

Semantic factors governing the order of object and verb in Walman,  
a language of Papua New Guinea

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Family: Torricelli

Genus: Wapei-Palai (Subgenus: West Palai)

SVO is the most common order in the majority of Torricelli languages

**SVO**

1. To runon n-ete-n wuel lapo-n ...  
then 3SG.MASC 3SG.MASC-see-3SG.MASC pig big-MASC  
'Then he saw a big pig ...'
2. Korue to runon n-a<y>ko wuem eni y-an roltu.  
but then 3SG.M 3SG.M-eat<3PL> fish REL 3PL-be.at smoking.bed  
'But he ate the fish that was smoked.'

**SOV**

3. ... wuem y-an roltu n-a<y>ko mpor  
... fish 3PL-be.at smoking.bed 3SG.M-eat<3PL> all  
'... and eating all the smoked fish.' (Becker 39a)

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**OSV vs SOV**

**OSV**

Clauses with impersonal uses of the 3PL pronoun *ri* are almost always OSV:

4. Chim ngan ri y-awaro-n nyien?  
2PL father 3PL 3PL-be.parent.of-3SG.M where  
'Where was your father born?'

Clauses with inanimate subjects and animate objects are almost always OSV:

5. O runon ke nyi y-a<n>ko mpor.  
and 3SG.M also fire 3PL-eat<3SG.M> all  
'And he was burnt up by it too.' (Becker 9)

Many other instances of OSV are contrastive:

6. O **amungko nyie olun** ru w-e<ø>chiki w-an  
 and **bone leg other** 3SG.F 3SG.F-stick<3SG.F> 3SG.F-be.at

Ulau pie.  
 Ulau bush

'And the other leg bone she set upright at Ulau bush.' (Becker 32)

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### SVO vs SOV

#### SVO -oko- 'take'

7. To n-ekiel pie n-oko-ø **pla** ...  
 then 3SG.M-go.south bush 3SG.M-take-3SG.F **mud**, ...  
 'Then he went to the bush and got some mud and ....' (Becker 3)

#### SOV -oko- 'take'

8. N-anan **teyir** n-oko-ø akou  
 3SG.M-go.down **palm(sp)** 3SG.M-take-3SG.F finish  
 'Then he came back and got teyir palms.' (Becker 28)

#### SVO -altawro 'look for'

9. o ri slaoi nyue w-aro-n ngan  
 and 3PL mouse mother 3SG.F-and-3SG.M father

y-altawro-ø **nka** **w-ru** **w-aro-n**  
 3PL-look-3SG.F baby GEN-3SG.F 3SG.F-and-3SG.M

'and the rat parents looked for their little baby' (Becker 51)

Data in this paper comes from Becker (1971), a collection of Walman texts collected by Father August Becker, an Austrian priest who lived among the Walman from 1907 to 1934.

### 10. Verbs that allow OV word order, and the numbers of OV and VO order in old texts

		VO	OV
-apu	'attack, kill'	37	13
-awaro	'be parent of'	6	6
-ao	'beat drum, light fire'	3	6
-apao	'blow (flute/conch shell)	2	2
-erie ~ -rakur	'carry'	6	1

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<i>-elie</i>	‘carve a boat’	3	5
<i>-ayako</i>	‘cause’	1	2
<i>-etiki</i>	‘cook’	3	3
<i>-orue</i>	‘cut down (a tree)’	5	10
<i>-olo-</i>	‘cut’	12	7
<i>-okorue</i>	‘dig’	2	1
<i>-ako</i>	‘eat’	31	7
<i>-arie</i>	‘hit’	2	2
<i>-oto</i>	‘hold, grab, get’	6	2
<i>-ayako</i>	‘make’	12	3
<i>-apalo</i>	‘pull out’	3	6
<i>-ikie ~ -ako</i>	‘put’	4	5
<i>-(u)lue</i>	‘scratch’	3	3
<i>-ouwru</i>	‘split open’	1	3
<i>-oko</i>	‘take, get’	80	36
<i>-otoplo</i>	‘tie’	2	3
<i>-aralie</i>	‘wrap’	1	2
<i>-apulu</i>	‘leave behind, drop’	0	5
<i>-apura</i>	‘spread out’	0	2

Examples of SOV order

*-apao* ‘blow on’, *-ao* ‘shoot’, *-arie* ‘hit’

11. Ngol n-apao-∅ o w-ara n-ao-∅,  
 conch.shell 3SG.M-blow.on-3SG.F and garamut.drum 3SG.M-shoot-3SG.F
- wangkul n-arie-∅, chwa w-iri, n-ara uwa,  
 hand.drum 3SG.M-hit-3SG.F noise 3SG.F-stand 3SG.M-come north
- n-ara, n-ara.  
 3SG.M-come 3SG.M-come

‘He blew the conch shell and hit the garamut drum, and beat the hand drum making a lot of noise as he continued on his way north.’ (Becker 38)

*-olo* ‘cut’

12. To y-ekiel, kreykiri y-olo-∅, ...  
 then 3PL-go.south vine(sp) 3PL-cut-3SG.F ...  
 ‘Then they went and cut the kreykiri rope,....’ (Becker 21)

**-apulu 'leave behind, drop'**

13. Akou runon **tantan** n-a<∅>pulu w-anan tot cha  
 finish 3SG.M **sand** 3SG.M-spread<3SG.F> 3SG.F-go.down exactly place

siar y-an.  
 reef 3PL-be.at

'Then he dropped some sand right on the place where the reef was.' (Becker 16)

**14. Verbs that do not occur with OV order**

-are	'ask'
-nulue ~ -mpulue	'be afraid of, not like'
-enie	'call <i>someone</i> (something)'
-e(yie)	'give (recip)'
-altawro	'look for'
-ao	'shoot, shoot at'
-asawro	'show (the one to whom s.t. is shown)'
-asawro	'show' (the thing shown)
-nare	'tell'
-an -ru	'wait for'

**Examples of verbs that do not appear to allow OV order****-enie 'call so or sth (sth)'**

15. ... to ri y-enie-∅ **pon nta** Anyiel  
 then 3PL 3PL-call-3SG.F island this Angel  
 '... and they called this island Angel.' (Becker 16)

**-an -ru 'wait for'**

16. Akou to ri y-an y-ru-y **konungkol**  
 finish then 3PL 3PL-wait.for\_3PL-waitfor-3PL men  
 komoru, y-anan  
 evening 3PL-go.down

'Then they waited for the men to come down in the evening.' (Becker 14)

**-na-re 'tell**

17. To n-anpa n-na-re-n **wlapon** **n-a-y**  
 then 3SG.M-wait 3SG.M-speak-APPLIC-3SG.M older.brother 3SG.M-and-3PL

**chu-tey ...**  
 wife-PL

'So he waited to tell his elder brother and his wives ....' (Becker 19)

**18. Verbs that (unexpectedly) allow OV order**

		VO	OV
-awanie-	'call (to)'	6	1
-ete(re)-	'see'	60	2

**-awanie- 'call (to)' OV**

19. Akou, may n-otoplo- $\emptyset$  tin, akou n-erie- $\emptyset$ ,  
 finish rope 3SG.M-tie-3SG.F tightly, finish 3SG.M-carry.on.shoulder-3SG.F  
 o **pelen** n-awanie-y, n-aro-y y-orou nakol  
 and dog 3SG.M-call-3PL 3SG.M-and-3PL 3PL-go house

'Then, he tied the rope tightly around it and heaved it onto his shoulder, and called to the dogs and they went home.' (Becker 24)

**-ete(re) 'see' SOV**

20. Akou ri **cha** mon y-ete- $\emptyset$  tu w-o kon.  
 finish 3PL **place** NEG 3PL-see-3SG.F PERF 3SG.F-be dark  
 'Then they could not see the place because it was dark.' (Becker 25)

21. **Chakonu w-kipin** mon m-ete- $\emptyset$   
 road GEN-1PL NEG 1SG-see-3SG.F  
 'I can't see the way to our village.' (Becker 49)

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**What we found for objects also holds true for (non-object) complements**

**Non-object complements****-ama 'resemble, be like' VComp**

22. To w-na-re-n "Chi n-ama kaminakol"  
 then 3SG.F-speak-APPLIC-3SG.M 2SG 2SG-like person.PL  
 'Then she said to him: 'You are like a person,' (Becker 16)

**23. Verbs with non-object complements that only occur with VComp order**

-ama	'be like'
-rnar	'change into'
-in	'hear'

**-rnar 'change into' VComp**

24. Ri y-rnar wuel, ....  
 3PL 3PL-change.into pig ...  
 'They (the wives) turned into pigs, ....' (Becker 34)

**-in 'hear' VComp**

25. Akou ri y-in yikiel mnon ...  
 finish 3PL 3PL-hear words 3SG.M.GEN  
 'So when they heard his words, ...' (Becker 2)

**26. Verbs that allow both VComp and CompV order**

	VComp	CompV
-napi 'speak (words)'	10	3
-aon 'put on traditional clothes'	8	4
-awa 'put a pot on a fire'	3	4

**-napi 'speak, say'****SCompV**

27. Akou ngan yikiel mon n-napi, korue mnon mkosil  
 finish father words NEG 3SG.M-speak but 3SG.M.GEN quiet

n-an.  
 3SG.M-be.at

'The father did not say a word, but remained silent.' (Becker 28)

**VComp**

28. To ri mon y-napi yikiel ngo- $\emptyset$ .  
 then 3PL NEG 3PL-speak words one-F  
 'Then they did not say anything.' (Becker 14)

29. Korue pelen w-ri wepin y-napi yikiel  
 but dog GEN-3PL before 3PL-speak words  
 'But dogs in the old days used to be able to speak.' (Becker 50)

**-aon ‘put on clothes’****SCompV**

30. Lasi Chnapeli *chno* y-aon akou ...  
 immediately Chinapelli trad.clothes 3PL-put.on.clothes finish  
 ‘The Chinapelli put on their traditional dress and ...’ (Becker 4)

**VComp**

31. Y-unau y-ete-y ri y-aon *chno*  
 3PL-go.south 3PL-see-3PL 3PL 3PL-put.on decoration  
 y-ak-re-n porukul ...  
 3PL-sing-APPLIC-3SG.M singing ...  
 ‘When they came up they saw that they were dressed for a funeral ceremony....’  
 (Becker 10)

**-awa ‘put a pot on a fire’****SCompV**

32. To ri *mei* y-awa, chol y-alo-y, ...  
 then 3PL pot 3PL-put.pot.on.fire sago 3PL-fetch-3PL ...  
 ‘Then they put a pot on the fire and fetched the sago and ....’ (Becker 19)

**VComp**

33. To ru w-an, w-awa *mei*,  
 then 3SG.F 3SG.F-be.at 3SG.F-put.on.fire pot  
 ‘While she was putting the pot on the fire, she heard the sound of branches  
 breaking.’ (Becker 21)

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**34. Verbs that do not allow OV order, but do allow both Vcomp and compV order, and the numbers of these orders that occur in the old texts**

	<b>VComp</b>	<b>CompV</b>
-nare ‘tell’	15	1
-e(yie) ‘give’	19	7

**-nare ‘tell’ CompVO**

35. Runon wuel *yikiel* n-na-re-n **kaminakol**  
 3SG.M pig words 3SG.M-speak-APPLIC-3SG.M person.PL  
 ‘The pig spoke to the man:’ (Becker 13)

**-e(yie) 'give' CompVO**

36. k-ete-y nyemi k-na-re-y ri  
 1PL-see-3PL friend 1PL-speak-APPLIC-3PL 3PL

*chuto ngo-∅ y-e-∅ kum m-ch-a*  
 3PL-give-3SG.F 1SG 1SG-2OBJ-and

'We will see friends and tell them to give us a woman.' (Becker 26)

**-e(yie) 'give' VOComp**

37. Akou, runon n-oko-n n-aro-n y-ekiel ala,  
 finish 3SG.M 3SG.M-take-3SG.M 3SG.M-and-3SG.M 3PL-go.south garden

*n-e-n runon mikie, klay, ...*  
 3SG.M-give-3SG.M 3SG.M banana taro ...,

'So he took him to his garden and gave him bananas, taro, ...' (Becker 8)

38. ... ykay cha pa ri y-e-y *chuto ngo-∅.*  
 ... 3pl-see whether FUT 3PL 3PL-give-3PL woman one-F

'... to see whether they could give them a woman.' (Becker 26)

**-e(yie) 'give' VOComp**

39. Chi n-eyie-n **ngan chi yikie-l.**  
 2SG 2SG-give-3SG.M father 2SG arrow-PL

'Give the arrows to your father.' (Becker 21)

**-e(yie) 'give' CompV**

40. Akou, to runon *keyre n-e-n,* ...  
 finish then 3SG.M fish(sp) 3SG.M-give-3SG.M

'When he'd finished, he gave him the keyre fish ...' (Becker 44)

41. To ri *ngal chuto ngo-∅ y-e-n,* ... ,  
 then 3PL bird woman one-F 3PL-give-3SG.M 3SG.M ...

'Then they gave him a bird-woman ...' (Becker 19)

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