

The role of corpus data in comparative research

Case studies from the MelaTAMP project

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- I will highlight two such phenomena for illustration.
 - Expressions of possibility without auxiliaries;
 - Timitive or apprehensive structures without lexical expressions;
- At the same time, the greater variability of supra-lexical structures makes it harder to determine strict differences between closely related varieties.

About the MelaTAMP project



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We (Manfred Krifka, Ana Krajinović, Stephan Druskat, two SAs and me) investigate

- expressions of **tense**, **aspect**, **mood** and **polarity**

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- Duration: March 2016 - March 2019

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- The corpora have been imported from their various source formats to the ANNIS platform at HU for enhanced analysis tools.
- In addition, we have designed storyboard stimuli to elicit specific contexts.
- Our collaborators and us have run these stimuli with 4-9 speakers per language this summer, except for Saliba-Logea.

Empirical sources: corpus data

Language	Texts	Tokens
Daakaka	119	68,291
Daakie	103	86,112
Dalkalaen	114	33,987
Mavea	95	63,123
North-Ambrym	75	142,609
Saliba	214	149,516
South-Efate	110	64,765

Empirical sources: corpus data

\ref .0978

\tx ma wese webung wi sii, wi
 vyer ma gete, mu
 kukyu

\mb ma wese webung w- i sii, w-
 i vyer ma ge -te, mu ku-
 kyu

\ge REAL enough day POT- COP three POT- COP
 four REAL like -MEDIAL REAL REDUP-SURROUND

\ps tam v n tam- cop num tam-
 cop num tam v -*** v.pre v.tr

\ft it might have been three or four days, it
 surrounded him

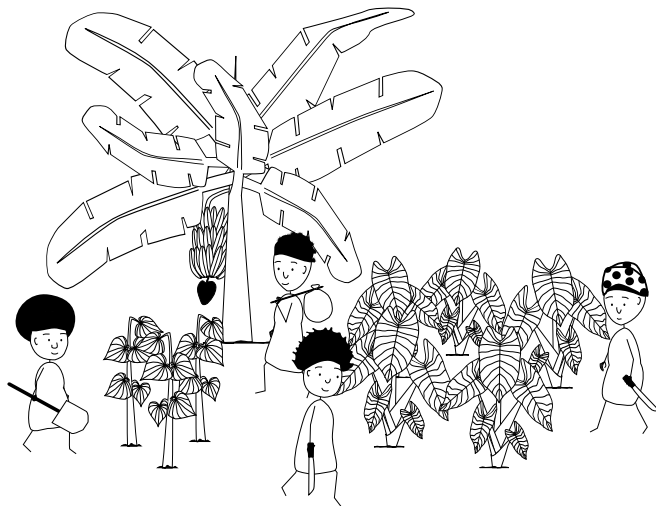
Our tagset

Categories	Name	Values
Clause type	clause	(main): assertion (default), question, directive, other; embedded: proposition, e.question, conditional, temporal, adverbial, attributive
Temporal domain	time	past, future, present
Modal domain	mood	factual, counterfactual, possible
Event structure	event	bounded, ongoing, repeated, stative, cos (change-of-state)
Polarity	polarity	positive, negative

Applying the tags

```
\ref .0978
\tx ma      wese      webung wi          sii,  wi          vyer
      ma      gete,      mu      kukyu
\mb ma      wese      webung w-      i      sii,  w-      i      vyer
      ma      ge      -te,      mu      ku-kyu
\ge REAL enough day      POT- COP three POT- COP four REAL
      like -MEDIAL REAL REDUP-SURROUND
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Storyboards



About storyboards

- Storyboards are stories represented by pictures such that each picture can be summarized by one or two sentences.

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- They allow for the elicitation of relatively natural speech while at the same time narrowly targeting specific meanings.

Areal TAM features under the typological radar

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- Embedding structures for the expression of possibility (von Prince & Margetts, 2017).

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- A combination of reduplication with imperfective aspect markers for the expression of habitual aspect (von Prince *et al.* , accepted).
- Embedding structures for the expression of possibility (von Prince & Margetts, 2017).
- *It would not be good if...*-structures for the expression of timitive or apprehensive modality.

Expressing possibility

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- In many Oceanic languages, there are no modal auxiliaries to express possibility (von Prince & Krajinović, 2017).
- Instead, five out of seven of our project languages resort to embedding structures.

Expressing possibility: auxiliaries

The project languages differ in whether they can express negative and positive possibility by auxiliaries or not.

Language	Positive possibility	Negative possibility
Nafsan	<i>lakor</i> “may”	<i>kano</i> “can’t”
Mavea	<i>adi</i> “can”	<i>leng</i> “cannot”
Saliba-Logea	—	—
North Ambrym	—	—
Daakie	—	—
Daakaka	—	—
Dalkalaen	—	—

Expressing possibilities: embedding structures

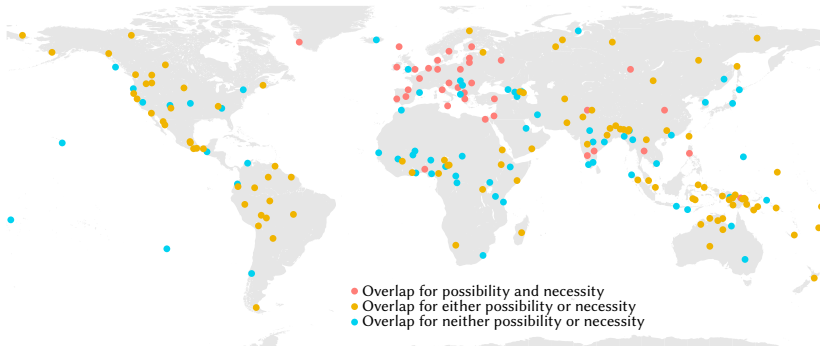
Saliba-Logea:

- (1) *gonowa-m meta kabo ku dobi ku*
 ability-2SG.POSS PART then 2SG.SBJ go.down 2SG.SBJ
unui-he-mate
 catch-CAUS-die
 “you are able to go down, to catch it and kill it (lit. ‘Your ability exists to...’)”

Daakaka:

- (2) *telelel [...] to kuowilye na*
 long.tailed.triller NEG;REAL know NEG;POT
tas-mar-mar yan lee
 sit-REDUP-quiet on tree
 “the long-tailed triller [...] can't sit still on a tree”

Wider typological implications



According to van der Auwera & Ammann (2013), most languages outside of Europe do not conflate epistemic and deontic modality (see also Viebahn & Vetter 2016). However, that is probably a function of how well the languages are studied.

Timitive/ apprehensive structures

Lichtenberk (2016) has identified *timitive* or *apprehensive* modality as a widespread category in Oceanic languages.

Toqabaqita:

- (3) *Ada wane qeri ka riki nau.*
TIM man that 3SG.SEQ see 1SG
“[I fear] the man might see me.”

Timitive structures in the project languages

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- Among the project languages, only Saliba-Logea has a specific marker dedicated to timitive modality.
- However, when we ran the storyboards in the six remaining languages, we found that several timitive contexts were expressed consistently with a specific canonical structure, across languages and speakers.

Timitive contexts in the storyboards



Timitive contexts in the storyboards



Timitives: *it would not be good*

Mavea:

- (4) *sopo-du me ko-ŵa ko-taraia-ira mo-evuia ko-laia-ira*
 NEG-good FUT 2SG-go 2SG-chop-3PL 3SG-finish 2SG-take-3PL
ko-mo-laia-ira ima mo-evuia ko-sopo-onea taite
 2SG-COND-take-3PL house 3SG-finish 2SG-NEG-see one
i-soŵi na sala
 3SG.IR-fall LOC road
 “no good you chop firewood then take it, if you take it home
 you don’t see a piece fall on the road” (VG20171059.006)

Timitives: *it would not be good*

Daakaka:

(5) *Te to vu ne ka na=p tewilya te ka*
 DISC NEG;REAL good TRANS COMP 1SG=POT kick DISC ASR
na=p mur vyan yen wye.

1SG=POT fall go in water

“And it would not be good if I stumbled on it, and fell into the water.”

Background
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Empirical sources
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New insights into grammatical features
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Things I still don't know about Ambrym
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- ...and to have data on comparable contexts for different languages from the same region to identify recurrent patterns.
- Embedding structures for the expression of possibility, complex timitives and complex habitual structures may very well turn out to be regional or family-specific features.

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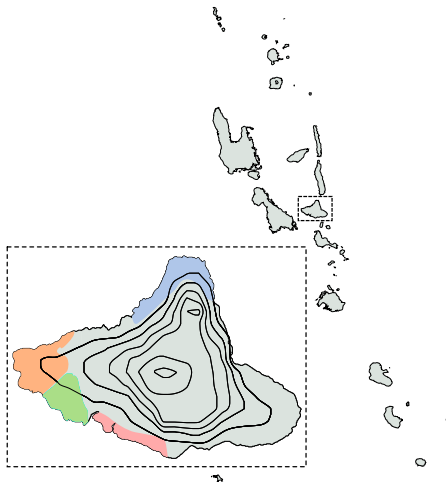
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Microvariation on Ambrym

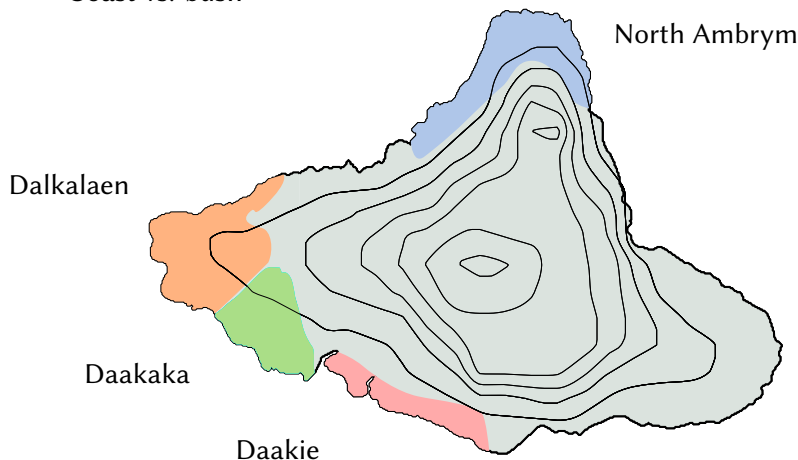
About Ambrym



Microvariation on Ambrym

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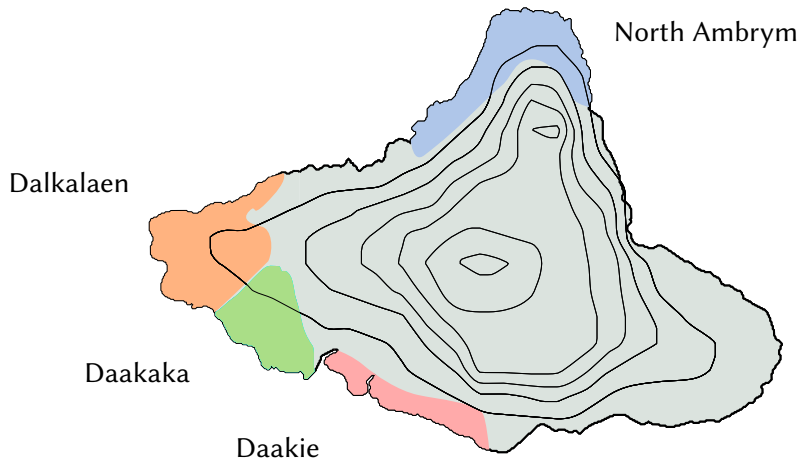
- Coast vs. bush



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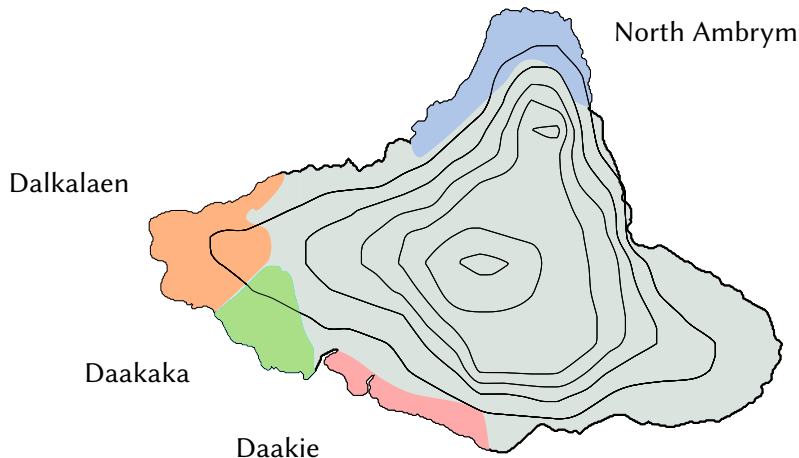
- French vs. English schools, Catholic vs. Protestant religion



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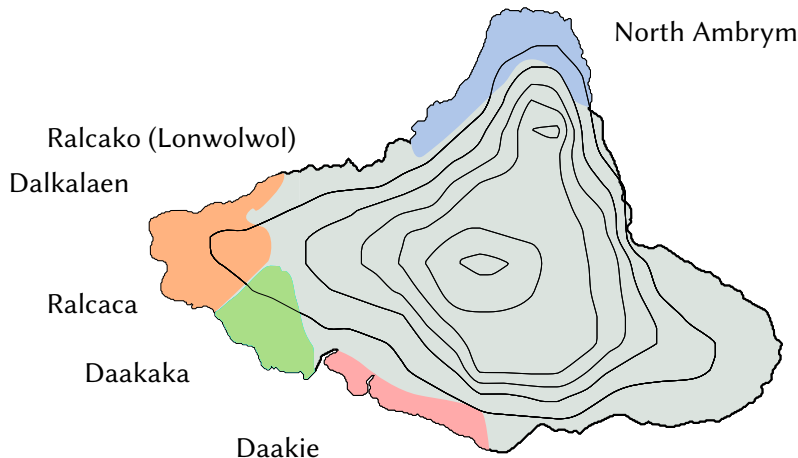
- Marriage relations to other islands/ villages



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Factors affecting linguistic differences and similarities:

- Exposure to neighboring varieties



Social differentiation and impact on languages

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- Exclusive varieties: Ralcaca (Polipetakever, Tou)

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- The same speakers will sometimes use Daakaka words instead of the corresponding Dalkalaen as (Daakaka *bili* vs. Dalkalaen *bone*).
- The same speakers will sometimes conflate 1 person exclusive and second person paucal and plural forms of pronouns, sometimes not.

Subject agreement markers in Dalkalaen

Table: The system of subject agreement markers

Person	Singular	Dual	Paucal	Plural
1ex	na	amro	miju/muju	qi/mi
1in		taro	ju	yi
2	qo	maro	muju	mi
3	∅	ro	ri	ra

Interim summary

- We do not know much about most Oceanic languages from Melanesia.

Background
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Empirical sources
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New insights into grammatical features
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- In Vanuatu especially, there is still no consensus about boundaries between and numbers of languages.
- Some varieties exhibit more intra-variety variation than others...
- ...for reasons I do not fully understand.

Counterfactual conditionals

- The most frequent environment for counterfactual reference are counterfactual clauses.
- In many languages, counterfactual clauses are themselves characterized by supra-lexical, canonical structures.
- In everyday language, counterfactual clauses are not very frequent.

(6) **If** Laura **had missed** the train, she **would** have been late to the conference.

Eliciting counterfactual contexts



Figure: From TFS Working Group (2010)

Counterfactuals in Dalkalaen and Daakaka

- (7) *a wuto sene ka na do kirine yaafu mwermwer ta*
 DISC ask catch COMP 1SG stay follow man short DEM
lo bala nga t=ii be?
 DISC CNTF FOC DIST=be.like how
 “And she asked: If I had gone with that short man, how would it have been?” (Dalkalaen)

- (8) *ma ka ka we pwe lene na ma kiyu te yene te*
 REAL say COMP POT stay marry COMP REAL fat DISC now DISC
bili ka ti ki=vi.
 time ASR DIST be.like=how
 “she asked how it would have been if she had married the fat one” (Daakaka)

Summing up

- We still do not know much about the Oceanic languages of Melanesia.
- Our knowledge about supra-lexical structures is particularly fragmentary.
- We need to collect more targeted and untargeted data to ...
 - ...discover area- or family-specific patterns.
 - ...better understand the parameters of micro-variation.

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Rare contexts: counterfactuals

Thank you!

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