The Manambu Language of East Sepik, Papua New Guinea

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with the assistance of
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Preface

This is a grammar of Manambu, a language of the Ndu family, which is, in terms of numbers of speakers, the largest language family of the Sepik area of New Guinea. Manambu is spoken by about 2,500 people in five villages—three of which, Avatip, Malu, and Yambon, are sufficiently big to appear on most maps of Papua New Guinea. I started studying the language in 1995, as part of my work on classifiers, genders, and noun classes. I was interested in learning a language with shape-based genders. Alan Rumsey was teaching a field methods course at the ANU, with Pauline Agnes Luma Laki as a consultant. I came along to the course, and then carried on working with Pauline tor more than ten years afterwards—this is how my voyage of discovery started. I have since worked with several dozen speakers of Manambu, mostly in Avatip. Pauline Agnes Luma Laki and myself are currently engaged in preparing a comprehensive dictionary of the language.

This grammar contains an analysis of the Manambu language, starting from a brief characterization of the language and its speakers, then going on to phonology, morphology, syntax, discourse organization, and semantics. The analysis is cast in terms of a cumulative typological framework of linguistic analysis—which employs ‘the fundamental theoretical concepts that underlie all work in language description and change’ (Dixon 1997: 158) and in terms of which significant typological generalizations are postulated; this has come to be called ‘basic linguistic theory’. I have avoided employing any transient formalisms. This grammar is part of genuine documentation of the Manambu language in its varied facets.

Every chapter of the grammar includes a presentation of the facts of the language interwoven with arguments for their analysis within a typological framework. No attempt has been made to separate pure ‘description’ from theoretical interpretation—which would not be a productive task. A typological perspective for each phenomenon is crucial for the analysis given here.

Detailed exemplification is provided for every grammatical point. Most examples come from texts, and a few from spontaneous—or carefully directed—conversation. An additional objective was to convey as much of the Manambu culture as possible through using naturally occurring examples. I avoid using elicited sentences; elicitation was limited to lexicon and to paradigms.

English glosses are kept as close as possible to the glosses and explanations offered by my consultants. Readers should be warned against trying to draw conclusions concerning Manambu grammar and semantics from study of the translations.

Examples, tables, diagrams, figures, charts, and footnotes are numbered separately within each chapter. Footnotes are also numbered separately for each chapter. The orthography used in the examples from languages other than Manambu, and language names, follows that of the sources (unless indicated otherwise).

This grammar can be used as a coursebook for further typological studies and as a model for further grammars of languages of the Ndu and of other families of the New Guinea area. It is far from being the last word on Manambu—the grammar is intended to provide a sound systematic foundation for further studies, reanalyses, and reinterpretations.

It is my hope that this book will encourage linguists to go out into the field and document languages threatened by extinction (before it is too late to do so). Nothing can compare with the intellectual excitement of working out the grammatical system of a previously undescribed language.
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This grammar would not have been written without the self-sacrificing help, and wonderful linguistic insights, of Jacklyn Yuamali Benji Ala—whom Pauline lovingly called ‘angel without wings’ (pap ίνα-μα:μα-μα angen). She spent hours helping me with transcriptions, translations, explanations, and at the same time cooking, cleaning, looking after her children, and telling the most wonderful and sophisticated stories. Her help and dedication could never be sufficiently acknowledged.

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Organization and Cross-references

This grammar has been written as an integrated whole. To understand what follows one needs to have digested what precedes. Chapter 1 provides a quick overview of the main points of the Manambu grammar. Later chapters deal with a particular grammatical topic each.

Chapter 3 discusses the ways in which grammatical relations are expressed. This chapter is basic for understanding the rest of the grammar. Chapter 2 contains a detailed discussion of phonology; it is not necessary to read to understand the rest of the grammar. Chapter 4 gives an overview of all the word classes, and Chapter 11 concentrates on the organization of verbal morphology, giving a preview of Chapters 12–17. Chapters 18 and 19 deal with complex clauses. Chapter 20 draws together the structure of clausal constituents, clauses, and sentences, and discusses the principles and functions of constituent order and of order of grammatical words within each constituent. Issues in semantics are addressed in Chapter 21. Those interested in cultural background and historical and comparative problems are advised to focus on Chapters 1 and 22.

Examples are numbered separately for each chapter. Examples from texts at the end of the grammar are referred to with the letter T followed by the number of the text and the sentence (that is, T1 40 refers to sentence 40 of Text 1).

All the examples and texts are supplied with an interlinear morpheme gloss, and then translated into English. Homophonous morphemes are differentiated by their glosses. The symbol ‘+’ is used to indicate fused morphemes, e.g. taha is glossed as ‘hand+1K’, its underlying form being ta:h ‘hand’ (with the long vowel shortened when the linker is added) and -a- ‘linker’. Portmanteau morphemes are glossed with ‘:’, for instance, mery ‘come:IMPV’. All grammatical morphemes are glossed in small caps while lexical morphemes are in lower case. Pronominal prefixes are shown as 1sg, 3pl, in lower case. For polysemous morphemes, different translations in glosses correspond to different meanings.

Cross-references are of two kinds:

- Those preceded by § refer to chapter and section number: for instance, §11.1 refers to section 1 of Chapter 11;
- Those beginning with a number refer to examples in the grammar: for instance, 11.1 refers to example 1 in Chapter 11.
Abbreviations and Conventions

Here and passim ‘-‘ stands for any morpheme boundary, that is, a boundary between a root and an affix, or between two roots. The symbol ‘=’ indicates a boundary between a root and a clitic, or an affix and a clitic, or two clitics (see Chapter 2). The symbol ’ indicates a primary stress, and ´ a secondary stress (obligatory on enclitics). Stress is marked on each example in Chapter 2 (Phonology) and in other chapters only if relevant to the discussion.

Manambu has a certain amount of variation between allophones (discussed in Chapter 2). Many variants depend on the age of the speaker. Examples reflect the recurrent individual variants which also appear in the Vocabulary at the end of the grammar (e.g. *kamma:gw, kamma: ‘food’, mama, nama ‘big’). Examples throughout the grammar are given in their phonological representation. Conventions of transcription are addressed in Chapter 2. Loans and code-switches from Tok Pisin and English are italicized in each example throughout the grammar (in Chapter 22, Tok Pisin words are italicized and English words are underlined).

Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>transitive subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>accusative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT.FOC</td>
<td>action focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADDR</td>
<td>addressee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADJ</td>
<td>adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>adverb</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANAPH</td>
<td>anaphoric</td>
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<td>APPR</td>
<td>apprehensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROX</td>
<td>approximative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASS</td>
<td>associative plural</td>
</tr>
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<td>AUG</td>
<td>augmentative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUX</td>
<td>auxiliary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAS</td>
<td>basic cross-referencing</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>common argument</td>
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<td>CAUS</td>
<td>causative</td>
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<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>copula complement</td>
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<td>COLL</td>
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<td>COMPL</td>
<td>completive aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPL.DS</td>
<td>completive different subject</td>
</tr>
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<td>COMPL.SS</td>
<td>completive same subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMPL.VB</td>
<td>completive generic verb</td>
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<tr>
<td>COND</td>
<td>conditional</td>
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<td>CONF</td>
<td>confirmation</td>
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<td>connective</td>
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<td>copula</td>
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<td>COTEMP</td>
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<td>CP</td>
<td>complex predicate</td>
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<td>copula subject</td>
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<td>CURR.REL</td>
<td>current relevance</td>
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<td>DIR</td>
<td>directional</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIR.SP.REP</td>
<td>direct speech report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations and Conventions

DIST distal
DS different subject
du dual
E English
EMPH emphatic
EP epenthetic
EXPR expressive
Fem. FEM feminine
FOC focus
FOC.M focus marker
FR frustrative
FUT future
HAB habitual
IMM.SEQ immediate sequence
IMPV imperative
INCOMPL incomplete
IND.SP.REP indirect speech report
INSTR instrument
INT intensive
INTERJ interjection
INTO intonation
IRR irrealis
itr intransitive
LENGTH expressive lengthening
LK linker
LOC locative
MANIP manipulative
masc masculine
MOM momentaneous
NAI natural phenomena
NEG negative
NEG.SUB subordinate negator
NOM nominal cross-referencing
NOM.ACT action nominalization
NP noun phrase
O object
OBJ object case
OBL oblique marker
OPT optative
ORD ordinal
P past
p person
pl, PL plural
POSS possessive
PRED predicative marker
PRES present
PROH prohibitive
PROH.EXTRA extra strong prohibitive
PROH.GEN general prohibitive
PROH.STR strong prohibitive
PROX proximal
PUNCT punctual
PURP purposive
PURP.DS different subject
PURP.SS same subject purposive
REACT.TOP reactivated topic
REC reciprocal
RED reduplication
REP repetition
REPSEQ repeated sequencing
S intransitive subject
SEQ sequencing
sg singular
SS same subject
SUBJ subject
SUBJNP cross-referencing
SUBSTI substitutive case
SUP.VB support verb
TERM terminative
TP Tok Pisin
tr transitive
TRANS transitivizer
TRANSP transportative
UNF unfulfilled
VB verb
VOC vocative
VT versatile tense