

Languages of Southwest Ambrym

Initiative: Dokumentation bedrohter Sprachen (beendet)

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Laufzeit: 3 Jahre

The project aims at the documentation of the languages of the West and South of the island of Ambrym in the South Pacific. Ambrym is the fifth-largest island of the Republic of Vanuatu (formerly known as the New Hebrides). Its highest elevations are two neighbouring active volcanoes, but in fact the island is one large volcano raising about 3000 m from the sea bottom. Currently, it is even unclear how many languages are spoken due to dialect chaining. Preparatory research provided evidence for the existence of three to five separate languages for the North, West and South of Ambrym. The languages are small, with about 6000 speakers in total, and they are becoming increasingly endangered due to the growing use of the lingua franca, Bislama, and the levelling-out of language and dialect differences. There is a specific threat to the languages of Ambrym because of its active and sometimes very destructive volcanoes. The documentation will comprehend the languages' lexicon and grammar and the use of these languages in informal conversation, storytelling, and in the context of ritualized activities such as songs, dances, court cases, religious services, and in the unique art of sand drawing. It intends to capture the striking dialectal variety of these languages by systematic investigation of local differences.

Projektbeteiligte

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