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terry Crowley, *Bislama reference grammar*. Honolulu: university of Hawai'i press, 2004, xv + 205 pp. [Oceanic Linguistics Special publication 31.] ISBN 0824828801. price: uSd 27.00 (paperback).

KeeS VerSteeGH

In the section on yes/no questions in Bislama, the national language of the republic of Vanuatu, the author of the reference grammar under review here remarks (p. 147) that the appropriate answer to such a question is either *yes* or *no*, and then he adds 'or obviously "I don't know"'. This addition is typical of the style of this reference grammar: the author is concerned with the way people communicate with each other in real life, rather than with the abstract structure of the language. With this aim in mind, he gives a short survey of the phonology (pp. 11-23), and then an integrated account of the morphology, and especially syntax, of Bislama; he even devotes five pages at the end to discourse structure, a topic often neglected in reference grammars.

Since Bislama is a creolized variety of English, one might have expected a treatment on the basis of English, but the author has chosen a different approach. He treats Bislama as a language completely separate from English, not even supplying etymologies for words whose English origin is not immediately clear. This has the wholesome effect of presenting the language as a linguistic system in its own right.

The relationship between Bislama and English is changing, however. In the introduction on the historical and sociolinguistic background of the language (pp. 1-10), two points are striking. In the first place, while Bislama is a second language for most inhabitants of Vanuatu (whose first language is one of the 80 languages spoken in these islands), there is an emerging group of first-language speakers. Intriguingly, Crowley refers (p. 4) in passing to the lack of distinction between its use as a first and a second language.

The second point of interest is the increasing importance of English as a school language. In fact, throughout the book there are references to exposure to English as a source of variation. The present situation in Vanuatu resembles that in other areas where a creole language interacts with its (former) lexifier in a post-creole continuum, in which new forms from the target language compete with the original ones. The author does not deal with this topic systematically, but it is clear from his book that there is a nascent diglossia, in which English has come to function as the High variety. He mentions instances of hypercorrection (the insertion of /h/ in *ae* ~ *hae* 'eye', p. 15), and ascribes some cases of variation to the difference between speakers with and without higher education (that is, with or without exposure to English): educated speakers tend to restore the deleted /t/ in verbs before the transitive suffix *-em*, for example *pen-em* ~ *pen-t-em* 'to paint' (p. 78); they use *masbi*

< *must be* (p. 97); they avoid the use of *i* with plural nouns, and use *oli* instead (p. 111); they use *wetaot(em)* 'without' (p. 129); they introduce manner questions with *hao* (p. 158); and they use *afta* and *bifo* (p. 190). In other cases, too, it is obvious that the variation correlates with knowledge of English, even though the author does not mention this explicitly, for example, the use of the plural ending *-es* (p. 44); the avoidance of *tugeta*, *trigeta* as pronouns (p. 48, where the use of *trigeta* is described as 'being a sign of an unsophisticated rural background'); the use of *wij* before a noun instead of *wijwan* (ascribed to 'some speakers', p. 154, n. 3); and the use of *sud* 'must' (p. 94, compare p. 100). Crowley does not deal with this variation systematically, partly because of the lack of relevant studies. In some places, for instance in the description of phonetic variation (p. 14), one would have liked to know whether there is a correlation between the variant and the speaker's level of education. The official spelling of Bislama in some respects reflects this relationship with English, for instance by making a distinction in orthography between *dog* and *dok* (p. 20), which is not realized in pronunciation.

In the introduction, Crowley states that his intended audience is broader than just professional linguists, and includes new learners and native speakers. Consequently, he discusses fundamental linguistic notions like classification into parts of speech. I am not sure this is always helpful. For the average reader, the discussion may be a little confusing, for instance when the author claims that the definition of the parts of speech will be strictly according 'to the behavior that words exhibit in Bislama speech' (p. 25), that is, by not taking into account semantic notions but only syntactic behaviour. Yet on page 27 semantic criteria are used in the discussion of the difference between nouns and pronouns.

At one point, the discussion of fundamental linguistic notions is actually a bit misleading, namely when the author distinguishes a category of non-predicative sentences (pp. 108-9). In the sentence *hemia reva blong mifala* 'that's our river', he claims that 'we are only talking about a single noun phrase (*reva blong mifala* "our river"). The other part of the sentence (*hemia* "that") does not say anything at all about what the river is like or what it is doing.' This leads to the curious result that the sentence just quoted is non-predicative, while a sentence quoted a few lines below, *hem i wan polis* 'he is a police officer', is predicative. Yet another sentence, *hemia i no pikinini blong krae* 'that's not a cry-baby' (p. 115), is said to be a 'kind of predicate construction'. It becomes even more confusing when equational sentences like *man ia tija blong mi* 'that man is my teacher' (p. 115) are classified as non-predicative, just like sentences with *blong* in the sense of 'ought to' (pp. 116-7), for example *mi blong karem raes* 'I'm the one who should get the rice'. If one compares this last sentence with the definition quoted above (predicates express what the subject is like or what it is doing), the average reader is bound to become confused.

Such minor problems aside, this reference grammar is a very rich source about Bislama, containing a tremendous amount of linguistic material. Its richness is not even exploited to the full by the grammar itself. a good example is the adverb *nomo* (< english *no more*), for which the numerous examples throughout the book provide more information than the concise statement (p. 144) that *nomo* means 'only, just', and may be used as a postmodifier with any kind of constituent, as in *bae mi kam naoia nomo* 'I will come right now'. For this latter use, no examples with verbs are given on page 144, but they may be found elsewhere, for example *mi ges nomo* 'I just guess' (p. 182). throughout the book, numerous sentences with *nomo* suggest that its semantic scope is richer than 'only, just'. It often occurs in combination with *olwe* 'always', with a connotation of 'exactly, no less', for example *Joseph i giagianan nomo* 'joseph always lies' (p. 75, compare p. 84, p. 142; p. 30 with *evri taem*). this could also be its meaning in the sentence *Saki i singsing olsem Fred Maedola nomo ia* 'Saki sings just like F.M.' (p. 6), and in the idiomatic combination with *olwe* 'really' in *Santo hem i hot krangki olwe nomo* 'Santo is really, really hot' (p. 142), and perhaps even in ... *mo ples i waet nomo* '... and everything was white' (p. 75). another meaning of *nomo*, not referred to on page 144 but mentioned elsewhere (pp. 57, 58), is found in combination with reflexives, as in *yu stap luk yu nomo* 'are you looking at yourself?' (p. 57).

One controversial topic in the syntax of Pacific English pidgins and creoles is that of the so-called 'predicate marker' (p. 110) in sentences like *hem i singsing* '(s)he is singing'. the author refers to alternative analyses in a footnote, to which could be added roger M. Keesing, *Melanesian Pidgin and the Oceanic substrate* (Stanford, California: Stanford university press, 1988), who gives a thorough refutation of the standard analysis of *i* as a predicate marker in Bislama and tok pisin (see especially 1988:159-170), and Crowley's own *Serial verbs in Oceanic; A descriptive typology* (Oxford: oxford university press, 2002), which contains very interesting remarks about the relationship between the 'predicate marker' in Pacific English pidgins/creoles and verbal serialization (especially p. 226).

In this connection, note that sentences like *hem i no swim yet* 'he has not yet bathed' are said (p. 112) to effectively have two subjects. The author states (p. 112) that *mi* and *yu* do not occur with any 'predicate marker'. But this is contradicted by some of his own examples, such as (p. 123) *mi mi wantem*, (p. 129 n. 4) ... *se yu yu stap wokbaot wetaot*, (p. 135) ... *se yu yu save rod*, (p. 163) *mi (nao) mi*, (p. 169) *bae mi livim yu yu stap long haos* 'I will leave you at home'. In this last sentence, *yu* is called a 'second predicate marker'. I would prefer to analyse all examples quoted here as 'predicate markers' (as subject marking on the verbal predicate, along the lines of Keesing 1988), rather than as 'second subjects'.

Crowley's own work on serial verbs is also relevant for the analysis of *kam*

and *stap* (p. 101), which are said to be used as inchoative auxiliaries but never before verbs. This is contradicted by examples like *hem i kam luk mi* (p. 178). Crowley analyses such examples as sentences with deleted complementizer *blong* (compare Crowley 2002:220), but it is not clear to me why they could not be regarded as instances of core juncture verb serialization, along the lines of Geoffrey Pullum, 'Constraints on intransitive quasi-serial verb constructions in modern colloquial English', in: Brian d. Joseph and Arnold M. Zwicky (eds), *When verbs collide; Papers from the 1990 Ohio State Mini-Conference on Serial Verbs*, pp. 218-39 (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 1990).

The comments given here are intended to illustrate the usefulness and richness of this reference grammar. One has to thank the author for his very readable outline of Bislama structure. Even those of us who like to read grammars for fun will readily admit that not all grammars are easy to read. This one is, thanks partly to the author's light style and partly to the many examples and the subtlety of the argument, which invites readers to carry out their own analysis of the material provided.

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