## On subordinate wh-clauses in Lakurumau

Łukasz Jędrzejowski (University of Cologne) / Lidia Mazzitelli (University of Cologne) l.jedrzejowski@uni-koeln.de / lidia.mazzitelli@uni-koeln.de

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*Introduction* In this talk, we examine the syntax and semantics of subordinate *wh*-clauses in Lakurumau, a Western Oceanic language spoken in the eponymous village on the East Coast of New Ireland, Papua New Guinea.<sup>1</sup>

*Phenomenon* Similar to English, Lakurumau possesses *wh*-phrases introducing root questions, cf. Table 1 for an overview, and (1) for the adjunct *wh*-phrases *uruk faa* (lit. 'like where') and *mita*, both meaning 'how':<sup>2</sup>

Lakurumau	azo	nanis	uruk faa; mita	faa	pan azo	
English	'what'	'who(m)'	'how'	'where'	'why'	
Table 1: Wh-phrases in Lakurumau						
	maat	uruk	faa?		U=mita	i-yaan?
3sg.s=die like 'How did he die?'			where		3NSG.S=how DUR~eat.TR 'How do they eat (it)?'	

In this talk, we investigate the use of the *wh*-phrases in subordinate environments and show that their behavior deviates from how they are used in independent contexts. First, contrary to independent clauses, *wh*-phrases used in subordinated clauses stay mainly in situ and the entire clause is headed by the complementizer oy, cf. (2) vs. (1):

(2) Ka=wit ge=rexaas oy a=ramaai faa. 3SG.S=NEG 1SG.IRR.S=know COMP 3SG.S=marry where 'I don't know where she got married.'

We outline an analysis for such cases, arguing that embedding of a particular subordinate clause type is sensitive to three parameters: i) lexical semantics of the clause-embedding predicate, ii) complementizer choice, and iii) meaning of the subordinate clause itself. We provide empirical evidence showing that i)–iii) should be attributed to the compatibility relation proposed by Safir (2021: 109), according to which a clause-embedding predicate and its subordinate clause can only combine if each partner in this relation satisfies requirements imposed by the other. We show that complementizers importantly contribute to the compatibility relation too. Second, we propose a *wh*-hierarchy along the lines given in (3) and argue that if Lakurumau disallows the use of a certain *wh*-word in a subordinate clause, all *wh*-words that are lower on the hierarchy are disallowed too.

(3)  $\{azo, nanis\} > \{faa, pan azo\} > \{uruk faa; mita\}$ 

Main evidence for (3) comes from the following observations. i) The argument *wh*-phrases *azo* 'what' and *nanis* 'whom' as well as the adjuncts *wh*-words *faa* 'where' and *pan azo* 'why' can occur in embedded questions without any restrictions. ii) The manner *wh*-phrases *uruk faa* and *mita* 'how' tend not to occur in finite subordinate clauses, instead they usually take a DP as their complement. iii) As our corpus data suggests, *wh*-phrases in Lakurumau can occur in what we refer to as pseudo-light-headed relatives containing a support empty noun such as 'thing' or 'place'. While discussing the *wh*-data from Lakurumau, we support Šimík's (2023) observation that *wh*-based relative clauses are derived from interrogative ones. Finally, we briefly compare subordinate *wh*-clauses in Lakurumau with those used in other Oceanic languages spoken in New Ireland, e.g. in Kara (cf. Dryer 2013), and elaborate on the question to what extent our claims can be upheld cross-linguistically.

References M. S. Dryer (2013): A Grammatical Description of Kara-Lemakot. Canberra: Asia-Pacific Linguistics. K. Safir (2021): Clausal complements as a compatibility relation. In N. Banerjee & V. Hehl (eds.), Proceedings of TripleA 6. The Semantics of African, Asian, and Austronesian Languages, 109–126. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. R. Šimík (2023): From interrogatives to relatives: A comprehensive account of wh-constructions. Ms., Prague.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The data was collected during a fieldwork conducted by one of the co-authors.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> There is no *wh*-phrase *when* in Lakurumau. Temporal clauses are introduced by means of a relativization strategy.