

3 Notes On Syntax

This discussion is divided into two main sections: the syntax of the clause, and the syntax of the phrases.

3.1 Syntax of the Clause

Typologically Minaveha falls into the SOV class for most finally transitive clauses. Oblique grammatical relations are usually found in postpositional phrases, but the language does allow for Oblique to Direct Object Advancement for some verbs, with the appearance of

a characteristic suffix **-(y)e** occurring after the verb root. In these cases the preferred phrase order is SIOV, but SOIV may also occur.

One notable exception to the SOV rule are clauses containing certain motion verbs which take goals as final Direct Objects (as evidenced by agreement markers on the verb). These clauses are generally SVO. Most motion verbs, however, may also be found in finally intransitive clauses and take goals (or sources or destinations) as Obliques in postpositional phrases. In these cases the phrase order can be either SPV or SVP, where P represents the Oblique postpositional phrase.

Minaveha clauses tend to have phrases bearing Oblique grammatical relations (such Time, Location and Instrument) on the clause periphery. Time relations are normally found clause initially, and may be postpositional phrases, adverbs, or adverbial nouns. Location and Instrument relations are normally found clause finally in postpositional phrases.

Like many other Austronesian languages in Milne Bay Province, Minaveha has a variety of constructions with zero copula. Simple equative clauses with a zero copula include those having a predicate nominative, a predicate adjective, or a predicate adverb. Not only is there no verb 'to be' in Minaveha, but neither is there a verb 'to have'. The most common way for a person to say 'I have X' is to say 'X [ZERO COPULA] with me'.

3.2 Syntax of the Phrases

The order of constituents in an unpossessed noun phrase is essentially:

HEAD-NOUN (adjective)

For a Class 1 head-noun, the order is:

(POSSESSOR) HEAD-NOUN (ADJECTIVE)

For Class 2 and Class 3 head-nouns, the order is:

(POSSESSOR) POSSESSIVE HEAD-NOUN (ADJECTIVE)
PRONOUN

In verb phrases, free adverbial modifiers can precede or follow the verb. For negated verb phrases, the *neg eha* precedes the Direct Object (if there is one) and so the order is usually S *eha* OV. The adverbial modifier *avaha* 'already' is used to show completive aspect, and occurs, as does *eha*, prior to the entire verb phrase: S *avaha* OV.

Conjunctions occur between the constituents they join, as in English. The most common conjunction is *e* 'and': *loni e yauke* 'John and I/me'.

Adjective phrases are rare, but two adjectives can be joined with a conjunction, *bagibagina e ahiahina* 'strong and good', and applied to a single head-noun: *onoto bagibagina e ahiahina* '(a) good, strong man'.

4 Notes On Morphology

Minaveha is a polysynthetic (agglutinating) language, with the verbs showing the greatest range of polysynthesis. Nouns, especially those derived from verbs, may also have polymorphemic structure.

4.1 Verb Morphology

All verbs in Minaveha have a marker (*su*) at the beginning which agrees with the final Subject of the clause in person and number. Transitive verbs have an object marker (*ob*) at the end which agrees with the final Direct Object in person and number.

Between these two markers other morphemes (in addition to the verb root) occur, as shown below:

Order of Morphemes in the Transitive Verb (partial display only)						
<i>su</i>	<i>mo</i>	<i>mn</i>	<i>as</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>mn</i>	<i>ob</i>
subject marker	mood marker	manner prefix	aspect (RDP)	verb root	manner suffix	object marker

The subject marker (*su*) is drawn from the following set:

The Set of <i>su</i> Agreement Markers		
Person:	Singular	Plural
1	a-	a- EXCL
		ka- INCL
2	e-	u-
3	Ø-, i-	i-

There are three moods in Minaveha marked with one of the following three markers (*mo*):

The Set of <i>mo</i> Markers	
Marker	Mood
Ø-	indicative
ta-	subjunctive (optative)
na-	imperative (desiderative)

All verbs have an unmarked indicative form and a subjunctive form (at least in conjunction with the negation of an event in the past, if not in conjunction with a possible event in the future); but, not all verbs have imperative forms.

The manner prefixes *mn* are generally adverbial in nature. For instance, something can be fastened (or stuck on) in a number of ways. If we take **pwata** “fasten” as the verb root, then any of the following *mn* prefixes may be added to the root:

<i>mn</i> Prefix	Meaning
tana-	pull together
tunu-	touch
tutu-	hit, hammer
vo-vi-	cause by hand

The single *mn* prefix **tana-** can be found in the following entries:

tana-yau	tana-wavini	tana-vivini
tana-vi-dahi	tana-vi-avini	tana-vi-anai
tana-vewani	tana-tone	tana-pwatei
tana-paniei	tana-kabubui	tana-ipwei
tana-honoi	tana-hadana	tana-gwaui
tana-godugodui		

We have isolated the following *mn* prefixes (or) combinations thereof:

The <i>mn</i> Prefixes		
am-	amo-	ana-
apa-	awa-	bou-
dewa-	ɗune-	epa-
hui-	imo-	imo-vi-
ino-	ito-	ito-vi-
mau-	ma(e)-	mini-
mo-	nau-	nau-vi-
ni-	nim-	novo-
nua-	ona-	si-
si-vi-	si-vo-	si-vo-vi-
tana-	toha-	tom-
tunu-	tupa-	tutu-
ubo(u)-	upwa-	uta-
va-	va-vi-	venau-
vene-	vimwa-	vina-
vi-nua-	viau-	vona-
vi-tutu-	vi-tupa-	vitu-
vitua-	vito-	vita-
vi-	vo-	vo-vi

Many verbs permit reduplication of one or two syllables of the verb root to show that the action took place over a period of time, or that several people were doing the action, or that one person did it over and over again. We have used the cover term durative DUR throughout the lexicon for the various aspects (*as*) this root reduplication indicates. Durative aspect contrasts with aorist in Minaveha, much as it does in Greek. Since aorist is often used in narrating events in the past, it is, understandably, the unmarked case, and is left un glossed in examples.

Other aspects are indicated in a number of ways. There are some *mn* suffixes which indicate complete or perfective aspect (-**ye**ha/i), or singular instances of occurrence (-**o**ho/i), both of which contrast markedly with durative.

There are also other adverbial modifiers which can follow the verb stem, forming complex verbs.

The <i>mn</i> Suffixes		
-waiwai	-vavaha	-yavune
-wayohe	-kwayavoni	-uhauha
-kavovo	-kavokavovo	

For some of these complex verbs, since there is an *mn* position both before the verb root and after the verb root, it is difficult to tell whether the first part is the *mn* and the second part is the *v* or whether the first part is the *v* and the second part is the *mn*.

Then again, in some cases there are compound verb stems formed from two verbs. This seems to be the case where either one of the parts may stand as a verb in its own right.

Finally, for transitive verbs, the object marker (*ob*) is selected from the following set:

The Set of <i>ob</i> Agreement Markers		
Person:	Singular	Plural
1	-u	-ai EXCL
		-ka INCL
2	-m	-mi
3	-i, -a	-i, neiei

The verbs are subcategorized according to the type of transitivity conveyed by the combination of the verb stem, the *ob*, and whether or not the OBT is present or not. The *v0* category covers all verbs which take no *ob* whatsoever. These verbs are found in finally intransitive clauses, taking all grammatical relations other than final Subject in postpositional phrases.

The *v1* category covers those verbs which end in *-na* and which, on occasion, take a final Direct Object in a noun phrase. This object is normally a generic noun phrase, non-specific in its extension. There is no agreement with person and number through any of the set of *ob* agreement markers: only *-na* is permitted.

The *v2* category covers the transitive verbs which ordinarily occur with final Direct Objects. This category has three types. The *v2* verbs take members of the *ob* agreement marker set directly onto the verb root (with any intervening *mn* morphemes). The *v2i* category includes verbs which only take third person objects, and normally only take the *-i* member of the *ob* agreement marker set. The *v2a* category is very similar to the *v2i* in that

final verb agreement can only be with third person objects. However, verbs which have **i** or **u** as the final vowel of the root are candidates for this category and take **-a** as the object marker.

The final category of verbs are the **v3** verbs, those which permit Oblique to Direct Object advancements. When an erstwhile Oblique Object advances to become the final Direct Object the OBT marker, **-(y)e**, precedes the *ob* marker. Verbs which have roots ending in any letter but **e** add **-e** before the *ob*. Verbs which end in **e** add **-ye** before the *ob*.

4.2 Noun Morphology

Noun morphology is chiefly used to distinguish between three possession classes, two nominalization strategies, and a number of plural forms.

4.2.1 Possession Classes

Possession is indicated in Minaveha in two ways: by suffixation and by pro-clitics. Class 1 nouns (*n1*) take a bound suffix which agrees in person and number with the possessor. For the most part, Class 1 nouns are body parts and kinship terms. The person-number agreement markers are drawn from the following set:

The <i>agl</i> Set of Agreement Markers		
Person:	Singular	Plural
1	-u	-ai EXCL
		-ka INCL
2	-m	-mi
3	-na	-i

This set differs from the Object marker agreement set only in the form for 3S. The noun root **ama** 'father' is a Class 1 root, so the form for 'his father' is **amana**.

Class 2 nouns (*n2*) and Class 3 nouns (*n3*) both utilize a proclitic composed of two parts. The first part is the possessive pronominal stem. For Class 2 nouns this stem (*pn2*) is **a**; and, for Class 3 nouns the possessive pronominal stem (*pn3*) is **ya**. The possessive proclitics are completed by adding an agreement marker suffix from the *ag2* set:

The <i>ag2</i> Set of Agreement Markers			
Person:	Singular	Plural	
1	-u	-ma	EXCL
		-ka	INCL
2	-m	-mi	
3	-∅, -n', -na	-i	

It is convenient to write the possessive pro-clitics as separate words in Minaveha since they are a small closed set, and because doing so means that the possessed noun is easily recognizable as such by a preceding space. Note that the *ag2* set of agreement markers differs from the *ag1* set in the forms for 3S and 1X. The variation in the 3S forms is phonologically conditioned. Monosyllabic and disyllabic nouns take the longer suffix, **-na**, nouns beginning with **a** take the suffix **-n'**, and polysyllabic nouns (those of more than 2 syllables) take the suffix **-∅**.

The noun root **kode** 'personal basket' is a disyllabic Class 2 noun. Therefore the form for 'his personal basket' is **ana kode**. The noun root **manua** 'house' is a polysyllabic Class 3 noun. Therefore the form for 'his house' is **ya manua**. The noun root **anamana** 'reputation' is a Class 2 noun beginning with **a**, so the form for 'his reputation' is **an' anamana**.

4.2.2 Nominalization Strategies

There are two main nominalization strategies employed in Minaveha. Both strategies add a pro-clitic to a verbal infinitive (*vi*) to produce a noun. The two pro-clitics, like the possessive pronouns, are written as separate words. The nominalizer **tau** precedes verbal infinitives and functions like '-or' and '-er' in English: 'one who *VERBS*'. The nominalizer **pai** precedes verbal infinitives and functions like '-ee' in English: 'one who *GETS VERBED*'. Therefore, adding **tau** to **paisewa** 'work' produces **tau paisewa** 'worker' and adding **pai** to **nim** 'drink' produces **pai nim** 'smt. to drink, smt. for drinking'.

Other nominalization strategies are possible, as well. See the entry for **me**, for instance.

4.2.3 Plural Formation

Most nouns do not have plurals. Most of those which do have plurals are Class 1 nouns, and most of them are the kinship terms. All of these nouns form plurals through reduplication. Normally the reduplication is disyllabic, but where geminate vowel clusters

result, they simplify and often give the appearance that the reduplication process was only monosyllabic. Also, certain combinations of vowels simplify when they are the result of reduplication. The cluster **oa**, for example, simplifies to **o** when the noun root **ayo** ‘mother’ is reduplicated producing **ayo+ayo**. Adding the required *agl* yields **ayoyoka** ‘our(1N) mothers’. There are also other irregular forms for plurals: **vavine** ‘woman’ has the plural **vaivine**; **tupunaina** ‘young boy’ has the plural **tubuao**.

4.3 Adjective Morphology

Most adjectives have three parts: a root, a reduplicated portion which completes the stem, and a member of the *agl* set of agreement markers. All adjectives have an *agl* which agrees in person and number with the head noun the adjective modifies. For instance, the root **nige** ‘black’ is reduplicated to form **nigenige**, then the *agl* is added to form **nigenigena**, the form applied to 3S noun-heads, such as **manua** ‘house’: **manua nigenigena** ‘black house’.

Some adjectives are defective in the sense that they do not have a reduplicated portion in their stems. Commonly occurring examples of unreduplicated adjective stems are **goyo** ‘bad’, **tuni** ‘different’, **pani** ‘forceful’, and **toyo** ‘hard’.

Minaveha Field Notes

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