

## **Functions of fronting in Savosavo (Papuan) and Gela (Austronesian)**

Claudia Wegener

This talk presents some results of comparative research on the encoding of topic, focus and contrast in a situation of long-standing language contact in the Solomon Islands.

The speakers of the two unrelated languages Savosavo (Papuan) and Gela (Austronesian) have probably been in contact for several centuries, but maintained their typologically quite different profiles. Savosavo is a verb-final Papuan language with postpositions, enclitic phrasal case marking (a "marked-nominative" system), a gender system with two classes, and a strong preference for nominal over verbal structures, as evidenced by the obligatory nominalization in many different contexts (Wegener 2008).

Gela, on the other hand, is a rather typical Austronesian language, verb-initial, with prepositions, no case marking or gender, but a distinction between alienable and inalienable possession, and the freedom of using many lexemes without derivation both in referential NPs and as verbal predicates (Crowley 2002).

Fronting of constituents is cross-linguistically common in the encoding of information structure categories, and seems to be a common feature in the area (and also in the wider world) and is mentioned in the grammatical descriptions of Lengo (Unger, unpublished manuscript), Longgu (Hill 1992, 2002) and Toqabaqita (Lichtenberk 2008). In principle there are two options: a constituent could be fronted to the initial position within a clause, or it could appear in a pre-clausal slot. Both options are found in Savosavo and Gela.

I will first discuss how these two types of fronting can be recognized in the two languages, and then provide an overview of their different functions. It will become apparent that despite their typological differences, and by employing rather different means, there are interesting parallels in the utterances that involve fronting, which might be due to contact.