

Frank Seidel 2008. A Grammar of Yeyi. A Bantu Language of Southern Africa. Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, Köln. 464 pages; 8 Chapters; 57 Tables; 12 Figures; 1341 Illustrations; Index

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<1>

The structuring of this volume is quite impressive as the author manages to organize the massive materials into chapters that facilitate collectively the understanding of facts about the Bantu language Yeyi. The author uses a huge amount of illustrative examples, totaling 1.341, which are supported by subsequent good descriptions. Throughout the volume, the many illustrations used could easily be divided into three:

- (i) first examples from texts, mostly narratives and overhead tokens that reflect language in use in Yeyi hinterland,
- (ii) elicited examples, in most cases when textual examples miss or are unsatisfactory, are used to unfold the reality about the language,
- (iii) rarely data from other sources have been brought up to clarify some of the intriguing issues.

One observes easily that the chaptering of the volume follows the common practice in Bantu – phonology-noun-verb-syntax – but with some modifications as we shall see below. Also, this volume is highly accredited of a well drawn schematic presentation of prosodemes which is a fascinating area across Bantu, as well as a systematic presentation of diagrams for tense, aspect and mood (TAM). Furthermore, the table of contents is elaborate enough to point out what is documented in the volume (pp. 9-13) and the glossing, transcriptions, abbreviations as well as conventions (pp. 14-17) are well given. The author successfully supplies the reader with the index to the end of the volume.

<2>

The review of this volume is divided into eight sections following the volume's chapters. The volume opens with the introduction chapter (pp. 21-26) that embraces the socio-linguistics of the Yeyi people, the short introductory remarks on the review of previous studies covering Yeyi language, theoretical orientations of the study, and the methods of data collection and analysis. I would personally, too, open with a remark: the author appreciates existing literature but checks them succinctly with data gathered through his multi-faceted techniques. I return to the issue of review of literature specifically on the paragraph covering phonology and on data in other parts of this review.

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Chapter Two is devoted to the phonology of the language which the author branches into phoneme inventory, phonotactic processes and syllable analysis (pp. 27-53) and prosodology (pp. 54-99). Seidel presents the 5-vowel system available in the language, vowel nasalization, imbrication and phonological processes, all well described and exemplified. He goes on to challenge existing literature as far as vowels are concerned. Turning to consonants, his inventory has 37 non-pre-nasalized egressive consonants, 26 pre-nasalized ones, and Table 4 has 14 ingressive consonants i.e. clicks (p. 41). His analysis, as he

explicitly states, stems from gathered data. Having read his inventory, I get the feeling that establishing the phoneme inventory for Yeyi is not an easy task as inventories of previous works somehow differ from Seidel's because for example one claims that synchronically Yeyi phonemes have some 45 consonants, leaving behind clicks (Gowlett 1997: 253, 260). Another one, Baumbach (1997: 417-421), has a total of 80 consonants, which he supplies with phonemes, alphabetic symbols as well as illustrations.

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The prosodology section of this chapter is quite detailed and mainly concentrates on an acoustically based analysis of Yeyi prosody. Shortly, the author demonstrates that Yeyi is characterized with High Tone (termed as Prosodeme II), Low Tone (Prosodeme I) which are semantically distinct (p. 57) and have grammatical functions (p. 61) as well as Prosodeme iii. I am aware that the issue of Bantu tone needs much attention which the author succeeds to manage. Furthermore, intonation is given in demarcative and expressive grounds. In short, the section is well presented, illustrations are many, quite instructive and satisfactory.

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Nominals, specifically nouns and adjectives in Yeyi, are covered in Chapter Three of the volume (pp. 101-149). The criteria to ascribe a noun to a certain noun class are well explained and shortfalls, where they exist, are pointed out. Individual noun classes are presented and their categorization is discussed both semantically and morphologically. On the part of nominal derivation, the author presents basically three processes which are at work in the language:

- (i) noun-to-noun derivation
- (ii) nouns derived from adjectives, which in my opinion is too brief (pp. 132-133)
- (iii) deverbal noun derivation as can be exemplified here by *yenda* 'travel', *mu-yend-i* 'traveller' (pp. 129-149).

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Lastly, after reflecting whether Bantu languages have a category adjective or not and accepting that data is not enough for Yeyi, he goes on to list down some 27 core adjectives in the language (p. 142). So far, one notices only the missing of the pre-prefix in Yeyi as used in Bantu Zone R, e.g. Herero (R31) (Möhlig & Kavari 2008). But illustrations and explanations of the VCV or VC- noun structures (pp. 108-109) and the noun class 9 prefix in Yeyi (R41) have the initial vowel *i-* as in *inyama* 'meat' (p. 119) and *u-* as in *undjovu* 'elephant' (p. 128). With such nouns at hand it follows, therefore, that probably Yeyi agrees with what Legere (2005) found as remnants of the pre-prefix in Kwangali (R21), the language clustered together with Yeyi in Zone R.

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Chapter Four (pp. 151-203) is entitled "Minor Word Categories" embracing the associative clitic, numerals and quantifiers, possessive pronouns, substitutive pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, demonstrative of manner, interrogatives and further pronouns and modifiers. Since all the eight word categories function as nucleus noun dependants, in my view, could well fall under the title Noun Phrase in Yeyi. For example, the author says the associative clitic functions as 'part of'-relationship to the head noun (p. 154). He further establishes that numerals and ordinals are for quantification purposes (pp. 157-160).

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The chapter for Adverbs, Adverbials, Syntactic and Preposition Clitics, Conjunctions and other Syntactic elements follows (pp. 205-224). Each word category is succinctly covered individually. Here, I will draw just two cases to exemplify the content. Individual adverbials

exemplified by *papani* ‘now’ and *amana* ‘first’ (p. 209) are described and well illustrated. Also, two prepositional clitics, *sha-*, marker of purpose, and *na-*, marker of comitative, are presented (pp. 212-213).

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Chapter Six is both very broad (pp. 225-409) and elaborate and covers issues revolving around verbs very well, though the author keeps cautioning that data is not satisfactory and another thesis will be produced in future. I would spare some energy and space here because, as it appears, it is of course a thesis on its own; and over years, surely, several other scholars of the Bantu area have studied the verb separately (cf. Besha 1989 (Shambala); Mreta 1998 (Chasu); Beaudoin-Lietz 1999 (Swahili); Kershiner 2002 (Chisukwa), among others). The author opens with a brief analysis of inflection morphemes, the subject agreement and object marker (p. 226). Then he proceeds to the well structured and detailed section on verbal derivation. I would say that in Table 44 the total of 23 individual derivational affixes gathered for Yeyi have well been listed (p. 229) and succinctly described thereafter. Moreover, the author makes efforts to trace all variants of the affixes for each verbal extension. To provide one example, the variants of the causative extensions i.e. *-is-*, *-z-* and *-ik-* are all described. However, all those verbal derivational affixes are associated with only eleven common verbal extensions in Bantu: applicative, causative, neutro-passive, reversive, extensive, associative, frequentative, passive, contactive, positional, and reduplicated affixes. Although the author is quite instructive I would probably accentuate two things here: One, across Bantu the applicative affix functions to license beneficiary, place/locative, and instrument (Schadeberg 2003: 74) and Seidel succinctly presents all but instrument in Yeyi. Another thing is that throughout the volume one hardly finds the presentation of the co-occurrence of at least two derivational affixes and rules surrounding the co-occurrences in Yeyi language.

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The author goes on to present the semantic classification of verbs in Yeyi (pp. 268-278); although it helps to analyze TAM, one would agree with the author that such an endeavor is hard to accomplish in Bantu languages. In short, Yeyi verbs fall into either durative or change-of-state categories semantically with sub-categorization for each. He goes on cautioning that the membership of a verb in a category is not clear cut (p. 276). He sets aside pages 278-409 for the analysis of TAM and his work in this area is accredited of involving three combinatorial and interwoven features:

- (i) formal features i.e. the identification of individual formative(s) associated with individual TAM type(s)
- (ii) succinct analysis of the prosodological issues especially tone aspects that interact in a manner that affect TAM categories
- (iii) the interpretations associated with the semantics of individual TAM type

These worked together give the best description of individual TAM types in Yeyi and other Bantu languages as well. To substantiate the TAM analysis the author succinctly employs both affirmative constructions and negative sentences carrying negation forms like *-ha-* (p. 406), TAM categories established are well checked and designated. Nevertheless, I would mention three areas of differences.

<11>

One, relying only on the volume, the semantics that surrounds Present Tense in Yeyi resembles totally with what obtains across Bantu, viz. being interpreted as General Present, Progressive Aspect, Habitual Aspect as well as Future Tense (pp. 283-288) and this leaves the puzzle undone/ problem unsolved or at least controlled by context (Besha 1989; Mreta

1998; Nurse 2003). Even the modal of analysis that he chooses betrays him somehow, specifically the interpretation of the diagrammatic presentation of the use of the formative **-ti-** and the explanation thereafter, although it is a personal opinion, has not solved the problem as it reflects the common several interpretations of the Present Tense, Future Tense, and Today's Past Tense in Bantu languages (pp. 368-369) and further the Present Tense remains revolving around the Speech Time. But if a reader gets hold of Seidel's (2008) article, the morphological and semantic realizations surrounding Present Tense in Yeyi obtain fuller illumination.

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Two, Seidel adheres to the data-to-meaning of individual tenses paradigm and one recognizes that he totally avoids the school of analysis followed by other Bantuists who have always observed: (i) the establishment of the TAM system in individual languages through the individual formative-and-associated meaning, (ii) the traditional past-present-future tenses investigation, and (iii) the perfective-imperfective aspect outlook (cf. Hewson *et al.* 2000; Nurse 2003; Nurse and Philippson 2006, among others).

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Three, the tool of TAM analysis that Seidel follows, which I have no objection on its capacity to capture well TAM across Bantu, was formulated and is popularized by Robert Botne and his student, Tiffany Kershner. But they developed the Cognitive Modal from the pre-existing models, namely the Linear Modal by Hans Reichenbach and Cognitive Model by Gustave Guillaume (Botne and Kershner 2008). Over the years, these two former models have been successfully applied in analysis of TAM in Bantu languages, for example Besha (1989) and Mreta (1998) for Linear Model, and Beaudoin-Lietz (1999) and Hewson *et al.* (2000) for the earlier Cognitive Model. One would expect Seidel at least to mention these fore-fathers briefly before embarking into description of the Botne's model and his subsequent use in the TAM analysis in Yeyi language. Botne and Kershner (2008: 149-151) appreciate the former proponents and build on their ideas from the founders' outlooks.

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The last two chapters are short but elaborate. Chapter Seven (pp. 411-441) covers issues surrounding the verbal predicates and the description and supporting illustrations provided are good. Chapter Eight (pp. 443-450) is a brief chapter that discusses the relative constructions in Yeyi language.

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Lastly, saying the volume is good and elaborate cannot, in my view, suffice, nevertheless I should just stipulate here that Frank Seidel has strived to gather a bulk of data and has made good efforts to give the best description in order to make sure that the reader gets the perfect reflections of what exists in Yeyi language. I will close my review with only two setbacks that I cannot tolerate. One, the author opts for provisioning many numerically referred textual illustrations within the volume but it is the tradition across Bantu that texts appear at the final part of the book and a few examples within the text. Two, frankly speaking the reader would just miss a map that shows the Yeyi hinterland.

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