

## ASSTA Travel Grant 2023

Shubo Li

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Vanuatu Languages Conference was held from July 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at the campus of the National University of Vanuatu in Port Vila, jointly hosted by the Comparative Oceanic Linguistic group at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme, and the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. I attended in order to share preliminary observations arising from my PhD research and to engage with the community of researchers working on languages of Vanuatu, before heading to the Nguna Island, North Efate, for my first fieldtrip to work on the phonetics and phonology of Nakanamanga.

The talks covered a wide range of language-related topics, and it was a valuable opportunity to learn about languages spoken in other parts of Vanuatu, as well as the culture, history, and archaeology of the region. There were various presentations related to the Efate region which were of particular interest, including historical linguistics (*Efatic: A History* by Ross Clark), depopulation (*Depopulation and its implications for the languages of Efate* by Chris Ballard, Stuart Bedford, and Nick Thieberger), archival materials (*John Layard's Efate papers* by Nick Thieberger), and oral histories (*The myth of Kuwae, a living tradition of the Shepherd* by Sandrine Bessis). A few talks on phonetics were also presented, including on vowel length contrasts (*A phonetic investigation of vowel length contrasts in Lelepa* by Rosey Billington), prenasalised coronal trills (*The prenasalised coronal trill NDR: Acoustic and articulatory properties in two Vanuatu languages* by Tihomir Rangelov), vowel inventory (*The sixth vowel in Vatlongos (Southeast Ambrym)* by Eleanor Ridge), and syllable structure (*Syllable structure in Lelepa* by Chao Sun and Rosey Billington). My talk, *a preliminary phonetic investigation of coronal consonants in Nakanamanga using archival materials*, focused on the unresolved consonant contrasts in the coronal space in Nakanamanga, , providing preliminary observations on their phonetic realisation in naturalistic speech recorded in the 1950s. The audience provided invaluable feedback and suggestions for how to proceed with my research on the language, and my talk also contributed to raising the profile of phonetic and phonological research on languages of the Pacific region.

My heartfelt thank-you to ASSTA for the Travel Grant that helped me attend the conference, meet the research community, present the talk, and receive feedback, which is important for me at the very early stage of my PhD. I look forward to doing much more future work on the phonetics and phonology of Nakanamanga.