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STUDIES IN TOKELAUAN SYNTAX

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is composed of separate studies of aspects of Tokelauan syntax. They are united by an emphasis on the relation between linguistic forms and communicative functions, and in particular on the semantics and pragmatics of grammatical categories.

Chapter 1, 'Outline of the main structures of Tokelauan' forms a background for the more intensive studies of later chapters. After short sections on phonology, morphology and word classes, I describe the composition of noun phrases and verb phrases, the pronoun system, and the internal structure and semantics of nominalisations. The final two sections cover a number of aspects of the structure of the simple sentence, including predicate types, verb classes, and clause types, and review the main types of complex sentence.

Chapter 2, 'Tense and aspect', presents a discourse-based analysis of this area of syntax. Section 1 outlines the theoretical basis of the analysis of Tokelauan tense-aspect categories which is presented in the following two sections. I then extend the analysis to a particular discourse type, oral Tokelauan narrative. The final section takes a typological approach, considering whether the particle kua can be regarded as a member of a cross-linguistic category of Perfect.

Chapter 3, 'The discourse functions of focus constructions', looks at a number of Tokelauan constructions involving clause-initial noun phrases which clearly have the pragmatic force of focussing, but in some of which the distribution of given and new information is not of the expected kind. Since clause-initial noun phrases are used for other discourse functions which can be grouped under the heading of topicalisation, the chapter concludes with some comments on this matter in section 2.

Chapter 4, 'The syntax of complementation', attempts in the first three sections a comprehensive description of Tokelauan complement types and of the semantic classes of complement-taking predicates. Section 4 is concerned with the syntax and semantics of complementizers, and section 5 with reduced complements of the kind which have been associated with the terms equi-deletion and raising. The final section assesses the overall nature of the Tokelauan complementation system.
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My interest in the Tokelauan language stems from several periods spent in Fakaofo with my family during the 1970s. I thank all my Tokelauan friends of those years for their patience and goodwill in helping me to learn their language. I also express my gratitude to those skilled speakers from all three islands whose recorded words form the data-base for these studies - some of them no longer alive. I owe a particular debt to Ropati Simona, my main consultant on Tokelauan. His profound knowledge of his language and his continuing curiosity about its words and meanings have been of great value to me. I also thank Loi lupati and Kelihiano Kalolo for answering questions about Tokelauan.

Judith Huntsman and Antony Hooper have made available to me tape-recordings and in some cases unpublished transcriptions of Tokelauan speech. In Fakaofo in 1986 Antony Hooper recorded for me several hours of sermons, conferences, village meetings, and informal discourse, and Judith Huntsman made recordings of talk about fishing in Nukunonu. I wish to thank them both for this assistance.

I am grateful to the University Grants Committee for the Postgraduate Scholarship which provided me with support during the first three years of my research, and to the University of Auckland Research Committee for a grant which enabled me to have some of my tape-recorded data transcribed by Ropati Simona.

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ABBREVIATIONS

1 first-person pronoun
2 second-person pronoun
3 third-person pronoun
A agent argument of agentive verbs
ANA, APH anaphoric particle, used for a1 and e1
APP apposition, used for ko when it marks an appositive NP
ART article, used for the forms te, a, i te and a te
CAUS causative prefix teka-
C/F counterfactual conditional marker
Cla verbal suffixes of the form -a, -agi, or -Cla
COMP complementizer
CON conjunction
CPR comparative morpheme
DEF definite
DEM demonstrative
DET determiner
DIM diminutive, used of the pronoun kīta and associated possessive forms
DIR directional particle
DIS discourse particle
dual
ERG ergative preposition
EXC exclamative
excl., EXCL exclusive (of possession)
EXIST the existential predicate i e1
HUM human numeral prefix toka-
HYP hypothetical, used for kafal
I J interjection, used for clause-initial a or clause-final a
incl., INCL inclusive (of possession)
INDEF indefinite
INT intensifier
LOC locative, used for the preposition i
MAN manner particle, e.g. pee
MOD modal particle
NEG negative marker
NEG.IMP negative imperative marker
NOM nominalising suffix -ga
NP noun phrase
NSP non-specific
O unmarked patient argument of agentive verbs
pl., PL plural
POL politeness particle
POSS possessive
PRED predicate marker, used for ko when it introduces a nominal predicate
RED, REDUP reduplication
REL relational marker ma
S unmarked primary argument of intransitive verbs
SEQ sequential, used of the conjunction at
sg. singular
SP specific
T/A tense-aspect particle
'TO' used for the preposition ki
TOP topic, used for ko when it introduces a topicalized NP
VOC vocative
VP verb phrase

Note: Where two or more English words or grammatical symbols are needed to gloss a single Tokelauan word, the use of hyphens indicates corresponding morpheme divisions in the Tokelauan word; the use of full stops indicates that there is no corresponding linear division in the Tokelauan word.