



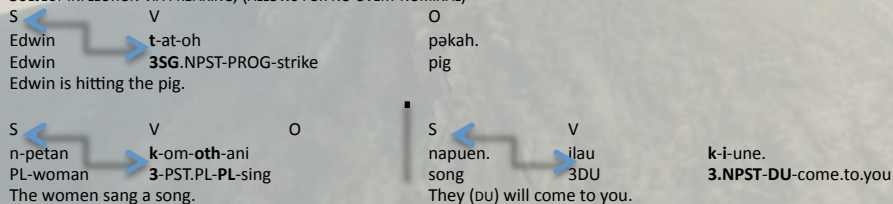
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Whitesands Echo Subject: Switch Reference in Oceanic

Echo Subject

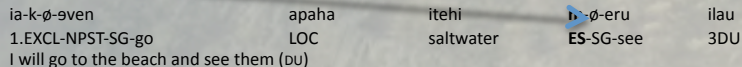
Whitesands Language

SUBJECT INFLECTION VIA PREFIXING, (ALLOWS FOR NO OVERT NOMINAL)



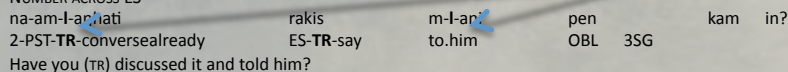
The 'Echo Subject' switch reference is part of this prefixing structure. In the canonical form it allows for a **substitution of the prefixing** with a single morpheme, *m-* 'ES'.

CANONICAL ES CLAUSES



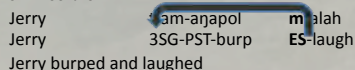
The *m-* morpheme works with any of the person marking, and typically the **number** is also marked.

NUMBER ACROSS ES

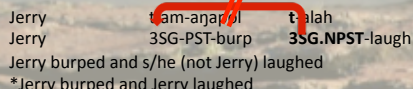


The canonical ES therefore acts as a Same Subject reference (in switch reference nomenclature).

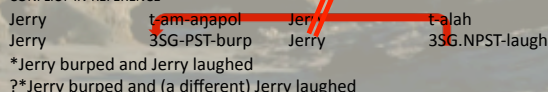
SAME SUBJECT



DIFFERENT SUBJECT



CONFLICT IN REFERENCE



Whitesands, Southern Vanuatu

- *Narak* (Whitesands) is spoken by around 5000 people in Vanuatu, an archipelago nation north of New Caledonia.
- It is one of around 100 indigenous Oceanic languages in the country and belongs to the Southern Vanuatu sub-group.
- It originates from Eastern Tanna, in the region starting immediately north of the active volcano, Yasur, and approximately extending to Weasisi bay in the north. It is also spoken across the island, on the neighbouring island of Aniwa and in the capital Port Vila.
- *Narak* is still the first language of children in the Whitesands region, it is in strong competition with Bislama (an English-lexifying pidgin) in education, and other formal or non-local settings. In the Vila Whitesands community, it is commonly being replaced by Bislama in all speech registers.

The Southern Vanuatu sub-group is an established language group consisting of all but one language in the TAFEA province. **They all share in the least a common grammatical innovation; the use of the 'Echo Subject'**. While all are derived from the same historical source, **the form and function of the Echo Subject varies in each language.**



What is switch reference?

'Switch reference' is a grammatical system that uses arguments' relationships across clauses for reference tracking. Canonical switch reference is generally a choice in morphemes that delineate whether or not the grammatical subject of their clause is the same (SS) or different (DS) from the subject of an adjacent related clause. A basic example would be as follows;

Florence hit-SS Joe and ran.away-3SG
(Florence ran away)



Florence hit-DS Joe and ran.away-3SG
(Joe ran away)



The key to these and similar constructs is that **grammatical relations and morphology are being used for non-grammatical pointers, that is, for reference tracking. Syntactically related clauses share (or distinguish) common points of reference using the grammar's morphology.**

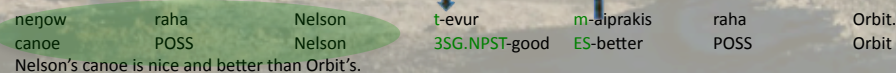
There is much variability within the various languages that utilise switch reference, with some systems being more obligatory in use, some more specific in reference and there is also variability in its interaction with the Tense, Aspect or Mood system. Further, the level of syntactic 'connectedness' of the adjacent clauses is variable. Some systems require main co-ordinate clauses, while others can also incorporate subordinate clauses into the switch reference system.

Switch reference is well known in the non-Austronesian languages of Papua New Guinea and also in the Americas, and central Australia. **In Austronesian languages it appears to be limited to the southern Vanuatu sub-group** that Whitesands belongs to and is clearly an innovation of the sub-group. There is one possible expectation to this; the geographically adjacent language of South Efate that also exhibits some similar grammatical constructs.

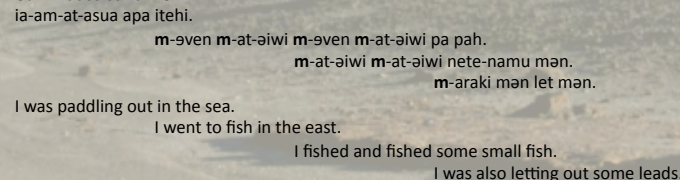
Issues in Analysis

The Echo Subject system has some unique and interesting properties about it.

- ES is solely anaphoric and it is used with all person/number combinations. It points backwards for its reference pivot in the fully inflected predicate.



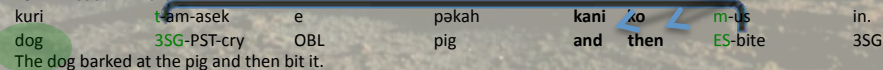
CONTINUOUS USE OF ES



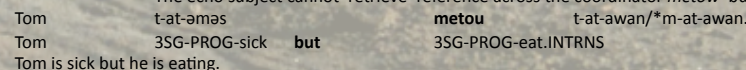
- Most other switch reference systems are cataphoric, with the switch reference morphemes coming before the fully inflected predicate. Historically related, is that the ES is a prefixing whereas other switch reference systems are suffixing (from its development from clause coordination).

- In Whitesands the echo subject is compatible with a range of clausal coordinators and also prefixes to a relativiser.

ES WITH COORDINATORS

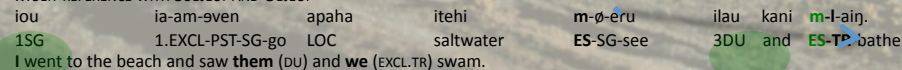


The echo subject cannot 'retrieve' reference across the coordinator *metow* 'but/because'.

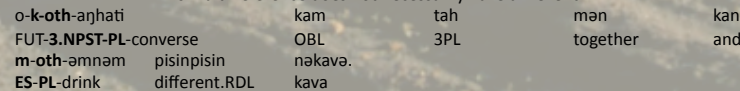


- The Echo Subject is capable of referring to non-privileged syntactic arguments, such as objects and obliques. This is usually disambiguated with number.

MULTI-REFERENCE WITH SUBJECT AND OBJECT



This multi-reference does not necessarily have an 'event' link.



Summary

This research sets out to clearly document and describe the grammar of the Echo Subject system of switch reference found in the languages southern Vanuatu. It investigates primary data of one language, *Narak*/Whitesands. The Echo Subject system is not a singular or unified grammatical process, but in fact, accounts for a wide range of grammatical junctures. Further, it also appears to be influenced by speakers' pragmatic priming, thus exhibiting the important link between functional (pragmatics) and formal (syntactic constructions) levels of grammar. Finally, the paper concludes by asserting that real-text analysis is required to fully explicate this grammatical feature. **Basic elicited or prompted (experimental) speech is not sufficient to discover all possible variation within the Echo Subject system, therefore supporting arguments for corpus collection in typologically diverse languages.**