

This limitation is apparent in all parts of the work, but most of all in the discussion of discourse-pragmatic functions. For example, a major function of the categories that Robert discusses under the label of *l'emphatique* relates to the presentation of new information in discourse, and in particular to focus marking. Thus, in the following example there is a particle *la-*, which is referred to as *Emphatique du Complément*.

Lekk la-a def
 manger je + EmphComp faire
 'C'est manger que j'ai fait' (p. 151)

This particle serves primarily to mark completive focus on complements and adjuncts, and Wolof disposes of a rich system of forms expressing similar focus functions, yet the term "focus" does not appear anywhere in the book.

Another shortcoming may be seen in the fact that no mention is made of the suprasegmental structure of the language. If the author has reached the conclusion that Wolof is not a tone language then she should have said so; otherwise the reader is left guessing whether the author has deliberately ignored tonal distinctions or else whether the role of tone is insignificant in this language.

To conclude, while the book contains a number of insightful discussions on the verbal structure of Wolof, the author did not quite succeed in making this exciting language accessible to the international world of scholarship in the way she intended.

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"*Wapun kantkn amanatin*" — I assume this could be one of the reactions of a Yimas speaker approving, and expressing his happiness with, Foley's excellent and exhaustive descriptive grammar of the Yimas language —

if he could read English, of course, and was interested in linguistics. Yimas is one of the approximately 750 Papuan languages, which is — like most of these languages — spoken in New Guinea (Foley 1986). The 250 or so speakers of Yimas live in two small villages in the Sepik river basin area of the West Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea. Yimas is an agglutinative polysynthetic language; together with Karawari, Angoram, Chambri, Murik, and Kopar it constitutes the morphologically highly elaborated Lower Sepik language family of the Sepik-Ramu region. Foley's monograph "is the result of a research project spread over some ten years" (p. vii), and the almost 500 pages of this book provide the reader with one of the most detailed descriptions of any New Guinea language published so far.

After a brief preface, a clearly organized table of contents, a list of maps and tables, and a list of abbreviations, the first chapter provides the reader with general information about the language and its speakers. Foley presents a brief characterization of Yimas and describes its situation with respect to the influences Tok Pisin (Melanesian Pidgin) and schooling exert upon it. He emphasizes that these influences may turn out to be fatal with respect to the chances for the survival of Yimas. This situation of language change in progress not only forces Foley to take the most important changes into account in his description of the language (see for example pp. 139f., 145, 147, 161, 170, 243, 247, 263, 275, 403); it also makes him point out that his grammar basically describes the language of "men now in their late thirties, who grew up in an almost purely monolingual Yimas environment, and who speak a relatively rich and elaborate version of the language" (p. 5, see also p. 35).

The first chapter also presents the position of Yimas with respect to its neighboring languages Karawari, Arafundi, the Inai dialect of the Enga language, and Alamlak. Moreover, after an ethnographic sketch of the Yimas people — traditionally sedentary hunter-gatherers with elaborate networks of trade and exchange connections — Foley gives an excellent overview on the Sepik-area languages in general and the lower Sepik family in particular. He ends this first chapter with a brief characterization of his informants and the data used for the arguments and examples presented in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 presents the complex Yimas phonology. The linguist describes the 12 consonants and four vowels of Yimas; he presents the segmental phonological rules and their extremely interesting interactions, discusses the role of reduplication, suprasegmentals (that is, stress), and the notion of the word, and finishes this chapter with a brief note on orthography. Foley employs for his description "a theoretical framework

... based loosely on autosegmental phonology” and “some ideas of Kiparsky’s ... framework of lexical phonology” (p. 37). As a descriptive linguist and as a fieldworker Foley let the editors of his grammar mention in the cover blurb of his book,

This book is not written in any set theoretical framework. Its organization attempts to reflect the structure of the Yimas language as closely as possible, and therefore the description is eclectic, choosing various ideas from different theories when they seem best to elucidate the structure of the language.

Moreover, Foley asserts his right to modify the autosegmental framework as well as the broad structural-functionalist perspective he uses for his description of the Yimas phonology and the Yimas morphology and syntax respectively. That more and more descriptive linguists — on the basis of their knowledge of, and active (!) competence in, the languages they describe after field research — can no longer rely on just one linguistic theory if they want to overcome at least some of what the present reviewer recently called their “Procrustean feelings” (Senft 1991) should give all theoreticians in our field food for thought. It’s down in the gutters of empirical field research, where descriptive linguists collect their speech data as the basis for the grammars they want and have to write, and where even the most elegantly formulated and sophisticated theories of language are proven right or wrong — at least for linguistics!

The third chapter presents the two major word classes of Yimas (noun and verb), and the minor categories (“adjective, quantifier, locational, temporal, pronoun, deictic, conjunction,” and “interjection”). With respect to these minor categories it is most interesting to note the following:

- Yimas has a quite complex numeral system; it “is based fundamentally on the fingers and toes of a human being” and “operates simultaneously with three bases: base twenty, base ten and base five. The stems denoting these bases are invariable, but all other numerals vary for noun class depending on the features of the noun which are being counted” (p. 101).

- Pronouns distinguish four numbers — singular, dual, paucal, and plural; they are not often used, though, because the verb has pronominal affixes for the subject, direct object, and indirect object of the clauses.

- Deictics distinguish not only between “place near the speaker,” “place near the addressee,” and “place near neither of these”; they also “agree in number and noun class with the noun denoting the objects whose location they are specifying” (p. 112).

– “Yimas has the ... Papuan system of reckoning time from the point ‘now’ Janus-like in both directions, so that one day in the past (yesterday) and one day in the future (tomorrow) are both denoted by the same term...” (p. 110).

In the next chapters Foley discusses the two major word classes of Yimas, noun and verb, in detail. Chapter 4 presents nouns and noun phrases. On both semantic and phonological grounds, nouns are divided into ten major noun classes plus a few common nouns that form classes unto themselves (Foley lists six of these nouns). The Yimas nouns are inflected for singular, dual, and plural; there is also an oblique case suffix that indicates locations, times, or instruments. Possession is indicated with a postposition to the possessor. Noun phrases may consist of only a modifier and a head. The word order of nouns is free; the syntactic function of nouns is indicated by the prefixes to the verb.

“The verb is by far the most morphologically complex class in Yimas” (p. 193) and — with chapters 5 and 6 — almost “half of this grammar is devoted to verb morphology” (p. 3). The Yimas verb can occur with many affixes — though these affixes are not obligatory. A verb offers up to five slots for suffixes that can be filled. The suffixes express notions of tense, aspect, and mood. Predominating, and more numerous than suffixes, are prefixes: they can fill up to eight slots and

...express notions like modality; agreement for noun class, person and number of core nominals like subject, direct object, and indirect object...; adverbial notions like place, direction, duration and manner; and ... valence alternations to the verb like reciprocal formation, causativization and applicative verb formation (p. 3).

One of the extremely interesting features of these affixes is the following: as already mentioned above, the verb has pronominal affixes for the subject, direct object, and indirect object of the clauses. With these affixes Foley describes a highly complex person-based split for their case-marking schema: he observes an underlying nominative/accusative pattern for first and second person forms; for third person forms, however, he finds something like an ergative/absolute pattern (pp. 193ff, 209ff).

While chapter 5 deals with the basic verbal morphology of pronominal affixes, chapter 6 describes the morphology internal to the verb theme. Foley first describes and analyzes the stem-derivational processes, that is the derivation of stems from verb roots. Then, on the next higher level, he describes the derivation of verb themes from verb roots. Here Foley discusses serial verb constructions (which in Yimas — unlike many other Papuan languages — never seem to consist of more than three verb stems)

and adverbial incorporation as types of verb-theme derivation; he also presents elevational/directional prefixes as morphemes that are added at the level of the verb theme. Foley emphasizes that his

...model of the Yimas verbal morphology means that the entire polysynthetic structure of a verb, with all its elaborate morphological specifications, is produced by a complex, ordered series of derivations. The morphological rules which accomplish these derivations are located in a component of the lexicon (p. 355).

He finishes this brilliant chapter on the verb theme and clause structure elucidating “explicitly the internal structure of this derivational process in its various stages” — and what he does here is remarkable! To quote just one example of a Yimas verb (p. 367):

- (1) pu-kay-yakal-caŋ-tantaw-malakmalak-kia-ntuk-nkt
 3PL O-1PL A-CONT-COM-sit (RED: law-)-talk(RED: malak-)
 -NIGHT-RM PAST-PC
 ‘We few were sitting down conversing with them.’

With respect to the Yimas clause structure Foley points out that the distinction between word and phrase — as well as the distinction between clause and sentence — is “hazy at best” (p. 280), and that the great majority of clauses in this language consist of just a verb (p. 369). Thus, “Yimas is syntactically a very flat language” (p. 280).

Chapter 7 deals with the interclausal relations of Yimas. Even by the Papuan language standards, word order in Yimas is extraordinarily free, though Foley observes a tendency for the verb to occur last — at least in pragmatically unmarked context (p. 370). The “order of the clauses reflects the order in the real world of the events described by the clause” (p. 438). In contrast to other Papuan languages, Yimas does not make extensive use of clause chaining. There is also no productive morphological system of switch reference. Clause linkage involves finite and nonfinite nominalization, and — to a lesser degree — coordination.

The appendix of the grammar provides three sample texts of Yimas mythical stories. These texts document that discourse in Yimas is very dense, indeed, and it is especially the agglutinative morphology of the verb that reinforces this impression. After the chapters on the verbal morphology these texts are also a final confirmation of Foley’s statement that Yimas puts “heavy processing loads on the hearer ... trying to decipher a verb consisting of ten morphemes” (p. 4) or so. It goes without saying that this feature of Yimas also “puts a great burden on simple memory in language acquisition” (p. 5) and with the changing times in PNG this may be one of the main causes for Foley’s not-too-optimistic

prognosis with respect to the survival of Yimas: “this work is likely to be the only documentation ever of the grammar of the Yimas language” (p. vii). The more we must appreciate Foley’s achievement with this monograph.

Reviewers looking for some points for negative criticism have a difficult job — they may ask for some IPA transcriptions, or criticize that glosses like “type of bird of paradise” (p. 129), “vine type, sago palm with short spikes, sago palm with very short spikes” (p. 132), “large green parrot” (p. 137f., see also pp. 141, 220), etc., are not particularly helpful, and that — among the few typos (pp. 93, 190, 195, 229, 285) — there is indeed one that really checks, and asks for, the reader’s attention (p. 195: [5–5] a: read “They went” for “He went”). However, all this is carping. A more general desideratum could be to provide the reader with some more ethnographic reference to the Yimas people (such as Haberland and Seyfarth 1974) and to the Sepik in general (such as Lutkehaus et al. 1990) — however, in this context I have to emphasize that Foley’s grammar is a good example to document the role ethnography plays for the descriptive linguist and to support the claim for the interdisciplinary orientation of field research, be it on languages or on cultures.

To sum up, Foley’s grammar is a must for all linguists (and anthropologists) interested in Papuan languages (and cultures). Everyone who reads this book will impatiently await the Yimas dictionary and the volume of traditional legends in Yimas with Tok Pisin and English translations that Foley announces in the preface to his excellent monograph.

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