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Sunday, March 30th: 2:00-2:30

(Dis)agreement of Post-verbal Subjects in Marshallese Intransitives

The purpose of this talk is to discuss the conditions for the agreement of post-verbal subjects on the verbs of Marshallese intransitives.

With preverbal subjects, the verb always shows agreement with the subject. When the subject is postverbal, however, the verb sometimes agrees in number with the subject and sometimes disagrees. The data below illustrates an example of disagreement in (2) as compared to (1):

Iroj ro re-kar buromuij.

chief the-PL 3PL-T(past) be.sad

'The chiefs were sad.'

(Willson to appear)

E buromuij iroj ro.

3SG be.sad chief the-PL

'The chiefs were sad.'

(Erdland 1914:198)

This talk aims to discuss the conditions that account for the agreement/disagreement distinction. The analyses Hale (1998) and Willson (to appear) provide are contradictory. I will gather a larger body of data to see if the disagreement is related to unergative and unaccusative classes of verbs and whether the disagreement is a consequence of a split in subject agreement between these two classes. I will also consider the context in which sentences appear in Marshallese stories for insight on focus and topicalization.

References

Erdland, P.A. (1914). *Die Marshall-Islander: Leben und Sitte, Sinn und Religion eines Südseevolkes*. Munster: Aschendorf.

Hale, M. (1998). Diachronic aspects of Micronesian clause structure. *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*. 43, 341-357.

Willson, H. (to appear). *Verb movement, word order and agreement in Marshallese declaratives*. UCLA Working Papers in Linguistics.