Anaphora
Description and theoretical issues in Whitesands

Jeremy Hammond and Dejan Matic
Syntax, Typology and Information Structure group
Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics
jeremy.hammond@mpi.nl & dejan.matic@mpi.nl

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Abstract

This paper investigates anaphora and control in the language of Whitesands. We look at a range of constructions involving anaphora, including zero referents, full pronouns, ‘reflexive’ suffix -aru and switch-reference chains. We use configurations with partial argument coreference to determine the anaphoric nature of the constructions in question.

Whitesands

Classification

Austronesian > Malayo-Polynesian > Central-Eastern > Eastern Malayo-Polynesian > Oceanic > Central-Eastern Oceanic > South Vanuatu > Tanna > Whitesands

Whitesands (ISO: TNP) is a language whose homeland is in the east of Tanna, Vanuatu. It has a variety of less-common indigenous names; Narak ‘Narak’ or naŋhatiien ‘talk’ being the two most used. It is spoken by roughly 7500 native speakers who live in family oriented hamlets immediately north of the volcano Mt Yasur (Whitesands iewhel), reaching until the bay of Weasisi where the dialect chain has changed enough so that it is no longer intelligible to Whitesands speakers.

WSN has a nominative alignment with a pragmatically unmarked word order of SV(O). It is mainly head marking where the verb has prefixing agreement and TAM, distinguishing (in order) subject person (1.EXCL, 1.INCL, 2 and 3), a PAST/NONPAST tense axis, various aspectual markers, and subject number (SG, DU, TRI and PL). Similar number and person distinctions are available for nominal constituents and pronouns when appropriate. An inflected verb constitutes a potential clause and there is frequent pro-drop found throughout the language, not only for the subjects indexed on the verb, but for all (contextually recoverable) constituent types, including a noun in a prepositional phrase.

(1) Schema of Whitesands verbal prefixing (a) and suffixing (b)

  a. MOOD/TENSE - SUBJ PERSON - TENSE - ASPECT/NEGATION - SUBJ NUMBER - root
  b. root - (movement.DIRECTION) - (GOAL PERSON/REFLEXIVE) = (NEGATION)

1 Reflexives

Disjoint reference within a clause is marked with zero (2) & (3) or a pronoun (4) & (5).

(2) ko namu t-us Ø
  then fish 3SG.NPST-bite
  Then the fish bites (it).
  WS4-110521-family1 00:43:47.148
Coreference is marked with zero (6) or a pronoun (7) & (8), or a benefactive/possessive pronoun (9).

(6)  itamah n-aut-o1 01 n-eepst-ien
2PL 2-PROG.PL-make OBL NMLZ-big-NMLZ
You all are making (yourselves) big/exalted.
ISJHWS3-20100329JVC-05-all.wav 592.076 593.214

(7)  k-ost-apariapari =iie itah mən ohni
1.INCL-NEG.PL-admire.RDP =NEG 1PL.INCL.ACC again OBL.3SG
We are looking bad at ourselves about it.
ISJHWS3-20100329JVC-02-all 00:09:26.673 - 00:09:29.883

(8)  NS mene G mene k-om-w-eti ilau mən
NS and G and 3-PST-DU-hit 3DU.ACC also
NS and G were also fighting each other.
WS4-110525-imaiim 00:07:57.100 - 00:08:00.140

(9)  k-ot-alahu nawanien=ikin niŋ-lah
3.NPST-PL-put food=PLACE POSS.EAT-3PL.GENITIVE
They put food there for themselves.
ISJHWS3-20100329JVC-01-hi 00:11:27.895 - 00:11:30.566

Coreference can also be additionally marked with a suffix -aru that occurs with both zero (10) and pronominal arguments (11).

(10)  t-at-stis-aru 01
3SG-PROG-unwind-REFL
It will undo itself.
WS5-120128-conver 00:04:30.220 - 00:04:30.993

(11)  t-at-oh-aru ama in
3SG-PROG-hit-REFL only 3SG.ACC
He was only attacking himself.
WS4-110524-imaiim 00:05:08.280 - 00:05:09.080

It is not possible to use -aru with full nominal reference (12), nor is it possible to use -aru with partial coreference (13).

(12)  *petan t-oh-aru petan
woman 3SG.NPST-hit-REFL woman
(she killed herself)

(13)  *petan t-oh-aru ilau
woman 3SG.NPST-hit-REFL 3DU.ACC
(she killed themselves)
2 Cause Chaining

Disjoint reference is made with full agreement on clauses, with (14) or without nominal reference (15).

(14) nəwəin k-awt-ue i-Vila, nəwəin k-awt-uen Santo
some 3.NPST-PROG.PL-go LOC-vila some 3.NPST-PROG.PL-go Santo
Some go to Vila, some others go to Santo.

(15) Laf t-ivi t-iaiŋ rakis
Laf 3SG.NPST-pull 3SG.NPST-escape out
Laf fished, it came out (of the mouth).

Coreference across clauses is marked with the echo referent prefix. This prefix tells us that the subject of the clause is typically coreferential with the subject of the preceding clause (16) and (17).

(16) k-l-eni aroiu m-l-eru ma, k-apa
1.INCL.NPST-TRI-say now ER-TRI-see COMP 3-no
Now we three will talk and we’ll see that, no.

(17) kani metou k-ot-aitŋ m-oh-uen m-ot-eni mən ko m-oh-ua m-ot-eni mən
and but 3PL.NPST-live ER-PL-go ER-PL-say also then ER-PL-come ER-PL-say also
nakele-temlau
back-1PL.INCL.
And because they lived and went on and were also talking, and then they came and talked behind our backs too. WS5-120108-nako 00:08:24.100 – 00:08:27.309

It is a true anaphor and is ungrammatical without an antecedent (18).

(18) * m-l-eru ma, k-apa
ER-TRI-see COMP 3-no

Partial coreference is possible with the echo referent prefix (19) & (20).

(19) t-am-at-oh raha-n iatemimi, m-w-aplis nati kati
3SG-PST-prog-hit POSS-3SG person ER:3-DU-break thing one
He₁ was hitting his wife₂ and they₁+₂ have broken something.

(20) a. ko ia-k-ø-eles nerow m-ø-aiiu m-ø-uen iwakir
then 1.EXCL-NPST-SG-hold spear ER-SG-run ER-SG-go close
b. ko m-ø-oh pukah-i
then ER-SG-hit pig-TRNS

c. t-imis ko
3SG.NPST-die then

d. m-ot-etei m-ot-eles m-h-awt a(paha) lahwau
ER-PL-cut ER-PL-carry ER-PL-quick OBL village
a. And then I₁ take the spear run close up to the pig b. and I₁ kill the pig. c. It dies, then d. we₁+₂ cut it up, and carry it and hurry back to the village.

The argument of the ECHO REFERENT clause can be also referenced with an explicit pronoun (21).

(21) in m-es-ø-efe =ien neseni kam lah kati, iewo
3SG.SUBJ ER:3-NEG-SG-give.to3 =NEG earth to 3PL one yes
He didn’t give his land to them at all, that is so?

WS4-110524-imaim 00:13:23.910 - 00:13:25.970
3 System features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Without -aru Neutral</th>
<th>With -aru Marked</th>
<th>m-Anaphor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full NP</td>
<td>Disjoint Reference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>Disjoint Reference</td>
<td>Coreference</td>
<td>Partial Coreference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Pronoun</td>
<td>Disjoint Reference</td>
<td>Coreference</td>
<td>(Coreference)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Usage of Anaphora in Whitesands

References


Abbreviations