RESENHA BIBLIOGRÁFICA

BAARLE, P. van & SABAJO, M. A. 1997. *Manuel de la Langue Arawak*. Paris, Du Saule, 224p.

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This textbook of the Arawak language is a French translation from Dutch (the Dutch version, under the joint authorship of Peter van Baarle, M.A. Sabajo, A.L. Sabajo, L.L. Sabajo and G. van der Stap, was published in Amsterdam in 1989). The French edition is intended for francophones who wish to learn the basic facts about the Arawak language and culture.

The Arawak language, also known as Lokono (the indigenous term for 'people'), is one of the major languages of the Northern branch of the Arawak, or Aruák, family. Its importance for Arawak studies is enhanced by the fact that this language gave its name to the family.

The Arawak, or Lokono, language is spoken by about 700 people in Surinam (Pet 1987), about 1500 in Guyana, about 200 in French Guyana and a few people in Eastern Venezuela. It is one of the rare languages in South America whose history of documentation goes as far back as the end of the sixteenth century (Brinton 1871). It is probably the best documented language of the most extensive family in South America. Among other important documents is a detailed

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grammar by de Goeje (1928) (For an overview of other sources, see Oliver 1989). There is also a more recent comprehensive grammar by Pet (1987).

This is a pedagogical grammar, and is organised accordingly. The book is written with minimum linguistic terminology, to enable a language learner with little or no linguistic training to understand it.

The preface gives a general idea of the spread of the Lokono Arawak language, and of the Arawak language family. Only thirty three Arawak languages are mentioned; if one compares this to other lists of Arawak languages in the literature (e.g. Payne 1991), one can easily see that this list is not exhaustive; all it gives is a general idea of the spread of the family. (Among the languages which do not appear on the map are Baniwa of Içana/Kurripako, Cabiyari, and a number of extinct languages, such as Bahwana, or Amarizana. Achagua, spoken by about 200 people in Colombia (Wilson 1992) is listed twice: as the extinct Axagua and as the living Achagua). Since these data are absent from the Dutch edition, it would have been a good idea to give a reference as to the origin of the maps, and of the list.

Further on, we are given a brief account of the practical orthography used for Lokono Arawak, with the IPA equivalents for each symbol. The phonological system of Arawak is given in the subsequent section (pp. 17-23).

The main body of the book is divided into ten lessons. Each lesson has a title in Lokono Arawak (translated further on in the text); it contains a short dialogue in the language (15 to 24 lines), which is then translated into French; further sections discuss various grammatical topics of the language. Two sections, one with a dictionary and the other with stories and songs, are not included into the French version. This is rather a pity because it appears to be

difficult to make one's way through the texts without even a wordlist in the end of each lesson.

The grammatical materials in the ten lessons are organised in such a way as to allow an attentive reader to get a basic idea of the structure of the language. Each lesson contains some information about morphology, some about syntax, and some about other issues. The first lesson deals with the simple clause structure, personal pronouns, questions and responses. The second considers gender assignment, number marking and verb root structure, and the habitual tense, while lesson three deals with syntax and the morphology of possession. Lessons four and five contain information on kinship system, besides grammatical information on postpositional phrases and on locatives. Later lessons (eight, nine) contain more information on syntax and lexicon than on morphology.

Every language has its own linguistic genius, that is, its particularly remarkable linguistic properties. This book manages to convey them. One fascinating property of the Arawak language is the way genders are assigned to nouns. The principle of assignment appears simple at first sight (Lesson 2, p.37): all male humans belong to masculine gender, and all the rest to feminine. But there is much more to it: to be assigned masculine gender, a male person must also belong to the Arawak community (all foreign men are treated as feminine). Masculine gender assignment is associated with positive value, while feminine gender goes with negative feelings. Animals and birds which are thought of as having a 'positive personality' (p. 38) are feminine - they include turtles and hummingbirds. Domestic animals to which speakers have a special attachment, for instance, dogs, are masculine; however, one's neighbour's dog is more likely to be feminine. Nice and cute animals are masculine, while bigger animals are feminine (the tapir is feminine just because of its large size). This semantic principle is quite different from that in many other

languages. Men are usually bigger than women; and in many of the world's languages with genders larger animals are masculine while smaller ones are feminine. This happens in Palikur, another language of the Arawak family spoken in French Guyana and in Brazil (Aikhenvald and Green forthcoming).

Similarly to the majority of languages in the Arawak language family, the Arawak language is head-marking and mildly polysynthetic. It has some elements of split ergativity, with the split relating to the semantics of the predicate. The subject of a transitive verb (A) and that of an intransitive stative verb (S_a) are cross-referenced on the verb with pronominal prefixes; while suffixes are used to mark the direct object (O) and the subject of stative intransitive verbs (S_o). This information is neatly explained in lesson 7 (p.89) with examples in two columns. Consider (1), where *na-* marks 3rd person plural transitive subject and *-de* marks 1sg direct object. In (2), the same suffix *-de* refers to the subject of a stative verb 'be very tired'. (Glosses supplied by me - A.A.)

    (1) na-küra-de
        3pl-tie-1sg
        'They tied me'

    (2) mêtheka-de
        be.very.tired-1sg
        'I am very tired'

This feature goes back to proto-Arawak (Payne 1991) and is present in a great many modern Arawak languages, but not every grammar describes it in such a clear and explicit manner.

Sometimes it is not clear why a particular order of presentation was chosen. For instance, information on morphophonological processes which take place with consonants before *i* could most

profitably have been treated before morphology. It is also a pity that the book does not have any subject index.

Creating a pedagogical grammar is an important and difficult task. There are rather few grammars of this sort for American Indian languages. We must congratulate Peter van Baarle and M. A. Sabajo on the completion of this! Important credit goes to the translator, Marie-France Patte, known for her invaluable work on an endangered Arawak language from Venezuela, Parauhano (or Añun).

Those who want to get basic information about this Arawak language, and the people who speak it, will greatly benefit from this book.

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