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Author

Rarrick, Samantha

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Samantha Rarrick

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Book Reviews

Matthew A. Taylor. 2015. *Nukna grammar sketch*. Data Papers on Papua New Guinea Languages, vol. 61. Ukarumpa: SIL-PNG Academic Publications. viii + 299 pp. ISBN 9980-0-3990-6. Open Access: <http://www.sil.org/pacific/png/abstract.asp?id=928474564222>.

Nukna (ISO code klt) is a Papuan language spoken by approximately 1,000 individuals in Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. This language is reported to be used extensively in the community, although Tok Pisin and English are used in schools. Existing documentation and description of this language includes Taylor's (2006) sociolinguistic study, with few other widely available publications on the language. Taylor's *Nukna grammar sketch* (NGS), published by SIL-PNG Academic Publications, adds significantly to this existing description and is based on data collected over approximately eight years with the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Although it is labeled a "grammar sketch," this book is certainly more robust than many sketch grammars, covering a wide range of topics from phonology to discourse. This work also addresses verbal morphology and syntax in greater depth than a typical sketch grammar might.

NGS is organized into ten chapters of text and six appendices, which span 294 pages. Chapters cover a range of linguistic topics, including: (1) an introduction; (2) phonology; (3) nouns and noun phrases; (4) postpositions and postpositional phrases; (5) verbs and verb phrases; (6) tense, aspect, modality, mood; (7) the clause; (8) complex sentence structure; (9) discourse considerations; and (10) lexical considerations. The front matter contains an extensive table of contents and a list of abbreviations used in the glosses, although this table omits other abbreviations used in the text. Appendices also address linguistic phenomena and provide glossed texts: (1) traditional number system; (2) nouns ending in /N/ and possessive suffixes; (3) Nukna kinship terms; (4) kinship terms pluralization and collectives; (5) glossed written text; and (6) glossed oral text. While the organization of this book is clear, it is less typical than what is found in other sketch grammars, which tend to have marked transitions between phonology, morphology, syntax, and other major topics. Taylor's organization also combines certain topics in ways that may not be useful for all readers. For example, clitics are listed in the chapter on phonology with indexes to other chapters, while adjectives and numerals are addressed in the chapter entitled "nouns and noun phrases."

The first chapter (1–9) of this work addresses the linguistic environment in which Nukna is spoken, including neighboring languages, and cultural notes. The phonology of this language is addressed in ch. 2 (2–27), covering such topics as phonemes and allophones, orthographic conventions, permissible syllable structures, and morphophonemics. There are 22 phonemes in Nukna: 16 consonants and six vowels. The vowel inventory provided by Taylor includes a back mid-low vowel, but no front mid-low

vowel. This imbalance is not addressed. A general scarcity of /f/ is noted in Nukna and other Finisterre-Huon languages, with no other unusual features of consonants. Possible syllable structures in Nukna include: V, CV, VC, CVC, CVV, CVVC. While CVV and CVVC structures are reported within single syllables, diphthongs are not reported in this language. Clarification on the nature of these VV sequences within a syllable would strengthen this work.

“Nouns and noun phrases” (28–68) addresses the structure of noun phrases, pronouns, possession, demonstratives, adjectives and adjectival phrases, quantifiers, and numerals. Noun phrases are head-initial with optional adjectival phrases, numerals or quantifiers, and demonstratives, in that order. Personal pronouns distinguish between singular, dual, and plural numbers and first, second, and third person. There are additional distinctions for agentive, genitive, dative, and comitative cases, with some irregularities and underspecifications. Nouns in this language are not marked for number. Instead, number can be determined by verb inflection, numerals, quantifiers, or cooccurrence with a reduplicated form of the adjective *isikimo* ‘small’ or *táwi* ‘large’. Prepositions and prepositional phrases are addressed in a separate chapter (69–84) that describes no notable traits.

Verbs and verb phrases (85–107) and tense, aspect, modality, and mood (108–57) are addressed across two chapters. In the first, the following are discussed: verb classes based on the final vowel of the verb root; person and number marking; an overview of tense and aspect; strategies for marking transitive verbs; the differences between final and medial verbs; serial verbs; existential verbs; and the verb phrase. Strategies for marking a verb as transitive include verbal prefixation, suppletive verb stems, serial verb constructions, and a reliance on context with no overt marking. Final and medial verbs in this language behave much like those of other Papuan languages. While final verbs are heavily inflected, medial verbs occur with fewer affixes and are never inflected for tense or mood. Additionally, medial verbs can occur with anticipatory switch-reference markers, and clause-chaining is used extensively. The chapter dedicated to tense, aspect, modality, and mood covers a wide range of these markers, addressing several tenses, aspects, modalities, and moods. In Nukna, there are distinctions between the following tenses: remote past, near past, present, immediate future, and dubitative future. Aspect is typically indicated lexically, a feature common in Papuan languages. Modality is expressed with free particles or with serial verbs, and includes a frustrative modality morpheme, used when an action or outcome is expected but does not occur. Mood is indicated by verb-final suffixes, as is common in other related languages.

Topics addressed in the chapter on clauses (161–98) include: transitive, intransitive, ditransitive, and negative clauses; four types of verbless clauses; serial verb constructions; frontshifting and endshifting; the topic-comment construction; how grammatical relations are indicated; and temporal adverbs and adverbs of manner or intensity. The basic word order of this language is SOV. In both transitive and intransitive clauses, an optional temporal phrase often occurs immediately before the subject noun phrase and an optional locative phrase often occurs immediately before the verb phrase. The four types of “non-verbal” clauses—those without an overt verb—that occur in Nukna are equative, attributive, possessive, and existential. Such clauses have neither verbs nor tense and can be interpreted as past or present, depending on context. Future tense has not been attested

with these types of clauses. The chapter on additional sentence structures (199–240) includes clause-level agentive marking, clause-level coordination, clause chaining, complementation, relative clauses, and adverbial clauses. Of note are the clause-final agentive markers that indicate that the clause either controls or makes possible the following clause.

The final chapters and appendices of this work cover topics related to discourse (241–53), lexical items and rhetorical devices (254–58), the traditional counting system (259–62), and an exhaustive list of kinship terms and their pluralization strategies (271–73). Discourse considerations include tail-head linkage, temporal connectors, exclamations, and an unexpected event marker *-n*. This event marker can only occur after the suffix *-nnga*, which marks vowel-final medial verbs as having the same subject as the following verb. The traditional number system of Nukna relies on base 20, using fingers, hands, feet, and whole persons, similarly to other Papuan languages. Two glossed texts (274–92) are also provided before the references section.

The main contribution of this work is its in-depth description of an understudied language. While he does only briefly touch on certain topics, Taylor manages to cover a full breadth of linguistic topics, with special attention to the complex morphosyntax of Nukna. This book is both more robust than a mere “grammar sketch” and is a valuable resource to individuals interested in Nukna or other Finisterre-Huon languages.

SAMANTHA RARRICK
University of Hawai‘i

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