

Some word order patterns in Karuk*

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Karuk word order is quite different from English word order.

- In English, the typical word order in a sentence is **subject-verb-object**, as in “**The boy** saw *a snake*.”
- In Karuk, the typical word order is **subject-object-verb**:

(1) **iim** *áama* í-mniish-tih.
you salmon you>it-cook-ing
You cooked salmon.

Vina Smith, July 23, 2010.

(2) páyava kári **pa-’áraar** *pa-’urípi* u-p-ithyúru-ripaa.
you.see then the-human the-net he>it-again-pull-out
Then the Indian pulled the net out of the water.

Julia Starritt “Salmon Fishing” (WB-KL-69:16)

Other orders are possible too, including

- **subject-verb-object**:

(3) páy uum **pa-’áraar** ú-mniish-ti *pa-chikin’úruh*.
this is the-human he>it-cook-ing the-(hen’s).egg
The man is cooking an egg.

Sonny Davis, February 20, 2016

- and **verb-object-subject**:

(4) ta’ítam kun-ífik-aheen *pa-xuntápan* **pa-’asiktávaansa**.
so they>it-pick.up-ANT the-acorn the-women
Then the women gathered the acorns.

Mamie Offield “Coyote Gives Salmon and Acorns to Mankind” (WB-KL-17:34)

*The material in this handout is drawn from language work in Yreka 2010-2017 with Karuk elders Lucille Albers, Sonny Davis, Julian Lang, Vina Smith, and Charlie Thom, facilitated by language learners and teachers Tamara Alexander, LuLu Alexander, Susan Gerh, Robert Manuel, Crystal Richardson, Arch Super, and Florraine Super. I have also consulted Karuk texts provided by earlier generations of Karuk speakers who also worked tirelessly to document and preserve their language including Abner’s mother, Lottie Beck, Mrs. Bennet, Maggie Charley, Grace Davis, Madeline Davis, Emily Donahue, Fritz Hansen, Benonie Harrie, Margaret Harrie, Daisy Jones, Phoebe Maddux, Mamie Offield, Chester Pepper, Nettie Ruben, Julia Starritt, Violet Super, Yaas. I also thank the UC Berkeley linguists who have worked with Karuk language starting in the 1940s and continuing to this day.

It's also possible to leave out the subject and/or object:

- subject omitted

(5) *áhup tá ni-kyâa-tih.*
wood have I>it-make-ing
I gathered wood.

Julian Lang, January 30, 2011

- object omitted

(6) **nani-kîit** nee-kshúpih-eet.
my-grandmother she>me-teach-PAST
My grandmother taught me.

Charlie Thom Sr., June 16, 2013

- subject and object omitted:

(7) *tá ni-path.*
have I>it-throw
I throw it.

Lucille Albers, May 1, 2010

Some words always come before the verb, including

- words that describe how one feels

(8) *payêem uum yáv ni-pmahóonkoona-tih.*
now is good I-feel-ing
Now I am feeling good.

Vina Smith, December 21, 2011

(9) *vúra kâarim pa-ni-xúti.*
indeed bad that-I-feel
I am feeling bad.

Chester Pepper, "Medicine for the Return of Wives" (WB-KL-52:50)

- words that describe how something looks, tastes, or smells:

(10) *pa-'ishkêesh yáv u-músahi-tih.*
the-river good it-look-ing
The river looks good.

Charlie Thom, Sr., June 5, 2013

(11) *vishvan-'áran kích u-'áka-ti.*
belly-tripe just it-taste-ing
It tasted merely like entrails.

[TK 221.34]

(12) *pa-hûut ú-mxaath-tih.*
the-how it-smell.like-ing
"How [tobacco] Smells"

Phoebe Maddux, Sense Characteristics (JPH-TKIC-III.5.A.a: 4)

- words marked with *kích* (= only), *káru* (= also), *kúna* (= in addition) also always come before the verb:

(13) xás pa-’únuhich kích t-u-páth-ih.
 then the-kidney only has-he>it-throw-to
Then he threw only the kidney to him.
 Mrs. Bennett “Screech Owl and Coyote” (ALK-14-35:13)

(14) uumkun káru kun-pakúriihva.
 they also they-sing.songs
They (the Does) were singing too.
 Mamie Offield “Coyote Trades Songs and Goes to the Sky” (WB-KL-09:4)

(15) âanxus uum káru pákuri u-thiiná-tih.
 weasel he also song he-have-DUR
Weasel had a song. (After the Old Woman sings her song)
 Lottie Beck “The Perils of Weasel” (WB-KL-18:19)

(16) pa-mu-hrôoha kúna ú-kfuukiraa.
 his-wife in.addition he>her-grab
He grabbed his wife in turn.
 Lottie Beck “The Greedy Father” (WB-KL-23:67)

- Finally, when you are contrasting or correcting something, it also goes before the verb:

(17) Question: Is your knife dull?
 Answer:
 púuhara, pa-nani-’akôor u-múmu-hi-tih.
 no the-my-axe it-dull-be-ing
No, my AXE is dull.

Sonny Davis Jr, November 8, 2015

In a COMPLEX SENTENCE that describes what someone THINKS, LIKES, KNOWS, FORGOT, REMEMBERED, SAID, REVEALED, TRIED TO DO, STOPPED DOING, IS WAITING FOR, OR IS HAPPY ABOUT, the part describing what was thought, known, forgotten and so on always comes **after** the verb:

(18) naa íp ni-pasúpiichv-at [pa-sôomvaan t-i-’ípasuk].
 I PAST I-reveal-PAST that-prospective.wife have-you-bring.back
I revealed that you were bringing home a new wife.
 Mamie Offield “Duck Hawk and His Wife” (WB-KL-27:23)

(19) ni-krúunti [iim p-ee-mnísh-eesh].
 I-wait.for you that-you-cook-going.to
I am waiting for you to cook.
 Vina Smith, September 8, 2013

(20) naa vúra ni-tapkúupi-ti [pa-ni-’uufíthvu-tih].
 I indeed I-like-ing that-I-swim-ing
I like to swim.
 Vina Smith, September 7, 2013

(21) i-pikrôok-ti húm [fâat p-ee-pí-tih]?
 you-remember-ing Q what that-you-say-ing
Did you remember what you said?
 Charlie Thom, Sr., June 5, 2013

Remember that words and phrases marked with *kích* (= only) go before the verb. So what happens when *kích* marks one of these embedded clauses that wants to go after the verb? Here Karuk uses the word *vaa* (= that) to resolve the word order situation:

- (22) xas uum vúra vaa kích u-kupí-tih-anik [p-óo-thtii-tih-anik].
 and he indeed that only he-do-ing-PAST that-he-gamble-ing-PAST
And all that he used to do was to gamble.
 Fritz Hansen “Mourning Dove Young Man Gambles away his Doodle Bug Grandmother’s Dress”
 (JPH-KT-06:5)

Some cases where Karuk word order is the opposite of English:

- (23) vuha mûuk
 teeth with
with the teeth
- (24) pa-asiktávaansas kóovan
 the-women together.with
together with the women
- (25) pa-sárip kumá’ii
 the-hazel because.of
because of the hazel bushes
- (26) ikmaháchrahaam kúuk
 sweathouse to
to the sweathouse
- (27) p-eethívthaaneen thaanêen
 the-earth around
around the earth
- (28) ishvít kóo
 half as.much.as
as much as half

Sometimes a Karuk phrase is split across the verb:

- (29) **asipárax** nu-’átivu-ti **káru múruk** **káru tásvaan** **káru tarípaan**
 cooking.basket we>them-carry-ing also mealing.tray also spatula also dipper.basket
In burden baskets we carried cooking baskets and tray baskets and soup stirrers and dippers
 Nettie Ruben “The Pikiawish at Katimin” (WB-KL-83:21)
- (30) púyava **táay** tá kun-’úupva **pa-tayíith.**
 you.see much have they>it-dig.roots the-brodiaea
So they dug a lot of brodiaeas.

Nettie Ruben “The Story of Skunk” (WB-KL-46:14)