# Experiencer Object constructions in Nen (Yam, Papuan)

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## Abstract

This chapter discusses the phenomenon of 'experiencer object constructions' for expressing corporeal, emotional and cognitive situations like 'be hungry', 'get angry' or 'forget', in Nen, a Papuan language of the Yam family. In doing so it pays tribute to Jane Simpson's longstanding interest in the intersection between lexicon, syntax and argument structure. Nen is interesting from the point of view of argument-structure typology because it combines ergative/absolutive flagging with double-indexing whereby monovalent verbs split between an 'undergoer' pattern (stative verbs) and an 'actor' pattern (dynamic verbs); grammatical relations are 'composed' by combining information from these two systems, just as many other aspects of Nen (number, TAM) are composed by combining various morphological sites. Drawing on various lines of evidence for setting up grammatical relations in Nen, I argue that these are best analysed as transitive-subject idioms, presenting a problem for the long-held view that transitive subjects do not lend themselves to idiom formation.

## Introduction

To begin with an example of the construction that this the paper will be about: *Zeinende ylsmne weiweiyäm wramte*: I am moved and sorry that Jane is retiring. Since I first began reading Jane's work in the early 1980s, then met her in person from the mid-1980s, then, more recently and intensively, had the privilege of having her as a treasured colleague at the ANU and at CoEDL, my respect for her combination of analytic and moral clarity with inexhaustible generosity and concern for others has been a constant source of inspiration.

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From early in her career, Jane has been interested in questions of verb valence, and of how the verbal lexicon connects up to argument structure and syntax more generally, beginning with her pioneering LFG treatment of Warlpiri syntax (Simpson 1983). I would therefore like to connect this tribute to that part of her interests by looking in detail at another language of Sahul, but on the other side of the Torres Strait (just): Nen, a Papuan language of the Yam family (Evans 2014, 2015a, b, Evans et al. 2018) which has a large and interesting class of 'experiencer object' verbs. These are verbs where the experiencer is indexed on the verb as an object (predominantly in the 'undergoer' prefix slot of the verb, and flagged by the absolutive case), and the 'stimulus', here *weiwei* 'sorrowful emotion' is encoded as an ergative NP, and indexed by the 'actor' suffix slot of the verb. Unpacking and glossing our initial example:[2]

(1) *Zein-ende* *yls-mne* *weiwei-yäm* *w-ram-t-e*
Jane-GEN go.INF-SOU sorrow-ERG 1SG.U:α-do-B.IPF.ND-3SG.A
'I am sorry that Jane is retiring.'
lit. 'Sorry of Jane's going does me.'

A few remarks on Nen morphosyntax will aid in the understanding of examples. Nen has absolutive/ergative organisation of case-marking (in both nouns and pronouns, except that the ergative vs. absolutive distinction is neutralised in the 1st and 2nd singular), a rich system of verbal morphology that indexes 'undergoers' (objects or indirect objects, and the subjects of static intransitives) by prefix and 'actors' (transitive subjects, and the subjects of dynamic intransitives) by suffix. Its verbal morphology is characterised by 'distributed exponence' (Carroll 2016), with many-to-many mappings between recurring formal elements at different points of the verb, which then need to be integrated before the actual inflectional values can be worked out in full.

For example, the tense of the verb *wramte* ('non-prehodiernal' – any time after yesterday – earlier today, now, or in the future) is determined by integrating the 'α' form of the undergoer prefix with the suffix sequence *-t-e*; to shift it to the yesterday past the prefix would shift into its β-form, *q*,[3] thus *qramte* 'it did to me (yesterday)'.

[2] The following non-standard abbreviations are used in this chapter. | is used to separate disjunctive person/number values (e.g. 2|3 '2nd or 3rd person'), though for ease of reading I have often chosen one of several values for glossing where the existence of a disjunction is irrelevant to the argument at hand. α, β, γ are form-series of prefixes, which unify with suffixes to give TAM values, but which cannot themselves be assigned clear semantic values. When combining with the basic imperfective, the α-series denotes time from today's dawn onwards into the future ('non-prehodiernal'), while the β-series is a recent past (usually yesterday); the γ-series is used for remote pasts in the imperfective. As far as more standard interlinear glosses: 1: first person, 2: second person, 3: third person, A: actor, ABS: absolutive, ACC: accusative, B: basic, DAT: dative, DEM: demonstrative, DS: different subject (from following verb), DU: dual, DUR: durative, ERG: ergative, FEM: feminine, FUT: future, GEN: genitive, IMM: immediate, IMP: Imperative, INF: infinitive, IPF: Imperfective, LOC: locative, M: middle, MASC: masculine, MU: multal, ND: non-dual, NEG: negative, NEUT: neuter, NFUT: non-future, NOM: nominative, NSG: non-singular, O: object, OBL: oblique, P: past, PF: perfect, PFV: perfective, NPREH: non-prehodiernal, POKE: classifier, POSS: possessive, PPF: pastperfective, PRES: present, PRIOR: prior or proceeding (the event denoted by the following verb), S: subject, SG: singular, STAT: stative, U: undergoer.

[3] See Evans and Miller (2016) on Nen phonology and orthography. <q> represents a coarticulated /kp/, <g̈> its voiced equivalent, and <ng> a prenasalised voiced velar stop /ŋg/. In the vowel space, <ä> is a high front vowel, and é is a slightly retracted short vowel (close to the vowel in English bit). The

With a different undergoer – say 3SG – the verb forms would respectively be *yramte* (today) and *tramte* (yesterday). Effectively, the verb inflections form what we might call a 'circumfixal paradigm' – information from both prefixes and suffixes needs to be integrated, in complex ways – though this will not be the focus of the present chapter.

Likewise, 'distributed exponence' characterises the way that grammatical relations are encoded: information from the case system (ergative/absolutive) and from the indexing system (actor/undergoer), along with knowledge of the verb's valency and Aktionsart category (static vs. dynamic) needs to be integrated to work out the relations of subject, object and indirect object, which though they can be defined clearly do not wear their heart on their sleeve.[4] One final point about Nen morphosyntax: the normal phrase order is Subject-Object-Verb, as in (2):

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (2) | *Yndbem* | *kae* | *ombte* | *nu* | *y-z-wa-m* |
| | 1NSG.ERG | ±1day | hot | water(ABS) | 3SG.U:α-cook-PPF:DU-1NSG.A |
| | 'We two boiled the hot water yesterday (from scratch).' | | | | |

However, particularly when the object is higher on the Silverstein (1976) hierarchy than the subject, it may precede the subject, with argument roles shown by case flagging and verbal indexing:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| (3) | *Ynd* | *ymam* | *w-lm-t-e.* |
| | 1SG.ABS | 3SG.ERG | 1SG.U:α-lead-B.IPF:ND-3SG.A |
| | 'He is leading me.' | | |

Through this article we will take it as a *prima facie* assumption that examples like (1) assign the stimulus to subject role (marking it ergative, and indexing it by the actor suffix on the verb) and the experiencer to the object role (marking it absolutive, and indexing it by the undergoer prefix on the verb). Phrase order is non-canonical for a transitive clause, in that the subject is not initial, but this lies within the range of permissible orders for transitive clauses, given the operation of person/number factors on the ordering of arguments, illustrated in (3). We return, below, to further discussion of what evidence can be brought to bear on the grammatical relations of such constructions, but our main focus in this chapter is to set the Nen constructions in typological perspective, with regard to other ways of encoding experiencers (in the next section), to explore some interesting subtypes of the Nen construction (in the following section). After this, we examine the semantic domain they encode. We conclude by raising their relevance to a more general linguistic question: the purported asymmetry of noun-verb idioms, according to which (e.g. Marantz 1984) verbs may form idioms with their objects, but not with their (transitive) subjects, a feature argued for both verb-object idioms and for noun incorporation (e.g. by Baker 1988) to reflect universal properties of syntactic structure (namely the definition of objects as direct sisters of verbs in underlying phrase structure) but for which a characteristically perceptive review by Simpson (1989) suggested the reader should look to the footnotes for the crucial data. Experiencer object constructions in Nen, I will conclude, offer a solid example of idiom formation where the idiomatised noun is in transitive subject, rather than object, function.

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trickiest orthographic issue is that it does not show epenthetic vowels: the word *wlmte* 'he leads me' in (3), for example, is [wələmte].

[4] See Evans (2015a,b) for details of Nen inflection and valence respectively.

## What are experiencer object constructions?

I will define experiencer object constructions as those in which a semantic experiencer (e.g. of sensation or emotion) is encoded as an object (O) in argument structure. Typically, there is also a 'stimulus' NP, exhibiting, to varying degrees, the characteristics of a transitive subject (A):

(4) $NP_{O:\ experiencer}$ $NP_{A:\ stimulus}$ $V_{tr:\ sensative/emotion}$

Experiencer object constructions are widespread in Sahul (the combined ancient continent of Australia and New Guinea, which were joined during 80% of the time since humans arrived here). In Australia, they have most widely been reported among non-Pama-Nyungan languages, such as Murrinhpatha (Walsh 1987, who calls them 'impersonal verbs'), Iwaidja (Evans 2004) and, within Pama-Nyungan, among the Lama-Lamic languages. Among Papuan languages, they have been reported in such languages as Kalam (Pawley et al. 2000) and Yagaria (Windschuttel 2012). We give examples of these below, but first discuss their cross-linguistic counterparts, which employ a range of constructional strategies.

In many parts of Eurasia, for example, 'dative subject' constructions are employed, as in Russian (5), where the sensation is a neuter adjective (or adverb, identical in form to neuter adjectives) and Tamil (6), where the accusative is used for the body part sourcing the sensation, and the verb an impersonal third singular neuter agreement.

(5) *Mne* *xolodno / skuchno*
1SG.DAT cold / boring
'I am cold / bored.' (Russian)

(6) *Kumaar-ukku.t* *talaiy-ai* *vali-kkir-atu*
Kumar-DAT head-ACC pain-PRES-3SG.NEUT
'Kumar has a headache.' (Tamil; Lehmann 1993: 185)

In other languages, such as English (7) or the Australian language Kayardild (8) (Tangkic; non-Pama-Nyungan) adjectival predicates with intransitive experiencer subjects are used.

(7) *I am cold / hungry.L*

(8) *Ngada* *rika-a /* *bardakawarri*
1SG.NOM cold-NOM / hungry (NOM).[5]
'I am cold / hungry.' (Kayardild)

Let us now back up and look in a bit more about how experiencer object constructions work on both the Australian and Papuan sides of Sahul.

First consider the Australian language Ilgar, closely related to Iwaidja and Mawng as members of the Iwaidjan family (Evans 2000; see also Singer 2016, 130-136 for a discussion of the rich Mawng system, and Verstraete 2011 on comparable constructions in Umpithamu). Ilgar indexes subjects and objects by verbal agreement

[5] *bardaka-warri* is, etymologically, the privative form of *bardaka* 'stomach', thus 'without stomach'.

(person, number and 2-way gender contrast between masculine and feminine), has generally free word order, but lacks case-marking. In all of its experiencer object constructions, the experiencer is indexed in the object slot, the subject is fixed at 3SG masculine, and the 'stimulus' directly follows the verb. However, there are differences in whether the stimulus element independently occurs as a synchronic noun (which is the case for *wurwiɲ* 'shame' in (9)), has been frozen as a 'frozen etymological noun' not otherwise attested outside the construction (which is the case for *ŋuk* in (10),[6] or does not have any stimulus noun at all, as in (11), where the experiencer is the object, there is a 3SG masculine transitive subject, but no nominal is possible.

(9) *ŋanimiɲ* *wurwiɲ*
ŋan-ni-mi-ɲ wurwiɲ
1SG.O-3SG.MASC.S-do-PPF shame
'I got ashamed.' (lit. 'Shame did me.') – (Ilgar)
Subcategorised nominal subject (*wurwiɲ* occurs outside this construction)

(10) *ŋanimiɲ* *ŋuk*
*ŋan-ni-mi-ɲ* *ŋuk*
1SG.O-3SG.MASC.S-do-PPF ?
'I'm full.' (Ilgar)

(11) *ŋani-ŋaʈpanpu-n*
ŋan-ni-ŋaʈpanpu-n
1SG.O-3SG.MASC.S-give.headache-PRES
'I have a headache.' (no nominal possible with this meaning) (Ilgar)

Similar ranges of variability, with respect to nominal inclusion, are found in Murrinhpatha (Walsh 1987, who calls these 'impersonal verbs'), with the twist that in at least some of these constructions the noun is overtly inflected with the ergative. Thus in (12),[7] the ergative inanimate subject can be omitted, though the meaning remains; here we could almost analyse this as a straightforward transitive construction with an omissible but semantically fixed subject. In (13), by contrast, there would normally be no NP, but it would be possible to insert *ʈuŋku* 'fire' to mean 'The fire makes my back feel hot.' Finally, in (14), no overt subject nominal is possible, though the experiencer is, again, indexed in the object slot.

12) *(laliŋkin-te)* *dam-ŋi-wiṇimaɖapaɭ*
sea/tide-ERG 3SG.S.POKE.NFUT-1O-oppose
'I went against the tide; the sea opposed me.' (Murrinhpatha)

(13) *dem-ŋi-dari-lerkperk*
3SG.S.POKE:RR.NFUT-1O-back-heat
'My back feels hot; something heats my back.' (Murrinhpatha)

[6] E.g. Jawoyn *ŋan-ŋuk* 'guts, excrement', Ngandi *ŋuk* 'guts, bowels, excrement'.
[7] These three examples employ different 'verbal classifier' prefixes, not glossed as different in Walsh's original paper. I have altered the glosses slightly to reflect the currently accepted analysis in terms of verbal classifier prefixes – my thanks to Rachel Nordlinger for explaining these intricacies to me and proposing these glosses.

(14) *pa-ŋi-ɭuŋ-nu*
3SG.S.POKE.FUT-1O-cause.to.shiver-FUT
'I will shiver.' (Murrinhpatha)

Passing to Papuan languages, experiencer object constructions have been reported for a number of languages – in the Trans-New Guinea family, for Kalam (Pawley et al. 2000) and for a rather different system, for Yagaria (Windschuttel 2012), and in the Sepik, for the isolate Tayap (Kulick and Terrill 2019, 114). The Tayap construction is rather similar to the Nen structure we will be examining: the experiencer is in the absolutive, the stimulus is in the ergative but comes after the experiencer in defiance of the normal SOV word order, and the verb indexes both the experiencer (as object) and the stimulus (as transitive subject):

(15) *ŋa* *kandaw=i* *ni-tin*
1SG illness=ERG.FEM do-3SG.FEM.S>1SG.O
'I'm sick' (lit. 'illness is affecting me')

Whereas Tayap has ergative flagging, like Nen and Murrinhpatha, Kalam is a nominative/accusative language. This means that any free noun or pronoun representing the experiencer is in the accusative, and the stimulus is in the nominative; consistently with its subject status, the stimulus noun governs subject agreement (16).

(16) *yp* *sb* *yow-p*
1SG.ACC excrement fall-PF.3SG
'I need to defecate/I feel like defecating.' (Pawley et al. 2000, 168)

Additional evidence that the stimulus is in fact the subject in these Kalam constructions comes from the switch-reference system: the switch-reference system employs switch-reference forms if the stimulus passes from object to (stimulus) subject (17, where the stimulus is [implicitly] the [taste of] the food), or, as in (18), if the experiencer passes from (experiencer) object to (intransitive) subject:

(17) *ñb-e-n* *yp* *tep* *g-p*
eat-DS.PRIOR-1SG 1SG.ACC good act-PF.3SG
'It tastes good.' (Kalam; Pawley et al. 2000:172)

(18) *toytk* *nup* *mñak* *g-e-k*
yesterday 3SG.ACC sick do-DS.PRIOR-P.3SG

*kum* *md-e-k*
indisposed stay-DUR.3SG-P
'Yesterday sickness affected him and he wasn't able to do anything.'
(Kalam; Pawley et al. 2000, 173)

Thus experiencer object constructions are just one of many constructional means for encoding the scenario where a human emotion, sensation or physical state is caused by some external or internal stimulus. While we lack the space here to go into a global survey of constructional preferences for dealing with this scenario, it does seem to be the case that the experiencer object construction is something of a Sahul specialty: see

also Merlan and Rumsey (1991, 337-34) and Rumsey (2002) for a further parallel in the Trans-New Guinea language Ku Waru. As always in typology, however, it is vital to pass from essentialised, handpicked examples to more detailed descriptions of the phenomenon, and in the next two sections we examine in detail how this construction, and its congeners, work in Nen.

## Nen experiencer object constructions in the context of other argument structure types

We already saw one example of Nen experiencer object constructions in (1); (19–21) give three more, expressing the physical states of thirst (19, literally 'thirst does the dog' for 'the dog is thirsty'), hunger (20, lit. 'hunger did me' for 'I was hungry') and sexual arousal / randiness (21, lit. 'lust seizes the horse'). In each case the stimulus noun appears in the ergative, after the 'experiencer' noun in the absolutive; the stimulus is indexed as transitive subject (3rd singular) and the experiencer as object. The verb is *räms* 'to do, make' with 'hunger' and 'thirst', as with the vast majority of experiencer object constructions, but other verbs do occur, such as *wñäms* 'seize' in (21). In referring to experiencer object constructions, here and in the Nen dictionary (Evans 2019a), I write them as a sequence of stimulus noun, in the ergative, then the infinitive of the verb, e.g. *akäm räms* 'be thirsty' or *waläm wñäms* 'be sexually aroused'.

(19) *zän* *ak-äm* *y-ram-t-e*
dog(ABS) thirst-ERG 3SG.U:α-do-B.IPF:ND-3SG.A
'The dog is thirsty.'

(20) *ynd* *kae* *gers-äm* *q-ram-t-e,*
1ABS ±1day hunger-ERG 1SG.U:β-do-B.IPF:ND-3SG.A

*totr* *nne* *tba* *y-ne-ta-n.*
today food(ABS) just.now 3SG.U:α-eat-B.IPF:ND-1SG.A
'I was hungry yesterday, but today I've eaten.'

(21) *hos* *wal-äm* *geä* *d-ñäm-ga,*
horse lust-ERG if 3SG.U:γ-seize-B.IPF:ND-3SG.FUT.PFV

*wal-äm* *yande* *ker* *dowako-äm* *bä*
lust- ERG 3SG.POSS penis erection-ERG FUT

*d-ñäm-ga.*
3SG.U:γ-seize-B.IPF:ND-3SG.FUT.PFV
'When a horse feels randy, it gets an erection.'

For all intents and purposes these are standard transitive constructions, with the peculiarity that their transitive subject is fixed (part from their ordering of O A V, instead of the normal A O V, but this deviation is found in other cases where the transitive subject is lower than the object on the Silverstein hierarchy. Before going on, let's briefly survey the main argument structure types found in Nen; standard transitive constructions have already been exemplified, with their two orders AOV (2) and OAV (3). Looking now at monovalent constructions, Nen exhibits a consistent split between two types of verb, those indexing their sole argument with the undergoer prefix

(otherwise associated with objects), and those which employ the actor suffix (otherwise associated with transitive subjects), filling in the undergoer slot with a 'middle' prefix, which is invariant for person/number,[8] though like all prefixes in this slot it participates in the three-way opposition which feeds into TAM categories. The first category, which I will call 'prefixing verbs', is primarily associated with the verb 'be' plus around forty-five 'positionals' (Evans 2014) like 'be immersed' (22) or 'be in a tree fork'. The second category, which I will call 'middle verbs', is found with dynamic predicates (whether they are volitionally controlled or not), and forms the most populous part of the Nen verb lexicon; *owabs* 'to talk' in (23) is an example.

(22) *wagib* *nu-wan* *y-éser-ngr*
fish(ABS) water-LOC 3SG.U:α-be.immersed-NPREH.IPF:ND:STAT
'The fish is in the water.'

(23) *bä /* *togetoge* *n-owab-t-at*
3ABS/ children(ABS) M:α-talk-B.IPF:ND-3SG.A
'They/the children (>2) are talking.'

Two other less common argument structure types will also be mentioned here:

(a) semi-transitive verbs, which like transitives index their two arguments on the verb by the undergoer prefix and actor suffix, but unlike transitives, assign the oblique case to their second argument, as with 'help' in (24);
(b) ditransitive verbs, like 'give', which have three arguments: a subject in the ergative, an object (theme) in the accusative, and an indirect object in the oblique; the verb agrees with its subject (actor suffix) and its indirect object (undergoer prefix) but not with its object (25).

(24) *buder,* *ta* *q-ete-na!*
friend 1SG.OBL 1SGU:α-help-IPF:ND-2SG.A.IPF.IMP
'Friend, help me!'

(25) *ymam* *wagib* *ta* *w-arama-nd-a.*
3SG.ERG fish(ABS) 1SG.OBL 1SG.U:α-give-PPF:ND-3SG.A
'She gave me a fish.'

Common to both of these is that the undergoer prefix indexes the indirect object, rather than the direct object, with the indirect object in the oblique case in both types. As argued in Evans (2015b), grammatical relations in Nen are encoded by the same mechanism of distributed exponence as other categories (number, TAM etc.), integrating information from various morphological positions on the verb, as well as from the case chosen to flag their arguments. Indirect objects, then, are defined as arguments which are indexed by the undergoer prefix, but flagged by the oblique case, whereas direct objects are defined as arguments which are indexed by the undergoer prefix, are flagged by the absolutive case, and which occur in clauses with a further argument indexed by the actor suffix and flagged by the ergative case. Armed with this distinction, from more standard clause types, we can see that the 'experiencer objects', in (1) and in (19)–(21) are indeed objects rather than indirect objects, because they take the absolutive case. This distinguishes them from dative-

[8] Well, almost. See Evans (2019b) for a complicated exception.

experiencer constructions in Russian, Tamil and many other languages.
Before going on to a more detailed consideration of the semantics of experiencer object constructions, I briefly treat two less canonical types.
One type is exemplified by (26), which regularly lacks any overt subject NP; the ergative stimulus NP *enzne-wäm* [disease-ERG] could be inserted, but is normally omitted. Such 'elided-stimulus experiencer objects', comparable to the Murrinhpatha example given in (14), are perhaps favoured by the absence of any other experiencer object constructions using the same verb, making the stimulus argument more predictable and hence recoverable.

(26) *sombes* *är* *e-zangˉ-ø-ng.*
two man.ABS 3NSG.U:α-kill-B.IPF:DU-2|3SG.A>DU.A
'Two men are dying.'

The other type is exemplified by (27). Here, there are two overt arguments, both as case-marked NPs and in the system of verbal indexing, the experiencer is indexed on the verb, and the actor is indexed by a third singular suffix on the verb: all normal properties of experiencer object constructions. But, exceptionally, the stimulus noun ('head') is in the absolutive rather than the ergative; this could perhaps better be analysed as an external possession construction, though this is not a generally-used strategy in Nen.

(27) *ynd* *mrkp* *w-kr-n-e*
1ABS head.ABS 1SG.U:α-crack-B.IPF:ND-3SG.A
'I have a splitting headache.'

While this latter construction could perhaps be analysed as an 'external possession' construction, this is not a general strategy in Nen, and moreover it has a few parallel exemplars with other verbs where the external possession construction analysis wouldn't be appropriate. For example, the verbs 'forget' (28) and 'leave (a relationship)' each take two absolutive arguments, with the undergoer prefix indexing the person from whose mind the memory has slipped. We currently have no explanation, however, for why it should be this particular predicate which takes an absolutive/absolutive case frame.

(28) *bä* *ya-nde* *ws* *y-aorer-nd-a.*
3ABS 3SG-POSS bottle(ABS) 3SG.U:α-forget|escape-PPF:ND-3SG.A
'He forgot his water bottle.' ('I forgot', lit. 'it escaped me', would change the undergoer prefix to 1SG *w-*, so *waorernda*).

## The semantics of experiencer object idioms in Nen

Experiencer object constructions form a substantial part of the Nen lexicon. In the Leipzig Valency Database sample, experiencer objects form 7/87 predicates (Evans 2015b), and the provisional Nen dictionary (far from complete) in Evans (2019a), which has around 3700 senses, contains 44 canonical examples as well as the less standard ones discussed in (26) and (27) above. In Table 1.1 in the Appendix, I give a close-to-comprehensive listing of the experiencer object idioms we have so far. Note that there is an issue of how best to characterise the meaning of the verbs – do we use their most natural English translation (e.g. 'feel itchy') or do use a translation that captures the literal argument projection (e.g. 'itchiness does me'). Here I use the first

strategy in the first column and the second strategy in the right column, using a first singular object but bearing in mind that any person/number combination would be acceptable.

[Insert Table 1.1 about here]
Table 1.1. Nen experiencer object constructions (TABLE ABOUT HERE, IN SEPARATE FILE)

Looking at the phrases in this list, the following question arises: are these transitive-subject + verb idioms, or regular transitive constructions which happen to have inanimate subjects? In other words, is there a principled way of drawing the line between experiencer object constructions and straightforward transitive constructions which happen to have an inanimate subject and an animate object, such as (29):

(29) *ynd* *nu* *bdr-äm* *w-parn-d-e*
1ABS water wetness-ERG 1SG.U:α-leak-B.IPF.ND-3SG.A
'The water made me wet' (lit. 'the wetness leaked onto me') (< *parngs* 'leak onto, make wet')

As is usual when discussing the boundaries of idiom formation (cf. Nunberg et al. 1994, O'Grady 1998), a number of criteria can be invoked.
Two factors suggest that at least some Nen experiencer object constructions are more compositional than fixed:

(a) for some at least, the stimulus nominal can be expanded into a more elaborate expression.[9] For example, 'hunger' can be modified by the name of the object hungered for, e.g. *Yna toge geym modowa gersäm yramte* for 'that child is hungry for bandicoot' contains *modowa gers* 'bandicoot hunger' in the ergative. Likewise, *krbr* 'cold' can be modified by *kitong* 'large', as in *mleg toge krbr kitongäm yramte* 'the girl got really cold, really froze'. An even more expanded stimulus example, this time with postposed infinitivised clause, is *ynd totr zérḡénäm engs awasengsn wñämda* 'I am totally fed up with waiting and waiting', where the (complex) stimulus NP is *zérḡén-äm eng-s awasengs-n* [exasperation-ERG wait.for.too.long-INF wait-INF-LOC].
(b) For many of the expressions, each component can occur independently elsewhere, with comparable meaning. For example, the element *ak* 'thirst' in *akäm räms* 'to be thirsty' can occur as the head of the NP *tande ak* 'my thirst' in (30):

(30) *tande* *ak* *kitong* *n-ämte-t-e*
1SG.POSS thirst(ABS) big M:α-become-B.IPF.ND-3SG.A
'My thirst is becoming really big; I'm getting really thirsty.'

On the other hand, there are others which exhibit one or another form of idiomatisation:

[9] See Döhler (2018: 299–300) for comparable examples of the head noun being modified in another Yam language, Komnzo, e.g. [people killing desire]-ERG it.finishes.him 'the bloodlust for people overcomes him'.

(i) The stimulus N may not be found outside the construction. For example the first word of the construction *kmbrämäm räms* 'be hungry for meat' looks like the ergative of a hypothetical noun *kmbräm* 'hunger for meat', but has not been attested outside this particular construction, though it does combine with nouns denoting the type of meat, e.g. *awia kmbrämäm wramte* 'I'm hungry for cassowary meat' or *modowa kmbrämäm yramte* 'he's hungry for bandicoot meat'. A variant of this is when the root occurs most commonly in the experiencer object construction, but occasionally turns up elsewhere. Earlier in my analysis of Nen I had recorded the construction *bdräm räms* 'get wet', suggesting an as-yet unattested noun root √*bdr* 'wetness', inflected with the ergative suffix *-äm*. Only some years later did I record an example of *bdr* outside this construction, with the meaning 'moisture', e.g. *keläṉ bdr!* 'wipe the moisture!'

(ii) Likewise, the V may not be found outside the experiencer object construction, e.g. *pams* in *nuwäm pams* 'rain on'. In this case, there exists a related middle form,[10] *apams*, meaning to 'fall (of rain)', but the transitive form *pams* is not otherwise attested.

(iii) The choice of verb is not always predictable – for example it is not clear why the more specific verbs *wñäms* 'seize' and *tnengs* 'shake off dust' occur in some combinations but not others. So the fact that not all 'stimulus' Ns allow all relevant Vs suggests some degree of idiomatisation

(iv) One of the component words may undergo some semantic modification in the collocation. For example, the verb *tnengs* normally means 'shake off dust', most commonly in the context of discussing tawny frogmouth birds, said to shake off dust from their feathers as they fly. But in the experiencer object expression *gersäm tnengs* 'be really ravenous' (*gers-äm* [hunger-ERG]) its literal meaning has been subordinated to the phrasal sense of the whole body being shaken up by hunger.

Beyond these occasional questions of idiomatisation, what is striking about Nen is how regularly these experiencer object constructions are composed. There is a reasonably productive template allowing stimulus nouns, inflected for the ergative, to combine with transitive verbs – most commonly *räms* 'do' (20 examples) or *wñäms* 'seize' (five examples) – to form expressions meaning '[stimulus:ERG]$_{subj}$ act upon [experiencer:ABS]$_{obj}$. More expressions of this type are likely to crop up as our documentation of Nen advances: after just nine months' cumulative fieldwork we still just have a fraction of its lexicographic riches recorded, and we are only a short way down the long path that is needed to produce a dictionary of the order of the forthcoming Warlpiri dictionary that Jane and many of her colleagues have been involved with over so many decades.

## A closer look at the syntax of experiencer object constructions

So far we have been assuming that the grammatical relations in these constructions array a stimulus NP, in (transitive) subject relation, and an 'experiencer' NP, in object relation. As discussed already, this *prima facie* analysis is supported both by the case-

[10] Nen regularly uses 'diathetic' prefixes to change valency, adding vowels to the stem to reduce valency (e.g. to derive middles, reflexives, reciprocals and decausatives) and the consonant *w-* to vowel-initial stems to increase valency (e.g. causatives, benefactives). See Evans (2015b).

marking (flagging) – an ergative stimulus NP and an absolutive experiencer, aligning with and indexed by an undergoer prefix and an actor suffix, as befits transitive subjects and objects respectively. The only fly in the ointment, namely the word order – the fact that the experiencer object is placed before the stimulus NP, against the commonest SOV constituent order – is disposed of by appealing to a second general principle shaping constituent order, namely that the order of constituents reflects the Silverstein hierarchy, so that experiencers (usually humans, sometimes animals) precede the stimulus NP. There is a subtle difference – in that, at least on the basis of our data so far, the OSV order for experiencer objects appears to be fixed rather than optional as it is for other transitive constructions with animate objects and inanimate subjects, but without a larger corpus it would be premature to pin too much on what could simply be an artefact of small sample size for the relevant constructions.
Here I briefly examine four pieces of further evidence regarding the syntactic status of experiencer-stimulus constructions: evidence from the 'multal' object prefix, evidence from perception complements, evidence from the transfer of argument-indexing to finite 'phasal verbs' in phasal complements, and behaviour in future imperatives. The first two align directly with the *prima facie* analysis; the third is intriguingly neutral. The fourth may at first glance seem to present a departure: the experiencer object can be the person to whom the imperative is directed, a property typically associated with subjects, but closer examination of this particular type of imperative reveals that here, too, though the situation is less clearcut it is still compatible with syntactic analysis we have been advancing so far.

(a) Nen possesses a 'multal' prefix, *ng-* (etymologically derived from the 'away' prefix) which in combination with a singular value of the undergoer prefix tracks large number in grammatical objects (Evans 2017). When employed with experiencer object constructions, the multal prefix tracks plurality of experiencer objects, as expected:

(31) *yna* *terber* *är* *gernger-äm* *y-ng-ram-t-e.*[11]
DEM many person shiver-ERG 3SG.U:α-MU-do-B.IPF.ND-3SG.A
'Lots of people are shivering.'

(b) Whereas subjects of perception complements are available to be the pivots in a special infinitivised construction, this option is unavailable to objects. This is shown with standard verbs in the complement clause: In such complements, the subjects (whether intransitive as in (32) or transitive as in (33)) are omitted from the complement clause, which employs an infinitive inflected for the locative case.

(32) *yndbem* *togetoge erne-s-n* *wrng-n*
1NSG.ERG children(ABS) hide-INF-LOC forest-LOC

*i-winḡ-nd-m.*
3NSG.U-find- PPF.ND-1NSG.A
'We found the children hiding in the forest.'

[11] An alternative here would be to use the plural object form, *yärämte*, without the multal prefix. The combination of the multal prefix with the third singular undergoer prefix suggests a larger group of objects than the plural object form.

(33) *modowa* *zän-äm* *y-ze-n-e.*
bandicoot(ABS) dog-ERG 3SG.U:α-bite-B.IPF.ND-3SG.A

*yndbem* *y-aka-ta-m* *tbende* *skop-ngama*
1NSG.ERG 3SG.U:α-see-B.IPF.ND-1NSG.A our eye-ABL

*zer-s-n*
bite-INF-LOC
'The dog bit the bandicoot, we saw it biting it with my own eyes.'

So what happens to experiencer object constructions here? To the extent that the experiencer has any subject properties, we should expect it to be available as a pivot in such complements, whereas if it behaves like an ordinary object this option should not be available. And in fact we find that it cannot serve as pivot in this construction: (34) is unacceptable and needs, instead, to be expressed as a combination of two finite clauses (35).

(34) **ynd* *bä* *ø-inḡ-nd-n* *gernger-äm* *räm-s-n*
1SG.ERG 3ABS 3SG.U:α-see-PPF.ND-1SG.A shiver-ERG do-INF-LOC
'I saw him shivering.' (intended meaning)

(35) *ynd* *bä* *ø-inḡ-nd-n* *gernger-äm* *aba*
1SG.ERG 3ABS 3SG.U:α-see-PPF.ND-1SG.A shiver-ERG IMM.P

*y-ram-t-e*
3SG.U:α-do-B.IPF.ND-1SG.A
'I saw him shivering.'

(c) Nen possesses a set of 'phasal verbs' with meanings like 'begin to', 'finish', 'stop' and so forth. To express meanings like 'begin to rain', 'finish cultivating the garden' and so forth, the phasal verb is combined with an infinitive of the lexical verb ('rain', 'cultivate' etc.), which bears an appropriate case inflection (allative after 'begin to', ablative after 'finish' and so forth). All inflectional affixes are realised on the phasal verb: subject, object (if the lexical verb is transitive), TAM, and any directionals that may be present (*n-* 'towards', *ng-* 'away from'); in order to create the correct form to host them, applicative prefixes are used to adjust the valency of the phasal verb – cf *opaps* 'begin (intransitive)', *wapaps* 'begin (transitive)', with transitivising prefix *wa-* replacing the base (middle) prefix *o-*. This is illustrated, for the phasal 'to begin', with the intransitive verb *nne* 'to eat' in (36) and the transitive verb *lsas* 'to warm (something)' in (37).

(36) *ynd* *nne-t* *n-opap-nd-n*
1SG.ABS eat(INF)-AL M:α-begin-PPF.ND-1SG.A
'I'm beginning to eat.'

(37) *ynd* *lsa-s-t* *y-a-pap-nd-n*
1SG.ERG warm-INF-AL 3SG.U:α-TR-begin-PPF.ND-1SG.A
'I'm beginning to warm it.'

Now, what happens with experiencer objects in such constructions? What we find is that the stimulus gets indexed by the agent prefix on a phasal verb, exactly as other subjects do – this is illustrated with the verb *gersäm räms* 'to get hungry' in (38), and the verb *waorers* 'to forget' in (39). Here then, as well, the stimulus NP appears to behave exactly like any other subject, although the fact that the experiencer also gets cross-referenced means that is not out of the game if one wanted to push for an exceptional indexing of the subject by the undergoer prefix in this case.

(38) *ynd* *gers-äm* *räm-s-t* *w-a-pap-nd-a*
1SG.ABS hunger-ERG do-INF-AL `SG.U:α-TR-begin-PPF.ND-3SG.A
'I'm beginning to get hungry.'[12]

(39) *ynd* *korkorp* *korkorp* *ge* *ḡnzron,*
1SG.ABS small small SUBOR be: 1SG.U.P.IPF.REM

*zi* *gbres* *waorers* *gte* *äte*
language(ABS) all forget-INF DEM already

*w* *a* *pam* *we*
1SG.U:α TR begin PRET.ND 3SG.A

'When I was a little girl, I already began to forget (the Nen) language.'
(NQN20170706-04WrkeaBioAndLanguageKnowledge)

(d) Future imperatives are an interesting case which may at first glance appear to associate some subject properties to the experiencer: the experiencer can be the subject of future imperatives under situations in which the experiencer is the addressee. An example is (40):

(40) *yao* *berber-äm* *n-ang-ram-t-a-ø!*
NEG fear-ERG 2SG.U:α-FUT.IMP-do-B.IPF.ND-IPF.IMP-2|3SG.A
'Don't be afraid!'

One analysis of these would be to say that here the subject-like property of being the addressee asked to bring about a command is associated with the experiencer argument. That line of attack would work fine with direct imperatives, which are restricted to second person subjects. However, these 'future imperatives' have a number of unusual properties. Semantically, they impute a wish that the action be carried out sometime later, or that a state come into effect sometime later. Unlike direct imperatives, which require that the designated eventuality be dynamic (so that execution can begin immediately), future imperatives allow the designated eventuality to be stative, e.g. copula-plus-adjective combinations or positionals, since the stipulation is that the eventuality be in place at a later point, rather than necessarily being brought about now. More tellingly, whereas direct imperatives are restricted to second person subjects, future imperatives allow subjects of any person: with second person subjects they have the obvious command reading, albeit displaced in time; with first-person subjects they are a sort of self-command ('I should do X, I must do X'); and with third person subjects they are like a jussive ('Let Subj do X'). We can

[12] Jimmy Nébni > NE, 26/8/23 while waiting for lunch.

thus return to constructions like (36) and treat them as jussives with a meaning along the lines of 'Let it be the case, later, that fear does not "do" you!'. This analysis has the advantage of aligning completely with both the flagging ('fear' remains in the ergative) and the indexing (the object is second person singular, and the (transitive) subject, though formally compatible with either second or third person, is more simply treated as third person, indexing *berber* 'fear').

Summarising this section, we have sought to tighten up our syntactic analysis of experiencer-object constructions by examining three further types of evidence. The scope of 'multal' prefixes, which emphasise the large number of objects in experiencer object constructions just like in regular transitives, is simply compatible with our *prima facie* analysis. Likewise, the unavailability of experiencer objects as pivots in perception complements is parallel to what is found with other types of object in the subordinate clause of perception complements. Finally, while the possibility of forming future imperatives where the addressee is the experiencer may at first blush run against the analysis advanced elsewhere in this chapter, a fuller consideration of the semantics and syntax of future imperatives in Nen shows that we can analyse these as a type of jussive expressing the desire that a state be brought about, a construction independently attested in Nen with third person subjects.

The analysis which we proposed heuristically at the start of this chapter, according to which the stimulus is a (transitive) subject and the experiencer an object, thus survives the additional syntactic data brought to bear in this section.[13]

## Conclusions

One of the many interests that has run through Jane's multifaceted career as a linguist has been the interface between the lexicon and morphology, developed with great precision in her influential monograph (Simpson 1991) on Warlpiri morphosyntax, and pursued and tested against all the verbs and verbal expressions, culminating in the great *Warlpiri Encyclopaedic Dictionary* of which she is a co-author (Laughren et al. 2022). As she put it in her 1991 book (all quotes from p. 2), 'more information must be contained in the lexical entries of words, than has been customary', '[w]ords may be *functionally* complex; they need not be single lexical packages, but may carry information about different "logical relations"', and 'lexical entries for words must contain a substantial amount of information about grammatical functions which is not overtly expressed, as well as the information overtly expressed by morphological markers such as case'. All of these observations apply as well to Nen as they did to her trailblazing lexicalist treatment of Warlpiri morphosyntax.

But even though both Warlpiri and Nen have ergative case systems, there is a vital difference between them: as I hope to have shown, the 'functionally complex' Nen expressions for talking about experiences of physical sensations, drives and emotions have the cross-linguistically unusual property that the lexically fixed part of the expression combines a transitive verb with its subject, leaving the object open, to be filled in by whatever NP appropriately designates the experiencer. This contradicts widespread claims that have been summed up as 'there are no fixed-agent, flexible-object idioms' (Truswell 2016, summing up arguments by Anagnostopoulou and

[13] In this sense the Nen data does not require us to retreat to the more 'Bickelian' approach to grammatical relations (Bickel 2010), in which different constructions trace different networks of grammatical relations – an approach applied to experiencer object constructions in the Australian language Mawng by Singer (2016) to account for the disconnect between the morphosyntax of agreement (more or less like Nen, but adding in a rich gender system) and the syntax of interclausal control, where the (Mawng) experiencer object exhibits subject properties.

Samioti 2013 and Harley and Stone 2013). Like so many bold claims based on a small subset of the world's languages, this turns out to be a putative universal that has not travelled far enough to find its counter-example.

The Nen phenomena examined here make it quite clear that there are at least some languages[14] where the most straightforward analysis is to posit a constructional template in which expressions for a number of physical and emotional states are encoded by combining an ergative subject (whose head noun is fixed) denoting the experiencer with a transitive verb (idiomatically keyed to the combination) but leaving the object slot open. Although there are varying degrees of idiomaticity, as discussed in above, the class of experiencer object constructions in Nen certainly includes many in which both verb and transitive subject element are lexically fixed as a way of expressing the desired meaning. As such, they provide a straightforward case of a language permitting 'fixed-agent, flexible-object idioms'.

In general, theorising about what is possible and what is impossible in languages gradually results in a migration from absolute universals to statistical ones (cf. Evans and Levinson 2009) as wider sampling finds that what was believed impossible was simply rare. This progression does not remove the interest of the now-demolished universals. As Cysouw and Wohlgemuth (2010, 1) put it: 'rara and rarissima, features and properties found in very few languages, can tell us as much about the capacities and limits of human language(s) as do universals. Explaining the existence of cross-linguistically rare phenomena on the one hand, and the fact of their rareness or uniqueness on the other, should prove a reasonable and interesting challenge to any theory of how human language works.'

In particular, when something occurs despite claims that it wouldn't, there is a special imperative to find the particular affordances that allow it to develop. My suspicion is that in the case of Nen this has to do with a general tendency, widespread across Sahul, to permit event lexicalisations which are at ease with humans being placed in the object role and non-humans – be they natural events or physiological stimuli – being placed in transitive subject role. Add to this the great morphological explicitness of Nen, whose coordinated double-signalling of argument roles by flagging (case) and indexing (undergoer prefixes and actor suffixes). And stir in an organisation of grammatical relations that gives far fewer 'morphosyntactic privileges' to subjects than is the case in most languages: passives aren't used to promote non-subjects to subjects, and the morphologically unmarked role is absolutives (intransitive subjects but also objects) rather than subjects. Finally, the tightest linkage between two clauses, 'phasal verb constructions' (Evans 2015b, 1077) discussed above, which involves the raising of both subject and object onto the phasal auxiliary, not just the subject. We can speculate that these features of Nen have produced an organisation in which the so-called subject-object asymmetries, attributed by Marantz (1984) to universal principles of syntactic architecture and which have shaped claims about the structure of idioms ever since, play a role in Nen syntax which is marginal at best. This, in turn, allows constructions where there are recurrent collocations of ergative stimulus subjects with particular transitive verbs to evolve into the idiomatised experiencer object constructions we have examined here.

## Appendix

[14] The related language Komnzo (Döhler 2018) is similar in its essentials.

| Meaning | Phrase | Syntax | N meaning | V meaning | Compositional meaning[15] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| be fed up, be sick of | *zérgnäm wñäms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | exasperation | seize, overpower | 'exasperation seizes me' |
| die | *(enznewäm) zangs* | $NP_{abs}$ ($NP_{erg}$) $V_{tr}$ | (disease) | ? | '(disease) *kills me' |
| be really hungry, be ravenous | *gersäm tnengs* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | hunger | shake off dust | 'hunger give me a good shake' |
| be hungry | *gersäm wñäms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | hunger | seize | 'hunger seizes me' |
| feel afraid | *brbräm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | fear | do, make | 'fear does me' |
| feel cold | *kérbéräm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | cold | do, make | 'cold does me' |
| feel hot | *pip omtewäm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | body hot | do, make | 'hot body does me' |
| feel hot | *warwaräm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | sweat | do, make | 'sweat does me' |
| feel hungry | *gersäm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | hunger | do, make | 'hunger does me' |
| feel hungry | *kraräm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | hunger | do, make | 'hunger does me' |
| feel itchy | *essäm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | itchiness[16] | do, make | 'itchiness does me' |
| feel moved | *weiweiyäm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | pity, empathy | do, make | 'pity does me' |
| feel nauseous | *srsr ermrs* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{abs}$ $V_{m}$ | stomach | ? | 'I ? (my) stomach' |
| feel nauseous, feel stomach pains | *srsr nps* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{abs}$ $V_{tr}$ | stomach | cut | 'stomach cuts me' |
| feel pain | *tkretewäm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | pain | do, make | 'pain does me' |
| feel sad, feel sorry for (OBL) | *weiweiyäm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ ($NP_{obl}$) $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | pity, empathy | do, make | 'pity does me' |
| feel sexually aroused | *waläm wñäms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | lust | seize, overpower | 'lust seizes me' |
| feel sick | *enznewäm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | sickness | do, make | 'sickness does me' |
| feel sick | *enznewäm wñäms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | sickness | seize, overpower | 'sickness seizes me' |
| feel thirsty | *akäm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | thirst | do, make | 'thirst does me' |
| get an erection | *dowakoäm wñäms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | erection | seize, overpower | '(an) erection seizes me' |
| get angry | *néqäm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | anger | do, make | 'anger does me' |
| get wet | *bdräm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | (none)[17] | do, make | 'wetness does me' |

[15] Where no synchronically attested word for one of the parts exists, * denotes a postulated meaning for the part.
[16] This is one of the few cases where the stimulus noun is an infinitive, used as a regular noun: the middle verb *ess* means 'to itch'.
[17] Though *bdrete* means 'wet'.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| get wet from rain | *nuwäm pams* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | water, rain | ? | 'water ?s me' |
| have a splitting headache (esp. malarial) | *mrkp krärs* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{abs}$ $V_{tr}$ | head | bite, crack | 'head cracks me' |
| have diarrhoea | *nä sosänewäm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | diarrhoea | do, make | 'diarrhoea does me' |
| have diarrhoea | *nä qrqräm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | diarrhoea | do, make | 'diarrhoea does me' |
| have leprosy (to the point of losing a body part) | *gangläm mämä wets* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ Adj $V_{tr}$ | leprosy | finish | 'leprosy bad(ly) finishes me' |
| have the flu, have a bad cold | *momae séqräm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | mucus | do, make | 'mucus does me' |
| have a toothache | *sn selm nne* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | toothache | consume, eat | 'toothache consumes me' |
| shiver | *gerngeräm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | shivering | do, make | 'shivering does me' |
| shiver | *dmbrdmbräm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | shivering | do, make | 'shivering does me' |
| want to eat meat | *kmbrämäm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | (none) | do, make | '*meat.desire does me' |
| want to eat something sweet (like sugarcane) | *mñtewäm räms* | $NP_{abs}$ $NP_{erg}$ $V_{tr}$ | sweetness | do, make | 'sweetness does me' |

Table 1.1 Nen experiencer object constructions

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