UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

Missionary Pragmalinguistics - Father Diego Luis de Sanvitores' Grammar (1668) within the Tradition of Philippine Grammars

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The grammar written in Latin, in 1668, by the Jesuit missionary Father Diego Luis de Sanvitores (1627-1672) is the oldest description we have of Chamorro, a language spoken on the Mariana islands. The grammar received a number of bad reviews and as a consequence has become neglected and almost forgotten. The main point of criticism has been that Sanvitores used the Latin grammatical framework to explain a language that in many ways does not fit this framework. In this thesis it is argued instead that Sanvitores had remarkable insight in the linguistic structure of Chamorro. It is shown how Sanvitores and his contemporary missionaries working in this 'Philippine area' in fact adapted the Latin framework to make it suitable for explaining the grammars of these native Philippine languages and how they redefined Latin grammatical terminology in order to make it applicable to their newly adopted pragmalinguistic method. The pragmalinguistic method of these missionaries was astonishingly innovative and even in some linguistic matters which are still subject of debate today among linguists they take clear and convincing stands. Furthermore, Sanvitores' grammar is a rich source of information about the Chamorro language as it was 300 years ago and sheds new light on the complex system of affixes.