

Grammar

The Kamasau Language, or Wand Tuan as speakers of the language call it, is part of the Marienberg Language Family in the Torricelli Phylum. Wand Tuan shares some features with other Torricelli Phylum languages, including how the reality of a statement is expressed. If a speaker is certain an event will take place, the particle *ye* is used to show that. For example:

Nge ko ye. I will certainly go.

Nge kaq ye. I will eat it.

If the speaker is uncertain about an event, he will use the particle *bri*. For example:

Ni no bri? Will he perhaps go?

Ni bri no? Is he the one who will go?

Wand Tuan can also show certainty by using the particle *bu*, both in questions in which a “yes” answer is expected and in reason-result statements. For example:

Nu wuny mbe bu kuo? Are you really going to the garden?

Nge mir gad pre bu muq nge mir kuregh segi.

I already ate, so now I am not hungry.

The verbs do not show tense, the time when an event occurs. Rather, Wand Tuan shows tense using time words. For example:

Nge prangi ko ye. I will go tomorrow.

Kambe ko segi. I did not go yesterday.

Muq ko yamb. I am about to go now.

Speakers of Wand Tuan show repeated or continuous action by repeating the verb, for example,

Ni muq nandi nandi. He is coming now.

Ni buk nuqond nuqond nas. He is reading a book.

Ni mir wase wuwo wuwo yequ . She is cooking food.

The parts of speech, with their abbreviations are listed in the Guide to the Dictionary (page 6 above). The following brief description gives more details.

Adjectives are words that describe a noun. They usually follow the noun they describe:

wuti yumbui the big man

wute quan many men.

If two adjectives describe the same noun, one is usually used in a relative clause, using *kin*:

nyombui yumbui quem kin the big dog that is white

Adverbs are words that modify or describe a verb or adjective. *Nganye* is an adjective meaning 'true,' but when it modifies another adjective it means 'truly' or 'very,' as in, *wuye yumbui nganye*, 'very big rain.' Adverbs describing verbs include: *brequ brequ*, 'quickly'; *waghi waghi*, 'slowly; carefully'; *oti oti*, 'slowly.' Some adverbs show completion of an event, for example: *omo*, 'completed; depleted'; *pre*, 'done.'

Conjunctions are words that join words, phrases, and clauses. The conjunction *di*, 'and,' can be used to make a list of items, for example, *Beghi minye kuanji, waru raqe, di singapi pe*, 'We ate spinach, pumpkin greens, and aibica.' The conjunction *di* can also mean 'then': *Nungoqi puq wen di wati*, 'If you do that then you will die.'

The conjunction *tedi* also means 'then.' It joins two parts of a sentence together. The first part of the sentence shows a condition that must be met before the second part of the sentence can happen.

Mir tiq, tedi mandi. When there is enough food, then they will come.
Beghi buid pap, tedi yembe omo pawo. If we work hard, then we will finish the work.

The conjunction *pudi* means 'but,' usually showing that a desired goal was not reached. For example:

Ni nandi ningg, pudi num gureg bu tuqui segi.
 They wanted to come, but he was sick so he was not able (to come).

The conjunction *bu* that occurred in this example was partly explained under certainty at the beginning of this grammar. When *bu* shows certainty it helps to explain some complicated ideas, including the result of an action. For example:

Nge kas, tedi yembe omo kawo, nge ko bu segi.
 If I had stayed, then I would have finished the work, (but) I went so I did not.

Particles are small words that have a grammatical meaning. Some of the particles are time words, giving the time for a story or expression. Some time words are: *otiwo*, 'later; a little later'; *oti te*, 'take your time'; *muq*, 'today; now'; *prangi*, 'tomorrow'; *yamb*, 'day after tomorrow'; *ive*, 'two days after tomorrow.'

Other types of particles are exclamations of surprise (*oi*), and of agreement or negation: *ege*, 'yes'; *segi*, 'no; not'; *yewo*, 'not.' Of the two words for 'not,' *segi* is the most frequent particle.

Other particles are like English prepositions, showing the relationship between the position of the two nouns. For example:

Ni baj sange pe yenu. He stood by the side of the house.
Ni baj nambu yenu. He stood under the house.
Ni baj wam yenu. He stood above the house.

Ni wabe yenu. He stood inside the house.
Ni tingi yenu. He stood down below (on the ground).

Pe is a particle with several meanings, like *long* in Tok Pisin. It can mean ‘to; with; on; at; in.’ The dictionary entry for *pe* gives examples of the various uses of the word.

The particle *ne* comes at the end of many kinds of words to show a limit to the time, participants, or kind of action. When it comes at the end of a number, it shows that just that number of people are involved. For example: *Ni irine nandi.* ‘He came alone’; *Ni temine mand.* ‘Just the two men came.’ When *ne* is added to *segi*, ‘no,’ it can have several meanings. The most common is ‘not yet,’ for example, *Ni no segine.* ‘He has not yet gone.’ Other examples are in the dictionary under *segine*.

The adjective *brequ*, ‘bad,’ becomes *brequne*, ‘immediately; quickly,’ when *ne* is added to it. When *ne* is added to *oghi*, ‘good,’ it becomes the adverb ‘well,’ for example, *Ni oghine yembe nand.* ‘He works well.’ When *ne* is added to a verb, it means ‘still’:

Ni nasene. He is still sleeping.
Ni nasne. He is still sitting.
Ni mir nand nandne nas. He is still sitting & eating.

The adverb *omo* means ‘finished; used up,’ for example, *Mir omo*, ‘The food is (nearly) gone.’ When the particle *ne* is added, it means ‘completely gone,’ as in *Mir omone*, ‘The food is completely finished.’

The particle *ei* can show that something will happen at a future time, as in, *Otiwo ei po*, ‘Later we will go,’ or it can show purpose, as in, *Nu brequne ghondo ei tequ wo*, ‘Go to him quickly so you two can go.’

Pronouns take the place of saying someone’s name all the time. The Kamasau pronouns are: *nge*, ‘I’; *ni*, ‘he, she, it, they’; *beghi*, ‘we’; *nu*, ‘you singular’; and *nungoqi*, ‘you plural.’ Examples of the pronouns are below with examples of the verbs “come” and “go.”

To show that a person owns something Wand Tuan sometimes uses *ni ningg*, ‘his own.’ The form of this word changes, depending on who is the owner. The following examples demonstrate the different forms of this word.

Buk nge gig. ‘It is my book.’
Te nu gug te. ‘It is yours.’
Buk ni ningg. ‘It is his book.’
Beghi big baj. ‘It is our house.’
Ni temi mingg kar. ‘It is their car.’

Most **nouns** in Wand Tuan do not have a separate plural form to show when there are more than one of an item. The prefix on the verb shows if the noun is singular (one) or plural (many). The exception to this is the word for “man, men; people,” which is:

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| <i>wuti</i> | man |
| <i>wute</i> | men; people (including women) |

There are classes, or groups, of nouns:

- 1) Things that are male (men, dogs, houses);
- 2) Things that are female (women, pigs, food);
- 3) Things that are neuter or without known gender (children, puppies, water);
- 4) Words that refer to language (talk).

Speakers of the language show these noun classes by the prefix and the suffix on the verbs and the demonstrative for “this here.” The male for “this” is *nen*, the female form is *wen*, the neuter is *kuen*, and the language form is *ven*. The plural form for male is *men*, and the plural form for female is *ren*.

Kinship terms, or terms for relatives, have three different forms. In Wand Tuan you must say whose relative you are talking about. For example, you must show if you are talking about ‘my mother’ (*moyu*), ‘your mother’ (*numo*), or ‘his/her mother’ (*kumo*). Each term for relatives has three forms. The kinship terms are listed in the dictionary under the form for ‘my relative,’ for example, *moyu*, ‘mother.’

Verbs in Wand Tuan give a lot of information. The prefix, letter or letters at the beginning of the verb, show the noun class and number of the subject, and so help to identify who is doing what. The verbs “come” and “go” show these prefixes.

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| <i>Nge ko.</i> | I go. | <i>Nge gadi.</i> | I come. |
| <i>Nu kuo.</i> | You (one) go. | <i>Nu guadi.</i> | You (one) come. |
| <i>Ni no.</i> ¹ | He goes. | <i>Ni nandi.</i> | He comes. |
| <i>Ni wuso.</i> | She goes. | <i>Ni wundi.</i> | She comes. |
| <i>Ni kuso.</i> | It goes. | <i>Ni gudi.</i> | It comes. |
| <i>Ni vuso.</i> | Talk goes. | <i>Ni vindi.</i> | Talk comes. |
| <i>Beghi po.</i> | We go. | <i>Beghi hadi.</i> | We come. |
| <i>Ni mo.</i> | They (men) go. | <i>Ni mandi.</i> | They (men) come. |
| <i>Ni rindi.</i> | They (women) go. | <i>Ni rindi.</i> | They (women) come. |
| <i>Nungoqi wo.</i> | You (many) go. | <i>Nungoqi wandi.</i> | You (many) come. |

These two verbs are intransitive verbs; they do not need an object to complete the idea of the verb.

¹ In this dictionary most of the verbs are listed by the form that begins with the letter ‘n-’ which is the masculine singular form of the verb. A few verbs, those that only women do, are listed under ‘w-’, for example, *Ni wo wumbroqi*. “She delivers a baby.”

A second type of verbs are transitive verbs. These verbs require an object to have a complete idea, for example, *Nge yumbo kare*, “I carry things.” These verbs change depending on whether the object is male or female, and singular or plural.

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| <i>Ni wo quayi neri no.</i> | He carries a boy. |
| <i>Ni wo nyumbueg niraq no.</i> | He carries a girl. |
| <i>Ni wo teri nare no.</i> | He carries two children. |
| <i>Ni quayi ni.</i> | He hit a man. |
| <i>Ni nyumbueg numbueq.</i> | He hit a woman. |
| <i>Ni wute namb.</i> | He hit people. |

When the verb changes with different kinds of objects, these changes are shown in the dictionary under the masculine, singular form with a masculine object, for example, *neri no*, “he carries a masculine object.”

A third type of suffix, ending, on the verbs shows the indirect object, or the person who is being helped or hurt by the action.

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| <i>Nge <u>nu</u> kew.</i> | I give to you (one). | <i>Ni <u>nge</u> negh.</i> | He gives to me. |
| <i>Nge <u>ni</u> geg.</i> | I give to him. | <i>Ni <u>nu</u> new.</i> | He gives to you (one). |
| <i>Nge <u>ni</u> kew.</i> | I give to her. | <i>Ni <u>ni</u> neng.</i> | He gives to him. |
| | | <i>Ni <u>ni</u> new.</i> | He gives to her. |
| <i>Nge <u>nungoqi</u> keuq.</i> | I give to you (plural). | <i>Ni <u>beghi</u> nengu.</i> | He gives to us. |
| <i>Nge <u>ni temi</u> kem.</i> | I give to them (male). | <i>Ni <u>nungoqi</u> neuq.</i> | He give to you (plural) |
| <i>Nge <u>ni teri</u> kenj.</i> | I give to them (female). | <i>Ni <u>ni temi</u> nem.</i> | He gives to them (male). |
| | | <i>Ni <u>ni teri</u> neny.</i> | He gives to them (female). |

Pronouns were shown in the examples given above, but they can be left out in the context of a story when the meaning is clear. These endings occur on many verbs, including:

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| <i>Nge ghav giduw.</i> | I help <u>you</u> (one). |
| <i>Nge gos kuam.</i> | I provide sago for <u>them</u> (male). |
| <i>Nge pas ur gidig.</i> | I wrote a letter to <u>him</u> . |
| <i>God ni yawo nirang righe.</i> | God loves <u>him</u> . |

Example sentences in the dictionary show some of these forms, but none of the entries show all the different forms. The forms shown here in this grammar give samples of how the other verbs also work.