

Verbs and inalienably possessed nouns (i.e. kinship terms, body parts and spatial nouns) receive an obligatory person prefix, which is coreferent with the subject of the clause or with the possessor of the noun. The phonological realisation of this prefix is determined by the form of the verb or noun: bisyllabic forms in which the first and the second syllable are C-initial receive a covert person prefix \emptyset . All other forms receive an overt person prefix according to the following paradigm: *t-* '1SG'; *p-* '1PL'; *n-* '2SG and 2PL'; *y-* '3M'; *m-* '3U', the unmarked prefix indicates third person singular feminine and third person plural. Gender is only distinguished on 3SG.

Demonstratives are morphologically complex: a demonstrative base *-f-* 'very near'; *-t-* 'near' and *-n-* 'far' indicates distance from the point of view of the speaker, and prefixes mark specificity, attributive or adverbial use and, in some cases, the nature of what is described such as 'area' or 'side'. Suffixes may indicate gender. Location markers and question words are partially derived from these demonstrative morphemes.

Maybrat has four (and in some dialects five) unique terms for numbers. The rest is based on body-parts, which is a typically Papuan feature (Laycock (1975) and de Vries (1992; 1993)).

Word order is fairly rigidly SVO, and in the NP the adjective, numeral and demonstrative follow the head noun, in this order. In possessive constructions in which the possessed is an inalienable noun the order is possessor-possessed, whereas in the case of an alienable noun the word order is possessed-possessor, where the possessor is marked by *ro*, as illustrated in (1).

- (1) *Tfo ro-Yan y-atia*
 machete POS-Yan 3SM-father

Yan's father's knife.

The restrictive relative clause, which follows the head, is also marked by *ro*, as in (2).

- (2) *Eok ro m-hu amah m-aim po-it*
 two REL 3U-stay house 3U-cook NOM-eat.PL

The two who stay home cook food.

Negation occurs by placing the negator *fe* in clause-final position. In 'yes/no' questions, the interrogative marker *a* is placed in sentence-final position. Content questions are formed with question words, which take the position of the constituent being questioned.

Syntactically, one of the most striking features of Maybrat are sequences of verbs, which can be classified into a number of different types of sequence. A problematic category are sequences which include verbs of position, motion, and which have shared arguments. These resemble coordinating constructions, but at the same time also seem similar to so-called 'serial verb constructions'. An example is given as (3), see further Dol (1999).

- (3) *Aof ro y-fat Ø m-tie m-ai tapam m-anes oh*
 sago REL 3M-fell (it) 3U-break 3U-hit ground 3U-old already

The sago tree that he felled and it broke and hit the ground, was already old.

The story below was written by Didimus Bame, a fifteen year-old boy who often helped to write out recorded Maybrat stories told by other people. At some point, Didimus said that he knew many Maybrat stories which his father had told him, and asked me if he could simply write out a few stories instead of recording them first. Eventually, other people also occasionally brought in written stories.

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