

DAGA GRAMMAR

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DAGA GRAMMAR

FROM MORPHEME TO DISCOURSE

by

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INTRODUCTION

This is a description of the grammar of Daga, a non-Austronesian language spoken by approximately 5,000 Papuans living in the Owen Stanley Mountains in the Rabaraba (formerly Baniara) Subdistrict of the Milne Bay District and in the Abau Subdistrict of the Central District of Papua New Guinea. The general linguistic theory upon which this description is based is tagmemic theory as developed by Robert E. Longacre in Grammar Discovery Procedures (Mouton, 1964) and as expanded in his various writings since then, and especially in Hierarchy and Universality of Discourse Constitutents in New Guinea Languages (Georgetown University Press, 1972).

One of the fundamental assumptions of tagmemics is that in language there are three simultaneous interlocking hierarchies--grammatical, phonological, and lexical. This paper describes only the grammatical hierarchy of Daga, and few, if any, interrelationships between grammar and the other hierarchies are given. The focus of this grammar is to present the levels of the grammatical hierarchy as they are related to each other, starting with the word, progressing through phrase, clause, and sentence, and ending with discourse. Morphemes are described along with the words with which they occur. An attempt is made to state the contrast, variation, and distribution for each construction. Tagmemic formulas (in the form of bidimensional arrays) are generally employed to present each construction as concisely as possible.

Tagmemic grammars have been criticized for dealing only with surface structures and not with deep structures. Although time limited a study of deep structures in all levels of the hierarchy, Chapter 6 examines both the surface and deep structures of Daga mult clause sentences. This chapter was inspired and guided by Longacre's work in this subject, especially by his lectures given in Papua New Guinea and by his two articles with Ballard and Conrad on the deep and surface structure of inter-clausal relations. (Foundations of Language 7:70-118, 1971; Language Data Asian Pacific Series No. 1, 1971.)

A variety of analytical problems were met during the research into Daga grammar, of which the following are typical:

(a) One of the analytical problems that arose was the treatment of the suffix -wa which occurs on nominal and verbal forms (see 3.1).

The problem was complicated by the fact that it has different functions according to its distribution on verbal forms. Finally, it was decided to describe all occurrences on nominal forms as the Substantive Clitic and, in order to avoid confusion, to also call it the Substantive Clitic when it occurs on verbal forms, even though it has a variety of different functions on verbs in addition to the marking of a nominal construction.

(b) Related to the problem of the Substantive Clitic was the homophony of the included clause verbal form and the past medial verb (see 3.4.2.2). The Substantive Clitic optionally occurs on both of these homophonous forms. On the included clause verbal form it marks the construction as nominal, but on the past medial verb it marks a change of subject or has various other functions. It was decided that the included clause verbal form and the past medial verb are distinct but homophonous forms.

(c) A decision also had to be made on certain morphemes and free forms, such as -a ~ gapan, den, umap, and menan, as to whether they were functioning on the phrase level as relators for relator-axis phrases or on the clause level as tagmeme markers (see 3.1 (1), 3.2 (3), and 3.3 (2)). The description seemed to be simplified if they were handled on the phrase level.

(d) At several points in the higher levels (see 6.3.16-6.3.18) where alternative analyses were possible, a description was preferred that involved recursion (the embedding of units within units of the same level). For example, a Summary Sentence was set up in which the Action slot is normally filled by one of five sentence types, instead of adding an optional Summary tagmeme to the structures of these five sentence types.

The data for this analysis were collected under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics during 37 months of residence in the village of Kakaia between 1963 and 1971. Textual material, approximately 25,000 words, collected from various dialects has been analysed, but almost all the informants have been from the Kakaia dialect. Various monolingual young people in their twenties have served as informants and have been either illiterate or semiliterate.

During the research, considerable use was made of a concordance of text in Daga made on the IBM 1410 computer at the University of Oklahoma by the Linguistic Information Retrieval Project of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the University of Oklahoma Research Institute, and sponsored by Grant GS-270 of the National Science Foundation.

The research and writing of the final four chapters was carried out under the auspices of the Office of Education (of the United States Government), Health, Education, and Welfare Contract no. OEC-9-097756-4409(014). This contract was undertaken and directed in Papua New Guinea during 1970 by Dr. Robert E. Longacre.

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