

**A Grammar of South Efate: An Oceanic Language of Vanuatu.** NICHOLAS THIEBERGER. Oceanic Linguistics Special Publications No. 33. With accompanying DVD. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006. Pp. xxviii + 384. \$39.00 (paper).

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Although, according to the estimate of Lynch and Crowley (2001:19), a total of eighty-one of the approximately one hundred languages of Vanuatu are still actively spoken, only sixteen Vanuatu languages were categorized as being reasonably well documented at the time of that publication. This new book by Nicholas Thieberger, along with other recently published works (François 2002; Chung 2005; Crowley 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d; Musgrave 2007), significantly and substantially increases the available information on Vanuatu languages. It also adds new dimensions to such language documentation by giving access to a large amount of supporting material.

South Efate, one of three distinct languages of the island of Efate, is spoken on and around the southern and southeastern coasts of the island. It is identified as belonging to Nuclear Southern Oceanic, within which South Efate and Southern Melanesian (the Southern Vanuatu and New Caledonia languages) probably make up a further subgroup (Lynch 2001). Despite the proximity of South Efate to Port Vila, the major population center of Vanuatu, previous linguistic work on South Efate has largely been limited to the production of word lists. The existence of a number of Christian texts dating from 1864 to 1923 has, however, provided South Efate with an orthography that is used in the work reviewed here. Thieberger explains (pp. 33–35) that the language of the early religious texts is a varied amalgam of different languages and dialects, in some cases deliberately constructed with the aim of being all-inclusive. The South Efate language is estimated to have about six thousand speakers. Older speakers who were schooled in the writing of their language are conversant with the traditional orthography. All speakers, including children, also use Bislama, the Vanuatu creole that has developed from Neo-Melanesian, and the effects of the use of Bislama are seen in many vocabulary borrowings from Bislama into South Efate.

The book contains twelve chapters, of which ten, covering some three hundred pages, are devoted to the language description. These chapters are preceded by an introduction that sets out the author's methodology, especially with respect to the documentation and archiving of material, and by a further chapter that provides a comprehensive account of what is known of the local history and of the various records of South Efate dating from the time of the earliest Western contact. An appendix presents eight glossed and translated texts. An accompanying DVD provides supplementary digitized material (in written, audio, and video formats), including a twenty-five-hundred-word South Efate–English dictionary and an English finder list. Nearly all the example sentences appearing in the book, as well as a number of word forms in the chapter on phonology, are included in the DVD audio files.

The description of the language begins with chapter 3 on phonology (pp. 45–73). South Efate has fifteen consonant phonemes, including two semivowels, and an unremarkable system of five vowels. The most interesting aspect of the consonant system is the presence of two coarticulated labiovelars, a stop / $\widehat{kp}$ / and a nasal / $\widehat{\eta m}$ /. Both of these have variant realizations which appear not to be conditioned by context: / $\widehat{kp}$ / is realized as [k $\widehat{p}$ ] (coarticulation), [kp] (two-consonant sequence), [k], or [p]; and correspondingly for / $\widehat{\eta m}$ /. Anticipatory degemination is observed in contexts in which the coarticulated segment is immediately preceded by a morpheme ending in a consonant identical to one or other of the consonants of the coarticulated unit. Thus, when / $\widehat{kp}$ / is preceded by a morpheme ending in /k/ or /p/, the morpheme-final segments are dropped in the output sequences (p. 72). This chapter also provides extensive coverage of

phonotactics (South Efate features a dominance of heterorganic clusters over homorganic clusters), stress placement (initial, with one systematic set of exceptions), and morphophonemic processes (including degeminations and vowel reductions). The discussion of the semivowels (pp. 53, 65) shows that their phonemic status is identifiable in certain contexts, but not in others. The chapter also provides a useful set of South Efate words matched with reconstructed Proto-Oceanic forms and exemplifying forty-five reflexes of Proto-Oceanic sound segments. (Among these, we see a source for one of the South Efate semivowels in the development of Proto-Oceanic \**pose* into Efate *wes* 'paddle'.)

Chapter 4, "Word Classes" (pp. 74–102), gives an overview of the word categories assumed in the remaining chapters of the book. Many of the definitions in this chapter are better understood in the light of the more elaborated explanations that appear in later chapters. However, chapter 4 also discusses how decisions were made in some of the more difficult cases of category attribution. Thus, affixes are distinguished from clitics in that the former attach only to a single word class, whereas the latter (all proclitics) attach to a variety of morpheme classes or phrases. The South Efate verb-adjective distinction is also elucidated in this chapter.

The major features of the morphosyntax are set out in chapters 5–12: chapter 5 treats noun phrases; chapters 6–10 treat mood and aspect, verb characteristics, and argument roles; chapter 11 treats simple clauses; and chapter 12 treats complex clauses.

Chapter 5 (pp. 103–48) begins with a discussion of pronouns, describes the content of noun phrases. The label "pronoun" is applied both to free forms and to the person-number-encoding clitics and affixes that reference arguments. The verb complex is preceded by a portmanteau clitic combining tense-aspect and person-number features, the latter said to represent the subject argument (pp. 103, 109, 267). In effect (see p. 267), it seems that Thieberger interprets this proclitic as the real subject, on the grounds that, except for some clause chaining constructions, it is the only obligatory subject-referencing element. Other overt manifestations of the subject—lexical nouns or free pronouns—are then said to coindex this (clitic) argument as an additional expression of the subject, usually "hav[ing] the function of emphasizing the subject in the sentence" (p. 269). The object-referencing pronoun (a suffix), on the other hand, does not cooccur with a lexical object, and Thieberger therefore considers the object argument itself to be either the suffix or the lexical noun, whichever one of these is overt.

This representation of argument roles in sentences is not explicitly linked to a formal theory of the syntax of clause arguments and it is thus difficult to evaluate, but I believe that it, in fact, runs into problems at the descriptive level. Sentence-initial constituent positions are discussed later in the book (see especially pp. 274–77); among the examples given, one with a left-dislocated subject topic ((37), p. 275) shows the sequence in (1).

(1) Topic<sub>i</sub> + Free Pronoun<sub>i</sub> + Pronoun Clitic<sub>i</sub> + Verb.

In this sequence, if the pronoun clitic is, as is claimed, the subject argument, and if the initial constituent is indeed a topic, then we are left with no account of the syntactic function of the intermediate free pronoun, which is said to be the overt trace of the dislocated topic.

The discussion of objects is also filled out elsewhere in the book (see especially pp. 175–76, 204–12). When the verb has an object, there can be a transitivity suffix on the verb root followed by an object-referencing suffix, which, in the case of third singular, is  $-\emptyset$  (zero) or  $-n$ . Nonindividuated third person lexical objects are said to be incorporated into the verb, and in this case the verb bears neither a transitivity suffix nor an object suffix. When the object is individuated, the verb bears the transitivity suffix, but the object suffix is present only if there is no overt noun phrase object after the verb. In the case of a third person singular object, which has a  $-\emptyset$  'zero' object referencing suffix, the

contrast is thus between Verb-*i*- $\emptyset$  (with no following noun phrase) and Verb-*i*-NP<sub>individuated</sub> (pp. 210–12). This interpretation aligns overt third person singular objects with objects in other person and number categories that have nonzero object referencing suffixes. Although the contrasting occurrences are demonstrated for non-third person objects, we do not see here the corresponding forms with a third person plural object (for which the object marking suffix is overt *-r*). The author also assumes that the suffix  $\emptyset$  is present on perception and causative verbs that have overt clausal complements (pp. 312–13, 321–22). This representation is inconsistent with the claim that an overt object argument does not cooccur with an object suffix. Although South Efate lacks postverbal elements that can intervene between the verb and an object and that therefore would provide an overt distinction of word order between incorporated and nonincorporated objects (as happens, for instance, in Polynesian languages), the incorporation analysis for South Efate fits with characteristics of incorporation in other languages (a nonspecific object in conjunction with the absence of the transitivity suffix on the verb). However, I retain some reservations over the identification of the subject and object arguments and over the application of the label “pronoun” to the subject clitics and to the object suffixes.

An interesting aspect of person and number encoding is that, of the different sets of markers, the most elaborated forms are the subject clitics, as these are the only forms for which dual number contrasts with singular and plural. Dual subject reference is encoded in the clitic form while an accompanying lexical noun (or free pronoun) has the plural form. Another apparent number mismatch is seen in the regular cooccurrence of an overt plural inanimate subject and a singular subject clitic. South Efate also has an invariant echo-subject marker that is not cognate with echo markers in other Vanuatu languages (pp. 111–15). The direct possession construction (mostly for inalienable possession) contrasts with an indirect possession construction, but the latter class lacks further subdivisions such as are found in a number of other Oceanic languages. An unusual development is the presence in South Efate of a noun-forming prefix *te-*, acquired from a determiner of this form in the neighboring Polynesian language, Mele-Fila (pp. 137–40).

In chapters 6–10, Thieberger presents a carefully detailed account of a fascinating array of phenomena relevant to components of the verb complex. These include mood and aspect marking, verb sequencing, and the classification of verbs in terms of their morphological and argument-taking characteristics. In chapter 6 (pp. 149–70), mood and aspect distinctions are clearly identified and located with reference to Dahl’s (1985) schema. This chapter also shows that South Efate has a form of stem-initial consonant mutation distinguishing realis and irrealis, in which the realis form is synchronically basic. An unusual feature of the South Efate stem-initial mutation is that the irrealis form is used with an understood object (illustrated on pp. 165–66).

In chapter 7 (pp. 171–95), verbs are classified on the basis of morphosyntactic criteria into five categories: intransitive, semitransitive, ambitransitive, transitive, and ditransitive. The class memberships of individual verbs are listed in tables and are well supported by illustrative example sentences. Chapter 8 (pp. 196–220) contains a wealth of information on derivational processes, in particular those relating to argument functions. In chapter 9 (pp. 221–42), we find a well-argued analysis showing that South Efate, unlike a number of Vanuatu languages, does not have serial verb constructions. Some interesting proposals are offered as to diachronic developments by which South Efate may have lost earlier serial verb constructions; it is proposed that earlier serial constructions are continued in South Efate by grammaticalized auxiliary verbs, (lexicalized) compound verbs, and other relics. Chapter 10 (pp. 243–66) then brings together the different components that have been examined in the preceding four chapters to show how they and other elements are sequenced within the verb complex. The possible sequences are highly complex, featuring several particle forms that occur between the subject-referencing clitic and the main verb and that are classed into two

linearly ordered preverbal units, called "preverbal complexes." Ordering restrictions allow four classes of auxiliary verbs to be identified, with the largest class containing the modal auxiliaries. The preverbal particles include the first element of the discontinuous negative *ta(p) . . . mau*. Unusually, the second part of the negative appears in sentence-final position. The first element in its form *ta* is homophonous with the durative marker *ta*. In single-clause sentences, the homophony does not give rise to ambiguity, since final *mau* indicates the negative. However, if both a main-clause verb and the verb of its complement are preceded by *ta*, there can be ambiguity in the interpretation, since the sentence-final position of *mau* leaves open which clause is being negated. Another interesting component of the preverbal sequence is the reflexive-reciprocal particle *tmo* that immediately precedes the main verb. This marker takes a direct possession suffix. Depending on context, when subject and object have the same person and number value, the interpretation may be emphatic (the only interpretation with an intransitive subject), reflexive, or reciprocal. Finally, following the verb complex, there can be a perfective suffix that occurs either immediately after the verb or after the object (pp. 265–66).

Chapter 11 (pp. 267–89) describes the structures of single-clause sentences, which basically follow subject–verb–object constituent order. Here we see that, with the ditransitive verb *tu* 'give', only the recipient argument appears as the syntactic object—it is referenced in the object suffix on the verb and it immediately follows the verb when overt. South Efate has a copular verb *pi* used in equative clauses, and *piatlak/pitlak* 'have' is used in existential clauses. Nonverbal clauses are used for possessed equatives ('my name is X') and for locational equatives. This chapter also includes treatments of constructions with preposed constituents (pp. 274–77), of interrogatives (pp. 282–86), and of different forms of negation (pp. 286–89). An unusual feature of clause structure is that benefactives, unlike other prepositional phrases, occur in preverbal position after other preverbal complexes, apparently not cooccurring with the reflexive-reciprocal particle discussed in chapter 10. This is an unusual position for a constituent which can be recursively extended as a full noun phrase (p. 280). Thieberger offers some speculations (pp. 280–81) as to the origin of the preverbal placement of benefactives; he suggests it could have evolved as an analogical extension based on the fact that prepositional phrases can be followed by the verb-derived directional particles. His proposal seems to assume relocation of the benefactive phrase to the preverbal position, implying that the cliticization effects are subsequent to the displacement. Given that it is not unusual for languages to cliticize benefactives (as attested, for instance, in historical developments in Romance languages), it seems that such an explanation is not called for. Under an alternative account in which cliticization is a first step, what is then unusual is for the clitic position to be opened up to a full phrase.

Chapter 12 (pp. 290–330) is on complex sentences. The focus in this final chapter is on coordinate and subordinate clauses, the kinds of markers used to introduce them, and the characteristics of the coordinate and subordinate clauses themselves. The coordinators are *me* 'but, and' (usually adversative), *go* 'and', and *ko* 'or', all of which may conjoin full clauses and noun phrases (although *me* does not have the adversative interpretation when conjoining noun phrases). There are three subordinating particles, all of which, with differing frequency counts, may introduce complement clauses and relative clauses, and only one of which may introduce adverbial clauses. The subordinate clauses themselves have no particular distinguishing characteristics except that certain complement clauses have an irrealis form that is likened to a subjunctive since it cannot occur in an independent clause.

Nine semantically distinct classes of complement-taking predicates are identified. The predicate-class distinctions are well supported by the data, except that some examples given as "immediate perception predicates" should have been placed in the

"predicates of knowledge" class (see, for instance, example (92), translated as 'I heard there was no bad behavior' [p. 313]).

The author discusses and demonstrates his commitment to providing access to his primary data (pp. 5–10). In terms of the content of the book, this commitment is represented most particularly in the referencing of example sentences, most of which are linked to audio files on the accompanying DVD, while others are referenced to audio material that is to be archived and made accessible on websites (notably, on the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures, <http://paradisec.org.au>).

I found that the instructions given on the DVD were easy to follow and that it was a very simple procedure to access the audio links to the numbered examples. Though there are a few mismatches in the numbering of examples between the book and the DVD (e.g., examples on pp. 328–30), this was not a serious problem as the sequential ordering of the data readily allows the reader-listener to correct the alignments. The audio access is of particular interest for cases where intonation or pause segmentation is relevant to interpretation, and obviously also for direct access to the realization of individual sound segments and allophonic variants. The DVD also includes written texts from historical sources, the interlinearized text of the South Efate responses to Dahl's (1985) tense-mood-aspect questionnaire, and South Efate lexicon with about twenty-five hundred head words accompanied by an English finder list. The lexicon is well set out and usefully applies distinct fonts and colors to its different fields (including species names, where applicable, and a number of illustrative sentence examples).

I have mentioned some points about which I have reservations, but these are minor in the context of the very impressive overall quality of the book. It contains a wealth of information, and is based on an extensive collection of data, including forty hours of recorded audio data (p. 5) as well as some texts from historical sources. It makes a very important contribution to knowledge of the languages of Vanuatu, including details on many phenomena that open up new avenues for research; the detailed coverage of the morphosyntactic characteristics central to the verb complex is particularly welcome. It also includes many references to comparable data from related languages and, in a number of instances, data from South Efate are shown in relation to Proto-Oceanic reconstructed forms.

In summary, Thieberger's book makes a very substantial contribution to the study of Oceanic languages. It is of great interest particularly for Oceanists, but it is also of more general linguistic interest for the data that it brings to bear on the understanding of typological features in languages. Especially commendable is the explicit and integral linking of data to accessible primary material.

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