THE NOUN PHRASE OF ATCHIN,

A LANGUAGE OF MALAKULA, VANUATU

Marie Duhamel

Abstract

This thesis presents a description of the Noun Phrase in the language spoken on Atchin Island in Central Vanuatu. The indigenous language of Atchin islanders belongs to the Oceanic subgroup of the Austronesian language family. Atchin is thought to be a dialect of the Northeast Malakula language which is estimated to have a population of 9,000 speakers. The study is based on narratives and elicitation notes collected in 2010 during two fieldtrips on Atchin. This corpus of data provides linguistic evidence to support the phonological, morphological and syntactic analysis throughout the thesis.

Atchin has an SVO word order, distinct noun, verb and adjective classes. Nouns can inflect for possession, and verbs are preceded by a particle marking modality, person and number. Noun modifiers are postposed to the noun. Atchin presents definite and indefinite articles, demonstratives and a small class of adjectives. Adjectives, adjectival verbs and relative clauses are common noun postmodifiers. In the adjectival verb construction, the preverb agrees in person and number with the noun modified. All members of the class of adjectives can appear in an adjectival verb construction. The language shows a formal distinction between inalienable and alienable possession. Syntactically, the distinction is expressed by two types of possessive constructions: the possessive suffix (marking the person and number of the possessor) is attached to the possessum for inalienable possession or to the classifier postposed to the possessum for alienable possession. Distinct classifiers encode relations of distinct natures: a classifier establishes a relation of possession with food, another relation of possession with drink and two classifiers express a relation of general possession. One of the general purpose classifiers is restricted to non-human possessors.

The phonological survey of the under-described language reveals a series of labiovelar consonants and free variation in speakers between fricatives and affricates. Tense mid-vowels become lax in an unstressed close syllable and vowel harmony is a common occurrence.

Acknowledgments

Photograph 1 - Gaston Atuary (left) and Gustave Romone – Atchin, August 2010

Photograph 2 - Lebon Sengavül in Senar - Atchin, August 2010.

(The legend that gave its name to this rock features in Capell & Layard 1980: 192-202).

Photograph 3 - ceremony ground in Senar – Atchin, August 2010

Photograph 4 - alignment of stones along the main path in Ruar - Atchin, March 2010

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List of Abbreviations

ADJ	adjective	**NEG**	negation particle
C	consonant	**NHUM**	classifier for non human possessors
COMP	complement clause marker	**OBJ**	direct object
DET	determiner	**PL**	plural
DRINK	drink possession classifier	**PN**	pronoun
DUP	reduplication	**POSS**	possession
EMPH	emphasis	**PURP**	purpose clause marker
EXCL	exclusive	**PV**	preverb
FEM	feminine	**REAL**	realis
FOCUS	focus	**REL**	relative clause marker
FOOD	food possession classifier	**SG**	singular
FUT	future tense	**TR**	transitive
INCL	inclusive	**V**	vowel
INT	interrogative		
IRR	irrealis	**1**	first person
LNK	linking word	**2**	second person
LOC	locative/direction preposition	**3**	third person
MULT	multiplicative	**Ø**	zero
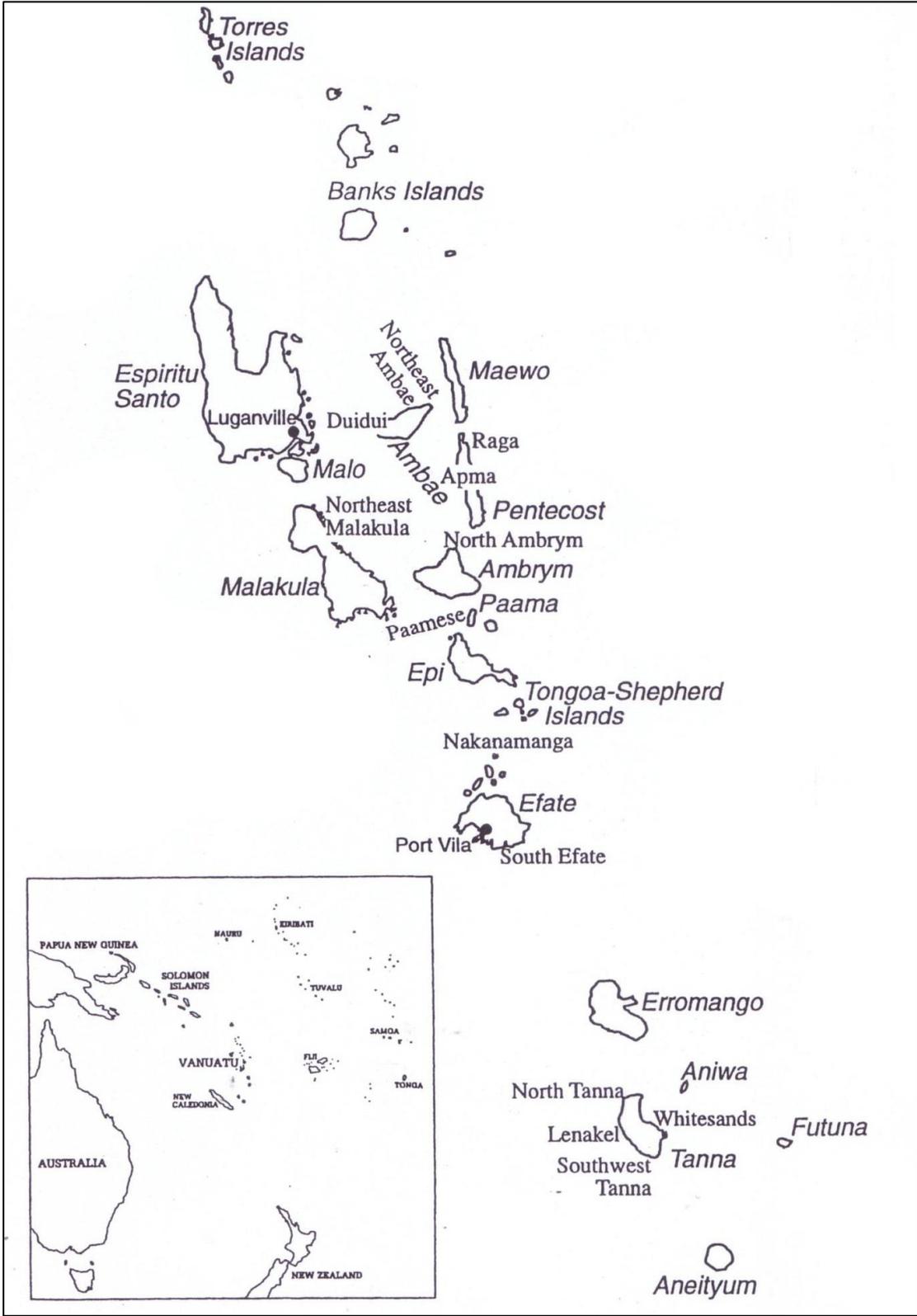
Map 1 –Vanuatu languages with over 5,000 speakers

(Lynch & Crowley 2001: 7, reproduced by permission of Pacific Linguistics.)
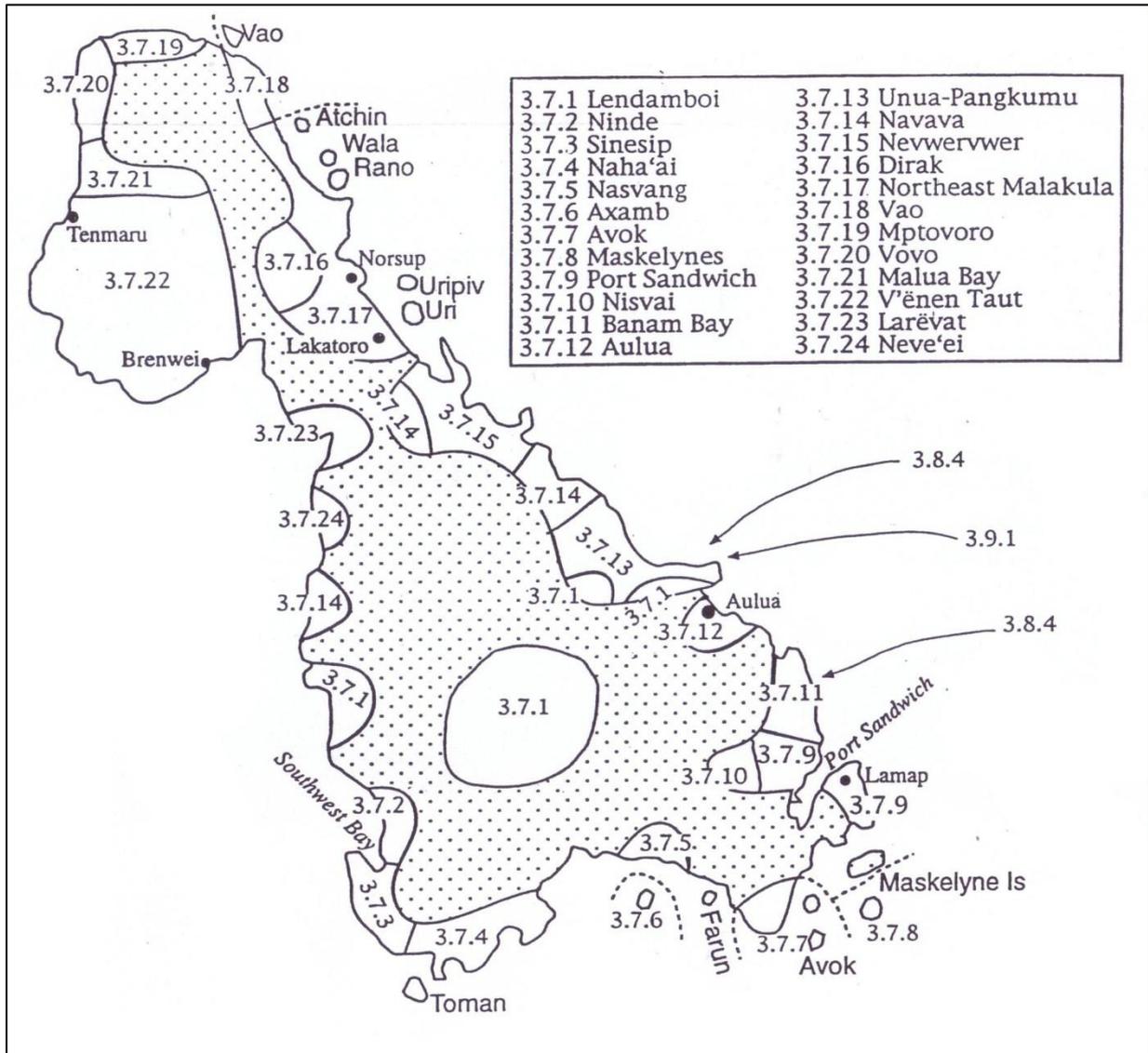
Map 2 - Vernacular languages of Malakula

(Lynch & Crowley 2001: 71, reproduced by permission of Pacific Linguistics.) Atchin island is shown at the northernmost point of the area where the Northeast Malakula language is spoken.

1.Introduction

1.1 Languages of Vanuatu

Atchin is one of over one hundred native languages spoken on the eighty islands that make up this country of the South-Pacific (Map 1). In July 2010, the Republic of Vanuatu celebrated the 30th anniversary of its independence from the Anglo-French condominium. The languages spoken in Vanuatu reflect the history of the country. Bislama, an English-based pidgin/creole, is the national language and the lingua franca spoken throughout the country. The second language of rural people, Bislama is increasingly the first language of the young urban dwellers of Port-Vila and Luganville, the two main towns of Vanuatu. French and English are the two languages of education. Bislama and the two European languages are the country's official languages.

1.2 The island

Atchin is a small island off the northeast coast of Malakula in central Vanuatu (Map 2). It is about 1km away from the coast and the trip from the mainland opposite the island is made by canoe or on a small speedboat. Atchin residents commute to their gardens on the mainland. The primary school children attend the island primary schools, or the nearby French secondary schools in Orap on the mainland or, further north, on the island of Vao.

The island itself (Map 3) is divided into five areas where the members of the five different clans (*potvanu*) live: Ruar, Melep, Melmarur, Melparav and Senar. The island is in the shape of an elongated oval, with the longer axis about 1km long, oriented northeast - southwest and the shorter axis about half a kilometre oriented northwest – southeast. The most densely populated area is on the southwest coast of the island, where the village of Melep is located, facing the mainland. Melparav, another village-type setting, is situated at the northeastern point of the island. The eastern area is the least populated, even though it is cooler, being more exposed to trade winds. Aside from a strip of land bordering the west and north coasts, the island is lush with vegetation separating sub-clanic groups of habitations. A network of paths, many of them running along former ceremony grounds, connects the diverse dwellings and villages.

Several missions represent the diverse Christian religions of the islanders: Catholic in Ruar, Adventist in Melep, Assembly of God in Melmarur, and Presbyterian in Senar. Antioch, a local religion derived from the Presbyterian faith, also has followers in Melmarur. Its church was moved from Melmarur to the mainland.
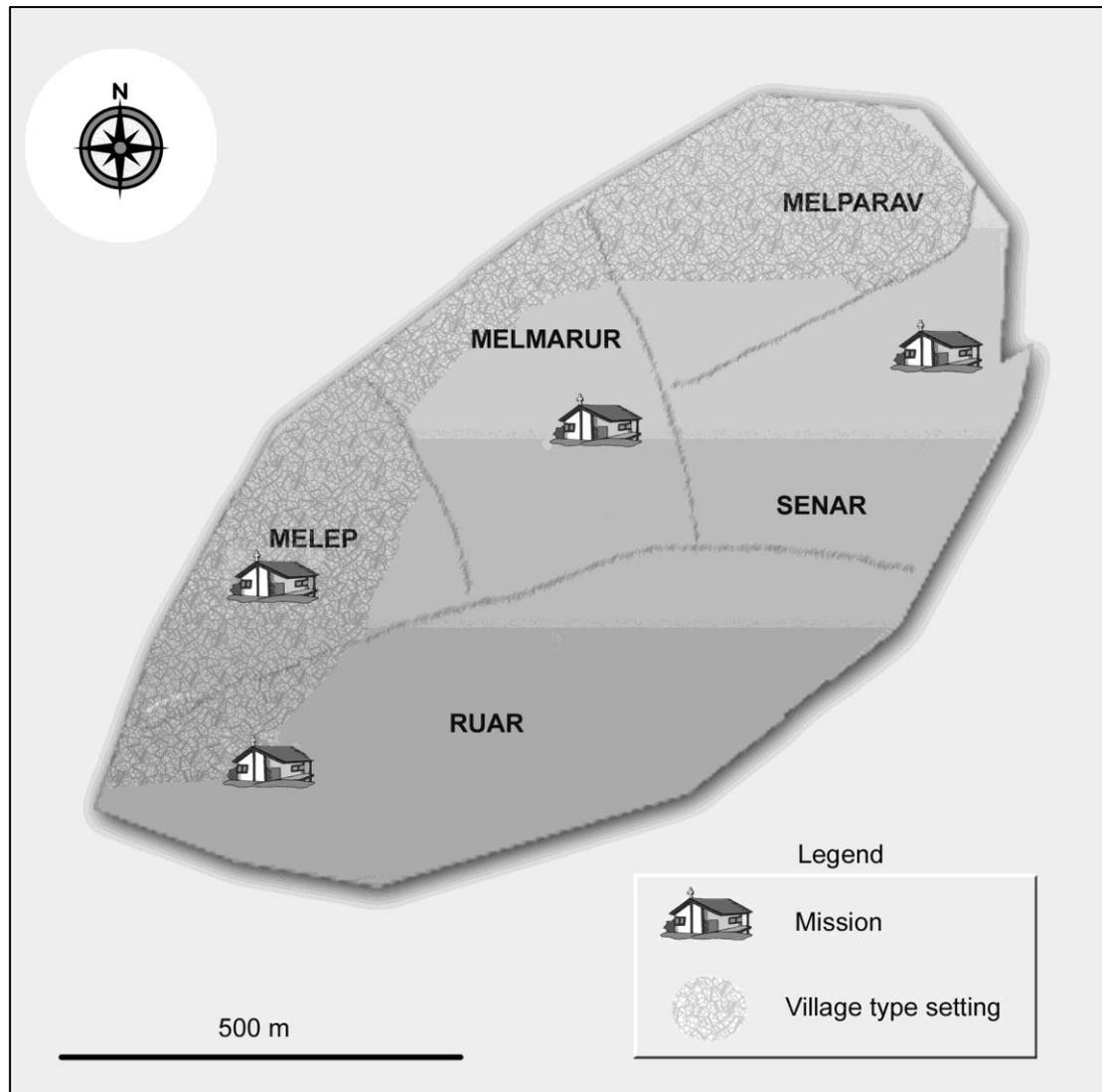
Map 3 - Atchin island

Map 3 shows the approximate location by *potvanu* of the religious churches on the island. I am aware of at least three churches that offer their own primary school system, in French for the Catholics[1] and Presbyterians, and in English for the Adventists. The speakers of each of the European languages tend to follow this map. However it is not unusual for individuals to

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[1] The Catholic service is delivered in local language and Bislama and the readings are from French religious texts.

change religion and, since brides also leave their clan to live at their husband's, speakers of both European languages can be found everywhere on the island. The result of the 2009 census (discussed in §1.3.2) confirmed my impression that, on Atchin island, the French speakers outnumber the English speakers.
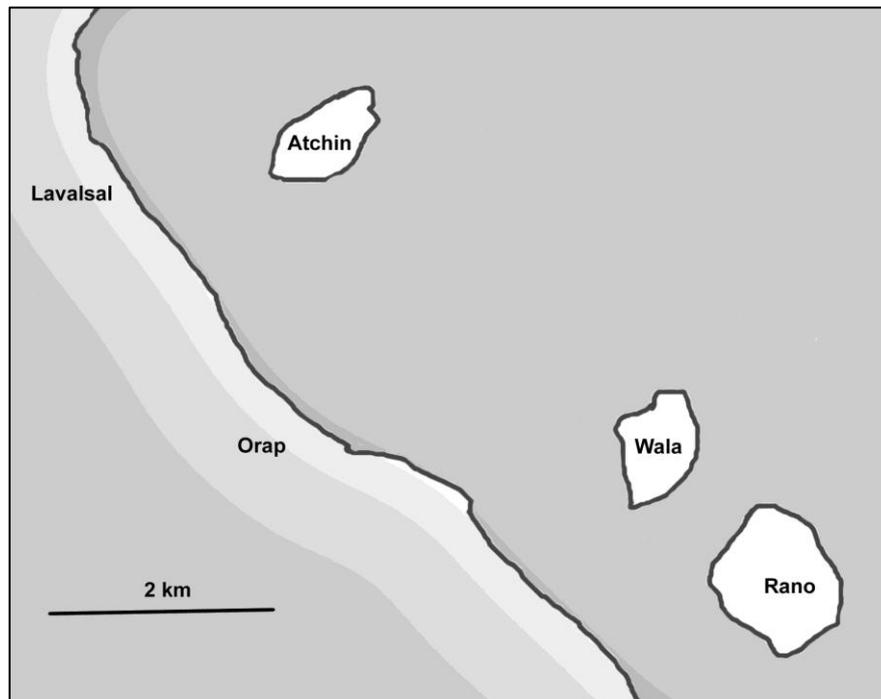
Map 4 - Northeast coast of Malakula

In spite of the importance of the Christian faith, the islanders have kept their traditional customs (*kastom*). The dancing grounds of the island are kept alive with regular practice of traditional dances. The alignments of ancestral stones face the Christian churches. Weddings may or may not be celebrated religiously. Depending on their religion, the islanders observe a religious day on Saturday or Sunday. The rest of the week is busy with working in the gardens on the mainland, maintaining or erecting diverse buildings, looking after small children, fishing and preparing food. With no electricity or tap water, everyday chores take time and energy.

1.3 Languages of Atchin

1.3.1 Languages of home and education

On the island the language spoken by all, children included, is the indigenous language: *nale totsan* 'language of Atchin'. In the present-day language of Atchin, there are loanwords from Bislama, but Bislama itself is rarely used. For examples of Bislama loanword, refer to the interlinear transcription of the narrative Le Wortamat (*ale* 'ok, alright' line 4 and *tseneresin* 'generation' line 33). Many islanders can also speak French or English. The language of Atchin is also spoken on the mainland at Lavalsal (Map 4), near the landing place just opposite Atchin island, and in Orap (Map 4), the next village in the south. The language is reported (Tryon 1972: 56) to be a dialect of the Northeast Malakula language, whose population of speakers nears 9,000 (Lynch & Crowley 2001: 68). On the mainland, in particular in Orap, Bislama seems to be more frequently used, and so does French. It is therefore best for linguists to be based on the island of Atchin to study the local language.

1.3.2 Census data[2]

According to the census carried out on the 16th November 2009, there are 634 people living on the island, in 154 households. Two of the census questions addressed language issues. The Household Interview Schedule (Population and Housing Census 2009) asked what main language was spoken by each household.[3] Individuals were also asked what their main language of instruction was.[4] The census shows that 88% of Atchin households mainly speak the local language at home. The two other home languages are Bislama, for 11% of households, and French, for the remaining 1%. 59% of Atchin islanders answered French was their main language of education, for 39% it was English and the remaining 2% answered it was the local language.

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[2] The Census data mentioned in this study are the provisional results that were communicated to me by the Vanuatu National Statistics Office in September 2010.

[3] H23. What is the main language used in this household? 1.local language 2.Bislama 3.English 4.French 5.other

[4] P18b. Main language of institution 1.English 2.French 3.English & French 4.Local language 5.other

Compared with the national figures (Graph 1 - Home language in Atchin and Vanuatu-wide), in Atchin the local language is spoken significantly more at home than in most Vanuatu households (88% for Atchin households and 66% for all Vanuatu households), to the detriment of Bislama (11% for Atchin households, 33% for all Vanuatu households).
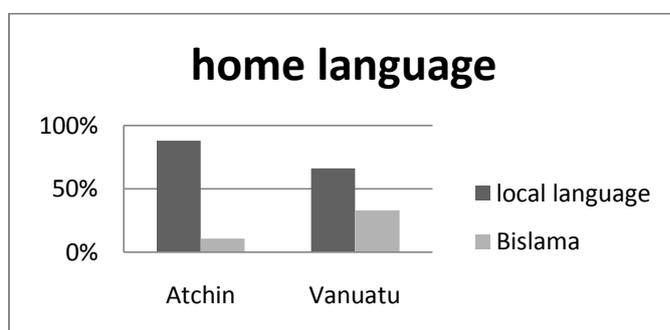
home language

Graph 1 - Home language in Atchin and Vanuatu-wide

1.4 Previous work on Atchin language

1.4.1 Tryon (1976)

Drawing from wordlists collected from 178 speech communities Vanuatu-wide, Darrell Tryon's comparative study of the languages of the New Hebrides had the purpose of enumerating and classifying the languages of the archipelago. The wordlists were collected over 7 years, from 1969 to 1976. Atchin was one of the communities that Tryon visited and from which he collected words. The list of core vocabulary consisted of 258 words and it incorporated Swadesh 100 and 200 wordlists that were modified in order to reflect the area under study. For example, words such as 'snow' were removed, while others like 'singsing', a Bislama 'word denoting ceremonial singing and dancing' (Tryon 1976: 73) were included. Cognates between the languages under study were determined on the basis of these wordlists. Tryon's study established that Atchin shares the highest cognate percentage - 81.8% (Tryon 1976: 146) - with only one speech community of Northeast Malakula: Rano Island (Map 4). And thus, according to the rules of lexicostatistics, the two communities are considered to be speaking two dialects of the same language. Tryon's study challenges the idea that the language spoken in Atchin is a dialect of the Northeast Malakula variety, as reported in a more recent survey of the languages of Vanuatu (Lynch & Crowley 2001: 80). But the

present study focuses strictly on the description of the language spoken in Atchin and does not address dialectal issues.

1.4.2   Capell and Layard (1980)

The only previous work on Atchin language was published in 1980 but it is based on material collected over a period of six months in 1914. The data was collected by the ethnologist Layard and later analysed by the linguist Capell in the 1930s, in consultation with Layard. Capell wanted to check the material collected prior to publishing the grammar of the language and the collection of the texts initially gathered by Layard, but he never got around to visiting the Atchin community (Capell & Layard 1980: iv-v) and finally released 'Materials in Atchin, Malekula: Grammar, Vocabulary and Texts' for publication in 1980, without further work on the material.

There are many shortcomings to the grammar based on the 29 texts and to the transcription of the texts. In his review of the material, Ross Clark (1985: 233) concludes 'there is little in the grammar that the reader could not discover almost as quickly by studying the texts themselves'. As for the texts, there is no interlinear transcription and not all words are referenced in the list of vocabulary. The grammar leaves everything to be done but, despite their deficiencies, the texts present an important collection of data. I did not end up using the stories collected by Layard. However I went over the short tale 'Shooting the banana' (Capell & Layard: 258) with a participant and, aside from a couple of lexical terms that were not recognised, the text was found to be in the language as it would be spoken nowadays by the Atchin community.

1.5   Material in the language of Atchin

'Nubo toptap, nale tojan' (Reverend Steward 1932) is a hymnal in Atchin language for the Seven Days Adventists. According to Lynch & Crowley (2001: 81) the hymns were written by Reverend Steward. The copy I consulted belonged to one of the participants on Atchin, Gustave Romone, and it did not mention the name of the author. The orthography does not reflect the phonology of the language truthfully at times: for instance, if 'h' appears, as expected, in loan words such as *Jehova*, it also appears in Atchin words (*jihim*, 'to you'), whereas the glottal fricative is not a phoneme of the language.

1.6 Why Vanuatu and why Atchin

At the onset I decided to do research that involved the description of a lesser-known language and I wanted my research to be based on data I would collect myself. I realised this last point would be an added challenge for a thesis that had to be completed in nine months, but this was an opportunity to learn linguistic fieldwork methodology - hands on. I wanted to work on a language of New Caledonia or Vanuatu: both countries are close to New Zealand and present languages for which there is little or no description. An added consideration was that, being a French native speaker, I can work in English and French. My intention was to start working in Auckland with a native speaker then complete my data in the field. In May 2009, I contacted the centre for foreign students at the University of Auckland and was soon in contact with a student in medicine (Dr Trelly, as he is known in Malakula) whose homeland is Atchin and who was willing to help me with his native language while in Auckland. I started researching Atchin and its neighbouring languages and found that, as explained above (§1.4.2), if there was some material on the language spoken in Atchin (Capell & Layard 1980) it was incomplete, based on old data and in need of reviewing.

I obtained the university ethics authorisation for the research in October 2009. Meanwhile, Dr Trelly had been given the responsibility of Norsup hospital, in Malakula, and had left Auckland. This meant my research would have to be based entirely on fieldwork. Bowern's (2008) and Crowley's (2007) guides on field linguistics proved very useful. In November 2009, I made a first trip to Vanuatu. I stayed in Port-Vila, in order to get the authorisation from the Vanuatu Cultural Council to carry out fieldwork in the country. Then I flew on to Malakula where I made first contact with a chief of Atchin to let the community know of my project. The chief, Gaston Atuary, welcomed my project and immediately assured me of his support.

I obtained the authorisation from the Vanuatu Cultural Council mid-February 2010 and in late March 2010 I started my field work on Atchin. I returned there late August for my second field trip. For further detail on the field trips refer to the document in the appendix.

1.7 The present study

This study is based on the data I collected during the work I carried out for a total period of five weeks over two stays on the island of Atchin (March, then August 2010) and with

speakers of Atchin in Port-Vila (March 2010). In Auckland I also received the help of a speaker of Atchin. Occasional reference is made to Capell & Layard's study, but the present study is not based on Layard's data.

In Atchin, I stayed in Ruar both times, near the French-speaking Catholic mission, at a relative of Chief Gaston Atuary's. The interviews were conducted in French on Atchin and in Port Vila, and in English in Auckland.

1.7.1 Methodology

The material collected on Atchin consists of vocabulary, elicitation and two texts. The elicitation focuses on the Noun Phrase (NP) and on Possessive Constructions since I had made the choice to detail these two aspects of Atchin for this thesis at the onset of my research.

Work with the two participants based in Port Vila and in Auckland consisted mostly in going over the data previously collected on site on Atchin and in transcribing the texts recorded from the participants living on Atchin.

Given my poor knowledge of Bislama and the fluency in French of most participants, the interviews were mostly conducted in French. When participants were English speakers, I interviewed them in English to minimise translation work. My original notebooks are written in a mix of French and English, but all the material was translated back into English for this thesis and the transcribed stories in Chapter 5 give only English glosses.

On its completion I will forward the outcome of my research as well as the recorded material, transcribed stories and notes to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. As an important part of what I am giving back to the community of Atchin, I have also arranged to prepare and forward some material to them in early 2011: a small Atchin/Bislama dictionary and two stories in Atchin language. And as agreed with The Vanuatu Cultural Centre, I also submitted a spelling system for writing Atchin to the community during my second stay on the island (more on this in the section about spelling system – §2.6).

1.7.2 Structure of this thesis

The focus of my study is on the Noun Phrase. It also includes a brief sociolinguistic background of the language, a chapter on its phonology and another on its morphology.

After the sociolinguistics presentation of the island of Atchin and the previous work on the language (this chapter), the chapter on phonology (Chapter 2) describes the phonemes of the language, its stress system and phonotactics. Based on the phonemes I have established, I also propose the spelling system for Atchin that I use throughout this study. The morphology chapter (Chapter 3) addresses the grammatical and derivational methods used for the diverse word categories of the language – this is the only chapter where I discuss Atchin verbs.

Chapter 4, on the noun phrase, first looks at the order of constituents in the phrase before describing each category of NP heads and constituents. A detailed discussion on the possession construction concludes the chapter on the noun phrase. Chapter 5 presents an interlinear transcription of the two narratives I have collected.

2. Phonology

This chapter consists of six sections. The first two sections describe Atchin phonemic consonants and vowels, the third section briefly looks at the language stress system, the fourth section considers some aspects of the language phonotactics while section five discusses three occurrences of morphophonemic vowel harmony. Finally section six describes the writing system I will be using for Atchin throughout my study.

2.1 Phonemic consonants

All phonemic consonants are listed in table 1.

Table 2.1 - Consonants of Atchin

	bilabial	labio-velar	alveolar	velar
plosive	p , b	pʷ bʷ	t	k
nasal	m	mʷ	n	ŋ
trill			r	
fricative	β		s	
affricate			ts	
approximant		w	l	

Atchin has a separate series of labio-velar consonants, a common feature in the languages of Malakula, but none of the linguo-labial consonants that have been described in the languages of North Malakula (Clark 2009: 35). Atchin does not have the bilabial trill /ʙ/ that was described for the neighbouring language Uripiv (McKerras 1988).

2.1.1   Plosives

The majority of plosive phonemes are unvoiced and can occur anywhere in the word, initially, medially or finally:

Table 2.2 - Positions of plosives in word

[pataβ]   'breadfruit'

[tikei]   'to marry'

[melŋonɔk]   'today'

[nalɛp]   'lake'

[temetmɛt]   'prepare'

[kokoni]   'narrow'

The position of a plosive in a word can affect its rendition, thus root-final prenasalised /b/ is devoiced:

[na^{m}b̥] 'fire', [tsʉno^{m}b̥] 'person'

The bilabial and labio-velar are the only phonemic voiced plosives and they are always prenasalised.

Table 2.3 - Prenasalised voiced plosives

/e ^{m}bʉt/   'seven'

/na ^{m}be/   'where'

/nœ^{m}b/   'lizard'

/na ^{m}b^{w}e/   'slitgong'

As already mentioned (§1.4.1), it is argued that Atchin and Uripiv are dialects of the Northeast Malakula language. Historical evidence sheds some light on an interesting difference between Atchin and Uripiv. For Uripiv, Clark proposes p/b/bb (where 'bb' is the bilabial trill /ʙ/) as reflexes for *b (2009: 33), with p the default case. For Atchin, I propose p and b are also the reflexes of PNCV *b (there is no bilabial trill in Atchin), with p the default case. There is much evidence of the unvoiced plosive being a reflex of *b in initial or medial position, as shown in Table 2.4:

Table 2.4 - Reflex of PNCV *b

		PNCV[5]
[lupwen]	'root'	*labwen
[pae]	'shark'	*bakewa
[pataβ]	'breadfruit'	*batava
[po]	'rot'	*bo
[piɔk]	'taro'	*buaqa
[poun]	'knee'	*bwau-

A possible explanation for the rare occurrence of b, reflex of *b, may be an ongoing devoicing of plosives in Atchin. Many lexical items collected by Layard in the early 20th century (Capell & Layard 1980) and listed in a recent dictionary of Uripiv (McKerras 2001) are listed under a word-initial /b/ but, according to my field notes, these lexemes start with the unvoiced bilabial in present-day Atchin. Table 2.5 demonstrates this divergence with a small set of data taken from the three sources:

Table 2.5 - Uripiv and Atchin reflexes of PNCV *b

Atchin, (my data), 2010	Atchin, (Layard), 1915	Uripiv, (McKerras), 2001		PNCV
pae	*bahi*	*bae*	'shark'	*bakewa
patav	*batav*	*betiv*	'breadfruit'	*batava
piok	*biok*	*bbuak*	'taro'	*buaqa
poun		*baun*	'his knee'	*bwau-
poron	*boron*	*boron*	'his ear'	*bwero
patun	*batun*	*batun*	'his head'	*bwatu
pala-	*bala-*	*belan* 'his foot'	'foot'	*bwalo

Despite what was just said about an ongoing devoicing of Atchin plosives, voiced plosives are a common feature of Atchin speech since unvoiced plosives are regularly voiced across word boundaries, when preceded by a homorganic nasal consonant.

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[5] All proto forms in this document are taken from Ross Clark's comparative lexical study on North and Central Vanuatu languages (Clark 2009).

Voicing of plosives

Word initial plosives are regularly voiced when preceded by a word with a word final homorganic nasal. Along with the bilabial voiced plosive, the alveolar and velar voiced plosives [d] and [g] are regular allophones of their unvoiced phonemic equivalents.

Table 2.6 - Voicing of plosives

ni 'ART' + *teng* 'basket'	[ndeŋ]	'basket'
ni 'ART' +*tas* 'sea'	[ndas]	'sea'
mu 'REAL.3SG' +*po* 'rot'	[mbo]	'rotten'

For *niteng* 'basket' and *nitas* 'sea', the vowel of the unstressed petrified noun prefix *ni-* is dropped and the initial /t/ of the morpheme *teng* 'basket', or *tas* 'sea', is voiced following the article nasal consonant. For the adjectival form *mu po* it is the verb *po* 'ripen, rot' whose initial plosive is voiced after the loss of vowel of preverb *mu* 'REAL.3SG':

In example 2.1 taken from the narrative *Le Wenper*, the initial plosive of verb *tikei* 'marry' is voiced after the final nasal of preverb *kon* .

2.1   *Se*   *kon*   *tikei-a*   [se kon dikeia]
      NEG   PV.2SG   marry-1SG.OBJ
       'You can't marry me'

2.1.2 Liquids

I found no evidence of the retroflex flap [ɽ] that has been reported in Northeast Malakula (Crowley 2006). The difference between the two phonemic liquids for this language is clearly audible. This pair demonstrates the phonemic contrast between the trill /r/ and the lateral approximant /l/:

l   r
/wele/ 'good'   /were/ 'towards'

The quality of the word-medial or word-final trill may be slightly different to its word-initial rendition. In particular the rendition of the word-medial or word-final trill can be shorter than the word-initial trill, but not to the extent that it becomes a flap.

As for the lateral approximant, it is velarised when in root-final position:

mitel [miteɫ] 'thick'

2.1.3   Fricatives and affricates

The phonemic contrast between s and ts is illustrated by the minimal pair:

s   ts
/sani/ 'climb'   /tsani/ 'tie'

There is variation in speakers and the alveolar fricative [s] and affricate [ts] are rendered by some speakers as the post alveolar fricative [ʃ] and affricate [tʃ], respectively. This is particularly common for the affricates, as illustrated in these lexical items:

Table 2.7 - Variation in fricatives and affricates

		Alternative pronunciation:
tsuom	'his mouth'	[tsuɔm] or [tʃuɔm]
tsotsi	'sibling of a different gender'	[tsotsi] or [tʃotʃi]
mutsika	'nowhere'	[mutsika] or [mutʃika]

The same free variation between individuals' speech has been observed in Bislama (Crowley 1995: 11) and is acknowledged by speakers. For the sake of consistency with the previously described languages of that region, I will consider the phonemes for the fricative and affricate are the ones at the alveolar place of articulation: /s/ and /ts/.

Labialisation of the bilabial plosives and nasal

The labialisation of the bilabial plosives, and of the bilabial nasal, seems to be occuring before unrounded vowels. However, since the three plain bilabial consonants also happen in that same environment, their labialisation is not a regular change. These three phonemes /p^w/, /b^w/ and /m^w/ are reflexes of PNCV labiovelars *bw (/p^w/ and /b^w/) and *mw (/m^w/).

Table 2.8 - Conservative reflexes of *mʷ, *pʷ and *bʷ

	PNCV
mweir 'left'	*mawiri
nimwet 'snake'	*mwata
lapwen 'root'	*labwe
nabwe 'drum'	*bwea

Additionally, there are at least two lexical items whose initial consonant lost their proto labialisation:

Table 2.9 - Loss of proto labialisation

	PNCV
malakel 'young man'	*mwalaqelo
poro- 'ear'	*bwero

I noticed some individual variation in consonant labialisation, particularly for pʷ. It is possible that labialisation is being lost for the unvoiced plosive. There was for example loss of labialisation in the younger speaker's rendition of 'child', [tipis], and 'liver' [peper]:

Table 2.10 - Ongoing loss of labialisation

	PNCV
norm(w)an 'man'	*ata-mwaʔane
tip(w)is 'child'	
p(w)ep(w)er 'liver'	*mwabwe

2.2 Phonemic vowels

The Atchin language has seven phonemic vowels, listed in Table 2.11:

Table 2.11 - Vowels of Atchin

	Front	Central	back
high	i	ʉ	u
mid-high	e		o
mid-low		œ	
low		a	

Some of the phonemic contrasts for the seven phonemic vowels are illustrated in the minimal pairs below. Table 2.12 concentrates on the suspicious pairs:

Table 2.12 - Vowels phonemic contrast

a	e
/sala/ 'neck'	/sale/ 'beach'
ʉ	œ
/namʉs/ 'grass'	/namœs/ 'sea-pool'
e	i
/ise/ 'who'	/isi/ 'squeeze'
u	o
/wusi/ 'call'	/wosi/ 'carry'

The tense mid-vowels, e, o and œ, become lax when in an unstressed closed syllable. In this environment, e is lowered to ɛ, o is lowered to ɔ and œ is centred to ə, as illustrated below :

Table 2.13 - Allophone of phoneme /e/

[ˈpʷepʷɛr]	'his liver'
[ˈnarɛt]	'heart'
[ˈlapwɛn]	'root'
[ˈnaᵐbwe]	'drum'

Table 2.14 - Allophone of phoneme /o/

[ˈmʷawɔs]	'straight'
[ˈporɔn]	'his ear'
[mɛlˈŋonɔk]	'today'

Table 2.15 - Allophone of phoneme /œ/

[ˈmœtmət]	'black'

2.3 Stress

The stress system discussed in this section is based on the analysis of the narrative '*Le Wortamat*', unless stated otherwise in the example. I took into account the pitch, intensity and length factors as they were reported by Praat software.

Stress generally falls on the penultimate syllable of verbs or nouns. When the word ends with a sequence of two vowels, on the pattern V.V(C)#, the stress falls on the penultimate vowel.

2.2 *ˈVina ˈnivat mwi ˈwala roni*

Vina	nivat	mwi	wala	roni
girl	stone	REAL.3SG	run	with

'The girl, the stone ran away with her'

2.3 *Po ˈma, roˈveim*

Po	ma	ro	veim
IRR.2SG	go	IRR.1DU.INCL	go.home

'Come, let's go home'

Verbs strictly follow the stress rule, but there are some irregularities for nouns. The nouns below are all regularly stressed on the penultimate syllable:
wiˈsewin 'woman' , *ˈkastom* 'tradition' , *melˈngonok* 'today' , *ˈrengen* 'inside'[6]

But these nouns below are stressed on the last syllable:
niˈmwet 'snake', *niˈtan* 'ground'

The reason for this irregularity cannot be a heavy word-final syllable, since the nouns in the first set were regularly stressed, despite their word-final consonants.

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[6] Literally: 'its belly', from *renge-n* 'belly-3SG.POSS'.

Noun stress is not affected by the possessive suffix:

2.4   ʹnatun

natu-n

offspring-3SG.POSS

'her child'

Verb stress is not affected by the bound pronoun object:

2.5   *Mwi tiʹkei wiʹsewin*

mwi   tikei   wisewin

REAL.3SG   marry   young woman

'He marries the woman'

2.6   *Me ʹre pe tiʹkeim* (Le Wenper)

Me   re   pe   tikei-m

REAL.1SG   want   IRR.1SG   marry-2SG.OBJ

'I want to marry you'

Some grammatical words are stressed, but stress does not fall regularly. Below, *sopon* 'some' is stressed differently by the same speaker in the same narrative.

2.7   ʹtamau sa mwi ʹleplep soʹpon

tamau   sa   mwi   leplep   sopon

castrated.pig   INDEF   REAL.3SG   big.DUP   some

'a rather big castrated pig'

2.8   *Mor ʹlek vatsin mi ʹparav ʹsopon mi pe ʹango*

Mor   lek   vatsin mi   parav   sopon mi   pe

REAL.3DU   stay   then   REAL.3SG   long   some   REAL.3SG   COP

ango

DEM

'They stay this way for some time'

2.4 Phonotactics

Syllables follow the pattern (C) V (C). Of all the possible combinations, the most common are CV (56% of the syllables of about 700 words) and CVC (31%). The frequency of the remaining two patterns is: V (8%) and VC (5%).

It follows from above that either consonant or vowel can be word-initial or word-final but that Atchin roots are more likely to start with a consonant. Words can start with any of the phonemic consonant but they never end with a labio-velar.

The boundaries of the grouping of sounds that make a syllable are defined by the onset and coda on either side of a vowel. Since CVC is a common syllable pattern for Atchin, consecutive consonants in a word are common. However consecutive consonants are not consonant clusters since they cannot happen in the same syllable. Below are some examples of words with consecutive consonants:

ri**β.ts**i   'hit'
ro**ŋ.s**u.ni   'know'
si**l.β**in   'his body hair'
u.tu**n.β**a.nu   'animal'
me**l.ŋ**o.nok   'today'

Among the examples of syllables that consist of a sole vowel, we find the monosyllabic morphemes:

Table 2.16 - Mono-vowel morphemes

V	
a	definite article
e	3SG preverb

I have not encountered morphemes that present three consecutive vowels, but there are many that present two consecutive vowels (Table 2.17). This structure in a multisyllabic morpheme can reflect the loss of an intervocalic proto-consonant, as is the case for *pae,* and *metua*, or the loss of an initial consonant, combined with the prefixation of the proto article *na, as is the case for *nout, nous* and *nial:*

Table 2.17 - Consecutive vowels in multisyllabic morphemes

V.V		PNCV
i.o	'yes'	*io
CV.V		
pa.e	'shark'	*bakewa
tu.a	'traditional'	*tuai 'long ago, old'
CV.VC		
pi.ok	'taro'	*buaqa
no.ut	'garden'	*na + *ʔuta
no.us	'rain'	*na+ *ʔusa
ni.al	'sun'	*na + *yalo
CV.CV.V		
me.tu.a	'uncle'	*matuʔa
ta.ma.i	'dog'	

Another observation to be made is the absence of the sequence of vowels featuring central round vowels[7] whereas any of the five peripheral vowels may appear next to one another.

2.5 Vowel harmony

I observed regressive vowel harmonising on three types of unstressed morphemes:

- On the preposed verbal particle *mwi*
- On the noun prefix nV-
- On the single digit prefix e-

These examples of phonotactics are discussed below.

2.5.1   Vowel harmonising in the realis 3SG preverb.

The realis 3SG preverb appears in the verb phrase. In the noun phrase, it appears in the noun modifier construction that involves verbs (this will be discussed under 'semantic adjectives' in NP section §4.2.4.1). The particle is preposed to the predicate of the verbal phrase and, in

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[7] perhaps this says something about the change to ʉ and œ: fusion of peripheral proto-vowels?

the adjectival construction, to the lexical item that modifies the noun. The underlying form of the verbal particle is *m(w)i* and its surface forms are *m* or *mu* or *m(w)i*.

m(w)i > m.

The vowel of this particle is dropped before a lexeme that starts with a vowel, and also often before a lexeme with an initial bilabial nasal or plosive:

2.9   *M-ureni* (rather than **mwi ureni*)

       M   ureni

       REAL.3SG   say

       '(s)he says'

Before a monosyllabic lexeme with an initial p, the vowel of the preverb (§3.4.1.1) is dropped. Directly following the bilabial nasal, the unvoiced plosive is voiced:

2.10   *m-po*   [mbo]

       m   po

       REAL.3SG   rot

       ˈrottenˈ

Before a lexeme with an initial bilabial nasal, the preverb may be omitted:

2.11   *Ma*   [ma]

       Ø   ma

       REAL.3SG   go

       '(S)he goes'

m(w)i > mu.

The particle vowel harmonises with the first vowel of the root of the predicate. / i/ becomes the back round /u/ when the initial syllable of the following lexeme features a back round vowel:

2.12   *mu*   *row*

       REAL.3SG   heavy

       'heavy'

2.13   *mu*   *so*

REAL.3SG   sharp

'sharp'

2.14   *Mu*   *susui*

REAL.3SG   go.down

'(S)he/it goes down'

$m^{(w)}i > m^{(w)}i$

Elsewhere the particle vowel remains /i/. As discussed in §2.1, there does not seem to be any regularity in the labialisation – or lack of labialisation - of the nasal.

2.15   *mi*   *mir*

REAL.3SG   ripe

'ripe'

2.16   *mwi*   *mitil*

REAL.3SG   thick

'thick'

2.17   *Mi*   *ma*

REAL.3SG   go

'(S)he/it goes'

2.18   *mi*   *venalew*

REAL.3SG   mud

'muddy'

2.19   *mwi*   *veven*

REAL.3SG   red

'red'

2.20   *mwi*   *mötmöt*

REAL.3SG   black

'black'

2.5.2 Vowel harmonising in the noun prefix article *nV-*.

The fusion of the particle *nV-* (PNCV *na) is complete for many nouns. The noun prefix is productively used, and in particular in nominalising verbs (this is discussed further in §3.2.2.1):

liw 'to shoot', *neliw* 'an arrow'
suli 'to burn', *nesul* 'a torch' .

The most common form of the noun prefix is *na-*, as was also observed for Uripiv (Clark 2009: 35), and since it is also the proto form of the article, I suggest *na-* is the underlying form of the suffixed article.

There are examples of the prefix vowel assimilating with the first vowel of the noun it precedes, and, when this happens, the assimilation follows these rules:

- before a front non-low vowel, the article vowel is changed to a front non-low vowel

Table 2.18 - Noun particle *ni-* before /i/ and /e/

		PNCV
nisel	'path'	*na+*sala
nimwet	'snake'	*na+*mwata
nisip	'knife'	*na+*siba
niteng	'basket'	*na+*taga
nevü	'turtle'	*na+*ʔavua

- before a back non low round, the article vowel is /o/:

Table 2.19 - Noun particle *no-* before /u/ and /o/

		PNCV
nous	'rain'	*na+*ʔusa
nobo	'song'	

However, there are prefixes that do not follow the tentative rules above, as in these examples of *ni-* prefix that precedes a noun whose first vowel is /a/:

nial	'sun'	*na+*yalo
niman	'bird'	*na+*manu-ku
niram	'yam'	*na+*damu
nitan	'earth'	*na+*tano

Table 2.20 below summarises the forms the article can take and in which environments. The results are based on a selection of 86 nouns for which I was sure the first syllable was a fossilised article.

The prefix *na-* is found in all environments and is predominant. This confirms the position that it is the underlying form. The overall picture confirms that the article vowel harmonises in frontness or backness with the initial vowel of the noun stem it is fused with (dark shaded area). The articles with a central vowel (light-shaded area, and ignoring *na-*) can precede stems with a front, central or back vowel. The only anomaly (jagged border) is the front vowel of *ne-* found before back vowel u, in the words *nesul* 'torch' and *nevu* 'sidebar on canoe'.

Table 2.20 - Vowel harmony in *nV-* article

	-(C)i	-(C)e	-(C)ö	-(C)ü	-(C)a	-(C)o	-(C)u	Total
ni-	1	6			15			22
ne-	5	3		1	1		2	12
nö-			1	1				2
na-	6	9	3	3	6	6	9	42
no-						3	3	6
nu-					1	1		2
Total								

2.5.3   Vowel harmonising of the numeral prefix *e-*

The single digit numerals offer a third example of vowel assimilation (Table 2.21). These lexemes all start with the prefixed vowel *e-*[8] except for two numerals, *owon* 'six' and *owal* 'eight'. Their initial vowel changes to *o-* after adopting the round and back features of the labio-velar semi-vowel it precedes:

Table 2.21 - Single digit numerals

etes	'one'
eru	'two'
etul	'three'
evats	'four'
elim	'five'
owon	'six'
embüt	'seven'
owal	'eight'
esiuw	'nine'

2.6 Spelling system

Based on the phonology I observed, below is the spelling system I intend to use for my study on the language of Atchin. This system was submitted to the language participants in Atchin. As mentioned in the first section of this study (§1.5), there are two sources of published texts in Atchin language: Layard & Capell (1980) and Nubo TopTap (Reverend Steward 1932). Both have their own set of problems. The orthography in Layard & Capell uses phonetic symbols and the one used in Nobo Toptap is not based on a phonemic analysis. On the few occasions when the speakers of Atchin write their native language (names of persons or places, lyrics of songs) they tend to apply the orthographic conventions of the European language in which they were educated. Some Adventists are also familiar with the spelling of Nobo Toptap. Thus the village where I was staying could be written *Rouwar* or *Ruar* and the next village *Chenard* ou *Senar*.

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[8] Perhaps a reflex of the 3sg subject *e-?

McKerras (2001) compiled a dictionary for the language of Uripiv, a language close to Atchin. Whenever possible I used the Uripiv spelling system, however some Uripiv sounds do not exist in Atchin (the flap, the bilabial trill) and the high central vowel ʉ in Atchin is not phonemic in Uripiv.

In summary, the orthography for this study is first based on the system used by Layard and Capell for Atchin, then on the system used for Uripiv. I avoided the phonetic symbols that appeared in Capell and Layard and replaced them with roman characters. Table 2.22 lists the written forms of the established phonemes.

Table 2.22 - Atchin spelling system

Written form:	**p**	**b**	**v**	**w**	**t**	**m**	**n**	**r**	**s**	**ts**	**l**	**k**	**ng**	**pw**	**bw**	**mw**
Corresponding phoneme:	p	b	β	w	t	m	n	r	s	ts	l	k	ŋ	p^w	b^w	m^w

Written form:	**a**	**e**	**i**	**o**	**u**	**ö**	**ü**
Corresponding phoneme:	a	e	i	o	u	œ	ʉ

b: the voiced plosive is always prenasalised, and therefore /na^{m}b/ 'fire', will be written **nab.** Capell & Layard would write the m (*namb*), but that is unnecessary.

r: in Uripiv, the trill is represented by *rr* to differentiate it from the flap, written *r*. Atchin has only one rhotic phoneme, the trill. Layard & Capell write the trill *r*, and this is the representation I adopted.

s/ts: these cover the variation for the fricative and affricate. **s** represents both [s] and [ʃ] and **ts** represents [ts] and [tʃ].

bw: the labialised voiced plosive is also prenasalised, as is the plain voiced plosive, and therefore the written form of /na^{m}b^{w}e/ 'slitgong' is **nabwe**.

v and **w** : represent β and w, respectively, whereas *w* covers both phonemes in Layard & Capell.

Table 2.23 - Illustration of Atchin spelling system

p	*piok*	'taro'
b	*ebüt*	'seven'
v	*viel*	'walk'
w	*wowon*	'hill'
t	*tang*	'cry'
m	*malakel*	'young man'
n	*nirak*	'my blood'
r	*roromi*	'think'
s	*so*	'thanks'
ts	*tsats*	'bad'
l	*lalo*	'dirty'
k	*koro*	'only'
ng	*ngaut*	'seaside'
pw	*pwepwen*	'his/her liver'
bw	*nabwe*	'slit-gong'
mw	*nimwet*	'snake'
a	*mata*	'be scared'
e	*lelep*	'big'
i	*lesi*	'see'
o	*ko*	'and'
u	*nevu*	'side bar on canoe'
ö	*menöv*	'yesterday'
ü	*nevü*	'turtle'

3. Morphology

After a brief presentation of the open word classes of Atchin, this section covers the grammatical words and, in particular, the inflectional and derivational morphology of nouns, pronouns and possessive classifiers. It also touches on the morphology of verbs and preverbs.

3.1 Word classes

The nouns of this language can be distinguished from its verbs using the following criteria: **Nouns** can refer to concrete entities, they can be modified by determiners, they can be inflected for possession and they cannot take the object suffix.

Verbs refer to action or state, they are directly preceded by a particle that marks modality, person and number, they cannot take the possession suffix and transitive verbs can take an object suffix.

There exists a small class of **adjectives**. These words modify a noun and are directly postposed to the noun. But nouns are predominantly modified by words that fill the criteria of the verb class and denote state and property. These stative verbs can also modify verbs. Adjectives and stative verbs are discussed in more detail in the Noun Phrase chapter under section 4.2.4.1.

3.2 Noun morphology

This section first discusses the possession inflection that affects some of Atchin words, then it looks at the derivational methods used in noun formation: affixation and compounding. Finally it covers the reduplication of full or part of the noun root.

3.2.1 Possession

The discussion on possessive construction is presented in chapter 4. This section only outlines the morphology of the possession relationship.

Possession is the only relation between constituents of the noun phrase that may be marked by an inflection. The relation of possession can be direct, when the possessor has an inherent connection with the possessum (body parts, relatives), or indirect when this connection is not inherent. As many Oceanic languages, Atchin makes grammatical differentiation between

direct and indirect possession. For direct possession, the possessive suffix is appended to the possessum. For indirect possession the inflection is suffixed to a possessive classifier postposed to the possessum.

The paradigm of the possessive suffixes is the same for direct and indirect possession. Only the host changes. The suffix marks the person and number of the possessor. The paradigm is displayed in Table 3.24

Table 3.24 - Possessive suffix

	Singular	Plural
1.EXCL		*-mam*
1.INCL	*-k*	*-r*
2	*-m*	*-mi*
3	*-n / ø*	*-r*

For direct possession, the suffix is hosted by the possessum:

3.1   *patu-k*

head-1SG.POSS
'my head'

For indirect possession, the suffix is hosted by a possessive classifier postposed to the possessum:

3.2   *neim   se-r*
house   POSS-3PL
'their house'

Directly possessed nouns and the general possessive classifier *se-* (§4.3.2.4) can both be marked with the *–n* suffix or zero inflection for the 3SG person. Items in a possessive relationship with non human possessors can only take the *–n* suffix.

3.3   *lolo-n   neim*
inside-3SG.POSS   house
'house interior'

3.4 *lolo-ϕ.*   *tsünob*

inside-3SG.POSS   person

'a person's feelings'

For human possessors, zero inflection and *–n* suffix are complementary and their occurrence depends on two criteria: the presence of a noun possessor and, when there is an overt possessor, the order of the possessum and possessor constituents in the phrase.

When there is no overt possessor, *-n* is used and zero inflection cannot be used.

3.5 *metue-n*

uncle-3SG.POSS

'his/her uncle'

3.6 **metue-ϕ*

uncle-3SG.POSS

'his/her uncle'

3.7 *niteng se-n*

basket POSS-3SG

'his/her basket'

3.8 **niteng   se-ϕ*

basket   POSS-3SG

'his/her basket'

When the directly possessed noun, or general classifier *se-* , precedes the noun possessor, it is zero inflected and *–n* suffix cannot be used.

3.9 *metue-ϕ*   *tipis   ok*

uncle-3SG.POSS   child   DEM

'the child's uncle'

3.10 **metue-n*   *tipis   ok*

uncle-3SG.POSS   child   DEM

'the child's uncle'

3.11 *niteng se-ø*   *leter*   *ok*

       basket POSS-3SG   woman   DEM

       'the woman's basket'

3.12 **niteng*   *se-n*   *leter*   *ok*

       basket   POSS-3SG   woman   DEM

       'the woman's basket'

When the directly possessed noun, or general classifier *se-,* follows the noun possessor it is *-n* suffixed and not zero inflected.

3.13 *tipis*   *ok*   *metue-n*

       child   DEM   uncle-3SG.POSS

       'the child's uncle'

3.14 **tipis*   *ok*   *metue-ø*

       child   DEM   uncle-3SG.POSS

       'the child's uncle'

3.15 *leter*   *ok*   *niteng se-n*

       woman   DEM   basket POSS-3SG

       'the woman's basket'

3.16 **leter*   *ok*   *niteng se-ø*

       woman   DEM   basket POSS-3SG

       'the woman's basket

3.2.2   Noun derivation

Derivational affixation and compounding are two methods used in this language to create nouns.

3.2.2.1   Derivational affixation

Affixes can be appended to verbs or nouns to create new nouns.

Noun = Verb + *-en*

Some nouns are derived from action or stative verbs by suffixing *–en* to the verb stem. The derived nouns all refer to abstract entities:

Verb	Noun
mara 'to wake up'	*mara-en* 'rising'
masa 'to be sick'	*masa-en* 'disease'
matsing ' to work'	*matsing-en* 'work'
romi 'to think'	*romi-en* 'idea'
tara 'be old'	*tara-en* 'ageing'
rits 'to talk'	*rits-en* 'argument'
palpal ' to fight'	*palpal-en* 'fight'
wel 'to dance'	*wel-en* 'dance'
tang 'to cry'	*tang-en* 'crying'

Noun = *nV-* + Verb

Fewer nouns are derived from verbs by prefixing the former article *nV-* to the verb stem. The resulting nouns refer to concrete entities.

Verb	Noun
liw 'to shoot'	*ne-liw* 'an arrow'
suli 'to burn'	*ne-sul* 'a torch'
us ' to rain'	*no-us* 'the rain'

Noun = *nV-* + Noun

Nouns are also derived from a noun by prefixing the former article *nV-* to the noun stem. The resulting prefixed noun replaces the former unprefixed noun. *Nira* 'blood' is the only example in my corpus of a noun that co-exists in the language with the unprefixed noun *ra-* 'blood'. There is a semantic and syntactic difference between the two nouns. *Nira* refers to the body product when its possessor is unknown, whereas *ra-* is the inalienable noun used in the direct possessive construction:

3.17 *Nira   ango*

blood   here

'There is blood here'

3.18 *ra-n   nato*

blood-3SG.POSS   chicken

'chicken's blood'

The nouns *lok* 'pudding' and *vits* 'banana' combine to form the compound *lokvits* 'banana pudding'. However, the nouns before their fusion with the noun article *nV-* only appear in this compound, and elsewhere we find the prefixed nouns *nalok* 'pudding' and *navits* 'banana' (as in compounds 3.22 and 3.24 below).

3.2.2.2 Compounds

A common type of compound is a structure made of a noun modified by a postposed noun. The meaning of the resulting head noun is narrowed down by the noun modifier:

3.19 *natuk norman*

natu-k   norman

offspring-1SG.POSS young.man

'my son'

3.20 *natuk   wisewin*

natu-k   wisewin

offspring-1SG.POSS girl

'my daughter'

3.21 *roun patuk*

rou-n   patu-k

leaf-3SG.POSS   head-1SG.POSS

'my hair'(lit: the leaf of my head)

3.22 *niteng navits*

niteng navits

basket banana

'basketful of banana'

3.23 *taron nial*

taron   nial

time   sun

'summer'

3.24 *nalok masal*

nalok   masal

pudding   fish

'fish pudding'

Compounding is also used for referring to people or entities belonging to a particular physical place:

3.25 *nale Totsan*

nale   Totsan

language   Atchin

'the language of Atchin'

3.26 *wisewin Laon*

wisewin   Laon

young.woman Laon

'a young woman from Laon'

3.2.3   Reduplication

I have only two examples of noun reduplication in my whole data:

nus 'rain'   *nusnus* 'heavy rain'

namus 'grass'   *namusmus* 'many grass'

One is a full reduplication, *nusnus* 'heavy rain', the other is a partial reduplication and only the original stem, prior to its fusion with the earlier article *na-*, is reduplicated: *namusmus* 'many grasses'. For *nusnus*, the reduplication marks intensity, and for *namusmus* it marks plural. Noun reduplication is less common than verb reduplication.

3.27 *Taron   ok   ango   rok   nusnus   mwi   lep*

Time   DEF   here   PROG   rain.DUP   REAL.3SG   big

'Nowadays, in heavy rain,…'

3.3 Pronoun morphology

3.3.1 Personal pronouns

Atchin has independent pronouns and bound pronouns. Both sets mark person and number. The independent pronoun can function as the head of a noun phrase. The bound pronoun is suffixed to the transitive verb and marks the object of the verb.

3.3.1.1 Free pronouns

Independent pronouns mark the person - speaker, addressee or a third person - and can function as the head of an NP. Atchin independent pronouns mark the number of the person they refer to, but not their gender. The first person plural marks the distinction between including and excluding the addressee. Table 3.25 shows the paradigm of the personal independent pronoun.

Table 3.25 - Independent pronouns

	SG	PL
1.EXCL	*ina*	*kiam*
1.INCL		*ikir*
2	*inik*	*kami*
3	*ini*	*inir*

Independent pronouns are optional in the verbal phrase. Aside from modality, the preverb marks person and number and fills the subject argument of the verb:

3.28 *Ina   pe   mini   nua*
      1SG   IRR.1SG   drink   water
      'Me I drink water'

3.29 *Pe   mini   nua*
      IRR.1SG   drink   water
      'I drink water'

The 1PL and 2PL independent pronouns may fill the object argument of the verbal predicate. All other forms of the pronouns are bound to the verb.

3.3.1.2 Bound pronouns

The paradigm of the object bound pronoun is given in table 3.26. The bound pronoun marks person, number and case.

Table 3.26 - Bound pronouns

	SG	PL
1.EXCL	*-a*	
1.INCL		
2	*-m*	
3	*- Ø*	*-r*

3.30   *Mo*   *lesi-a*
      REAL.2SG   see-1SG.OBJ
      'You see me'

3.31   *Me*   *lesi-r*
      REAL.1SG   see-3PL.OBJ
      'I see them'

3.32   *Me*   *re*   *pe*   *tikei-m*
      REAL.1SG   want   IRR.1SG   marry-2SG.OBJ
      'I want to marry you'

3.33   *Pe*   *tarav-i-m*   *nael*
      IRR.1SG   wait-TR-2SG.OBJ   here
      'I'll wait for you here'

3.34   *Kami*   *pi*   *etul*   *par*   *tsire-a*
      2PL   IRR.3SG   three   IRR.2PL   follow-1SG.OBJ
      'You three, follow me'

3.35   *Natun*   *tamai*   *mwi*   *tsire- Ø*
      small   dog   REAL.3SG   follow-3SG.OBJ
      'A small dog follows her'

The bound form for the 3SG person object is Ø. I have encountered the 3SG free pronoun *ini* as an indirect object:

3.36 *Merok   mu   ure-ni ini*
      young.man   REAL.3SG   tell-TR 3SG
      'The young man says to her: ' (what he says follows)

3.3.2 Possessive pronouns

Atchin four possessive classifiers and possessive pronouns all use the possession paradigm listed in table 3.24. The classifiers, pronouns and their paradigms are discussed in the section on possessive construction (§4.3).

3.4 Verb morphology

This section covers some aspect of verb inflection and verb derivation. [9]

3.4.1 Inflection

Atchin verb stems can take an object suffix and are preceded by a particle that marks a combination of modality (realis/irrealis), person and number. In interrogative clauses, a particle that does not make modality refers to 2SG and 3SG, and an alternative set of preverbs is used in some negative clauses to express an event that is impossible. These preverbs are listed and discussed in the section below.

3.4.1.1 Realis/irrealis preverbs

Realis refers to events that have happened or are happening and irrealis refers to wishes, orders and all events 'that didn't happen in the past (but could have) and to all or most of the post-present domain' (Dixon 2010a: 153). Where English would use imperative or future, Atchin uses irrealis. However the distinction between realis and irrealis pertains to modality and not to mood - and even less to tense. In this example, taken from the narrative *Le Wortamat*, the desire of the girl to step away from the stone is an indisputable fact and the verb *re* 'want' is preceded with a realis preverb, whereas the stepping away action is a wish and the verb *viel* 'walk' is marked with irrealis:

---

[9] Since this study focuses on the noun phrase, elicitation and research on the verbal phrase was reduced to the features necessary to describing the categories of noun modifiers that involve verbs.

3.37 *Mwi re pi   viel re nivat*

   REAL.3SG want IRR.3SG walk LOC stone

   'She wants to step away from the stone'

There is an overlapping of the two preverbs for the 1PL forms and these will be glossed as 1PL with no mention of modality. For the other forms, it is only the initial consonant that changes from realis to irrealis particle. The realis forms take an initial bilabial nasal, whereas the irrealis forms take an initial plosive, velar (2DU and 2PL) or bilabial:

  me REAL.1SG *pe* IRR.1SG

  mo REAL.2SG *po* IRR.2SG

The dual form is similar to the same person plural form except for the alternation of back low vowel for the dual preverb and central low vowel for the plural:

  mor REAL.3DU *mar* REAL.3PL

  kop IRR.2DU *kap* IRR.2PL

My corpus shows no dual forms for the 1st and 2nd persons of the realis preverb.

Table 3.27 - Realis preverbs

	SG	Dual	PL
1.EXCL	*me*		*nom/na(m)*
1.INCL			*ra(m)*
2	*mo*		*mar*
3	*m(w)i/mu/mo*	*mor*	*mar*

Table 3.28 - Irrealis preverbs

	SG	Dual	PL
1.EXCL	*pe*		*no(m)*
1.INCL		*ro*	*ra(m)*
2	*po*	*kop*	*kap*
3	*p(w)i*	*por*	*par*

The verbal phrase in **realis** indicates the action has taken place or is taking place.

3.38   *Mar*   *tur*   *mar*   *miteni*

     REAL.3PL   stand   REAL.3PL   watch

     'They are standing and watching'

Adverb such as *pin* 'already' set the event in the past:

3.39   *Me*   *an*   *pin*

     REAL.1SG   eat   already

     'I have eaten'

Realis 2PL and 3PL are identical and to disambiguate them the free pronoun marking 2PL or 3PL may precede the preverb, as illustrated in 3.40 with the 3PL pronoun *inir*.

3.40   *inir*   *mar*   *sesui*

     3PL   REAL.2/3PL   find

     'they found'

In the following examples, the **irrealis** preverb is used to express orders or wishes:

3.41   *Kap*   *se*   *tarav-i-a*   *te !*

     IRR.2PL   NEG[1]   wait-TR-1SG.OBJ   NEG[2]

     'Don't wait for me!'

3.42   *Po*   *tori*   *wenen nei*[10]   *nen*

     IRR.2SG   catch   fruit   DEM

     'Pick that fruit'

3.43   *Ro*   *veim*

     IRR.1DU   go.home

     'Let's go home'

3.44   *Mor*   *re*   *por*   *van*   *por*   *vavarong*

     REAL.3DU   want   IRR.3DU   go   IRR.3DU   fish.by.turning.rocks.over

     'The two of them want to go fishing by turning the rocks over'

---

[10] *Wenen nei* is a compound: *wenen* 'fruit', *nei* 'tree'.

The irrealis preverb is also used to indicate that an action is about to happen:

3.45 *Tipis   pi   van   pi   matur*
      child   IRR.3SG   go   IRR.3SG   sleep
      'The child is going to sleep'

To set the event in the future, the future tense marker *ar* is slotted in between the irrealis preverb and the verb:

3.46 *Pe   ar   ma   mewi*
      IRR.1SG   FUT   come   tomorrow
      'I'll come tomorrow'

3.4.1.2 Preverbs ko and e

In interrogative clauses, preverbs *ko* and *e* are used for 2SG and 3SG respectively (instead of the realis or irrealis preverbs), and there is no realis/irrealis distinction in these cases.[11] In the interrogative clause 3.48, corresponding to the affirmative 3.47, it is preverb *ko* and not realis *mo* that is used:

3.47 *Mo   lesi   kiam*
      REAL.2SG   see   1PL
      'You see us'

3.48 *Ko   lesi   kiam?*
      PV.2SG   see   1PL
      'Did/do you see us?'

For the 3SG, the preverb *e* is used instead of irrealis *pwi* or realis *mwi*:[12]

3.49 *Sere   e   ma   roni   kiam ?*
      NEG   PV.3SG   come   with   1PL
      'She doesn't come with us?'

---

[11] I label preverbs that do not mark realis/irrealis with the general preverb abbreviation PV, since some of these preverbs, like *e,* fill diverse functions.

[12] Further south on the mainland, the preverb *e* is used where Atchin speakers use the realis preverb: the common expression 'it's good' is said *mwi res* in Atchin and *e res* in Lakatoro (Map 2).

3.50   *Nana   sa   e   tivei-m ?*

        thing   INDEF   PV.3SG   hurt-2SG

       'Has something hurt you?'

3.51   *E   viel?*

       PV.3SG   walk

       'Does she walk?'

The preverb *e* may also be used in negative clauses and before copula *ve*:

3.52   *Wenen nei   se   e   po*

       fruit   NEG PV.3SG   rot

       'This fruit is not rotten'

3.53   *pwire miro-m   e   ve   narriv,   e*

       if   mother-2SG.POSS   PV.3SG   COP   rat   PV.3SG

       ve   nimwet,…

       COP   snake

       'If your mother is a rat, a snake,…' (LeWenper)

3.4.1.3   Preverbs in negative clauses

Table 3.29 lists the forms of the preverb that is only found in some negative clauses.

Table 3.29 - Negation-specific preverbs

	SG	PL
1.EXCL	*non*	*nan*
1.INCL		*ran*
2	*kon*	*kar*
3	*kin*	*ar*

Atchin has two negative constructions:

- with the negation particle *sere* on the pattern *sere* + Preverb + Verb
- with the discontinuous negation particle *se..(te)* on the pattern

    se + Preverb + Verb + *(te)*.

The negation-specific preverb may be used with any of the two constructions:

3.54   *Sere*   *nan*   *mini*   *melo*

        NEG   PV.NEG.1PL.EXCL   drink   kava

        'We don't drink kava'

3.55   *Se*   *kon*   *tikei-a*

        NEG   PV.NEG.2SG   marry-1SG.OBJ

        'You cannot marry me'

However we have seen an example - repeated in 3.56 - of negative clauses that use an irrealis marking preverb instead of the negative-specific preverb:

3.56   *Kap*   *se*   *tarav-i-a*   *te !*

        IRR.2PL   NEG$_1$ wait-TR-1SG   NEG$_2$

        'Don't wait for me!'

The examples below illustrate a semantic difference between the two negative forms. In 3.58, the negation-specific preverb signifies impossibility:

3.57   *Wenen nei*   *se*   *e*   *po*

        fruit   NEG   PV.3SG   rot

        'This fruit is not rotten'

3.58   *Wenen nei*   *sere*   *kin*   *po*

        fruit   NEG   PV.NEG.3SG   rot

        'The fruit does not rot' (it is a fruit that cannot rot)

Examples 3.54 and 3.55 are also open to dynamic or deontic interpretation: 'you can't marry me' because 'my mother is bad' (Le Wenper), and 'we don't drink kava' may suggest a physical or moral impediment. There is no such possible interpretation for 3.57 and only marginally for 3.56, as they do not use the negation-specific preverb. This difference in modality may explain the restricted use of the preverb listed in Table 3.29.

3.4.2 Verb derivation.

The suffix *–(n)i* is added to verb stems to add an argument to the verb:

3.59   *Pe*   *tarav*   *nael*

    IRR.1SG   wait   here

    'I'll wait here'

3.60   *Pe*   *tarav-i-m*   *nael*

    IRR.1SG   wait-TR-2SG.OBJ   here

    'I'll wait for you here'

My corpus includes many transitive verbs ending in *-(C)i*, but most have no corresponding intransitive verbs.

3.4.3 Reduplication

Reduplication is very common for verbs, and in particular for stative verbs used in adjectival constructions. Verbal full or partial stem reduplication conveys intensity or plural:

row 'heavy'   *rorow* 'very.heavy'
oploni 'try'   *opoploni* 'try.repeatedly'
lep 'big'   *leplep* 'very.big'

3.61   *nabwe*   *mar*   *rorow*

    slitdrum   REAL.3PL   heavy.DUP

    'very heavy drums'

3.62   *Mi*   *opoploni*   *nga*   *pi*   *lai- ø*

    REAL.3SG   try.DUP   COMP   IRR.3SG   catch-3SG.OBJ

    'She tries again and again to catch (it)'

4. Noun Phrase

This section covers the Noun Phrase. It first describes the order of its constituents, then reviews the phrase head, whether noun or pronoun, and the head modifiers. A detailed discussion on the possession construction concludes the chapter.

4.1 Order of NP constituents

Modifiers within the Noun Phrase follow the head of the phrase. Determiners are directly postposed to the noun:

4.1   *tsünob   sa*
       man   INDEF.SG
       'a man'

4.2   *nivat   sopon*
       stone   INDEF.PL
       'stones'

4.3   *nimwet   a*
       snake   DEF
       'the snake'

4.4   *nobo   nen*
       song   DEM
       'that song'

4.5   *nimwet   ok*
       snake   DEM
       'this/the snake'

Modifiers that belong to the small class of adjectives follow the determiner:

4.6   *neim   a   welwele*
       house   DEF   small
       'the small house'

Possessive classifiers are directly postposed to the possessum and cardinal numbers come after the determiner or possessive classifier that follows the noun:

4.7   *nimal   sa-k*   *eru*
       child   POSS-1SG   two
       'my two children'

There are two exceptions to the postposition of the modifiers of noun. The determiner reserved for proper noun designating humans, or animals and objects considered as humans, is positioned before the proper noun, as is the case below for *Le*, reserved for females, with the male equivalent being *Melte* (now often found prefixed to names):

4.8   *Le*   *Wenper*
       DET.FEM   Wenper
       'Wenper'

The second type of preposed modifiers of noun comes from possessive constructions on the model possessum + possessor:

4.9   *natun   neim*
       small   house
       'small house'

4.10   *miren   nivat   nen*
       big   stone   that
       'the big stone'

As a possessive construction, the model head + modifier is respected:

4.11   *natu-n*   *neim*
       offspring-3SG.POSS   house
       'a house's child'

4.12   *mire-n*   *nivat   nen*
       mother-3SG.POSS   stone   this
       'the stone's mother'

But with the shift from a possessive construction to an adjectival construction, the head is no longer the noun that occupied the possessum slot (*natu-* or *mire-*) but the one that occupied

the possessor slot (*neim, nivat*). The noun that was the possessum in the possession construction is now the modifier of the head noun but the position it occupied in the possession construction does not change and it remains preposed.

This construction is discussed in more detail in the section on the types of lexemes that can function as noun modifiers (§4.2.4.3).

4.2 NP constituents

4.2.1 Nouns

The syntactic class of nouns and their morphology was described in the morphology chapter (§3.2). Nouns, as head of the noun phrase and obligatory element of the noun phrase.

Atchin distinguishes between alienable and inalienable nouns. The small class of inalienable nouns refers to entities that are inalienably possessed. These nouns take the direct possession suffix (§3.2.1). Most animal and human body parts and many kin terms belong to this category. The predominant class of alienable nouns refer to entities that are alienable from their possessor and the relation of possession is expressed via other means than a suffix of the possessum (§4.3.2).

Proper nouns belong to the class of nouns. They can be replaced by a free pronoun and as we see in the next section, they can be modified by a determiner.

4.2.2 Determiners

Articles, demonstratives and possessive determiners all exist in Atchin. Determiners do not co-occur and, with the exception of the two proper noun articles, they are postposed to the noun they determine. The language has two articles that occur with proper nouns and several definite and indefinite articles for common nouns. Several demonstratives position the noun in the physical or abstract space shared by speaker and listener. Some demonstratives are so frequent that they can be regarded as articles. Only the proper noun articles mark the gender of the noun they modify. Number is marked by some articles, but not by demonstratives.

4.2.2.1   Proper Nouns determiners

Proper noun determiner - feminine   *Le, Lelek*

Proper noun determiner - masculine   *Melte*

Le (or **Lelek**) and **Melte** are determiners preposed to the names of humans, or to the names of objects or animals that are regarded as humans. The determiners indicate the gender of the person, or personified object or animal. *Le (*or *Lelek)* is preposed to names of females and *Melte* is preposed to names of males. Both determiners fill the role of titles since they are used not only to indicate the gender of a person but also as a sign of respect for people well into their forties. The determiners are never used for children and youths.

In present day however, the titles are only used for ancestors and some aged persons. The nouns *nasup* 'man, husband' and *leter* 'woman, wife' are now used to indicate the gender of a person, and also to convey respect. Semantically, the two nouns have replaced the determiners.

4.13   *nasup   sa-k*

man   POSS-1SG

'my husband' (respectful)

4.14   *tewen   sa-k*

husband   POSS-1SG

'my husband'

Nowadays the superseded determiners help indicate whether a person or personified animal or object was male or female. There is for example a tomb stone dated 2006 engraved with a name preceded by *Lelek*, which is the only indication that the person buried there was a woman. And in the case of two stories I collected, *Le Wenper* and *Le Wortomat*, the determiner tells us the stories each named after a female character:

4.15   *Le   Wenper*

DET.FEM   Wenper

'Wenper'

4.2.2.2   Articles

Table 4.30 gives the list of indefinite and definite articles.

Table 4.30 - Articles

Indefinite singular	*sa*
Indefinite plural	*sopon*
Definite with no mark of number	*a, ok*
Definite plural	*ok rik*

Sa is postposed to singular nouns and is used to introduce new entities:

4.16 *Vesa   miren nivat   sa*

      once   big   stone   INDEF.SG

      'There was a big stone'

4.17 *ko   wisewin   Laon   sa*

      FOCUS   girl   Laon   INDEF.SG

      'a girl from Laon'

The indefinite determiner *sa* is also the cardinal number 'one' used in two-digits numbers:

4.18 *(e)sangavül   romon sa*

      ten   LNK   one

      'eleven'

The plural form is ***sopon***, which means 'some'.

4.19 *mirer   nivat   sopon*

      big.PL   stone   INDEF.PL

      'big stones'

The indefinite article is optional, whether the noun is singular or plural. In section 3.2.3, we saw that reduplication could mark plural for nouns:

4.20 *mirmiren   nivat*

      big.DUP   stone

      'big stones'

A is a definite determiner and is postposed to a noun that refers to a known entity.

4.21 *malakel   a   romien se-n*
     young.man   DEF   idea   POSS-3SG
     'the young man's idea'

ok and plural *ok rik* function as both anaphoric and deictic markers. They are more commonly used to refer to already mentioned entities than to indicate the actual location of a referent. The two determiners can fill an anaphoric (or inferable) function as well as locate a referent in the intermediate (neither proximal nor distal) environment of the speaker and addressee. The two determiners are discussed in the section on demonstratives.

4.2.2.3 Demonstratives

Demonstratives mark the noun in relation to space and time, from the speaker's perspective. Atchin speakers dispose of 4 demonstratives: the proximal *ango*, the intermediate *ok* (plural *ok rik*) and *ak* and the intermediate-distal *nen*. To mark a noun in a far away location, a locative adverb (*naok* 'there') is postposed to the determiner. The demonstrative adjectives and pronouns are listed in Table 4.31.

Table 4.31 - Demonstratives

	adjective/ pronoun	number	deictic	
'this' 'this one'	ADJ or PN	SG or PL	proximal	*ango*
'this' 'these' 'the'	ADJ	SG or PL	intermediate	*ok*
'this'	ADJ	SG	intermediate	*ak*
'These'	ADJ	PL	intermediate	*ok rik*
'this, that' 'this one, that one'	ADJ or PN	SG	intermediate-distal	*nen*

In the demonstrative paradigm, **ango** denotes the proximity of a referent. *Ango* can be used as a demonstrative adjective or pronoun:

4.22 *Nimet ango nimwet a   Tepsen Nual.*
     snake   DEM   snake   from   Tepsen Nual
     'This snake comes from Tepsen Nual' (the snake was just introduced in the story)

4.23   *taron   ango*

      time   DEM

      'nowadays'

When *ango* occurs in a noun phrase where the noun is modified by a determiner, the function of *ango* is more akin to that of a locative adverb:

4.24   *nivat   a   ango*

      stone   DEF   here

      'this stone right here'

In the following example, the function of *ango* as a locative adverb is more evident:

4.25   *Mira-k   mi   ma   ango*

      mother-1SG.POSS   REAL.3SG   come here

      'Here is my mother (lit: My mother arrives here)'

Ango is not used as frequently as the other demonstratives. It is however commonly used as a demonstrative pronoun in the expressions *ango koro* and *mi pe ango*:

4.26   *Ango   koro*

      DEM   only

      'This is it'

4.27   *mi   pe   ango*

      REAL.3SG   COP   DEM

      'this way'

The intermediate demonstrative **ok** does not mark number, whereas **ok rik** is only used with plural nouns. The plural marker *ri*k is also found following the possessive classifier when the possessum is a plural term (§4.3.2). The two demonstratives are used to reference information that was already mentioned or that can be inferred, and thus function as definite markers. Beside their common anaphoric or inferable usage, *ok* and *ok rik* also function as locators of a referent set in a visible and not too distant position.

4.28   *Mu   susui   wisewin   ok*

      REAL.3SG   find   girl   DEM

      'He finds the girl' (she was already mentioned - anaphoric)

4.29 *Ise   mu   ruwi   sibul   ok?*
     who   REAL.3SG   plant   leek   DEM
     'Who has planted the leeks? (that both speaker and addressee can see)'

When used as a demonstrative, *ok* and *ok rik* refer to a location that is imprecise. They can however co-occur with a locative adverb to specify a location. The utterance below is likely to be accompanied with a gesture towards the stones:

4.30 *nivat   a   niak   ok   rik*
     stone   DEF   here   DEM   PL
     'these stones here'

Ak, less common than *ok,* is mostly used postposed to the locative adverb *niak* 'here'

4.31 *nivat   a   niak   ak*
     Stone   DEF   here   DEM
     'this stone here'

Since it is often found after *niak*, it is tempting to see in *ak* an allomorph of *ok* after vowel assimilation with the central low vowel of *niak*. However *ak* is more restricted in its use than *ok. Ak* is only used with singular NPs and by selecting it over *ok*, the speaker insists on the single occurrence of the noun referent. 4.30 above offers counter-evidence for the allomorph hypothesis since in this example *niak* is followed by *ok*.

Nen can be used as noun modifier or as a pronoun. Of the three demonstratives, *nen* denotes the bigger distance in space and time. *Nen* is the most likely demonstrative to modify nouns that refer to abstract entities. It is also the only demonstrative I found to be used for cataphora:

4.32 *Ko   mwi   sei   nobo   nen*
     and   REAL.3SG   sing   song   DEM
     'And she starts singing this song (that I'm going to sing to you)'

In narratives, *nen* is the demonstrative used to position the referent in the timeframe, provided the event referred to is not proximal (in which case, *ango* is used):

4.33   *vatsin, rorpong   nen, ..*

        then   morning   DEM

        'then, that morning, …'

When *nen* and *ok (rik)* are used to oppose two nouns, the one followed by *nen* is understood to be further away than the one modified by *ok* :

4.34   *nivat   a   niak   ok?*

        stone   DEF   here   DEM

        'this stone ?'

4.35   *mwitsa,   nivat   a   niak nen.*

        no   stone   DEF   here DEM

        'no, that stone' (showing the stone)

The speaker will opt for *nen* over *ok* to single out one item from a group of similar items, for example a fruit, among other fruits in a tree:

4.36   *Po   tori   wenen nei   nen*

        IRR.2SG   pick   fruit   DEM

        'Pick that fruit' (from the tree)

4.37   *Po   tori   wenen nei   ok*

        IRR.2SG   pick   fruit   DEM

        'Take the fruit' (a single fruit on a table)

Finally, in 4.38 below, *nen* is not the demonstrative but the 3SG form of the possessive classifier used for non-human possessors (this classifier is discussed in more detail in §4.3.2.5, in the section on possessive construction):

4.38   *Mwi   sei   nobo   ne-n   maki   ok*

        IRR.3SG   sing   song   NHUM-3   grade-taking.ceremony   DEM

        '(S)he sings a song of the grade-taking ceremony'

There is enough evidence to suggest the demonstrative derives from the possessive classifier. The two grammatical words show semantic, phonological and syntactical similarities, whose combined presence supports the hypothesis of grammaticalisation (Frajzyngier 1996: 199). Demonstrative and possessive *nen* share the 'non-human' semantic criterion. They are identical phonological words. Their syntactic construction positions them directly after the word they modify. The possessive classifier is followed by the possessor (4.39), but if the possessor is already known in the discourse it may be dropped in the utterance (4.40).

4.39	*Po*	*tori*	*wenen*	*nei*	*ne-n*	*nei*	*ok*
	IRR.2SG	pick	fruit		POSS-3SG	tree	DEM

'Pick that fruit from the tree'

4.40	*Po*	*tori*	*wenen*	*nei*	*ne-n*
	IRR.2SG	pick	fruit		POSS-3SG

'Pick its fruit' (from the tree)

In examples 4.41, *nen* is the demonstrative. In example 4.40, *nen* is the possessive classifier. The two clauses show semantic, phonological and syntactical similarities.

4.41	*Po*	*tori*	*wenen*	*nei*	*nen*
	IRR.2SG	pick	fruit		DEM

'Pick that fruit' (from the tree that we can both see)

On the other hand, since the possessive classifier is inflected for person and number (§4.3.2.5), I would not argue for a derivation from the demonstrative to the possessive classifier.

4.2.3   Numerals and quantifiers

4.2.3.1   Numerals

The numeral system of Atchin is decimal. As most noun modifiers, numerals and cardinals follow the noun they modify.

4.42	*nimal*	*sa-k*	*eru*
	child	POSS-1SG	two

'my two children'

4.43 *Tsünob*   *eru*   *mor*   *palpal*

man   two   REAL.3PL   fight

'These two men are fighting'

As is made evident by the proto forms listed in table 4.32, the cardinal numbers from one to nine are prefixed with *e-*, which becomes *o-* before a stem starting with *w* (this was discussed in phonology section 2.5.3).

Table 4.32 - Cardinal numbers from 1 to 9

		*PNCV
1	*etes, sa*	*zikai
2	*eru*	*rua
3	*etul*	*tolu
4	*evats*	*vati
5	*elim*	*lima
6	*owon*	*ono
7	*ebüt*	*bitu
8	*owal*	*walu
9	*esiuw*	*sivwa

Numeral *etes* 'one' is only used to represent the first single digit numeral when counting without a noun. For two decimal digits, and when used as a noun modifier, *sa* is used to represent 'one'.

4.44 *Tipis* *ok*   *rom*   *se-n*   *sa*

child   DEM year POSS-3SG   one

'This child is one year old'

For numerals above nine (Table 4.33), the *e-* prefix is most often dropped.

Table 4.33 - Cardinal numbers from 10 to 99

		PNCV
10	*(e)sangavül*	*sagavulu
11	*(e)sangavül romon sa*	
12	*(e)sangavül romon eru*	
...		
20	*mov(i)l eru*	
21	*movil eru romon sa*	
...		
30	*mov(i)l etul*	
40	*mov(i)l evats*	
…		

Romon is a linking word between the numeral for tens and the numeral for units:

4.45   *(e)sangavül   romon sa*

      ten   LNK   one

      'eleven'

Mov(i)l before a single digit numeral indicates a multiple of ten:

4.46   *mov(i)l   etul*

      MULT.ten   three

      'thirty'

Prefix *va-* expresses a multiple:

4.47   *va-ru*

      MULT-two

      'twice'

Table 4.34 - Cardinal numbers, 100 and over

100	*mo(ve)sangavul*
200	*ivin varu*
300	*ivin vatul*
400	*ivin vavats*
500	*ivin valim*
600	*ivin vawon*
700	*ivin vambüt*
800	*ivin vawal*
900	*ivin vasiuv*
1000	*ivin vasngavül*

Ivin preceding a single digit numeral prefixed with *va-* indicates a multiple of one hundred:

4.48 *ivin*   *va-vats*

     MULT. hundred   MULT-four

     'four hundred'

Cardinal numerals can fill the intransitive predicate slot. However, unlike intransitive verbs that function as adjectives (as discussed in §4.2.4.1), the preverb preposed to the cardinal number does not agree in person and number with the nominal head it modifies:

4.49 *Kami pi*   *etul   par*   *tsire-a?*

     2PL   IRR.3SG   three   IRR.2PL   follow-1SG.OBJ

     'Can you three follow me?' (lit: 'you, will be three, follow me')

Table 4.35 - Ordinal numbers

1st	*na wo munen*
2nd	*eruen*
3rd	*etulin*
4th	*evatsin*
5th	*elimen*
6th	*owonin*
7th	*ebütin*
8th	*owalin*
9th	*esiuwen*
10th	*(e)sangavülin*
11th	*(e)sangavül romon sa ni*
12th	*(e)sangavül romon eruen*
...	
20th	*mov(i)l eruen*

Ordinal numbers are nouns that can modify other nouns:

4.50   *malakel*   *etulin*   *mwi*   *ketket*   *wuso*   *mwi*   *seser*

       young.man   third   REAL.3SG   do.DUP   well   REAL.3SG   fast

       'the third clever and fast young man '

The ordinal numbers from 2nd to 10th are formed by adding the suffix *–en* or *–in* to the cardinal number. Suffix *–en* that derivates noun from verbs was discussed in section 3.2.2.1. Since cardinal numbers can be used as stative verbs (example 4.49), I suggest that this nominalisation suffix derivates ordinal numbers from cardinal numbers which can fill the verb slot.

The ordinal number *na wo munen* 'the first' is preceded by the noun derivational affix *na-* (§3.2.2.1) but is not based on the ordinal number for one: *sa* or *etes*.

The word for 'yesterday' is *menöv* and the word for 'tomorrow' *mewi,* but to refer to the days before yesterday or after tomorrow, Atchin speakers use nouns derived from the cardinal numbers by prefixation.

For the the days before yesterday, the prefix is *ponV-* :

4.51 *Me*   *ma*   *pono-tol*

REAL.1SG   come   day.before-three

'I arrived three days ago'

Table 4.36 - Complex nouns to refer to the days before yesterday

poneru	*ponV-* 'day.before' +*-ru* 'two'	'day before yesterday'
ponotol	" + *-tul* 'three'	'3 days ago'
ponevats	" + *-vats* 'four'	'4 days ago'
ponelim ,…	" + *-lim* 'five'	'5 days ago'

For the days after tomorrow, the prefix is *ta-* :

4.52 *ta-ru*

day.after-two

'day after tomorrow'

4.53 *ta-tol*

day.after-three

'3 days later, in three days'

Table 4.37 - Complex nouns to refer to the days in the future

taru	ta- 'day.after' + *-ru* 'two'	'day after tomorrow'
tatol	" + *-tul* 'three'	'in 3 days'
tavats	" + *-vats* 'four'	'in 4 days '
talim, …	" + *-lim* 'five'	'in 5 days'

4.2.3.2   Quantifiers *same-, kise, koro* 'alone, only'

Same-, 'one alone', is a complex form of *sa* 'one' and *me* 'alone', to which is affixed the possessive singular suffix (paradigm in Table 3.24):

same-k   'alone-1SG'

same-m   'alone-2SG'

same-n   'alone-3SG'

4.54   *Me   viel   same-k*

        REAL.1SG   go   alone-1SG

        'I go alone'

Same- is only used with singular nominals. For all plural forms it is the uninflected *kise,* 'alone', that is used:

4.55   *Inir   mar   viel   kise*

        3PL   REAL.3PL   go   alone

        'They go on their own'

Koro 'only, merely' can also be used in place of *same-* and *kise* and with the same meaning. *Koro* is placed straight after the lexical item it modifies:

4.56   *Pe   vök   ngein   koro.*

        IRR.1SG   go   there   only

        'I go just there.'

Koro can function as an adverb whereas *same-* and *kise* only modify nominals.
In the example below, *koro* modifies the verb *ralral* 'walk about':

4.57   *Pe   ralral   koro*

        IRR.1SG   walk.about   only

        'I'm just having a walk'

Whereas in the same position in the sentence, *same-k* modifies the subject of the verb *ralral*:

4.58   *Pe   ralral   same-k*

        IRR.1SG   walk.about   only-1SG

        'I'm having a walk on my own'

Koro has semantic connotations that are not covered by *same-* and *kise-*. Below, *koro* modifies the verb and is used in the sense of 'exactly':

4.59   *Nasup mu   rongsoni   koro*

        man   REAL.3SG   know   only

        'The man knew exactly (what to do)'

4.2.4 Semantic adjectives and relative clauses

To assign quality to a noun, speakers of Atchin commonly use four types of modifiers:

- a verbal construction postposed to the noun

- an adjective postposed to the noun

- an adjective derived from a possessive construction and directly preposed to the noun

- a relative clause directly postposed to the noun and introduced by the relative marker *(ng)a*

The expression 'semantic adjectives' is taken from Dryer's typological description of the Noun Phrase, and denotes 'a set of words on the basis of their meaning, regardless of their grammatical properties in a particular language' (Dryer 2007: 168). Since Atchin uses words with diverse grammatical properties to ascribe qualities to noun, it is relevant to regroup these noun modifiers under a semantic criterion.

Atchin relative clauses cannot be reduced to 'a set of words', as per Dryer's definition quoted above, and they do not fall into the semantic adjective category.

4.2.4.1 Verbal construction postposed to the noun

The verbal construction consists of a verbal particle that marks realis/irrealis status and the person and number of the noun, followed by the descriptive term which is an intransitive verb. Most examples of noun modifying verbal constructions in my corpus are elicited and they all use the realis preverb:

4.60   *nasup ok   mi   tara*
       man   DEF REAL.3SG old
       'the old man'

4.61   *nabwe   mar   rorow*
       slitdrum   REAL.3PL heavy.DUP
       'heavy drums'

4.62   *nei   ok   rik   terwesi-r   mar   lelep*
       tree   DEM PL   size-3PL.POSS   REAL.3PL big.DUP
       'wide logs' (lit: these logs, their size is big)

The few adjectival terms found in the narratives use the verbal construction as well:

4.63   *tamau*   *sa*   *mwi*   *lelep*   *sopon (Le Wortamat)*

       castrated.pig   INDEF   REAL.3SG   big.DUP   INDEF

       'a rather big castrated pig'

4.64   *ina*   *mira-k*   *mwi*   *tsats (Le Wenper)*

       1SG   mother-1SG.POSS   REAL.3SG   bad

       'my bad mother'

Compare this construction with the verbal phrases:

4.65   *Nar*   *m*   *uror*

       shell   REAL.3SG   turn

       'The shell turns'

4.66   *Mira-k*   *mi*   *ma*   *ango*

       mother-1SG.POSS   REAL.3PL   come   here

       'My mother has come here'

Several adjectival terms are joined with the connective *ko* (4.67) in the same manner as two verbal phrases (4.68) :

4.67   *nabwe*   *ok*   *mwi*   *tara*   *ko*   *mu*   *row*

       drum   DEF   REAL.3SG   old   and   REAL.3SG   heavy

       'the heavy old drum'

4.68   *Mwi*   *ureni*   *nar*   *ko*   *mwi*   *sei*   *nobo*   *nen*

       REAL.3SG   throw   shell   and   REAL.3SG   sing   song   this

       'She throws the shells and sings this song'

4.2.4.2   Adjective postposed to the noun

Some lexical terms can modify a noun without the verbal particle. They are directly postposed to the noun they modify, or directly postposed to the determiner modifying the noun.

4.69   *tamai   mötmöt*

    dog   black

    'a black dog'

4.70   *tamai   ok   mötmöt*

    dog   DEM   black

    'the black dog'

These lexemes form the class of adjectives in Atchin. Table 4.38 lists the adjectives I encountered in my data and this list may not be exhaustive.

Table 4.38 - Class of adjectives

murol	'short'	*nisel murol*	'short path'
merets	'thin'	*leter merets*	'thin woman'
mamlasor	' cold'	*nua mamlasor*	' cold water'
wuwun	'full'	*niteng wuwun*	'full basket'
tsats	'bad'	*tsinum tsats*	'bad man'
mawos	'straight'	*nisel mawos*	'straight path'
mulmuli	'round'	*nivat mulmuli*	' round stone'
nemuri	'nearby'	*neim nemuri*	'house nearby'
nesuvi	'far'	*neim nesuvi*	'house faraway'
matu	'right (side)'	*verer matu*	'right arm'
mweir	'left'	*verer mweir*	'left arm'
mötmöt	'black'	*tamai mötmöt*	'black dog'
kokoni	'narrow'	*nisel kokoni*	'narrow path'
tara	'old'	*leter tara*	'old woman'

All the adjectives above are fairly common noun modifiers that mostly address the dimension ('short', 'thin', 'straight', 'round', 'narrow'), position ('nearby', 'far', 'right', 'left') or physical properties ('cold', 'full', 'old') of the noun they modify. All these adjectives can also modify the noun in a verbal construction postposed to the noun. But not all lexemes that modify a noun in a postposed verbal construction can directly modify a noun.

4.71   *vulvulu-n   nei   mitel

        skin-3SG.POSS   tree   thick

        'thick bark'

4.72   vulvulu-n   nei   mwi   mitel

        skin-3SG.POSS   tree   REAL.3SG   thin

        'thick bark'

4.2.4.3 Preposed noun-modifiers derived from a possessive construction

Other adjectival terms that modify a noun without the verbal particle come from a possessive construction. In the possessive construction the head modifier, the possessor, is postposed to the noun. However, in its adjectival function, the former possessum modifies the noun that formerly was the possessor. The function changes but the word order in the phrase does not change and these adjectival terms are therefore preposed to the noun they modify. My corpus lists two nouns that can modify nouns in this contruction:

From possessive construction	
natun 'small' (from natu-n 'offspring-3SG.POSS')	natun neim 'small house'
miren 'big' (from mire-n 'mother-3SG.POSS')	miren nivat 'big stone'

This 'dependency reversal' or 'head shift' has been discussed before for Oceanic languages (Lichtenberk 2005; Ross 1998). In particular the type of construction that corresponds to the direct possession has been associated to the noun-modifying function of a small number of nouns. That function relates to the size of the referent of the modified noun (Lichtenberk 2005: 135, referencing Ross). Thus for Toqabaqita, a language of the Solomon Islands, Lichtenberk lists two nouns (meaning 'father' and 'mother') that can modify nouns in a direct possession construction and convey a notion of 'big' applied to the head noun. Similarly, in Atchin the nouns meaning 'mother' and 'offspring' can modify a head noun and convey a notion of, respectively, 'big' and 'small' to the noun they modify. And similarly to what Lichtenberk observed for Toqabaqita, the noun-modifying function of the two Atchin lexemes involves 'dependency reversal, whereby the original modifier position became the head position and vice versa' (Lichtenberk 2005: 142).

This construction is not specific to Oceanic languages. Without being universal (it is not found in French, for example), it is also used in other families of languages. In English we

use the construction in the expression 'the mother of all' + N , as in 'the mother of all budgets' , 'the mother of all battles', to convey the importance of the noun modified.

Aside from being preposed, noun modifiers that derive from a possessive construction are also inflected for plural. The only occurrence of inflection on a noun is in a direct possession construction, where a suffix that marks the person and number of the possessor is appended to the possessum. The plural marking is preserved in what has become an adjectival construction:

4.73   *mirer*   *nivat* *sopon*
       big.PL   stone INDEF.PL
       'big stones'

can also be analysed as:

4.74   *mire-r*   *nivat* *sopon*
       mother- 3PL.POSS   stone INDEF.PL
       'the mother of stones'

The plural can also be marked on the noun modifier derived from a possessive construction by partial reduplication (refer to §3.2.3 for discussion on noun reduplication):

4.75   *mirmiren*   *nivat*
       big.DUP   stone
       'big stones'

4.2.4.4   Relative clause directly postposed to the noun

The relative clause is introduced by relative marker *nga,* sometimes reduced to *a.*

4.76   *Me*   *lesi* *tsünob nga* *mi*   *ma*   *menöv*
       REAL.1SG see   man   REL REAL.3SG   come yesterday
       'I saw the man who came yesterday'

The reduction of *nga* to *a* is not regular and both forms can happen in the same environment:

4.77   *nivat* *nga*   *mar*   *lelep*
       stone REL   REAL.3PL   big.DUP
       'big stones' (lit: 'stones that are big')

4.78 *nivat a mar leplep ok*
stone REL REAL.3PL big.DUP DEM
'the big stones' (lit: 'the stones that are big')

In the two narratives, *Le Wenper* and *Le Wortamat, nga* is predominantly used after verbs to introduce complement or purpose clauses:

4.79 *Mor lesi nga nivat mu tsovi Vao* (Le Wortamat)
REAL.3DU see COMP stone REAL.3SG go.past Vao
'They see that the stone has gone past Vao'

4.80 *Mi opoploni nga pi lai- Ø* (Le Wortamat)
REAL.3SG try.DUP COMP IRR.3SG take-3SG
'She repeatedly tries to take it'

4.81 *Me ma nga pe lai ndas* (Le Wenper)
REAL.1SG come PURP IRR.1SG take sea.water
'I have come to take sea water'

However, in my elicited data, the relative clause was often the pattern proposed to assign quality to a noun:

4.82 *Po lai niteng a mu wuwun ok*
IRR.1SG take basket REL REAL.3SG full DEM
'I take the full basket' (lit: 'I take the basket that is full')

4.83 *Me ore tamai nga mu wis*
REAL.1SG hunt dog REL REAL.3SG white
'I hunted the white dog' (lit: I hunted the dog that is white)

4.3 Possessive Constructions

Grammatical possession codes a relation that may be of true ownership, but is not confined to this type of relation. Ownership, whole-part relationship and kinship are 'typically covered by an NP-internal grammatical construction of possession' (Dixon 2010b: 263). However the relation of true ownership needs to be formally established, whereas the relation of whole-part relationship and kinship is embedded in the possessum. As its name indicates, a whole-part (e.g. 'flesh', 'feather', 'door') is inherently related to a whole, animate or not, and a kinship term entails a reciprocal relationship ('father' entails a relation with 'child' and vice versa), but the notion of ownership is not embedded for most nouns that do not fall in the whole-part or kin category. As is common for Oceanic languages, Atchin marks the semantic distinction of these relationships. In particular, alienable relations of ownership are coded differently from inalienable relations of whole-part and kinship.

Possession in Atchin language can be marked by two different NP-internal constructions that reflect the alienability/inalienability of the relation between possessum and possessor. Possession can be marked

- with a possessive suffix on the possessum
- with a possessive suffix on a classifier postposed to the possessum

Emulating the directness of the relation between possessum and possessor, the first type of construction is used for inalienable possession and thus for body parts and most kin terms. The second type of constructions is mostly used for alienable possession.

Atchin formally distinguishes several kinds of alienable possession and different sets of classifiers are used to express food possession, drink possession and other possessive relationships.

The animacy of the possessor also plays a role in the possessive construction:

 - 3SG zero inflection is exclusive to marking relations involving a human possessor
 - The general possession classifier *se-* marks relationships involving a human possessor and classifier *ne-* those involving a non-human possessor.

Direct and indirect possessive constructions are discussed in more detail below.

4.3.1 Direct possession – possessive suffix on possessum

The paradigm for the possessive suffix was given in the morphology chapter (Table 3.24). For direct possession, the possessive suffix is appended to the possessum. Most body parts and many kinship terms are directly marked for possession:

4.84 *patu-k*

   head-1SG.POSS

   'my head'

4.85 *mira-mam*

   mother-1PL.EXCL.POSS

   'our mother'

Some nouns that express location also use direct possession morphology:

4.86 *puto-n*   *neim*

   back-3SG.POSS   house

   'back of the house'

4.87 *lolo-n*   *vera-k*

   inside-3SG.POSS   hand-1SG.POSS

   'palm of my hand' (lit: 'inside of my hand')

The possessive suffix is appended to the locative preposition *tsi* 'to, at, on' to refer to the person that is the locative argument:

4.88 *Naven nab*[13]   *mu*   *suruni tsi-n*

   ash   REAL.3SG   land   LOC-3SG

   'The ash lands on her'

For many directly possessed nouns, the root-final vowel follows the pattern listed in Table 4.39: root final *a* occurs for the 1SG and 2PL and root final *e* occurs for all other persons - though *o* also occurs in some roots for 2SG and 1PL.EXCL.

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[13] *Naven nab* is a compound: *naven* 'ash' *nab* 'fire'

Table 4.39 - Changing root-final vowel before possession suffix

	root-final vowel	'eye'	'tongue'	'brother'	'belly'	'hand'
1SG	a	*meta-k*	*mema-k*	*tua-k*	*renga-k*	*vera-k*
2SG	e/o	*meto-m*	*meme-m*	*tuo-m*	*renge-m*	*vero-m*
3SG	e	*mete-(n)*	*meme-(n)*	*tue-(n)*	*renge-(n)*	*vere-(n)*
1PL.EXCL	e/o	*mete-mam*	*meme-mam*	*tuo-mam*	*renge-mam*	*vere-mam*
1PL.INCL	e	*mete-r*	*meme-r*	*tue-r*	*renge-r*	*vere-r*
2PL	a	*meta-mi*	*mema-mi*	*tua-mi*	*renga-mi*	*vera-mi*
3PL	e	*mete-r*	*meme-r*	*tue-r*	*renge-r*	*vere-r*

For other nouns the same root-final vowels occurs for all persons. This is the case for the terms listed in Table 4.40.

Table 4.40 - Unchanged root-final vowel before possession suffix

	'head'	'blood'	'other.sex.sibling'	'wing'
1SG	*patu-k*	*ra-k*	*tsotsi-k*	*nabe-k*
2SG	*patu-m*	*ra-m*	*tsotsi-m*	*nabe-m*
3SG	*patu-(n)*	*ra-(n)*	*tsotsi-(n)*	*nabe-(n)*
1PL.EXCL	*patu-mam*	*ra-mam*	*tsotsi-mam*	*nabe-mam*
1PL.INCL	*patu-r*	*ra-r*	*tsotsi-r*	*nabe-r*
2PL	*patu-mi*	*ra-mi*	*tsotsi-mi*	*nabe-mi*
3PL	*patu-r*	*ra-r*	*tsotsi-r*	*nabe-r*

The independent pronoun referring to the possessor may precede the inflected possessum. In 4.89, the free pronoun is preposed to the suffixed noun to disambiguate the 1PL.INCL and 3PL identical suffixed forms:

4.89 *inir   vere-r*
      3PL   hand-1PL.INCL/3PL.POSS
      'their brother'

In 4.90 the 1SG free pronoun is added for emphasis:

4.90 *ina   mira-k*

1SG   mother-1SG.POSS

'(it's) my mother'

The inflected possessum may be followed by the noun possessor. The 3SG zero inflection was discussed in the morphology chapter (§3.2.1).

4.91 *patu-ø   leter*

head-3SG.POSS   woman

'woman's head'

4.92 *ra-n   nato*

blood-3SG.POSS   chicken

'chicken's blood'

Nouns referring to human body parts (and many animal body parts) are directly inflected for possession. But not all kinship nouns are directly inflected for possession and some use the general possession classifier *se-* (Table 4.45). Some kinship terms using the indirect construction refer to older siblings and relatives with whom one has no blood relation:

4.93 *tutu   se-n*

same.sex.older.sibling   POSS-3SG

'his older brother/her older sister'

4.94 *tewen   sa-k*

husband   POSS-1SG

'my husband'

The indirect possession construction may also reflect the distance two relatives must keep with one another. [14] Women avoid all dealings with their husband's older brother whose name they also avoid using. To refer to this relative they use the construction *tewen sak tutu sen* (4.95). The same rule applies to men for their wife's older sister whom they call *leter sak tutu sen* (4.96).

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[14] These rules are respected in present day Atchin and are referred to as *metanani*.

4.95 *tewen*   *sa-k*   *tutu*   *se-n*

husband   POSS-1SG   same.sex.older.sibling   POSS-3SG

'my husband's older brother' (lit: 'my husband his older brother')

4.96 *leter*   *sa-k*   *tutu*   *se-n*

woman   POSS-1SG   same.sex.older.sibling   POSS-3SG

'my wife's older sister' (lit: 'my wife her older sister')

Some kin relationships can be referred to with two terms, one term using the direct possessive construction and the other the indirect possessive construction. There is no semantic distinction between the two terms in 4.97 and 4.98, not even one of respect. The only difference is the noun in 4.98, *te* 'father', is also used as a term of address,[15] without the classifier.

4.97 *tima-k*

father-1SG.POSS

'my father'

4.98 *te*   *sa-k*

father POSS-1SG

'my father'

Table 4.41 gives the terms for some kin terms in the 1SG person. When a 3SG-inflected possessum is part of the kinship term (4.99) there is an alternative zero-inflected construction (4.100). The corresponding zero-inflected construction is not shown in Table 4.41.

4.99 *te*   *sak*   *tasi-n*

father POSS-1SG   younger.same.sex.sibling-3SG.POSS

'my father's younger brother'

4.100 *tasi-ϕ*   *te*   *sa-k*

younger.same.sex.sibling-3SG.POSS   father   POSS-1SG

'my father's younger brother'

---

[15] A participant commented that *pe sak* 'my mother', *pe* 'mother', *sak* 'POSS-1SG', was more commonly used by younger generations.

Table 4.41 - Some kin terms

	Direct construction	Indirect construction
my father	*tima-k*	*te sa-k*
my mother	*mira-k*	*pe sa-k*
my older sibling - same sex		*tutu sa-k*
my younger sibling - same sex	*tasi-k*[16]	
my opposite sex sibling	*tsotsi-k*	
my father's sister	*te sa-k tsotsi-n*	
my father's younger brother	*te sa-k tasi-n*	
my father's older brother		*te sa-k tutu se-n*
my mother's younger sister	*pe sa-k tasi-n*	
my mother's brother	*metua-k* *pe sa-k tsotsi-n*	
my father's brother's child	*tasi-k / tsotsi-k*	
my mother's brother's child	*tasi-k / tsotsi-k* *metua-k natu-n*	
my husband		*tewen sa-k* *nasup sa-k*[17]
my wife		*leter sa-k*
my husband's sister	*reva-k* *tewen sa-k tsotsi-n*	
my husband's younger brother	*tewen sa-k tasi-n*	
my husband's older brother		*tewen sa-k tutu se-n*
my husband's father	*puela-k nasup*	
my husband's mother	*puela-k leter*	
my daughter	*natu-k wisewin*	
my son	*natu-k norman*	
my daughter-in-law	*vünga-k*[18]	
my son-in-law	*puela-k*[18]	*natu-k tewen se-n*
child of my opposite sex sibling	*oloa-k*	
child of my same sex sibling	*natu-k*	
my grandchild	*nabu-k*	

---

[16] *Tasik a mwi welwele* 'the youngest same sex sibling, *a* 'REL', *mwi* 'REAL.3SG', *welwele* 'small'.

Tasik a re liven 'younger same sex sibling', *a* 'REL', *re* 'LOC', *liven* 'middle'.

[17] For couples with children. Also a term of respect.

[18] Parents use this term instead of the name of their children's spouses.

4.3.2 Indirect possession - possessive suffix on classifier

I have identified five classifiers that take part in the indirect possessive construction. Four of the classifiers concern animate possessors and one is reserved for non-human possessors.

The roots of the four classifiers I have identified for animate possessors are *nome*[19]- for drink possessions, *nore*[20]- for edible possessions, *se-* for broad possession and *na-*. The classifier *na-* is used with only one item in my corpus, *naret* 'heart', and the type of relation it establishes is unclear. The paradigm of the three first classifiers shows the same variation in the root final vowel as the one observed for directly possessed nouns (Table 4.39).

The classifier *ne-* is restricted to non-human possessors. It establishes relations of alienable or inalienable possession. This classifier is discussed last, in §4.3.2.5.

Possessive classifiers establish a relation of possession at the time of the utterance. The classifier depends on the nature of the relationship and not exclusively on the nature of the possessed items. Drink and food classifiers add semantic information and express what the possessor is intending to do with their alimentary possession. But a noun can appear in constructions with different classifiers (as illustrated further by examples 4.116, 4.117 and 4.118).

The overt noun possessor may precede or follow the suffixed classifier:

4.101 *wuso   nore-n   tamai*
      meat   FOOD-3SG   dog
      'meat for the dog'

4.102 *leter   ok   niteng se-n*
      woman   DEM   basket   POSS-3SG
      'the woman's basket'

If the possessor's identity is known, the suffixed classifier is sufficient to establish the relation of possession:

---

[19] *Mini* is the verb for 'drink'

[20] I have two verbs for 'eat' in my corpus: *uroi* and *an*

4.103 *niteng se-n*

basket POSS-3SG

'her basket'

The possessive suffix marks the number and person of the possessor. To mark the plural of the possessum, the suffixed classifier is followed by *rik* 'PL':

4.104 *leter   ok   niteng se-n   rik*

woman   DEM   basket POSS-3SG   PL

'the woman's baskets'

4.3.2.1   Classifier *nome-* for drink possession

The classifier used to establish the relation between the drink possession and its beneficiary is set out in Table 4.42. The classifier displays the same root-final vowel alternation as was observed in directly possessed nouns (Table 4.39).

Table 4.42 - Classifier for possession of drinkable items

	Singular	Plural
1.EXCL	*noma-k*	*nome-mam*
1.INCL		*nome-r*
2	*nomo-m*	*noma-mi*
3	*nome-n*	*nome-r*

The classifier *nome-* appears in possessive constructions with nouns that refer to liquids but also plants and fruits from which a liquid can be extracted: *melo* 'kava', *tipang* 'green coconut':

4.105 *nua   nome-n*

water   DRINK-3SG

'his water'

4.106 *melo   noma-k*

kava   DRINK-1SG

'my kava'

4.3.2.2 Classifier *nore-* for edible possession

The classifier used to establish the relation between the edible possession and its beneficiary is set out in Table 4.43.

Table 4.43 - Classifier for possession of edible items

	Singular	Plural
1.EXCL	*nora-k*	*nore-mam*
1 INCL		*nore-r*
2	*noro-m*	*nora-mi*
3	*nore-n*	*nore-r*

4.107 *piok*   *nora-k*

     taro   FOOD-1SG

     'my taro (that I intend to eat)'

Contrary to the general classifier for human possessors (Table 4.45), drink and food classifiers do not take a zero inflection for the 3SG person when followed by the noun possessor:

4.108 *nembi*   *nore-n*   *nasup*

     meat   FOOD-3SG   chief

     'chief's meat'

4.3.2.3 Classifier *na-*

In my corpus, classifier *na-* is used with only one noun, *naret* 'heart', and the lexical item refers to the animals' organ:

4.109 *naret* *na-n*   *tamai*

     heart   POSS-3SG   dog

     'dog's heart'

4.110 *naret* *na-n*   *puluk*

     heart   POSS-3SG   cow

     'cow's heart'

4.111 *Meuren   sa-k   mwi   mamavis*
      heart   POSS-1SG   REAL.3SG   hurt
      'My heart is sore'

Historically, the classifier may not have been so restrictive[21] since its paradigm covers all the persons, in the singular and plural, as shown in Table 4.44.

Table 4.44 - Possessive classifier *na-*

	Singular	Plural
1.EXCL	*na-k*	*na-mam*
1.INCL		*na-r*
2	*na-m*	*na-mi*
3	*na-n*	*na-r*

4.3.2.4 Classifier *se-* for general possession

The classifier used to establish all other types of alienable possessions for animate possessors is set out in Table 4.45. When followed by the noun possessor, the classifier takes a zero inflection for the 3SG person, as was discussed in §3.2.1.

Table 4.45 - Classifier for general possession

	Singular	Plural
1.EXCL	*sa-k*	*se-mam*
1.INCL		*se-r*
2	*so-m*	*sa-mi*
3	*se-n/se- ø*	*se-r*

4.112 *neim   se-r   nasup ko   leter*
      house POSS-3PL   chief and   woman
      'the house of the chief and his wife'

The indirect possessive construction with classifier *se-* is also used with the abstract nouns discussed in the section on nominalisation (§3.2.2.1):

---

[21] Capell & Layard (1980: 122) list *na-* as a 'possessive cooked food'

4.113 *masaen*   *se-ø*   *leter*

       disease   POSS-3SG   woman

       'the woman's disease'

4.114 *malakel*   *a*   *romien se-n*

       young.man   DEF   idea   POSS-3SG

       'the young man's idea'

Relation between objects and possessors but also, as we saw above in Table 4.41, between some relatives, is expressed by means of the general classifier:

4.115 *leter*   *se-ø*   *nasup*

       wife   POSS-3SG   chief

       'chief's wife'

When used in a construction with a lexical item that refers to edible or drinkable items, the general classifier implies the possessor is not intending to use the item for alimentary purpose:

4.116 *tipang*   *sa-k*

       green.coconut POSS-1SG

       'my coconut (that I do not intend to drink or eat)'

The relationship between the possessor and possessum is established at the moment of the utterance and a different classifier is used depending on the nature of the relation the speaker wants to convey:

4.117 *tipang*   *noma-k*

       green.coconut   FOOD-1SG

       'my coconut (that I intend to eat)'

4.118 *tipang*   *nora-k*

       green.coconut   DRINK-1SG

       'my coconut (that I intend to drink)'

4.3.2.5 Classifier *ne-* for non-human possessors

The criterion for using classifier *ne-* is the nature of the possessor. This construction is used with non-human possessors and it can express inalienable possession such as whole-part relations:

4.119 *nonom*   *ne-n*   *neim*
door   NHUM-3   house
'the house door'

4.120 *Mwi*   *sei* *nobo* *ne-n*   *maki*   *ok*
IRR.3SG   sing song NHUM-3   grade-taking.ceremony   DEM
'(S)he sings a song of the grade-taking ceremony'

In 4.101 the classifier *noren* linked the possessor *tamai* 'dog' to its intended food *wuso* 'meat'. In 4.121, the classifier *ne-n* conveys an entirely different relation between the two nouns and in this example *wuso* is understood as a body part of the possessor *tamai:*

4.121 *wuso* *ne-n*   *tamai*
meat   NHUM-3   dog
'the flesh of the dog'

Ne-n is the only form for the classifier. Since it is restricted to non-human possessors, the classifier is only used in the third person. Zero inflection is reserved for human possessors (§3.2.1) and classifier *ne-* does not take a zero inflection for the 3SG person when followed by the noun possessor:

4.122 **nua* *ne- ɸ*   *nurur*
water NHUM-3   island
'the water of the island'

5. Narratives

5.1 Le Wortamat

told by Martino Metsen in Atchin on 23 March 2010. Transcription (in French) by Ropitjo Paniel. Transcription completed and checked with Gaston Atuary in August 2010.

This is the story of a stone that caught a girl by magic and whisked her away to the island of Tutuba, near Santo. There, the girl is rescued from the stone by a man who sacrifices a pig to break the spell. There are still descendants of the girl nowadays in Tutuba Island.

1 *Le   Wortamat.*
   DET.FEM   Wortamat
   'Le Wortamat.'

2 *Le   Wortamat   mi   lek   mi   matur nere*
   DET.FEM   Wortamat   REAL.3SG   stay   REAL.3SG   sleep at

   sale   mawos   sa   mar   ure   nesel Wortamat .
   beach   landing   INDEF   REAL.3PL   say   name Wortamat
   '(The rock called) Le Wortamat lies by a landing place that we call Wortamat.'

3 *Nivat ok   mi   matur ne   renge-n.   .*
   stone DEM   REAL.3SG   sleep at   belly-3SG.POSS
    'The stone lies there.' (lit: 'the rock sleeps at its belly')

4 *Ale   mar   usi   vatsin mar   ure   le   Wortamat.*
   alright REAL.3PL   name then   REAL.3PL   say   DET.FEM   Wortamat
   'This is why it is called Le Wortamat.'

5 *Vatsin ko…[pe   sope   tatatser   ni   vatsin ?]*
   then   and   IRR.1SG   tell   non.stop.DUP   3SG   then
   'Then…[do I tell it (the story) without stopping then?]'

6   *Nasup   sa*   *natu-n*   *eru,*   *wisewin*   *eru,*
     man   INDEF   offspring-3SG.POSS   two   girl   two

     vatsin ko   mor   *leklek ko*   *nimat*   *mi*
     then   and   REAL.3DU   stay   and   shore.at.low.tide   REAL.3SG

     mat   *a*   *ngarang*   *mi*   *pe   ango   ok.*
     low.tide   of   daytime   REAL.3SG   COP   DEM   DEM

     'A man has two children, two girls, and they are on the shore waiting for the low tide
     to come in, the daytime low tide, as at present.'

7   *Ko   mor*   *re   por*   *van   por*
     and   REAL.3DU   want   IRR.3DU   go   IRR.3DU

     vavarong.
     fish.by.turning.rocks.over
     'They want to go fishing by turning the rocks over.'

8   *Mor*   *van   mor*   *vavarong,*
     REAL.3DU   go   REAL.3DU   fish.by.turning.rocks.over

     vatsin ko   mor   *lesi   nelil*   *sa*
     then   and   REAL.3DU   see   trochus   INDEF

     ko   tutu   *se-n*   *mi*   *tur*   *tser*
     and   older.same.sex.sibling   POSS-3SG   REAL.3SG   standing   stay

     ngaut   ko   tasi-n
     shore   and   younger.same.sex.sibling-3SG.POSS

     mi   *van   e*   *re   pi*   *lai- ø.*
     REAL.3SG   go   PV.3SG   want   IRR.3SG   take-3SG.OBJ

'They fish, then they see a trochus and the older girl stays on the shore (while) her little sister goes to take it.'

9	*Mi*	*van*	*mi*		*pe*	*ango*	*ko*	*mi*		*opoploni*
	REAL.3SG	go	REAL.3SG		COP	DEM	and	REAL.3SG		try.DUP

	nga	*pi*	*lai- ø*		*ko*	*mi*	*tsamon.*
	COMP	IRR.3SG	take-3SG.OBJ		and	REAL.3SG	fail

'She tries several times to take it this way but she can't.'

10	*Mi*	*opoploni*	*nga*	*pi*	*lai- ø*
	REAL.3SG	try.DUP	COMP	IRR.3SG	take-3SG.OBJ

	mi	*tsamon*	*ko*	*tutu*		*se-n*
	REAL.3SG	fail	and	older.same.sex.sibling		POSS-3SG

	mi	*ure-ni*	*wa:*
	REAL.3SG	say-TR	say

'She keeps on trying but she can't take it, then her older sister says :'

11	*"Po*	*ma*	*ro*		*lua*	*ko*	*veral*	*notpong,*
	IRR.2SG	come	IRR.1DU.INCL		return	and	later	evening

	ko	*ro*		*kete*	*nab*	*ko*	*ro*		*ma*
	and	IRR.1DU.INCL		do	fire	and	IRR.1DU.INCL		come

	ro		*rumsi*	*ko*	*ro*		*lai- ø. "*
	IRR.1DU.INCL		fish.at.night	and	IRR.1DU.INCL		take-3SG.OBJ

'"Come, we will return later this evening, we will make a fire and fish at night and catch it".'

12	*Notpong*	*ma,*	*ko*	*mor*	*oploni*	*nga*		*por*
	evening	come	and	REAL.3DU	try	COMP		IRR.3DU

lai- ø,		*ko*	*mi*	*ara*	*ma*	*tsalil*
take-3SG.OBJ		and	REAL.3SG	crawl	come	outside

ko	*tasi-n*		*mi*	*rowosi*
and	younger.sibling.same.sex-3SG.POSS		REAL.3SG	skip

van	*nga*	*pi*	*lai- ø.*
go	PURP	IRR.3SG	take-3SG.OBJ

'The evening comes, they try to take it this way and it crawls outside. The youngest skips to catch it.'

13

Tutu		*se-n*	*mi*	*tur*	*tser*
older.same.sex.sibling		POSS-3SG	REAL.3SG	standing	stay

ngaut,	*mi*	*van*	*mi*	*pe*	*ango*
shore	REAL.3SG	go	REAL.3SG	COP	DEM

ko	*mi*	*ronge*	*mi*	*pe*	*nga*	*nivat*	*mi*
and	REAL.3SG	feel	REAL.3SG	COP	COMP	stone	REAL.3SG

rosros.
move

'The eldest is standing on the shore and she feels that the stone is moving.'

14

Vatsin	*mi*	*rieni*	*nab*	*ve*	*tepsen*	*ko*	*mi*	*lesi*
then	REAL.3SG	lean	fire	to	side	and	REAL.3SG	see

mi	*nobü,*	*mi*	*lesi*	*ve*	*tepsen*	*ko*	*mi*	*lesi*
REAL.3SG	deep	REAL.3SG	see	COP	side	and	REAL.3SG	see

mi	*nobü.*
REAL.3SG	deep

'She leans with the fire on one side and sees it is deep, and on the (other) side and sees it is deep (too).'

15   *Mu*   *su.*   *Mu*   *rowon*   *vatsin.*

REAL.3SG   finish REAL.3SG   be.confused   then

'It's over. She does not know what to do.'

16   *Nivat*   *mwi*   *tata*   *vesuvi*

stone   REAL.3SG leave   far

mi   *pe*   *ango* *mwi*   *tata* *mwi*   *van*

REAL.3SG COP DEM REAL.3SG leave REAL.3SG go

mwi   *wala* *roni.*

REAL.3SG run   with

'The stone has gone far, it has run away with (the girl).'

17   *Tutu*   *se-n*   *mu*   *lua* *veim,*

older.same.sex.sibling   POSS-3SG   REAL.3SG   return go home

mwi   *van* *mwi*   *lesi* *te*   *se-n*

REAL.3SG go   REAL.3SG see   father POSS-3SG

pe   *se-n*   *wa.*

mother   POSS-3SG   EMPH

'The eldest returns home to her parents.'

18   *"Vina,*   *nivat*   *mwi*   *wala*   *roni !"*

girl   stone   REAL.3SG run   with

'"The girl, the stone ran away with her!"'

19   *Mor*   *wala* *mor*   *tsupul*   *ngala*   *ko*

REAL.3DU run   REAL.3DU go.down   seaside   and

mor	*lesi*	*nga*		*nivat*	*mu*	*tsovi*	*Vao.*
REAL.3DU	see	COMP		stone	REAL.3SG	go.past	Vao

'They run down to the shore and see that the stone has gone past Vao Island.'

20
Mu	*su.*	*Nab*	*mi*	*menmenunur*
REAL.3SG	finish	fire	REAL.3SG	diminish.in.the.distance

mutomuri	*nga*	*pwi*	*tsel.*
entirely	COMP	IRR.3SG	disappear

'It's over. The light diminishes in the distance and disappears.'

21
Mar	*tur*	*mar*	*mite-ni- ø*
REAL.3PL	standing	REAL.3PL	look.at-TR-3SG.OBJ

mi	*vanvan*	*nab*	*mwi*	*tsel*
REAL.3SG	until	fire	REAL.3SG	disappear

ko	*mar*	*lua*	*veim.*	.
and	REAL.3PL	return	go.home	

'They stand and stare until the light disappears, then they return home.'

22
Mor	*lek*	*vatsin*	*mi*		*parav*	*sopon*	*mi*	*pe*
REAL.3DU	stay	then	REAL.3SG		long	some	REAL.3SG	COP

ango.
DEM

'Some time goes by.' (lit: 'they stay this way for some time')

23
Se	*e*		*parav*	*mar*		*ronge*	*nga*		*nivat*
NEG	PV.3SG		long	REAL.3PL		hear	COMP		stone

mi	*veut*	*Tutu.*
REAL.3SG	lie	Tutuba.island

'Not long after they hear that the stone lies by Tutuba Island.'

24

Ale	*rorpong*	*nen*	*nasup*	*sa*	*mu*	*tsupul*
alright	morning	DEM	man	INDEF	REAL.3SG	go.down

ma	*ngala*	*mwi*	*lesi*	*nivat*	*mi*	*matur.*
come	seaside	REAL.3SG	see	stone	REAL.3SG	sleep

'That morning, a man went down to the seaside and saw the stone there.'

25

Nivat	*mi*	*matur*	*ko*	*wisewin*	*mu*	*tur*
stone	REAL.3SG	sleep	and	girl	REAL.3SG	standing
belly	3SG					

renge-n.
belly-3SG.POSS

'The stone was lying there with the girl standing in it.'

26

Mwi	*lek*	*renge-n*	*vatsin.*
REAL.3SG	stay	belly-3SG.POSS	then

'She was staying in it.'

27

Vatsin	*ko*	*mu*	*ure-i:*
then	and	REAL.3SG	say-TR

'So he said:'

28

"Po	*ma*	*ro*	*veim!"*
IRR.2SG	come	IRR.1DU.INCL	go.home

'"Come, let's go home!"'

29	*Wisewin*	*mwi*	*kete*	*nga*	*mwi*	*re*	*pi*	*viel*
girl	REAL.3SG	do	COMP	REAL.3SG	want	IRR.3SG	go

re	*nivat*	*ko*	*se*	*e*	*rongsoni*	*pi*	*viel.*
LOC	stone	and	NEG	PV.3SG	know	IRR.3SG	go

'The girl wants to leave the stone but she cannot go.'

30	*Sere*	*kastom*	*mu*	*toto-ni- ø*	*vatsin.*
because	kastom	REAL.3SG	reach.for-TR-3SG.OBJ	then

'Because she is caught by kastom magic.' (lit: 'because kastom reached for her then')

31	*Nasup*	*mu*	*rongsoni*	*koro*	*ko*	*mi*	*viel*
man	REAL.3SG	know	only	and	REAL.3SG	go

| *mu* | *lua* | *veim* | *mwi* | *lai* | *tamau* | *sa*
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
| REAL.3SG | return | go.home | REAL.3SG | take | castrated.pig | INDEF

| *mwi* | *leplep* | *sopon,* | *mwi* | *tori* | *mi* | *ma*
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
| REAL.3SG | big.DUP | some | REAL.3SG | hold | REAL.3SG | come

| *roni,* | *mwi* | *ma* | *mi* | *te* | *nitan,*
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
| with | REAL.3SG | come | REAL.3SG | place | earth

| *mwi* | *revitsipini-ø* | *ko* | *mwi* | *tikei* | *wisewin.*
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
| REAL.3SG | kill-3SG.OBJ | and | REAL.3SG | take.s.o.home | girl

'The man just knows what to do and he returns home to take a rather big castrated pig, he brings it back, places it on the ground, kills it, then takes the girl home.'

32	*Mi*	*viel*	*tua*	*re*	*nivat*	*ko*	*mor*	*veim.*
REAL.3SG	go	get.out	LOC	stone	and	REAL.3DU	go.home

'She steps out of the stone and they go home.'

33 *Mor*   *lek*   *mwi*   *tsipari* *melngonok*   *ko*   *mwi*
    REAL.3DU   stay   REAL.3SG   settle   today   and   REAL.3SG

    malet   *tseneresin*   *mu*   *to*   *mi*   *tsipari*
    start.a.breed   generation   REAL.3SG   located.at   REAL.3SG   settle

    melngonok   *Tutua.*   *Mu*   *su.*
    today   Tutuba.island   REAL.3SG   finish

'They stayed and she settled there until today and started a breed that is still there in Tutuba. This ends (the story).'

5.2 Le Wenper

Told by Gustave Romone in Atchin on 23 March 2010. Transcription by Gina Mayeu. Transcription checked with Gaston Atuary

This is the story of a woman who is a snake. Her daughter marries a boy from another village. When the snake visits her daughter at her son in law's village, he burns her to death.

1 *Le*   *Wenper.*   .
   DET.FEM   Wenper
   'Le Wenper.'

2 *Le*   *Wenper*   *ve*   *nimwet*   *ko*   *sa.*   .
   DET.FEM   Wenper   COP   snake   FOCUS   INDEF
   'Wenper is a snake.'

3 *Nimet* *ango* *nimwet*   *a*   *Tepsen Nual.* .
   snake DEM snake   LOC   Tepsen Nual
   'This snake is from (a place called) Tepsen Nual.'

4 *Tepsen*   *wa*   *a*   *Tondor*.
   Tepsen   EMPH LOC   Tondor
   'Tepsen is nearby Tondor.'

5 *Vatsin ko*   *wisewin*   *Laon* *sa.*   .
   then   and   girl   Laon   INDEF
   'Then there's a girl from Laon.'

6 *Mu*   *tsupul*   *mwi*   *ma*   *ngala.* .
   REAL.3SG   go.down   REAL.3SG   come   seaside
   'She goes down to the seaside.'

7 *Ko*   *nimwet*   *ok*   *natu-n.*   .
   and   snake   DEM   offspring-3SG.POSS
   'She is the child of the snake.'

8 *Nimwet   ok   natu-n,   van   m   utui*
   snake   DEM offspring-3SG.POSS   go   REAL.3SG   draw.water

   nitas.
    sea
   'The child of the snake has gone to fetch sea water.'

9 *Natu-n   nimwet   ok   wisewin   a   Tondor.*
   offspring-3SG.POSS   snake   DEM girl   LOC Tondor
   'The daughter of the snake is from Tondor.'

10 *Ko   nasup a   Laon   natu-n   norman   ok*
   and   man   LOC Laon   offspring-3SG.POSS   boy   DEM

   mi   ma   ngala,   mu   tsupul   ma   ngala.
   REAL.3SG   come seaside   REAL.3SG   go.down   come seaside
   'And there's a man of Laon whose boy goes to the seaside.'

11 *Mu   susui wisewin   ok.   .*
   REAL.3SG   find   girl   DEM
   'He finds the girl.'

12 *Natu-n   nimwet   ok   mu   susui a*
   offspring-3SG .POSS snake   DEM REAL.3SG   find   REL

   mu   tungavi   nitas.
   REAL.3SG   draw.water   sea
   'He finds the child of the snake who is drawing sea water.'

13 *Ale   ko   mu   ure-ni   ni   vatsin ok :*
   alright   and   REAL.3SG   say-TR   3SG   then   DEM

"Ko   ma   epense ?"
PV.2SG   come how
'He tells her: "How come you're here? "'

14   *"Ina   me   viel   mare   koro me   ma   nga*
         1SG   REAL.1SG   go   from.above   only   REAL.1SG   come PURP

       pe   lai   ndas".
       IRR.1SG   take   sea
       '*"*Me I come from just up there, I have come to fetch sea water*".*'

15   *Vatsin ko   merok   mu   ure-ni ni   wa:*
       then   and   young.man   REAL.3SG   say-TR3SG   say

       "Me   re   pe   tikei-m ".
       REAL.1SG   want   IRR.1SG   marry-2SG.OBJ
       'Then the young man says to her: "I want to marry you".'

16   *Vatsin ko   ure-ni ni   wa :" O   sere   kon   tikei-a*
       then   and   say-TR3SG   say   O   NEG PV.2SG   marry-1SG.OBJ

       sere   ina   mira-k   mwi   tsats,
       because   1SG   mother-1SG.POSS   REAL.3SG   bad

       mwi   tsats   res" .
       REAL.3SG   bad   well
       'Then she says: "O you can't marry me because my mother is bad, very bad".'

17   *Vatsin ko:"   Miro-m   nise   ?"*
       then   and   mother-2SG.POSS   what
       'Then (he says): "What about your mother?"'

18   *"Mwi   tsats   wa   se   nen   ure-ni".*
      REAL.3SG   bad   say   NEG   DEM   say.TR
      '"She is bad, I can't tell how much".'

19   *Ini   vatsin   mu   ure-i   mi   pok   wa:*
       3SG   then   REAL.3SG   say   REAL.3SG   this.way   say

      "Pwire   miro-m   e   ve   nariv,   e   ve
      if   mother-2SG.POSS   PV.3SG   COP.   rat   3SG   COP

      nimwet,   e   ve   nariv perngensis,   e   ve
      snake   PV.3SG   COP   rodent   PV.3SG   COP

      nuob   wa,   e   ve   nise   ko   pe
      lizard   EMPH   PV.3SG   COP   what   and   IRR.1SG

      tikei-m".
       marry-2SG.OBJ
      'Then he says: "(Even) if your mother is a rat, a snake, a rodent, a lizard, whatever she is, I marry you".'

20   *Mi   wa   :   "   Ale,   mwi   res.   Mak*
      REAL.3SG   say   alright   REAL.3SG   well   come

      ro   veim".
      IRR.1DU.INCL   go.home
       'She says: "That's good then. Let's go home".'

21   *Mor   viel   mor   van   mor   lek   neim*
      REAL.3DU go   REAL.3DU go   REAL.3DU stay house

vatsin	*mi*	*pok*	*ko*	*mire-n,*		*mire-n*
then	REAL.3SG	this.way	and	mother-3SG.POSS		mother-3SG.POSS

a	*ve*	*nimwet*	*a,*	*mwi*	*kila*	*ko*
REL	COP	snake	DEF	REAL.3SG	look.for	and

se	*e*	*lesi*	*natu-n*		*e*
NEG	PV.3SG	see	offspring-3SG.POSS		PV.3SG

mas	*lua*	*vatsin*	*natu-* ∅	*wisewin*	*a.*
turn.up	return	then	offspring-3SG.POSS	girl	DEF

'They go and they stay home , but her mother, the snake, she looks for her daughter and she can't see her come back.'

22 | *Natu-n* | *wisewin,* | *e* | *ve* | *wisewin* |
    |----------|-----------|-----|------|-----------|
    | offspring-3SG.POSS | girl | PV.3SG | COP | girl |

a	*Tondor.*
LOC	Tondor

'The girl is from Tondor.'

23 | *Ko* | *malakel,* | *malakel* | *a* | *Laon.* . |
    |------|-----------|-----------|-----|-----------|
    | and | young.man | young.man | LOC | Laon |

'And the young man is from Laon.'

24 | *Ale,* | *mwi* | *lai* | *nar,* | *nar* | *vatsin* | *sa,* | *mwi* |
    |--------|-------|-------|--------|-------|----------|-------|-------|
    | alright | REAL.3SG | take | shell | shell | then | INDEF | REAL.3SG |

vreni	*nar*	*ko*	*mwi*	*sei*	*nobo*	*nen :*
throw	shell	and	REAL.3SG	sing	song	DEM

'She (the mother) takes a shell, she throws it and she sings this song:'

25   *"Le   Wenper,   Le   Wenper*

        DET.FEM   Wenper   DET.FEM   Wenper

        *'"*Wenper, Wenper *"'*

26   *sete   no   res   le   ,   sete   no   tsats   le*[22]

        NEG?   ?   well   ?   NEG?   ?   bad   ?

        *'"*not good, not bad*"'*

27   *natu-k   nebe,   natu-k   nebe?"*

        offspring-1SG.POSS where offspring-1SG.POSS where

        *'"*where is my child, where is my child?*"'*

28   *Mi   vreni   nar   mi   pe   nga   ango   ko*

        REAL.3SG   throw shell REAL.3SG   COP COMP here   and

        nar   m   uror   ko   mi   mawos   ni   Laon.

        shell   REAL.3SG turn   and   REAL.3SG   straight   LOC Laon

        'She throws a shell this way and it turns in direction of Laon.'

29   *Ko   uwa :   " natu-k   niok   mwi   lek   ne   Laon".*

        and   say   offspring-1SG.POSS there REAL.3SG   stay   LOC Laon

        'She says: "My child is staying there, in Laon".'

30   *Taem a   mwi   sei   nobo malakel   a   malakel*

        when DEF REAL.3SG sing song young.man   DEF young.man

        roni   wisewin   nimwet   natu-n   ok   a   Tondor

        with   girl   snake   offspring-3SG.POSS DEM LOC Tondor

        ok,   mor   lek   ko   mor   salepor.

        DEM REAL.3DU stay   and   REAL.3DU   listen

---

[22] I am told this sentence is in 'snake language' and that I should ignore it.

'When she sings the song, the young man and the girl, the child of the snake from Tondor, sit and listen.'

31   (sings)

32   *Ale,   nobo   nen   vatsin ango.*
     alright song   DEM   then   here
     'Yes, that is this song.'

33   *Ale   mwi   vreni nar,   nar   mu   uror   mi*
     alright REAL.3SG   throw shell shell REAL.3SG   turn   REAL.3SG

     mawos   ni   vesa   ni   Laon.
     straight   LOC   once   LOC   Laon
     'She throws the shell, and the shell turns immediately in direction of Laon.'

34   *Mor   leklek   se   e   parav mor   sipni*
     REAL.3DU   stay.DUP   NEG   PV.3SG   long   REAL.3DU   jump

     nga   nobo nga   mi   ma   ma   ma   ma   mori
     COMP   song REL   REAL.3SG   come   come   come   come   close

     re   to²³   vatsin bok   merok   mi   kila
     LOC   door   then   entrance   young.man   REAL.3SG   look.for

     mwi   lesi: " Pe   sa-k   mi   mas
     REAL.3SG   see   mother   POSS-1SG   REAL.3SG   turn.up

     ango,   mira-k   mi   ma   ango !"
     here   mother-1SG.POSS   REAL.3SG   come   here

---

²³ *To* is a Bislama loanword. Gustave commented he should have used the local language term *nonom* 'door'.

'They are staying there and not long after they are startled when (they hear) the song that comes closer and closer to the door. Then the young man[24] looks and says:"My mother has arrived here, my mother has come here!"'

35　　*" Po　　　　ure-ni pe　　som　　pi　　　asi　　ve　　loloum".*
　　　IRR.2SG　　say-TR mother POSS-2SG　　IRR.3SG　　enter　COP　inside
　　　'"Tell your mother to come inside".'

36　　*Vatsin ko:　　"Me　　　　ure　　pe　　sa-k　　　mi　　　　tsats*
　　　then　　and　　REAL.1SG　say　　mother POSS-1SG　　REAL.3SG　bad

　　　ko　　m　　　　　ure　　e　　　　res　　ko　　pi　　　　　ma
　　　and　　REAL.2SG　say　　PV.3SG　good　and　　IRR.3SG　　come

　　　vatsin mi　　　　ma　　bok　　　ko　　mi　　　　　ve　　re
　　　then　　REAL.3SG　come　entrance　and　REAL.3SG　COP　LOC

　　　kitsin" .
　　　kitchen
　　　'*"* I said my mother is bad and you said it's alright, she will come, so she came and now she is by the kitchen*".* '

37　　*"Po　　　　lek　　ve　　re　　neim　a　　mar　　　tapu*
　　　IRR.2SG　　stay　COP　LOC　house　REL　REAL.3PL　cook

　　　renge-n　　　　　ok" .
　　　belly-3SG.POSS　　DEM
　　　'*"* Come and stay in the kitchen*".*' (lit: 'stay inside the house where they cook')

38　　*Mi　　　　asi　　mi　　　　van　　mi　　　　van　　mi　　　　van*
　　　REAL.3SG　enter　REAL.3SG　go　　REAL.3SG　go　　REAL.3SG　go

---

[24] Gustave had meant to say 'the young woman'.

mi	*van,*	*mu*	*loveng*	*mu*	*loveng*	*mu*
REAL.3SG	go	REAL.3SG	crawl	REAL.3SG	crawl	REAL.3SG

loveng	*van*	*neim*	*mi*	*kel*	*lolo-n*	*mi*
crawl	LOC	house	REAL.3SG	small	inside-3SG.POSS	REAL.3SG

kel	*mi*	*raleni*	*patu-n*	*re*	*to.*
mall	REAL.3SG	rest	head-3SG.POSS	LOC	door

'She enters, crawling, crawling, in the small interior of the tiny house and she rests her head in the door.'

39

Malakel	*a*	*mu*	*rowon*	*vatsin*	*pwi*	*kete*
young.man	DEF	REAL.3SG	be.confused	then	IRR.3SG	do

nitse	*vatsin*	*ko*	*mwi*	*kete*	*roromien*	*sa*	*matsin*
what	then	and	REAL.3SG	do	idea	one	work

ko	*ureni*	*ni:*
and	say.TR	3SG

'The young man is embarrassed. Now what? Then he has an idea and says to her (the girl):'

40

"Ma	*ro*	*ve*	*re*	*nout*	*ro*
come	IRR.1DU.INCL	COP	LOC	garden	IRR.1DU.INCL

pitsele	*anen*	*pwi*	*sa*	*ko*	*leter*	*pwi*
look.for	food	IRR.3SG	one	and	woman	IRR.3SG

ar	*lua*	*roni".*
FUT	return	with

'"Come, let's go to the garden and fetch some food for the woman to take home".'

41   *Mor*   *viel*   *mor*   *van*   *mor*   *ve*   *lamös.*

REAL.3DU   go   REAL.3DU   go   REAL.3DU   COP   field

'They go to the field.'

42   *Malakel*   *a*   *romien se-n*   *pwi*   *kete*   *miren nana*

young.man   DEF   idea   POSS-3SG   IRR.3SG   do   big   thing

veral.

later

'The young man will put his big plan in practice soon.'(lit: 'the young man's idea will do a big thing soon')

43   *Mi*   *van*   *ure-ni*   *ni:"*   *Po*   *tur*   *naok*

REAL.3SG   go   say-TR   3SG   IRR.2SG   stand   here

pe   *vök*   *ngein*   *koro".*

IRR.1SG   go   there   only

'He tells her (the girl): "You stay here. I will go just there".'

44   *Mi*   *van*   *ko*   *mi*   *vei*   *roser.*

REAL.3SG   go   and   REAL.3SG   collect   dry.leaf.of.coconut.tree

'He goes and collects the dry leaves of coconut trees.'

45   *Mi*   *vei*   *roser*   *ma*   *ma*   *ma*   *ma*

REAL.3SG   collect   dry.leaf.of.coconut.tree   come   come   come   come

van   *ko*   *mwi*   *sisngi*   *lep*   *a ,*   *kitsin*   *lep*   *a.*

LOC   and   REAL.3SG   surround.with   several   DEF   kitchen   several   DEF

'He goes and collects the dry leaves of coconut trees. He collects the leaves while coming closer and closer. He puts a lot of them around the kitchen.'

46   *Mwi*   *sisngi*   *mi*   *sisngi*   *van*   *se*   *e*

REAL.3SG   surround.with   REAL.3SG   surround.with   LOC   NEG   PV.3SG

parav	*mi*		*pok*	*ko*	*mu*	*tsupli*	*van*	*nab*
long	REL.3SG		this.way	and	REAL.3SG	start	go	fire

'He puts them around and around and shortly after he starts a fire.'

47 | *Ko* | *se* | *e* | | *parav* | *ko* | *mwi* | | *lesi* | *sere* | *e* |
     |------|------|-----|--|---------|------|-------|--|--------|--------|-----|
     | And | NEG | PV.3SG | | long | but | REAL.3SG | | see | NEG | PV.3SG |

mas		*lua*		*ma.*
turn.up		come.back		come

'It does not take long but the girl doesn't see him come back.'

48 | *Naven nab* | *ok* | *sa* | *mu* | | *row* | *naok* | *mi* | | *ma* |
     |-------------|------|------|------|--|-------|--------|------|--|------|
     | ash | DEM | one | REAL.3SG | | fly | there | REAL.3SG | | come |

ma	*ma*	*ma*	*mwi*		*tawos*	*tsi*	*wisewin*		*ok,*	*nab*
come	come	come	REAL.3SG		rest	LOC	girl		DEM	fire

mu		*suruni*		*tsi-n.*
REAL.3SG		land.on		LOC-3SG

'A speck of ash flies there and falls to rest on the girl. It lands on her.'

49 | *"O* | *mira-k !* | | *Mu* | | *su,* | *mi* | | *mats".* |
     |------|-----------|--|------|--|-------|------|--|----------|
     | O | mother-1SG.POSS | | REAL.3SG | | finish | REAL.3SG | | die |

'"O my mother! It's over, she is dead".'

50 | *Wala* | *wala* | *wala* | *mwi* | | *tatser* | | *mi* | | *ma* |
     |--------|--------|--------|-------|--|----------|--|------|--|------|
     | run | run | run | REAL.3SG | | non.stop | | REAL.3SG | | come |

mi		*lesi-ø*		*ko*	*mi*		*row*	*tsupul*
REAL.3SG		see-3SG.OBJ		and	REAL.3SG		jump	go.down

roni	*van*	*mu*		*tsöv*	*roni*	*mire-n*		*ko*
with	LOC	REAL.3SG		fall	with	mother-3SG.POSS		and

mi   an   vesa.
REAL.3SG   burn   once

'She runs and runs without stopping, sees her mother and jumps right in the fire with her and burns at once.'

51   *Taron ango melngen   mu   to   ne   Laon*
      time   DEM   location   REAL.3SG   located.at   LOC   Laon

ne   mare   re   Amal.
LOC   from.above   LOC   Amal

'Nowadays this place is located at Laon, above Amal.'

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APPENDIX

A fieldwork report sent to Ralph Regenvanu, Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Council, on the 13th September 2010.

Linguistic fieldwork in Atchin.

From the 23 August to the 3rd September 2010, I carried out linguistic fieldwork on the island of Atchin, northeast of Malakula. My research consists in describing some aspects of the indigenous language spoken on the island. This is a one-year research that I have to complete by December 2010.

This was my second fieldwork there: in March I spent one week on the island.

Both times I stayed in Ruar, near the Catholic mission, with a relative of Chief Gaston Atuary. I had a private room in a brick house and another room with table and chairs to work with participants. The house had water and gas facilities. I had my own food: there are shops on the island and a weekly market at Lavalsal, on the mainland just opposite the island. Sometimes I would also share the family meals. I paid VT1000 a night. There was no electricity but I didn't need it: I had my own solar-powered lamp, I didn't have a computer with me and the rest of my equipment runs on batteries. But, if needed, I could ask for a generator to be started for me.

I worked with two participants: Gaston Atuary and Gustave Romone. Back in March I had also worked with Martino Metsen and Nelson Nembwen. They were not on the island for my second trip. With Gaston and Gustave I addressed all the questions I had after working on the data I had collected during my first fieldwork. We also checked the transcription of texts that I had recorded in March. I had made these transcriptions with speakers of the language based in Port-Vila but wanted them checked. We worked every morning (except Sunday) for about 2 hours. Then I would go over the material in the afternoon.

Aside from the actual sessions with the participants there were many occasions to mix with the community and I didn't hesitate to go everywhere on the island – as I had been authorised by the Council of Chiefs, back in March. Soon I started using greetings and short sentences with the people I bumped into on the island and everyone seemed to want to help me with the language. On the island everybody speaks the indigenous language, children included, and Bislama is rarely used (though many words are borrowed from Bislama in the present day language of Atchin). On the mainland, in particular in Orap where I went with the Atuary family to visit their relatives, Bislama seems to be more frequently used, and so does French. It is therefore best to be based on the island to study the local language.

For the time being this is my last trip in Atchin. As I mentioned, this research ends in December. On completion I will forward the outcome of the research and the recorded material and notes to the Cultural Center. I have also arranged with the community of Atchin to prepare and forward some material to them in early 2011: a small Atchin/Bislama dictionary and two stories in Atchin.

I left Gaston Atuary my copy of Anita Herle & Haidy Geismar's "Moving Images" that has just been published (July 2010). There was of course a lot of interest in the photos taken by Layard in Atchin a century ago. I also left my solar-powered lamp, inexpensive in New Zealand, and very useful on Atchin Island.