

Learning about Language in Papua New Guinea Villages

Some Personal Vignettes

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Psychological Reality of Phonology: Sapir's Example

Nuu Chah Nulth

ejectives: p', t', k', q' (Sapir: *p!*, *t!*, *k!*, *q!*)

preglottalized sonorants: ʔm, ʔn, ʔw, ʔy

(Sapir 'm, 'n, 'w, 'y)

'-ahs 'in container' + wik- 'be not' > wik'ahs

+ kan 'kneel' > ka'nahs

Alex Thomas wrote: *p!*, *t!*, *m!*, *n!* etc

Psychological Reality of Phonology: Sepik Example

latmul (Ndu, Sepik family)

/i/ → [i] / ____y,ŋ
[i] / y,ŋ____
[u] / ____w
[o] / w____
[ɨ] / elsewhere

Examples of these rules are [hikəndi] /hikənti/ 'it's here', [nduw] /ntiw/ 'man' and [yuiwiy] /yiwiy/ 'grass'.

/ə/ → [e] / ____y,ŋ
[e] / y,ŋ____
[o] / ____w
[ɔ] / w____
[ə] / elsewhere

Examples of these include [ndow] /ntəw/ 'shrunken', [məriy] /məliy/ 'mud flats'.

Native Speaker writes:

latmul word for 'tree': [mi] like Tok Pisin *mi*

But a speaker from Tambunum spelled it:

mwɨ

where I believe this was his attempt to render

/miy/

Words: Phonological and Morphological

Yimas (Lower Sepik, Lower Sepik-Ramu family)

ya-mpu-párk-mpi-kápik-mpi-wárk-t

VII.SG.NOM-3PL.ERG-split-SEQ-break-SEQ-tie-PERF

‘they split them (branches), broke them into pieces and tied them’

ta-mpu-park-mpi-kapik-mpi-wark-r-(r)a

NEG-3PL.ERG-split-SEQ-break-SEG-tie-PERF-VII.SG.NOM

‘they didn’t split them (branches), broke them into pieces and tied them’

But Speakers Write Phonological Words (Sort Of)

NS: *kikay minta krana wapalbi taiak*

WAF: *kikay mnta kranawapalmpitayk*

kikay mnta kra-n-(n)a-wapal-mpi-tay-k

PN then 3PC 0-3SG A-DUR-climb-SEQ-see-IRR

NS: *kanta nanan apisambi ilimnut*

WAF: *kanta nananapisampiirmnut*

kanta nanan-apisa-mpi-irm-(n)nut

but DUR-hang-SEQ-stand-REM.PAST

Oral and Literate? Styles in an Unwritten Language

Watam (Lower Ramu, Lower Sepik-Ramu family)

literate

oral

detached

involved

integrated

fragmented

Figure 1: Parametric Differences in Literate-oral Texts (Chafe 1982)

literate style?

aes an tok bibrak mbo nga-birka-r-a
father this bum sit.NOM OBL FOC-sit-R-DEP

itij ma na kiau kiau an un nakan an mbo
son 3SG POSS dog dog this jar big this OBL

kukurtamak nakae ndo-r ma-iri-tak
frog toward see-PAST PROG-go.down-PROG

‘the father (of the dog (i.e. boy)) sat down on a chair, while the son (i.e. dog)
looked down on the frog in the jar’

Oral style

karir namtiŋ an irki-r, irki-r kor
then child this go.down-PAST go.down-PAST canoe
'then the child went down, went down to the canoe'

yokpaka-r irki-r, anup angi-r ausu-r sangga-r-a,
push-R go.down-R oar take-R row-R go-R-DEP

simuk mbo mbirka-r ma-ndo-tak
point OBL sit-PAST PROG-see-PROG

'(he) shoved (it, the canoe) down (into the water), took (his) oar and rowed away and sat down on the point and watched'

Language and Culture in the Sepik

Yimas:

wampun ‘heart, care, understanding’ (*wampun* ‘inside’) versus
anƙanƙana ‘will, spirit, image’)

na-ka-pay-ira-wampun-kra-n

3SG O-1SG A-now-ALL-Heart.V.SG-cut-PRES

‘I’m worried/concerned/disturbed about her now’

mpu-na-nti

3PL-POSS-act

malak-t-nti

quarrel-NFN-act

wampun

heart.V.SG

tia-ŋa-

act A-1SG

na-ira-kkt-n

D-PRES-ALL-hurt-PRES

‘Their quarreling angers me’ (literally, ‘their quarreling hurts my heart’)

Beliefs about Talk

karmp-n

language.VII.SG

t-i-c-mpwi

RECP-tell-NFN-talk

apiak

COP.talk

‘They were quarreling with each other’ (literally ‘there is telling talk to each other in language’)

pia-mpu-nanan-ant-ntut

talk O-3PL A-DUR-hear-RM.PAST

ta-mpu-nanan-tar-pakara-ntuk-mpwi

NEG-3PL A-DUR-CAUS-open.ITR-RM.PAST-talk O

‘They were listening and didn’t reveal the information’

Development of Pidgins in Economic Transactions

| | Yimas | Arafundi Pidgin | Alamblak Pidgin |
|-------------|----------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| 'man' | <i>payum</i> | <i>payum</i> | <i>yenmisinawt</i> |
| 'woman' | <i>ŋaykum</i> | <i>aykum</i> | <i>yerimaŋwi</i> |
| 'village' | <i>num</i> | <i>kumbut</i> | <i>yimunga</i> |
| 'betelnut' | <i>patn</i> | <i>patn</i> | <i>yabu</i> |
| 'pig' | <i>numpran</i> | <i>numbrayn</i> | <i>yimbian</i> |
| 'sago' | <i>tupwi</i> | <i>tupwi</i> | <i>sipi</i> |
| 'cassowary' | <i>awa</i> | <i>karima</i> | <i>awa</i> |
| 'basket' | <i>impram</i> | <i>yamban</i> | <i>yamban</i> |
| 'water' | <i>arim</i> | <i>yim</i> | <i>mīray</i> |
| 'tobacco' | <i>yaki</i> | <i>yaki</i> | <i>yagi</i> |
| 'canoe' | <i>kay</i> | <i>kay</i> | <i>kay</i> |
| 'flyingfox' | <i>kumpwi</i> | <i>ariŋgum</i> | <i>kumbut</i> |
| 'I' | <i>ama</i> | <i>ama</i> | <i>apia</i> |
| 'you' | <i>mi</i> | <i>mi</i> | <i>mi</i> |
| 'he/she' | <i>mīn</i> | <i>mīn</i> | <i>masaŋgum</i> |
| 'talk' | <i>malak-</i> | <i>mariawk-</i> | <i>mariak-</i> |
| 'give' | <i>ŋa-</i> | <i>asa- (<Y aca- 'send')</i> | <i>seri-</i> |

Grammatical Simplification in Pidgins

Yimas:

ta-ka-tay-c-rm

NEG-1SG.A-see-PERF-3DL.O

'I didn't see those two'

Yimas-Arafundi Pidgin:

min kundamwin ama tay-nan kakan

3 two 1SG see-NONFUT NEG

'I didn't see those two.'

Rapid Language Change (Laycock 1959)

Angoram (Lower Sepik, Lower Sepik-Ramu family)

na-m-ti
him-1-hit
'I hit him'

na-n-ti-k-n
him-2-hit-PRES-you (SING)
'You (SING) hit him'

na-na-ti
him-he-hit
'He hits him'

pa-m-ti-k-nde
them-1-hit-PRES-we
'We hit them'

pa-n-ti-k-ndu
them-2-hit-PRES-you PLUR
'You (PLUR) hit them'

pa-pwa-ti
them-they-hit
'They hit them'

Rapid Language Change (Foley 2005)

mɪn-ti-ka-nɪn
I-hit-PRES-him
'I hit him'

apa-ti-ka-nɪn
you (SING)-hit-PRES-him
'You (SING) hit him'

apwa-ti-ka-nɪn
he (=you (PLUR))-hit-PRES-him
'He hits him'

mɪnta-ti-ka-nde
we-hit-PRES-we
'We hit him or them'

apwa-ti-ka-ndum
you (PLUR)-hit-them
'You (PLUR) hit them'

apwa-ti-ka-num
they (=you (PLUR))-hit-them
'They hit them'