

References

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Cynthia J. M. Farr, *The Interface between Syntax and Discourse in Korafe, a Papuan Language of Papua New Guinea*. (PaciƁc Linguistics, C-148.) Canberra: Australian National University, 1999, xx + 459 pages, ISBN 0-85883-499-5, AU\$ 75.95.

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The aim of this book is to explore and compare the morphosyntactic and discourse properties of the three complex predicate and clause-combining structures in Korafe, a Papuan language spoken in the Oro Province of Papua New Guinea. Korafe is a member of the Binandere subgroup of the Trans-New Guinea Phylum. The three structures are serial verb constructions, switch-reference constructions, and co-ranking constructions. The author also gives detailed supporting grammatical descriptions of the rather complex verbal inflectional system; NP structure; predicate structure; clause structure, with a pragmatic account of word order and NP marking systems; sentence structure; as well as the complex clause combining constructions.

This is a particularly important work for typologists. New Guinea contains 20% of the world's languages, yet only a small proportion of these have been

adequately described so far. The languages of New Guinea are typically drastically under-represented in typological studies, primarily because of a lack of accessible data. This work, in providing a wealth of linguistic data in a very accessible format, is, among other things, an important contribution of material for typological studies.

The description has a strong functional orientation. It poses (and answers) such questions as “Why are there two chaining constructions in Korafe?”, “What is the difference between using a switch-reference construction and a co-ranking construction?”, “Why are NPs there when they are, and why are they not when they are not?”, and ultimately, “How are things said in Korafe?”.

Farr employs an eclectic mix of theoretical persuasions: she uses, among others, Dik (1978) on pragmatic relations, Givón (1984/1990) on discourse cohesion and reference tracking, Dixon (1994) on basic syntactic relations, Fox (1987a, b), Hopper & Thompson (1984), Pawley (1987), and Givón (1987) on discourse structures, and Pawley (1986, 1988) on lexicalisation. She also makes frequent use of Papuan descriptive and typological literature, noting similarities and differences with other languages of the same family, as well as pointing out typological correlations with other distantly related or probably unrelated Papuan languages.

The corpus used for the work is impressive: it was collected by the author over 27 years, during which she and her family have lived for extended periods with the Korafe community as an SIL team, with some of that time spent at the Australian National University in Canberra doing her PhD, on which the book is based, at the Department of Linguistics in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies. Her thorough knowledge of Korafe language and life is evident in every line of the book. Her ongoing commitment to community ownership of the Korafe language, in particular the orthography, is evident in comments throughout the whole work.

The rest of this review discusses each chapter in turn. Chapter 1 describes the social and linguistic context. A brief ethnographic section describes Korafe speakers, a coastal population of about 3,000 people, living a swidden agriculture lifestyle, growing taro as their staple crop, sago, and other plant foods, as well as utilising marine resources. Other languages used in the Korafe speaking area are the Austronesian language Wedau, used in some schools before 1950, English, used in schools now, and Tok Pisin, the lingua franca of much of Papua New Guinea.

Chapter 2 covers verbs, the only obligatory constituent in verbal clauses, and the heart of the language. The basic morphological distinction in verbs is between *ɓ*nite and non-*ɓ*nite verbs; and within *ɓ*nite verbs between medial verbs and *ɓ*nal verbs. Combinatorial possibilities between TAM categories and other verbal categories are also rather complex. Verbal morphology is complex, with fusional morphemes, including stem changes in verbs in certain

person/number/tense/speech-act value combinations. Some morphology is agglutinative in some categories and fusional in others; Farr chooses to gloss morphemes as portmanteaus in most cases, although more morpheme segmentation is often possible. There are also different verb stem forms for use with different inflectional categories; and some marking categories require analytic verb forms, for example with a verb stem and a general inflecting verb such as ‘do’.

Chapter 3 deals with NP structures and functions. The internal constituency of NPs (briefly, possessor–head–qualifier–quantifier–determiner) is described, and an outline is given of complement clauses and relative constructions. The major section covers NP functions: these she deals with on three separate levels: syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic. Core NPs are unmarked for syntactic function, but oblique NPs are generally marked by postpositions. Verbs, however, cross-reference their subject argument with a suffix. It is not clear why Farr discusses verbal cross-reference in this chapter, not the previous one. Is she claiming that the verbal cross-reference suffix is a pronoun, and has argument status? Pragmatic functions have important morphosyntactic correlations in Korafe, being marked by word order, clitics, and phonological features including stress. Demonstratives play a major role in marking pragmatic relations of referents, and in marking pragmatic relations between clauses. For instance, pragmatic markers *mo* (marking theme and topic), *i(mi)* (marking effector of change), and *va* (marking change of direction) can be cliticised directly to phrases or clauses, or they can be cliticised to demonstratives. Unmarked word order is SOV, but OSV is also possible. If OSV word order occurs, for instance to topicalise the O, one of the NPs must be marked for its pragmatic function. Otherwise NPs can be, but do not have to be, marked for their pragmatic function. Themes can be left-extracted and tails can be right-extracted.

Chapter 4 describes in some detail basic sentences, predicates, and predication types, including valency and the way this is expressed in predicate types. Farr notes the problem of determining how many argument roles a predicate has: in a language with a high degree of ellipsis, many ambitransitive verbs, and no object cross-referencing on predicates, it is often very difficult to know if a particular verb is transitive in any one instance. She also describes a problematic possessive experiencer construction, similar constructions to which also occur in some other Papuan languages. In this construction, verbal subject-marking morphology does not always agree with the overt NP which one might otherwise want to call subject. This anomaly is discussed further in Chapter 7, where it is shown that these expressions have similarly anomalous effects on same-subject or different-subject marking on medial verbs.

A good detailed account is given of principles governing word order variations in Korafe. Rather than just saying word order is free, or that it is governed by “pragmatic principles” and leaving it at that, Farr explains exactly what

principles determine the order of NPs. Her definition of “sentence” is partly syntactic and partly prosodic. She gives computer-analysed intonational contours with amplitude contours for, among other things, declarative sentences, questions, and commands.

Chapters 5 to 8 are the main body of the work. Chapter 5 describes serial verb constructions (SVCs) in Korafe. There are two structural types of these: contiguous and non-contiguous (nuclear-layer and core-layer serialisation in Foley & Olson’s 1985 terms). After discussing the morphosyntactic details of SVCs, she then takes a broad perspective, and asks why does Korafe have two chaining constructions: SVCs and switch-reference constructions (which are described in the following chapter). It is, she concludes, a matter of staging, information packaging, and event integration, and she shows this more thoroughly in later chapters. It is this type of question, which she often asks, that makes the whole work so interesting.

Chapter 6 deals with switch-reference constructions (SRCs), which are so characteristic of Papuan, especially Trans-New Guinea Phylum languages. The now-standard “coordinate-dependent” analysis of Foley (1986) is applied to the syntactic relations between medial verbs and their final verb. SRCs are a type of chaining construction which consist of one or more dependent (medial) clauses, followed by a final clause. The medial verbs are marked for whether the same or a different subject follows in the next clause. They are also marked for whether the action of the next clause is simultaneous with or sequential to the marking in the current clause. Tense values and speech-act values are constrained across the entire construction, and clauses are ordered iconically. She gives a good account of when and why conjunctions can intervene between medial clauses showing that when they occur they null the tense-iconic ordering of clauses and provide their own overt causal or temporal relations between medial clauses.

Chapter 7 is really a continuation of the previous chapter: Farr takes three apparently anomalous phenomena to do with SRCs and shows, using the morphosyntactic and pragmatic rules she outlined in the previous chapter, that they are not exceptional anomalies, but rather principled departures from these rules. The three phenomena are referential overlap (i.e., how the same-subject and different-subject system operates when some but not all subject referents are shared), skipped embedded sentences (i.e., non-medial clauses or sentences which appear in the SRC construction, but are ignored, for the purposes of switch-reference, when the chaining construction resumes), and clauses with mismatches in the subject referencing in the SRC. Such mismatches occur with clauses encoding physiological and psychological responses, with clauses encoding temporal, meteorological, and circumstantial settings, and with clauses that register a temporal overlap between medial clauses. Farr shows that in each of the three types the apparent anomalous marking is a response to com-

peting demands between constraints of syntactic marking on the one hand, and pragmatic requirements on the other hand.

Chapter 8, a discussion of co-ranking constructions (CRSs), begins with a typology of clause linkage in Korafe. Farr employs Bruce's (1984) concept of "base" as her basic unit, then distinguishes a continuum of clause combining from parataxis to embedding, showing that all three methods of clause combining can be distinguished morphosyntactically in Korafe, although there are grey areas in between – hence the continuum rather than three distinct types. Co-ranking clauses themselves are sequences of clauses in which the primary predicating units are of the same syntactic rank; none are dependent on the others. They can be clauses or sequence of clauses (including sequences of SRCs or other CRSs). Each co-ranking clause can be dependent or independent of the other(s). Dependent co-ranking clauses stand in a hypotactic relationship to each other. Independent co-ranking clauses stand in a paratactic relationship to each other. Co-ranking clauses can each have their own TAM, polarity, illocutionary force, and argument array; and they are joined together by overt linking words, which are for the most part based on demonstratives.

Chapters 9, 10, and 11 are concerned with larger discourse structures. Chapter 9 begins with the stated aim of answering the rather large question of "How are things said in Korafe?". To answer this question Farr introduces the idea of "standardised sequences of verbs" and thematic clause chain units (TCCUs), drawing on work by Pawley (1987, 1994) among others, who explores the idea that competence in a language requires not just knowing the grammatical rules of a language, but also knowing common ways of expressing things. "Standardised verb sequences" are the conventionalised sequences, which may consist of any type of clause or clause combination, which are used to express conventional activities; they also include speech formulas. TCCUs, similar to Pawley & Syder's (1983) "ßuent units" and Chafe's (1986, 1987) "intonation units" are units of discourse held together by a common theme. Farr gives a definition for Korafe which encompasses semantic, phonological, and grammatical criteria.

Chapter 10, entitled "Introduction to Korafe discourse", has a still broader scope: linguistic organisation across a whole discourse. She examines chaining paragraphs (which are typically about a sequence of events) vs. thematic paragraphs (typically about a dominant theme with supporting arguments). She shows that these different types of paragraphs can be distinguished by their use of different grammatical devices. For instance, chaining paragraphs are associated with the following grammatical features: they include only SRCs, have few overt NPs, all sentences and Pnal verbs have the same tense, and they employ head-tail linkage, another feature often characteristically associated with Papuan languages. In thematic paragraphs, however, CRSs are used, employing all sentence types, using many more NPs than are used in chaining paragraphs, and allowing different tense marking on Pnal verbs. The chapter also discusses

general rules of structuring discourse in different genres (though not including conversation, which she places, reasonably, beyond the scope of the work), including opening and closing routines and the components of plot, build-up, and so on. The final part of the chapter deals with scripts, which are “a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation” (p. 370, quoting Schank & Abelson 1977: 41). Korafe scripts are quite loosely structured in comparison with a language like Kalam (Pawley 1987), which has very tightly structured obligatory sequences in which a speaker cannot just mention one part of a particular event, but has to express every culturally salient component part of the action, in a conventionalised way.

Chapter 11 concerns cohesion, dominance, and prominence in Korafe discourse. Farr gives a list of guidelines for interpreting the identity of ellipsed NP referents. These include, for example, the observation that referents initially introduced as objects in a same-subject medial sequence tend to be understood as the object of all subsequent transitive clauses until another overt NP is introduced, and further that the object in a medial clause marked with a different-subject verb tends to be the subject of the next clause, and so on. Farr finds so many powerful guidelines for interpreting the reference of ellipsed NPs that I found myself wondering about possibilities for ambiguity: in a language with such frequent NP ellipsis and the only verbal cross-referencing marking person and number of subject, it is interesting that the language has such powerful interpretational rules to render ambiguity less likely. My own experience is of a language, viz. Lavukaleve (also Papuan), which has extensive cross-referencing throughout the predicate and concordance in person, gender, and number in most nominal dependents; yet even with all this referent-marking material available, ambiguity is frequent, and is in fact to some extent courted by speakers (Terrill 1999: 435–439). Korafe speakers, by contrast, seem to go to some lengths to avoid ambiguity, even though there are comparatively few morphosyntactic referencing structures available.

The book concludes with a collection of over 30 pages of texts from a variety of genres, glossed and marked out into its various structural components.

A bit more careful editing could have helped in some places. There are occasional mistakes in the example sentences which can make them quite difficult to follow: e.g., example 2.34b is incorrectly translated (should be ‘I arrived in the village and found him’, not ‘He arrived in the village and found me’ as given), there are mistakes in the translation in example 5.49b, and in example 7.15b the final verb should be glossed as do.PRES.1S.FN, not do.PRES.3S.FN as given. Also there are occasional references to underlining or bolding to highlight particular elements in example sentences which does not appear, e.g., no underlining in examples 6.32 and 11.36, use of italics instead of boldface in example 11.2. In addition, there are occasional references to “this thesis”, a reminder of the original purpose of the work, which should have been edited

out. Still, these mistakes are infrequent enough to be notable; and with a work of this scope, and dealing with so much data, it is almost impossible to avoid the odd mistake.

This book contains an enormous amount of data from a little-known area of the world. It is clear, well written, extremely detailed, yet takes a broad perspective. Its thorough-going pragmatic stance sets it apart from most grammatical descriptions, and makes it an important contribution to the literature on Papuan linguistics, as well as to typology, discourse analysis, and functional and pragmatic linguistics.

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Marianne Mithun, *The Languages of Native North America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, XXI + 773 pages, ISBN 0-521-23228-7, US\$ 90 (hardback); ISBN 0-521-29875-X, US\$ 32 (paperback).

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This volume is a most welcome continuation of a most useful series. It is a great pleasure to review Marianne Mithun's *The Languages of Native North America* in the Cambridge Linguistic Area Surveys, since one can only express admiration for the tremendous amount of labor behind this book. There are very few people in modern Native North American linguistics, if any, who could do an equally beautiful job as Mithun. As was aptly remarked in an early short review, "M[ithun] dares to play the role of a modern Kroeber or Sapir, and she pulls it off" (Victor Golla, *SSILA Newsletter* 18–4 [January 2000], pp. 11–12).

It is important to note at the outset that, in accordance with American ethnolinguistic tradition, "North America" is understood in the book as essentially the modern territory of the USA and Canada, with some minor outliers in Mexico.

Mithun's book consists of a 12-page introduction and two major parts. Part I, "The nature of the languages" (pp. 13–294), is organized by topic and provides an account of the main types of phenomena, such as sounds and sound patterns, words, grammatical categories, and sentences. There is also a chapter on special language. Part II, "Catalogue of languages" (pp. 295–616), contains an account of the genetic and areal diversity on the North American continent, and a catalogue per se, in the form of an alphabetical list of over 50 language families and isolates currently identified in North America and structural sketches of each of them. The book also contains a preface, a transcription key, a list of abbreviations, twelve maps, an incredibly rich list of references of 139 pages, and an index of names, terms, and languages.