

Chapter 8

Persons and Address Terms in Melanesia: A Contrastive Study

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ABSTRACT

This chapter deals with vocative and address terms of the several Melanesian languages and tries to investigate the grammatical and sociolinguistic characteristics of them. This study is a contrastive study of the six languages which are spoken in Papua New Guinea (Amele, Bel, and Tok Pisin) and Vanuatu (South Efate, Nguna, and Bislama). This study tries to clarify the characteristics of their lexicon (mainly kinship and address terms) and usages of personal pronouns and their verb inflections. Generally, the sample languages are rich in usages of these terms (kinship, personal pronouns, vocatives) whereas creole languages have limited usages and borrowed from English lexicon. Finally, this study claims that there are several rules of defining social relations and their grammatical forms.

INTRODUCTION

Melanesia area is known as the most diverse area in the world, not only in languages, but also in biology (plants, animals and insects). Linguistically, there are approximately 1,200 languages in West Papua, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu¹, and they are mostly different in their grammars and lexicons. The languages spoken in the area are roughly classified into two types: Papuan or New Guinea languages (henceforth, this study calls New Guinea languages, because this study examine the language of Papua New Guinea) and Austronesian languages². Moreover, the languages in the area are so diverse, and the Melanesian people have the common languages (so called, the lingua franca) for mutual communication. These are creole languages which represent Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Pijin in Solomon Islands and Bislama in Vanuatu³.

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This study will consider how the Melanesian people categorize peoples and their cultures in their grammars. To discuss this question, we try to contrast several genealogically different languages and their human-related words and expressions in the area. Specifically, this study observes usages of personal pronouns, basic kinship terms and address terms and tries to clarify how the languages categorize humans and human relations in their grammars. The followings are chosen as the sample languages in this study: Amele and Bel (in Papua New Guinea), Nguna and South Efate (in Vanuatu), and Tok Pisin/Bislama (creole languages). Bel, Nguna and South Efate are Austronesian languages and Amele is a New Guinea language. The choice of the sample languages is based on the author's fieldwork and availability of the data (particularly, reliable descriptive grammars). The sample languages are different geographically (Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu) and genealogically (Austronesian, Trans-New Guinea and creole languages) and this is useful to explore the tendency and the characteristics in the area. This study tries to clarify the characteristics of their lexicon (mainly, kinship and address terms) and usages of personal pronouns and their verb inflections. Generally, the native languages of the sample are rich in usages of these terms and grammatical expressions, whereas creole languages have limited usages. At the same time, this study examines their sociolinguistic situation including code-switching and language maintenance in the area.

Next section shows background and previous studies of the languages in Melanesia and review previous studies on address terms and vocatives. And then, this study observes the data of each language (Amele, Bel, South Efate, Nguna, Tok Pisin and Bislama) and discusses the categorization through the observed data and tries to describe their cultures and grammars. This study found that some features can be observed only in Melanesia or specific language(s). The observed features are "friend" as a greeting and location name for addressing in New Guinea. Final section is conclusion and future research directions.

BACKGROUND

This section describes background of this study and introduces the previous studies of the languages of Melanesia and vocative/ address terms.

Previous Studies on Melanesia and Address Terms

This study reviews two kinds of previous studies which are related to this study. This study observes the previous studies on general linguistic information in Melanesia, and then, persons (together with kinship terms) and vocatives/address terms. As we know, the languages in Melanesia are so diverse grammatically and lexically that there are many languages which have not been described or limited description (cf. Foley, 1986, 2000; Lynch, 1998). Also, many previous studies try to clarify the diversity model, grammaticalization paths, and pragmatic and sociolinguistic factors in the area⁴. This section introduces the sample languages briefly.

Linguistic Diversity in Melanesia: For a Contrastive Study

New Guinea languages are totally different each other in the grammars and lexicons and there is little common point among them, but Austronesian languages are rather similar among other Austronesian

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