

Determiners in Wooi (West Papua)

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Like most (all?) languages belonging to the West New Guinea branch of Austronesian languages, Wooi has a fairly complex system of determiners that is morphologically closely intertwined with deictics and directionals. While for some of the deictic and directional formatives meaning, function and morphological structure are reasonably clear, others pose challenges on all levels of analysis, apart from their obligatory phrase-final position. The paper addresses three interrelated issues:

1. Pronouns may occur at the right edge of noun phrases, sometimes functioning as determiners by themselves, sometimes in addition to other determiners. It is argued that these are not clusory pronouns, as suggested in the literature, but rather pronominal articles.
2. Numerals may occur in two different positions within the noun phrase. One position is close to the head noun and precedes determiners, the other position is at the very end of the NP, after other determiners (and hence violating Greenberg's universal). It is argued that NP-final numerals have a different function and are, in many ways, more determiner-like and not 'purely' quantifying.
3. The determiner system is characterized by a pervasive distinction between singular and non-singular forms, where the non-singular forms appear to be the less marked forms, contrary to what is found in many other languages.