



The documentation of a South-Pacific language and culture

The language

The Teop language is spoken by ca. 6000 people on the island of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea. Genetically Teop belongs to the Oceanic languages which are spoken on the Melanesian and Polynesian islands of the South Pacific.

The Teop language corpus

The digital Teop corpus contains recordings of spontaneously spoken texts, transcriptions, edited versions of the transcriptions and written texts without previous recordings in a variety of genres, and thus documents how the Teop people developed their own indigenous written literature. Translations into English, comments on the language and the content as well as numerous drawings by indigenous artists and photographs facilitate the understanding of the texts.



Enoch Horai Magum, the leader of the Teop team



Shalom Magum doing transcriptions

The themes of the Teop language corpus

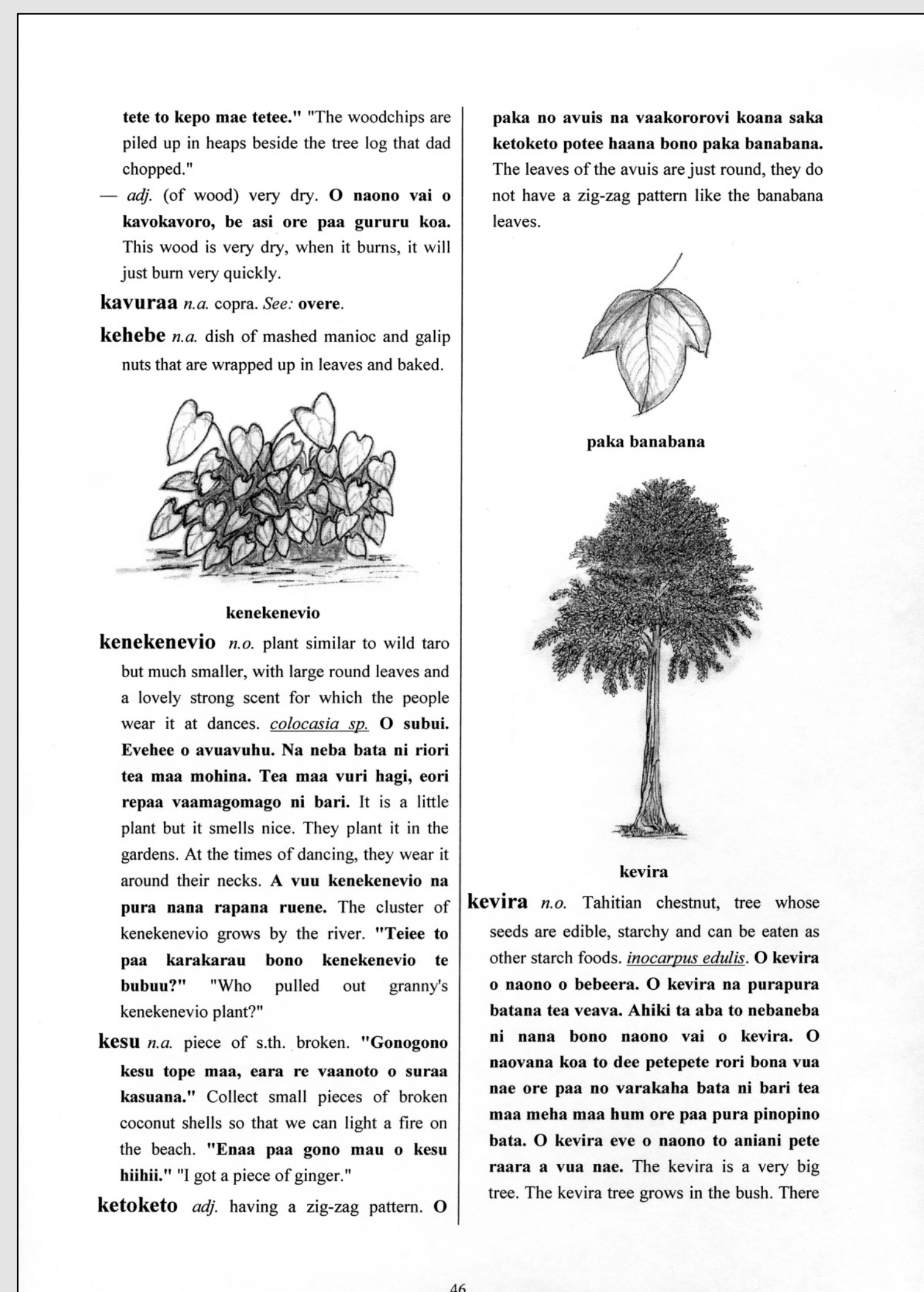
Legends

Encyclopedic descriptions of

- » House building,
- » Plants and their uses
- » Fishes and other sea creatures
- » Fishing and canoe building
- » Gardening and cooking
- » Body and health
- » Ceremonies and rituals

Narratives and conversations about

- » The Second World War,
- » The work of the missions,
- » The Bougainville civil war,
- » Personal histories



A page of the Teop-English plant encyclopedia



Hiovaon and Teop Island

Educational materials

From the very beginning the project integrated the production of educational materials into the compilation of the corpus and assisted the Teop team members in becoming proficient in recording, transcribing, editing and creative writing.

The result of their work is a legends book and a series of small Teop-English encyclopedias of the natural environment and the material culture in which the definitions and descriptions are written in Teop and English.



Siimaa Rigamu teaching Ulrike Mosel the Teop language



Children reading the manuscript of a legend

Interesting linguistic features

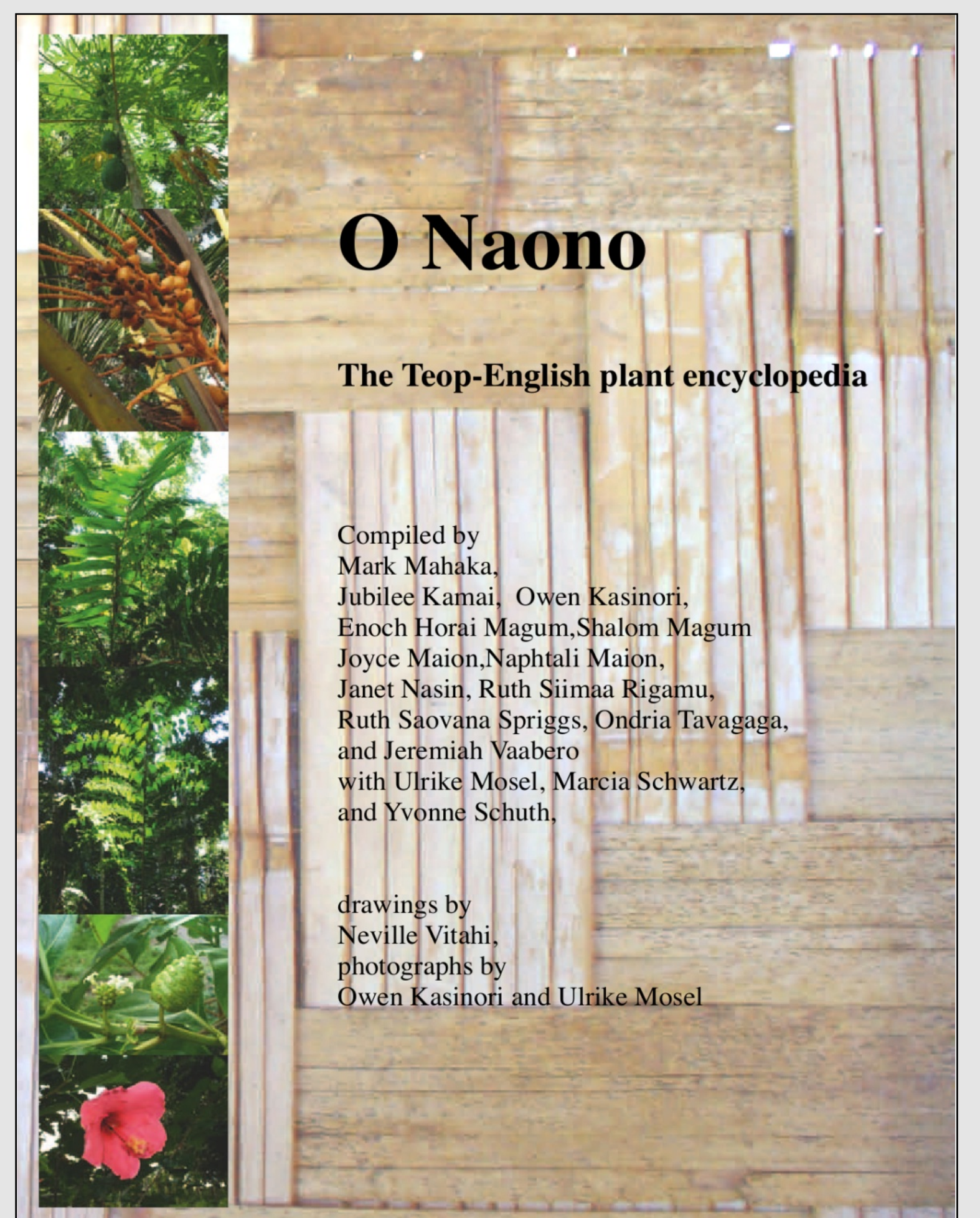
Most grammatical morphemes are clitics which combine with other each other and with lexical words to phonological units across word and phrase boundaries.

Nouns and verbs show an extremely high degree of syntactic flexibility. The paradigm of personal pronouns has a 4th person in addition to the common 1st, 2nd and 3rd person categories.

The verb complex may incorporate nouns, serial verbs, adverbs, prepositions, and directional particles. Most transitive verbs can be used ditransitively.



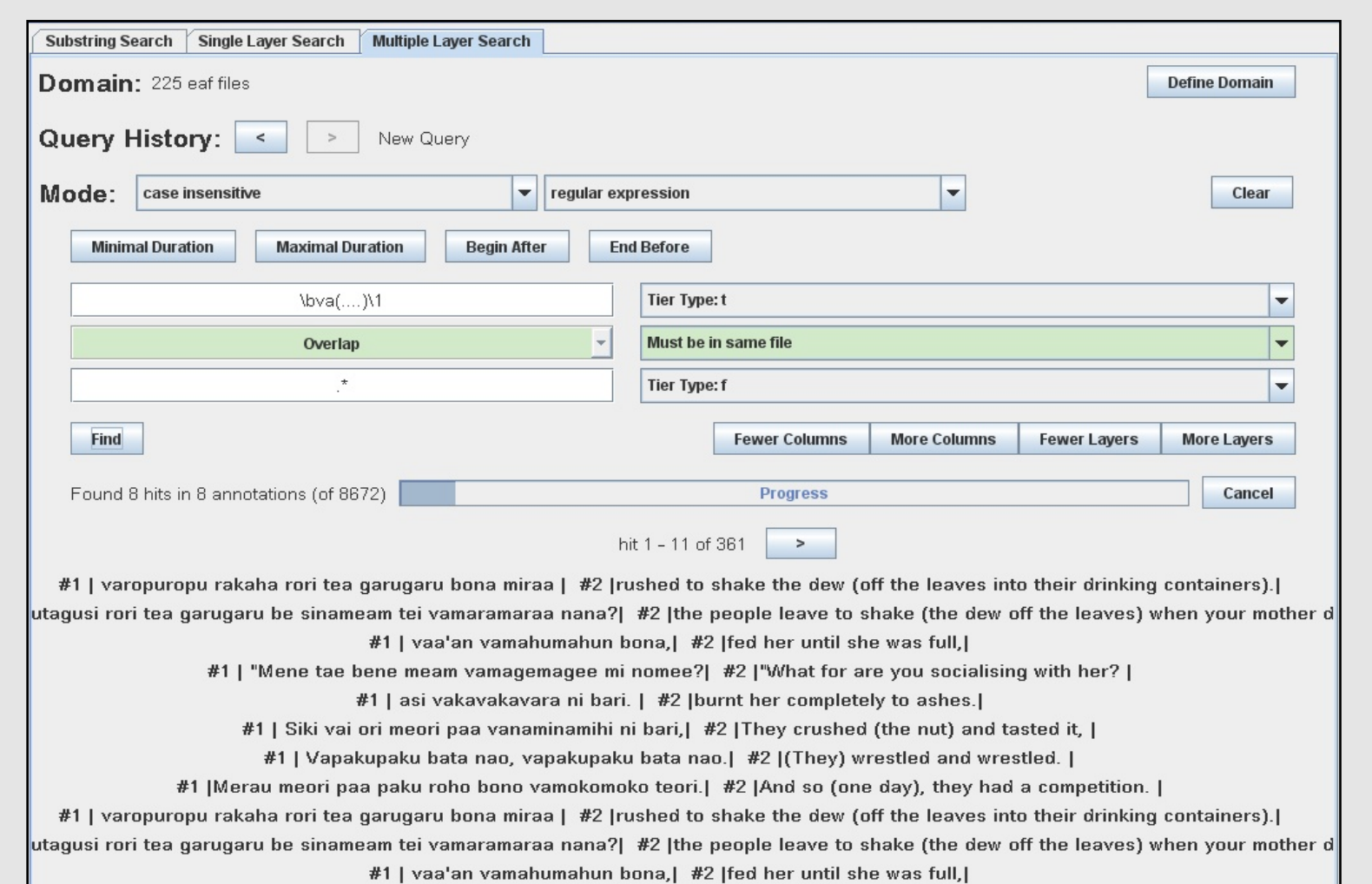
Book launch for the house building dictionary



The Teop-English plant encyclopedia

New methods of grammatical analysis

Since all data are digitized in ELAN, it is possible to analyze grammatical constructions by using the query language Regular Expressions for searches, document the search methods and thus make the analysis replicable.



ELAN search for all words in the Teop corpus that start with va- and contain 4 reduplicated characters

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