other two dialects. EMek prefers elliptical expressions of the kind just illustrated, as does NWMek.

If my analysis is correct and the final *-MA* of *AIAMA* is in fact the uncertainty marker (functioning as INT), then the topical status of this kind of adverbial predication at least is confirmed in accordance with Haiman's (1978) hypothesis about the underlying interrogative nature of topic clauses.⁶⁵

At this point I wish to introduce the incompletive aspect marker: *GO*² This *GO*², homonymous with *GO*¹ in §8.2.5 above, translates into English as 'still, yet, already'.⁶⁶

8.143 *A-e-mai koà.* (EMek)
NEG-3SG-come yet
S/he has not come yet.

8.144 *Gina ae-i-ujj go.* (NWMek)
sun NEG-3SG-grow yet
The sun has not risen yet.

However, the situation is complicated by *goŋa* (< *go-ŋa*) in NWMek meaning 'when', and what appear to be 'extended' uses of *GO*¹ in temporal and conditional as well as other predication types. *GO*² is in fact meant to incorporate some of the semantic components of *GO*¹, i.e. the meaning 'like'. It thus represents a semantic blend. Its uses will be examined in certain of the following sections where *GO*² will be seen to be – at times – in competition with *AIAMA*.

8.3.2.3 CONDITIONAL PREDICATIONS: *AIAMA*, *GO*, \emptyset

Conditional predications that postulate fulfillable conditions are usually expressed by means of *AIAMA*. The verb of the protasis is always in the indicative mood (any tense). However, as we saw in the last section, *AIAMA* also expresses 'time when'. There is in fact often some hesitation between a conditional and a temporal reading. Only when the verb in the protasis takes a definite past tense reading can one exclude a conditional interpretation of *AIAMA*. If the verb of the protasis takes a non-past reading or is in the future tense it is never absolutely clear whether the intended meaning of *AIAMA* is 'if' or 'when'.

8.145 *Kamu g-ida e-gai-n-i-a aidama-ŋ-ai* (WMek)
goods 3PL-see 3SG-suffice-TH-PF-3SG time-3SG-OBL

ŋaige e-pua.
thus 3SG-finish
They look at the goods and if/when they're sufficient it finishes like that.

8.146 *Isa a-ke-mai aisama, lau a-la-lao.* (EMek)
they FUT-3PL-come time I FUT-1SG-go
If/when they come, I will go.

8.147 *Iza aŋani ge-mai aizama, itsi a-ao.* (NMek)
they yesterday 3PL-come time I 1SG-go
When they came yesterday, I went.

⁶⁵ Haiman (1978:570-572) points out that topics are essentially polar questions aimed at reaching agreement with the addressee as to what can be presupposed or treated as given.

⁶⁶ *This* item (as opposed to *GO* < *go*, *goa*, *koa* 'true') is undoubtedly cognate with Motu *do*, *do-hore* 'till, yet', Lala *do'o* 'yet', Balawaia *royo* 'still, yet', etc., and it can thus be reconstructed for PCP at least in this meaning.

The future tense usually signals a realis condition, with a real possibility of being fulfilled, but when the situation permits there is often an added nuance of ‘supposing’ or ‘whenever’:

8.148 *Kopi an-a-inu aidama, ma-u an-e-aka.* (WMek)

coffee FUT-1SG-drink time eye-1SG FUT-3SG-awake

If/whenever I drink coffee I wake up.

(lit. When/if I will drink coffee, my eye(s) will be (wide-)awake.)

8.149 *Au-ma a-ne-ama aizama, kofi a-no-inu,* (NMek)

body-2SG FUT-3SG-cold time coffee FUT-2SG-drink

au-ma a-ne-laŋa.

body-2SG FUT-3SG-relax

If you drink coffee when you feel ill you will feel better.

(lit. When/if you will feel cold, you will drink coffee, you will feel well.)

A future tense protasis followed by *AIAMA* will rarely take a temporal reading. This meaning would normally be expressed by the non-past verb. This is no doubt why future tense can be used alone (where one might have employed a non-future tense with *AIAMA*) to express a condition:

8.150 *Iku ŋaina apie kaina a-lo-fai a-lo-lao,* (EMek)

mountain that side direction FUT-2SG-go FUT-2SG-go

auŋa Tapini.

ASS Tapini

If you go/went to the other side of that mountain, there's Tapini.

This is particularly common in NWMek, where a particle *ŋa*, added to the protasis, marks it as an assertion while a high rising tone on the verb simultaneously signals a request for its acceptance as a premise from the hearer. The underlying proposition can be glossed in full as:

'It is a fact that X will happen: OK? – (then) Y will happen'.

Here are some examples:

8.151 *Iu agia-u n-io ŋa, iu aga na-io.* (NWMek)

I friend-1SG FUT.3SG-go ASS I too FUT.1SG-go

If my friend goes, I will go too.

The particle *ŋa* seems to be equivalent to *au-ŋa* in the other dialects, functioning here as a sign of assertion. It is indeed glossed as such (ASS) here:

8.152 *Ika na-ga-io ŋa, ia aga ni-gi -io.* (NWMek)

we FUT-1PL-go ASS s/he too FUT-3PL-go

If we go, s/he will go too.

It is very possible, judging from the frequency of unmarked or minimally conditionals in texts, that this represents the traditional mode of expression for conditional propositions, along with the hypothetical mood which is also very common in speaking about things that *would* or *might* happen (see the following section).⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Thompson and Longacre (1985:205) seem to be of the opinion that, for many freshly contacted languages, “the ‘basic’ clause connecting strategy is one of juxtaposition”, with the semantic relationship between the clauses inferred rather than signalled explicitly. This accords with much in Stump (1985).

8.3.2.4 CONDITIONAL PREDICATIONS: *GO*²

Conditional predications are frequently expressed by means of a predication-enclitic conjunction or postposition *GO*. This item, as explained in §8.3.2.2 above, seems to represent a merger of the similitive/causal operator described in §2.2.1.6 and §8.2.5 above (i.e. *GO*¹) with an adverbial particle whose basic meaning is ‘still, yet’, and I shall refer to it as *GO*². It becomes *WMek*, *NMek goà*, *EMek koà* while it appears as *go* (and perhaps *go-ŋa*) in *NWMek*. In the glosses it is labeled ‘if’.

*GO*² expresses improbable conditions. There are in Mekeo more degrees of probability/improbability than in English, and it is difficult to provide adequate glosses for all of these. According to whether the verb in the protasis is in the future tense, the obligative mood or the hypothetical mood, the meaning can be read as expressing a) a mildly improbable condition, b) a hypothetical condition, or c) a remote condition. That is, the reality of the condition decreases as we go from one to the next of these constructions.

a) Mildly improbable conditions:

8.153 *Isa a-ŋe-lao koà, lau isava a-la-lao.* (EMek)
s/he FUT-3SG-go if I also FUT-1SG-go
If s/he should go, I would go too.

8.154 *Ika a-ga-ao goà, iza pe-ge-ao.* (NMek)
we.I FUT-1PL-go if they OBLG-3PL-go
If we (all) should go, they would go.

b) Hypothetical conditions:

8.155 *Isa fe-lao koà, i?a a-lao.* (EMek)
her/him OBLG.3SG-go if we.I 1PL-go
Should s/he go, we (all) would go.

8.156 *Ika pama-oai goà?* (WMek)
we.I OBLG.1PL-go if
(How would it be) if we came to visit you?

c) Remote conditions:

8.157 *Isa afe-lao koà, lau isava afa-lao.* (EMek)
her/him HYP.3SG-go if I also HYP.1SG-go
If s/he went, I might also go.

8.158 *Napo-kualai goà, a a-ne-ŋama?* (WMek)
HYP.2SG-fall if what FUT-3SG-happen
What would happen if you should fall?

8.159 *Ke aŋao-mo afe-ŋea koà...⁶⁸* (EMek)
and one-just HYP.3SG-lose if
And should one be lost...

⁶⁸ This is from the mission translation of the story about the man who, having 100 sheep, loses one. The parables (translated into Mekeo with the help of mission catechists) are a rich source of hypothetical/conditional clauses. One must, however, suspect interference. More authentic documents show a similar use of the hypothetical mood, *but without GO*.

Imperative mood in the protasis makes the condition even more remote:

- 8.160 *Ika ama-ao goa, iza fe-gi-ao.* (NMek)
 we.I IMP.1PL-go if they OBLG-3PL-go
 If we (all) went, they could go.

There are – significantly perhaps – as many examples where *go*, *goà* or *koà* function in combination with *AIAMA* as where they function alone. I examine this construction in the next section.

8.3.2.5 HIGHLY IMPROBABLE CONDITIONS: *GO* + *AIAMA*

This redundant construction is commonly used to express highly improbable conditions in modern Mekeo.⁶⁹

- 8.161 *Oi a-ŋo-lao koà aisama, lau isava a-la-lao.* (EMek)
 you FUT-2SG-go if time I also FUT-1SG-go
 If you were to go, I would go too.

The irrealis mood of these constructions is often emphasised by the use of the imperative mood in the protasis. Conditions expressed by such sentences amount to (and translate) counterfactual conditions:

- 8.162 *Isa ŋa-lao koà aisama, lau isava fa-lao.* (EMek)
 her/him IMP.3SG-go if time I also OBLG.1SG-go
 If s/he were to go, I would also go. OR: If s/he had gone, I would have gone too.
- 8.163 *Ika ama-ao goà aidama ida pe-gi-ao.* (WMek)
 we.I IMP.1PL-go if time they OBLG-3PL-go
 If we were to go, they would go. OR: If we had gone, they would have gone too.

The true sense of the imperative mood in such sentences might be better translated as ‘Imagine...!’ (‘Imagine we went, they would go too’). A ‘true counterfactual’ construction is illustrated in §8.3.2.8 below.

8.3.2.6 CONDITIONAL PREDICATIONS WITH *MA* AND *MO*

The particle *MA* is the uncertainty particle or interrogative marker already described and illustrated in §6.3.1 and §8.2.4 above. It is used as follows to express real conditions:

- 8.164 *Ibio ida-tsi⁷⁰ ma ŋua e-gae.* (WMek)
 girl 3SG.see-3PL INT heart 3SG-rise
 If he sees (any) girls he gets excited/happy.

⁶⁹ As already noted the mission linguists thought the frequent use of *AIAMA* to be a consequence of contact. Thompson and Longacre (1985:204-205) make much the same kind of suggestion cross-linguistically, with regard to the borrowing and overuse of subordinating/complementising particles, using morphemes and/or models derived from the introduced superstrate language. In this case, redundant surface structure *iconically* captures the improbability of the condition.

⁷⁰ The underlying form of this utterance is: *Ibiao e-ida-tsi ma, ŋuā e-gae.*

Haiman (1978) has pointed out the connection between conditionals and polar interrogatives. Here is another example with *MA*:

- 8.165 *Naja 'laka Agupa a-ni-o ma, iji 'po* (WMek)
 canoe one Akufa FUT-3SG-go INT I with
*pa-o.*⁷¹
 OBLG.1SG-go
 If a canoe leaves, I'll go to Akufa with it.
 (lit. If a canoe will go to Akufa, I should go with (it).)

My informant suggested that an alternative to *ma* in this sentence would be *auja: naja alaka Akufa a-ni-o auja, iji epo pa-o* ('Given that a canoe will go to Akufa, I will go with (it)').

The focusing discourse marker *MO* can also be used to express a realis condition:

- 8.166 *Gi-amaŋe-bainao mo ge-mai mo ... ge-lo'u.* (WMek)
 3PL-marry-steal CND 3PL-come just 3PL-quarrel
 If they marry by elopement they just come (and) they quarrel.

8.3.2.7 SUPPOSITIONAL PREDICATIONS: *GOA PE-MIA*

Suppositional conditions are expressed periphrastically, by means of the expression: *GOA PE-MIA* 'pretend it were true' (or, more literally, 'It should be true!'). This meaning is reinforced by the use of the imperative intentional mood in the protasis: 'Let it be the case that...!' The apodosis *typically* takes the obligative mood (which, as we saw in §4.2.4.7 and §8.3.2.5 above, is capable of expressing improbable and even counterfactual conditions or wishes).

- 8.167 *Isa ŋa-lao koa fe-mia, lau fa-lao.* (EMek)
 s/he IMP.3SG-go true OBLG.3SG-be I OBLG.1SG-go
 Imagine s/he went/had gone, I would go/have gone too.
- 8.168 *Ipa a-lao koa fe-mia, isa fe-ke-lao.* (EMek)
 we 1PL-go true OBLG.3SG-be they OBLG-3PL-go
 Imagine we went/had gone, they would go/have gone.
- 8.169 *Iji ua-ege.pa ŋa-ao (goà) aidama, iji napa-m-ao.* (WMek)
 I 1SG-friend IMP.3SG-go (if) time I HYP-B-go
 Imagine my friend went/had gone, I would go/have gone.
- 8.170 *Ika ama-ao goà aidama, ida pe-ge-ao.* (WMek)
 we.I IMP.1PL-go if time they OBLG-3PL-go
 Imagine we went/had gone, they would go/have gone.

Suppositional conditionals in NWMek are expressed in much the same way as in the other dialects except that a second person verb form is preferred:

⁷¹ For underlying: *Njaŋa alaka Akufa a-ne-ao ma, iji epo pa-ao.*

- 8.171 *Iu agia-u na-io go⁷² po-mio,* (NWMek)
I friend-1SG FUT.3SG-go true OBLG.2SG-be

iu aga a-io n-oma.
I too 1SG-go FUT.1SG-DNT
Imagine my friend went/had gone, I would go/have gone.

- 8.172 *Ika ama-io go po-mio,* (NWMek)
we.I IMP.1PL-go true OBLG.2SG-be

ia aga g-io n-oma
they too 3PL-go FUT.1SG-DNT
Imagine we went/had gone they would go/have gone.

Data collected in 1983 (from a young male), suggests that NMek is exceptional in its treatment of suppositional/counterfactual conditions. The following sentences are phrased like realis conditions, except for the mood:

- 8.173 *Itsi ua-eke.faka-u ŋa-ao goà aizama,* (NMek)
I 1SG-friend-1SG IMP.3SG-go if time

itsi fama-ao.
I OBLG.1SG-go
Imagine my friend went/had gone, I would go/have gone.

- 8.174 *Ika ama-ao goà, iza fe-ge-ao.* (NMek)
we.I IMP.1PL-go if they OBLG-3PL-go
Imagine we (all) went/had gone, they would go/have gone.

However, the double marking on 'friend' in example 8.173 suggests that the language is here possibly substandard.

8.3.2.8 COUNTERFACTUAL CONDITIONS: *E-MIA PE-GABA*

Counterfactual propositions are expressed in Mekeo by means of a locution built on the verb of being and becoming, *MIA*, and the obligative mood with past meaning.⁷³

- 8.175 *E-mia pe-gaba, gai ai-d-e-gaba-i-a.* (WMek)
3SG-be OBLG.3SG-do but NEG-B-3SG-do-PF-3SG
S/he would have done it, but she did not do it.

- 8.176 *E-mia aina-u fo-afi-a,* (EMek)
3SG-be voice-1SG OBLG.2SG-take-3SG

pau lau isava aina-mu fa-afi-a.
now I also voice-2SG OBLG-take-3SG
If you had heeded me, I would now heed you.

⁷² The item *go* here appears to be a shortened form of *goa* 'true, true likeness' (i.e. *GO¹*).

⁷³ This 'limiting-case conditional' is in fact the only one to employ the simulative postposition in Manam (Lichtenberk 1983:533-534). The other conditionals are couched in an irrealis mood.

8.3.2.9 CAUSE AND RESULT PREDICATIONS: *GAI*, *BUO*, *ŃOME*, *GO*

A distinction between reason and cause is difficult to make consistently, as Mekeo uses the same forms to express both. I shall simply illustrate the different lexico-syntactic structures available, and provide suitable glosses.⁷⁴ There are three main subordinating postpositions, *GAI*, *BUO* and *ŃOME*, that function specifically in such predications, as well as *GO*².

GAI here bears no relation to the conjunction *GAI~GAE~GE*. This is the very hard-working polysemic root that means *basically* perhaps ‘side, direction, way’.⁷⁵ It is also used, perhaps by extension, to mean ‘reason, sake’ and sometimes ‘cause’:

- 8.177 *Oai gai-mu a-gaba-i-a.* (WMek)
 you reason-2SG 1SG-do-PF-3SG
 I did it for you, because of you.
- 8.178 *Lau la-mai kai-na kuku mo-peni-au.* (EMek)
 I 1SG-come reason-3SG tobacco IMP.2SG-give-1SG
 Since I’ve come, give me some tobacco.
- 8.179 *Oi paia kai-mi-ai, ŋa la-oma.* (EMek:D)
 you merely sake-2PL-OBL thus 1SG-DNT
 It was only for you/because of you I acted thus.

Note, however, that in WMek and NMek *gai-mo* means ‘although’:

- 8.180 *Uabu e-age gaimo, uma e-ao.* (NMek)
 rain 3SG-descend although garden 3SG-go
 Although it was raining, s/he went to the garden.

Cause is expressed chiefly by *BUO* ‘cause’,⁷⁶ or *BUO-Ń-AI* ‘because of’. It is not clear whether the realisations *buo*, *puo* have an underlying third person singular even when this is not indicated by extra length. Examples follow:

- 8.181 *Ibiao aibaia buo a-idawa.* (WMek)
 girl not cause 1SG-sick
 I’m sick because there are no girls.
- 8.182 *Ida amā e-ba-ŋome, buo, lobia au-ŋa.* (WMek)
 s/he father.3SG 3SG-CA-base cause chief ASS
 He made his father install (legitimise) him, therefore he is chief.
- 8.183 *Ida ai-j-i-ida buo-ŋ-ai, ŋuā e-gobu.* (WMek)
 s/he NEG-B-3SG-see cause-3SG-OBL heart 3SG-close
 Because s/he did not see it, s/he was angry.

⁷⁴ Note that cause clauses, as subordinate clauses with co-relative postpositions, are dependent-marked, while result clauses, as main clauses with an adverbial marker, are head-marked.

⁷⁵ As with other Mekeo root words it owes its richness to the semantic conflation of several homophonous morphemes, with meanings close enough to merge. *Kai* has fifteen separate entries in Desnoës, some with assorted sub-sections. Postpositional *GAI-N-AI* has at least as much in common with *PAU* (§8.3.2.1.1) as with *BUO*, according to informants.

⁷⁶ The only language of West Central Papua to have a cognate term is Roro: *buo-n-ai* ‘because of’. Grace has reconstructed POC **puqu(n)* ‘cause, origin’ (Wurm and Wilson 1975), and reflexes of this are common in the languages of Polynesia (and Fijian has *vū* (or *vuu*) ‘origin’).

The important root *ɲome* means ‘stump of tree’ and by extension ‘source’ or ‘cause’ or even ‘basis, basic truth’. This use of *ɲome* is especially prevalent in WMek and it is perhaps the WMek equivalent to EMek *veia* (see §8.2.6 above). Here are some examples:

- 8.184 *Ai-d-o-loŋo, ɲome, ai-d-o-ida.* (WMek)
 NEG-B-2SG-know stump NEG-B-2SG-see
 Since you did not see it you do not know.
 (lit. You do not know, cause, you did not see.)

- 8.185 *Ogo ai-d-a-loŋo⁷⁷ belo, ɲome bai-jin-au-tsi-ai* (WMek)
 vine NEG-D-1SG-know good stump now-day-one-3PL-OBL
auŋa, malele imi-tsi binauŋa apu-ŋa ai-gi-aps-i-a.
 TOP school child-3PL work place-3SG NEG-3PL-take-PF-3SG
 I don’t know very well at all, because these days students don’t get jobs.

Finally, *GO*² can be used to express cause.⁷⁸ I give one example:

- 8.186 *Isa ʔefu laa’i, ɲau-ŋa ɲua koà ke-amaje.* (EMek)
 s/he valuables not child-3SG two like 3PL-marry
 Since two of her daughters have married, she has no valuables left.

*GO*² is used to signal that the cause constitutes old information. In this situation, however, it is more natural to mark the following predication as representing a result. This is done by opening the following predication with the expression: *ɲa βuo...*, *ɲa buo...*, *Eɲa buo...*, *Eɲa puo...* ‘because of that’ or ‘therefore’.

- 8.187 *Eɲa buo nap-ai-d-a-oabi-aŋemo.* (WMek)
 that cause FUT-NEG-B-1SG-speak-idly
 Therefore, I won’t waste my breath.

Sometimes *βuo*, *buo*, *puo* alone appears in this function. It does not appear always to carry compensatory stress for an underlying third person singular suffix, though sometimes it quite clearly does: *βuō*, *buō*, *puō*.

Finally in this section, mention must be made of *OUNAI* (possibly EMek only):

- 8.188 *Ŋaina ou-ŋa-ai ke-mai.* (EMek)
 that cause-3SG-OBL 3PL-come
 They came because of that.

8.3.2.10 PURPOSE PREDICATIONS: *OMA*

Purpose is most naturally expressed by means of *OMA* followed by a verb in an intentional mood:

- 8.189 *Aniani na-ani-a e-ma, aŋo gai-na⁷⁹* (NWMek)
 food IMP.3SG-eat-3SG 3SG-DNT village direction-3SG

⁷⁷ *Ogo aidaloŋo, oko alaloŋo* ‘I haven’t a clue’ is a very common idiom.

⁷⁸ Again, there is a close parallel with Manam. See Lichtenberk (1983:548).

⁷⁹ Note that movement towards a person or place is almost always signalled by the postposition *gai-na* in NWMek, which can be seen as a goal marker. Other dialects have nothing here.

e-mai.

3SGcome

S/he came home to eat some food.

- 8.190 *Ipipi bauŋa e-mai, fokama ŋa-ani-a e-ma.* (NMek)
 Ipipi village 3SG-come food IMP.3SG-eat-3SG 3SG-DNT
 S/he came home to eat some food.

- 8.191 *Ia amā i-le-i-a taun gai-na* (NWMek)
 him father.3SG 3SG-send-PF-3SG town direction-3SG

na-skul e-ma i-io.

IMP.3SG-school 3SG-DNT 3SG-go

His father sent him to town in order to attend school.

- 8.192 *Ida ama tauni e-la-i-a* (WMek)
 him father.3SG town 3SG-send-PF-3SG

i-ao pe-malele e-ma.

3SG-go OBLG.3SG-writing 3SG-DNT

His father sent him to town in order to attend school.

We can also express purpose with *GAI*:

- 8.193 *Ŋa gai-n-ai a-mai.* (WMek)
 that side-3SG-OBL 1SG-come
 I've come for that (reason).

Purpose can also be expressed elliptically:

- 8.194 *Lau a?iva fa-pinauŋa.* (EMek)
 I knife OBLG.1SG-work
 I'll work for a knife.

8.3.2.11 QUASI-BENEFACTIVE PREDICATIONS: *PAU, BANI, AGA*

There is a set of words in Mekeo that express the idea of doing something 'on account of someone or something', 'in the name of someone or something', 'for the sake of someone or something'. The key words are *aga*, *aka* 'name' (which has a number of semi-grammaticalised functions besides), *pau*, *fau* which is probably a doublet of *bagu*, *paku* 'forehead', and which is specialised in the abstract meanings of 'sake, account, respect' (it can also translate 'grace' and 'honour'),⁸⁰ and *bani*, *pani* 'reputation, fame', which functions rather like *pau*, *fau*. For convenience I shall gloss the last two items with ACCT, short for 'account'. Here are some examples:

⁸⁰ *Pa-fau* is 'strut about, flaunt oneself, act vaingloriously' (see Desnoës 1933:262); while *fau/fa-fau* is strictly one's 'account', and hence one's 'honour', or perhaps 'responsibility' (p.223); and *pa-fa-fau-a* is 'blame, put down to someone's account' (p.224). Motu *bagu-bagu*, by way of contrast, means 'shameless' or 'effronté' (in which *-front* is of course derived from the French word for 'forehead'). *Fau* is the expected reflex of Motu *bagu*, not *paku*, which may represent an 'indirect inheritance' via Ku'ni (see Kuni *badu* 'forehead', itself unexpected; Ross (1983a) at one stage reconstructed PCP **bagu* which should yield Kuni ***bau*). Roro has *pau* and Doura has *pau*, but Gabadi has *ba?u*; now the Devadeva dialect of Kuni, like Lala and Gabadi, has intrusive ?, and unmotivated *ba?u* may have been transphonemicised into Central Kuni as *badu*.

- 8.195 *Joseph, iza fau-ŋ-ai e-binauŋa.* (NMek)
Joseph s/he ACCT-3SG-OBL 3SG-work.
Joseph is working for him/her.
- 8.196 *Fau-mu-ai la-mai.* (EMek:D)
ACCT-2SG-OBL 1SG-come
I've come on your account.
OR: I've come for you, I've come at your request.'

A quite different usage appears in the example which follows, but we can still translate it by means of 'account' ('thanks to' also suggests itself here):

- 8.197 *Pau oi, nao au-mi, fau-mi-ai Ve'e* (EMek:D)
now you European man-3PL ACCT-2PL-OBL Ve'e
ke-pea-aŋe.
3PL-walk-idle
Now, on account of you Europeans, the Ve'e can walk about anywhere.

And, as a cognate object verb, we get the following:

- 8.198 *Fau-mu-ai mo-fau-fau, ?ifo-mu mo-pea.* (EMek:D)
ACCT-2SG-OBL IMP.2SG-rely-RED self-2SG IMP.2SG-walk
Count upon your (own) sense-of-responsibility (?), walk alone.

BANI means 'reputation, fame, blame', so *BANI-N-AI* means basically 'in honour of' and by extension 'to the due of ' and 'for':

- 8.199 *Pani-mu-ai a-mai.* (EMek)
fame-2SG-OBL 1PL-come
We have come in your honour, for your sake.
- 8.200 *Lau la-mai pani-na veia, kuku mo-peni-au.* (EMek)
I 1SG-come ACCT-3SG since tobacco IMP.2SG-give-1SG
Owing to the fact that I have come, you must give me tobacco.

The root *AGA* 'name' has become semi-grammaticalised in a number of extended uses, in some of which it resembles *PAU* while in others it expresses purpose:

- 8.201 *Fata aka-ŋ-ai la-mai.* (EMek)
Father name-3SG-OBL 1SG-come
I have come for Father's sake. (lit. I have come in Father's name.)
- 8.202 *Bauŋa na-lipu aga-ŋ-ai o-mai ma?* (WMek)
village IMP.3SG-ruin name-3SG-OBL 2SG-come INT
Is it to wreck the village you have come?

Another usage with *AGA* 'name' may be exemplified here in passing (and compare §8.2.7 above):

- 8.203 *Akā favoko lo-lao Moku eŋae?* (EMek)
name.3SG tomorrow 2SG-go Moresby there
Does that mean you are going to Moresby tomorrow?

It should be noted that in NWMek and WMek the benefactive relation was expressed by preference periphrastically:

- 8.204 *Joseph, ia na-kaβaia e-kaβakaβaia.*⁸¹ (NWMek)
Joseph, ida na-binauηa e-gaba. (WMek)
 Joseph him/her 3SG-work 3SG-do
 Joseph did/does his/her work (for her).

This is a common mode of expression in all dialects. Indeed one has the general impression that the benefactive *meaning* is foreign to the Mekeo, and that some of the constructions just described are innovative and contrived in that meaning.

8.3.2.12 COMPARISON AND MANNER PREDICATIONS: *GO*, *GOA*

As we saw in §3.1.5 this operator can also occur after a nominal: *iji goà* ‘like me’, *ηaηa koà* ‘like a canoe’.⁸² It is often followed by *i-kobo-ηa*, *i-?opo-ηa*, meaning literally ‘its measurement’ and used here to mean ‘the same (as)’. Another word that means ‘same’ and that is often used in construction with *GO* is *ioi-na* (all dialects). When one wants to ‘compare’ whole predications the meaning of *GO* becomes very similar to that of conditional *GO*. This sense is usually best translated by ‘as if’:

- 8.205 *E-pea ke-piu-ηa koà.* (EMek)
 3SG-walk 3PL-throw-3SG like
 S/he walks as if they threw him/her.
- 8.206 *Ke-fau-n-i-a koà e-apa.* (EMek)
 3PL-plant-TH-PF-3SG like 3SG-stand
 S/he stands as if they planted him/her.
- 8.207 *Ake-mu ke-au-ηa koà e-ufu.* (EMek)
 mouth-2SG 3PL-hit-3SG like 3SG-swell
 Your mouth is swollen as if they had beaten it.

In the next example the compared predication is implicit, represented by a nominal:

- 8.208 *Ivani a-pa-pea-lai-n-a koà ioi-na.* (EMek)
 war 1PL-CA-walk-AT-TH-3SG like same-3SG
 It is as if we were going to war.

In the next example our heads are not compared to the enemy, as might at first appear. *Ou* ‘enemy’ stands for an entire proposition: ‘the enemy had struck us’.

- 8.209 *Ou koà kania-mai e-fafa.* (EMek)
 enemy like head-1PL.E 3SG-split
 Our heads are split as if the enemy (had struck us).

GO^I is a focusing operator, frequently following and depending on a chosen nominal which itself stands for a whole predication. Here are two more examples with ‘pro-forms’:

- 8.210 *?uma ηaka koà a-ke-fau-n-i-a.* (EMek)
 pig sago.pulp like FUT-3PL-stab-TH-PF-3SG
 They will cut into the pig as (they cut into) sago pulp.

81 NWMek *na-kaβaia* is unusual as a nominal as it has the full perfective OM of a verb: *-i-a*.

82 I assume that we here have to do with similitive *GO^I* ‘true likeness’.

- 8.211 *Lo-pikupa, aŋo koà lo-aŋa.* (EMek)
 2SG-anger bush like 2SG-cut
 You are angry, it is as if you were chopping trees.⁸³

Another example illustrates a very common form of WHY question:

- 8.212 *A goà i-kopo-ŋa imi-ai e-mae.* (WMek)
 what like NOM-measure-2SG child-OBL 3SG-die
 Why did she die in childbirth?

Finally here are two miscellaneous examples from texts:

- 8.213 *Ame oi koà i-ʔopo-mu.* (EMek)
 Ame you like NOM-measure-2SG
 Ame is the same (age) as you.
- 8.214 *otsi koà iu-ŋa* (EMek)
 horse like tail-3SG
 like a horses tail

8.3.2.13 CONCESSIVE PREDICATIONS: *ŋaninai, ŋaninaŋai*

The postposition *ŋani-na-ai*, as well as the redundantly marked form *ŋaninaŋai*, is used to mean ‘in spite of, despite; nevertheless, notwithstanding’, and is perhaps based on the verb *ŋani* ‘tear at, bite at’ (along the lines of the English metaphor ‘in the teeth of’). Here is how it appears in the data:

- 8.215 *La-iva-apu-a ŋani-n-ai, lo-afi-a.* (EMek)
 1SG-speak-close-3SG spite-3SG-OBL 2SG-take-3SG
 Despite my forbidding it, you took it.
- 8.216 *Uabu i-age mo ŋani-na-ŋ-ai, Pol uma i-ao.* (WMek)
 rain 3SG-fall just spite-3SG-OBL Paul garden 3SG-go
 Paul went to the garden although/even though it was raining.

The same informant who spontaneously supplied the above ‘translation’ into Mekeo offered the following sentence as a paraphrase:

- 8.217 *Uabu i-age gai-mo, Pol uma i-ao baia.* (WMek)
 rain 3SG-fall but-just Paul garden 3SG-go sheer
 It was raining but Paul went to the garden anyway.

The NWMek version of this sentence is as follows:

- 8.218 *Pol, kimu e-age-age ŋaninaŋai,* (NWMek)
 Paul rain 3SG-fall-RED despite
βinauŋa gai-na e-io.
 garden direction-3SG 3SG-go
 Paul, despite the rain falling, went to(wards?) the garden.

The commas in the above examples all represent distinct easily heard pauses.

⁸³ This is a common idiom implying both concentrated energy and suppressed/sublimated anger.

8.4 PREDICATIONAL COMPLEMENTS

True complement-taking verbs are very few in Mekeo.⁸⁴ The one verb that comes to mind immediately is *OMA*, which of course always (and alone) *follows* the verb it 'governs'. And indeed in a head-final language it can be predicted of verbal complements that they will *precede* the main or governing verb. In Mekeo, however, many of the functions that are usually or often expressed in other languages as complements of modal verbs are expressed through the system of intentional moods, with *OMA* (or *POKA*, or any of the other discourse markers). But there is one other verb that can – in one of its meanings – govern tense and mood: *BAI* 'tell'. But *BAI* differs from *OMA* in that it *precedes* the complement.

Verbs of reporting, commanding, desiring, thinking and so on occur *in series*, with *following* predications⁸⁵ that realise the 'object' of the first verb but which are ungoverned as to tense or mood. Such predications are morpho-syntactically unreduced, and independent. There is no deletion or raising of the arguments. There are, moreover, no complementisers in Mekeo. Such predications are (in a sense) in apposition, and any relationship between them is semantic and inferred. They can often be analysed in terms either of core subordination or of core coordination (see §8.1 above).

However, in such appositional strings the rules of relativised deixis do constrain the person/number of role-marking affixes. And *semantic dependencies* (of the kinds detailed by Noonan 1985:91ff.) are sometimes realised as constraints on tense and/or mood. Such constraints amount to a kind of government and provide us with a practicable criterion.

8.4.1 UNGOVERNED OR WEAKLY GOVERNED COMPLEMENTS

Directly reported speech events are ungoverned. They are simply quoted, with or without an introductory verb of uttering. Under one analysis they represent core subordination (mentioned in §8.1.4 above). *Indirectly reported speech events* are weakly governed as to the tense of the reported verb, and the person/number of its functions are governed in terms of *relativised* deixis.

8.4.1.1 DIRECT SPEECH

Direct speech in a narrative is often reported without any reporting verb or other overt marking.

8.219 *Muni-u-ai* *e-pea* *e-mai.* (EMek)
back-1SG-OBL 3SG-walk 3SG-come

"*A-la-pitsi-n-a* *a-la-peni-o.*"
FUT-1SG-shoot-TH-3SG FUT-1SG-give-2SG

He walked up behind me. "I'll shoot something and give it to you."

The more usual, grammatically marked construction is as follows (in answer to the foregoing):

⁸⁴ Mekeo contrasts in this with Motu. Taylor (1970a:135-137) lists a total of fifteen Motu verbs that take complements. Many of the meanings thus encoded are expressed in Mekeo by means of mood marking with *OMA* or by the discourse particles described in §6.3.

⁸⁵ I shall be using the expression 'following predication' in a technical sense from now on.

- 8.220 *Lau la-inaka*: “E” *la-oma*. (EMek)
 I 1SG-utter yes 1SG-DNT
 I said “yes”.

The fullest way of reporting predications is as follows:

- 8.221 *Lau la-iva la-inaka*: “*Lo-ani-a!*” *la-oma*. (EMek)
 I 1SG-speak 1SG-utter 2SG-eat-3SG 1SG-DNT
 I spoke and said “You’ve eaten it!”

The shortest way of reporting predications is with following *OMA* only:

- 8.222 “*Mo-ao!*” *ge-ma*. (WMek)
 IMP.2SG-go 3PL-DNT
 “Go!”, they said.

Deictic disparity between the person-marking affixes of reported verbs and the actual participants in the utterance situation in which the speech is being reported (including the absent third person of the narrative discourse) is the most reliable indicator of reported speech. In the following the speaker (the narrator) refers to himself as the second person singular:

- 8.223 *E-inaga*: “*Mo-lao ?uma mo-iva*” *e-oma*. (EMek)
 3SG-uttered IMP-2SG-go pig IMP.2SG-cut 3SG-DNT
 He spoke: “Go and cut up the pig”, he said (to me).

In the next example a third person protagonist (absent from the US) refers to himself in the first person:

- 8.224 *Ia e-inaga*: “*Iu ae-io-ŋ-a*” *e-ma*. (NWMek)
 s/he 3SG-uttered I NEG.1SG-see-TH-3SG 3SG-DNT
 S/he spoke: “I don’t/didn’t see it”, s/he said.

When *thoughts* are reported directly one can use *OMA* or a verb of cognition:

- 8.225 [*Au eŋaina apuapu e-kapa-kapa*] *ke-oma-ŋa*. (EMek)
 man that cloud 3SG-make-RED 3PL-DNT-DUR
 They thought that man was making cloud. (US: He was making fire)
- 8.226 *Ke-opola-ŋa* [*au eŋaina apuapu e-kapa-kapa*]. (EMek)
 3PL-think-3SG man that cloud 3SG-make-RED
 They thought that man was making cloud. (See previous gloss.)

8.4.1.3 INDIRECT SPEECH

Reporting speech ‘indirectly’ in Mekeo involves none of the rules that make this area of English grammar so difficult for non-native speakers to master. However, deixis has to be relativised in order to accord with the actual speech situation rather than the reported speech situation. That is, the person of role-marking affixes ‘shifts’ from first and second person to third. Thus

- 8.227 “*Ga-mai*” *ge-ma*. (WMek)
 1PL-come 3PL-DNT.PAST
 “We (will) come” they said.

becomes

- 8.228 *Ge-mai ge-ma.* (WMek)
 3PL-come 3PL-DNT.PAST
 They said they had come//were coming//would come.

The following examples illustrate colloquial equivalents to the same sample of indirect reported speech from English. Only the relativised pronouns and pronominal affixes identify this as direct reported speech (thus in examples 8.229 to 8.232 one assumes that Peter said “S/he has come”):

- 8.229 *Peto e-giba oi o-mai.* (NWMek)
 Peter 3SG-speak you 2SG-come
 Peter said you had come.
- 8.230 *Peto i-oabi o-mai e-ma.* (WMek)
 Peter 3SG-speak 2SG-come 3SG-DNT
 Peter said you had come.
- 8.231 *Peto jji e-bai-n-i-au oi o-mai.* (NMek)
 Peter I 3SG-tell-TH-PF-1SG you 2SG-come
 Peter said you had come. (Peter told me you had come.)
- 8.232 *Peto e-pai-n-i-au lo-mai e-oma.* (EMek)
 Peter 3SG-tell-TH-PF-1SG 2SG-come 3SG-DNT
 Peter said you had come. (Peter told me you had come.)

Note the preference in NMek and EMek for the verb ‘tell’ as opposed to ‘speak, say’ for this locution.

Reporting a future tense verb is done in the following way:

- 8.233 *Peto i-oabi an-o-mai e-ma.* (WMek)
 Peter 3SG-speak FUT-2SG-come 3SG-DNT
 Peter said you would come.
- 8.234 *Peto e-bai-n-i-au oi o-mai.* (NMek)
 Peter 3SG-tell-TH-PF-1SG you 2SG-come
 Peter said you would come.
- 8.235 *Peto e-giba oi aga po-mai.⁸⁶* (NWMek)
 Peter 3SG-speak you name OBLG.2SG-come
 Peter said you would come.

Reporting a (disjunctive) question can be done in the following ways:

- 8.236 *Oi a-lo-mai ma afa-lo-mai* (EMek)
 you FUT-2SG-come INT HYP.NEG-B-2SG-come
ma Peto e-pa?ani.
 INT Peter 3SG-ask
 Peter asked whether you would come or not.
- 8.237 *Peto e-bakani an-o-mai ma nap-ai-do-mai* (WMek)
 Peter 3SG-ask FUT-2SG-come INT FUT.NEG-2SG-come

⁸⁶ Obligative mood is unexpected here.

ma e-ma.

INT 3SG-DNT

Peter asked whether you would come or not.

- 8.238 *Peto e-giβa oai aga no-mai ma* (NWMek)

Peter 3SG-speak you name FUT-2SG-come INT

pa-mai-ŋa.

DES.NEG.2SG-come-DUR

Peter asked whether you would come or not.

Reported commands are often encoded in an intentional mood (as in direct speech):

- 8.239 *Ida e-mai aidama, Peto e-bai-n-i-a* (WMek)

s/he 3SG-come time Peter 3SG-tell-TH-PF-3SG

pi-ao-buŋu.

OBLG.3SG-go-again

When he had come, Peter told him to go again.

- 8.240 *Iza e-mai gai, Peto e-bai-n-i-a* (NMek)

s/he 3SG-come but Peter 3SG-tell-TH-PF-3SG

fe-me-buŋu.

OBLG.3SG-return-again

When he had come, Peter told him to return again.

While the subordinate verb word takes an intentional mood, *OMA* may signal the tense of the speech event (within the limits of the system):⁸⁷

- 8.241 *Ia e-mai-ŋa, Peto e-βai-n-i-a* (NWMek)

s/he 3SG-come-DUR Peter 3SG-tell-TH-PF-3SG

na-io-βu e-ma.

IMP.3SG-go-again 3SG-DNT

When he had come, Peter told him to go again.

- 8.242 *Iji pam-ao an-a-oma.* (WMek)

I OBLG.1SG-go FUT-1SG-DNT

I'll tell (them) I want to go.

In some utterances it is unclear whether one is dealing with reported speech or reported 'purport'. I look briefly at this problem in the next section.

8.4.1.4 REPORTING PURPORT AND INTENTION

It is often clear from the context of the utterance situation that *OMA* is being used to report or question an intention rather than an utterance:

- 8.243 *Ala a-Ia-oma lo-oma?* (EMek)

what FUT-1SG-DNT 2SG-DNT

What do you want/expect me to do?

⁸⁷ The stress always falls on the SM in NWMek, WMek and NMek, so one cannot have marked stress signalling imperfective aspect. Indeed I have never recorded (noticed) EMek **e-oma*.

Only the pragmatic indices of the utterance situation can make this really clear. For example, I know from the context in which the following utterance occurred that *OMA* represents a mental event, an evaluation in the present, rather than a reported speech event in the past. The speaker began by saying that all the people of the village had said/thought that a woman was *bad*. He then interrupted his narrative to give his own personal opinion.

- 8.244 *Iji... belo a-oma.* (WMek)
 I good 1SG-DNT
 I ...thought (she) was good.

The context of situation alone can tell us whether a given token of *OMA* represents speech ('I said she was good') or thought. The remark was in fact made in the context of a conversation with me in which the speaker reported an event at which he had not been present and hence could not have spoken.

- 8.245 *Babiau, ida auḡa, abala ge-ma.* (WMek)
 people them TOP bad 3PL-DNT
Iji, babie, ika ka-gaḡa.gaḡa iwai-na
 I woman we.I 1PL-custom first-3SG
e-gaba-i-a buo, belo a-oma.
 3SG-do-PF-3SG cause good 1SG-DNT
 The people, as for them, they thought(said) she/it was bad. Me, as she did (according) to our ancient custom, I think the woman was good.

But sometimes, in narrative discourse, even the context fails to disambiguate, and the question could be asked whether the Mekeo themselves distinguished psychologically between saying and meaning (or intending) before they were introduced to English.

In the following example (from the same narrative text) it is not absolutely clear that *gema* does not represent a verb of uttering, but I take it to mean 'they desired, wanted', with the implication that they (unspecified) were making noises to that effect:

- 8.246 *Kopu-ai au maa-ḡa⁸⁸ meleki* (WMek)
 clan.house-OBL man face-3SG plate
ḡa-mai-ai-n-a gaḡa-ani-ani ge-ma.
 IMP.3SG-come-RTR-TH-3SG IMP.3PL-eat-RED 3PL-DNT
 The important people on the clan-house platform wanted her to bring plates so that they might eat.

In this last example the intentional (IMP) mood of the subordinate verbs indicates a true complement.

Next, an example that illustrates the verb *obolaḡa, opolaḡa* in the sense of 'remember'. The absence of an intentional mood definitely detracts from the complement status of the initial predication:

- 8.247 *Eḡaina Fata-ḡa la-pai-n-i-o lo-opolaḡa ma?* (EMek)
 that priest-3SG 1SG-tell-TH-PF-3SG 2SG-remember INT
 Do remember the priest I told you about?
 OR: Do you remember (that) I told you about that priest?

88 *Au maa-ḡa* (lit. 'man eye-3SG') is an idiom meaning 'everyone who counts'.

And finally, an example that illustrates a right-dislocated ‘complement’ of the verb ‘know’:

- 8.248 *Isa a-ke-loŋo, kapaina akā ipako.* (EMek)
 they NEG-3PL-know what name.3SG sago
 They don’t know what *ipako* means.

8.4.2 GOVERNED (MODAL) COMPLEMENTS

Only two verbs govern modal complements. In one of their meanings these always take a ‘subjunctive’ complement (with the governed verb in one or other of the intentional moods).⁸⁹ The verbs are *OMA* and *BAI*. I refer to these as TM-control verbs.

8.4.2.1 TM-CONTROL VERBS

These two verbs – in certain meanings⁹⁰ – can only take modal complements. The relevant meanings (or functions) can be categorised as jussive. *OMA* has been amply illustrated in §4.2.4 above, in this as well as other functions. Here are some examples containing *BAI* in the meaning ‘tell’:

- 8.249 *Fo-bai-n-a ŋa-mai.* (NMek)
 OBLG.2SG-tell-TH-3SG IMP.3SG-come
 You should tell him that he must come. OR: Tell him to come.
- 8.250 *Mo-bai-n-a p-ai-j-i-ao.* (WMek)
 IMP-tell-TH-3SG OBLG-NEG-B-3SG-go
 Tell him/her s/he shouldn’t go.
- 8.251 *Ida ga-bai-n-i-a, ŋa-aŋu ga-oma,* (WMek)
 him 1PL-tell-TH-PF-3SG IMP.3SG-sit 1PL-DNT
gai i-ao-bu.
 but 3SG-go-again
 We told him to sit/stay but he went back.

8.4.2.2 AVERTITIVE COMPLEMENTS: *MANIKI-NA* AND *POKA*

These operators correspond to the adverbial conjunctive expressions ‘lest’, ‘for fear that’ and ‘in case’. The complements are always in an intentional mood, and one can thus put these operators in the same class as the the verbs *-bai-n-a*, *-pai-n-a* ‘tell, order’ and **oma*, ‘intend’ (§3.3.6.2 above). That is to say, they contain underlying predicates to the effect: ‘I intend that X will not occur’. *POKA* could indeed be analysed as the negative, non-finite form of *OMA*.

- 8.252 *P-ai-d-o-kaŋau-gae napo-kua-lai poka.* (WMek)
 OBLG-NEG-B-2SG-climb-rise HYP.2SG-drop-AT LEST
 Do not climb up in case you fall

⁸⁹ Taylor divides the Motu clause-complement taking verbs into two groups, those that allow any tense and/or mood in the complement (Group 1) and those that only allow a “modal-future” verb in the complement (Group 2).

⁹⁰ Thus *bai-n-a*, *bai-n-a*, *pai-n-a* can mean ‘reprimand, scold, accuse’ and ‘relate’ as well as ‘tell, command’. *OMA* can mean ‘say, speak, mean, intend, want’ as well as ‘tell’.

- 8.253 *Lau-e-u kapia fe-ŋea foʔa, la-pa-pua-θ.* (EMek)
 I-POSS-1SG plate OBLG.3SG-lose LEST 1SG-CA-carry-3SG
 In case my plate goes missing I (will) hide it
- 8.254 *Kakia laa-ŋ-ai afa-lo-pea* (EMek)
 mud top-3SG-OBL HYP-2SG-walk
fo-ŋava-kani-n-a foʔa.
 OBLG.2SG-kick-poke-TH-3SG LEST
 You shouldn't walk on the mud in case you sink (your foot) into it.
- 8.255 *Io ke-piu-ŋa ke-ŋeŋe* (EMek)
 spear 3PL-throw-3SG 3PL-dodge
fe-o-n-i-ʔi foʔa.
 OBLG-pierce-TH-PF-3PL LEST
 They_i threw spears_k, they_j dodged, lest they_k pierce them_j

This last example demonstrates the coreference problem when several third person actants are simultaneously present in a predication/sentence.

8.5 COHESION OR COHERENCE

Mekeo is a weakly cohesive language if one confines oneself to an examination of its formal marking. Cross-referencing is ineffective and clear anaphors are rare. But so much is implicit in the social transactions of daily life that ambiguity is nonetheless rare. Text is decodable and has apparent cohesion due to its *coherence*, which it has on two levels: on the level of the discourse-pragmatic context and on the level of the cultural context.

By these statements I do not mean that there are *no* cohesive elements in Mekeo grammar and discourse. These are much the same as have been catalogued for such genetically related and structurally similar languages as Tawala and Iamalele:⁹¹ nominal anaphors, with and without the support of demonstrative pronouns, personal and demonstrative pronouns used as anaphors, determining suffixes, and role-marking affixes on the verb word. Role-marking on the verb word is indeed relatively well developed, and is usually obligatory, in Mekeo. But these mechanisms can only function within the limits of the co-indexing system, which (as I have shown at different points in the course of this study) is referentially defective. Third person markers function as little more than place holders. This problem has been recognised in grammars of Papuan languages (NAN) which openly discuss the issue of ambiguity,⁹² and Lichtenberk has recently described the largely pragmatic basis of anaphora in an Oceanic language that resembles Mekeo in many aspects.⁹³

91 These languages are spoken in Milne Bay and on Fergusson Island (PNG) respectively. They are Papuan Tip languages, like Mekeo, although they belong to the Nuclear Papuan Tip network, as opposed to Peripheral Papuan Tip network which includes Mekeo (§1.2.1.2). See Ezard (1978) on Tawala and Beaumont (1988) on Iamalele discourse cohesion.

92 See Nichols (1986:112-114). And see Whitehead (1981) for a useful survey of cross-reference in 35 Papuan languages, and some hypotheses. Nichols mentions six mechanisms used across languages to disambiguate head-marking affixes but none of these applies to Mekeo. In many Papuan languages switch-reference functions as an effective disambiguating mechanism, but this has not been imported into Mekeo or the other AN languages under discussion.

93 This language is To'aba'ita, which is spoken on Malaita Island in the south-east Solomons (see Lichtenberk 1988).

Thematic unity is the chief unifying force underlying text cohesion. Thematic unity covers unity of the participants and unity of time and place. These add a pre-linguistic organisation to text, which is reinforced by shared expectancies about the world and about the largely predictable doings of predictable and/or previously mentioned actants and circumstants. Daily life is composed of a series of largely predictable situations and transactions, which following Fillmore (1975 and 1977) we have been referring to as *scenes*.

In the last analysis it is the wealth of mutually shared knowledge and expectations that produces the culture-specific 'coherence' of the message, and the predictability which devolves from this coherence is what enables communication to take place:

It is not simply a knowledge of the language system, in all its details, that enables a listener to decode a spoken message. He has also at his disposal a very wide range of statistical information about the language. In this area the development of information theory has had a profound influence on linguistics, as on other branches of science. Its effect has been to bring sharply into focus the fact that using a language involves knowing a great deal about what is likely to follow at any point in a spoken message, that is a knowledge of sequential probabilities on all levels of the language.

(Fry 1970:31)

Fry goes on to quote Wiener to the effect that 'the most important thing we can know about a message is that it makes sense.' I might add: 'within the parameters of the culture.'

8.5.1 ANAPHORA

Anaphoric strategies play a prominent part in Mekeo discourse. These are not always very effective in terms of the clear identification of prior referents.⁹⁴ However, they help to create coherent text in their own way. I will first illustrate briefly a number of discourse strategies wherein pronouns play the key role, though doing little to disambiguate reference (§8.5.3.1). Then the role of nominal anaphora will be examined (§8.5.3.2).⁹⁵ This is followed by a consideration of semantic overlap, and lexical cohesion (§8.5.3.3). Finally (in §8.5.4.4) I examine resumptive topics.

8.5.1.1 DISCOURSE FUNCTIONS OF PRONOUNS

Many of the functions of pronouns in discourse could be described in a general way as deictic reinforcement. By deictic reinforcement I mean the use of either personal pronouns or demonstrative pronouns to refer back redundantly to referents *which have just been mentioned* (i.e. in the form of a nominal). This kind of apposition is technically anaphoric, but it is used less to identify an actant than

⁹⁴ Lichtenberk (1988:338-339) has found that, in To'aba'ita, pronominal anaphors are a largely inefficient means of identifying referents, with full nominal anaphors (formally definitised by means of demonstrative pronouns) being preferred in potentially ambiguous contexts and/or over longer stretches of text at a ratio of four to one. Givón's (1983) universal scale of anaphoric strategies predicts such a ratio, as Lichtenberk notes.

⁹⁵ It is worth noting that post-verbal additions do not form an attested repair strategy here, as they do in some statistically verb-final languages.

- a) to install a new topic with the potential to recur across predications in subject function,
- b) to signal a resumed subject/topic, often at considerable referential distance within the text,
- c) to signal a contrastive subject/topic or focus, where there is some danger of confusion, or
- d) to emphasise the presumed accessibility of a referent to the hearer.⁹⁶

Two somewhat different phenomena will be examined here. There are the uses of a third person personal pronoun: *ia*, *ida*, *iza*, *isa* (unmarked for number). And there are the uses of demonstrative pronouns. I deal with them in that order.

In the first example a new topic is introduced into a story:

- 8.256 *Au, akā...*, *nao akā...* *Mista Kilaun,* (EMek)
 man name.3SG foreigner name.3SG Mister Crown(?)
pau isa e-mai...
 now *he* 3SG-come
 A man by the name of..., a foreigner by the name of...Mister Crown,
 now *he* came...

It will be seen from this and the following examples that the personal pronoun normally follows the nominal to which it makes reference – it is anaphoric in this use.

In the next example (which comes from the middle of the narrative quoted at greater length in §8.5.1.3 below), *Kinokino* has already been introduced and so represents given information. *Isa* following immediately after the name is referentially redundant, but it signals a *change of subject* (the last words in the immediately preceding sentence were: *Ofuala e-mae* ‘Ofuala died’) – and incidentally affirms the familiarity of this referent to the hearer:

- 8.257 *Mo Kinokino,* *isa,* *e-ake,* *aa-ŋa* (EMek)
 just Flying.Squirrel her/him 3SG-descend e.s.s.sibling-3SG
e-afia
 3SG-take
 So Flying Squirrel, him, he came down, he took hold of his brother.

In the next example (from a recording), the speaker has just said what he himself thinks (i.e. that something was good) and he now goes on to state, by way of contrast, what other people think:

- 8.258 *Babiau, ida auŋa, abala ge-ma.* (WMek)
 people they TOP bad 3PL-DNT
 As for (other) people, *they* think (it was) bad.

It will be noticed that *ida* is a *marked* topic here, with topicalising *auŋa*. In other cases prosodic marking alone can signal a contrastive function for *ia*, *ida*, *iza*, *isa*. *Abala* ‘bad’ is here a contrastive focus, spoken with a somewhat marked pitch contour (hgh-falling).

⁹⁶ In this latter function deictics serve to affirm a community of background knowledge, and thus to bind the hearer socially to the speaker.

In the next example (which is also from a recorded text and is in answer to the question: ‘Who minded the drying platform?’) there are three co-referential elements in apposition to one another – and all of them in apposition to the subject marker on the following verb word. The personal pronoun *ida* restates the identity of the actant, without disambiguating it further than has already been achieved:

- 8.259 *Belo, ejaia tsiapolo au-ŋa,* (WMek)
 Belo that devil man-3SG
ida, maomao e-tsimai-a.
 him drying.platform 3SG-watch-PF-3SG
 Belo, that devil of a man, *him*, he was minding the drying platform.

Prior to *ida*, a co-relative predication restricts the reference of the otherwise rather common personal name *Belo*. But this example needs to be put into its larger context:

- 8.260
 Oa: *Ke, pau, ŋaea auŋa,* (EMek)
 and now that TOP
kai-s-au maomao e-uma-i-s-a?
 who-B-man drying.platform 3SG-roast-PF-B-3SG
 And now, as for that, who (specifically) roasted the drying platform?⁹⁷
 Simon: *Belo maomao e-tsimai-a.*⁹⁸ (WMek)
 Belo drying.platform 3SG-watch-PF-3SG
Belo, ejaia tsiapolo auŋa,
 Belo that devil man-3SG
ida, maomao e-tsimai-a.
 him drying.platform 3SG-watch-PF-3SG
 Belo was watching the drying platform. Belo, that devil of a man, *him*,
 he was minding the drying platform.

Belo is first mentioned as someone already familiar to the hearer. It can now be seen that the deictic *ida*, which refers back to both *Belo* and to *ejaia tsiapolo auŋa*, is not contrastive but merely emphasises that it was the *Belo* whom everyone knows who had ruined the drying platform.

The next example, which is a constructed one,⁹⁹ is to demonstrate that a sentence can remain thoroughly ambiguous despite the presence of the pronominal deictic:

- 8.261 *Au eŋa'ina, isa, papie e-iva-ŋ-a.* (EMek)
 man that him woman 3SG-speak-TH-3SG
 That man, him, he is calling the woman.

The uses of demonstrative pronouns parallel the uses of third person personal pronouns in most ways, but demonstratives have extra functions.

⁹⁷ I take it that this use of the verb *uma* represents sarcasm on Oa's part.

⁹⁸ Oa speaks EMek while Simon speaks WMek throughout this conversation. This is normal practice at places like Akufa where dialect areas border upon one another.

⁹⁹ That is to say, I have 'generated' it, using my knowledge of the rules of Mekeo grammar/discourse.

In the next example (from the same recorded text as example 8.258, which it precedes) demonstrative deixis is apparently redundant. The topic *babie* is given, it is indeed the discourse topic, and the context is unambiguous. *Babie* was the referent of several subject-markers in the previous sentence. The deictic phrase simply re-mentions the same referent – but thereby constitutes it as a super-marked topic:

- 8.262 *Iji, babie, eηaea auηa, belo a-oma.* (WMek)
 I woman that TOP good 1SG-DNT
 Me, the woman, that one, I think she was/did good.

The speaker can choose between relatively marked topicalisation by means of ...*auηa*, and hyper-marked topicalisation by means of ...*eηaia auηa*.

Hyper-topicalising deixis can be locative:

- 8.263 *Inae, ηaηa-ai, fo-lo-aηu-uka!* (EMek)
 here canoe-OBL OBLG.NEG-2SG-sit-enter
 You can't sit here in (the) canoe!
- 8.264 *Apu, ηa-e auηa, babiau alaka aibaia?* (WMek)
 place DX-LOC TOP people one not
 Were there no people in (the) place, there?

The expression *ηaea auηa*, *ηaina auηa* in particular seems to be used to buy time and to avoid relinquishing one's turn while planning the rest of the message. The expression *ηaea auηa* in Oa's question, in example 8.260 above, is a case in point. Compare the use of *ηaina auηa* in Oa's answer to the following:

- 8.265
 Simon: *Oai, ηa-e, krismas o-ba-pua, niyia?* (WMek)
 you DX-LOC Christmas 2SG-CA-end New.Year
 'Did you spend all of Christmas there, and the New Year?'
- Oa: *Mo, ηaina auηa, niyia, krismas, lau eηa-e.* (EMek)
 just that TOP New.Year Christmas I that-LOC
 Just wait, as for that, I was there for Christmas and the New Year.

Personal pronouns (or possessive morphemes) are conspicuous throughout texts of all kinds because of their frequent presence in possessive constructions, just before the possessive particle or the possessum:

- 8.266 *Mo, ida, ηa-kerere, autsina, ge-ma.* (WMek)
 just she 3SG-mistake two 3PL-DNT
 Now, as for her, she made two mistakes, they say.
 (lit: It's just, her, her mistakes were two they say/think.)

This is not obligatory, but it is the general rule, in all dialects, irrespective of whether the possessive particle *E-* is overtly present or not, and of whether the possessive morpheme accretes to the pronoun or to the possessum (§3.1.6). This ensures that the possessor is always a kind of focus, even in embedded and subordinated possessive predications.¹⁰⁰ Thus in the following example a proper name represents the possessor:

¹⁰⁰ This statement currently has the status of hypothesis only. Possession is morphologically a very complex area.

- 8.267 *Ame, e-ŋa eʔa, ŋamo-eŋae.* (EMek)
 Ame POSS-3SG house thus.there
 Ame's house is over there.

In the next example *Ame* is separated from what he possesses by a parenthesis, and so must be replaced by *isa*:

- 8.268 *Ame auŋa, lo-loŋo au-ŋa, isa e-ŋa* (EMek)
 Ame TOP 2SG-know man-3SG him POSS-3SG
eʔa, ŋa-mo-eŋae.
 house that-just-there
 Ame's house is over there.

Personal pronouns commonly occur in constructions with *POU*:

- 8.269 *Ida, agawā po, ge-mai.* (WMek)
 she spouse.3SG together 3PL-come
 She and her husband came.
- 8.270 *Oi, akava-mu fou, fo-mai.* (EMek)
 you spouse-2SG together OBLG.2PL-come
 You and your spouse should come.

8.5.1.2 NOMINAL ANAPHORA

Nominal anaphora is the chief alternative in Mekeo to non-specific anaphora at one extreme (as encoded by third person singular pronominal affixes) and specificational reference at the other (as encoded by co-relative predications).

Nominals may be either determinate or non-determinate. Determinate nominals (relational predicates) belong near the latter end of the scale just mentioned – they are definite in as much as they stand in a specified relation to some other definite nominal. Non-determinate nominals which are otherwise unmarked for definiteness (see below) may usually be read as definite.¹⁰¹ However, non-determinate nominals may be overtly marked for definiteness by means of an accompanying demonstrative pronoun. As illustrated in §2.1.1.2.3, a preceding pronoun encodes non-restricted reference while a following pronoun encodes restricted reference. I repeat the examples:

- eŋaiʔi-na ʔuma(-ŋa)* 'That/the pig' – non-restricted reference, definite
 (There is only one pig and I mean that one.)
- ʔuma eŋaʔi-na* 'That/the pig' – restricted reference, contrastive
 (There are several pigs, but I mean *that* one.)

Nominal anaphora, when non-determinate, is highly implicit. Overtly definitised nominals contain little more information than non-definitised nominals, other than the fact that the hearer is expected to be able to identify the referent (Hasan 1984:117-119). The contrast between restricted and non-restricted definiteness often amounts to a difference in

¹⁰¹ As illustrated in §2.1.1.2.3, indefinite topics normally have to be specified as such. For example, *au aminia, au alaka, au aŋa* 'o man one', i.e. 'a man'; however, it should be remembered that this is not a rule, and *au* 'man' can sometimes mean 'a man'.

emphasis.¹⁰² Note that there is no contrast between proximate and distal demonstratives (as described in §2.2.2.1) in this function.¹⁰³

The following three short texts¹⁰⁴ illustrate the different types of definiteness, implicit or explicit, as these actually occur in connected discourse. In the first extract all overt references to the topic have been underlined:

8.271 ?uma, ηau, ke-pitsi-n-i-a, ke-iva-iva-n-i-au (EMek)
pig young 3PL-shoot-TH-PF-3SG 3PL-speak-RED-TH-PF-1SG

ke-iva-iva-n-i-au, a-ke-loŋo..., a-la-loŋo!
3PL-speak-RED-TH-PF-1SG NEG-3PL-know NEG-1SG-hear

?uma vei-mo ke-pa-kipo ke-mai-s-ei-n-a,
pig water-just 3PL-CA-go.down 3PL-come-B-RTR-TH-3SG

ηa-e, ηaηa, ηa-e kua e-koko. ηa,
DX-LOC canoe DX-LOC nose(.3SG) 3SG-enter DX

inae-u e-kimu. Mo, e-fua, ?uma ηaina
stomach-1SG 3SG-bitter just 3SG-finish pig that

ke-oŋe-uka, e-fua, afu-mi-mo a-mue a-mai.
3PL-put-enter 3SG-finish place-1PL-just 1PL-turn 1PL-come

A pig, a young pig, they shot it, (and) they were calling me and calling me (but) they didn't know (where I was)..., I couldn't hear. They just floated the pig down river and brought it (like that), (and) there, the canoe, it put its nose in there. So, I was feeling hungry. Well, (when) that was finished, they put that pig in, (and when) they were finished, we returned to our camp.

In the first sentence of the above text a new topic – a pig – is referred to by means of an unmarked nominal with indefinite reference. This is by no means unusual. The second reference – by means of the same unmarked nominal – can be read as definite. The third reference is *followed* by a demonstrative pronoun and must thus be glossed as ‘*that* pig’. However, non-restricted reference is unnecessary here, as there is still only one pig, and the demonstrative pronoun can be interpreted as having an emphatic function.

A long segment of text about spearing fish follows the account of the shooting of the pig, and then a confused section of dialogue centred around an instance of near homonymy between the dialects, and the misunderstanding that resulted. The pig then re-enters the conversation, although it is now referred to (at first) as *tsitsi* ‘meat’. All references to ‘meat’ and ‘pig’ are underlined:

8.272 A-mai a-mai a-mai, pajua, pau, ke-inaka, pau (EMek)
1PL-come 1PL-come 1PL-come village now 3PL-say now

“tsitsi”, lau auŋa la-opolaŋa pau, tsitsi aŋa-kimu-n-i
meat I TOP 1SG-think now meat 1PL-singe-TH-PF

¹⁰² Statistical studies are needed to confirm this.

¹⁰³ Compare To’aba’ita, where there are two demonstratives with different uses corresponding to a greater or lesser referential distance, i.e. interfering text (Lichtenberk 1988).

¹⁰⁴ The first two are extracts from a much longer informal narrative text, while the third is extrapolated from a short story, or myth.

kai a-ke-iva la-oma. ŋa-puo pau, la-mai
 but FUT-3PL-cut 1SG-DNT that-cause now 1SG-come

la-oŋe-i-s-a e-fua, ininau, ŋaina au-ʻi, koŋa
 1SG-put-PF-B-3SG 3SG-finish leaf that one-3PL coconut

ininau-na, la-fou-i-ʻi la-mai la-oŋe-i-s-a.
 leaf-3PL 1SG-cut-PF-3PL 1SG-come 1SG-put-PF-B-3SG

“A-kimu-ŋ-a kai, ?uma fo-iva” la-oma.
 1PL-singe-TH-3SG but pig OBLG.2SG/PL-cut 1SG-DNT

“Laaʻi” ke-oma. “?uma mai pui-na mo a-iva” ke-oma.
 Not 3PL-DNT pig with bristle-3SG just 1PL-cut 3PL-DNT

“Ōi ŋaina tsitsi o-pa-lifu-i-ʻi” la-oma. Laa-fai-ai
 you that meat 2PL-CA-bad-PF-3PL 1SG-DNT breath-finish-OBL

mo a-e-kai-n-i-au, au isa ke-iva-iva
 just NEG-3SG-suffice-TH-PF-1SG man they 3PL-cut-RED

ke-iva-iva mo la-aŋu mo la-isa-ʻi. La-isa-ʻi
 3PL-cut-RED just 1SG-sit just 1SG-look/see-3PL 1SG-look/see-3PL

kai, foʻama, isa, e-aŋa e-mai e-kae-ŋa,
 but veg.food it 3SG-burn 3SG-come 3SG-reach-DUR

kai-mu e-kai. Uma ŋaina auŋa ke-lao-ai-n-a
 wait-2SG 3SG-wait pig that TOP 3PL-go-RTR-TH-3SG

ke-ŋaku-n-i-a e-fua, mei fofou-ŋa mo
 3PL-cook-TH-PF-3SG 3SG-finish whole-3SG just

ke-oŋe-uka ke-mai-s-ei-n-a.
 3PL-put-go.in 3PL-come-B-RTR-TH-3SG

We came and came and came, it was the village, now, they said, now, “the meat”, as for me I thought, now, after we have singed the meat they will cut it, I thought. Therefore, now, I came (and) I put it, it was finished, leaves, those ones, coconut leaves, I cut (and) I came (and) I put them (there). “You should cut up the pig (only) after we have singed it”, I said. “No”, they said. “We will just cut the pig with the bristles”, they said. “You are spoiling that meat”, I said. My breath ran out and it was no use, the men, they were cutting and cutting (and) I just sat and watched them. I watched them, the vegetable food, it, it roasted, it came (along), it was ready, it was waiting for you. As for that pig, they brought it, (and) they cooked it (and) it was finished, they just put the whole thing in and brought it.

There are two tokens of the meronymic *tsitsi* ‘meat’ which is by association definite. Then there are two mentions of *?uma* ‘pig’, which is again definite, though the actual word was used at a considerable referential distance, much earlier in the rather rambling narrative. The next reference is the meronymic *ŋaina tsitsi* ‘that meat’. This is non-restricted definite and contrasts with implicit definiteness of *tsitsi* or *?uma*. Finally, in the second last line, there is the reference *uma ŋaina auŋa*, which is marked as definite *with restricted reference*, and at the same time topicalised. This seems completely unnecessary here, as the pig has been

effectively foregrounded for some time. One must look for an expressive explanation for this marking.

Finally, in order to illustrate referential strategies in a passage where the possibility of ambiguity is high, a summary of reference in a short story is presented. The main characters are a set of three young men and a set of three young girls, who finally pair off and marry. However, early on in the story a second set of three girls appears momentarily on the scene. In this story reference was made the following number of times, in the following sequence and in the following ways, to the various characters:

Form or words:	Sense in context:	
i) <i>iviao oiso</i>	Three girls...	(indefinite)
ii) <i>iviao oiso</i>	The three girls...	(definite)
iii) <i>iviao</i>	The girls...	(definite)
iv) <i>iviao</i>	The girls...	(definite)
v) <i>iviao oiso'i i'oi-'i</i>	The other three girls...	(definite, contrastive)
vi) <i>inae'i iviao'i oiso auŋa</i>	Now these three girls...	(definite, contrastive, marked topic)
vii) <i>iviao</i>	The girls...	(definite)
viii) <i>iviao</i>	The girls...	(definite)

The three youths were referred to twice as *o'oe oiso* ('youth three') and thereafter as *au'i oiso* ('the men/the ones three').

An important point is the ability of a nominal to take number marking when necessary. This assumes a prior topic noun with which the marked noun agrees, as in vi) above. Examples from the text follow:

- a) *au'i* the men/ones
- b) *iviao'i* the girls
- c) *ŋae-'i* those

A final example (from a dialogue) illustrates the literal as opposed to the metaphoric use of demonstrative definitisers:

8.273

Simon: *Ŋa agai goà eŋa e-ma?* (WMek)
 DX who like that 3SG-DNT?
 That, who sort of said that?

Oa: *Ŋa ifiao ŋaina au-'i. Okapai ifiao-'i.*
 DX girl that one-3PL Okavae girl-3PL
 That, it was those girls. The Okavae girls.

Notice that *au-'i* reinforces the deictic *ŋaina*. *Ŋaina* has an emphatic and/or contrastive function here, as well as marking restrictive definiteness, while *au-'i* signals both definiteness and specificity. (I have tentatively translated *goà*, literally 'its likeness/like', as 'sort of'. This is probably a fairly close rendering of its discourse function here.)

8.5.1.3 SEMANTIC OVERLAP

The *interlacing* of actants and circumstants is one of the main semantic strategies underlying text cohesion in Mekeo.¹⁰⁵ Unity of time and place is another. Together, given the situation of culture, these factors make events largely predictable (see §8.5.4.1). The context, in effect, constrains the sense, just as culture itself constrains behaviour.

The interlacing of actants does not require their direct mention, or full mention. Partial coreference is made by means of items that habitually collocate, or items that are of differing levels of abstraction (Halliday and Hasan 1976:284-288). For example, *oŋoŋo* in the text below, literally ‘dry’, can be identified as a coconut because a) coconuts are ‘present to the scene’ and b) this is a term for a stage of growth/ripeness in coconuts. Similarly, *tsitsi* ‘meat’ was clearly coreferential with *?uma* ‘pig’ in example text 8.272 above.

I shall now illustrate cohesion and coherence, and some of the devices mentioned above, with the opening of a popular folktale about Flying Squirrel and Blue-Tongue Lizard. The two protagonists – a legendary ‘pair’ – are cohesively indexed throughout the first phase by third person plural subject marking and third person plural determining suffixes. This is indicated in the text by underlining. However, notice how cross-reference fails when another third person plural topic appears. Third person singular cross-referencing is quite useless as a disambiguating device, as there are two third person participants (not to mention the coconuts). And the frequent occurrence of quoted speech, without any signals, introduces first person singular, second person singular and first person plural subject marking into the story.

A certain degree of interclausal and intersentential cohesion is realised by conjunctive particles, and these are indicated in small capitals. These are, over 19 lines of text: *-kai, e-fua, -kai, ke, ke, e-oma pau...aisama, afu-ŋa*. It is worth pointing out how little use the deictics are in this text in disambiguating participants or in cross-referencing times or places. They function rather to foreground and/or topicalise actants and circumstants.

The first phase of the story deals with hunger and the search for sustenance. This lends thematic unity to this sequence, or phase. Not only that but it ‘subcategorises’ a whole area of lexicon connected with hunger, eating and the names of foodstuffs. I have indicated this kind of lexical cohesion in the text by putting the key words into bold. As noted above, this kind of cohesion is as much semantic as lexical. But it is not enough to establish “the indexical consequences” (Widdowson 1983:69) of the connections. What happens next is that a range of “bridging, adding and restructuring procedures are directed at assembling the information provided into schematic patterns” (Widdowson p.70). Plausible patterns are *coherent* patterns. They ultimately reflect a cultural framework shared by the speaker and the hearer, a scene within which the story unfolds simultaneously for both of the speech act participants. It is this shared semantic scene, and the requirement that events cohere, that enable both of these (and the linguist) to assign reference plausibly to the subject markers.

¹⁰⁵ “Interlacing” and “interweaving” (of functions and participants) are terms used by Lehmann (1988) to describe a different phenomenon. I am here concerned with what Halliday and Hasan call “lexical cohesion”, while widening that concept to include the notion of collocation. I prefer the pre-linguistic term semantic overlap.

8.274 *Kino-kino isa Ofuala auni-ʔi fou ke-ka ke-feu-feu.* (EMek)
 Kinokino him Ofuala pair-2PL together 3PL-lie 3PL-sleep-RED

Ke-ʔue-ŋe-kai, inae-ʔi e-kimu. Kino-kino Ofuala
 3PL-rise-CNT-but stomach-3PL 3SG-bitter. Kinokino Ofuala

e-ifa-ŋa, ʔisa a-lao koŋa aŋao ma-pa-ake,
 3SG-speak-3SG we.I 1PL-go coconut one IMP.1SG-CA-go.down

inae-ʔa e-kimuʔ. E-FUA ke-lao koŋa
 stomach-1PL.I 3SG-bitter 3SG-finish 3PL-go coconut(tree)

e-ʔaŋa-au-kae, oŋoŋo¹⁰⁶ e-pa-ʔua-lai-s-a.
 3SG-crawl-go.up-rise dry 3SG-CA-hang-AT-B-3SG.

Flying Squirrel and Lizard, they were lying down sleeping the two of them together. After they woke up they were hungry. Flying Squirrel said to Lizard, “Let’s go and I’ll get down a coconut, for we’re hungry”. That said, they went and he climbed up a coconut (tree), (and) he threw down a dry one.

(It will be noticed here that *oŋoŋo* derives its meaning from *koŋa* not by virtue of co-reference but by hyponymy, that variety of lexical cohesion (or semantic overlap) called collocation.¹⁰⁷)

ʔoi mo-apa-ʔau-kai, koŋa ma-pa-ʔua-lai-s-a
 you IMP.2SG-stand-hang-but coconut IMP.1SG-CA-hang-AT-B-3SG

ŋa aŋ-e-fai.ʔ Mo-piu-lai-s-a a-la-fio.ʔ
 thus FUT-3SG-‘come’ IMP.2SG-throw-AT-B-3SG FUT-1SG-catch.

1	2	3
<i>E-piu-lai-s-a</i>	<i>e-fio-i-s-a,</i>	<i>ŋa-e</i>
3SG-throw-AT-B-3SG	3SG-catch-PF-B-3SG	that-CNT

e-oŋe-i-s-a.
 3SG-put-PF-B-3SG

“As soon as you stand aside, I’ll throw down a coconut and like that you can get it.”¹⁰⁸ “Throw it and I’ll catch.” He threw it (and) he caught it (and) he put it over there.

(Note that in this last sentence the identity of the third person singular – of which there are three tokens – can only be ascertained from the context. The grammar alone gives no help. The fact that two chunks of direct speech have just been quoted without a reporting verb or a reiterated subject-topic means that the hearer must backtrack for several sentences to find a *possible* denotation for the role-marking affixes.)

¹⁰⁶ *Oŋoŋo* here signifies ‘mature (coconut)’. In this context it contrasts with *bea*, *pea* and *oli* (or *ori*) all of which signify coconuts at different stages of growth or ripeness. See below, same text.

¹⁰⁷ Collocation, of which hyponymy is one form, is described by Halliday and Hasan (1976:284) as “the most problematical part of lexical cohesion”. I am calling this coherence here.

¹⁰⁸ The predicate *aŋ-e-fai* translates literally as ‘it will come to you’. The addressee is always the goal of *wai*, *vai*, *fai* (see §3.1.4.2).

“*Oi fo-apa-au-KAI KE namo’o faaŋa maisa*
 You OBLG.2SG-stand-hang-but and this.like skin unripe
a-la-pa-ʔua-lai-s-a aŋ-e-fai.”¹⁰⁹ “*Isa pa-ʔua-lai-s-a*
 FUT-1SG-CA-hang-AT-B-3SG FUT-3SG-‘come’ 1PL.I CA-hang-AT-B-3SG
a-la-fio” e-oma. KE pea e-pa-ʔua-lai-s-a
 FUT-1SG-catch 3SG-DNT And dry.coconut¹¹⁰ 3SG-CA-hang-AT-B-3SG
*e-fio-i-s-a. ŋae auni-ʔi fou*¹¹¹ *e-oŋe-fou-a.*
 3SG-catch-PF-B-3SG there pair-3PL together 3SG-put-together-3PL
 “*Oi fo-apa-ʔau namo’o oli*¹¹²
 You OBLG.2SG-stand-hang this young.coconut
a-la-pa-ʔua-lai-s-a aŋ-e-fai.”
 FUT-1SG-CA-hang-AT-B-3SG FUT-3SG-‘come’
 “*A isa a-lo-pa-ʔua-lai-s-a a-la-fio.”*
 A it FUT-2SG-CA-hang-AT-B-3SG FUT-1SG-catch
E-OMA PAU oli e-pa-ʔua-lai-s-a AISAMA,
 3SG-DNT now young.coconut 3SG-CA-hang-AT-B-3SG time
ŋa-fio e-oma e-vio AFU-ŋA inae-ŋa
 IMP.3SG-catch 3SG-DNT 3SG-catch place-3SG stomach-3SG
e-pa-au-feke-lai-n-a. E-pa-au-feke-lai-n-a,
 3SG-CA-hit-split-AT-TH-3SG 3SG-CA-hit-split-AT-TH-3SG
Ofuala e-mae. Mo Kino-kino isa e-ake
 Blue.Tongue.Lizard 3SG-die Now Flying.Squirrel him 3SG-descend
aa-ŋa e-afi-a, e-afi-a e-lao paŋua-ai,
 eld.s.sex-sib.-3SG 3SG-take-3SG 3SG-take-3SG 3SG-go village-OBL
ʔufu aʔama-ŋa-ai e-oŋe-i-s-a.
 clan.house verandah-3SG-OBL 3SG-put-PF-B-3SG
 “You should just stand aside and this way I’ll throw down a green one and you
 can get it.” “We will catch what is dropped”, he said. And he threw down a dry
 one and he caught it. He put it over there, the two together. “You stand aside and
 I’ll throw down this young one and you can get it (it will come to you). “Ah,
 that one, you’ll drop it and I’ll catch it.” Now when, saying this, he had dropped
 the young one, he wanted to catch it but instead of catching it it split his stomach
 It split his stomach and Blue-Tongue Lizard died. Now Flying Squirrel, him, he
 came down and took his older brother and brought him to the village, he put him
 on the the clan-house verandah.

109 The last verb word means literally ‘It will come to you’.

110 *Bea. pea* is a coconut whose juice has dried up but which is still not completely ripe.

111 Note that *auni-ʔi fou* could refer to the two protagonists, as it did earlier.

112 *Oli.* or *ori.* is a young coconut with juice but no meat. *Ori* (with *r*) suggests a Roro borrowing, as [r] is not an allophone of /l/ in Mekeo.

The contrapuntal interplay of new and resumptive topics, in or out of focus, with successive predicates, is similar to the commingling of background and foreground that has been described by some writers. Although one might expect imperfective aspect to appear in background passages and perfective in the foregrounded narrative, it is impossible to discern any such pattern here.

The above passage provides an example of a chain made up both of identical lexical items that refer to different but related entities and of non-identical lexical items that either refer to the same entity or refer to related entities (as members of a collocational set). The chain consists of *koŋa aŋao* meaning 'a coconut', followed by *koŋa* meaning 'a coconut tree', followed by *oŋoŋo* 'a kind of coconut', *koŋa* again meaning 'a coconut', *namo'o* 'this', coreferential with the immediately following *faaŋa maisa* 'a kind of coconut', *isa* meaning 'it' and coreferential with the preceding, *pea* 'a kind of coconut', and so on.

Immediately following that there are three references to the same coconut, which is referred to twice by the hyponym *oli* and once by the (normally personal) pronoun *isa*. Note that at the third mention of this entity over three adjacent sentences, i.e. the second use of the term *oli*, there is no marking for definiteness (whether by means of a deictically/anaphorically functioning demonstrative pronoun or by means of the specificational *auŋa*). This form of implicit definiteness, or definiteness by association, is typical of many texts.

8.5.1.4 MARKED TOPICS

In this section the actual frequency with which *auŋa* occurs in longer conversational texts will be illustrated, as well as some of its discourse-pragmatic functions. Due to limitations of space I will concentrate on a single (WMek) text, but first some shorter examples are adduced in order to demonstrate in a short space the range of functions which *auŋa* can fulfil.

First, a reminder of the underlying predicative uses of *auŋa*:

- 8.275 *Au-ŋa!* (all dialects)
 one-3SG
 (That's) the one!
- 8.276 *Eŋaina mo au-ŋa.* (EMek)
 that just one-3SG
 That (is) exactly it.

Au-ŋa is also – as noted above – used as a topicaliser:

- 8.277 *Ke bai ŋaea ao-ŋa-ai auŋa...* (EMek)
 and now that inside-3SG-OBL TOP
 And, now, (it was).during that time...

Sometimes it is difficult to be sure which of these two functions it is fulfilling:

- 8.278 *Apu, ŋaea au-ŋa, babiau alaka aibaia?* (EMek)
 place that one-3SG people one not
 (The) place, that (is the) one, (were there) no people at all?
 (lit. Place, that being the one...)

Auŋa also functions as a relativiser:

- 8.279 *Ge bauŋa ibauma au-ŋa ŋa gaino?* (WMek)
 and village huge one-3SG DX far
 And the village which is the big one, is that far?

And it also functions simply to background the item that precedes it, to mark it as an unquestionable given.¹¹³ A somewhat longer stretch of conversation follows to illustrate this function:

- 8.280 *Pau, ŋae auŋa aŋe-ŋaku-ŋaku, papiau kapa* (EMek)
 Now there TOP FUT.3SG-cook-RED people thing
auŋa mo, eŋae alo-aŋu auŋa alo-ani-ani.
 TOP just there FUT.2SG-sit TOP FUT.2SG-eat-RED
 Now, she will cook there (right!), the people's place is there (right!),
 (and) you will sit there (right!) and you will eat.

The longer text that follows was elicited by giving a leading question to an informant (a 17 year-old male who had been educated to Form IV and spoke good intermediate-level English) and encouraging him to speak at length in his reply. References to his thought processes or intentions are marked by an asterisk, and items topicalised with *auŋa* are underlined.

- 8.281 Question: 'Where will you be next year?'

Oai, aŋo-ka tsinibo-ŋa-ai a ano-boa ma?
 you front-1PL year-3SG-OBL what FUT.2SG-walk INT?

**A-obola-ŋa aŋo-ka tsinibo-ŋa-ai *iji ia-mino pama-ao*
 1SG-think-3SG front-1PL year-3S-OBL I 1SG-brain 1SG-go

*kolej alaka ma. Ke *ogo ai-d-a-loŋo belo, ŋome*
 college one INT CNJ 'vine' NEG-B-1SG-know good source

bai-jina-au-tsi-ai auŋa, malele imi-tsi bai Gret ten
 now-day-one-3PL-OBL TOP school child-3PL now Grade ten

o Fom foa ge-ba-pua imi-tsi aut-si auŋa,
 or Form four 3PL-CA-finish child-3PL one-3PL TOP

binauŋa apu-tsi ai-gi-apsi-a. ŋa buo-ŋa-ai
 work place-3PL NEG-3PL-take-3SG that cause-3SG-OBL

*apa-ŋa-mo *a-obobo goa ikoboŋa. Ke *iji ia-mino*
 little-3SG-just 1SG-worry like same and I 1SG-brain

goà auŋa, kolej alaka pama-ao, ŋaea mo auŋa,
 like TOP college one OBLG.1SG-go that just TOP

**a-obola-alonaina Ge, pepa mo ŋome-ŋa-ai a*
 1SG-think-much CNJ paper just base-3SG-OBL what

*ne-ge-gaba-oma, ŋaea mo auŋa *a-obobo-ai-n-a.*
 FUT-3PL-do-DNT that just TOP 1SG-worry-RTR-TH-3SG

¹¹³ As this is a specialised part of its topicalising function, I gloss it TOP.

Where will you be next year? I think that in the year ahead, as I see it, I could perhaps go to a college. But I really don't know exactly since, these days now, school children, now, the children who finish Grade ten, or Form four, these ones, they won't find positions (employment). Because of that, it's like I worry a bit. And to my way of thinking now, if I went to some college, that now, I think about it a lot. But how will they react to my certificate, that now, I worry a lot about it.

There are several topics which weave separate strands throughout the text. Reference is repeatedly made to the speaker's intentions (verbs or idioms of mental process are marked in the text with asterisks). His plans or intentions constitute the theme or discourse topic of this whole monologue, they are what he has just been asked about. His thought processes are foregrounded by the phrases: *aobolaŋa, iji ia-mino, ogo aidaloŋo belo, iji ia-mino goa auŋa*. That is, there are four mentions over five sentences (I discount places where the speaker says he is worried – this is incidental to the answer, not a direct reference to his intentions.)

From this passage it is evident that the particle *auŋa* can mark a topic as contrastive, new, resumed or new and important:

1. The expression *bai-jina-au-tsi-ai auŋa* 'as for these days' (in the third line) represents a contrastive topic, contrasted with *aŋo-ka tsinibo-ŋa-ai* 'the days ahead' (mentioned twice in the first two lines).
2. The topicalised sentence (actually a co-relative predication) *malele imi-tsi bai Gret ten o Fom foa ge-ba-pua imi-tsi au-tsi auŋa* presents a new topic – 'school-boys who have finished Grade 10 or Form 4'.
3. The expression *iji ia-mino goà auŋa* finally introduces his actual opinion as a new and important topic.
4. The expression *ŋaea mo auŋa* (repeated twice in the last two lines) refers back to his opinion, as just presented, and thus represents a resumed topic.

8.5.1.5 CONCLUSION

There is a sense in which some of the definitising strategies outlined above can be regarded as types of conversational 'repair'.¹¹⁴ Some of these, however, are less effective than others in disambiguating reference. As already noted, a demonstrative pronoun in restricted or non-restricted reference signals little more than the fact that the speaker expects the hearer to be able to identify something. In response to the question: 'Which pig?' it is little use saying: '*That* pig!' – unless one's interlocutor can actually see the animal under discussion.

8.5.2 ACTIVE LISTENING: STRATEGIES

The emphasis in Mekeo is less upon decoding strategies than on parallel coding by the hearer, who anticipates the speaker's progress and frequently proffers potential continuations

¹¹⁴ The concept of "conversational repair" originated in Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977). See also Levinson (1983:339-345) for a more recent treatment based on the foregoing.

for approval or disapproval by the speaker.¹¹⁵ Decoding is also carried out, but it entails a psychological lag between hearing and processing the grammatical component of the heard language. I call this delayed parsing.

In Mekeo discourse, in practice, there is rarely any awareness of the kinds of dysfunctional ambiguities detailed in previous sections. I argue here that this is less a function of the language *qua* system than of parallel coding and/or delayed parsing.

8.5.2.1 ANTICIPATION

The shared frames of culture and environment frequently allow a hearer to add to a narrative, as in the following examples:

8.282

Oa: *Aŋa'o ke-o-n-i-a ŋaŋa alo-ŋ-ai* (EMek)
 one 3PL-stab-TH-PF-3SG canoe inside-3SG-OBL

ke-oŋe-uka, aŋa'o ke-o-n-i-a ŋaŋa alo-ŋ-ai
 3PL-put-enter one 3PL-stab-TH-PF-3SG canoe inside-3SG-OBL

ke-oŋe-uka, ŋa pau, ŋaŋa alō ŋaina auŋa...
 3PL-put-enter so now canoe inside.3SG that.one TOP
 They stabbed one and put it into the canoe, they stabbed one and
 put it into the canoe, so now, the inside of the canoe, well it was...

Simon: *Ge-ŋabu-j-i-a.* (WMek)
 3PL-flail-TH-PF-3SG
 They flailed (about).

Oa: *Ke-ŋapu-k-i-a a'o ke-lou.* (EMek)
 3PL-flail-TH-PF-3SG noise 3PL-quarrel
 They flailed (about), they made a racket.

Simon's proffered addition can be called a potential continuation, in the event readily taken up by the speaker as a part of his own narrative. Anticipation is an important listening strategy in every culture, but cultures differ as to the extent to which *explicit guessing* is encouraged (as opposed to the mere expression of incomprehension).¹¹⁶ Another example from the same conversation follows:

8.283

Oa: *[Ufai] Laa-ŋa mo ke-mai, laa-ŋa mo ke-lao,* (EMek)
 fish.sp top-3SG just 3PL-come top-3SG just 3PL-go

kalautsi ke-afi-a.
 spear 3PL-take-3SG

The ufai were coming and going on the surface of the water, they took spears.

¹¹⁵ The same strategy is favoured by the Australians Aborigines of South-east Queensland. See Eades (1985). Other cultures favour clarification requests.

¹¹⁶ The latter is what Ochs calls the "minimal grasp" strategy (see Ochs 1988, Chapter 7). Samoans disfavour guessing by a hearer (i.e. anticipation), while the Mekeo, like some Australian Aborigines, favour it and expect it.

Simon: *Ubi i-aka buo, epo-tsi ge-puji-gae.* (WMek)
 water 3SG-draw cause.3SG self-3PL 3PL-emerge-rise
 Because the water withdrew, they came to the surface of their own accord.

Oa: *E! vei e-fuṅa-ʔafe-ai-n-a ke,* (EMek)
 yes water 3SG-dry.up-exhaust-RTR-TH-3SG and
pau, isa, a-lo-apa, ina-moʔo, ufai maʔo a-lo-oni.
 now they FUT-2SG-stand this-just fish.sp. many FUT-2SG-pierce
 Yes! The water had dried right up and, now, they ...if you will just stand like
 this...you will spear many ufai.

Simon again proffered a continuation, which was taken up albeit in slightly different words (even allowing for the fact that they are speaking in different dialects). The proffered sentence was uttered in a matter-of-fact voice, with assertive intonation.

On the other hand, questions can occur just as frequently, and function to signal the hearer's continued interest:

8.284

Oa: *"A-lao mo, inei ke-ṅopo-kae."* (EMek)
 1PL-go just bird 3PL-fly-rise
 "As we went [some] birds flew up."

Simon: *"Maua?"* (WMek)
 big
 [Were they] big [ones] ?

Oa: *"Mmm ʔuṅaʔa, ʔeʔele laa 'i!"* (EMek)
 mmm Goura.pigeon small not
 "Mmm! [They were] Goura pigeon, [and they were] not small!"

A proffered continuation may be refused, but not rejected. This is often accomplished with a phrase like the following:

8.285 *Kapa lo-oma.* (EMek)
 what 2SG-DNT
 Whatever you think. OR: As you think.

The hearer's right to restructure the message is thus recognised, though his initiative is in this case not adopted.

8.5.2.2 DELAYED PARSING

It is clear, simply from the linear structure of verbal predications, and mainly from the fact that the densely encoded verb word comes at the end of a predication, that grammatical functions cannot be assigned to the topic nominals until the end of the predication has been reached.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ As already noted, the point is made by Nichols (1986:81-82) that verb-initial word order is the optimal arrangement for a head-marking language, from the viewpoint of a sentence processor.

This can be illustrated with an actual example (from a sentence given above):

- 8.286 [Isa] *Papiau-papiau, akavā-mo* (EMek)
 she people-RED spouse.3SG-just
e-oma-ʔafeai-n-i-ʔi.
 3SG-DNT-completely-TH-PF-3PL
 She thinks everyone is her husband.

At the point in time when a hearer has been given the first two nominals only (*isa* did not appear in surface structure), that hearer could reasonably entertain a number of different expectations simultaneously,¹¹⁸ some of which can be listed formally, without regard to the content of any verbal base:

Papiau-papiau, akava-mo...

- i) *papiau-papiau* = S, *akava* = O
- ii) *akava* = S, *papiau-papiau* = O

These possibilities allow the hearer to predict a range of possible configurations of number-marking on the core:

- 1) V = 3SG-Verb-3PL
- 2) V = 3PL-Verb-3SG

Given this information and nothing more the hearer might anticipate a number of continuations. Any of the following seem more likely in the abstract than the actual continuation:

- a) *e-au-n-i-ʔi* ('he beat them'); *e-pai-n-i-ʔi* ('he warned/told them')
- b) *ke-au-n-i-a* ('they beat him'); *ke-pai-n-i-a* ('they warned/told him')

Clearly, the hearer may entertain these expectations, but s/he must refrain from choosing, and await the end of the sentence.

The perceptual and cognitive implications of Mekeo-type grammars have yet to be investigated. One would expect a measurable lag in the processing of input, while the hearer waits for the grammatical 'key' to the topic nominal or nominals, as compared with a head-initial language or language with fixed word order or indeed a dependent-marking SVO language. Listed topics must be stored in the short-term memory, and then, when all the clues are in, the sentence is parsed *retrospectively*. Since the 'key' is in any case frequently undermarked and hence underdetermined for reference, often establishing no more than the presence or absence of arguments, a further delay can be predicted (in certain situations at least) while the hearer decides between competing interpretations.

This contrasts with simultaneous linear parsing as carried out by hearers of more highly coded languages. It is widely accepted nowadays, by psychologists and cognitive scientists, that comprehension "proceeds in a piecemeal, 'incremental' fashion" (Altman and Steedman 1988:192).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ That the hearer has heard PC2 on *papiau-papiau* and PC1 on *akavā-mo* is irrelevant. These facts contain no syntactic entailments.

¹¹⁹ LFG grammarians claim that their theory is compatible with incremental semantics (e.g. Bresnan 1982; Steedman 1985).

Decoding in Mekeo must thus be *provisional*. There is an expectation that more than one approximation will have to be made before one has adequately 'copied' the speaker's intention. Successive approximations are matched against situational (i.e. pragmatic) knowledge. The hearer's final step will most likely be to test the hypothesis arrived at by offering plausible continuations for acceptance or rejection by the speaker. This is what was discussed in the previous section.

8.5.3 NEGOTIABLE VERSUS NON-NEGOTIABLE REALITY

In this chapter I have attempted to show how Mekeo discourse at the level of linked verbal predications is characterised by an even greater degree of indeterminacy than at the level of the simple verbal predications. There is no well developed "coreference maintenance system" such as the ones listed in Nichols (1986:112-114), or by Foley and Van Valin (1984, see especially Chapters 6 and 7). The grammar tolerates a considerable degree of referential uncertainty. This is implicit in that a) third person pronominal role-markers on the verb word may carry no semantic information about their referents,¹²⁰ b) free nominals are not obligatorily marked for number or definiteness, c) anaphora is pragmatically rather than formally determined, and d) the lexicon does not contain a delimited set of verbs with fixed case-frames.

Indeterminacy is compounded by the combination of verb-final word order with head-marking. The cataphoric nature of predication-internal cross-reference, and the positional freedom of optional constituents, with an unordered queue of nominals looking forward to the role-markers on the verb for their syntactic functions, prolong the hearer's uncertainty about the argument structure of the predication.¹²¹ Since third person role-markers encode a minimum of semantic information, this uncertainty is in principle irresolvable. Syntactic bonds in Mekeo are often, grammatically, *untraceable*. Pragmatic principles provide the main strategies available to hearers in identifying the participants, in relation to the argument structure, of a predicated event.

Mekeo can be compared in this regard with Tuvaluan and To'aba'ita.¹²² Zero-anaphora in Tuvaluan "refers most frequently by far to third-person singular entities" (Besnier 1985:123). It is rule-governed in that an unbroken chain of zero-anaphoric references may extend back (across turns in a conversation, and across minor interruptions) to the introduction of a new topic. This chain is broken when another referent of the same semantic 'rank' (in terms of, for example, animacy) is grammatically focused by being "placed in the same pragmatic function" as the prior topic when last mentioned non-zero-anaphorically (Besnier 1985:138). In To'aba'ita anaphoric reference is pragmatically conditioned, but when ambiguity is a danger reference is made quite explicit by the use of nominal anaphors, which are a striking feature of To'aba'ita narrative texts (Lichtenberk 1988:335). These can be definitised by means of two deictics. The choice of deictics distinguishes between a recent and a not-so-recent antecedent. "Anaphoric NP's are an explicit strategy; they normally identify the referent uniquely" (1988:338). In Mekeo, by way of contrast, neither firm rules about

¹²⁰ That is, number is not marked on topic nouns, only on determinate predicates.

¹²¹ It probably creates a mild sense of suspense similar to that mentioned by Longacre (1985:251) in connection with recapitulation sentences and generic-specific paraphrases. Compare Longacre (1985:246).

¹²² Both of which are dependent-marking languages.

uninterrupted topic chains nor a system of explicit formal anaphora ensure the coherence of a text.

Linguists have acknowledged that some languages are more implicit than others, leaving far more interpretive responsibility to the hearer, in terms of the pragmatic reconstruction of a prototypical scene. "Kalam narrators are very sparing in their mention of...places, instruments, objects affected, etc. The audience is left to infer these from his knowledge of customary usages" (Pawley 1987:342). Urdu is perhaps an extreme case.¹²³ An unusually high degree of subject ellipsis combines with fairly frequent complement ellipsis to render the hearer almost wholly reliant on his or her knowledge of social and cultural norms for his interpretation of a given utterance. Concord between the verbal predicate and its arguments is weak, so that on formal grounds it may be impossible to determine the identity of the latter. As Hasan (1984:151) has it, "the system of the language permits a much higher degree of implicitness than that permitted by the system of English"; and "We can claim without hesitation that the dominant semantic style in Urdu is the implicit one".

What is it that makes this level of implicitness functional rather than dysfunctional? In the words of Hasan (1984:151), in Urdu society there is a "routine, well-defined set of relationships" and a "mutually recognized set of rights and obligations centring around systems of roles" which enable interlocutors to form firm expectations about what a speaker will say in a given situation. "The role system for the community of Urdu speakers is considerably more determinate than it is for the middle-class English speaker". There is in fact never much chance that a speaker will be misunderstood (Hasan 1984:151). "To say, then, that one is an Urdu speaker is largely to discount the possibility of being misunderstood. It is to believe that your addressee knows what you are on about; it is to assume that the chances of ambiguity are so low as to be almost negligible". Now, much the same can be said of the Mekeo.

Mekeo is, as Hau'ofa (1981:297) pointed out, one of "the three reported Papua New Guinea societies with the most pronounced ascribed authority structures". Authority structures are indeed "so clearly defined and demarcated" that competition for power is either absent or is carried on at a level of such subtlety and circuitousness that it is undetectable to an outsider. At the same time, "the system of inheritance of the most valued property, land, is not clear-cut and is a factor for disharmony among agnates" (1981:296). Resentment over unpaid or incompletely paid brideprice settlements is widespread, and sorcery (*uŋa-uŋa*) on that count, attributed to one's affines, is often cited as the cause of children's illnesses. Simple jealousy (*bi-guba*, *pi-kupa*) is a recurrent theme in Mekeo society (1981:7ff.). There is, moreover, "intense competition in the field of invisible mystical powers, which is largely a metaphor for psychological dominance contests" (1981:300-301). Yet Mekeo authority structures *institutionalise inequality* (it is the theme of Hau'ofa's book). The potential for conflict, within a system of prescribed power-relationships, is clearly great.

For an adult male going to a meeting, the aim is "to mystify and baffle his opponents" (Hau'ofa 1981:301). Speaking in riddles (EMek *iva epoŋa*) is one of his tools, while lying (*βi-poŋe*, *bi-poŋe*, *bi-foŋe*, *pi-foŋe*) is another, equally legitimate.¹²⁴ In this context, indeterminacy of reference is scarcely a disadvantage. Variability of reference has indeed

¹²³ This is a mainly dependent-marking language, with some degree of head marking (i.e. verbs reflect person and number and gender of the subject).

¹²⁴ As I have remarked elsewhere, lying is regarded as an enviable accomplishment rather than as a vice by the Mekeo.

been shown to have definite social advantages – i.e. to be ‘functional’ – in small scale communities (see Sankoff 1972, on cognitive variability). The negotiation of variable truths clearly avoids the kind of confrontation that results from the juxtaposition of absolute truths. A relatively high level of indeterminacy may very well be functional within the context of traditional Mekeo culture and society,¹²⁵ but it poses a number of theoretical challenges for the descriptive linguist.

There is, I would argue, another factor at play. Ellipsis forces the hearer to invoke mutual cultural knowledge, and thereby forces him or her to summon up a high degree of empathy with the speaker.¹²⁶ This degree of empathy makes open conflict improbable, suggesting ways and means of resolving disputes that fall within accepted cultural parameters, but also subtly locking the interlocutors into a complex mesh of rights and obligations, an inescapable web of claims and counter-claims and debts and rejected debts that binds Mekeo society tightly together.

The Mekeo are on the whole more concerned with the avoidance of open confrontation and the maintenance of face than with the transmission of accurate – let alone ‘true’ – information about the world. The vagueness of role and reference as coded on verbally functioning bases can only facilitate the co-existence of multiple conflicting interpretations, permitting the hearer to infer a meaning compatible with his or her own self-image and the vision they have of the world. The hearer may, indeed, actively cooperate in the construction of a mutually acceptable reality by proffering continuations to the speaker based on his or her own vision of the events narrated or described, anticipations that may be accepted or rejected by the speaker. The inefficiencies of the code ensure that there will always be a considerable residue of indeterminacy, and hearers can always dispute any given interpretation of the speaker’s message, and negotiate a mutually acceptable version. In a society where competing claims flourish – claims about seniority, sickness, women, and (most importantly) land – this kind of language use probably serves a key function in the avoidance or resolution of conflict.

Certain elements of represented reality are *not* negotiable for Mekeo speakers in as much as they are encoded in the language as choices that have to be made. The contrast between the nominal and verbal functioning of a base is ever-present to both the encoder and the decoder, and this binary system presents the speaker with a choice at every turn in a conversation, at every point in discourse. It is the fact that so many aspects of reality *do not have to be* represented as processes that makes the decision to so represent them slightly marked. From this optionality come the agentive semantics of the Mekeo verb, the feeling that the verb form represents a process, marked by a sustained inputting of energy, as opposed to the nominally functioning base where no such input is coded.¹²⁷

The Mekeo language functions sparingly to give what the Mekeo see as the important elements of a situation, in particular *the kinds of processes* that are involved. Transitivity as

¹²⁵ It is worth noting that case demarking by female speakers of Samoan and Japanese (as well as subject deletion in Japanese) are well documented phenomena, along with consistently higher levels of politeness marking for female Japanese speakers than for males. See Shibamoto (1987) for Japanese, and Ochs (1987) for Samoan.

¹²⁶ Case demarking by female speakers of Samoan has been linked to informal contexts (e.g. within the home) where empathy is normally high (Ochs 1987). I would suggest that case demarking is as much a strategy to increase empathy as a symptom of empathy.

¹²⁷ As noted above, Pagotto (1992) believes that this emphasis on agents and agency may represent a pan-Oceanic bias.

such – the effect of action on an object – seems to be a somewhat peripheral component of Mekeo grammar. A system of morphological transitivity is part of the inherited apparatus of the language but nowadays functions less to index objects than to express *the degree of involvement of autonomous agents*, the degree of kinetic energy invested in an action. Object marking may be entirely absent, something that appears to be lexically as much as pragmatically determined, or it may be fossilised and may thus help to signal an *adverbial* usage of the verb (§6.1.8). Many processes are represented as targeting but not necessarily affecting their objects at all – or as missing the mark entirely (§4.3.2.9). Yet the object is the natural focus of the message, and object markers provide more kinds of information about the ways in which objects are approached (as opposed to the degree to which they are affected) than subject markers do about the involvement of subject-agents. However, if the information about transitivity functions and kinesis is regarded as being in fact about the agent, and about the nature and intensity of the agent's involvement, the contradiction is resolved.

Causativity is more central to the grammar than transitivity, and certainly more central to an understanding of the process dynamics of certain classes of verbs, and hence to their classification. The lexical-conceptual structure of many of these verb classes can only be explicated in terms of causation, including self-causation.

At the same time the whole system of person–number combinations based upon the superordinate verb *OMA* and other verbs in either of the subjunctive moods allows the Mekeo to be extremely and exceptionally precise about the source of deontic necessity. People always want to know who is responsible, for words as well as for deeds, i.e. in whose name one is speaking. This is something that is required to be specified whenever people try to get other people to do things. But beyond that the specification of intentionality is felt to be relevant to all the processes of daily life. What Halliday calls the interpersonal function of language can thus be seen as being extended in Mekeo, potentially at least, to all reported events, and to be superimposed upon or to incorporate the ideational function in a way that does not happen in English.

The dominant system of the language is a discourse-pragmatic one. The discourse-pragmatic functions – a topic or topics, a focus and, optionally, a verbal core – that constitute the message are the ultimate constituents of Mekeo grammar. The core as 'clause', however, encodes a full proposition about the world. Core functions have been incorporated into the core itself, and it is the domain of grammatical relations as such.¹²⁸ Outside the core, unilateral grammatical dependencies bind free-floating nominal topics to their anaphors on the verb word, while unilateral pragmatic dependencies acting in the opposite direction bind the verb word to these nominal cataphors from which it gets all its referential and pragmatic meaning.

The cataphoric nature of any nominal topics and/or topic predicates that may precede a verb word creates a certain sense of suspense in the hearer, and this suspense can be orchestrated by a speaker, who can choose endless additional circumstantial topics with which to delay the actual message. On the other hand, because each verb word is a predication, the speaker can send the action hurtling forward, with verb word after verb word after verb word. And when all is said (I would argue) there will still be some element of doubt as to precisely who did what to whom.

¹²⁸ That is, in the sense of bilateral grammatical dependency.

In this study I have surveyed current usage, I have not defined the limits of the sayable within the constraints of the grammar. The lexicon of Mekeo requires much further study. The verb classes in particular require much further work, in order to either justify them fully or to redefine them, and this work that can only be carried out by or with native speakers. In this final section I have tried to pull together the various strands of general significance that have emerged in the course of the description. All of my generalisations are tentative, and indeed subjective, and will need to be tested extensively in the field. However, they are compatible with what I know of Mekeo and culture society, from my own limited first-hand experience of it and from the texts of social anthropologists who have worked among the Mekeo.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ As mentioned in Chapter 1, the chief anthropological authorities on the Mekeo are Epeli Hau'ofa, Mark Mosko, and Michelle Stephen.

APPENDIX I

ESSENTIALS OF MEKEO PHONOLOGY

The establishment of Mekeo phonemes is complicated by an ongoing process of consonantal excrecence, whereby adjacent vowels, even across morpheme boundaries, tend to diphthongise, and the onsets or offsets to produce medial glides and, ultimately, fricatives or even stops. As noted in §1.2.2.2, each dialect has its own typical kind of 'intrusion': NWMek [y], WMek [d], NMek [ʒ] and EMek [s]. In certain idiolects one can still hear the merest beginnings of these consonants as fricative glides. Intrusive consonants may come to function as buffers, preventing assimilation and the merging of morphemes, as in the verbal prefixes. Others serve no function at all and often disguise inherited lexical roots. EMek has an intrusive [f], as in *ife* 'foot' (< *uve*, < *ue* still heard), and an apparently increasing tendency to eliminate all voiced variants of /f/.

A. JUSTIFICATION OF THE PHONEMES

1. CONSONANTS

The consonantal phonemes (with their major allophones) are set up for each of the four dialects on the basis of contrasts in minimal pairs, as illustrated below. All of the diaphonemic sets are numbered:

LABIAL/LABIO-DENTAL CONTRASTS – INITIAL POSITION:

		NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
finish	1	/p/ <i>pua</i>	/p/ <i>pua</i>	/v/ <i>vua</i>	/f/ <i>fua</i>
carry, bear	2	/β/ <i>βua</i>	/b/ <i>bua</i>	/b/ <i>bua</i>	/p/ <i>pua</i>
skin.3SG.OBL	1	/p/ <i>paŋai</i>	/p/ <i>paŋai</i>	/v/ <i>vaŋai</i>	/f/ <i>faŋai</i>
across	2	/β/ <i>βaŋai</i>	/b/ <i>baŋai</i>	/b/ <i>baŋai</i>	/p/ <i>paŋai</i>
skin.1SG	1	/p/ <i>pau</i>	/p/ <i>pau</i>	/v/ <i>vaau</i>	/f/ <i>faau</i>
eye.1SG	4	/m/ <i>mau</i>	/m/ <i>mau</i>	/m/ <i>maau</i>	/m/ <i>maau</i>

EMek [v] is strictly speaking a 'free' variant of /f/ but it often reflects a phoneme that has fairly recently merged with /f/. This /v/ originally corresponded to /w/ (or /θ/) in the other dialects, and EMek [v] still tends to appear more often in lexical items that once had a reflex of the presumed diaphoneme than elsewhere. Here are two common examples:

namesake.1SG	3	/o/ oau	/w/ wau	/w/ wau	/f/ faau
				/v/ vau	[v] [vaau]
stringbag	3?	/θ/ eka	/θ/ eka	/θ/ eka	/f/ fe?a
					[v] [ve?a]

LABIAL/LABIO-DENTAL CONTRASTS – MEDIAL POSITION:

		NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
a little	1	/p/ apa	/p/ apa	/v/ ava	/f/ afa('a)
great grandfather	2	/β/ aβa	/b/ aba	/b/ aba	/p/ apa
price	3	(kaoa)	/w/ kawa	/w/ kawa	/f/ ?afa
				/v/ kava	[v] ?ava
father	4	/m/ ama	/m/ ama	/m/ ama	/m/ ama
grandfather	1	/p/ upu	/p/ upu	/v/ uvu	/f/ ufu
shut	2	/β/ guβu	/b/ gobu	/b/ gubu	/p/ kupu
left	3	(aoani)	/w/ awani	/w/ (l)awani	/f/ lafani
				/v/ lavani	[v] lavani
charcoal	4	/m/ umu	/m/ omu	/m/ umu	/m/ umu

Note that the NWMek items in brackets are not relevant to the NWMek system of contrasting consonantal phonemes but are included to illustrate cross-dialectal patterns of change, i.e. the absence of certain consonants in this dialect (see also below). Note again that WMek, NMek /w/ corresponds *statistically more often* to the EMek variant [v] of /f/.

NASAL-LATERAL CONTRASTS – INITIAL POSITION:

		NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
eye.3SG	4	/m/ maŋa	/m/ maŋa	/m/ maŋa	/m/ maŋa
canoe	5	/ŋ/ ŋaŋa	/ŋ/ ŋaŋa	/ŋ/ ŋaŋa	/ŋ/ ŋaŋa
top	6	/θ/ aŋa	/θ/ (a)aŋa	/l/ (l)aŋa	/l/ laŋa
dream	5	/ŋ/ ŋiβi	/n/ nibi	/n/ nibi	/n/ nipi
be wrong, spoilt	6?	/l/ lipu	/l/ lipu	/l/ lifu	/l/ lifu

NWMek /ŋ/ and /n/ intervary unpredictably in all environments, including /_i. NWMek, WMek, NMek /l-/ may represent a loan from EMek. But note that some instances of /l/ in EMek are intrusive (especially if not solely in initial position and before /a, o/.

NASAL-LATERAL CONTRASTS – MEDIAL POSITION:

		NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
father	4	/m/ ama	/m/ ama	/m/ ama	/m/ ama
bite	5	/ŋ/ aŋa	/ŋ/ aŋa	/ŋ/ aŋa	/ŋ/ aŋa
tongue	6	(maea)	/l/ mala	/l/ mala	/l/ mala

VELAR-PALATAL CONTRASTS – INITIAL POSITION:

		NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
pig	7	/k/ kuma	/k/ kuma	/k/ kuma	/ʔ/ ʔuma
ochre paint	8	/g/ guma	/g/ guma	/g/ guma	/k/ kuma
dawn	7	/k/ kapa	/k/ kapa	/k/ kava	/ʔ/ ʔafa
thing	8	/g/ gaβa	/g/ gaba	/g/ gaba	/k/ kapa
year	7	/k/ kiniβo	/ʃ/ tsinibo	/ʃ/ tsinibo	/ʔ/ ʔinipo
sun, day	8	/g/ gina	/dʒ/ jina	/ʃ/ tsina	/k/ kina
game meat	8	(maki)	/dʒ/ jiji	/ʃ/ tsitsi	/ʃ/ tsitsi

EMek /ʃ/ for /k/ occurs only in certain lexical items. EMek *kiki* ‘game meat’ can still be heard. (NWMek *maki* corresponds to *matsi* ‘wallaby’ in WMek, NMek.)

VELAR-PALATAL CONTRASTS – MEDIAL POSITION

		NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
laugh	7	/k/ aka	/k/ aka	/k/ aka	/ʔ/ laʔa
name	8	/g/ aga	/g/ aga	/g/ aga	/k/ aka
sneeze	7	/k/ akino	/dʒ/ ajino	/ʃ/ atsino	/ʔ/ aʔino
younger same-sex sibling	8	/g/ agi	/dʒ/ aji	/ʃ/ ači	/k/ aki

The EMek glottal stop has completely disappeared from very many lexical items (at least in the speech of young to middle-aged people) and is gradually disappearing from many others. For instance, one hears *aʔino* ‘sneeze’ with only a very weak glottal catch, or a pause, separating the *a* from the *i*, though one does not yet, ever, hear ***aino* or ***asino*. The word for ‘pig’: (*ʔuma* (for *ʔuma*), is indistinguishable from the word for ‘garden’: *uma*. However, between vowels it is more likely to be retained in its fullest form (e.g. *laʔa* ‘laugh’).

2. VOWELS

All dialects have the same set of five vowel phonemes. These are:

i/ e/ a/ u/ /ʊ/

The vowels contrast as follows before a consonant (in initial position: V-CV):

		NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
shell sp.	/o-/	<i>oga</i>	<i>oga</i>	<i>oga</i>	<i>oka</i>
shell sp.	/e-/	<i>ega</i>	<i>ega</i>	<i>ega</i>	<i>eka</i>
we (incl.)	/i-/	<i>ika</i>	<i>ika</i>	<i>ika</i>	<i>iʔa</i>
house	/e-/	<i>eka</i>	<i>eka</i>	<i>eka</i>	<i>eʔa</i>
name	/a-/	<i>aga</i>	<i>aga</i>	<i>aga</i>	<i>aka</i>
enter	/u-/	<i>uga</i>	<i>uga</i>	<i>uga</i>	<i>uka</i>
hill	/i-/	<i>igu</i>	<i>igu</i>	<i>igu</i>	<i>iku</i>
smoke	/a-/	<i>agu</i>	<i>agu</i>	<i>agu</i>	<i>aku</i>
bird sp.	/u-/	<i>uβi</i>	<i>ubi</i>	<i>ubi</i>	<i>upi</i>
bark cloth	/i-/	<i>iβi</i>	<i>ibi</i>	<i>ibi</i>	<i>ipi</i>

They contrast as follows in final position (i.e. after a consonant: (C)V-CV):

		NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
younger same-sex sibling	/-i/	<i>agi</i>	<i>aji</i>	<i>ači</i>	<i>aki</i>
mouth	/-e/	<i>age</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>ake</i>
name	/-a/	<i>aga</i>	<i>aga</i>	<i>aga</i>	<i>aka</i>
boy	/-o/	<i>ago</i>	<i>ago</i>	<i>ago</i>	<i>ako</i>
grandparent	/-u/	<i>agu</i>	<i>agu</i>	<i>agu</i>	<i>aku</i>

In 'closed' syllables (i.e. syllables closed off by a following syllable: CV-CV) the contrasts are:

		NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
complicated	/-i-/	<i>bini</i>	<i>bini</i>	<i>bini</i>	<i>pini</i>
underneath	/-a-/	<i>baba</i>	<i>baba</i>	<i>baba</i>	<i>papa</i>
butterfly	/-e-/	<i>pepe</i>	<i>pepe</i>	<i>fefe</i>	<i>pepe</i>
budge	/-o-/	<i>ŋoŋo</i>	<i>ŋoŋo</i>	<i>ŋoŋo</i>	<i>ŋoŋo</i>
blocked	/-u-/	<i>pupu</i>	<i>pupu</i>	<i>fufu</i>	<i>fufu</i>

3. CONSONANTAL INTRUSION

The intrusive consonants are always found in the same environments. They are more or less optional according to a) the lexical item being considered and b) the speaker. While age may once have been a factor, it is not now. Sex/gender *may* be a factor (the innovation is often attributed to young females, but further investigation is needed here).

NWMek	∅	>	<i>y, ∅/i_a</i>
WMek	∅	>	<i>d/i_a (/i_o)</i>
NMek	∅	>	<i>z, ʒ, ʃ, s/i_a (/i_o)</i>
EMek	∅	>	<i>s/i_a (/i_o)</i>
	∅	>	<i>v, f/u_a, u_e, u_i, u_o (/i_e)</i>

While /f/ is an independently justified phoneme in EMek, as is shown by minimal pairs, the other intrusive consonants cannot be classified as phonemes, being entirely conditioned by the phonetic environment.¹ However, the intrusive consonants are still in the process of spreading through the lexicon and have not yet appeared in every word that provides the requisite conditions. This applies more to the WMek stop ([d]) than to the NMek and EMek fricatives. The latter even appear in unstressed verb endings:

EMek:

e-kapa-i-s-au
 3SG-do/make-TR-B-1SG
 s/he made me

¹ The intrusive consonants have in several cases already resulted in minimally contrasting pairs (WMek *ida* 's/he, they', versus *ika* 'we', *ipa* 'blood', etc.). As they become even less optional and spread right throughout the lexicon they will eventually become phonemes. Some might claim indeed that they should already be treated, synchronically, as phonemes.

e-kapa-i-s-o
3SG-do/make-TR-B-2SG
s/he made you

e-kapa-i-s-a
3SG-do/make-TR-B-3SG
s/he made it

kai-s-au
who-B-man
who (specifically)?

They also appear between words that habitually collocate:

oi-s-o-fai
you-B-2SG-go
Off you go! (= Goodbye!)

The complete loss of /ʔ/ in EMek (in certain lexical items) can be demonstrated by the now general substitution of *isa* for *iʔa* 'we (inclusive)'. An [s] has 'intruded' into the gap left by the disappearance of /ʔ/. We can postulate an intermediate stage: **i-Ø-a*. In fact this does not seem to occur, as I have only heard *iʔa* with the weak glottal catch, or *isa*, with an intrusive consonant.

The first person singular personal pronoun 'I' across dialects illustrates consonantal excrescence of a different kind:

NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek		ProtoMek
<i>iu</i>	<i>iji</i>	<i>itsi</i> (<i>it^hau²</i>)	<i>lau</i>	<	* <i>eau</i> 'I'

Finally mention should be made of the persistence of [t] substitution (for expected or attested [k]) in certain lexical items that do not all appear to be loanwords. A sample of such words follows:

English	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
red		<i>pitoŋa</i>	<i>pitoŋa</i>	<i>pitoŋa</i> (* <i>piko</i>)
weed				<i>kotakota</i>
leech				<i>toma</i>

It has already been noted that a kind of baby talk is produced by means of regular [t] substitution. This happens in all dialects. In the western dialects one might have expected [d], but it is in fact [t] that appears in this usage.

B. INVENTORY OF ALLOPHONES

There is a relatively wide range of free variation for each phoneme in the four phonemic systems, a fact consistent with the small number of phonemes included in each system. Cross-over phenomena also occur (e.g. substitution of /ŋ/ for /l/ or /l/ for /ŋ/).

1. CONSONANTS:

NWMek:

- /p/ A voiceless bilabial stop.
- /β/ A voiced bilabial fricative. The main (free) variants are [b] and [v].
- /g/ A voiced velar stop. The main (conditioned) allophone is [dz] before /i/.
- /k/ A voiceless velar stop.
- /w/ A vocoid approximant freely intervening with [o] (a raised high vowel in consonantal function).
- /m/ A bilabial nasal continuant.
- /ŋ/ A velar nasal continuant with the occasional unconditioned variant [n].
- /y/ A palatal approximant (a glide) intervening with [ε] (a flattened mid-front vowel with some pharyngealisation).

WMek:

- /p/ A voiceless bilabial stop.
- /b/ A voiced bilabial stop with the variant [β].
- /k/ A voiceless velar stop.
- /g/ A voiced velar stop. It has the intervening allophones [dz] and [dʒ] before /i/.
- /m/ A bilabial nasal continuant.
- /ŋ/ A velar nasal continuant with the occasional free variant [n] before *or* after /i/.
- /l/ A more-or-less velarised lateral continuant.

NMek:

- /b/ An unaspirated bilabial stop with late voice onset.
- /v/ A voiced bilabial fricative, with varying degrees of delayed voice onset. The main allophones are [f] and [ϕ]. The 'central' realization seems to be [v].
- /k/ An unaspirated velar stop with early voice onset. It has the conditioned allophones [ts] and [dʒ] which intervene freely before /i/.
- /m/ A bilabial nasal continuant.
- /ŋ/ A velar nasal continuant that has the conditioned allophone [n] before *or after* /i/.
- /l/ A more-or-less velarised lateral continuant.

EMek:

- /p/ A voiceless bilabial stop. Onset of phonation varies considerably.
- /f/ An EMek fricative with at least four allophones: a voiced labiodental [v], a voiced bilabial [β], an unvoiced labiodental [f], and an unvoiced bilabial [ɸ]. The 'central' (prototypical) realisation seems to be [f].
- /k/ A voiceless velar stop. Onset of phonation varies slightly. It has the freely intervening allophones [ts] and [ç] before /i/; but some speakers retain the /k/.
- /ʔ/ An unaspirated glottal stop that alternates with pause (intervocalic) or with zero.
- /m/ A bilabial nasal continuant.
- /ŋ/ A velar nasal continuant that has the conditioned allophone [n] before and after /i/.
- /l/ An occasionally velarised lateral continuant.

2. VOWELS

The following applies to all dialects.

- /i/ A high front unrounded vowel with varying degrees of centralisation and palatalisation, mainly after /a/ when it yields [e] or [ɛ], but also before /a/ and /o/. It has an off-glide ranging from [y] to [j] or [ʒ], to [s], and even to [d], depending upon the dialect.
- /e/ A mid front unrounded vowel that ranges between half-open [ɛ] and half-close [e]. Thanks to tongue retraction there is often a velar-palatal off-glide.
- /a/ A low back unrounded vowel, actually [ɑ], with some slightly fronted allophones. There is a tendency to raise /a/ to [e] or [ɛ] in the three western dialects.
- /o/ A mid back rounded to unrounded vowel. It has the allophone [u] after consonants, especially in WMek and NWMek.
- /u/ A high back unrounded vowel, with lips spread, the lower lip everted. This secondary labialisation brings the lower lip into contact with the upper lip and/or teeth in an approximation of [β], [v] or [f] and often results in one of these consonants being sounded. The sound is phonetically similar to [ʉ].

Vowel length is phonemic; it distinguishes a number of otherwise indistinguishable items.

C. PHONOTACTICS AND MORPHOPHONEMICS

A main word stress falls regularly on the penultimate syllable of polysyllabic words. The Mekeo syllable can be defined in terms of the following three constituents:

- C: A consonantal onset.
- V: A syllabic peak, realised by a vowel. Vowels can have distinctive length, as noted above.
- V: A vocalic glide. Vocalic glides occur before a vocalic peak (as an onglide) or after a vocalic peak (as an offglide).

The canonical structure of the Mekeo syllable can be given as (O)V, where O stands for onset and can be realised either as a consonant or a vocalic glide. V is the only obligatory constituent. Within the syllable there can be no more than one syllabic (vocalic) peak, hence vowel sequences have to be analysed either as strings of syllables or as diphthongs (or triphthongs). Sequences of two or three vowels can have the form ^VV or V^V or V^VV. A sequence of three vowels can be realised as one or two syllables, with the strong tendency being towards reducing the total number of syllables by transforming the end vowels into onglides or offglides. Sequences of four (or more) vowels are always polysyllabic.

There is a certain amount of variation between dialects in the treatment of vowel sequences and this need to be carefully documented across the lexicon. Changing stress patterns and differential diphthongisation is the spearhead of phonological change, and a comparison of the four dialects will reveal the directionality of this change, thus enabling us to make hypotheses about past developments. Here I will only make some very general statements about the synchronic situation.

Diphthongs of the form ^VV are usually preferred to ones of the form V^V in final syllables: CV^V#. In non-final syllables the preferred pattern is more often V^V, very possibly under the influence of a new tendency towards *antepenultimate* word stress: C^VV-CV^V#. The final

syllable in such cases can have varying forms. Any combination of two vowels can occur in Mekeo roots, as illustrated below, but some diphthongs of the form C^VV seem not to be permitted in open syllables in root words (the same forms of diphthongisation generally can occur, however, across morpheme boundaries). These diphthongs are marked with asterisks below. The syllabic peak is here marked with a macron.

LIST OF POSSIBLE DIPHTHONGS WITH EXEMPLIFICATION FROM EMEK:

- ie* *papīē*, *papiē* ‘woman’, *papiē-ŋa* ‘female’, *kiē-kie* ‘pain’.
- ia* *e-miā* ‘3SG-become’, *miāmia* ‘feast’, *e-afiā*, *e-afiā* ‘take’.
- io* *pīō* ‘cassowary’, *piōŋe* ‘sharp, pointed’.
- iu* *ekiū*, *e-kīu* ‘3SG-dive’, *kiūkiu* ‘diver (duck)’.
- ei* *inēi* ‘bird’, *mēi* ‘excreta’, **eī* (BUT *e-iša* ‘3SG-see’)
- ea* *e-peā* ‘3SG-walk’, *e-peā-pea* ‘3SG-walk-RED’.
- eo* *pēo* ‘fish poison’, *peōpeo* ‘fork’.
- eu* *fēu* ‘sleep, night’, *ēu* ‘mound of bush fowl’, *keūŋo* ‘vine sp.’.
- ai* *e-māi* ‘3SG-come’, *pa-kāi* ‘slow’, *fāifai* ‘water spirit’, **aī*.
- ae* *māe* ‘death, corpse’, *āe* ‘excrement’, *fāeva* ‘crooked’, **aē*.
- ao* *nāo* ‘White’, *nāonao* ‘corrugated iron’, **aō*.
- au* *lāu* ‘I’, *i-fāu* ‘post’, *e-fāu-ŋ-a*, **au*.
- oi* *ōi* ‘you (SG)’, *fōi* ‘eagle’, *kōikoi* ‘palm sp.’, **oi*.
- oe* *fōe* ‘egret’, *e-koē-pa* ‘3SG-collect’.
- oa* *kōa* ‘true, true likeness’, *koā* ‘like, as if, if’, *oāka* ‘hate’.³
- ou* *fōu* ‘together with’, *kōu* ‘flood’, **oū*.
- ui* *pupūi* ‘bristly’, *puika* ‘bristly’.
- ue* *e-mūe* ‘3SG-turn (back)’, *uēle* ‘bathe’, *e-ŋu-ē* ‘3SG-sit-CNT’.
- ua* *e-pūa* ‘3SG-bear’, *e-puāpua* ‘3SG-proliferate’.
- uo* *pūo*, *puō* ‘cause(-3SG)’, *fuōfuō* ‘mildewed’.

Geminate vowels and diphthongs tend to be shortened to one and a half morae or even just one mora. Across dialects the first person singular subject marker *a-*, *la-* assimilates completely to verb roots with initial *a*. The oblique case marking suffix *-AI* (OBL) can be heard as [ai], as [-ae], or as [-e] or even as [-i] (in NWMek). The phoneme /ŋ/ tends to disappear between vowels. Thus (across dialects) EMek *uŋu-ŋa* corresponds to NWMek, WMek, NMek *uu-ŋa*, *u:-ŋa* or *u-ŋa* ‘backside-3SG’, while EMek *aŋa* ‘burn, bite’ has gone to *aa* or *a* in many compounds.

³ The word *koā* may have developed from *koa-ŋa* ‘true.likeness-3SG’. The word *oaka* seems to be cognate with Motu *vada* ‘lethal sorcery, murder’.

APPENDIX 2
COMPARATIVE WORD LISTS

[The following is based loosely on the Swadesh 200-word list, but has been extensively modified where this was inappropriate or inapplicable for climatic or cultural reasons. An asterisk here indicates that a form is attested, idiolectally or in mission documents, but is no longer in general use.]

	English	NWMek	WMek	NMek	EMek
1.	all	<i>mako</i>	<i>mako</i>	<i>mako</i>	<i>maʔo</i>
2.	and	<i>ge</i>	<i>ge</i>	<i>ge</i>	<i>ke</i>
3.	banana	<i>poa</i>	<i>poa</i>	<i>foa</i>	<i>o'o</i>
4.	ashes (black)	<i>umu</i>	<i>omu</i>	<i>omu/umu</i>	<i>umu</i>
5.	at	<i>-ai</i>	<i>-ai</i>	<i>-ai</i>	<i>-ai</i>
6.	back (body)	<i>oa</i>	<i>owa</i>	<i>owa</i>	<i>ova</i>
7.	bad	<i>aβaea</i>	<i>abala</i>	<i>abala</i>	<i>apala</i>
8.	bark (tree)	<i>au pa-ŋa</i>	<i>au pa-ŋa</i>	<i>au faa-ŋa</i>	<i>au faa-ŋa</i>
9.	because	<i>βuo-ŋa-ai</i>	<i>buo-ŋa-ai</i>	<i>buo-ŋa-ai</i>	<i>puo-ŋa-ai</i>
10.	belly	<i>ina</i>	<i>ina</i>	<i>inae</i>	<i>inae</i>
11.	big	<i>mau</i>	<i>maua</i>	<i>maua</i>	<i>akaikia</i>
12.	bird	<i>ini</i>	<i>ini</i>	<i>ineu</i>	<i>inei</i>
13.	bite	<i>aŋa</i>	<i>gaŋa</i>	<i>gaŋa</i>	<i>aŋa</i>
14.	black	<i>uma-uma</i>	<i>omu-ŋa</i>	<i>umu-ŋa</i>	<i>umu-ŋa</i>
15.	blood	<i>ipa</i>	<i>ipa</i>	<i>ifa</i>	<i>ifa</i>
16.	blow (fire)	<i>iβi-na</i>	<i>ivi-na</i>	<i>ibi-na</i>	<i>ipi-na</i>
17.	bone	<i>uŋia-ŋa</i>	<i>unia</i>	<i>unia</i>	<i>unia</i>
18.	be sick	<i>maigi</i>	<i>idawa</i>	<i>izawa</i>	<i>isafa (*iava)</i>
19.	burn (tr.)	<i>uma</i>	<i>uma</i>	<i>uma</i>	<i>uma</i>
	burn (intr.)	<i>aŋa</i>	<i>aŋa</i>	<i>aŋa</i>	<i>aŋa</i>
20.	child	<i>imi</i>	<i>imi</i>	<i>imi</i>	<i>imoi</i>
21.	cloud	<i>agu-agu</i>	<i>abu-abu</i>	<i>abu-abu</i>	<i>apu-apu</i>
	cold	<i>kama-kama</i>	<i>gegea</i>	<i>gegea</i>	<i>kekea</i>
23.	come	<i>mai</i>	<i>mai</i>	<i>mai</i>	<i>mai</i>
24.	count	<i>βa-kaoa</i>	<i>guabi-na</i>	<i>guabi-na</i>	<i>kuapi-na</i>
25.	cut (rope)	<i>aŋa-au-a</i>	<i>pou-a</i>	<i>fou-a</i>	<i>fou-a</i>
	cut (pig)	<i>iua</i>	<i>iwa</i>	<i>iwa</i>	<i>iva</i>

26.	breast (fem.)	<i>kuku</i>	<i>kuku</i>	<i>kuku</i>	<i>ʔuʔu</i>
27.	die	<i>mae</i>	<i>mae</i>	<i>mae</i>	<i>mae</i>
28.	dig	<i>aβi-a</i>	<i>abi-a</i>	<i>abi-a</i>	<i>api-a</i>
29.	dirt(-y)	<i>opu</i>	<i>opu</i>	<i>ofu</i>	<i>ofu</i>
30.	dog	<i>auke</i>	<i>auke</i>	<i>auke</i>	<i>amuʔe</i>
31.	drink	<i>inu</i>	<i>inu</i>	<i>inu</i>	<i>inu</i>
32.	dry	<i>oŋoŋo</i>	<i>oŋoŋo</i>	<i>oŋoŋo</i>	<i>oŋoŋo</i>
33.	dull (blunt)	<i>puŋuŋu</i>	<i>pu</i>	<i>fu</i>	<i>fuŋu</i>
34.	dust	<i>kaŋapa</i>	<i>kaŋapa</i>	<i>lapu-lapu</i>	<i>apu/lapu</i>
35.	ear	<i>aina</i>	<i>aina</i>	<i>aina</i>	<i>aina</i>
36.	earth	<i>aŋo</i>	<i>aŋo</i>	<i>aŋo</i>	<i>aŋo</i>
37.	eat	<i>ani</i>	<i>ani</i>	<i>ani</i>	<i>ani</i>
38.	egg	<i>aina</i>	<i>aoi-na</i>	<i>aoi-na</i>	<i>aoi-na</i>
39.	eye	<i>ma</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>maa</i>	<i>maa</i>
40.	fall (drop) (topple over)	<i>kua-lai</i> <i>βoi</i>	<i>kua-lai</i> <i>boi</i>	<i>kua-lai</i> <i>boi</i>	<i>ʔua-lai</i> <i>poi</i>
41.	far	<i>ʔkauŋai abaea</i>	<i>aŋoma</i>	<i>aŋoma</i>	<i>aŋoma</i>
42.	fat, grease	<i>oko</i>	<i>oko</i>	<i>oko</i>	<i>oʔo</i>
43.	father	<i>ama</i>	<i>ama</i>	<i>ama</i>	<i>ama</i>
44.	fear	<i>maniki</i>	<i>maniki</i>	<i>maniki</i>	<i>maniʔi</i>
45.	feather	<i>pupu-ŋa</i>	<i>bui-na</i>	<i>bui-na</i>	<i>pui-na</i>
46.	few	<i>apa</i>	<i>apa</i>	<i>apa</i>	<i>a fa</i>
47.	fight	<i>oku-oku</i>	<i>bi-baini</i>	<i>bi-baini</i>	<i>pi-paini</i>
48.	fire	<i>moiβa</i>	<i>ido</i>	<i>izo, iyo</i>	<i>lo, loo</i>
49.	fish	<i>ui maki-na</i>	<i>maka</i>	<i>maka</i>	<i>maʔa</i>
50.	five	<i>ima</i>	<i>ima</i>	<i>ima</i>	<i>ima</i>
51.	float, swim	<i>ŋau</i>	<i>ŋau</i>	<i>ŋau</i>	<i>ŋau</i>
52.	flow (river)	<i>giβo</i>	<i>jibo</i>	<i>tsibo</i>	<i>kipo</i>
53.	finger	<i>nene</i>	<i>lelele</i>	<i>lele/gege</i>	<i>kekeʔe</i>
54.	fly (= jump)	<i>ŋoβo</i>	<i>ŋobo</i>	<i>ŋobo</i>	<i>ŋopo</i>
55.	grass-skirt	<i>kenia</i>	<i>tsinia</i>	<i>tsinia</i>	<i>ʔenia</i>
56.	foot	<i>au</i>	<i>au</i>	<i>au</i>	<i>ife, uve, ue</i>
57.	four	<i>βani</i>	<i>bani</i>	<i>bani</i>	<i>pani</i>
58.	crocodile	<i>uaea</i>	<i>uala</i>	<i>uala</i>	<i>ufala</i>
59.	fruit	<i>βua</i>	<i>bua</i>	<i>bua</i>	<i>pua</i>
60.	give	<i>βini</i>	<i>bini</i>	<i>bini</i>	<i>peni</i>
61.	good	<i>loβia-ŋa</i>	<i>lobia/belo</i>	<i>velo</i>	<i>felò</i>
62.	grass	<i>gaβina</i>	<i>gabina</i>	<i>gabina</i>	<i>kapina</i>
63.	green	<i>uŋiŋiŋa</i>	<i>aŋe-aŋe</i>	<i>aŋe-aŋe</i>	<i>aŋe-aŋe</i>
64.	guts	<i>ŋua</i>	<i>ŋua</i>	<i>ŋua</i>	<i>ŋua</i>
65.	hair (head)	<i>pupu</i>	<i>pupu</i>	<i>fufu</i>	<i>fufu</i>
66.	hand	<i>ima</i>	<i>ima</i>	<i>ima</i>	<i>ima</i>
67.	he (she)	<i>ia</i>	<i>ida</i>	<i>iza</i>	<i>isa (*ia)</i>

68.	head	<i>gania</i>	<i>gania</i>	<i>gania</i>	<i>kania</i>
69.	hear	<i>oŋo</i>	<i>oŋo/loŋo</i>	<i>oŋo/loŋo</i>	<i>loŋo</i>
70.	heart	<i>ŋua poβā</i>	<i>ŋua pobā</i>	<i>ŋua fopā</i>	<i>ŋua fopā</i>
71.	heavy	<i>miu</i>	<i>miau</i>	<i>miau</i>	<i>meau</i>
72.	here	<i>ina(-e)</i>	<i>ina(-e)</i>	<i>ina(-e)</i>	<i>ina(-e)</i>
73.	hit	<i>u-ŋa</i>	<i>au-ŋa</i>	<i>au-ŋa</i>	<i>au-ŋa</i>
74.	hold (= take)	<i>api-a</i>	<i>api-a</i>	<i>api-a</i>	<i>afi-a</i>
75.	how?	<i>gai go</i>	<i>a goà</i>	<i>ala goà</i>	<i>ala koà</i>
76.	hunt	<i>kala</i>	<i>gabu-gabu</i>	<i>gabu-gabu</i>	<i>kapu-kapu</i>
77.	husband	<i>agawa</i>	<i>agawa</i>	<i>agawa</i>	<i>akava</i>
78.	I	<i>iu</i>	<i>iji</i>	<i>itsi (*itau)</i>	<i>lau</i>
79.	moon	<i>ŋawa</i>	<i>ŋawa</i>	<i>ŋawa</i>	<i>ŋava</i>
	[archaic]	<i>puia</i>	<i>puia</i>	<i>fuia</i>	<i>fuia</i>
80.	if (=when)	<i>aia-ma</i>	<i>aida-ma</i>	<i>aiza-ma</i>	<i>aisa-ma</i>
81.	in, inside	<i>o-ŋa-ai</i>	<i>o-ŋa-ai</i>	<i>ao-ŋa-ai</i>	<i>alo-ŋa-ai</i>
82.	kill	<i>u-ŋa</i>	<i>au-buŋu-a</i>	<i>au-buŋu-a</i>	<i>au-puŋu-a</i>
83.	know	<i>oŋo</i>	<i>loŋo/oŋo</i>	<i>loŋo</i>	<i>loŋo</i>
84.	lake	<i>oβu</i>	<i>opu-ŋa</i>	<i>ofu-ŋa</i>	<i>ofu-ŋa</i>
85.	laugh	<i>aka</i>	<i>aka</i>	<i>aka</i>	<i>laʔa</i>
86.	leaf	<i>ŋaŋau</i>	<i>ŋaŋau</i>	<i>ŋaŋau</i>	<i>ŋaŋau</i>
87.	left (side)	<i>apeŋa-u-gai-na</i>	<i>awani-na</i>	<i>awani-na</i>	<i>lavani-na</i>
88.	lip	<i>pipi</i>	<i>pipi</i>	<i>fifi</i>	<i>fifi</i>
89.	lie (down)	<i>ga-giβo</i>	<i>ga-jibo</i>	<i>ga-tsibo</i>	<i>ka-kipo</i>
90.	live	<i>mauni</i>	<i>mauni</i>	<i>mauni</i>	<i>mauni</i>
91.	liver	<i>ake</i>	<i>ake</i>	<i>ake</i>	<i>aʔe</i>
92.	long	<i>maeŋa</i>	<i>maewa</i>	<i>maewa</i>	<i>maeva</i>
93.	louse	<i>moka</i>	<i>ajino</i>	<i>atsino</i>	<i>u'u</i>
94.	man, male	<i>maŋuvaŋa</i>	<i>maŋue-ŋa</i>	<i>maŋuae-ŋa</i>	<i>maŋuae-ŋa</i>
95.	many	<i>mako</i>	<i>mako</i>	<i>mako</i>	<i>maʔo</i>
96.	meat	<i>maki</i>	<i>jiji</i>	<i>tsitsi</i>	<i>tsitsi, kiki</i>
	flesh	<i>βigio</i>	<i>bijio</i>	<i>bitsio</i>	<i>pitsio, pikio</i>
97.	mother	<i>ina</i>	<i>ina</i>	<i>ina</i>	<i>ina</i>
98.	mountain	<i>igu, kokoi</i>	<i>igu, kokoi</i>	<i>igu, kokoi</i>	<i>iku, ʔoʔoi</i>
99.	mouth	<i>age</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>ake</i>
100.	name	<i>aga</i>	<i>aga</i>	<i>aga</i>	<i>aka</i>
101.	narrow	<i>maniβi</i>	<i>manibina</i>	<i>manibi</i>	<i>manipi</i>
102.	near	<i>keŋaimo</i>	<i>gainaiŋai</i>	<i>gainaiŋai</i>	<i>kainaiŋai</i>
103.	neck	<i>eku</i>	<i>ikupaka</i>	<i>ikufaka</i>	<i>iʔu, iu</i>
104.	new	<i>mamaŋa</i>	<i>mamaŋa</i>	<i>mamaŋa</i>	<i>mamaŋa</i>
105.	night	<i>ŋaβi</i>	<i>ŋabi</i>	<i>ŋabi</i>	<i>ŋapi</i>
106.	nose	<i>gu, gua</i>	<i>gua</i>	<i>gua</i>	<i>kua</i>
107.	not	<i>maini</i>	<i>aibaia</i>	<i>aibaiza</i>	<i>laa'i</i>
108.	old	<i>uei-na</i>	<i>aiai-na</i>	<i>uwai-na</i>	<i>ufai-na, uvai-na</i>

109.	one	<i>aipinamu</i>	<i>alaka,</i> <i>alakaonja-mo</i>	<i>alaka,</i> <i>akaonja-mo</i>	<i>anja'o</i> <i>anja'o-mo</i>
110.	other	<i>ikoi-na</i>	<i>ikui-na</i>	<i>ikoi-na</i>	<i>i?oi-na</i>
111.	person	<i>au</i>	<i>au</i>	<i>au</i>	<i>au</i>
112.	play	<i>kauku</i>	<i>kobu-a</i>	<i>kobu-a</i>	<i>?opu-a</i>
113.	pull	<i>aka</i>	<i>aka</i>	<i>aka</i>	<i>la?a</i>
114.	push	<i>gunji</i>	<i>guni</i>	<i>goni</i>	<i>koni</i>
115.	rain	<i>kimu</i>	<i>uabu</i>	<i>uabu</i>	<i>imu</i>
116.	red	<i>βitoŋa</i>	<i>bitonja</i>	<i>bitonja</i>	<i>pitonja</i>
117.	right, true	<i>goa</i>	<i>goa</i>	<i>goa</i>	<i>koa</i>
118.	right (side)	<i>gaiu-gai-na</i>	<i>gai-na</i>	<i>gai-na</i>	<i>kai-na</i>
119.	river	<i>ui</i>	<i>ubi</i>	<i>ivi</i>	<i>vei</i>
120.	road, path	<i>enene(a)</i>	<i>gia</i>	<i>gea(ŋa)</i>	<i>keanja</i>
121.	root	<i>ŋamu-ŋamu-ŋa</i>	<i>ŋamu-ŋa</i>	<i>ŋamu-ŋa</i>	<i>ŋamu-ŋa</i>
122.	rope, string	<i>ue</i>	<i>ue</i>	<i>ue</i>	<i>uve</i>
123.	rotten	<i>mami</i>	<i>pululu</i>	<i>fululu</i>	<i>fujunu</i>
124.	rub	<i>kaki-na</i>	<i>kaki-na,</i>	<i>baiŋu-a,</i> <i>baiŋu-a kaki-na</i>	<i>paiŋu-a,</i> <i>?a?i-na</i>
125.	salt	<i>tsitsimalu</i>	<i>tsitsimalu</i>	<i>tsitsimalu</i>	<i>kikimalu,</i> <i>?i?ifo</i>
126.	sand	<i>ŋoau</i>	<i>piŋu</i>	<i>fiŋu</i>	<i>finu</i>
127.	say, speak	<i>kaβi</i>	<i>oabi</i>	<i>wabi</i>	<i>iva</i>
128.	scratch	<i>agi-agi</i>	<i>ajji</i>	<i>atsitsi</i>	<i>a?i?i</i>
129.	sea	<i>aku</i>	<i>aku</i>	<i>aku</i>	<i>a?u</i>
130.	see	<i>ia</i>	<i>ida</i>	<i>iza, iya</i>	<i>isa (*ia)</i>
131.	seed	<i>ani</i>	<i>ani</i>	<i>ani</i>	<i>ani</i>
132.	sew	<i>iŋi-a</i>	<i>gai-na</i>	<i>gai-na</i>	<i>kai-na</i>
133.	sharp	<i>inago</i>	<i>ago</i>	<i>ago</i>	<i>ako</i>
134.	short	<i>potoa, pokoa</i>	<i>kukupu</i>	<i>fokoa</i>	<i>fo?oa</i>
135.	sing	<i>iβi</i>	<i>ibi</i>	<i>ibi</i>	<i>ivi</i>
136.	sit	<i>aŋu</i>	<i>aŋu</i>	<i>aŋu</i>	<i>aŋu</i>
137.	skin	<i>pa</i>	<i>pa</i>	<i>faa</i>	<i>faa</i>
138.	sky	<i>upa</i>	<i>upa</i>	<i>ufa</i>	<i>ufa</i>
139.	sleep	<i>pi</i>	<i>pei, pi</i>	<i>feu</i>	<i>feu, few, fev</i>
140.	small	<i>titino, kikino</i>	<i>bebela</i>	<i>bebela</i>	<i>e?ele, kekele</i>
141.	smell	<i>poŋa</i>	<i>poŋa</i>	<i>foŋa</i>	<i>foŋa</i>
142.	smoke	<i>agu</i>	<i>agu</i>	<i>agu</i>	<i>aku</i>
143.	soft	<i>malo-malo</i>	<i>mameka</i>	<i>mameka</i>	<i>mame'a</i>
144.	snake	<i>paeβo</i>	<i>paebo</i>	<i>faibo</i>	<i>kaapa</i>
145.	sago	<i>aia</i>	<i>aida</i>	<i>aiza</i>	<i>ipako</i>
146.	some	<i>βiga</i>	<i>biga</i>	<i>biga</i>	<i>pika</i>
147.	spit	<i>kufe</i>	<i>kobe</i>	<i>kube</i>	<i>?upe</i>
148.	split, break	<i>pai-βo-ŋa</i>	<i>pai-bo-ŋa</i>	<i>fai-bo-ŋa</i>	<i>fai-po-ŋa</i>

149.	squeeze	<i>βεβε-ga</i>	<i>bebe-ga</i>	<i>bebe-ka</i>	<i>pepe-ka</i>
150.	stab, implant	<i>pau-ηα</i>	<i>pau-ηα</i>	<i>fau-ηα</i>	<i>fau-ηα</i>
151.	stand	<i>aβa</i>	<i>aba</i>	<i>aba</i>	<i>apa</i>
152.	star	<i>mikimiki</i>	<i>mitsimitsi</i>	<i>mitsimitsi</i>	<i>mi?imi?i</i>
153.	shoot (n.)	<i>uki</i>	<i>utsi</i>	<i>utsi</i>	<i>u?i</i>
154.	stone	<i>geβo</i>	<i>gebo</i>	<i>gebo</i>	<i>kepo</i>
155.	strong	<i>kaβula</i>	<i>kabula</i>	<i>kabula</i>	<i>kapula</i>
156.	suck	<i>mika</i>	<i>mika</i>	<i>mika</i>	<i>mia</i>
157.	sun	<i>gina</i>	<i>jina</i>	<i>tsina</i>	<i>kina</i>
158.	swell (v.)	<i>ipu</i>	<i>upu</i>	<i>ifu, ufu</i>	<i>ufu</i>
159.	swim	<i>ηau</i>	<i>ηau</i>	<i>ηau</i>	<i>ηau</i>
160.	tail	<i>aηe</i>	<i>aηe</i>	<i>u-ηα</i>	<i>iu-ηα</i>
161.	that	<i>eke</i>	<i>naba, eηaea</i>	<i>naba, eηaiaηa?ina</i>	
162.	there	<i>ekake</i>	<i>eηae</i>	<i>eηae</i>	<i>eηae</i>
163.	they	<i>ia, iya</i>	<i>ida</i>	<i>iza, iya</i>	<i>isa</i>
164.	thick	<i>kapua</i>	<i>kapua</i>	<i>kafua</i>	<i>?afua</i>
165.	thin	<i>maniβina</i>	<i>manibina</i>	<i>manebina</i>	<i>manipina</i>
166.	think	<i>oβo, oβoηa</i>	<i>obolaηa</i>	<i>obolaηa</i>	<i>opolaηa</i>
167.	this	<i>ike</i>	<i>namo</i>	<i>inaia, namo</i>	<i>ina-i-na</i>
168.	thou	<i>oi</i>	<i>oai</i>	<i>oai</i>	<i>oi</i>
169.	three	<i>kokapuηa</i>	<i>oido</i>	<i>oizo</i>	<i>oiso</i>
170.	throw	<i>kapo</i>	<i>kapo, biu-ηα</i>	<i>biu-ηα, kafo</i>	<i>piu-ηα, ?afo</i>
171.	tie (v.)	<i>ηoβe</i>	<i>ηobe</i>	<i>ηobe</i>	<i>ηope</i>
172.	tongue	<i>maea</i>	<i>mala</i>	<i>mala</i>	<i>mala</i>
173.	tooth	<i>nia</i>	<i>nie</i>	<i>nie</i>	<i>nie</i>
174.	tree	<i>au</i>	<i>au</i>	<i>au</i>	<i>au</i>
175.	twist (v.)	<i>βaino</i>	<i>baino</i>	<i>baino</i>	<i>paino</i>
176.	two	<i>iaηoπu</i>	<i>autsina</i>	<i>autsina</i>	<i>ηua</i>
177.	vomit (v.)	<i>iηa, uηa</i>	<i>uηa</i>	<i>uηa</i>	<i>uηa</i>
178.	walk (v.)	<i>βea</i>	<i>boa</i>	<i>boa</i>	<i>pea</i>
179.	warm/hot	<i>kakaηa</i>	<i>baηaiηai, iabu/idabu</i>	<i>baηaiηai, izabu</i>	<i>isapu (*iapu)</i>
180.	wash (bathe)	<i>uele</i>	<i>uele</i>	<i>uele</i>	<i>ufele</i>
181.	water	<i>ui</i>	<i>ubi</i>	<i>ivi</i>	<i>vei</i>
182.	we (incl.)	<i>ika</i>	<i>ika</i>	<i>ika</i>	<i>isa, i'a, i?a</i>
	we (excl.)	<i>ai</i>	<i>ai</i>	<i>ai</i>	<i>lai</i>
183.	wet	<i>pika</i>	<i>kome</i>	<i>kome</i>	<i>vei, mua</i>
184.	what?	<i>gaβaηu</i>	<i>gagaba</i>	<i>gagaba</i>	<i>kapa</i>
185.	when?	<i>ηaiga</i>	<i>ηaiga</i>	<i>ηaiga</i>	<i>ηaika, aika</i>
186.	where?	<i>gaβai</i>	<i>gabai</i>	<i>gabai</i>	<i>kapai</i>
187.	white	<i>gagaeηa</i>	<i>keloηa, gagalana</i>	<i>keloηa</i>	<i>keloηa</i>
188.	who?	<i>gai</i>	<i>a-gai</i>	<i>gai</i>	<i>kai</i>

189.	wide	<i>paŋaβa</i>	<i>paŋaba</i>	<i>faŋaba</i>	<i>falapa</i>
190.	wild	<i>aki</i>	<i>aki</i>	<i>aki</i>	<i>aʔi, aʔi</i>
191.	wind (n.)	<i>kamakama</i>	<i>amegu</i>	<i>amegu</i>	<i>ameku</i>
192.	wing (n.)	<i>βani</i>	<i>bani</i>	<i>bani</i>	<i>pani</i>
193.	wipe (v.)	<i>kaki-na</i>	<i>kaki-na</i>	<i>baiŋu-a</i>	<i>paiŋu-a</i>
194.	with	<i>mei</i>	<i>mei</i>	<i>mei</i>	<i>mei</i>
195.	woman	<i>βaβie</i>	<i>babie</i>	<i>babie</i>	<i>papie</i>
196.	woods (bush)	<i>anioŋa</i>	<i>au atsi,</i> <i>aŋo ao-ŋa</i>	<i>au atsi,</i> <i>aŋo ao-ŋa</i>	<i>au-f-aʔi,</i> <i>aŋo alō</i>
197.	worm	<i>kaikimu</i>	<i>kaitsima</i>	<i>tsimatsima</i>	<i>imaima</i>
198.	ye	<i>oi</i>	<i>oai</i>	<i>oai</i>	<i>oi</i>
199.	year	<i>kinifo</i>	<i>tsinibo</i>	<i>tsinibo</i>	<i>ʔinipo</i>
200.	yellow	<i>lopaŋa</i>	<i>laopaŋa</i>	<i>laofaŋa</i>	<i>laofaŋa</i>

APPENDIX 3

NWMek: THE KUNI CONNECTION

A historical link with the Lapeka area of Kuni is postulated not merely by outsiders but by the Kivio themselves (I here refer to speakers of NWMek by the name they themselves use). A number of origin myths and legends (see Text 1, Appendix 5, for an example) testify to a migration from the Kuni area, along the foothills of Mount Yule, to the low lands and wild sago stands situated around the major bend in the Lakekamu River where the Kivio now live. This leads one to speculate that their language might be in origin a dialect of Kuni rather than of Mekeo. However, the data make it quite clear that all four of the Mekeo dialects must have enjoyed a long period of exclusively shared development after separating from the common ancestor of the Kuni dialects. Not only does the lexical material show this at a glance, but the systems of the two grammars prove upon analysis to be very different. In fact the Kuni dialects seem to represent an earlier, more analytic language stratum, ancestral to both Mekeo and Roro.

In order to demonstrate this, and to illustrate some of the similarities and differences between NWMek and the Kuni dialects, I have collated a short word list (70 items, including the names of some very basic items of both a cultural and a non-cultural nature) from NWMek with similar lists from Central Kuni ('Standard Kuni'), North Kuni (Iaifa) and Lapeka (in fact a convergent, Kuni-Mekeo dialect). It will be observed that the Iaifa dialect of Kuni has undergone a sound-change identical to the one undergone by NWMek, WMek and NMek (i.e. PCP **d* > *g*). It is thus Iaifa that resembles NWMek the most, phonologically speaking. But there are very few lexical correspondences (some 44% by my calculations). I have, incidentally, starred all NWMek items not found in WMek, or at least not in the same meaning. For the Kuni dialects I have underlined items that have EMek/NMek/WMek cognates, but not NWMek ones. (NB: |kh| stands for the voiceless velar fricative /χ/ in the Iaifa dialect.) It will be seen by referring back to Appendix 2 that the Kuni dialects (and Lapeka in particular) show more affinity with EMek than with NWMek.

The distinct sets of cognates recognised for each meaning are numbered in the lists that follow. The number after a lexical item indicates the set to which it is taken to belong.

English	NWMek	Iaifa	Lapeka	'Kuni'
1. all	<i>mako-ki</i> (1)	<i>fofou</i> (2)	<i>mato-mo</i> (1)	<i>fofou</i> (2)
2. bad	<i>abaea</i> (1)	<i>abala</i> (1)	<i>abala-na</i> (1)	<i>avaya-na</i> (1)
3. banana	<i>poa</i> (1)	<i>ko</i> (2)	<i>koko</i> (2)	<i>ko</i> (2)
4. be hungry	<i>ina e-gimu</i> (1)	<i>e-moigi-au</i> (2)	<i>foa moidi</i> (2)	<i>e-moidi-au</i> (2)
5. be sick	<i>e-maigi</i> (1)*	<i>khaugua</i> (2)	<i>e-kouda</i> (2)	<i>kaudua</i> (2)
6. betelnut	<i>maoe, moe</i> (1)	<i>iluba</i> (2)	<i>inuba</i> (2)	<i>iluba</i> (2)
7. big	<i>maua</i> (1)	<i>galoana</i> (2)	<i>anokoina</i> (3)	<i>namana</i> (4)
8. black	<i>umauma</i> (1)*	<i>ikaikana</i> (2)	<i>itaita</i> (2)	<i>ikaika</i> (2)
9. blood	<i>ipa</i> (1)	<i>lalana</i> (2)	<i>nana</i> (2)	<i>lala</i> (2)
10. bone	<i>unia</i> (1)	<i>kulia</i> (1)	<i>kuluia</i> (1)	<i>kunia</i> (1)
11. butterfly	<i>pepe</i> (1)	<i>felofelo</i> (2)	<i>ofefo</i> (3)	<i>lofefo</i> (3)
12. child	<i>imi</i> (1)	<i>feafea</i> (2)	<i>naku</i> (3)	<i>feafea</i> (2)
13. chop(wood)	<i>aja-βua</i> (1)	<i>kala</i> (2)	<i>fofa</i> (3)	<i>foya</i> (3)
14. cold	<i>kamakama</i> (1)	<i>ululu</i> (2)	<i>ununu/ama</i>	<i>ama</i> (1)
15. cry	<i>igege</i> (1)*	<i>khan</i> (2)	<i>kai</i> (2)	<i>kani</i> (2)
16. dream	<i>oŋe</i> (1)*	<i>nibi</i> (2)	<i>nibi</i> (2)	<i>nibi</i> (2)
17. ear	<i>aina</i> (1)	<i>kaia-na</i> (1)	<i>kaia-na</i> (1)	<i>kaia-na</i> (1)
18. egg	<i>ai-na(aoi-na)</i> (1)	<i>avoi</i> (1)	<i>akoi</i> (1)	<i>avoi</i> (1)
19. elbow	<i>gi-na</i> (1)	<i>giu-na</i> (1)	<i>diu-na</i> (1)	<i>diu-na</i> (1)
20. fat	<i>ok</i> (1)	<i>okho</i> (1)	<i>oto</i> (1)	<i>oko</i> (1)
21. father	<i>ama</i> (1)	<i>khama</i> (1)	<i>kama</i> (1)	<i>kama</i> (1)
22. feather	<i>pupu-ŋa</i> (1)*	<i>bui-na</i> (2)	<i>bui-na</i> (2)	<i>kofi-na</i> (3)
23. finger	<i>nene</i> (1)	<i>obiobio</i> (2)	<i>obiobio</i> (2)	<i>obibio</i> (2)
24. fire	<i>moiβa</i> (1)*	<i>aloba</i> (2)	<i>anoba</i> (2)	<i>aloba</i> (2)
25. give s.o	<i>βini-a</i> (1)	<i>beni-a</i> (1)	<i>bei-a</i> (1)	<i>beni-a</i> (1)
26. good	<i>lobiana</i> (1)	<i>lobiana</i> (1)	<i>lobiana</i> (1)	<i>yobiana</i> (1)
27. head	<i>gania</i> (1)	<i>ola-na</i> (2)	<i>ona</i> (2)	<i>ola-na</i> (2)
28. hit	<i>u</i> (1)	<i>akhu</i> (1)	<i>aku</i> (1)	<i>aku</i> (1)
29. hot	<i>kaka-ŋa</i> (1)* <i>iaβu</i> (2)	<i>siabu</i> (2)	<i>siabu</i> (2)	<i>siabu</i> (2)
30. house	<i>eka</i> (1)	<i>luma</i> (2)	<i>numa</i> (2)	<i>luma</i> (2)
31. I	<i>iu</i> (1)	<i>mukau</i> (2)	<i>kau</i> (2)	<i>mukau</i> (2)
32. jaw, mouth	<i>age</i> (1)	<i>age-na</i> (1)	<i>ade</i> (1)	<i>ade</i> (1)
33. long	<i>maea-ŋa</i> (1)	<i>lakha-na</i> (2)	<i>laka-na</i> (2)	<i>yakaia-na</i> (2)
34. louse	<i>moka</i> (1)*	<i>ukhu</i> (2)	<i>uku</i> (2)	<i>uku</i> (2)
35. man, person	<i>au</i> (1)	<i>mukhau</i> (2)	<i>kau</i> (1)	<i>mukau</i> (1)
36. moon	<i>ŋaoa</i> (1)	<i>buia</i> (2)	<i>buia</i> (2)	<i>buia</i> (2)
37. morning	<i>ŋaβi-mu</i> (1)*	<i>kafakafa</i> (2)	<i>amanai</i> (3)	<i>kafa</i> (2)
38. mosquito	<i>iye</i> (1)	<i>moigi</i> (2)	<i>udi</i> (2)	<i>moidi</i> (2)
39. mother	<i>ina</i> (1)	<i>sina</i> (1)	<i>sina</i> (1)	<i>sina</i> (1)
40. name	<i>aga</i> (1)	<i>aga</i> (1)	<i>ada</i> (1)	<i>ada</i> (1)

41. new	<i>mamaŋa</i> (1)	<i>maulina</i> (2)	<i>maunina</i> (2)	<i>mauluna</i> (2)
42. nose	<i>gua</i> (1)	<i>igu-na</i> (2)	<i>dua</i> (1)	<i>idu</i> (2)
43. not	<i>maini</i> (1)* <i>ai</i> (2)	<i>atsi</i> (2)	<i>ate</i> (2)	<i>asi</i> (2)
44. old	<i>ueina, uina</i> (1)	<i>aiaina</i> (1)	<i>uaina</i> (1)	<i>aiaina</i> (1)
45. pain	<i>βa-aŋaŋa</i> (1)	<i>moigi</i> (2)	<i>moidi</i> (2)	<i>moidi</i> (2)
46. path	<i>enene</i> (1)	<i>gaea</i> (2)	<i>dala</i> (2)	<i>daea</i> (2)
47. pig	<i>kuma</i> (1)	<i>foloma</i> (2)	<i>fonoma</i> (2)	<i>foloma</i> (2)
48. pig louse				<i>kuma</i> (1)
49. rain	<i>kimu</i> (1)	<i>tsimu</i> (1)	<i>simu</i> (1)	<i>simu</i> (1)
50. root	<i>ŋamu-ŋa</i> (1) <i>ŋome</i> (2)	<i>lumi-na</i> (2)	<i>numi-na</i> (2)	<i>lumi-na</i> (2)
51. run	<i>βiu</i> (1)	<i>bale</i> (2)	<i>beau</i> (2)	<i>bale</i> (2)
52. sago	<i>aia</i> (1)	<i>faleo</i> (2)	<i>faneo</i> (2)	<i>faleo/ipako</i> (2/3)
53. scratch	<i>agiagi-na</i> (1)	<i>asisi</i> (1)	<i>vaia</i> (2)	<i>asisi</i> (1)
54. sharp	<i>inago</i> (1)	<i>anona</i> (1)	<i>ladona</i> (1)	<i>anona</i> (1)
55. short	<i>potoa</i> (1)	<i>ogoba-na</i> (2)	<i>toba-na</i> (2)	<i>odoba-na</i> (2)
56. sit	<i>aŋu</i> (1)	<i>mia</i> (2)	<i>mia</i> (2)	<i>mia</i> (2)
57. small	<i>tsi-tsiŋo</i> (1)*	<i>bea-na</i> (2)	<i>be-bea-na</i> (2)	<i>bea-na</i> (2)
58. smoke	<i>agu</i> (1)	<i>vaikafu</i> (2)	<i>akudu</i> (1)	<i>vaikafu</i> (2)
59. speak	<i>kaβi</i> (1)*	<i>avaka</i> (2)	<i>ninitai</i> (3)	<i>avaka</i> (2)
60. sugarcane	<i>eni</i> (1)	<i>khama</i> (2)	<i>ife</i> (3)	<i>kama</i> (2)
61. sun	<i>gina</i> (1)	<i>gia</i> (1)	<i>dia</i> (1)	<i>dia</i> (1)
62. sweet potato	<i>ukaβa</i> (1)*	<i>gubea</i> (2)	<i>veakoa</i> (1)	<i>gubea</i> (2)
63. taro	<i>kokou</i> (1)	<i>bae</i> (2)	<i>bae</i> (2)	<i>bae</i> (2)
64. tongue	<i>maea</i> (1)	<i>maea</i> (1)	<i>mala</i> (1)	<i>maea</i> (1)
65. tooth	<i>nie, nia</i> (1)	<i>ikhe</i> (2)	<i>ike</i> (2)	<i>ike</i> (2)
66. we (incl.)	<i>ika</i> (1)	<i>ika</i> (1)	<i>ita</i> (1)	<i>ika</i> (1)
67. what	<i>gaβa-ŋu</i> (1)	<i>gaba</i> (1)	<i>daba</i> (1)	<i>daba</i> (1)
68. white	<i>gagai-ŋa</i> (1)*	<i>labu-na</i> (2)	<i>devadeva</i> (3)	<i>deva-na</i> (3)
69. woman	<i>βaβie</i> (1)	<i>vabine</i> (1)	<i>vabie</i> (1)	<i>vabine</i> (1)
70. yellow	<i>lopaŋa</i> (1)	<i>laofana</i> (1)	<i>laofaŋa</i> (1)	<i>yaofana</i> (1)

The only NWMek words in the above list that do not have cognates in any other Mekeo dialects are: *moka* ‘louse’, *e-maigi* ‘be sick’, *kaka-ŋa* ‘hot’, *tsi-tsiŋo* (also *ki-kino*) ‘small’ *ukaβa* ‘sweet potato’ (apparently an Angan borrowing) and *kaβi* ‘speak’.¹ There are, however, a number of vocabulary items in common use in NWMek, or reported as having been in common use until recent times, which seem to represent either borrowings (from Roro or Motu, or Police Motu) or a more ancient linguistic substratum. Some examples (with underlining indicating probable cognation) are:

¹ The NWMek word *gagaiŋa* ‘white’ is known to some older speakers of WMek and NMek, but is now very rarely used.

	NWMek	English	WMek	Motu	Roro
a)	<i>piaku</i>	master, owner	—	<i>biagu</i>	—
b)	<i>pou</i>	story, legend	<i>idonioni</i>	<i>gori</i>	<i>pou</i>
c)	<i>moka</i> ²	louse	<i>ajino</i>	<i>utu</i>	<i>uhu</i>
d)	<i>ioβina</i>	know, understand	<i>loŋo, oŋo</i>	<i>diba</i>	<i>iovina</i>
e)	<i>malomalo</i>	soft	<i>mameka</i>	<i>manoka</i>	<i>muamua</i>
f)	<i>uβi</i>	roof (Brown)	<i>oa-oa</i>	<i>guhi</i>	<i>'uvi</i>

Other possible borrowings may involve large or small semantic shifts and are in that case harder to recognise.

g)	<i>tarua</i>	louse	<	Toaripi	<i>saruta</i>	louse
h)	<i>kifai</i>	to fish	<	Motu	<i>kimai</i>	fish-hook ³
i)	<i>oŋe</i>	dream	<	Toaripi	<i>ore</i>	knowledge (?) ⁴

Semantic shifts have of course also occurred within the Mekeo word stock, and it is by no means always obvious in which direction such shifts have occurred. However, it is often possible to make an educated guess based on PCP reconstructions. Some examples follow:

	NWMek	English	< ? >	Other Mekeo	English
j)	<i>βinauŋa</i>	garden	>	<i>binauŋa, pinauŋa</i>	to work
k)	<i>aŋo</i>	village	<	<i>aŋo</i>	land
l)	<i>maini</i>	is/are not	< >	<i>maini</i>	empty, idle
m)	<i>aaŋe</i>	crazy	< >	<i>aaŋe</i>	be lost
n)	<i>uga</i>	wealthy	<	<i>uga, uka</i>	accumulate
o)	<i>umauma</i>	black	<	<i>uma</i>	burn, roast
p)	<i>aguagu</i>	cloud	<	<i>agu, aku</i>	smoke

Other words that at first sight seem foreign are in fact, upon closer inspection, found to belong to the common Mekeo lexicon and to have undergone unexpected sound changes:

- q) *ui* water < WMek, NMek *iβi* (~ *ivi*) 'water'
 r) *uio* girl < > EMek *iviao* (WMek *ibio*) 'girl'
 s) *oku* fight < > WMek *loku*, EMek *loʔu, lou* 'quarrel'

Other words are innovative compounds:

- t) *pakiage* door < > *paki* 'tie, knot' + *age* 'mouth, opening'

I would suggest that the Kuni words for 'hungry', 'pain' and 'mosquito' are cognate. This appears to be a definite Kuni loan in NWMek where it means 'sick'.

² Brown collected NWMek *tarua* for 'louse'. See g) below.

³ A stressed *initial* [β] is often realised as pre-nasalised [m+β] in Toaripi, as well as other Eleman languages, and was often written unsystematically as either [b] or [m] by early missionaries. See Brown's (1986:xiii) remarks.

⁴ Two other possible borrowings from Eleman languages that are also found in the other Mekeo dialects are *opu, ofu* 'body dirt' (< Toaripi *opu* 'juice, sap, blood') and *poŋe, foŋe* 'deceit' (< Orokololo *o-pore* 'lie, falsehood, deceit').

It is worth mentioning that several East Mekeo clans claim to have originated *in the area of* Lapeka. Among these are *Inaufokoa*, the East Mekeo clan which founded Veifaa from Isoisovapu⁵ (see Hau'ofa 1981:34, and Seligman 1910:368), *Ujokapia* and *Apaŋaikoa*, two clans of the large East Mekeo village of Inawaia (Seligman 1910:355), and *Maipa Faka*, a North Mekeo clan strongly represented in Maipa village and Ioi village as well as elsewhere (Mark Mosko, pers.comm.). So that although the NWMek have no special linguistic relationship with the Kuni (either Iaifa or Lapeka), it is possible and even probable that they represent an early wave of migrants pushing southwards out of the mountains ahead of the Kuni speaking peoples, themselves just ahead of the Fuyughe expansion.⁶

⁵ *Iso-iso-vapu* is the folk-historical name for the legendary centre of dispersal for all of the East Mekeo clans. Its sister village was *Iso-iso-vina*. These may have existed shortly before 1840 or thereabouts when, according to Hau'ofa (1981:40), "the present structure and ward composition of Beipa'a and the other two major Pioufa villages, Aipiana and Inawi, was already established". This assertion is based on Fr Egidi's genealogies, which date back to the 1890s. The two villages were situated in the grasslands between Oriropetana and Bebeo. (Note that the names of the two ancestral villages were until recently *Io-io-vapu* and *Io-io-vina*, without intrusive [s].)

⁶ I do not mean to exclude the possibility that some immigrant clans were in fact Kuni speakers who subsequently became acculturated.

APPENDIX 4

THE MORPHOPHONEMICS OF SOME COMMON VERBS

As already noted (see §4.1.2 above) the verbal prefixes or subject markers in Mekeo are portmanteau forms that combine morphemes marking tense-mood and person/number. In addition there can be a negative operator. These prefixes involve varying degrees of vocalic assimilation. Intrusive consonants often function as buffers, preventing the assimilation of vowels, but they themselves undergo certain changes according to their vocalic environment. The conjugation of certain very common verbs is thus unpredictable on the basis of the tables provided in the text of the work. Full conjugations are provided here for two of the most important of these verbs. These will at the same time illustrate the different kinds and degrees of assimilation that can occur.

The order of elements in the verbal prefix has recently been used as a classificatory tool by Ross (1983b). In view of his claim that Proto Peripheral Papuan Tip languages and Proto Nuclear Papuan Tip languages can be differentiated according to whether the TM-marking morphemes precede or succeed the subject-marking morphemes, I am obliged to pay special attention to this feature (which is not as transparent in some paradigms, and in some dialects, as in others). The future tense marking morphemes figure importantly in crucial analyses and, as this is the only case in which there is any doubt that the TM-marking morphemes precede the rest in Mekeo, I demonstrate below that this is indeed the case. The West Mekeo future and future negative paradigms best preserve the original future tense marking morphemes, so I present my analysis in terms of these paradigms, at the end of §4.2 below.

In this appendix I shall illustrate the following verbs with full conjugations:

- 4.1 North-West Mekeo Verbal Paradigms: *io* 'go'
- 4.2 West Mekeo Verbal Paradigms: *ao* 'go'
- 4.3 North Mekeo Verbal Paradigms: *ao* 'go'
- 4.4 East Mekeo Verbal Paradigms: *lao* 'go'
- 4.5 North-West Mekeo Verbal Paradigms: *ia/iya* 'see'
- 4.6 West Mekeo Verbal Paradigms: *ida* 'see'
- 4.7 West Mekeo Verbal Paradigms: *ido-ŋ-a* 'see'
- 4.8 North Mekeo Verbal Paradigms: *iza* 'see'
- 4.9 North Mekeo Verbal Paradigms: *izo-ŋ-a* 'see'
- 4.10 East Mekeo Verbal Paradigms: *isa* 'see'

4.1 NORTH WEST MEKEO PARADIGMS: *io* 'go' (Brown has *eo*)

A. AFFIRMATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Hypothetical	Obligative	Imperative
1SG	<i>aio</i>	<i>naio</i>	<i>napaio ŋa</i>	<i>paio ŋa ke</i>	<i>maio</i>
>	<i>a-io</i>	<i>n-a-io</i>	<i>nap-a-io ŋa</i>	<i>p-a-io ŋa ke</i>	<i>m-a-io</i>
2SG	<i>iaio</i>	<i>nio</i>	<i>nipio ŋa</i>	<i>pio ŋa ke</i>	<i>mio</i>
3SG	<i>iaio</i>	<i>nio</i>	<i>nipio ŋa</i>	<i>pio ŋa ke</i>	<i>naio</i>
1PL.I	<i>gaio</i>	<i>nagaio</i>	<i>napaio ŋa</i>	<i>paio ŋa ke</i>	<i>amaio</i>
1PL.E	<i>gaio</i>	<i>nagaio</i>	<i>napaio ŋa</i>	<i>paio ŋa ke</i>	<i>amaio</i>
2PL	<i>giaio</i>	<i>nigio</i>	<i>nipio ŋa</i>	<i>pio ŋa ke</i>	<i>gio</i>
3PL	<i>giaio</i>	<i>nigio</i>	<i>nipigio ŋa</i>	<i>pigio ŋa ke</i>	<i>gaio</i>

The post-clitics in Hypothetical and Obligative mood are optional. They add emphasis, but may also perform discourse functions that have yet to be fully investigated (see §7.4.3 above). The sporadic loss of person/number distinctions (due to assimilation) is typical of this dialect.

B. NEGATIVE:

	Past	Non-Past	Future	Prohibitive
1SG	<i>maini aeaiio</i>	<i>paeoŋa</i>	<i>napaeoŋa</i>	<i>maini paeoŋa ke</i>
2SG	<i>maini aeaiio</i>	<i>paeoŋa</i>	<i>napaeoŋa</i>	<i>maini paeoŋa ke</i>
3SG	<i>maini aeio</i>	<i>paeoŋa</i>	<i>napaeoŋa</i>	<i>maini paeoŋa ke</i>
1PL.I	<i>maini agaeo</i>	<i>pagaeoŋa</i>	<i>napaeoŋa</i>	<i>maini pagaeoŋa ke</i>
1PL.E	<i>maini agaeo</i>	<i>pagaeoŋa</i>	<i>napaeoŋa</i>	<i>maini pagaeoŋa ke</i>
2PL	<i>maini aeio</i>	<i>pagioŋa</i>	<i>nipioŋa</i>	<i>maini pioŋa ke</i>
3PL	<i>maini aeio</i>	<i>pagioŋa</i>	<i>nipigioŋa</i>	<i>maini pigioŋa ke</i>

The past negative and prohibitive appear to be doubly marked, possibly because assimilation of the negative marker *ae* risks giving rise to misperceptions and ambiguity. Note that the non-past negative is effectively a near future tense. The future negative proper is in origin a negative hypothetical paradigm – it functions as a pure future tense.

C. REDUPLICATED FORMS (HABITUAL ASPECT):

	Non-Future	Future	Hypothetical	Obligative	Imperative
1SG	<i>aiaio</i>	<i>naiaio</i>	<i>napaiaio</i>	<i>paiaio</i>	<i>maiaio</i>
2SG	<i>iaiaio</i>	<i>niaio</i>	<i>nipiaio</i>	<i>piaio</i>	<i>miaio</i>
3SG	<i>iaiaio</i>	<i>niaio</i>	<i>nipiaio</i>	<i>piaio</i>	<i>naiaio</i>
1PL.I	<i>gaiaio</i>	<i>nagaiaio</i>	<i>napaiaio</i>	<i>pagiaio</i>	<i>amaiaio</i>
1PL.E	<i>gaiaio</i>	<i>nagaiaio</i>	<i>napaiaio</i>	<i>pagiaio</i>	<i>amaiaio</i>
2PL	<i>giaiaio</i>	<i>nigiaio</i>	<i>nipiaio</i>	<i>pagiaiaio</i>	<i>giaio</i>
3PL	<i>giaiaio</i>	<i>nigiaio</i>	<i>napaiaio</i>	<i>pagiaiaio</i>	<i>giaio</i>

4.2 WEST MEKEO PARADIGMS: *ao* 'go'

A. AFFIRMATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Hypothetical	Obligative	Imperative
1SG	<i>ao</i>	<i>anao</i>	<i>napao</i>	<i>pao</i>	<i>mao</i>
>	<i>a-ao</i>	<i>ana-a-ao</i>	<i>napa-a-ao</i>	<i>pa-a-ao</i>	<i>ma-a-ao</i>
2SG	<i>oao/owo</i>	<i>anoao/anowo</i>	<i>napoao/napwo</i>	<i>poao/pwo</i>	<i>moao/mwo</i>
3SG	<i>iao/io</i>	<i>aniao/anio</i>	<i>napiao/napio</i>	<i>piao/pio</i>	<i>ɲao</i>
1PL.I	<i>gao</i>	<i>nagao</i>	<i>napamao</i>	<i>pamao</i>	<i>amao</i>
1PL.E	<i>gao</i>	<i>nagao</i>	<i>napamao</i>	<i>pamao</i>	<i>amao</i>
2PL	<i>goao/gwo</i>	<i>nogoao/nogwo</i>	<i>nopoao</i>	<i>poao/powo</i>	<i>oao/owo</i>
3PL	<i>giao/gio</i>	<i>negiao/negio</i>	<i>nepiao</i>	<i>piao</i>	<i>gaɲao</i>

B. NEGATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Prohibitive
1SG	<i>aidao</i>	<i>naidao/napaidao</i>	<i>paidao</i>
2SG	<i>aidoao/aidowo</i>	<i>naidoao/napaidowo</i>	<i>paidoao/paidowo</i>
3SG	<i>aijiao/aijio</i>	<i>naijiao/napaijiao</i>	<i>paijiao/paijio</i>
1PL.I	<i>aigao</i>	<i>naigao/napaigao</i>	<i>paigao</i>
1PL.E	<i>aigao</i>	<i>naigao/napaigao</i>	<i>paigao</i>
2PL	<i>aigoao/aigowo</i>	<i>naigoao/napaigoao</i>	<i>paigoao/paigowo</i>
3PL	<i>aigiao/aigio</i>	<i>naigiao/napaigiao</i>	<i>paigiao</i>

The negative paradigms here make clear that the negative marker *ai* precedes the subject marking morpheme from which it is separated by the intrusive consonant [d] (*d* > *dʒ*/*i*_*i*, which is written here as |j|), while the future tense marker precedes the negative marker:

Tense	Polarity		Person	Base	
<i>n</i> - FUT-	<i>ai</i> - NEG-	<i>d</i> - B-	<i>a</i> - 1SG-	<i>ao</i> go	I will not go.
<i>n</i> - FUT-	<i>ai</i> - NEG-	<i>d</i> - B-	<i>o</i> - 2SG-	<i>ao</i> go	You won't go.
<i>na</i> FUT-			<i>ga</i> - 1PL-	<i>ao</i> go	We will go.
<i>an</i> - FUT			<i>a</i> - 1SG-	<i>ao</i> go	I will go.
FUT.: * <i>ana</i> , or * <i>anV</i>					

As I noted in §4.2.2 above, Pre- or Proto-Mekeo **ana* corresponds to the Kuni aspect-marking particle *ana* (*ane* before *a*-) and Lala *ani*, both signalling the imminence or immediacy of an action: 'having just...-ed' or 'on the point of...-ing'. The simple future tense in Kuni (with *f*-) corresponds to the WMek obligative (in *p*-). Kuni has no **ana*-

future. Ross (1988:103) suggests that the POC verbal system operated with unbound morphemes, later incorporated into the verb phrase in different ways in different languages and groups of languages. This would seem to be what happened here in the WCP subgroup.

4.3 NORTH MEKEO PARADIGMS: *ao* 'go'

A. AFFIRMATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Hypothetical	Obligative	Imperative
1SG	<i>ao</i>	<i>anao</i>	<i>afamao</i>	<i>fao</i>	<i>mao</i>
2SG	<i>oao</i>	<i>anoao</i>	<i>afoao</i>	<i>foao</i>	<i>moao</i>
3SG	<i>eao</i>	<i>aniao</i>	<i>afiao</i>	<i>feao</i>	<i>ŋao</i>
1PL.I	<i>gao</i>	<i>agao</i>	<i>afamao</i>	<i>famao</i>	<i>amao</i>
1PL.E	<i>gao</i>	<i>agao</i>	<i>afamao</i>	<i>famao</i>	<i>amao</i>
2PL	<i>goao</i>	<i>agoao</i>	<i>afoao</i>	<i>foao</i>	<i>oao</i>
3PL	<i>giao</i>	<i>agiao</i>	<i>afegiao</i>	<i>fegiao</i>	<i>gaŋao</i>

B. NEGATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Prohibitive
1SG	<i>aizao</i>	<i>naizao /afaizao</i>	<i>faizao</i>
2SG	<i>aizoao</i>	<i>naizoao/afaizoao</i>	<i>faizoao</i>
3SG	<i>aiziao</i>	<i>naiziao/afaiziao</i>	<i>faiziao</i>
1PL.I	<i>aigao</i>	<i>naigao/afaigao</i>	<i>faigao</i>
1PL.E	<i>aigao</i>	<i>naigao/afaigao</i>	<i>faigao</i>
2PL	<i>aigoao</i>	<i>naigoao/afaigoao</i>	<i>faigoao</i>
3PL	<i>aigiao</i>	<i>naigeao/afaigeao</i>	<i>faigeao</i>

The intrusive consonant [z] fulfils the same function here as [d] in WMek. This z goes to *ʒ/i_i*, but is still written here as | z |.

4.4 EAST MEKEO VERBAL PARADIGMS: *lao* 'go'

A. AFFIRMATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Hypothetical	Obligative	Imperative
1SG	<i>lao</i>	<i>alao</i>	<i>afalao</i>	<i>falao</i>	<i>malao</i>
2SG	<i>lolo</i>	<i>alolo</i>	<i>afolao</i>	<i>folao</i>	<i>molao</i>
3SG	<i>elao</i>	<i>aŋelao</i>	<i>afelao</i>	<i>felao</i>	<i>ŋalao</i>
1PL.I	<i>lao</i>	<i>aŋalao</i>	<i>afalao</i>	<i>falao</i>	<i>amalao</i>
1PL.E	<i>lao</i>	<i>aŋalao</i>	<i>afalao</i>	<i>falao</i>	<i>amalao</i>
2PL	<i>olao</i>	<i>aŋolao</i>	<i>afolao</i>	<i>folao</i>	<i>olao/amolao</i>
3PL	<i>kelao</i>	<i>akelao</i>	<i>afekelao</i>	<i>fekelao</i>	<i>keŋalao</i>

B. NEGATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Intentional
1SG	<i>alalao</i>	<i>afalalao</i>	<i>falalao</i>
2SG	<i>alolao</i>	<i>afalolao</i>	<i>fololao</i>
3SG	<i>a-elao</i>	<i>afa-elao</i>	<i>fa-elao</i>
1PL.I	<i>alalao</i>	<i>afalalao</i>	<i>falalao</i>
1PL.E	<i>alalao</i>	<i>afalalao</i>	<i>falalao</i>
2PL.	<i>alolao</i>	<i>afalolao</i>	<i>fololao</i>
3PL	<i>akelao</i>	<i>afakelao</i>	<i>fakelao</i>

The raised point /-/ indicates a pause. This is different to the weakened glottal stop [']. Because of vowel assimilation the prefixes are true portmanteaus in this dialect and it is not always possible to provide a linear constituent analysis.

The analysis of WMek prefixal morphology given above allows one to break down the more opaque and often homonymous EMek forms as follows (initial *l* is an accretion):

Tense	Polarity	Person	Base	Gloss
<i>a-</i> FUT-		<i>la-</i> 1SG	<i>lao</i> go	I will go.
	<i>a-</i> NEG-	<i>la-</i> 1SG-	<i>lao</i> go	I do/did not go.
<i>f-</i> OBLG-		<i>a-</i> 1SG-	<i>lao</i> go	I would/should go.
<i>af-</i> HYP-	<i>a-</i> NEG-	<i>la-</i> 1SG-	<i>lao</i> go	I will not go.
OBLG.: * <i>pV-</i> .		HYP.: * <i>napV-</i> .		NEG.: * <i>a-i</i>

The presence/retention of the *l* (which typically accretes to word-initial *a*) in the future (affirmative) paradigm and *not* in the other intentional paradigms suggests that the future marker was accreted to the base later than the intentional mood markers. This supports the hypothesis that it derives from a free particle of the form **ana* or **anV*. This also would explain the differing order of elements in the different language groups, as noted above.

4.5 NORTH WEST MEKEO VERBAL PARADIGMS: *ia* / *iya* 'see'

A. AFFIRMATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Hypothetical	Obligative	Imperative
1SG	<i>aiya-n-a</i>	<i>naiya-n-a</i>	<i>napaiya-n-a</i>	<i>paiya-n-a</i>	<i>maiya-n-a</i>
>	<i>a-iy-a-n-a</i>	<i>n-a-iy-a-n-a</i>	<i>nap-a-iy-a-n-a</i>	<i>pa-a-iy-a-n-a</i>	<i>ma-a-iy-a-n-a</i>
2SG	<i>uiya-n-a</i>	<i>nuiya-n-a</i>	<i>napuiya-n-a</i>	<i>puiya-n-a</i>	<i>muiya-n-a</i>
3SG	<i>iya-n-a</i>	<i>niya-n-a</i>	<i>napiya-n-a</i>	<i>piya-n-a</i>	<i>naiya-n-a</i>

1PL.I	<i>gaiya-n-a</i>	<i>nagaiya-n-a</i>	<i>napagaiya-n-a</i>	<i>pagaiya-n-a</i>	<i>amaiya-n-a</i>
1PL.E	<i>gaiya-n-a</i>	<i>nagaiya-n-a</i>	<i>napagaiya-n-a</i>	<i>pagaiya-n-a</i>	<i>amaiya-n-a</i>
2PL	<i>guiya-n-a</i>	<i>nuguiya-n-a</i>	<i>napaguiya-n-a</i>	<i>paguiya-n-a</i>	<i>giya-n-a</i>
3PL	<i>gaiya-n-a</i>	<i>nageiya-n-a</i>	<i>napagaiya-n-a</i>	<i>pagaiya-n-a</i>	<i>gaiya-n-a</i>

(Note that in NWMek *o* > *u* / *_i*.)

B. NEGATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Prohibitive
1SG	<i>aeiya-n-a</i>	<i>naeyia-n-a/napaeiya-n-a</i>	<i>paeyia-n-a auŋa ke</i>
>	<i>ae-a-iyā-n-a</i>	<i>n-ae-a-iyā-/nap-ae-a-iyā-</i>	<i>p-ae-a-iyā-n-a...</i>
2SG	<i>aeiya-n-a</i>	<i>naeyia-n-a/napaeiya-n-a</i>	<i>paeyia-n-a auŋa ke</i>
3SG	<i>aeiya-n-a</i>	<i>naeyia-n-a/napaeiya-n-a</i>	<i>paeyia-n-a auŋa ke</i>
1PL.I	<i>agaeiya-n-a</i>	<i>nagaeiya-n-a/napagaeiya-n-a</i>	<i>pagaeiya-n-a auŋa ke</i>
1PL.E	<i>agaeiya-n-a</i>	<i>nagaeiya-n-a/napagaeiya-n-a</i>	<i>pagaeiya-n-a auŋa ke</i>
2PL	<i>agaeiya-n-a</i>	<i>nagaeiya-n-a/napagaeiya-n-a</i>	<i>pagaeiya-n-a auŋa ke</i>
3PL	<i>agaeiya-n-a</i>	<i>nagaeiya-n-a/napagaeiya-n-a</i>	<i>pagaeiya-n-a auŋa ke</i>

4.6 WEST MEKEO VERBAL PARADIGMS: *ida* 'see'

A. AFFIRMATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Hypothetical	Obligative	Imperative
1SG	<i>aida</i>	<i>anaida</i>	<i>napaida</i>	<i>paida</i>	<i>maida</i>
>	<i>a-ida</i>	<i>an-a-ida</i>	<i>nap-a-ida</i>	<i>p-a-ida</i>	<i>m-a-ida</i>
2SG	<i>owida</i>	<i>anowida</i>	<i>napowida</i>	<i>powida</i>	<i>mowida</i>
3SG	<i>ida</i>	<i>anida</i>	<i>napida</i>	<i>paida</i>	<i>ŋaida</i>
1PL.I	<i>gaida</i>	<i>nagaida</i>	<i>napaida</i>	<i>paida</i>	<i>amaida</i>
1PL.E	<i>gaida</i>	<i>nagaida</i>	<i>napaida</i>	<i>paida</i>	<i>amaida</i>
2PL	<i>gowida</i>	<i>nagowida</i>	<i>napowida</i>	<i>powida</i>	<i>owida</i>
3PL	<i>gida</i>	<i>nagida</i>	<i>napagida</i>	<i>pagida</i>	<i>gaŋaida</i>

B. NEGATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Prohibitive
1SG	<i>aidaida</i>	<i>naidaida/napaidaida</i>	<i>paidaida</i>
>	<i>ai-d-a-ida</i>	<i>n-ai-d-a-ida/nap-ai-d-a-ida</i>	<i>p-ai-d-a-ida</i>
2SG	<i>aidowida</i>	<i>naidowida/napaidowida</i>	<i>paidowida</i>
3SG	<i>aijida</i>	<i>naijida/napaijida</i>	<i>paijida</i>
1PL.I	<i>aigaida</i>	<i>naigaida/napaigaida</i>	<i>paigaida</i>
1PL.E	<i>aigaida</i>	<i>naigaida/napaigaida</i>	<i>paigaida</i>
2PL	<i>aigowida</i>	<i>naigowida/napaigowida</i>	<i>paidowida</i>
3PL	<i>aigida</i>	<i>naigida/napaigida</i>	<i>paidagida</i>

There are two two parallel conjugations for the verb ‘see’ in NWMek, WMek and NMek, one with and one without the thematic consonant *-ŋ*. The presence of this consonant permits the base to take a full range of object markers. Since the WMek and NMek conjugations are virtually identical except for the difference in the intrusive, or buffer consonants (*d* versus *z*), I will only give one full conjugation for each dialect here.

4.7 WEST MEKEO VERBAL PARADIGMS: *ido-ŋ-a* ‘see’

See §4.9 below.

It will be recalled that [oi] > [wi] in WMek.

4.8 NORTH MEKEO VERBAL PARADIGMS: *iza* ‘see’

See §4.6 above.

4.9 NORTH MEKEO VERBAL PARADIGMS: *izo-ŋ-a* ‘see something’

A. AFFIRMATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Hypothetical	Obligative	Imperative
1SG	<i>aizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>anaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>afaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>faizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>maizo-ŋ-a</i>
2SG	<i>oizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>anoizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>afoizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>foizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>moizo-ŋ-a</i>
3SG	<i>eizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>aneizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>afeizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>feizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>ŋaizo-ŋ-a</i>
1PL.I	<i>gaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>agaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>afagaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>fagaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>amaizo-ŋ-a</i>
1PL.E	<i>gaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>agaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>afagaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>fagaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>amaizo-ŋ-a</i>
2PL	<i>goizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>agoizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>afagoizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>fagoizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>oaizo-ŋ-a</i>
3PL	<i>geizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>ageizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>afageizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>fageizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>gaŋaizo-ŋ-a</i>

B. NEGATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Prohibitive
1SG	<i>aizaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>naizaizo-ŋ-a/afaizaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>faizaizo-ŋ-a</i>
>	<i>ai-z-a-izo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>n-ai-z-a-izo-ŋ-a...</i>	<i>f-ai-z-a-izo-ŋ-a</i>
2SG	<i>aizoizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>naizoizo-ŋ-a/afaizwizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>faizwizo-ŋ-a</i>
3SG	<i>eizizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>neizeizo-ŋ-a/afaizeizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>faizeizo-ŋ-a</i>
1PL.I	<i>aigaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>naigaizo-ŋ-a/afaigaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>faigaizo-ŋ-a</i>
1PL.E	<i>aigaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>naigaizo-ŋ-a/afaigaizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>faigaizo-ŋ-a</i>
2PL	<i>aigoizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>naigoizo-ŋ-a/afaigoizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>faigaizo-ŋ-a</i>
3PL	<i>aigeizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>naigeizo-ŋ-a/afaigeizo-ŋ-a</i>	<i>faigaizo-ŋ-a</i>

4.10 EAST MEKEO VERBAL PARADIGMS: *isa* 'see'

A. AFFIRMATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Hypothetical	Obligative	Imperative
1SG	<i>laisa</i>	<i>alaisa</i>	<i>afaisa</i>	<i>faisa</i>	<i>maisa</i>
2SG	<i>loisa</i>	<i>aloisa</i>	<i>afoisa</i>	<i>foisa</i>	<i>moisa</i>
3SG	<i>eisa</i>	<i>aŋeisa</i>	<i>afeisa</i>	<i>feisa</i>	<i>ŋaisa</i>
1PL.I	<i>aisa</i>	<i>aŋaisa</i>	<i>afaisa</i>	<i>faisa</i>	<i>amaisa</i>
1PL.E	<i>aisa</i>	<i>aŋaisa</i>	<i>afaisa</i>	<i>faisa</i>	<i>amaisa</i>
2PL	<i>oisa</i>	<i>aŋoisa</i>	<i>afoisa</i>	<i>foisa</i>	<i>oisa</i>
3PL	<i>keisa</i>	<i>akeisa</i>	<i>afekeisa</i>	<i>fekeisa</i>	<i>gaŋaisa</i>

B. NEGATIVE:

	Non-Future	Future	Prohibitive
1SG	<i>alaisa</i>	<i>afalaisa</i>	<i>falaisa</i>
2SG	<i>aloisa</i>	<i>afaloisa</i>	<i>foloisa</i>
3SG	<i>a·eisa</i>	<i>afa·eisa</i>	<i>fa·eisa</i>
1PL.I	<i>alaisa</i>	<i>afalaisa</i>	<i>falaisa</i>
1PL.E	<i>alaisa</i>	<i>afalaisa</i>	<i>falaisa</i>
2PL	<i>aloisa</i>	<i>afaloisa</i>	<i>foloisa</i>
3PL	<i>akeisa</i>	<i>afekeisa</i>	<i>fekeisa</i>

C. REDUPLICATED FORM (HABITUAL ASPECT)

	Non-Future	Future	Hypothetical	Obligative	Imperative
1SG	<i>laisaisa</i>	<i>alaisaisa</i>	<i>afaisaisa</i>	<i>faisaisa</i>	<i>maisaisa</i>
2SG	<i>loisaisa</i>	<i>aloisaisa</i>	<i>afoisaisa</i>	<i>foisaisa</i>	<i>moisaisa</i>
3SG	<i>eisaisa</i>	<i>aŋeisaisa</i>	<i>afeisaisa</i>	<i>feisaisa</i>	<i>ŋaisaisa</i>
1PL.I	<i>aisaisa</i>	<i>aŋaisaisa</i>	<i>afaisaisa</i>	<i>falaisaisa</i>	<i>amaisaisa</i>
1PL.E	<i>aisaisa</i>	<i>aŋaisaisa</i>	<i>afaisaisa</i>	<i>falaisaisa</i>	<i>amaisaisa</i>
2PL	<i>oisaisa</i>	<i>aŋoisaisa</i>	<i>afoisaisa</i>	<i>falaisaisa</i>	<i>oisaisa</i>
3PL	<i>keisaisa</i>	<i>akeisaisa</i>	<i>afekeisaisa</i>	<i>fekeisaisa</i>	<i>keŋaisaisa</i>

APPENDIX 5
FOUR SAMPLE TEXTS

TEXT 1: NWMek

Origins of the Kovio

Au nao, Alan Jones, gamomaŋa e-mai Okovae. Ai gaβa-ai ga-mai,
man European Alan Jones recently 3SG-come Okovae we.E what-OBL 1PL-come
'(A) European man, Alan Jones, has come to Okovae recently. Where we have come from,

ŋa-βuo, ai Kuni ma, Lapeka ma, ena gemomaŋa ga-mai,
that-for we.E Kuni INT Lapeka INT there recently 1PL-come
for that (reason), are we Kuni or Lapeka, (have) we come (from) there in past times?

ŋa-βuo pou na-e ma-kaβi-n-a na-loŋo, a-oma,
that-for story this-CNT IMP.1SG-speak-TH-3SG IMP.3SG-know 1SG-DNT
For that I would tell (this) story here (so that) he may know,

na-kaβi-n-a. Pou ike-go: Lapeka au-ŋa aminia ia a-ŋa
FUT.1SG-speak-TH-3SG story this-like Lapeka man-3SG one he e.s.s..sib-3SG
I will tell it. (The) story (goes) like this: A Lapeka man he was the elder brother,

aji-na ia a-ŋa agaoā e-βa-ai-a, ŋa-βuo
y.s.s.sib-3SG he e.s.s..sib-3SG spouse.3SG 3SG-CA-copulate-3SG that-for
(the) younger brother copulated with him his elder brother's wife, (and) for that

[a-ŋa:] na-u-ŋa e-ma, e-βa-maniki-n-a e-βiu e-mai,
[e.s.s.sib-3SG] FUT.1SG-beat-3SG 3SG-DNT 3SG-CA-fear-TH-3SG 3SG-run 3SG-come
his elder brother said: I will beat him, he scared him (and) he ran (and) he came

e-mai ina aŋo o-ŋa-ai e-aŋu-e, ina-e e-aŋu-aŋu agaoa maini,
3SG-come here land inside-3SG-OBL 3SG-sit-CNT this-CNT 3SG-sit-RED spouse not
he came here (and) stayed in the bush, he lived here without a wife,

ŋa-buo e-mue o, βiopa-ŋa-ai ma Waima e-amaŋe, e-mai ina-e
that-for 3SG-turn or Veifaa-3SG-OBL INT Waima 3SG-marry 3SG-come here-CNT
therefore he returned or, he married in Veifaa or Waima, (and) he came (and) here

e-aŋu-aŋu, ŋa famili, ŋa famili eh, ge-ŋama. βai-ge muŋi-na-ai e-mai,
3SG-sit-RED DX family DX family oh 3PL-burgeon then after-3SG-OBL 3SG-come
he lived, to his family, to his family, it grew. Then after that he came

a-ŋa bu e-βio, a-ŋa e-βai-n-i-a:
 e.s.s.sib-3SG again 3SG-meet e.s.s.sib-3SG 3SG-tell-TH-PF-3SG
 he met his elder brother again, (and) he told him:

Bu na-aŋu, e-ma; e-βai-n-i-a: O! Iu a-ia famili, aia famili
 again FUT.1SG-sit 1SG-DNT 3SG-tell-TH-PF-3SG Ho! I my family [my] family
 I will settle again, he said; he told him: Ho!, I have founded a family (home),

e-ŋome, ŋa-buo, apu eke ini apu-ŋa, βio, kuma apu-ŋa,
 3SG-base that-for place that bird place-3SG cassowary pig place-3SG
 because that place is a place (full) of birds, a place (full) of cassowary and pig,

ŋa-buo oi aoàlai, ina-e pu a-aŋu, iu ena na-aŋu. Na-make,
 that-for you never.mind here-CNT again 1SG-sit I there FUT.1SG-sit that after
 therefore you never mind, here again I live, I will live there/thus. After,

ai e-na Kuni ga-mai, ŋa-buo pou ije a-kaβi-n-i-a.
 we there Kuni 1PL-come that-for story this 1SG-speak-TH-PF-3SG
 we came (from) Kuni there, for that I (have) told this story.

TEXT 2: WMek

Kuma à goà ga-iwa.
 pig what like 1PL-cut
 How we cut up pigs.

Ai kuma ga-apsi-a ga-ao-ai-n-a
 we.E pig 1PL-take-3SG 1PL-go-RTR-TH-3SG
 We take a pig

au-ai ganiā ga-au-n-i-a e-mae.
 wood-OBL head.3SG 1PL-hit-TH-PF-3SG 3SG-die
 (and) we kill it by hitting it on the head with a piece of wood.

ŋaegai inināu ga-apsi-a ga-jin-i-a e-pua.
 then coconut.leaf 1PL-take-3SG 1PL-singe-PF-3SG 3SG-finish
 Then we take coconut leaves and we singe it and that's that.

Ga-iwa, mabē pa-ŋa ga-ba-iji-b-a. Imā ga-api-lai-a.
 1PL-cut rib.3SG skin-3SG 1PL-CA-pinch-TH-3SG arm.3SG 1PL-take-AT-3SG
 We cut (it up), we tear off the chest skin. We pull its legs away.

Ipa ga-gobi-a tapu-ai ga-ba-kewa-uga. Babzie gi-apsi-a
 blood 1PL-scoop.up-3SG pot-OBL 1PL-CA-pour-enter woman 3PL-take-3SG
 We scoop up the blood and pour it into a pot. The women take it

koua-ai ge-moga-i-a ido-ai ge-gau-a i-aŋa.
 banana.leaf-OBL 3PL-wrap-PF-3SG fire-OBL 3PL-do-3SG 3SG-cook
 (and) wrap it in banana leaves (and) put it into the fire.

I-ŋa gi-ani-a.
 3SG-burn 3PL-eat-3SG
 It cooks and they eat it.

Mabe ga-api-lai-a. Ima mabe pou ga-api-lai-tsi e-pua aidama,
 rib 1PL-take-AT-3SG arm side together 1PL-take-AT-3PL 3SG-finish time
 We pull off the sides. When we have finished pulling apart the forelegs and sides,
ga-ba-ila-baŋai-n-a, ima mabe ga-ua-lai-tsi.
 1PL-CA-send-across-TH-3SG arm side 1PL-separate-AT-3PL
 we turn it over, we break off the forelegs and sides.

Aŋoŋo ga-api-lai-a, ga-api-lai-a e-pua aidama,
 breast 1PL-take-AT-3SG 1PL-take-AT-3SG 3SG-finish time
 We pull the chest skin off, (and) when we have finished pulling it off

au-ŋa autsina pou ga-api-lai-tsi. E-pua aidama,
 foot-3SG two together 1PL-take-AT-3PL 3SG-finish time
 we pull its two hindlegs apart together. When that is finished,

oajiomol e-mai iku-ŋa ke-ŋa-ai ga-bou-ŋ-a.
 spine 3SG-come nape-3SG side-3SG-OBL 1PL-sever-TH-3SG
 coming to the spinal column, we sever it near the nape of the neck.

ŋae-gai age ga-kopa, gania ga-pola mino ga-api-lai-a.
 then jaw 1PL-break.off head 1PL-split brain 1PL-take-AT-3SG
 Then we break the jaw off, we split the head open and we take out the brains.

Kuma-ŋua kamu-kamu-ŋa ge-ŋagu-n-i-a, ikau-ai
 pig-viscera property-RED-3SG 3PL-cook-TH-PF-3SG platform-OBL
 They cook the pig's nobles² and attachments (?), on the platform

laapou e-mia, eŋae ani-ani e-mia.
 crowd 3SG-be there eat-RED 3SG-be
 a crowd gathers (and) there is a feast there.

Kopu-ai au-mo gi-ani-ani. Kuma-ŋua babzie ge-ŋagu-n-i-a,
 clan.house-OBL man-just 3PL-eat-RED pig-heart woman 3PL-cook-TH-PF-3SG
 In the clan-house only men eat. The women take the pig's nobles and cook them,

kopu-ai au gi-ani-a.
 clan.house-OBL man 3PL-eat-3SG
 the men eat it in the clan-house.

Babzie alaka inae-ŋa i-apsi-a i-ani-a.
 woman one intestine-3SG 3SG-take-3SG 3SG-eat-3SG
 A woman takes the intestines (and) eats them.

¹ EMek *ova-kinomo*, NMek *oa-tsinomo*.

² The lower jaw with attached wind-pipe, lungs and heart. The 'vital organs', the portion of the chief's sorcerers. See Hau'ofa (1981: 282).

Bauŋa kuma iŋe-paŋa³ lobzia auŋa napa-ai-d-i-ani-a,
 village pig tail-skin chief TOP FUT-NEG-B-3SG-eat-3SG
 The chief now, he cannot eat the back-skin of a village pig.

au ikui-tsi ne-gi-ani-a. Ulalu au-ŋa kuma
 man different-3PL FUT-3PL-eat-3SG poor man-3SG pig
 other men will eat it. When a commoner

i-au-n-i-a aidama,
 3SG-hit-TH-PF-3SG time
 kills a (wild) pig,

iŋe-pa-ŋa i-ila-i-a i-ao lobzia auŋa ke-ŋa-ai.
 tail-skin-3SG 3SG-send-PF-3SG 3SG-go chief TOP side-3SG-OBL
 he sends off the back-skin, to the chiefs it goes.

(Ida) agawa e-ŋagu-n-i-a aidama laapou-ai i-ani-a.
 (s/he) spouse 3SG-cook-TH-PF-3SG time crowd-OBL 3SG-eat-3SG
 When his (= the chief's) wife has cooked it, he eats it in company with everyone.

Ŋa aidama ulalu au-ŋa aga maua e-mia.
 that time poor man-3SG name big 3SG-be
 At such a time a commoner's name becomes big.

Iŋe-pa-ŋa i-ani-wage aidama, eŋaia gaiake gaba mae-ŋa.
 tail-skin-3SG 3SG-eat-hide time that too thing death-3SG
 If (a man) eats the back-skin secretly, that could also/even result in death.

TEXT 3: NMek

Mala ga-mix.
 tongue PL-mix
 We mix tongues.

In the following, deliberately *modern* text, English borrowings, English-based neologisms and recently coined expressions have been underlined by the speaker, Clement Ame of Ioi village. I in turn underline the interlinear gloss when the word is a straight borrowing from English, and the free translation when this represents an innovative expression in Mekeo. Note the unexpected intrusive [z] ~ [s] in *aibaisa* 'none, not', and *mala-mai-s-ai* 'in our language'.

Itsi Clement, oi Alan, a-na-bai-n-i-o, aina-u fo-oŋo.
 I Clement you Alan FUT-1SG-tell-TH-PF-2SG voice-1SG OBLG.2SG-hear
 I, Clement, will instruct you, Alan, listen to my words.

³ For *iŋe-pa-ŋa*; cf. EMek *iu-kefe-kefe*. It consists of strips of back-skin tied up together with portions of liver and stomach. See Mosko (1985:169).

Kaba alaka aibaisa gai, oi mala o-malele-ai-n-a buo,
 thing one not but you tongue 2SG-literacy-RTR-TH-3SG cause
 It is not important but, as you study language.

bau o-mai ina-e, ai Mekeo isa mala-mai ikoi-na goa auŋa.
 now 2SG-come here-LOC we Mekeo it tongue-1PL.E different-3SG like TOP
 now you have come here wishing to study our different Mekeo languages as it were now,

mo-stadi-ai-n-a, buga-ai mo-babua o-ma,
OBLG.2SG-study-RTR-TH-3SG book-OBL OBLG.2SG-write 2SG-DNT
 (and) wishing to write⁴ them in books.

Ŋa-buo bau a-na-bai-n-i-o. Uai-na-ŋa-ai aisama
 that-cause now FUT-1SG-tell-TH-PF-3SG first-3SG-3SG-OBL time
 Now because of that I will instruct you. In ancient times

ufu-mai aba-mai mala-tsi nini.kani-na goa, bau
 grandfather great.grandfather tongue-3PL talk-3SG like now
 the like of our ancestors' languages (or) talk, now

ai nao-ai ga-mauni auŋa ai-ga-ninikani. Eŋa-buo bau
 we European-OBL 1PL-birth TOP NEG-1PL-talk that-cause now
 we (who) were born in European (times) now we do not talk (it). Therefore now

ogo ma-oabi-n-a a-oma.
 line OBLG.1SG-say-TH-3SG 1SG-DNT
 I wish to explain the way it is.

Ai, nao-ai ga-mauni auŋa, nao mala-tsi mako
 we European-OBL 1PL-birth TOP European tongue-3PL many
 We (who) were born in European (times) now, we mix European language

mala-mai-s-ai ga-mix. Mala bau e-tsientsi.
 tongue-1PL-B-OBL 1PL-mix tongue now 3SG-change
 with our language. (The) language is changing now.

Ina-tsina-tsi-ai ao-tsi-ai au abao-tsi tsi-taim bau e-oua,
 here-time-3PL-OBL inside-3PL-OBL man great-3PL 3PL-time now 3SG-over
 In these times the times of the great men (= ancestors) is now over,

ai imi auka-mai-mo nao mala mako paisa ga-iusi-ai-n-a.
 we child youth-1PL-just European tongue many mere 1PL-use-RTR-TH-3SG
 we, the children, just in our youth, are simply using much of the Europeans' language.

Oi ninikani fa-silou o-ma, aina-ma-gai-na-ai
 you talk OBLG.1SG-slow 2SG-DNT voice-1PL-reason-3SG-OBL
 You want me to talk slowly, because of your wish

⁴ This verb (-*babua*, -*papua* 'write') is to the best of my knowledge well established in the language (it is listed by Desnoës) and I cannot say why Clement underlined it here.

ikobo-ŋa-ai isi-ai a-na-oabi-n-a.
 same-3SG-OBL easy-OBL FUT-1SG-say-TH-3SG
 because of that, I will speak slowly.

Oabi uai-tsi gaea mako-paisa ai bau muni imi-mai ai-ga-oŋo.
 speech first-3PL also much-mere we now next child-1PL NEG-1PL-hear.
 Now we the new boys also do not know very much of the old speech.

Oabi uai-tsi alaka, itsiba ge-ma, ŋaea auŋa, ai muni
 speech first-3PL one right 3PL-DNT that TOP we next
 One word of the old speech, they say it is right, that now, we the new boys

imi-mai auŋa ga-oabi, iviao 'ge-oŋe-abu-a' ga-oma.
 child-1PL TOP 1PL-say girl 3PL-put-close-3SG 1PL-DNT
 now, we say, "they put the girl away" we say.

Oi nao mala-mi-ai go-inaga, 'engaged' go-ma.
 you European tongue-2PL-OBL 2PL-utter engaged 2PL-DNT
 You in your European language say, 'engaged' you say.

Ŋa-buo 'Mala uai-na bau ŋa-miae ma?' a-ba.kani.
 that-cause tongue first-3SG now IMP.3SG-useless INT 1SG-ask
 Therefore I ask, "Should the old language now be abolished?"

Au abao-tsi ma-tsi-labui-na⁵ buo muni aisama
 man great eye-3PL-clouded-3SG cause next time
 The ancestors did not realise that in the future

tsinibo e-ao-e-ŋa ao-tsi-ai mala a-ne-tsientsi.
 year 3SG-go-CNT-TOP inside-3PL-OBL tongue FUT-3SG-change
with the passing of the years the language will change.

Itsi, oabi inaeake, a-oabi-n-a e-fua.
 I speech this.here 1SG-say-TH-3SG 3SG-finish
 I have spoken this speech, it is finished.

TEXT 4: EMek

Au aŋa'o loo e-pa-ŋama isonioni-na
 man one fire 3SG-CA-burgeon legend-RED
 The story of a man who made fire.

Ufai-na-ŋ-ai kina Mekeo alo-ŋ-ai papiau loo oko-a-ke-loŋo.
 distant-3SG-3SG-OBL time Mekeo inside-3SG-OBL people fire ITS-NEG-3PL-know
 In ancient time(s) in the Mekeo people knew nothing at all (about) fire.

5

Clement Ame mistakenly believes this idiom to be a recent innovation, since he underlines it.

eŋa puo foʔama kapa ke-isa auŋa maisa-ŋa-mo ke-ani-a.
 that cause food thing 3PL-see TOP raw-3SG-just 3PL-eat-3SG.
 Therefore (when) they saw anything like food they just ate it raw.

Papiau eʔa, ʔuma fou a-ke-kapa-ʔi. Isa-ʔi vopa alo-ŋ-ai
 people house pig together NEG-3PL-make-3PL some-3PL stone inside-3SG-OBL
 people did not make house(s) or garden(s). Some lived inside the rocks

ke-aŋu or imu a-e-ake afu-ŋ-ai ke-aŋu. E-ʔi foʔama auŋa
 3PL-sit or rain NEG-3SG-fall place-3SG-OBL 3PL-sit POSS-3PL food TOP
 or they lived in places where the rain did not fall. They got their food by

ke-kapu-n-i-ʔi ke-afi-ʔi ke-kapukapu aao ke-au-n-i-ʔi
 3PL-seek-TH-PF-3PL 3PL-take-3PL 3PL-go.hunting possum 3PL-hit-TH-PF-3PL
 gathering and hunting, they caught possum and

ke-ani-ʔi. ʔinipo maʔo ina ke-kapa-oma kai kina aŋa'o auŋa
 3PL-eat-3PL year many this 3PL-do-like but day one TOP
 ate them. They went on like this (for) many years but one day

papiau isa-ʔi e-kai-fai-n-i-ʔi. Au eŋaina apao-ŋa au-ŋa imoi
 people some 3SG-come/go-with-TH-PF-3PL man that old-3SG REL-3SG child
 he met some people. That old man was

ʔinipo-ʔi ima-ŋea-pani koà iʔopo-ʔi. Eŋa-e e-aŋu-e-kai papiau
 year-3PL five-miss-four like same-3PL there-LOC 3SG-sit-CNT-but people
 just like a nine year old boy. While he stayed there he saw the people

foʔama maisa ke-ani-a e-isa-ʔi. Mino-ŋ-ai auŋa
 food raw 3PL-eat-3SG 3SG-see-3PL brain-3SG-OBL TOP
 ate their food raw. Now he wondered

ala-moŋa-oma loo ŋa-pa-kina-ʔi e-ʔi oo
 what-just.3SG-DNT fire IMP.3SG-CA-shine-3PL POSS-3PL banana
 what he might do in order to show them fire so they might cook

keŋa-ŋaku-ŋa e-oma kai mala-ʔi a-e-loŋo puō
 IMP.3PL-cook-3SG 3SG-DNT but tongue-3PL NEG-3SG-know cause.3SG
 their bananas but because he did not know their language

a-e-kai-n-i-a. Eŋa puo ima-mo e-kapa-ʔi
 NEG-3SG-suffice-TH-PF-3SG that cause hand-just 3SG-do-3PL
 he did not succeed. Therefore he told them by signing

e-pai-n-i-ʔi kai papiau loo oko-a-ke-loŋo puo
 3SG-tell-TH-PF-3PL but people fire ITS-NEG-3PL-know cause
 with his hands but because people did not know anything (about) fire

kapaina e-iva-n-i-a au-ŋa isa oko-a-ke-loŋo.
 what 3SG-speak-TH-PF-3SG REL-3SG they ITS-NEG-3PL-know
 they did not understand what he was saying.

Eṅaekai papiau ke-isa-isa-kai kupu oṅoṅo-ʔi isa-ʔi,
 then people 3PL-see-RED-but grass dry-3PL some-3PL
 Then while the people were watching carefully he took some dry grass,

au oṅoṅo-ʔi e-isa-ʔi ke pieni oṅoṅo fou e-afi-ʔi.
 wood dry-3PL 3SG-see-3PL and bamboo dry together 3SG-take-3PL
 he saw some dry wood and took it together with dry bamboo.

Eṅaekai kupu ʔaʔisa-ai e-oṅe-i-s-a kai au, pieni fou
 then grass ground-OBL 3SG-put-PF-B-3SG but wood bamboo together
 Then he put (some) grass on the ground, and took wood with bamboo

e-afi-ʔi e-pa-iku-i e-lao-lao loo mini-ʔi ke-aʔa-lai
 3SG-take-3PL 3SG-CA-rub-3PL 3SG-go-RED fire spark-3PL 3PL-laugh-AT
 and kept rubbing them together until sparks of fire leapt out

kupu-ai ke-afi-au aku e-ʔue. Ŋa aisama au, i-pa-iku-ṅa
 grass-OBL 3PL-take-up smoke 3SG-get.up that time man NOM-CA-rub-3SG
 and caught in the grass and smoke rose. Then as soon as the smoke started to rise

e-pua-afu-ṅ-a kai pakai-pakai e-ipi-n-i-a. Papiau inaina
 3SG-bear-fail-3SG but slowly-slowly 3SG-blow-TH-PF-3SG people this
 the man stopped rubbing, and he blew gently. When the

ke-isa kina alo-ʔi-ai a-e-koko. Papiau isa-ʔi aku
 3PL-see sun inside-3PL-OBL NEG-3SG-enter people some-3PL smoke
 people saw this they were amazed. Some people saw the

e-ʔaṅa-au ke-isa, ke-opolaṅa, au eṅaʔina apu-apu ke-kapa-kapa ke-oma.
 3SG-climb-up 3PL-see 3PL-think man that mist-RED 3PL-do-RED 3PL-DNT
 smoke rise up and thought the man had made a cloud.

Eṅakai aufo isa-ʔi e-oṅe-au-ʔi loo akaikia e-mia kai
 then fire.wood some-3PL 3SG-put-up-3PL fire big 3SG-be but
 Then he put on some firewood and the fire got big and then he

papiau e-pai-n-i-ʔi foʔama ke-peni-a e-uma-i-s-a.
 people 3SG-tell-TH-PF-3PL food 3PL-give-3SG 3SG-roast-PF-B-3SG
 instructed the people and they gave him food and he roasted it.

E-aṅa aisama e-aʔa-lai afa e-ani-ʔi ke afa papiau
 3SG-burn time 3SG-laugh-AT little 3SG-eat-3PL and little people
 When it was cooked he laughed and ate a little and gave a little to the people

e-peni-ʔi keṅa-ani-ʔopo-ṅai-n-a e-oma. Ke-ani-ʔopo-ṅai-n-a
 3SG-give-3PL IMP.3PL-eat-try-RTR-TH-3SG 3SG-DNT 3PL-eat-try-RTR-TH-3SG
 so that they might taste it. When they had tasted it

aisama felo ipauma ke-oma.
 time good very 3PL-DNT
 they thought it was very good.

Eŋa?ina afe-ŋ-ai e-?i fo?ama keŋa-ani-a ke-oma aisama
 that after-3SG-OBL POSS-3PL food IMP.3PL-eat-3SG 3PL-DNT time
 After that whenever they wanted to eat their food

ke-ŋaku-n-i-a kai ke-ani-a. Ŋa kina-ŋ-ai
 3PL-cook-TH-PF-3SG but 3PL-eat-3SG DX day-3SG-OBL
 they cooked it first and then ate it. In those days

ke pau e-mai inaina kina-?i-ai papiau loo-ai fo?ama
 and now 3SG-come this day-3PL-OBL people fire-OBL food
 and up till now, these days people cook their food with fire

ke-ŋaku-ŋa kai ke-ani-a. Kina ima afe-ŋ-ai loo
 3PL-cook-3SG but 3PL-eat-3SG day five after-3SG-OBL fire
 and then eat it. After five days, having shown them fire he

e-pa-kina-?i auŋa afu eŋa?ina e-pua-afu-ŋ-a afu oina e-lao.
 3SG-CA-shine-3PL TOP place that 3SG-bear-avoid-TH-3SG place other 3SG-go
 left that place and went to another.

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