The Benefactive Construction in South Efate

Nick Thieberger

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

The benefactive construction in South Efate employs a prepositional phrase in the position immediately preceding the main verb. This position facilitates the expression of an additional participant in a sentence without competing for slots held by other participants (core arguments or adjuncts). Possessive morphology encoding the benefactive has been noted for other Oceanic languages, with distinct word-order marking a final stage of grammaticalization of the benefactive. While South Efate shares features with southern Vanuatu languages, it is shown that a preverbal benefactive is an areal feature of several languages to the north of South Efate, potentially supporting South Efate's position in the Central Vanuatu subgroup.

1. INTRODUCTION.[1] South Efate is an Oceanic language spoken in central Vanuatu. It has SVO word order, and distinguishes nominative Subjects and accusative Objects. Pronouns distinguish S, O, and POSS(essive) forms. S is obligatorily proclitic to the verbal complex. The preverbal complex contains markers of aspect, mood, polarity, and modifiers. The object follows the verb either as an enclitic pronoun or as a free NP.[2]

In this paper I focus on the benefactive construction, which is unusual in allowing the beneficiary to appear in preverbal position. The following examples, both from the same text, contrast the benefactive with the possessive construction. In (1) *ni sokfal* 'of the owl' follows the verb with a possessive reading, and in (2) the same possessive morphology is used in preverbal position to express the beneficiary.

(1) Mlapuas kin   i=min   nalkis ni sokfal.
     owl sp.   REL   3S.R.SBJ=drink   herbs   of owl sp.
     'It was Mlapuas who drank Sokfal's herbs.'

                                (24:14) (005Ax, 1649.7199, 1668.0001)

(2) Ki=ni   sokfal ut   nai.
     3S.IRR.SBJ=of   owl sp. pour water
     'He poured water for Sokfal.' (lit. he, for the owl, poured water)

                                (24:10) (005Ax, 1591.62, 1594.7401)

As we will see in the following section, it is not unusual in Oceanic languages for the benefactive to be expressed with possessive morphology. In the literature on benefactives it is less common to find a construction grammaticalized to the extent that we do in South Efate. To show that the benefactive occurs in a unique position I will contrast it with the ditransitive construction (3.1) and with the possessive construction (3.2), with which the benefactive shares morphological marking. I will then show that the presence of a pre-verbal benefactive is an areal feature shared with languages to the north of South Efate.

2. THE BENEFACTIVE IN OCEANIC LANGUAGES. In an overview of benefactive marking in Oceanic languages, Song (1998) observes that benefactive constructions in some Oceanic languages have arisen from possessive classifiers, with the possessor being reinterpreted as the beneficiary. Margetts (1999:327) discusses the benefactive in Saliba, and points out the expected relationship between a possessive and benefactive reading, such that typically "if the beneficiary is not the possessor of the object prior to the expressed action it will be the possessor after the action is completed." One of the strategies used to distinguish possessive from benefactive constructions is a change in word order (Song 1998:265). Margetts (2004) suggests three stages in the shift from Oceanic possessive to benefactive marking, beginning with (1) attributive possession with benefactive implicature; (2) separate constructions with distributional overlap; and finally (3) separate constructions without distributional overlap.

In some languages, there is ambiguity between a possessive and benefactive reading of morphologically possessive constructions, as we would expect following stages (1) and (2) above. For example, in Lewo on the island of Epi, north of Efate, Early (1994) notes that there is a benefactive use of prepositional phrases that can be determined pragmatically. However, as he notes, "in many situations, the close semantic relatedness of the directional goal and beneficiary role makes it difficult to distinguish them" (Early 1994:180).

South Efate has resolved this ambiguity by distinguishing possessive from benefactive phrases by word order (i.e., Margetts's stage three). We will see more examples below, but first I will show that the benefactive does not use the same strategies for encoding participants as do ditransitive verbs or possessive constructions.

3. TYPICAL DITRANSITIVE AND POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN SOUTH EFATE. Ditransitive verbs in South Efate take two objects that both follow the verb, unlike the beneficiary, which precedes the verb. Furthermore, while the pos-

sessive and benefactive are morphologically identical, they occupy mutually exclusive sentential positions.

3.1 DITRANSITIVES IN SOUTH EFATE.

The recipient of the most typical ditransitive verb *tu* 'to give' can be expressed either by a suffix on the verb stem, or by an NP following the stem. The indirect object (IO) appears as an NP and cannot be cross-referenced. In (3) the 2SG recipient is expressed by a 2S.OBJ suffix *-k*. The theme, *nalkis* 'grass' follows the 2SG.OBJ suffix.

(3) Ka=fo   tu-o-k   nalkis   p̃a=fo   min-gi-Ø.
     1S.IRR.SBJ=PSP give-TR-2S.OBJ herbs   2S.IRR.SBJ=PSP drink-TR-3S.OBJ
     'I will give you grass (herbal drink), you drink it.'   (024:7)

In (4) there are two mentions of the ditransitive verb *tu* 'give', and in each the object appears as a free pronoun (*ag* '2SG' and *kineu* '1SG') and the theme follows immediately after the object pronoun.

(4) I=tu   ag   ntaewen, i=tu   kineu ntaewen.
     3S.R.SBJ=give 2SG   knowledge 3S.R.SBJ=give 1SG   knowledge
     'He gives you knowledge, he gives me knowledge.'
                                           (087:64) (98017a, 2459.2800, 2470.7801)

In (5) the 3SG recipient is marked by a zero morpheme and the theme is introduced by the preposition *ki*.

(5) Go marik naot ki=preg-i-Ø   Sualo i=mai   go
     and mister chief 3S.PRF.SBJ=make-TR-3S.OBJ S.   3s.R.SBJ=come and

     ki=tu-a-Ø   ki   tesa   nmatu nega
     3S.PRF.SBJ=give-TR-3S.OBJ PREP child female 3S.POSS

     nig nmatu nega   iskei.
     of   wife   3S.POSS one
     'And the chief made Sualo approach and he gave him a daughter from one of his wives.'   (053:17)

The above examples show that there is no slot preceding the verb and following the subject proclitic that is available to any of the objects (O/IO) in a ditransitive construction. This is the position in which the benefactive construction occurs.

3.2 POSSESSIVE FORMS.

As is common in Oceanic languages, there are two possessive constructions in South Efate: the direct possessive construction, in which a suffix attaches directly to the possessed noun (typically a relationship or part/whole term), and the indirect possessive. South Efate has no special possessive forms for consumable items, as are found, for example, in Paamese (Crowley 1982:210–12). For the purposes of this paper I discuss only indirect possession, as it is the construction employed in encoding the benefactive.

Indirect possession is expressed by a (possessed) NP followed by a prepositional phrase encoding the possessor. The prepositional phrase can consist of either a possessive pronoun (6a), or a preposition and NP (6b). A small group of relationship terms

allow possession to be encoded paratactically (6c), where a possessor nominal follows the nominal encoding the possessed.³ These are all represented schematically in (6), and examples of each follow.

(6)   POSSESSED   POSSESSOR
   a. NP   possessive pronoun
   b. NP   prepositional phrase introduced by *ni / nig*
   c. NP   NP

a.   The possessed nominal followed by a pronominal possessor is illustrated in (7), in which *neu* 'IS.POSS' is the possessor of the preceding noun phrase *nawesien pei* 'first job'.

(7) Nawesien pei neu,   a=weswes   Hotel Lagon.
    job   first IS.POSS IS.R.SBJ=work H.   L.
    'My first job, I worked at the Hotel Lagon.'   (98012 WT)

b.   In (8) the possessor, *Efat* 'Efate', follows the preposition *ni* and the possessed *naṁolien* 'life'.

(8) Naṁolien   ni   Efat mes   na-serteᵽal-wen   i=top.
    life   of   Efate today the-nonbelief-NML.SBJ 3S.R.SBJ=high
    POSSESSED [PREP PHRASE]
    'Efate's life today, lack of faith is too great.'
                          (98010b, 1598.8799, 1609.9199)

In (9) we see the prepositional phrase 'of his father', which itself includes the possessed form *apap nega* 'his father', each possessed item being followed by the possessor.

(9) Me i=tap   metpakor nafsan   nig apap   nega   mau.
    but 3S.R.SBJ=not forget   story   of   father 3S.POSS NEG2
                 POSSESSED [PREP PHRASE]
    'But he didn't forget his father's story.'   (014:12)

c.   In (10), *rait* 'mother' is possessed by the following nominal *tmak* 'my father' in a paratactic construction.

(10) Rait   tm-ak   i=pi   nataṁol ni Australia.
     mother father-IS.DPOSS 3S.RSBJ=be person   of A.
     'My father's mother was an Australian.'   (GZ 98004)

Only forms a. and b. above are relevant to this discussion, as the benefactive construction employs possessive morphology and not the paratactic possessive illustrated in (10). In all of these possessive constructions the word order is strictly possessed/possessor, unlike the benefactive construction, in which possessive prepositional phrases occur with no possessed NP.

---

3. Possessive pronouns can occur without a possessed noun, but in this case they are nominalized with the determiner *te-,* as in the following example:

    Nagi pei ga   i=ta   pi te-gar   mau.
    name first 3S   3S.RSBJ=not be DET-3P.POSS NEG2
    'His first name was not theirs.'   (20003az, 467.5999, 472.7800)

4. THE BENEFACTIVE CONSTRUCTION IN SOUTH EFATE. In this section I contrast examples of the benefactive construction with the ditransitive and possessive constructions outlined in section 3. As we have already seen, the benefactive construction employs a prepositional phrase in preverbal position, preceded by the preverbal complex that would otherwise directly precede the verb. The S proclitic and V are the only obligatory elements of the verbal complex (see [11]), but if any preverbal material is present, then it will host the S proclitic, as we see in (12).

(11) S=(PVC) (Benefactive Phrase) V

In the first clause of (12) the subject *ru*= '3P.R.SBJ' is proclitic to the 3SG benefactive *nega,* and in the second clause the same benefactive form, together with its referent (Captain Pierre), occurs between the subject proclitic *i*= '3S.R.SBJ' and the verb *slat* 'take'.

(12) Ru=nega   nep ki tete mane me Apu Tata i=po
      3P.R.SBJ=3S.BEN   throw TR some money but A.   T.   3S.R.SBJ=PSP

      nega   Captain Pierre slat-i-Ø   pan.
      3S.BEN   C.   P.   carry-TR-3S.OBJ   go
      'They threw in money for him, and Apu Tata took it for Captain Pierre.'
                                                               (053:65)

In (13), the subject clitic *ka*= '1S.IRR.SBJ', which is ordinarily proclitic to the verbal complex, is proclitic to the pronoun *gag* '2S.BEN' (as there are no morphemes of the preverbal complex present to which it would otherwise attach).

(13) P̃a=til-i-Ø   na "Ka=gag   traus kastom."
      2S.IRR.SBJ=tell-TR-3S.OBJ   say 1S.IRR.SBJ=2S.BEN   tell   custom
      'You say, "I'll talk to you about custom."'
                                           (83:32: 98010a, 2164.5599, 2174.5200)

While possessive and benefactive morphology are identical, there is no possession entailed in a benefactive construction, nor is there a possessed item expressed. Example (14a) shows the pronominal possessor *ga* '3S.POSS' following the noun *nafum̃kas* 'flowers' in canonical possessive construction word order, as discussed in 3.2 above. Contrast (14a) with (14b) in which the same pronoun *ga* '3S.BEN' in preverbal position encodes the beneficiary of the flowers being brought.

(14) a. U=sat   nafum̃kas ga   mai.
          1P.EXCL.R.SBJ=take   flower   3S.POSS   hither
          'We brought his flowers.'   (elicited)

      b. U=ga   sat nafum̃kas mai.
          1P.EXCL.R.SBJ=3S.BEN   take flower   hither
          'We brought flowers for him.'   (98005)

In (15a) the food is marked as being possessed because it is followed by the 3S.POSS pronoun *ga*. In (15b) the same pronoun occurs in preverbal position and encodes the beneficiary.

(15) a. Ku=tae   tu-a-Ø   rait   nen ke=fam
       2S.R.SBJ=know   give-TR-3S.OBJ   mother this   3S.IRR.SBJ=eat

       nafnag ga   ke=nom.
       food   3S.POSS   3S.IRR.SBJ=finish

       'You can give this mother her food to eat, to finish.'   (98018)

    b. A=ga   preg nafnag ke=fam.
       1S.R.SBJ=3S.BEN   make food   3S.IRR.SBJ=eat.IRR

       'I made her food to eat.'   (40:54: 98003a, 1314.1200, 1323.379)

These examples show the difference between the possessive phrase preposed to the verb encoding the benefactive and the position encoding possession following the possessed noun.

Examples (16a) and (16b) contrast the possessive and benefactive and distinguish between building a house for someone and doing it for their benefit. The relationship between a future possessor (someone for whom the house is being built) (16a) and a beneficiary (someone for whose benefit the house is being built, but who may not be the owner) (16b) has been noted by Margetts (2004) as being the path by which a separate benefactive construction can arise.

(16) a. I=to   tfag nasum̃ ni   apu.
       3S.R.SBJ=STAT   build house   for   grandfather

       'He is building grandfather's house.'   (elicited)

    b. I=to   ni apu   tfag nasum̃.
       3S.R.SBJ=STAT   of   grandfather   build house

       'He is building a house for grandfather (for his benefit).'   (elicited)

The following example is part of a story told about a spirit who will do the bidding of the speaker by punishing someone on the speaker's behalf. The speaker says to the spirit, "You will hit him for me." What this and previous examples of the preposed possessive phrase have in common is a sense of an action occurring for someone's benefit (morphologically marked as being the possessor).

(17) P̃a=fo   neu   wat-gi-Ø.
       2S.IRR.SBJ=PSP.IRR   1S.POSS   hit-TR-3S.OBJ

       'You will hit him for me.'   (077:13) (98009bx, 1057.6, 1059.3611)

A possessed object and benefactive phrase do not compete for the same slot, as shown by their expression by the same possessive pronominal in example (18). The two constructions can cooccur, which provides evidence of the grammaticalized status of the benefactive construction.

(18) Ru=gamus   preg   na   naftourwen   gamus.
       3P.SBJ=2D.OBJ   make   DET   wedding   2D.OBJ

       'They will make your wedding for you.'   (070:117)

In (19) the O is possessed ('your life'), while a benefactive phrase occurs in the preverbal slot, again showing the complementary distribution of the possessive and benefactive constructions.

(19) Me ku=ga   traus naṁolien gag.
      and 2S.R.SBJ=3S.BEN tell   life   2S.POSS
     'And you tell him about your life.'
     (lit. you tell for him the story of your life)
     (81:24) (98010a, 1084.3, 1090.3400)

Possessed beneficiaries are encoded just as any complex phrase in the benefactive position. In (20) we see 'for his son' as a benefactive phrase that includes a possessed nominal (the chief's brother's son), distinguishing possession from benefaction.

(20) I=pi   esuan npalu-n   i=tae   nig tesa nanwei nega
      3S.R.SBJ=be   where brother-3S.DPOSS 3S.R.SBJ=know of child man   3S.POSS
                                                        [BEN[POSS   ]]

     slat   nafinaotan.
     take   chiefly.line
     'That is where the chief's brother can take the chiefly line for his son.'
                                                                          (53:28)

The previous examples show that the benefactive phrase can be fairly complex, but the extent of that complexity is shown in (21), where it consists of a relative clause dependent on a possessive NP, all occurring within the slot between the possessive preposition *nig* (signaling the beginning of the benefactive clause) and the main verb *slat*.

(21) I=nig   tesa taklep nanwei nig marik pal-un   nag i=pi
      3S.R.SBJ=of child firstborn male   of   mister brother-3S.DPOSS REL 3S.R.SBJ=be
                                    [BEN   [POSS   [REL

     naot p̃ur marik N. K. slat-ki nafinaotan.
     chief big mister N. K. take-TR chiefly.line
                      ]]]
     'He, for the firstborn son of his brother who was the big chief NK, took
     the chiefly line.'   (53:46)

We can further distinguish the possessive from the benefactive construction by showing that benefactives can occur with intransitive verbs, in a construction in which possession is not a possible reading, as in (22), where the intransitive verb *traus* 'to tell' has no object, but does have a beneficiary, *neu* '1SG'.

(22) Kat   natrauswen ga   nrak lap i=to   neu   traus.
      because story   3S.POSS time many 3S.R.SBJ=STAT 1S.BEN tell
     'Because he told his story to me many times.' (lit. because, his story,
     many times he would to me tell)   (015:31)

(23) Ruk=fo   nig naṁer nfanu wan weswes.
      3P.IRR.SBJ=PSP.IRR of people land this work
     'They will work for the people of the land.'
                                              (adapted from Anon 1874; Genesis 15:13)

None of the examples of the benefactive includes a malefactive sense. Attempts to elicit the following malefactive sense with a benefactive construction failed. The speaker said that by putting the possessive form in preverbal position it implied that

"something nice" was happening to the addressee. Using the benefactive construction made the proposition a humorous threat ("I will break your head for you").

(24) *Ka=fo   gag   p̃rai   np̃au=m.
      1S.IRR.SBJ=PSP.IRR   2S.BEN   break   head=2S.DPOSS
      *'I will (to you) break your head.'   (elicited)

To seriously threaten someone with a broken head one would say (25) using the direct possessive in this case.

(25) Ka=fo   p̃rai   np̃au=m.
      1S.IR.SBJ=PSP.IRR   break   head=2S.DPOSS
      'I will break your head.'   (elicited)

Because the benefactive NP occupies a slot outside of those filled by the object and indirect object, it is possible to encode four participants (three arguments and the beneficiary) with the ditransitive verb *tu* 'give'. In (26) the speaker asks that five arrows be given on his behalf. We know that the action is on behalf of the speaker, because if he were asking for arrows for himself (e.g., 'you give me five arrows'), the suppletive verb form for 'give me' would be *tao* and not *tua* 'give him' as it is in (26).

(26) P̃a=freg-si   nas,
      2S.IRR.SBJ=make.IRR-all   bow
      p̃a=neu   tu-a-Ø   ki   timen   ke=lim.
      2S.IRR.SBJ=1S.BEN   give-TR-3S.OBJ   PREP   arrow   3S.IRR.SBJ=five
      'You make the bow, you give him five arrows for me (on my behalf).'
                                              (98017b, 2586.8599, 2593.6075)

Similarly in (27) *neu* '1S.POSS' encodes the participant on whose behalf the letter is given to another person, allowing the expression of the theme ("the letter"), the recipient ("him"), and the beneficiary (*neu* '1S.POSS').

(27) Ka=fo   preg   leta   ke=skei.   Ale   a=tu   nat,
      1S.IRR.SBJ=PSP.IRR   make   letter   3S.IRR.SBJ=one   okay   1S.R.SBJ=give   man

      "P̃a=fo   neu   tu-a-Ø   ki-Ø."
      2S.IRR.SBJ=PSP.IRR   1S.BEN   give-TR-3S.OBJ   PREP-3S.OBJ
      'I will write a letter. Then I give it to a man, "You will give it to him for
      me."   (066:93: 98003b, 1334.7999, 1340.5399)

From all of these examples it is clear that there is a morphosyntactically distinct benefactive construction in South Efate that involves the beneficiary (encoded by possessive morphology) preceding the verb.

5. TYPOLOGY OF OCEANIC BENEFACTIVES. Song (1997) distinguishes three types of benefactive construction for Oceanic languages characterized as P-type (possessive classifier–based); V-type (verb-based); and N-type (noun-based). Data for North/Central Vanuatu considered by Song (1997:49) suggest that Paamese has the V- and P-types, exploiting classifiers as a base to which possessive pronominal sufixes are attached. The closest language to South Efate mentioned by Song is Nguna, which he

notes as being of the V-type. V- type or verb-based benefactives, if they are not clearly derived from a verb meaning 'to give', retain "certain vestiges or properties of a verb, e.g., person marking" (Song 1997:36). The only grammatical analysis of Nguna is a short sketch by Schütz (1969a), which mentions a distinct construction of the kind discussed here for South Efate. Indirect possession in Nguna, as in South Efate, is marked by a possessive pronoun (28) or possessive NP (29) following the possessed noun. Examples of pronominally encoded benefactives follow (glossed by Schütz as 'intentional'), and then in example (33) we see a beneficiary encoded by a possessive phrase rather than a pronoun.

NGUNA[4]

(28) na-vinaga aneana
      DET-food   3S.POSS
      'his food'   (Facey 1988:306)

(29) E pei varea   ni Togalapa.
      it be   meeting.house of Togalapa
      'It was Togalapa's meeting house.'   (Schütz 1969a:73)

(30) Ee, tu   ga   mateata pauri   a.
      no we.INCL int(entional) 3P.BEN pile.firewood it
      'No, we'll pile firewood for them.'   (adapted from Schütz 1969b:49)

(31) Au   ga   wo manimu sui na-kapu kiiki.
      we.EXCL int(entional) will 2P.BEN blow DET-fire small
      'We'll make something for you to eat.'   (adapted from Schütz 1969b:45)

(32) Tu   ga   maginau lalawo.
      1P.INC.SBJ intentional 1S.BEN   plant
      'Let's plant it for me.'   (adapted from Facey 1988:226)

The previous examples show a possessive pronoun encoding the benefactive role. Example (33) shows a prepositional phrase in the same position.

(33) Goo te ragi seara naka ni Farealapa eu magi naka ni
      then a time some people of Farealapa they for people of

      Utanilagi lalawo.
      Utanilagi   plant
      'In those days sometimes the people of Farealapa planted for the people of Utanilagi.'   (Facey 1988:136)

This construction should not be called V- type, as it relies on a pronominal possessive (and also, in the case of South Efate, a possessive NP). As in South Efate, the position of the possessive correlates consistently with the semantics of either a benefactive in preverbal position, or a possessive elsewhere. Thus both the Nguna and South Efate benefactive should be classified as Song's P-type.

---

4. Glosses are adapted from those provided in the original sources.

6. THE BENEFACTIVE AS AN AREAL FEATURE. A preverbal benefactive is a feature of the group of languages on Efate and immediately to its north. We have already seen examples from South Efate and Nguna ([28–33] above, including both prepositional and full NP benefactive phrases). In Namakir (Sperlich 1991:271), spoken on Makira Island, located between Epi and Efate, there is a benefactive construction that occupies the same preverbal position as in South Efate, but it is apparently limited to pronominal expression of the beneficiary, with pronominals formed with the possessive *min* 'for'.

(34) Ni min-io daʔ na-masimas.
     1S for-me cut ART-knife
     'I (for myself) cut a knife.'   (slightly adapted from Sperlich 1991:149)

(35) Ke-Jack no min-ini i-boh na-im.
     Art-Jack PROG for-3s 3s-build ART-house
     'Jack is building a house for her.'   (slightly adapted from Sperlich 1991:271)

Similarly, the language of Lelepa Island, to the northwest of Efate, displays at least a pronominal preverbal benefactive, as shown in (36)

(36) Ku ga wes.
     2S.R.SBJ 3S.BEN take
     'You take it for him.'   (from fieldnotes)

The preverbal pronominal position is recorded in Macdonald's 1907 dictionary, where he says, "thus instead of *ka fano, ke fano* we have *aga fano, iga fano,* in exactly the same sense, but, literally, 'I to go,' 'he to go.' This variation in Ef. of the order of the three elements of the expression in no way varies the sense, and seems to be purely for euphony" (Macdonald 1907:84–85). If his conclusion about the sense of these forms is correct, it indicates that the grammaticalization of the benefactive was only incipient at the end of the nineteenth century. However, it is more likely that the benefactive was already a functioning construction that was not taken into account by Macdonald's analysis, especially considering that there are examples of benefactives in the 1874 Genesis translation, as seen in (23) above.

    Capell (n.d.) noted the preverbal prepositional phrase as a feature of Nguna and associated languages: "A number of particles in Nguna-Efate occur in an unexpected position, viz, before the verb: these are a few conjunctions, and certain of the prepositional nouns. ... Two morphemes [that] function prepositionally need special treatment because they cause perturbation of the word order. These in the Nguna form are *agi* and *magi* 'for' and their peculiarity is that they intervene between tense particles and verb, whether they are completed by a suffixed pronoun or by a noun. The subject indicator and tense particle retain their normal places and the preposition is placed between them and the verbal stem. They are found in all the dialects."

    Lynch (2004) has pointed out a number of linguistic features shared by South Efate and languages of southern Vanuatu. These features suggest a linkage between these languages at the level of a subgroup of Proto-Oceanic. Without detracting from this observation, the areal distribution of preverbal benefactive phrases suggests a cohesion of central Vanuatu languages, perhaps due to a shared history and diffusion, or perhaps due to shared inheritance.

7. PATHWAYS TO THE SECOND POSITION. The grammaticalization of a benefactive from a possessive construction is widely attested in languages of the world (as discussed above, and see Song 1997 and Margetts 2004). A change of word order is a final stage in this grammaticalization, with the benefactive and possessive constructions occupying mutually exclusive positions. In South Efate the benefactive construction is the only phrasal element permitted between the preverbal complex and the verb. How did that position become available? Croft (1990:233–34) discusses "verbal attraction" as a form of morphosyntactic gramaticalization by which "various dependents on the verb—adverbs, auxiliaries, pronominal subjects and objects, etc.—move to a position next to the verb." The benefactive in South Efate has moved to a preverbal position, as an instance of "verbal attraction," but the question remains, why that particular position?

Reanalysis of verbs as directional particles may provide a bridging context in which prepositional phrases occur before items that are directional particles identical in form to the verbs from which they have derived. Thus, in the schema in (37), the directional particle, formally identical to the verb from which it is derived, occurs following the sentential complement.

(37) PVC   PREP/VERB   COMPLEMENT   DIRECTIONAL.PARTICLE

I suggest that there are two features of this structure that provide a route for the benefactive occurring before the main verb. One is the directional particle, and the other is the verbal preposition, which I will now address in turn.

In South Efate, as in other Oceanic languages (see Lichtenberk 1991), several verbs have been reanalyzed as directional particles in post VP position and now only express direction ('to', 'at', 'along', 'from', and so on) in that position.[5] Directional particles in South Efate are homophonous with the verbs from which they are clearly derived, thus:

(38) VERB   PARTICLE
      mai   'to come'   mai   'hither'
      pan   'to go'   pan   'from'
      ur   'to follow'   ur   'along'
      to   'to stay'   to   'at'
      nrokot   'to cross'   nrokot   'across'

It is because the relationship between a verb and derived directional particle is so transparent that the directional particle retains vestiges of its verbal status. Thus prepositional phrases occurring before the directional particle can be interpreted as occurring in the same position as the benefactive, that is, before the main verb, as we will see below.

Verbal prepositions have been noted in Oceanic languages (Durie 1988, Pawley 1973) as sharing features of both prepositions and verbs. Durie (1988:3), in his discussion of verbal prepositions, argues that the reanalysis of serial verbs into prepositions is due to the diachronic instability of serial verbs. Crowley (2001) similarly talks of the "dissolution" of serial verbs into other word classes, including prepositions and directional particles.

---

5. Lynch, Ross, and Crowley 2002:85 suggest that the development of directional particles (or enclitics) from directional verb serializations could have occurred in POc, but could also be "the outcomes of post-POc encliticization."

Verbal prepositions like *plak* 'to be with/with' in South Efate can act as the main verb in a sentence, as shown in (39).

(39) Gar ru=plak   pisplolo   m̃as ko nafon ses.
     3PL 3P.R.SBJ=with pubic.cover only or skirt   small
     'They had pubic covers only or small skirts.'

<div align="right">(98002a, 1678.6000, 1682.7858)</div>

Typically *plak* occurs with a directional particle following its complement, as in (40) below, where the directional particle is *mai* 'hither'. Note in the following examples that *plak* occurs with a subject proclitic and with elements of the preverbal complex, indicating that it is functioning as a verb in these cases.

(40) Ale i=po   plak Apu   Kalmet mai.
     okay 3S.R.SBJ=PSP.R with grandfather K.   hither
     'Okay, he then came with Apu Kalmet.' (lit. he, with Apu K. came)

<div align="right">(1/10/98)</div>

The following example shows *nrokot* 'to cross' following *plak* 'with' plus its pronominal object. In both (40) and (41) the slot before the directional particle is identical to the preverbal slot in which benefactive prepositional phrases occur.

(41) Ru=plak-e-r   nrokot kin ru=pak   Erakor.
     3P.R.SBJ=with-TR-3P.OBJ cross REL 3P.R.SBJ=to E.
     'They went with them across so they went to Erakor.'

<div align="right">(056:29) (98002b, 984.6, 988.0599)</div>

(42) Go kineu kin a=po   to plak America ur   ser naor.
     and 1S.   REL 1S.R.SBJ=PSP stay with A.   follow every place
     'I went with the Americans around all over the place.'   (040:13)

(43) I=mai   kai skot Apu   nimam to naur to.
     3S.R.SBJ=come ESBJ with grandfather 1P.EXCL at island at
     'He came and with our grandfather stayed at the island.'   (PK 28/9/98)

In (40–43) the prepositional phrase has no benefactive reading. These examples have an ambiguous structure, where *skot* and *plak* are acting either as prepositional verbs whose objects are then followed by directional particles (*to* 'at', *mai* 'hither', *ur* 'follow', and so on) or they are acting as prepositions introducing a prepositional phrase, and the directional particle could then be interpreted as being the main verb. Let us take example (41) and display this ambiguity as in (44a), where the prepositional verb *plak* 'to be with' and its complement (-*r* '3P.OBJ') precede the main verb (*nrokot* 'to cross'). However, we could also interpret *plak* as being the main verb in this sentence, as in (44b) with *nrokot* acting as a directional particle.

(44)   Ru=plak-e-r   nrokot kin ru=pak   Erakor.
        3P.R.SBJ=with-TR-3P.OBJ cross   COMP 3P.R.SBJ=to Erakor
    a. S-V-PREP-OBJ   Vmain
    b. S-VMAIN-OBJ   Vdirectional / directional particle
        'They went with them across to Erakor.'
        (lit. they with them crossed that they go to Erakor)

<div align="right">(056:29) (98002b, 984.6, 988.0599)</div>

The directional particle could be interpreted as being a main verb in what could also be seen as verbless sentences, due to the homophony of directional particles and their equivalent verbs. The two lines of structural analysis in (45) show alternate analyses possible for this type of sentence, with (45a) showing the verbless sentence analysis, and (45b) showing the analysis with the directional particle as the main verb. *Emar* 'Mare' is a place-name that bears the locative prefix *e-* and so is here a prepositional phrase ('at Mare').

(45)   Apu   nigmam   i=to   E-mar   mai.
         grandfather   1P.EXCLPOSS   3S.R.SBJ=STAT   LOC-Mare   come

a.	[N	Spec	] N	ASPECT	N/PP	Directional Particle
b.	[N	Spec	] N	ASPECT	N/PP	V

     'Our grandfather came from Mare.'   (98014a, 812.3000, 819.1801)

Thus there is a potentially ambiguous structure, one that allows prepositions to bring their complements into a preverbal position. Once South Efate verbal prepositions occurred in this ambiguous slot, it could have facilitated nonverbal prepositions such as those marked by the locative *e-* or the possessive *ni* to follow with a benefactive reading.

8. CONCLUSION. There is a benefactive construction in South Efate that employs possessive morphemes in preverbal position. While grammatical objects and their possessors follow the verb, the benefactive occurs between the preverbal complex and the verb. I suggest that this position could have arisen from the inherent structural ambiguity of prepositional verbs, thus providing a vector for true prepositions that were employed in encoding a benefactive reading. The use of a preverbal benefactive construction is restricted to a group of languages from Efate and its immediate north and suggests a commonality among them, either by diffusion or inheritance, that is not shared with languages to the south.

REFERENCES

Anon. 1874. *Kenesis natus a bei nag Moses ki mtir i.* Trans. J. Cosh. Sydney: British and Foreign Bible Society.

Capell, Arthur. n.d. Perturbation of word order. Ms. http://paradisec.org.au/fieldnotes/AC2/VNEFAT.htm#VNEFAT14

Clark, Ross. 1985. The Efate dialects. *Te Reo* 28:3–35.

Croft, William. 1990. *Typology and universals.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crowley, Terry. 1982. *The Paamese language of Vanuatu.* Series B-87. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.

———. 1998. *An Erromangan (Sye) grammar.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

———. 2001. Serial verb constructions in Oceanic languages. Lecture notes.

Durie, Mark. 1988. Verb serialization and "verbal prepositions" in Oceanic languages. *Oceanic Linguistics* 23:1–23.

Early, Robert. 1994. A grammar of Lewo, Vanuatu. PhD thesis, RSPAS, Australia National University.

Facey, Ellen 1988. *Nguna voices: Text and culture from central Vanuatu.* Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

Lichtenberk, Frantisek. 1991. Semantic change and heterosemy in grammaticalization. *Language* 67:475–509.

Lynch, John. 2004. The Efate-Erromango problem in Vanuatu subgrouping. *Oceanic Linguistics* 43:311–38.

Lynch, John, Malcolm Ross, and Terry Crowley. 2002. *The Oceanic languages.* Surrey, England: Curzon Press.

Macdonald, Donald D. 1907. *The Oceanic languages: Their grammatical structure, vocabulary, and origin.* Oxford: Henry Frowde.

Margetts, Anna. 1999. *Valence and transitivity in Saliba, an Oceanic language of Papua New Guinea.* MPI Series in Psycholinguistics 12. Munich: Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften.

———. 2004. From implicature to construction: Grammaticalization from possession to benefaction in Oceanic languages. *Oceanic Linguistics* 43:445–69.

Pawley, Andrew. 1973. Some problems in Proto-Oceanic grammar. *Oceanic Linguistics* 12:103–88.

Schütz, Albert J. 1969a. *Nguna grammar.* Oceanic Linguistics Special Publication No. 3. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

———. 1969b. *Nguna texts.* Oceanic Linguistics Special Publication No. 4. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Song, Jae Jung. 1997. The history of Micronesian possessive classifiers and benefactive marking in Oceanic languages. *Oceanic Linguistics* 36:29–64.

———. 1998. Benefactive marking in Oceanic languages: From possessive classifiers to benefactive markers. In *Case, typology and grammar,* ed. by Anna Siewierska and Jae Jung Song, 247–75. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Sperlich, Wolfgang. 1991. Namakir: A description of a Central Vanuatu language. PhD thesis, University of Auckland.

Thieberger, Nicholas. 2004. Topics in the grammar and documentation of South Efate, an Oceanic language of Central Vanuatu. PhD diss., University of Melbourne.

Department of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics
University of Melbourne
Melbourne 3010, AUSTRALIA
thien@unimelb.edu.au

Author/s:
Thieberger, N

Title:
The benefactive construction in South Efate

Date:
2006-12-01

Citation:
Thieberger, N. (2006). The benefactive construction in South Efate. OCEANIC LINGUISTICS, 45 (2), pp.297-310. https://doi.org/10.1353/ol.2007.0010.

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/31254