A grammar of Cheke Holo

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Summary in English

This book provides a synchronic description of the phonology, word classes (including various semantic categories of classification), morphology, and syntax of the Cheke Holo (CH) language. CH is an Austronesian language of the Oceanic subgroup, spoken by 11,000 speakers on Santa Isabel island in the Solomon Islands. This grammar contains over 1000 examples sentences, and is based on language data collected between 1989-2017. The data set comprises: (1) several hours of recorded CH texts of various genres, ranging from short greetings to 45 minute talks on a variety of topics, and (2) approximately 40 written texts of various genres, including poetry, personal letters, myths, and narratives.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the CH language and discusses the research methodology used for this study. Notes on the socio-cultural aspects of the CH people are provided, which includes the considerable impact of the Anglican church on the culture and language. The predominance of CH among the other seven languages of Santa Isabel is discussed, concluding that the influence and vitality of CH remains firm.

Chapter 2 is a description of CH phonology and includes several noteworthy features such as numerous consonant clusters and vowel sequences, voiceless continuants, and phonological phenomena involved in verb nominalization. The number of consonantal phonemes is 31 and there are five vowel phonemes. Regardless of word class, the underlying position of phonological stress on the word root is on the penultimate syllable. The predominant syllable pattern is one of open syllables. Reduplication of the verb stem is quite common in CH. The verb is the predominant word class which reduplicates, and usually serves the purpose of intensification or prolonging of action. There are three types of reduplication: full, partial, and syllable. In CH grammar, the shape of the prefix that nominalizes verbs depends on their initial consonant. Verbs that begin with voiceless stops, liquids, a voiced fricatives /ɣ/ or a voiceless fricative /h/ each take a different nominalized form.

Nominals are discussed in **Chapter 3**. CH has a large, open class of nouns. These are classified by semantic and morphosyntactic features. CH nouns demonstrate fairly typical Oceanic distinctions between alienability and inalienability. Various categorizations of nouns are described in some detail, including those which reference people; proper nouns; kinship nouns; compound nouns and their various compound constructions with other nouns, with verbs, and with adjectives; count and mass nouns; borrowed nouns; temporal nouns; and, directionals. CH pronouns occur as subjects and objects, or in a possessor relationship to a noun. CH has four singular pronouns, and 16 non-singular pronouns. A gender distinction is made in the third person singular, though this contrast is very rare in Oceanic languages. Non-singular pronouns show distinction between plural, dual, and trial, as well as

clusivity in first person and gender in third person. CH has two sets of demonstrative pronouns which mark specificity and proximity.

Verbs are discussed in **Chapter 4**. CH verbs express actions, processes, and states. Verbs in CH are distinguished from nouns by a combination of syntactic and morphological features. Structurally, there are morphological features of verbs which are not present with nouns. First, verbs undergo reduplication to encode durative aspect. Secondly, transitive verbs are cliticized with direct object marking enclitics. Thirdly, verb roots are prefixed with the causative prefix *fa-*. Fourthly, verbs are suffixed with aspect markers, both continuative and completive. Verbs in CH are not inflected for tense, person, or subject agreements. Apart from transitive and intransitive verbs, CH has a set of ambitransitive verbs that are used in both intransitive or transitive constructions without a morphological distinction.

Chapter 5 describes the word classes of adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions. CH has a broad inventory of adjectives, differing from many other Oceanic languages which have a small, closed number of adjectives. And, differing again from many other Oceanic languages, certain semantic sub-classes of CH adjectives are inflected by possession-marking enclitics, completive aspect enclitics, and the causative prefix *fa-*. In concert with Oceanic typology that adjectives can be used in both predicate and attributive functions when following the nominal head they modify, this is true for CH. This word class in CH shares some similarities with intransitive verbs, such as being able to be reduplicated, and occurring with the same negator. Adverbs modify constituents other than nouns, and as such, occur extensively in CH, modifying verbs and adjectives, and also modifying clauses. Semantic classifications of adverbs are recorded for various sub-classes including modality, direction, and epistemic. The verbal adverbs occur linearly adjacent to the verb, either pre-verbally or post-verbally. Unlike what occurs with nouns, verbs, and adjectives, pronominal clitics do not attach to adverbs. One syntactic feature of CH adverbs is that members of certain sub-classes occur in pairs on the same side or on the opposite side of the verb which they modify. This doubling serves to bring greater emphasis to the modification of the verbal action. CH has a fairly limited inventory of prepositions, all of which mark non-core nominal arguments. The multi-functional *ka* is by far the most common CH preposition. In general, *ka* marks location. This is described as an underspecified or non-specific kind of location. Prepositions immediately precede the head noun of the NP which serves as the complement of the preposition. Prepositional phrases usually occur at the end of clauses.

Chapter 6 discusses the word classes of conjunctions, interjections, determiners, demonstratives, interrogatives, and quantifiers and numerals. CH demonstratives make a two-way distinction between proximal and distal. Unlike some other Oc languagues, CH does not attest the notion of intermediate. Four types of demonstratives are attested in CH. Three of these mark proximal and distal distinctions but one type does not make this distinction, nor does it mark singular and plural distinctions, nor does it serve as the head of a noun phrase. It does mark a

special pragmatic focus. The inventory of CH interrogatives numbers nine lexical items. Each interrogative is optionally followed syntactically by the focus marker *si*. A set of CH quantifiers modify nouns and indicate number. Quantifiers indicate either definite or indefinite amounts. CH has cardinal and ordinal numbers. CH has numeral forms up to one million. The form of CH numbers marking 'tens' varies widely. CH ordinals are formed by pre-posing the causative marker *fa-* to the numeral. However, this ordinal number formation is irregular with six of the ten cardinal numbers.

The CH noun phrase (NP) is described in **Chapter 7**. The NP can include a variety of modifiers. If we assume the noun is the head of the noun phrase, it is not possible to characterize CH as predominantly either a left-headed language or right-headed language, in that various inventories of modifiers of the head of the NP are distributed both to the left and right of the head noun. The NP can operate as verbal argument but also as a non-verbal predicate. CH possessive construtions receive extensive treatment in this chapter. CH possesion patterns Oceanic typology of alienable and inalienable distinctions, and is a prominent feature of the language. Other topics under the heading of modifiers of nominals include quantifiers and numerals, the role of focus marker *si* with demonstratives in the NP, and the structure and function of relative clauses.

The verb phrase is described in **Chapter 8**. The CH verb phrase (VP) is a phrase headed by a verb. The VP can include a variety of optional modifiers. Enclitics on the verb mark transitivity or aspect. By itself the CH VP can form a clause. The VP can include a significant number of pre-verbal and post-verbal constituents. Among these are the pre-verbal elements which mark aspect, tense, negation and purpose. The post-verbal elements include an array of enclitics such as those which mark direct objects. Also there are markers of completive, continuative, inceptive and non-specific aspect. The two-way distinction of past and non-past is the most adequate descriptor for the CH tense system. One of the main justifications for classifying CH as past/non-past rather than future/non-future is that past is the most prominent time action indicated by CH tense markers.

Chapter 9 is the concluding chapter, and covers the topic of the CH clause. A clause is defined as a grammatical unit having a predicate plus the core arguments and any non-core arguments. The core arguments refer to those constituents, such as verb phrases or noun phrases, which have a grammatical relation of subject or object to the verb in the clause. The non-core arguments such as prepositional phrases are peripheral to the core. CH is described as an SVO language. Clause types are categorized as verbal and non-verbal, equative, copular, attributive, subordinate, imperative, interrogative, and negatives. Clause combinations are described with extended discussion on various types of adverbial clauses which can function as subordinate clauses. Serial verbs are quite common in CH. The chapter concludes with a discussion of select features of information presentation in CH. These include the quotative *egu*, the focus marker *si*, and the pragmatic emphasis marker *e*.