

# Combining verbal number in Muyu

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# Outline

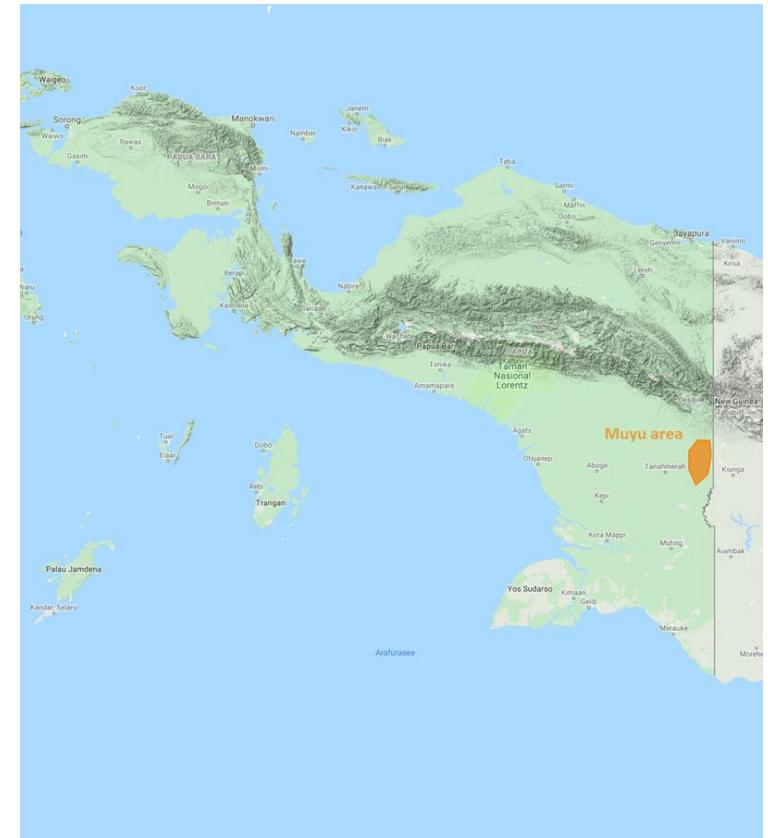
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# The Muyu language

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- Lowland Ok language (Trans New Guinea)
- estimated 2.000 speakers
- no transmission to children
- Ongoing documentation project (2018-2023), funded by ELDP (Zahrer 2019)
- Currently: 10 hrs of video/audio, 6 hrs transcribed



# Number in Muyu grammar

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Where do we find **number** as a grammatical category?

- number is distinguished for free pronouns (singular vs. plural)
- number is marked on argument affixes (subject=obligatory, object=lexically specified)
- but: number is not marked on NPs (two exceptions: kinship plural *-a*, occasional reduplication)

Medial verbs vs. final verbs:

- clause chains have morphologically restricted medial verbs and unrestricted final verbs
- both types have argument affixes:

(1) DS:

*Pieter=ko a-Ø-un=e*  
PN=KO 3SG.M-hit-3SG.F=DS.SEQ  
'She knocks Peter down.'

(2) SS:

*Jack=ko ap kaweno-n-e kok-o-den.*  
PN=KO tree climb-SS-3SG.M fall:SG.S-3SG.M-PFV  
'Jack climbed a tree and fell down.'

# Multiverb constructions

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Only final verb has argument affixes.

All other verbs end in *-e* glossed 'SM' (serial marker).

- (3) *Ayekon kan-e kawin-ip.*  
flag take:SG.O-SM climb-3PL  
'They raise a flag.'

- (4) *Ton=ko opnon=ko b-e men-en.*  
fish=KO late.AN=KO take:PL.O-SM come-3SG.M  
'He brought the fish in the late afternoon.'

# Verbal number

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Number in the verbal domain (Corbett 2000, Frajzynger 1985, Durie 1986, Veselinova 2013) distinguishes...

- the number of participants of an event
- or number of events taking place / or number of places where an event is taking place

Verbal number is often organised as **alternation in the root** of the verb:

(5) (Hiw, Torres islands, Vanuatu: François 2019)

*Ne wō-metu mik sō.*

ART fruit-coconut APPREH fall.NON.PLURAL

'The coconut might fall.'

*Ne wō-metu mik iw.*

ART fruit-coconut APPREH fall.PLURAL

'The coconuts might fall.'

# Verbal number

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Corbett (2000) distinguishes three categories

- subject number
- object number
- event number

Another notion verbal number relates to is **pluractionality** (Newman 1980).

Ongoing debate whether verbal number alternation is a **kind of suppletion** (Durie 1986, Veselinova 2013) or **separate lexical items** (Mithun 1988: 214, Mel'čuk 1994: 386-387, Corbett 2000).

Interesting approach in François (2019): verbal number alternations form **lexical paradigms**, i.e. a "structured set of word pairings" (356) as e.g. antonymic pairs {open: shut}, {deep: shallow}, {thick: thin}, or certain zoonymic terms {cow: calf}, {pig: piglet}, {dog: puppy}.

# Distribution of Verbal number

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Veselinova's (2013) WALS sample has 34 out of 193 with verbal number (=18%)

- Focus in North America; but also South America, East Asia, the Caucasus and the Pacific region
- TNG languages with VN: Usan, Amele
- TNG languages without VN: Kewa, Dani, Asmat, Suena

No mention of VN (or pluractionality) in Ok languages so far.

-> VN is not consistent within a language family

Is it an areal phenomenon?

- in Sandau Province (North of Ok): cf. Honeyman (2016).
- pluractionality in South New Guinea: Marind (Olsson 2021), Ngkolmpu (Carroll 2016), Yelmek (Gray & Gregor 2019), Marori (Arka 2012), ...

# Verbal number in Muyu

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Features:

- binary distinction (singular / plural)
- all three types: object number (21)\*, subject number (6), event number (6)
- absolute alignment, i.e. S in intransitive and O in transitive verbs
- independent of argument indexing
- correlates with conjugation classes (e-, o- and a-stems) [not discussed in this talk]

(presumptive) diachronic source: aspectual stem pairs?

\* numbers in brackets indicate how much lexical pairs encoding this feature have been found

# Subject number

Singular stem	Plural stem	Gloss
<i>alo</i>	<i>alendili</i>	'stand'
<i>koke</i>	<i>kombVlo</i>	'fall'
<i>(kulune wini)</i>	<i>kulumbangga</i>	'crawl'
<i>tole</i>	<i>totka</i>	'perch on, step on'

- 6 pairs found so far.

(6) *On ap kobi tol-on.*  
bird tree on perch:SG.SBJ-3SG.M  
'A bird perched on the tree.'

(7) *Wamung kadap tana kon bop totka-d-ip.*  
fly many child woman corpse perch:PL.SBJ-DUR-3PL  
'Many flies are perching on a female dead body.'

# Subject number

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Verbal number is independent from verbal affixes.

Inanimate subjects trigger a default 3SG.M suffix, as in (9):

- (8) *Nimbin=ko ap kobi=bet kombil-ip.*  
women=KO tree on=SRC fall:PL.SBJ-3PL  
'The women fell from a tree.'

- (9) *Yum yumu kadap kep men=dem ombet kombel-en.*  
banana ripe many 2SG string.bag=in from.that fall:PL.SBJ-3SG.M  
'Many ripe bananas fall out of your bag.'

# Object number

Singular stem	Plural stem	Gloss
<i>amino</i>	<i>amingga</i>	'weave'
<i>kale</i>	<i>namo</i>	'throw (away)'
<i>kane</i>	<i>bio</i>	'take'
<i>tokbe</i>	<i>tabangga</i>	'split'

- 21 pairs found so far.

(10) *Omani amidak yinim wani komb-e.*  
banana floor on down put:SG.O-2SG.IMP  
'Put the banana on the floor!'

(11) *Omani amidak yinim wani yal-e.*  
banana floor on down put:PL.O-2SG.IMP  
'Put the bananas on the floor!'

# Event number

Singular stem	Plural stem	Gloss
<i>bane</i>	<i>bamba, yongga</i>	'call so.'
<i>bulune</i>	<i>bulubo</i>	'hit'
<i>bune</i>	<i>bemengga</i>	'water sth.'
<i>tole</i>	<i>totka</i>	'perch on, <b>step on</b> '

- 6 pairs found so far.

(12) *Nimbin-nimbin okun-e ban-an=go teleb-ip.*  
women-women like.that-SM call.once-1SG=KO gather-3PL  
'When I called the women, they gathered.'

(13) *welen kel-on=got, nup bamba-un.*  
difficult become-3SG.M=and.then.DS 1PL call.several.times-3SG.F  
'It was (too) hard (for her), so she kept calling us.'

# Interaction of VN

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Between clauses, verbal number can track number values for each event:

- (14) *Yanggan=ko bio-n-ip.*  
torch=KO take:PL.O-SS-3PL  
They took the torches and then

*Anyan, yu        nin-un,              Kedo        yu        taman    nin-on.*  
yo.sis    3SG.F    hold:SG.O-3SG.F    and.then   3SG.F   yo.bro   hold:SG.O-3SG.M  
'The sister, she held one, and her brother held one.'

Generally: two identical singular object verbs denote distribution (put sth. + put sth.)

- (15) *Ton mim eyani komb-a,              ta    ton mim wonggo komb-a.*  
fish one here put:SG.O-1SG.IMP and fish one there put:SG.O-1SG.IMP  
'I'll put one fish here and one fish there.'

# VN in MVCs

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MVCs with 2 verbs can combine in two ways:

1. only one verb encodes VN:

<i>kudule kani</i> 'pull out (sg. obj.)'	<i>kudule bi</i> 'pull out (pl. obj.)'
<i>kane mini</i> 'bring (sg. obj.)'	<i>be mini</i> 'bring (pl. obj.)'

2. both verbs encode VN, they agree in number:

<i>kane kali</i> 'take and throw away (sg. obj.)'	<i>be nami</i> 'take and throw away (pl. obj.)'
<i>wane kane mini</i> 'pick and bring (sg. obj.)'	<i>watme be mini</i> 'pick and bring (pl. obj.)'

-> Required, since MVCs form one predicate with shared argument.

# MVCs with number mismatch

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There are MVCs with opposite numbers:

- 'take many' + 'take one' = 'collect'

(16) *an-i yeman odo b-e kan-e yado min-ip*  
eat-INF for DEM take:PL.O-SM take:SG.O-SM up come-3PL.  
'they collected (some fish) and brought them up to eat'

- 'put down many' + 'put down one' = 'put down forcefully/carelessly/in anger'

(17) *kumun b-e wen-e wonggo yal-e komb-e*  
all take:PL.O-SM go-SM there put:PL.O-SM put:SG.O-2SG.IMP  
'bring all the stuff and just drop it there'

# MVCs with number mismatch

However, combining opposite number verbs (from one pair) is not productive.

Compare:

<i>be kani</i> 'collect'	<i>bi</i> 'take (pl. obj.)'	<i>kani</i> 'take (sg. obj.)'
<i>yale kombi</i> 'put down forcefully/carelessly'	<i>yali</i> 'put down (pl. obj.)'	<i>kombi</i> 'put down (sg. obj.)'

With:

* <i>name kali</i> / * <i>kale nami</i>	<i>nami</i> 'throw (pl. obj.)'	<i>kali</i> 'throw (sg. obj.)'
* <i>bane bambai</i> / * <i>bamba banai</i>	<i>bani</i> 'call once'	<i>bambai</i> 'call repeatedly'

# MVCs with number mismatch

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Opposite number combinations are probably lexicalised:

Compare:

<i>yale kombi</i> 'put down forcefully/carelessly'	<i>yali</i> 'put down (pl. obj.)'	<i>kombi</i> 'put down (sg. obj.)'
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With:

<i>bane kombi</i> 'scream/yell at'	<i>bani</i> 'call once'	<i>kombi</i> 'put (sg. obj.)'
* <i>bane yali</i> * <i>bamba kombi / bamba yali</i>	<i>bani</i> 'call once', <i>bambai</i> 'call repeatedly'	<i>yali</i> 'put (pl. obj.)'

# Summary

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Across clause boundaries:

- VN interacts to track number value  
"take many; throw one", "take one; take one; hold many"
- repeated SG verbs can have distributive meaning  
"put one here; put one there"

Monoclausal (MVCs):

- VN agrees between all verbs that share the argument
  - evidence for single-predicate!
- opposite number MVCs ('collect', 'put down forcefully/carelessly') are lexicalised items with idiosyncratic meaning

# Literature

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Thank you!