

# FROM ASPECT/MOOD MARKER TO DISCOURSE PARTICLE: RECONSTRUCTING SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC CHANGE

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## 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

This paper examines the reanalysis of an aspect/mood marker as a discourse connective particle from the perspectives of both syntactic and semantic change.

Evidence of the change is found in the system of subject marking in Marovo, an Oceanic language of the Solomon Islands. Marovo has preverbal markers which indicate the person and number of the subject argument and occur primarily in only two types of constructions: negative verbal declarative clauses and verbal clauses with an initial discourse connective particle. These unusual conditions on the presence of subject marking in Marovo are shown to reflect its historical development. Through comparison of Marovo with other closely related Oceanic languages, it is demonstrated that subject marking in negative clauses is archaic, reflecting original constructions in which subject markers occurred within the verb complex alongside preverbal markers of aspect/mood and negation. The use of subject markers with discourse connective particles reflects the same original construction, but in this case the reanalysis of an aspect/mood marker as a discourse connective particle has resulted in the subsequent extension of subject markers to use with discourse connective particles in general.

A detailed reconstruction of the change, informed by accepted models of syntactic and semantic reanalysis (Harris and Campbell 1995, Traugott and Dasher 2005, Eckardt 2006), suggests that it was motivated by both the morphosyntactic and semantic characteristics of the construction. While the reanalysis appears to have been triggered by structural ambiguity resulting from a chance homophony of forms, semantic and pragmatic aspects of the construction also facilitated the change.

The details of this particular change are presented in section 5, where data from Marovo and the closely related language Roviana are used to reconstruct the syntactic and semantic contexts which motivated the change. This section also demonstrates the ways in which the present reconstruction has been informed by established models of language change. Preceding sections provide the synchronic and diachronic context within which the change occurred.

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Thus section 2 provides an overview of Marovo and its place within the Oceanic language family, and section 3 describes the use and distribution of subject markers in Marovo, giving details of the construction that represents the end result of the reanalysis. Section 4 gives an overview of the development of subject marking in Marovo highlighting its archaic and innovative characteristics with respect to Proto Oceanic.

## 2. MAROVO AND THE NEW GEORGIA LANGUAGES

Marovo is spoken on islands in and around Marovo Lagoon in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands. It is a member of the Oceanic subgroup of languages within the large Austronesian family. Within the Oceanic subgroup, Marovo is part of the Northwest Solomonic linkage that also includes languages of the New Georgia, Shortland and Choiseul islands in the Solomon Islands and of Bougainville, Buka and Nissan islands of Papua New Guinea.<sup>2</sup> Within this linkage Marovo is most closely related to other languages of the New Georgia group of islands, and in particular those of the eastern region.

The linguistic history of Marovo and the development of particular constructions are presented in terms of retention and innovation from several reconstructed proto-languages, namely Proto Oceanic, Proto Northwest Solomonic, Proto Eastern New Georgia, and pre-Marovo. Proto Eastern New Georgia is the hypothesised common ancestor of the Oceanic languages in the eastern region of the New Georgia group of islands, including Roviana, Ughele, Hoava, Kusaghe, Marovo, Vangunu and Bareke. While I am not claiming that the evidence for the existence of a distinct Proto Eastern New Georgia speech community is completely conclusive (but see Ross in press), such a stage is used to represent the shared history of these eastern languages. The system of aspect/mood and subject marking in western New Georgia languages is rather different from that in the eastern languages, and further investigation is needed to reconstruct accurately the Proto New Georgia system. Pre-Marovo represents structures reconstructed within the history of Marovo, but distinct from other eastern New Georgia languages. The reconstruction of pre-Marovo constructions with subject marking may reflect a shared history with Vangunu (see Bouchier 2007), but again further investigation is needed. The linguistic relationships and proto-languages relevant to this study are set out in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Languages and proto-languages relevant to the present study

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Proto Oceanic	<i>ancestor of all Oceanic languages</i>
Proto Northwest Solomonic	<i>ancestor of languages of Bougainville and western Solomon Islands</i>
Proto New Georgia	<i>ancestor of languages of New Georgia group of islands</i>
Proto Eastern New Georgia	<i>ancestor of languages of eastern New Georgia region, incl. Roviana, Hoava and Marovo</i>

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<sup>2</sup> Ross (1988:8) uses the term linkage to refer to a group of languages which have arisen through dialect differentiation, such that the set of innovations which define the group are not necessarily shared by all languages of the group. Rather the innovations have different, but overlapping, geographical domains. This is in contrast to subgroups that are defined by innovations which are shared by all members of the group.

The New Georgia languages considered in detail in the present study are Roviana, Hoava and Marovo. Detailed descriptions are available for Hoava (Davis 2003) and Roviana (Waterhouse 1949, Corston 1996, Corston-Oliver 2002, 2003), and all Marovo data presented are based on my own fieldwork. Certain changes, relevant to the present study, have occurred in Roviana between the time of Waterhouse's and Corston-Oliver's descriptions of the language, and so a distinction is made between Early Roviana (data from Waterhouse 1926, 1949, Western Province Government 1991) and (contemporary) Roviana (data from Corston 1996, Corston-Oliver 2002, 2003).

The basic clause order in Marovo, and indeed other New Georgia languages, is VERB-SUBJECT-OBJECT, as demonstrated by (1).<sup>3</sup>

Marovo

- 1) [Heru-i]<sub>VC</sub> [hami]<sub>SUBJ</sub> [ria labete]<sub>OBJ</sub> ...  
 carry-TR:3PLO 1PLEXCL ART:PL timber  
*We carried the timber ...*

The syntactic string which comprises the lexical verb or verbs, any accompanying adverbial-like modifiers and morphemes marking aspect, mood, transitivity and participant reference will be labelled the verb complex. For ease of interpretation the verb complex in the examples presented here is enclosed in square brackets and labelled VC. The subject and object noun phrases are also enclosed in square brackets and labelled SUBJ and OBJ, respectively.

### 3. SUBJECT MARKERS IN MAROVO<sup>4</sup>

Marovo, like many other Oceanic languages, has preverbal markers which indicate the person and number of the subject argument. Thus in the intransitive clause in (2) the form *-ma* indicates that the subject argument is a 1<sup>st</sup> person plural exclusive (1PLEXCL) participant; this information is also expressed by the clause-final independent pronoun *hami*. (3) is a transitive clause and demonstrates that the preverbal subject markers may also index transitive subjects.

Marovo

- 2) ... beto ma-[**ma** la tepa~tepa]<sub>VC</sub> [**hami**]<sub>SUBJ</sub>.  
 finish then-1PLEXCLS go RDP~pray 1PLEXCL  
 ... *and then we prayed.*

<sup>3</sup> Abbreviations: ABS - absolutive; ART - article; CAUS - causative; DEF - definite; DES - desiderative mood; EXCL - exclusive; FOC - focus; FUT - future; HORT - hortative; IMP - imperative; INCL - inclusive; INTJ - interjection; IRR - irrealis; LOC - locative; NEG - negative marker; NOM - nominaliser; NUM - numeral marker; O - object marker, object; OBJ - object noun phrase; OPT - optative mood; P - possessive pronominal; PL - plural; POSS - possessive marker; RDP - reduplication; S - subject marker, subject; SG - singular; TR - transitive marker; 1 - first person; 2 - second person; 3 - third person.

<sup>4</sup> A more detailed account of the use and distribution of subject markers in Marovo is provided in Evans (n.d.).

- 3) Beto ma-[**ma** la va-hobili hore-a]<sub>VC</sub> [**hami**]<sub>SUBJ...</sub>  
 finish then-1PLEXCLS go CAUS-roll down-3SGO 1PLEXCL  
*Afterwards we then rolled it [the log] down...*

These subject markers can co-occur with a pronominal or lexical noun phrase, or may be the only expression of the subject argument within the clause. Examples (2) and (3), illustrate the use of subject markers with pronominal noun phrases. Example (4) shows the use of the 3SG subject marker *-ni* with a lexical noun that expresses the subject, while in (5) *-ni* is the only expression of the subject argument within the clause.

Marovo

- 4) He-[**ni** kala]<sub>VC</sub> [**vonu**]<sub>SUBJ.</sub>  
 th/fore-3SGS go **turtle**  
*Therefore the turtle went.*
- 5) Ma-[**ni** choga va-kiki la]<sub>VC</sub> pa idere ...  
 then-3SGS jump CAUS-small go LOC sea  
*Then he jumped gently into the sea ...*

Although, there are a few examples in which subject markers appear to be phonologically independent (see example (10b)), typically they form a phonological word with the preceding discourse connective particle, as indicated by the patterning of primary stress in (6) and (7). In (6) the connective particle *pata* ‘in order that’ occurs with primary stress on the penultimate syllable, the usual stress pattern in Marovo. In (7), *pata* ‘in order that’ occurs with a following subject marker and the sequence *pata-gu* behaves as a single phonological word in terms of stress: primary stress occurs on the penultimate syllable of the entire sequence.

Marovo

- 6) ... ma-[gu valu keli]<sub>VC</sub> **páta** [la chaba]<sub>VC</sub> ...  
 then-1SGS paddle go.up **in.order** go to.fish  
*... then I paddled up to go fishing ...*
- 7) **Patá**-[gu gura vagara]<sub>VC</sub>.  
**in.order-1SGS** be.able to.net  
*For me to be able to net.*

Unlike preverbal subject markers in many Oceanic languages, in Marovo such markers are not obligatory, but have a rather restricted distribution. Within the set of narrative data examined here less than half the clauses included subject markers. In many clauses the expression of the subject argument is a pronominal or lexical noun phrase only, as in (8), or the subject argument is inferred from context and not overtly expressed within the clause at all, as in (9b).

Marovo

- 8) [Taleto ni-a]<sub>VC</sub> [**vonu**]<sub>SUBJ</sub> [ia ororeke pia]<sub>OBJ</sub> ...  
 feel.sorry TR-3SGO **turtle** ART:SG wife DEM  
*Turtle felt sorry for this wife ...*

- 9) a. ... beto [pocho]<sub>VC</sub> [ia]<sub>OBJ</sub> [hami]<sub>SUBJ</sub>,  
 finish squeeze 3SG 1PLEXCL  
 b. [va-reka la ni-a]<sub>VC</sub> pa ikuchu.  
 CAUS-hot go TR-3SGOLOC fire  
 a. ... *after we have squeezed it [the coconut],*  
 b. *we boil it in the fire.*

The presence of subject markers within a clause in Marovo appears to be motivated by both discourse functions and the semantic-grammatical structure of the clause. A primary function of subject markers in Marovo is reference tracking. Thus subject markers typically denote a referent that is the topic of a section of discourse.<sup>5</sup> For example, in (10) the 1SG participant is initially denoted by an independent pronoun. This referent is topic of the subsequent clauses, where it is denoted solely by the subject markers.

Marovo

- 10) a. [Mae]<sub>VC</sub> [raka]<sub>SUBJ</sub>,  
 come 1SG  
 b. [gu mae kaduvu]<sub>VC</sub> pa chopochopo Adado,  
 1SGS come arrive LOC point A.  
 c. beto ma-[gu la ukala mae]<sub>VC</sub>,  
 finish then-1SGS go past come  
 d. ma-[gu la mae hodoko]<sub>VC</sub> pa gua sera.  
 then-1SGS go come arrive LOC 1SGP shore  
 a. *I came*  
 b. *and reached Adado Point,*  
 c. *and then I came over,*  
 d. *then I came and arrived at my shore.*

The presence of subject markers in Marovo is also conditioned by the semantic-grammatical structure of the clause in that the use of certain particles within the clause require the use of subject markers. Thus subject markers obligatorily occur with the negative particle *ka-*, as shown in (11).

Marovo

- 11) “Oh, [pavu]<sub>VC</sub> [ia]<sub>SUBJ</sub>, boru [ka-ni tavete]<sub>VC</sub>”, [hua]<sub>VC</sub> [ia]<sub>SUBJ</sub>.  
 INTJ be.sick 3SG and.so NEG-3SGS work say 3SG  
 “*Oh, he’s sick and so he’s not working*”, *she said.*

Subject markers also always occur with certain discourse connective particles, namely *ma-* ‘and then’, as seen in (2) and (3), and with *he-* ‘therefore’, as in (12). With *boru* ‘and so’ and *pata* ‘in order that’, on the other hand, subject markers are optional (see examples (6) and (7)).

<sup>5</sup> The topic of a clause is defined as having three characteristics: (i) it is what the statement is about; (ii) it invokes “knowledge in the possession of an audience”; and (iii) “the statement is assessed *as* putative information *about its topic*” (Strawson 1964:97-98, Erteschik-Shir 2007:13).

Marovo

- 12) Boru **he-[gu** ka-gu vagara]<sub>VC</sub> pa Omo [raka]<sub>SUBJ</sub> ...  
 and.so **th/fore-1SGS** NEG-1SGS to.net LOC O. 1SG  
*So therefore I didn't net at Omo ...*

#### 4. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SUBJECT MARKERS IN MAROVO

The distribution of subject marking in Marovo appears unusual when compared with that in other Oceanic languages, however, it can be shown to reflect the original Proto Oceanic system, and its unusual features explained by a series of natural diachronic developments.

Preverbal subject markers similar to those in Marovo are found in a wide range of contemporary Oceanic languages, and can be reconstructed for Proto Oceanic. In Proto Oceanic, subject proclitics occurred as the second element within the verb complex, as shown by the structure of the Proto Oceanic verb complex reconstructed by Lynch, Ross and Crowley (2002:83) in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The Proto Oceanic verb complex (Lynch, Ross and Crowley 2002:83)

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(ASPECT/MOOD =) <sup>6</sup>	SUBJECT MARKER =	VERB	(= OBJECT MARKER)	(= DIRECTIONAL MARKER)
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This original structure is still clearly reflected in many Oceanic languages, including Hoava. In Hoava the preverbal future tense marker *ma-* can occur with 1SG or 1PLINCL subject markers, as in (13).

Hoava

- 13) Koleo, [ma-**qu** puta]<sub>VC</sub>.  
 good FUT-1SGS sleep  
*Good, I will sleep.*

(Davis 2003:150)

Comparison of the distributions of cognate subject markers in Marovo, Hoava and Roviana, suggests that their common ancestor had a system of subject marking very similar to that reconstructed for Proto Oceanic. In both Hoava and Roviana the use of preverbal subject markers is marginal, and in fact is present in Early Roviana only.<sup>7</sup> As mentioned, 1SG and 1PLINCL subject markers occur with the preverbal future tense marker *ma-* in Hoava, and subject markers of all person/number categories occur with the preverbal optative marker *o-* (Davis 2003:149-152), as in (14).

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<sup>6</sup> The initial element of the Proto Oceanic verb complex, labelled as ASPECT/MOOD, does not include tense as it is presumed that Proto Oceanic, like many contemporary Oceanic languages, had grammatical distinctions for aspect and mood, but not tense (Lynch, Ross and Crowley 2002:84).

<sup>7</sup> While Waterhouse (1926, 1949) describes the use of subject markers in Roviana, more recent work (Corston 1996, Corston-Oliver 2002, 2003) makes no mention of preverbal subject markers; suggesting that the rather marginal system described by Waterhouse is no longer used.

Hoava

- 14) [**O-na** napo]<sub>VC</sub> [sa koburu]<sub>SUBJ</sub>.  
**OPT-3SGS** drink ART:SG child  
*The child wants to drink.*

(Davis 2003:151)

Subject markers occur in cognate structures in Roviana, that is with the preverbal particles *o-* ‘desiderative’, as in (15) and *ma-* ‘imperative’, as in (16) (Waterhouse 1949:244-246).

Roviana

- 15) [**Ma-mu** podek-i-a]<sub>VC</sub>.  
**IMP-2SG** try-TR-3SGO  
*You try it.*

(Waterhouse 1949:68)

- 16) [**O-da** gani igana]<sub>VC</sub>.  
**DES-1PLINCL** eat fish  
*We (incl.) wish to eat fish.*

(Waterhouse 1949:83)

In Roviana, *ma-* occurs with subject markers of all person/number categories. While with a 2<sup>nd</sup> person subject, *ma-* has an imperative function, with non-2<sup>nd</sup> person subjects it has the meaning of ‘to let, allow’, as in (17). *Ma-* in Roviana is also used to indicate future tense, as in (18).

Roviana

- 17) [**Ma-qu** vilit-i-a]<sub>VC</sub>.  
**IMP-1SGS** see-TR-3SGO  
*Let me see it.*

(Waterhouse 1949:245)

- 18) Uve; [ma-qu podek-i-a]<sub>VC</sub>.  
 yes **FUT-1SG** try-TR-3SGO  
*Yes, I will try.*

(Waterhouse 1926:6)

Negative imperative constructions in Roviana also occur with preverbal subject marking. Negative imperatives with a 2<sup>nd</sup> person subject occur with the particle *meke* followed by the subject marker and then the verb, as in (19). In negative imperative constructions with a non-2<sup>nd</sup> person subject, the mood marker *ma-* plus a following subject marker are used alongside the usual negative particle *lopu*, as in (20).

Roviana

- 19) [**Meke mu** la]<sub>VC</sub>.  
**NEG.IMP 2SG** go  
*Do not go.*

(Waterhouse 1949:246)

- 20) [Ma-qu lopu la]<sub>VC</sub>.  
 IMP-1SGS NEG go  
*Let me not go.*

(Waterhouse 1949:246)

Unlike Marovo, Hoava and Roviana clearly reflect the original use of subject markers, namely following markers of aspect/mood and preceding the verb, suggesting that such a structure was also present in their common ancestor language. It seems likely that in Proto Eastern New Georgia the negative particle also preceded the subject markers, and thus the verb complex structure in Figure 3 can be reconstructed.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 3: Posited structure of the verb complex in Proto Eastern New Georgia

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(ASPECT/MOOD=)	(NEGATIVE=)	SUBJ MARKER=	VERB	(=OBJECT MARKER)	(=DIRECTIONAL MARKER)
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The reconstruction of the verb complex structure in Figure 3 considers the use of subject markers with the negative particle *ka-* in Marovo to reflect their original distribution. I propose that the use of subject markers with discourse connective particles also reflects this structure, but that in this case an original aspect/mood marker *\*ma=* has been reanalysed as the discourse connective particle *ma-* ‘and then’. Table 1 sets out the stages of development which I propose have led to the use of preverbal subject markers with discourse connective particles in Marovo.

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<sup>8</sup> Further investigation is needed to confirm this analysis of negative clauses, particularly since subject markers can sometimes precede the negative particle in Roviana, and such an order is also found in western New Georgia languages.

Table 1: The development of the use of preverbal subject markers with discourse connective particles in Marovo

STAGE	CONSTRUCTIONS	FUNCTION
I	* <i>ma</i> VERB COMPLEX	• discourse connective particle <i>ma</i> precedes clause-initial verb complex
	* <i>ma</i> =SUBJ.M VERB	• aspect/mood marker <i>ma</i> = followed by subject marker and lexical verb
II	* <i>ma</i> VERB COMPLEX	• discourse connective particle <i>ma</i> precedes clause-initial verb complex
	* <i>ma</i> = SUBJ.M VERB	• aspect/mood marker * <i>ma</i> = followed by subject marker and lexical verb
	* <i>ngina</i> ( <i>ma</i> = SUBJ.M) VERB	• innovative epistemic adverb denoting possibility
III	* <i>ma</i> VERB COMPLEX	• discourse connective particle <i>ma</i> precedes clause-initial verb complex
	* <i>ma</i> = SUBJ.M VERB	• implied sequential meaning of aspect/mood * <i>ma</i> = salient in certain contexts
	* <i>ngina</i> ( <i>ma</i> = SUBJ.M) VERB	• gradual grammaticalisation of <i>ngina</i> such that it is extended to use in a broader range of contexts
IV	* <i>ma</i> - SUBJ.M VERB COMPLEX	• two constructions with * <i>ma</i> merge; aspect/mood * <i>ma</i> = is reanalysed as the discourse connective particle <i>ma</i> -
	* <i>ngina</i> VERB	• <i>ngina</i> used as a preverbal marker of irrealis mood
V	<i>ma</i> - SUBJ.M VERB COMPLEX	• use of subject markers is extended to include co-occurrence with other discourse connective particles
	<i>he</i> - SUBJ.M VERB COMPLEX	
	<i>boru</i> (-SUBJ.M) VERB COMPLEX	
	<i>pata</i> (-SUBJ.M) VERB COMPLEX	

Stage I shows two original structures with a morpheme \**ma*. In one, \**ma* was a clause-initial discourse connective particle that preceded the verb complex. There is strong evidence that this morpheme and construction, exemplified by (21) from Roviana, are reconstructable for Proto Oceanic (see Lynch, Ross and Crowley 2002:89).<sup>9</sup>

#### Roviana

- 21) [Nuquru la]<sub>VC</sub> [rau]<sub>ABS</sub>, **me** [nanas-i-u]<sub>VC</sub> [sa titisa]<sub>ERG</sub> ...  
 enter go 1SG **and** ask-TR-1SGO DEF:SG teacher

*I went in, and the teacher asked me ...*

(Corston 1996:31)

<sup>9</sup> Roviana has ergative-absolutive alignment of core noun phrases (see Corston 1996), and in Roviana examples they are labelled ERG and ABS.

The other stage I structure comprises an aspect/mood marker *\*ma=* followed by a subject marker and the verb. This structure was present in Early Roviana, as shown by (18) and (22).

Early Roviana

- 22) [Ma-**qu** tiok-i-a]<sub>VC</sub> [si asa]<sub>ABS</sub>.  
 FUT-1SGS call-TR-3SGO ABS 3SG  
*I will call her.*

(Waterhouse 1926:19)

Lynch, Ross and Crowley (2002:83-86) provide evidence supporting the reconstruction of the structure ASPECT/MOOD=SUBJECT MARKER + VERB for Proto Oceanic, and suggest that there was likely an aspect/mood distinction between realis and irrealis, with irrealis as the morphologically marked category. Lynch (1975) presents comparative data supporting the reconstruction of *\*ma* ‘irrealis mood’ for Proto Oceanic, however, Lynch, Ross and Crowley (2002:85) note that continued processes grammaticalisation makes the reconstruction of the forms of Proto Oceanic aspect/mood markers exceedingly complex (see also Ross and Lithgow 1989). At a lower level there is reasonably strong evidence to support the reconstruction of *\*ma=* for Proto Northwest Solomonian. While its exact function is difficult to determine, Ross (1982:31) suggests a non-past/non-completive meaning. Proto Northwest Solomonian *\*ma=* is glossed here as ‘irrealis’ reflecting the use of its reflexes as markers of ‘irrealis’, ‘future’ and ‘imperative’. It should be noted, however, that this reconstruction warrants further investigation.

Stage II represents structures which are reconstructable at least back to the common ancestor of eastern New Georgia languages. An innovation at this stage is the epistemic adverb *ngina*, which denoted possibility. There is no direct evidence that *ngina* co-occurred with *\*ma=*, however the presence or absence of *\*ma=* in this construction does not affect the overall analysis. In Hoava, *ngina* is an epistemic adverb that occurs before the verb complex (Davis 2003:247-249), as in (23).

Hoava

- 23) **Ngina** [koni tavet-i-a]<sub>VC</sub> [rao]<sub>SUBJ</sub>.  
 possibly FUT make-TR-3SGO 1SG  
*I will possibly make it.*

(Davis 2003:249)

Stages III and IV are those reconstructed for pre-Marovo. During this period I hypothesise that *ngina* underwent a gradual process of grammaticalisation; losing its specific epistemic meaning, extending in use to a broader range of contexts, and becoming a marker of irrealis mood. In contemporary Marovo *ngina* has a range of functions which can be described as irrealis, including future tense, (24) and habitual aspect (25).

Marovo

- 24) “[**Ngina** tepa~tepa paki]<sub>VC</sub> [hita]<sub>SUBJ...</sub>”  
 IRR RDP~pray first 1PLINCL  
*“We will pray first ...”*

- 25) [Manemaneke ororeke ta-gu raka]<sub>SUBJ</sub>,  
 woman wife POSS-1SGP 1SG  
 [ngina ta-tavete]<sub>VC</sub> pa chigo tongania kolokolo.  
 IRR RDP-work LOC garden every time  
*My wife works in the garden all the time.*

It is also argued that the two constructions with *\*ma*, shown in stages I to III in Table 1, have merged in Marovo to a single construction with a clause-initial discourse connective particle *ma-* that occurs with subject markers. Thus juxtaposed sequences of clauses with an initial mood marker *ma-*, like those in (26) from Early Roviana, have been reanalysed as clauses conjoined not by juxtaposition, but by the discourse connective particle *ma-*, as are those in (27) from Marovo.

Early Roviana

- 26) a. Uve, [ma-mu la va mate-a]<sub>VC</sub> [sa boko taqarau]<sub>ABS</sub>  
 yes IMP-2SG go CAUS die-3SGO DEF:SG pig 1SGP  
 b. [ma-da gani~gani]<sub>VC</sub>.  
 FUT-1PLINC RDP~eat  
 a. *Yes, go and kill my pig*  
 b. *that we may eat.*

(Waterhouse 1926:18)

Marovo

- 27) a. [La]<sub>VC</sub> [raka]<sub>SUBJ</sub> pa tania vasina tope-ani,  
 go 1SG LOC here place dive-NOM  
 b. ma-[gu ngina choga]<sub>VC</sub> [raka]<sub>SUBJ</sub>  
 then-1SGS IRR jump 1SG  
 c. ma-[gu tope]<sub>VC</sub>.  
 then-1SGS dive  
 a. *I'll go to the place for diving,*  
 b. *then I'll jump in*  
 c. *and I'll dive.*

Stage V represents the contemporary Marovo system, where the two original structures with *\*ma* have merged. The *ma-* morpheme now has the discourse connective meaning, but the original morphology of the mood marker *\*ma=*, that is, the subject markers, has been retained and extended to all instances of the merged construction with *ma-*. The use of subject markers has also been extended by analogy to constructions with other discourse connective particles.

## 5. ASPECT/MOOD MARKER TO DISCOURSE CONNECTIVE PARTICLE

The reconstruction of the reanalysis of an aspect/mood marker *\*ma=* as a discourse connective particle warrants further investigation in terms of motivations and processes of change. The change, proposed by the reconstruction in Table 1, is that the construction under (i) in Figure 4 has been reanalysed as, and merged with, the construction under (ii). The linguistic evidence that such a change has occurred is the morphological parallels between the constructions in the form of subject marking.

Figure 4: The two constructions with *\*ma*

(i)	ASPECT/MOOD MARKER	=SUBJECT MARKER	VERB	<i>example (26)</i>
(ii)	DISCOUSE CONNECTIVE PARTICLE	-SUBJECT MARKER	VERB	<i>example (27)</i>

It is proposed that constructions like (i) in Roviana and like (ii) in Marovo represent the beginning and end of this change, which implies that certain processes of change have occurred in the history of Marovo. An important aspect of justifying the reconstruction presented in Table 1, and this change in particular, is demonstrating its nature and plausibility. The reanalysis proposed to have occurred here implies the diachronic reorganisation of both the syntactic and semantic composition of construction (i), and this paper highlights the need to consider the motivations and explanations of such changes from both these perspectives. The models of syntactic and semantic change, used here to inform the reconstruction, are described in section 5.1.

### 5.1 Syntactic and semantic reanalysis

Eckardt (2006:106) comments that “[r]eanalysis rests crucially on specific communicative situations, the right kind of side message, the right kind of grammatical material”. This view is reflected here by the fact that the syntactic motivations and explanations of reanalysis are viewed within the context of the communicative use of the construction, and semantic and pragmatic motivations and explanations are viewed within the context of morphosyntactic aspects of the construction.

Harris and Campbell (1995) examine reanalysis from a syntactic perspective, mentioning only briefly the possibility of concurrent meaning change. Reanalysis, one of three mechanisms within their theory of syntactic change, is defined as change in “the underlying structure of a syntactic pattern ... which does not involve any modification of its surface manifestation” (Harris and Campbell 1995:50, see also Langacker 1977). Harris and Campbell (1995:81-82) describe reanalysis and its actualisation in terms of three stages:

*Stage A, Input:* The input structure has all of the superficial characteristics of the input analysis.

*Stage B, Actualization:* The structure is subject to multiple analysis; it gradually acquires the characteristics of an innovative analysis, distinct from that of Stage A.

*Stage C, Completion:* The innovative structure has all of the superficial characteristics of the innovative analysis.

Reanalysis per se occurs at the transition between stages A and B, that is the shift from one to more than one structural analysis of a construction. Indeed, Harris and Campbell (19995:72) state that:

the conditions necessary for reanalysis to take place are that a subset of the tokens of a particular constructional type must be open to the possibility of multiple structural analyses, where one potential analysis is the old one (applicable to all tokens) and the other potential analysis is the new one (applicable to a subset).

Stage B, the actualisation of reanalysis, often involves changes of extension, such that the construction undergoes changes in its usage and/or its surface manifestation that reflect the innovative structural analysis. From the perspective of reconstruction, it is the linguistic evidence of Stage B changes that provide evidence of the underlying reanalysis. It should be noted that more than one structural analysis of a construction may be maintained over time, and some reanalyses may never reach Stage C.

Eckardt (2006:236) characterises semantic reanalysis in a parallel way to Harris and Campbell (1995) for syntactic reanalysis:

**Semantic reanalysis:** The process of semantic reorganization of a sentence whereby the salient overall conveyed information remains the same, but is composed in a different manner. What may have previously been in part assertion, in part implication, turns entirely into a literal meaning after reanalysis.

This view of semantic reanalysis places it within the context of models of meaning change that are pragmatically based. Within such models, semantic change is viewed to be dependent on and motivated by patterns of language use. For example, Traugott and Dasher (2005) set out the following diachronic path for meaning change: coded meaning > utterance-token meaning (invited inference) > utterance-type meaning (generalised invited inference) > new coded meaning (see also Levinson 2000). Thus a shift in meaning begins where the use of a linguistic element (lexeme, construction) ‘invites’ an inferred meaning alongside its coded meaning in a particular context. Over time this inferred meaning may become a more salient aspect of the overall meaning of the linguistic element in this context, and be generalised to other contexts (generalised invited inference). A new coded meaning is seen to have developed once the linguistic element can be used in contexts where only the meaning of the generalised invited inference is appropriate. Mosegaard Hansen and Waltereit (2006) argue that pragmatically-based meaning change is more complex than Traugott and Dasher’s (2005) single overarching pathway. Through a detailed examination of the different kinds of implicatures and their usage, they propose that it is more common for an utterance-token meaning (their particularised conversational implicature) to be directly semanticised as a new coded meaning. Eckardt (2006:10) highlights the need to also consider the aspects of meaning change other than the semanticisation of a pragmatic inference, listing three factors that play a crucial role. First, for a construction to be reorganised, both semantically and syntactically, there needs to be the ‘right’ kind of match between the surface parts of the construction and the information conveyed. Second, Eckardt (2006:10, ch 7) suggests that semantic reanalysis is restricted by semantic universals. Finally, the communicative characteristics of the onset contexts of a change must be different from the use of the construction in ordinary contexts, perhaps including that the inferred meaning occurs frequently relative to the use of the construction.

## 5.2 The reanalysis of *\*ma* = ‘irrealis mood’ in Marovo

It is proposed here that the combination of syntactic and semantic/pragmatic factors motivated the reanalysis of construction (i) in Figure 4 as construction (ii). From a syntactic perspective several factors appear to have motivated the development of a second structural analysis of construction (i). First, structure (ii) was already a construction within the language (pre-Marovo), and the homophony of *\*ma* = ‘irrealis mood’ and *\*ma-* ‘and (then)’ meant there was surface similarity between the two underlying structures. Second, in Marovo, as well as in all New Georgia languages, clauses tend to be VSO, meaning that the sequence of a clause-

initial discourse connective particle followed by the verb complex was not unusual. Third, comparative evidence suggests that not all clauses would have had overt aspect/mood marking, and that subject markers could occur as the sole preverbal element within the verb complex, thus increasing the occurrence of the sequence DISCOURSE CONNECTIVE PARTICLE + SUBJECT MARKER + VERB. Finally, the development of an innovative irrealis marker, *ngina*, may have led to a decrease in the use of *\*ma=* as an aspect/mood marker in terms of at least some functions (eg. future time reference). Thus the characteristics of pre-Marovo indicate that the “right kind of grammatical material” was present to allow for the two constructions in Figure 4 to merge. The change to the underlying syntactic structure proposed to have occurred as part of this reanalysis is one of category labels (see Harris and Campbell 1995:61-65). That is, instances of *\*ma=* with the grammatical function of an aspect/mood particle came to have the possible analysis as a discourse connective particle.

But what about “the right kind of side message”? That is, was the overall conveyed information of construction (i) in Figure 4 the same as that of construction (ii), at least for a subset of tokens? The use of *ma-* ‘imperative; future’ in Early Roviana, as described by Waterhouse (1949), appears to reflect at least some of the functions of Proto Northwest Solomonic *\*ma=* ‘irrealis’ and these are taken to be inherited functions in Roviana from the ancestor language of both Roviana and Marovo, Proto Eastern New Georgia. Thus the use of *ma-* in a corpus of Early Roviana narratives (Western Province Government 1991) can be used to gain insights into the likely semantic and pragmatic interpretations of construction (i) in pre-Marovo.<sup>10</sup>

This corpus of Early Roviana comprises 19 narratives, all of which are traditional stories narrated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person. In the 888 sentence corpus there are only 57 uses of the construction *MA-SUBJECT MARKER + VERB*, all of which are within direct speech. As expected the three functions of this construction described by Waterhouse (1949) are present in the corpus. The most frequent use of *ma-*, shown in (28b), was with the 2SG subject marker *-mu* and an imperative function. The other commonly occurring use of *ma-* was a hortative function, occurring with the 1PLINCL subject marker *-da* and the particle *aria* ‘call to action; come on’, as shown in (29).

#### Early Roviana

- 28) a. “Agoi tugo [kaqu ino va toa i-a]<sub>VC</sub> [sa nika]<sub>ABS</sub>,  
 2SG:FOC EMPH must make.fire CAUS live TR-3SGO DEF:SG fire
- b. [**ma-mu** va toa ngi~ngira i-a]<sub>VC</sub>, ...”  
**IMP-2SGS** CAUS live RDP~strong TR-3SGO
- a. “You must get the fire going,  
 b. you make it strong, ...”

(Western Province Government 1991:77)

<sup>10</sup> These Early Roviana narratives, published by the Western Province Government of the Solomon Islands in 1991, were collected in the 1930s and 1940s. The narratives are published in Roviana only, and the grammatical and basic semantic analyses of examples presented here are based on Waterhouse’s (1949) Roviana dictionary and grammatical description, as well as grammatical description of contemporary Roviana (Corston 1996, Corston-Oliver 2002, 2003). Further analysis of semantic and pragmatic meanings of the examples is based on the context of the clause within the narrative as a whole.

- 29) a. “Aria [ma-da peqo-i]<sub>VC</sub> [ka ngeta tomoko lavata]<sub>ABS</sub>”,  
 come.on IMP-1PLINCLS adze-TR NUM three war.canoe large  
 b. [gua]<sub>VC</sub> [si asa]<sub>ABS</sub>.  
 say ABS 3SG  
 a. “Let’s carve (adze) three large war canoes”,  
 b. he said.

(Western Province Government 1991:26)

The imperative/hortative nature of *ma-* implies future time reference, which is otherwise not overtly indicated within the clause. From the context of (30b), for example, either a hortative or a future interpretation is possible. Within the corpus there are a few examples of *ma-* where the imperative/hortative meaning is not apparent, but the future time reference interpretation is apparent, as in (31b). This future use of *ma-* typically occurs with a 1SG or 1PL subject participant, and indicates the speaker’s intention to carry out the event described. This again is a meaning which is also conveyed in the imperative clauses with *ma-*, that is the speaker intends that an event will be carried out and is instructing someone to do so.

#### Early Roviana

- 30) a. “... [Kera pule n-ia]<sub>VC</sub> ko,  
 sing return APPL-3SGO EXPL  
 b. [ma-qu avavoso qua]<sub>VC</sub>”, gua se Eo.  
 FUT-1SGS hear 1SGP say PERS:ABS brush.hen  
 a. “... Sing it again,  
 b. let me listen / I will listen”, said Brush Hen

(Western Province Government 1991:50)

- 31) a. Ba [zama]<sub>VC</sub> [se Viruviru]<sub>ABS</sub>,  
 but speak PERS:ABS swordfish  
 b. “Arau [ma-qu kopu-ni]<sub>VC</sub> [sari karua tomoko]<sub>ABS</sub>  
 1SG:FOC FUT-1SGS watch-APPL DEF:PL two war.canoe,  
 c. pude [gore mae]<sub>VC</sub> [gamu]<sub>ABS</sub> kote arau [pule la napo]<sub>VC</sub>”,  
 if go.down come 2PL soon 1SG:FOC return go drink  
 d. [gua]<sub>VC</sub> [si asa]<sub>ABS</sub>  
 say ABS 3sg  
 a. But Swordfish said,  
 b. “I will watch the two war canoes,  
 c. when you (pl) go down, soon I will drink”,  
 d. he said

(Western Province Government 1991:81)

In summary, clauses with *ma*-SUBJECT MARKERS in Early Roviana had coded meanings of imperative and hortative, and implied both future time reference and the speaker’s intention that an event be carried out. Examples like (31b) where the imperative/hortative meaning is not apparent, suggest that the meaning of future tense and speaker intention was also a coded meaning of clauses with *ma-*.

In Marovo there are two uses of the construction *ma*-SUBJECT MARKER. First, Marovo has a construction verb similar to Roviana in which *ma*- occurs with the 1PLINCL subject marker *-da* and the particle *aria* ‘come on’ and the construction has a hortative meaning, as in (32). In Marovo, however, *aria* ‘come on’ can be used alone with this same hortative meaning, as in (33).

Marovo

- 32) “Aria **ma-[da** kala la]<sub>VC</sub> pa goana, ...”  
 come.on **HORT-1PLINCLS** go go LOC bush  
*“Let’s go to the bush, ...”*
- 33) [Jama]<sub>VC</sub> [Junior]<sub>SUBJ</sub>, “**Aria**, [raka]<sub>SUBJ</sub> mana [hiva om~omi tungana]<sub>VC</sub>”...  
 talk J. **come.on** 1SG but want RDP~see also  
*Junior said, “Let’s go, I want to have a look too”...*

With the other use of the construction *ma*-SUBJECT MARKER in Marovo, *ma*- is a discourse connective particle and indicates the temporal relationship between the events described by the preceding and following clauses. Although *ma*- can be used to conjoin clauses describing simultaneous events, the most frequent function of *ma*- is to indicate a sequential relationship between the events; the event described by the following clause occurs after the event described by the preceding clause. For example, in (34), *ma*- is used to indicate that the event ‘waiting for low tide’, (34a), was followed by the event ‘fishing with a net’, (34b).

Marovo

- 34) a. Pata [vera ni-na]<sub>VC</sub> [h<in>ore ta mati]<sub>OBJ</sub>,  
 in.order wait TR-3SGO <NOM>go.down POSS shallow.reef  
 b. **ma-[gu** la talavuni vagara hua]<sub>VC</sub>.  
**then-1SGS** go start net HUA  
*So I waited for low tide, and then I started to net.*

Despite these apparently very different meanings of the constructions with *ma*-SUBJECT MARKER in Early Roviana and Marovo, there are examples in each language where the “overall conveyed information” is very similar, if not the same. The Early Roviana example in (35) is from a traditional narrative about an earthworm and a centipede. This section of the narrative describes the earthworm telling the centipede to come to him early in the morning when he will tell about a medicine. While the first clause with *ma*-, (35a), has a clear imperative meaning, the second clause with *ma*-, (35b), describes the speaker’s intention to tell the addressee about the medicine, and conveys that the ‘telling’ event will occur after the ‘coming’ event described in the first clause. Thus, just as in Marovo, here in Early Roviana the construction with *ma*-SUBJECT MARKER conveys a sequential relationship between the events described by preceding and following clauses. The conveyed sequential relationship between events described by clauses with *ma*-SUBJECT MARKER is particularly apparent in Early Roviana, in cases, like (35), where there is a change in the subject participant and the event described in the second clause is conditional on the occurrence of the event described in the first clause.

## Early Roviana

- 35) a. [Zama]<sub>VC</sub> [se pilaka]<sub>ABS</sub>, “Vugo munumunu vaqavaqasa  
 speak PERS:ABS worm tomorrow morning at.dawn  
 [lopu ele gasa]<sub>VC</sub> sa rimata si [ma-mu mae]<sub>VC</sub> koa rau  
 NEG yet leap DEF:SG sun FOC IMP-2SGS come to 1SG
- b. [ma-qu tozi ni-go]<sub>VC</sub> keke meresena hopena taqarau,”  
 FUT-1SGS tell APPL-2SGO one medicine holy 1SGP  
 [gua]<sub>VC</sub> [se pilaka]<sub>ABS</sub>.  
 say PERS:ABS worm

*Earthworm said, “Early tomorrow morning, before the sun has risen, you come to me, I will tell you about my sacred medicine”, said Earthworm.*

(Western Province Government 1991:5)

Even in contexts where the coded imperative meaning of a clause with *ma*-SUBJECT MARKER is clearly apparent, the conveyed sequential meaning may be an equally important part of the overall meaning of the clause. Example (36) is a series of imperative clauses where the speaker is instructing the addressee to climb a coconut palm and pick two drinking coconuts, dropping one down from the top of the palm and bringing the other down without dropping it. Thus it is not simply the imperative meaning which is important in the way in which this message is structured, but also that the overall event, climbing and getting two drinking coconuts, is done in a particular way, with each sub-event specified and to be carried out in the sequence that the speaker states.

## Early Roviana

- 36) a. “Ke la [ma-mu haele i-a]<sub>VC</sub>  
 thus go IMP-2SGS climb TR-3SGO  
 [sa ngohara buma papaka-na hoi]<sub>ABS</sub>.  
 DEF:SG coconut green short-3SGP that:SG
- b. [Ma-mu pakete vagi]<sub>VC</sub> [karua bulo]<sub>ABS</sub>.  
 IMP-2SGS pluck get two drink.coconut
- c. Tamu goi si [ma-mu va hoqa i-a]<sub>VC</sub> pa pepeso.  
 2SGP 2SG FOC IMP-2SGS CAUS fall TR-3SGO LOC land
- d. Ba taqarau si [ma-mu paleke gore ni-a]<sub>VC</sub>  
 but 1SGP FOC IMP-2SGS carry go.down APPL-3SGO  
 [lopu va hoqa i-a]<sub>VC</sub>”, [gua]<sub>VC</sub>.  
 NEG CAUS fall TR-3SGO say

*a. “So go, you climb that short green coconut tree.*

*b. You pick two drinking coconuts.*

*c. Yours, you drop it to the ground.*

*d. But mine, you carry it down, don’t drop it”, he said.*

(Western Province Government 1991:62)<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> In the published narratives *paleke* ‘to carry’ in (36d) is written as *peleke*. Since *peleke* is not in Waterhouse’s (1949) dictionary and the meaning of *paleke* ‘to carry’ is apparent from the context, I have taken this to be a typographical error.

While there are no examples within the Early Roviana corpus in which the imperative/hortative or future time reference interpretations are not available for a clause with *ma*-SUBJECT MARKER, there are only 5 examples with which a sequential meaning is clearly not appropriate. This can be contrasted with double that number of clauses in which the sequential meaning appears to be an equally important part of the meaning.

In Marovo the construction with *ma*-SUBJECT MARKER with the coded sequential meaning can, with some tokens, convey a hortative meaning. Thus in (37b) *ma*- indicates that the event ‘starting work’ will follow that of ‘praying’. The context of this clause is also such that a hortative meaning is conveyed, though not indicated grammatically within the clause.

Marovo

- 37) a. “[Mae]<sub>VC</sub> [hamu]<sub>SUBJ</sub>, [ngina tepa~tepa paki]<sub>VC</sub> [hita]<sub>SUBJ</sub>,  
 come 2PL IRR RDP~pray first 1PLINCL  
 b. beto **ma**-[da ngina talavuni tavete]<sub>VC</sub>”.  
 finish **then-1PLINCLS** IRR start work  
 a. “You lot come, we’ll pray first,  
 b. after that then we’ll start work”.

From the Early Roviana examples in (35b) and (36) and the Marovo example in (37) it can be seen that there are tokens of the two different *ma*-SUBJECT MARKER constructions which have essentially the same “overall conveyed information”, and it is these kinds of tokens of the constructions which must have provided the necessary conditions for the reanalysis. It seems likely that this change was triggered by the chance homophony of *\*ma* ‘irrealis’ and *\*ma* ‘and (then)’, and the surface similarity of the two constructions. The semantic/pragmatic aspects of the constructions would have also facilitated the change. It is proposed that the shift in meaning was from an utterance-token meaning to a coded meaning (cf. Mosegaard Hansen and Waltereit 2006). This kind of detail is difficult to reconstruct, but examples in Early Roviana where the sequential meaning of constructions with *ma*- is most salient are within two specific contexts. First, where a future construction with *ma*- follows an imperative clause with *ma*-, as in (35) where the occurrence of the event of the second clause carried out by the speaker or speaker and addressee is dependent on the addressee carrying out the event denoted by the first clause. Second, in imperative clauses with *ma*- which specify a sequence of sub-events, as in (36). In other contexts the sequential meaning of clauses with *ma*- in Early Roviana is less salient and may reflect universal tendencies of narrative structure with respect to the expected temporal relationships. But did these two contexts occur frequently enough to facilitate a shift in coded meaning? Rather than frequency as such, it seems likely that it was a reduction in the use of *\*ma*- ‘imperative/hortative; future’ which was crucial. In Marovo and in (Early) Roviana an imperative meaning can be indicated by bare verb stem, and it is possible that the *ma*- imperative in Early Roviana (and thus pre-Marovo) was used in contexts where the imperative nature of the clause was being emphasised, for example, when giving a list (or sequence) of instructions highlighting that the speaker expects the addressee to carry out each sub-event. In pre-Marovo *ngina* would have been another way of indicating future time reference, and so the use of *ma*- with future time reference would be more likely to have occurred in contexts where an imperative/hortative interpretation was also possible. For example, contexts in which the addressee is required to carry out one event to allow the speaker or the speaker and the addressee to carry out a subsequent event. In this way, it seems possible that an overall decrease in the use of *\*ma*- ‘imperative/hortative; future’ may have resulted in a perceived frequency of the *\*ma*-SUBJECT MARKER construction in contexts where

the sequential inference was particularly salient. The presence of *\*ma* ‘and (then)’ would have facilitated the redistribution of meaning components within the construction, with *\*ma* gaining a coded sequential meaning.

Constructions (i) and (ii) with *ma*-SUBJECT MARKER have merged in contemporary Marovo and now the discourse connective particle *ma*- occurs obligatorily with the subject markers, even in cases where there is no coded or inferred meaning of imperative/hortative or of future time reference. The use of subject markers has also been extended to other discourse connective particles (see section 3). The use of *ma*- in Marovo in the construction *aria ma-da* [come.on MA-1PLINCL] ‘let’s go’ is a relic of the original construction where *\*ma* had a hortative function.

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In summary, it was the combination of morphosyntactic as well as semantic and pragmatic characteristics of both construction (i), ASPECT/MOOD=SUBJECT MARKERS + VERB, and construction (ii), DISCOURSE CONNECTIVE PARTICLE VERB COMPLEX, which motivated the reanalysis described here. The presence of both constructions in pre-Marovo which in some contexts would have conveyed the same overall information (coded and inferred meanings), provided the onset conditions for the change. While much of the reconstruction of processes of change remains speculative, it can be seen that the combined use of established models of syntactic and semantic change as well as the detailed comparison of the usage of constructions within the contemporary languages allows for a greater understanding of the development, and thus explanation, of synchronic structures.

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