

REVIEWS

Malcolm Ross with John Natu Paol. A
Waskia Grammar Sketch and Vocabulary.
Pacific Linguistics B56, 1978. Pp.v+119.

"Waskia is a non-Austronesian language belonging to what Z'graggen (1971) has termed the Kowan language family, a member of the Isumrud stock. . .which is a part of the Madang-Adelbert Range sub-phylum" (p.1). John Natu Paol, who speaks Waskia as his first language, is responsible for the data and has compiled most of the vocabulary. Malcolm Ross is responsible for most of the analysis.

This work is the first grammatical description published in English of a language representative of the Madang sub-phylum. (Z'graggen (1975a) reports a grammar and vocabulary of Kukubar (or Tani) written in German by W. Tranel.) The organization follows the format of Dutton's grammar sketch of Koita (Dutton, 1975), with the addition of a discussion of topicalization. This means that first sentences are described, divided into simple, compound, and complex sentences; then phrases; then words, which are followed by morpheme categories. The grammar section closes with a short account of the morphophonemics. A slight problem with this presentation, which is otherwise very clear and quite readable, is that questions raised by alternative morphological forms have to wait for an answer until the reader reaches the word level or the section on morphophonemics.

The vocabulary contains approximately 800 items, many of which are referenced to appropriate sections in the grammar sketch. They are also identified as to their origin, i.e. as borrowings from surrounding Austronesian languages or as cognates with items that are characteristic of the Trans-New Guinea phylum.

The few comments that I wish to make should in no way be taken to invalidate the very valuable contribution Ross and Paol have made to our understanding of PNG languages. On the contrary, it will

become clear that some generalizations I want to make are only possible because of their detailed work. Firstly, I will question some of the analysis on the morphological level; secondly, I will suggest that the description could do with a few less categories on the word and phrase level; finally, and most important, I will point out some differences and striking similarities in the Waskia sentence structures with other non-Austronesian languages.

1. Morphology

Verb-roots are divided into 17 classes, based on the final vowels or consonants. This gives 5 vowel classes, each with 2 stems; and 12 consonant classes, each with 3 stems (see section 2.410 - 2.412.2, pp.62-71). It seems strange that in some cases two of the three stems of the consonant classes are the same. Stem II is only needed, it appears, to form the 2nd person singular of the future tense and of the imperative; stem IIA, derived from stem II, is the dependent simple verb form, and is further only needed to form the past habitual. Further, only 3 consonant classes have a vowel change between their different stems. This means that 9 classes operate exactly the same way. They could just as well be collapsed into one class.

As the authors point out, further research would probably lead to abbreviation and reordering of the proposed morphophonemic rules (sections 3.1-3.4, pp.76-80). I would expect this to be true also. For example, rule 1. states: e → i before a vowel (i.e. across root-suffix boundary). This would change kide + uki → kidiuki 'he will cook'. But rule 3.: i and o → ∅ before a vowel, needed to derive mipar 'cool' from mipi + ar, would reduce kidiuki incorrectly to kiduki. I would expect that further work on the morphophonemic rules may change some verb-root classification as well.

The reconstruction of the personal pronouns by means of the proposed rules looks quite promising. Compare their note 2 (p.116), which includes all singular pronouns in Wurm's set III pronouns: 1s a; 2s ni; and 3s nu (Wurm 1975), whereas prima facie 1s ane was

classified by Z'graggen (1975b:592) as a set I. The reconstruction is a could very well be cognate with ye (ya) of the Adelbert Range languages.

2. Word and Phrase Level

It seems that the absence of theoretical considerations facilitated the interpretation of certain words and hence of certain constructions on the basis of their free translation in English (i.e. their meaning). Such interpretation then leads the authors to posit categories that may not be necessary. For example, the morpheme ko is glossed as:

'for' in (1) Gagi (. . .) aweri ko bamban tagir-am?
 Subj IObj Obj VP
 Gagi who for fish catch-ps.3s
 'Who did Gagi catch fish for (yesterday)?' (p.14)

'of' in (2) pamu awiri ko naur?
 Subj Comp
 this who of coconut
 'Whose coconut is this?' (p.15)

(awiri should be aweri as in (1), according to the vocabulary.)

'from' in (3) kulak munta Simbu ko
 Subj Comp
 boy that Chimbu from
 'That boy is from Chimbu' (p.12)

'for' in (4) nu /kadi bo ariga / ko tair-am
 Subj AdvP Obj VP
 he man some see-vn for come-ps.3s
 'He came for seeing some man =He came to see someone' (p.28)

'about' in referential phrases as in:

(5) ane kasili ko walasam
 I snake about look.for
 'I'm looking for a snake' (p.49)

(6) Gagi God ko den ikiso
 Gagi God about words hears
 'Gagi hears the words about God = G. believes in God' (p.49)

'?' in (7) bining ko/se
'at (the) back' (p.47)

'his' in (8) buruk ko na pamta
posn poss nn det
pig his food this
'This pig's food' (p. 41, cf. also p. 54:
possessive phrases)

Let us take (8) as the basic meaning for ko₁, i.e. 3s possessive pronoun. We will then try to apply this to the other examples as well. In that case (1) would be similar to (2): aweri ko 'whose', and that would mean that (1) does not have an Indirect Object, but only an Object, consisting of a normal possessive noun phrase as in (8) and (2). A similar reasoning makes from God ko den in (6) an Object: 'God's words'.

I would suggest that Simbu in (3) is a proper noun, the name of a group of people, instead of a geographical name. On p.58 such names are called adjectives of nationality. My suggestion would do various things. It eliminates the need for an extra category of adjectives, and thus removes a spurious slot in the normal noun phrase, i.e., that of one kind of adjective preceding the noun while all others follow it (cf. p.38). If Simbu is a proper noun and ko is 'his', (3) can be glossed as 'that boy is Simbu's' or 'one of the Simbu', and thus makes a rather unrelated gloss as 'from' for ko unnecessary. Probably similar reasoning could get (7) in line, but in order to prove or disprove that we need an example of the phrase in the context of a sentence.

This leaves us with the examples (4) and (5), in which some intention is expressed. It would not be far fetched, I believe, to expect that these instances of ko₂ could be shown to be related to the desiderative ako. If so, the purpose phrase, mentioned on p.28 and p.59, and the referential phrases (p.58) could be collapsed into one phrase type. It is rather common for PNG languages to express a wide range of intentional phrases and clauses by means of the verb 'to say' (cf. Deibler 1971) or a desiderative.

3. Sentence Level

Many PNG languages distinguish between final (or independent) verbs and medial verbs, with special devices on the latter to indicate whether the subject of the next clause is going to refer to the same entity or to a different entity from the subject of the former clause.

Apparently, Waskia makes use of the independent verb sentence-medially when successive actions are concerned. With simultaneous actions a verb root (=stem IIA of consonant classes, II of vowel classes) without any suffixation forms the dependent verb. The connective se indicates whether a different subject follows, just as with the independent verbs (cf. section 2.13.11 connected action, pp.18-22).

The distinction between simultaneous and successive actions does not seem very clear, when the authors state "it seems that most simultaneous actions are regarded as durative or are conceptualized as successive" (p.19), and when (9) is given for simultaneous action.

- (9) tai-se / nama / augi san ugi-nako
 VP VP Obj VP
 come.dep-cd go.dep mango some take-imp.1p
 'come on, let's go and get some mangos' (p.19)

There are a number of different sentence types based on different glosses of the morpheme mu. I will first list them and then suggest that perhaps they can be brought under one denominator. The morpheme mu is interpreted or glossed as:

- a. a determiner as in (10) Gagi arak mu mait se batag-am
 Subj Obj Advpi VP
 Gagi net the knifewith tear-ps.3s
 'Gagi tore the net with a knife'
 (p.9)

- b. 'but' (cf. p.75) in (11)

nunga nuam-net inongi tair-un / mu kulak (. . .) me bager-un
 Subj AdvP VP Conj Subj neg VP
 their.3 mother-villagecome-ps.3p but boy not stay-ps.3p
 father
 'Their parents came to the village but the (. . .) boys weren't there.' (p.16)

c. condition marker in (12):

(12) nina den ik-ako-mu / pala tair-anko
 Subj Obj VP AdvP VP
 you.p word hear-des-cond here come-imp.2p
 'If you want to hear a story, come here' (p.23)

d. determiner to embed as in (13):

(13) ane kadi / anega buruk usag-am / mu arig-em
 Subj Obj (Subj)' Obj' VP'
 I man my pig kill-ps.3s the see-ps.1s
 'I saw the man who killed my pig'. (p.25)

Followed by se 'at, to, with, etc' (cf. mait se in (10)), mu is said to "form a pro-form adverb phrase with a number of meanings, including 'there' and 'for this reason'", as in (14).

(14) nu / kadi mu den balu bager-un / mu-se
 he man the word speak.dep stay-ps.3p there
sangami bager-am
 stand.dep stay-ps.3s
 'He was standing where the men were talking' (p.26)

All these constructions, i.e. (11)-(14), are basically the same, if they can be seen without the normal FREE ENGLISH translation of mu. If mu is translated as GIVEN THAT, which is the basic meaning of any Relative Clause, it would be clear that we have relative clauses in (11)-(14) that have the same function as GIVEN-NP such as arak-mu in (10).

Once we have seen this (cf. Haiman 1978 for the interpretation of conditionals as topics in the Highlands language Hua), we can understand how mu + se ('the' + 'at, to, for, etc') can be used to show causal connection between two successive actions as in (15) and as connective in purpose sentences as in (16).

(15) kadi mu ani-so-le mu-se me tair-uki
 man the sleep-pres.3s-cs so not come-fut.3s
 'The man is sleeping, so he will not come' (p.22)

(16) nu manga t-ako-se mu-se urat bite-so
 he money get-des-c so work do-pres.3s
 'He is working in order to make money' (p.23)

For each of the examples (10)-(16) I could give a parallel construction in Usan (called Wanuma by Z'graggen (1975a), Numugenan

family, Pihom stock of the Madang-Adelbert Range sub-phylum), which uses its demonstrative eng where Waskia has mu and its relator -t, where Waskia has se. Examples (11)a and (13)a will suffice.

(11)a. wurinou ur unor ginam-t diamir eng
their father mother place-at they.came.up.FP this
wau me igamau
child not staying

'Their parents came up to the village, but the boys weren't (there).'

or: 'Given that the parents came up . . .'

or: 'When their parents came up . . .'

(13)a. ye munon yonou bur waramor eng gamei
I man my pig he.killed.FP this I.saw.FP.
'I saw the man who killed my pig.'

Research which I am currently undertaking shows that these constructions and their functions are shared by many other PNG languages.

In conclusion, then, I must say that A Waskia Grammar Sketch and Vocabulary is a very useful reference work in spite of its brevity and its lack of theoretical considerations.

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