

The Impact of Immigrants on Language Vitality: A Case Study of Awar and Kayan

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Immigration

- Immigration is nothing new in villages of Papua New Guinea.
- For this presentation we will define immigrant as:
- A person who moves into a *tok ples* area from somewhere else
- Traditionally, women and sometimes men constantly moved into new villages as they married.

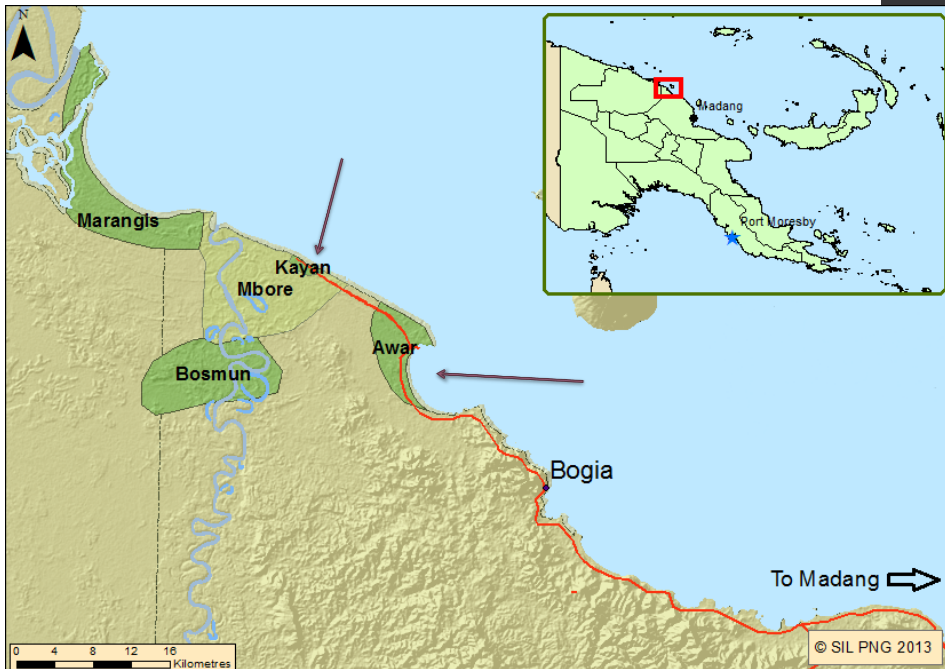
Immigration

- The change in modern PNG is where these immigrants originate.
- In the past most immigrants came from the surrounding ethnolinguistic groups bringing with them similar cultures and sometimes related languages.
- Now, it is not surprising to find a woman from Daru in a remote village of New Britain or a man from Popondetta in the Lower Ramu.

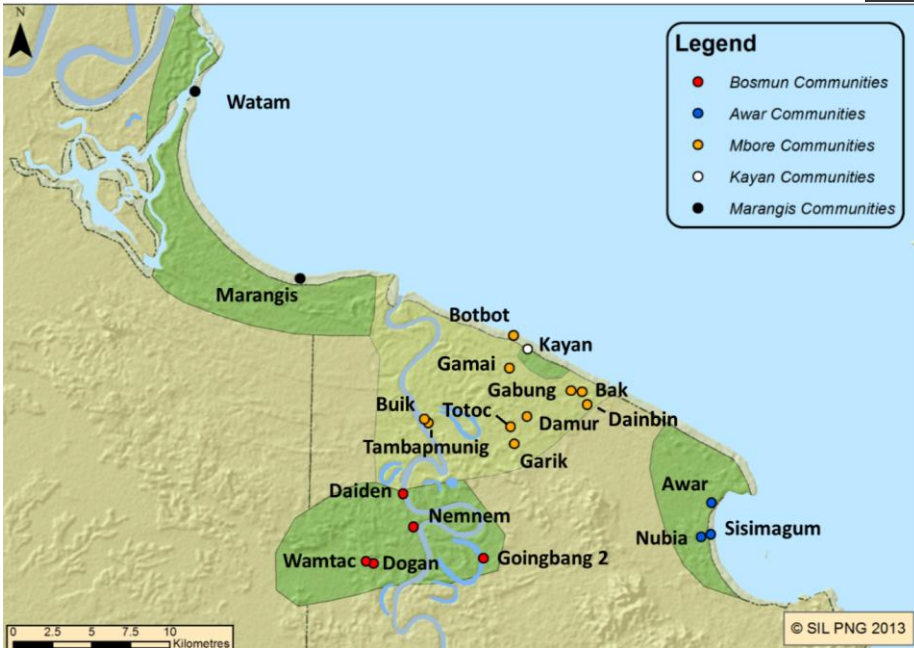
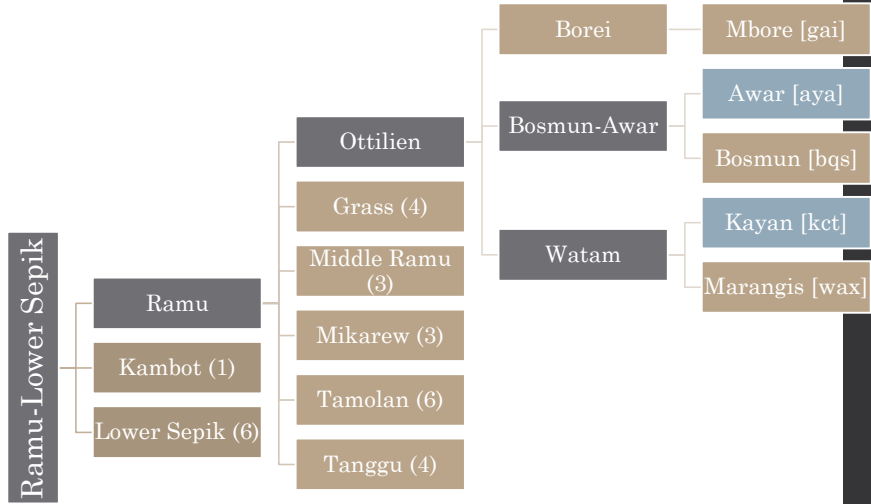
Immigration

What effect can new immigration patterns have on *tok ples* in PNG?

A case study of Awar and Kayan



Language Classifications (Lewis 2009)



Population

Village Name	Actual Households 2013	Estimated Population 2013
Awar Village	110	601
Nubia	58	317
Sismagum	43	235
Awar Total	211	1153
Kayan	145	792

I visited the households individually and counted them in each village. The estimated 2013 population is based on 5.46 persons per household found in Yawar Rural Local Level Government (LLG) in the 2000 census (National Statistical Office 2002a).

Awar and Kayan

- Similar location
- Related languages
- Similar size of territory
- Comparable population
- Similar church situation
- Same school situation (minor difference)
- Same level of government support
- Same economic opportunities
- Similar internal/external attitudes and prestige

Language Vitality

For a full description of the vitality of the Lower Ramu languages see (Paris Forthcoming)

Language Vitality

EGIDS Levels 6a to 8a (Lewis and Simons 2010)

Level	Name	Description
6a	Vigorous	The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language. This level is considered to be a sustainable situation for continued oral use of the language.
6b	Threatened	The language is used orally by all generations but only some of the child-bearing generation are transmitting it to their children.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation knows the language well enough to use it among themselves but none are transmitting it to their children
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation.

Language Vitality - Kayan

- EGIDS Level 6a
- The community reports that all children learn Kayan before they learn another language.
- The Kayan feel that it is the parents' responsibility to teach their children Kayan and the school's responsibility to teach Tok Pisin and English.
- The Kayan reported that the community at large uses Kayan in every domain.
- Kayan is a sociolinguistically sustainable oral language.

Language Vitality - Awar

- EGIDS Level 7 but soon to be 8a
- The three Awar communities reported that all their children learn Tok Pisin before *tok ples*.
- Only a few children go on to learn Awar (passively).
- One man even called Tok Pisin, "the new *tok ples*."
- None of the children are actively using Awar.
- Parents almost always use Tok Pisin when communicating with their children.
- The community at large rarely uses Awar in any domain.

Language Vitality - Awar

- The ability to hear and speak the language still resides in most of the grandparent generation and some of the parent generation, but regular use of the language has died out.
- One elder complained that even the parent generation are only able to passively understand the language.
- Currently there is no effort visible in the community to teach members of the parent generation or their children the Awar language.
- If this remains the case, Awar will be at Level 8a in a decade and from there slowly move into total loss as the final speakers die.

What is different?

Immigration in Awar and Kayan

Village Name	Estimated Population 2013	Number of Immigrants	Percentage of population
Awar Village	601	30	5.0%
Nubia	317	32	10.1%
Sismagum	235	26	11.1%
Awar Total	1153	88	7.6%
Kayan	792	55	6.9%

Awar and Kayan

- Similar location
- Related languages
- Similar size of territory
- Comparable population
- Church situation
- School
- Government Support
- Economic Opportunities
- Internal/External attitudes and prestige
- Comparable immigrant population

Immigration in Awar and Kayan

- “There is a word... to designate an in-law within Awar speakers, and another word to designate in-laws within the Sepik-Ramu area, but there is no word to designate an in-law from anywhere else...”
- (Levy 2005, 82)
- There is another way to look at an immigrant population
- Where do these immigrants come from?

Immigration in Awar and Kayan

- In Kayan, only 5 individuals come from outside the Sepik-Ramu basin.
- 0.6% of the entire population of Kayan
- In Awar, 34 immigrants come from outside the Sepik-Ramu basin
- 2.9% of the entire population of Awar

Immigration in Awar and Kayan

- Of the 88 total immigrants in the Awar villages, only 16 come from the other Lower Ramu languages.
- In Awar, 72 immigrants come from unrelated languages (6.3%).
- Of the 55 immigrants in Kayan, 26 come from other Lower Ramu languages.
- In Kayan, 29 immigrants come from unrelated languages (3.7%).

Immigrant Language Use in Kayan

Immigrant Language Use in Kayan

- Of all 55 immigrants in Kayan, only three report that their children are not able to speak Kayan. A total of 5 children.
- The people of Kayan report that they try to teach every outsider their language, in fact they see it as their duty.
- Almost half of the immigrant women come from the neighbouring Lower Ramu language, Mbore.
- “*Mipela Mbore. Ol Mbore save tok ples bilong graun.*”
- This identity, that Mbore know the vernacular, when applied in a strong sociolinguistic situation only further strengthens it.
- In Kayan it is evidence of the rule: if you live in Kayan, you speak Kayan.

Immigrant Language Use in Awar

Immigrant Language Use in Awar

- No children, regardless of parentage, are actively using Awar.
- Many parents themselves, both immigrants and locals are not using Awar either.
- The vitality of Awar is almost beyond the point of an immigrant being able to learn Awar even if he or she tried. There are just too few opportunities to speak it.

Immigrant Language Use in Awar

- In the late 1800s the German New Guinea Company created the first copra plantation in the area, the Potsdam Plantation. This was not in the Awar area, but just a few kilometres southeast.
- The men and women who came to work this plantation did not learn Awar, but instead brought Tok Pisin.
- It is likely these people first introduced and taught the Awar Tok Pisin as they interacted with them.
- These were immigrants from all over PNG. If they married locals, there was not a word to describe them in the Awar language.

Immigrant Language Use in Awar

- Later in the 1950s and 60s, the Catholic Church started plantations in Awar village and Nubia.
- These two new plantations brought in workers from all over PNG right into the Awar villages.
- Though immigration was not new in Awar villages, where these immigrants came from was (there is no word to describe them).
- And now they were living directly in Awar villages.

Immigrant Language Use in Awar

- It was the immigrants who came to work in the Nubia and Awar plantations and lived in those villages that had the real impact.
- From the 1950s to the 2000s immigrants from all over PNG lived among the Awar and later married the Awar.
- At first, probably only a small portion of them and their children did not learn Awar, but as a few generations passed that number grew as fewer and fewer immigrants learned Awar until now, when almost no children know enough Awar to understand it when spoken to them.
- The current immigrant population residing in the Awar villages is mainly a result of the influx of workers for these plantations.

Immigrant Language Use in Awar

- Missing data
 - Populations totals before 2000 (and 2010)
 - Immigrant populations for those times
 - Parentage of current Awar locals

Conclusion

- The vitality of oral languages can be tenuous and is influenced by many factors.
- In this instance, one factor is the introduction of an immigrant population unwilling or unable to learn the *tok ples* into a population willing to allow it.
- Immigrants are easily overlooked as agents of language change (especially women marrying into an area).
- Communities that see it as their duty to teach immigrants *tok ples* and exert social pressure on them to do so are more likely to survive in modern PNG.

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