

Question 19: Kairak verb forms

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Kairak is spoken by about 750 people on the New Guinea Islands, off the Papua New Guinea mainland. It is a member of the Baining (Papuan) language family.

The data below (slightly simplified) illustrate how Kairak speakers express the past, present, and future tenses with different types of verbs. Your job is to identify the patterns involved, then answer the questions below.

1/2/3 indicate 1st, 2nd and 3rd person; 'sg' is singular, 'pl' is plural, 'du' is dual, i.e. when two people are involved (translated here as 'both'). Kairak distinguishes masculine ('m') and feminine ('f'), and also human vs non-human.

Pronunciation notes: *ǎ* is a low central vowel sound a bit like the 'u' in (British English) 'cup'; *ŋ* represents the 'ng' in 'sing'; *ɲ* represents the 'ny' sequence in 'canyon'.

Type 1 Example *tsup* 'to smoke'

	present		future		past	
1sg	<i>ŋut sup</i>	I smoke	<i>ŋu sup</i>	I will smoke	<i>ŋa sup</i>	I smoked
2sg	<i>ɲit sup</i>	you (sg) smoke	<i>ɲi sup</i>	you (sg) will smoke	<i>ɲa sup</i>	you (sg) smoked
3sg m	<i>kǎt sup</i>	he smokes	<i>kǎ sup</i>	he will smoke	<i>ka sup</i>	he smoked
3sg f	<i>yit sup</i>	she smokes	<i>yi sup</i>	she will smoke	<i>ya sup</i>	she smoked
1du	<i>unit sup</i>	we both smoke	<i>uni sup</i>	we both will smoke	<i>un sup</i>	we both smoked
2du/ 3du	<i>anit sup</i>	you / they both smoke	<i>ani sup</i>	you / they both will smoke	<i>an sup</i>	you / they both smoked
1pl	<i>urit sup</i>	we smoke	<i>uri sup</i>	we will smoke	<i>ut sup</i>	we smoked
2pl	<i>ŋǎnit sup</i>	you (pl) smoke	<i>ŋǎni sup</i>	you (pl) will smoke	<i>ŋǎni sup</i>	you (pl) smoked
3pl	<i>rit sup</i>	they smoke	<i>ri sup</i>	they will smoke	<i>ra sup</i>	they smoked
3pl non-human	<i>ŋǎrit sup</i>	they (non-human) smoke	<i>ŋǎri sup</i>	they (non-human) will smoke	<i>ŋǎri sup</i>	they (non-human) smoked

Other type-1 verbs:

tsek 'to raise'
tvǎstǎmna 'to meet'
tsiqut 'to try'

tŋes 'to dig'
tkur 'to show'

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Type 2: Example *yam* ‘to swing’

	present		future		past	
1sg	<i>ŋu yam</i>	I swing	<i>ŋu yam</i>	I will swing	<i>ŋa yam</i>	I swung
2sg	<i>ŋi yam</i>	you (sg) swing	<i>ŋi yam</i>	you (sg) will swing	<i>ŋa yam</i>	you (sg) swung
3sg m	<i>kǎ yam</i>	he swings	<i>kǎ yam</i>	he will swing	<i>ka yam</i>	he swung
3sg f	<i>yi yam</i>	she swings	<i>yi yam</i>	she will swing	<i>ya yam</i>	she swung
1du	<i>uni yam</i>	we both swing	<i>uni yam</i>	we both will swing	<i>un yam</i>	we both swung
2du/ 3du	<i>ani yam</i>	you/they both swing	<i>ani yam</i>	you/they both will swing	<i>an yam</i>	you / they both swung
1pl	<i>uri yam</i>	we swing	<i>uri yam</i>	we will swing	<i>ut yam</i>	we swung
2pl	<i>ŋǎni yam</i>	you (pl) swing	<i>ŋǎni yam</i>	you (pl) will swing	<i>ŋǎn yam</i>	you (pl) swung
3pl	<i>ri yam</i>	they swing	<i>ri yam</i>	they will swing	<i>ra yam</i>	they swung
3pl non-human	<i>ŋǎri yam</i>	they (non-human) swing	<i>ŋǎri yam</i>	they (non-human) will swing	<i>ŋǎ yam</i>	they (non-human) swung

Other type-2 verbs:

<i>monǎk</i>	‘to cook’
<i>sameŋ</i>	‘to speak out’
<i>vǎlǎŋ</i>	‘to kill’
<i>mǎnatǎm</i>	‘to sleep’

Type 3: Example *tet* ‘to go’

	present		future		past	
1sg	<i>ŋa tet</i>	I go	<i>ŋa ret</i>	I will go	<i>ŋa met</i>	I went
2sg	<i>ŋa tet</i>	you (sg) go	<i>ŋa ret</i>	you (sg) will go	<i>ŋa met</i>	you (sg) went
3sg.m	<i>ka tet</i>	he goes	<i>ka ret</i>	he will go	<i>ka met</i>	he went
3sg.f	<i>ya tet</i>	she goes	<i>ya ret</i>	she will go	<i>ya met</i>	she went
1du	<i>un tet</i>	we both go	<i>un ret</i>	we both will go	<i>un met</i>	we both went
2du/3du	<i>an tet</i>	you / they both go	<i>an ret</i>	you / they both will go	<i>an met</i>	you / they both went
1pl	<i>ut tet</i>	we go	<i>ut ret</i>	we will go	<i>ut met</i>	we went
2pl	<i>ŋǎni tet</i>	you (pl) go	<i>ŋǎni ret</i>	you (pl) will go	<i>ŋǎni met</i>	you (pl) went
3pl	<i>ra tet</i>	they go	<i>ra ret</i>	they will go	<i>ra met</i>	they went
3pl non-human	<i>ŋǎri tet</i>	they (non-human) go	<i>ŋǎri ret</i>	they (non-human) will go	<i>ŋǎri met</i>	they (non-human) went

Other type-3 verbs:

<i>tǎn</i>	‘to come’
<i>ton</i>	‘to go inside’
<i>dudǎbǎt</i>	‘to set fire to the bush’

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F1. Translate the following into Kairak.

(8 pts)

- (a) I tried
- (b) They both dig
- (c) We cooked
- (d) They [the dogs] will kill
- (e) You (sg) sleep
- (f) He came
- (g) You (pl) will go inside
- (h) She sets fire to the bush

F2. Translate the following into English:

(8 pts)

- (a) *rit vǎstǎmna*
- (b) *ani kur*
- (c) *rat sek*
- (d) *ṅǎn sameṅ*
- (e) *ra monǎk*
- (f) *un ton*
- (g) *ṅa rǎn*
- (h) *ut mudǎbǎt*

F3. Provide the translations as indicated.

(3 pts)

- (a) If *yit sal* means ‘she gives birth’, what is ‘to give birth’?
- (b) If *ra ru* means ‘they will put’, translate ‘he put’.
- (c) If *unit nari* means ‘we both feel’, what does *ani nari* mean?

F4. Some of the forms are ambiguous, i.e. they do not fully distinguish the person or tense. Besides the ambiguity between 2nd and 3rd person dual (‘you both’ / ‘they both’), which other forms are ambiguous? In your answer book, complete the following statements: (6 pts)

- (a) In type-1 verbs [verb form] can be either [tense] or [tense] with [person], and also
- (b) [verb form] shows the same ambiguity with [person].
- (c) In type-[x] verbs, [tense] and [tense] are the same for [which person].