



Time and transitivity in South Efate

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South Efate, an Oceanic language of central Vanuatu, allows the expression of temporal relations in several ways using markers of aspect and mood. Sentences which are morphologically unmarked for aspect or mood can have different lexically encoded 'temporal frames' (following Dahl 1985). Pronominal expression of arguments is obligatory and, as subject proclitics occur in one of three forms, realis, irrealis and perfect, mood is a required component of every sentence. South Efate is one of the group of Vanuatu languages that displays stem-initial mutation (Lynch 1975, Crowley 1991) whereby the initial consonant of a very small group of verbs changes to reflect mood. There is evidence that realis/irrealis stem mutation correlates with features of transitivity. All else being equal, the realis form of the verb occurs in clauses which have an overt expression of an object while the irrealis form occurs when there is no object in the clause. Stem-initial mutation occurs in only a small class of verbs, so its use in marking transitivity is all the more interesting. This paper will explore the relationship between the morphological expression of mood and transitivity in South Efate.

References

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