

Kairak Verbs (15 marks)

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 on the next page (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.

Notes:

- 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.

For example, the '1sg present' for a verb meaning 'to smoke' means 'I smoke', and the '3pl future' of the same verb means 'they will smoke'.

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

Kairak verbs follow one of three patterns, depending on which verb type they belong to:

| Type 1 | | Type 2 | | Type 3 | |
|-----------|---------------------|----------|----------------|---------|-------------------------|
| tsup | 'to smoke' | yam | 'to swing' | tet | 'to go' |
| tsek | 'to raise, pull up' | monək | 'to cook' | ten | 'to come' |
| tjes | 'to dig' | sameŋ | 'to speak out' | ton | 'to go inside' |
| tvəstəmna | 'to meet' | vələŋ | 'to kill' | dudəbət | 'to set fire to a bush' |
| tkur | 'to show' | mənətəm | 'to sleep' | | |
| tsiqut | 'to try' | sənanbət | 'to ask' | | |
| tpəs | to hold | | | | |

| | present | future | past |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| | Type 1: tsup ‘to smoke’ | | |
| 1sg | ɲut sup | ɲu sup | ɲa sup |
| 2sg | ɲit sup | ɲi sup | ɲa sup |
| 3sg m | ket sup | kɛ sup | ka sup |
| 3sg f | yit sup | yi sup | ya sup |
| 1du | unit sup | uni sup | un sup |
| 2du/ 3du | anit sup | ani sup | an sup |
| 1pl | urit sup | uri sup | ut sup |
| 2pl | ɲenit sup | ɲeni sup | ɲeni sup |
| 3pl | rit sup | ri sup | ra sup |
| 3pl non-human | ɲerit sup | ɲeri sup | ɲeri sup |
| | Type 2: yam ‘to swing’ | | |
| 1sg | ɲu yam | ɲu yam | ɲa yam |
| 2sg | ɲi yam | ɲi yam | ɲa yam |
| 3sg m | kɛ yam | kɛ yam | ka yam |
| 3sg f | yi yam | yi yam | ya yam |
| 1du | uni yam | uni yam | un yam |
| 2du/ 3du | ani yam | ani yam | an yam |
| 1pl | uri yam | uri yam | ut yam |
| 2pl | ɲeni yam | ɲeni yam | ɲen yam |
| 3pl | ri yam | ri yam | ra yam |
| 3pl non-human | ɲeri yam | ɲeri yam | ɲɛ yam |
| | Type 3: tet ‘to go’ | | |
| 1sg | ɲa tet | ɲa ret | ɲa met |
| 2sg | ɲa tet | ɲa ret | ɲa met |
| 3sg m | ka tet | ka ret | ka met |
| 3sg f | ya tet | ya ret | ya met |
| 1du | un tet | un ret | un met |
| 2du/ 3du | an tet | an ret | an met |
| 1pl | ut tet | ut ret | ut met |
| 2pl | ɲeni tet | ɲeni ret | ɲeni met |
| 3pl | ra tet | ra ret | ra met |
| 3pl non-human | ɲeri tet | ɲeri ret | ɲeri met |

Q6.1. Translate the following into Kairak.

- 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 a bush

Q6.2. Translate the following into English:

- a. rit vøstømna
- b. ani kur
- c. ra sek
- d. ηən sameη
- e. ra monək
- f. un ton
- g. ηa rən
- h. ut mudəbət

Q6.3. Provide the translations as indicated.

- 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?

| | |
|----------------|--|
| 6.1. a. | |
| b. | |
| c. | |
| d. | |
| e. | |
| f. | |
| g. | |
| h. | |
| 6.2. a. | |
| b. | |
| c. | |
| d. | |
| e. | |
| f. | |
| g. | |
| h. | |
| 6.3. a. | |
| b. | |
| c. | |

5. Kairak (15 marks, 41 points)

Assigning points:

- 7.1,2: 2 points for each completely correct answer; 1 point for almost correct answers with just one error. (total 32)
 - Give benefit of the doubt if IPA symbols are unclear (e.g. *v* or *e*?)
- 7.3: 3 points for a completely correct answer; no partial credit (total 9)

| | |
|---------|--|
| 6.1. a. | ŋa siqut |
| b. | anit ŋes |
| c. | ut monək |
| d. | ŋeri vələŋ |
| e. | ŋi mənatəm |
| f. | ka mən |
| g. | ŋəni ron |
| h. | ya dudəbət |
| 6.2. a. | ‘they meet’ |
| b. | ‘the two of you/them [or: you/they both] will show (it)’ [or: (dual) ...] |
| c. | ‘they raised/rose[!] (it)’ [or: they pulled (it) up] |
| d. | ‘you (pl) spoke out’ [or: you all spoke out] [or: (plural)] |
| e. | ‘They cooked’ |
| f. | ‘the two of us [or: we both] go inside’ [or: (dual)] |
| g. | ‘you will come’ |
| h. | ‘we (all) set fire to a bush’ [or: We (all) set a bush on fire; not: We both ...; or: ... (past), not: ... (present) or: ... are setting fire ...] |
| 6.3. a. | tsal |
| b. | ka mu |
| c. | the two of you/them will feel [or: you/they will both feel. or: you/they both will feel] |

Comments

In order to solve the questions, you first need to figure out the general pattern that distinguishes the present, future, and past tenses for each type.

It is always a good strategy to tackle the easiest bits first. Type 3 forms are the most straightforward: the pronouns (*I, you, he*, etc) stay the same, but the initial sound in the verb changes according to tense (*t/r/m* for present/future/past, respectively).

With Type 2 forms, the present and future tenses are identical to each other. Only the past tense is distinguished by the form of its pronouns. (Many languages make only a dual tense distinction, such as between past and non-past, or between future and non-future. However, other information in the text usually provides clues as to when in time an event is occurring.)

Type 1 forms are the trickiest because they use a combination of changes to both the pronoun and the verb to distinguish tenses. In present tense, the verb has an initial *t* sound that drops off in non-present tenses. So when you see a verb form like *sup*, without a *t* attached to the preceding pronoun, you know that it can't be in the present tense. (Don't let the *t* at the end of present tense pronouns fool you into thinking it “belongs to” the pronoun. The *t* is really a part of the verb. But for ease of pronunciation, it attaches to the end of the pronoun.) While the verb distinguishes present from non-present tenses, the pronoun distinguishes the past from the non-past (just like with Type 2 forms). Note, though, that there is no distinction across 3pl non-human or 2pl pronouns.