1 Perspectives on subgrouping and dialectology: an introduction

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This volume has had a rather unusual genesis. It was originally conceived as part of the now defunct Series A of Pacific Linguistics, which was once used to publish collections of occasional papers. For a number of reasons, a decision was made to abandon the occasional papers series, and only to publish collections of articles which had some sort of thematic coherence. Of course, there was still the problem of how to deal with a few papers which had already been accepted for publication in the A series, in this case the papers by Donohue and Rau that appear in this book. Fortunately, the two papers that had already been accepted for publication both dealt with the classification of languages and dialects in different ways and it was clear that there was already the making of a volume with the kind of thematic coherence Pacific Linguistics wanted.

There was another complication with this volume as well. The book began with just Nikolaus Himmelmann as sole editor. However, when he left The Australian National University to take up a position in Germany, he no longer had the time to devote to the rest of the task of putting this volume together alone. When John Bowden came to the ANU, he joined Himmelmann as coeditor, and put out a call for papers on Austronesian subgrouping and dialectology that could combine with the ones already received to make a coherent volume.

Although this book was not planned in quite the same way as most collections organised around a theme, we hope that the volume as it has turned out will be a worthwhile addition to studies on dialectology and subgrouping in the Austronesian family. The papers reflect a wide range of approaches to looking at questions of linguistic classification at both macro and micro levels.

Terry Crowley's paper compares how linguists have talked about the classification and naming of languages and dialects with how speakers of Oceanic languages themselves actually name and classify their ways of speaking. He takes issue with Mülhäusler's (1996) claim that languages represent colonial abstractions produced by foreign academics and missionaries and have no relationship to indigenous understanding of what their local linguistic situations are like. He cites a wealth of evidence from the Pacific surveying indigenous classification of speech varieties in order to refute Mülhäusler's claim.

Mark Donohue's paper constitutes an examination of a long-standing claim about the unity of a Muna Buton group of languages consisting of all the languages spoken in southeast Sulawesi. As with quite a few long-standing claims on Austronesian subgrouping that have been repeated many times, no one has yet offered any hard evidence for the group, although speculation has abounded. Donohue assesses a range of phonological evidence and concludes that not all of the languages of this area can be included together in one subgroup. Nevertheless, it is possible to link many of the languages from this area together into a coherent subgroup. However, the Wolio and Kamaru languages do not belong to this group and the status of others not examined in his paper remains unclear.

Victoria Rau's paper aims to clarify the relationships between Atayalic dialects of Taiwan. In her paper she focuses on the Mstbaun, Palngawan and Inago dialects. A feature of her study is the careful attention paid not just to lexical similarity, but also to sound change and mutual intelligibility. Rau concludes that a family-tree model for the relationships between these groups is not appropriate, but that rather they should be seen as a dialect chain with Mstbaun between Palngawan and Inago.

The major contribution of Malcolm Ross's paper is to map out the major features of an internal subgrouping for the Malayic subgroup of Austronesian, mostly using as evidence shared innovations in bound morphology. The Malayic group has largely resisted earlier efforts at internal classification based on phonological innovations because of widespread lexical borrowing between the languages. He concludes that Old Malay, despite its nomenclature, was not actually a part of the Malayic group, and further proposes that Malayic has two major subgroups: a western group including Salako, Ahe and Belangin, and a larger nuclear Malayic group including all the other Malayic languages.

Jae Jung Song also uses the evidence of bound morphology in Micronesian to assess competing claims about subgrouping within that subgroup of Oceanic. Debate has focused on whether or not a 'flat-tree' model of Micronesian subgrouping should be preferred over a more stratified one. Song concludes that the evidence from the focus system and from the possessive pronouns suggests that the flat-tree model, with little internal branching, is to be preferred.

René van den Berg's paper is a contribution to dialectology in the Muna language. Van den Berg's (1989) grammar of the Muna language focused on the most prestigious and most widely spoken northern dialect of the language spoken in Muna subdistrict. The paper in this volume provides quite detailed description of the main features of the lesser known southern dialect which differ from that of the north. In this sense, the paper here could perhaps be viewed as an important appendix to his (1989) grammar.

References

Mülhäusler, Peter, 1996, *Linguistic ecology: language change and linguistic imperialism in the Pacific region*. London: Routledge.

van den Berg, René, 1989, *A grammar of the Muna language*. Dordrecht: Foris.