Interesting Features of Porome
An Isolate Language of PNG

Robert Petterson
robbie_petterson@sil.org
1. Location of Porome [pri]
2. Aird Hills
3. Ero, pop. 1,000
4. Ero Landing
5. Sounds - 5 vowels + 9 consonants

• Vowels: a e i o u

• Consonants: p b v / t d r / k~g~ɣ

m / n (s)

• Languages around:
  • Baimuru – 5 vowels, 7 consonants
  • Rumu – 7 vowels, 8 consonants
  • Kope – 5 vowels, 10 consonants
  • Urama – 5 vowels, 12 consonants
  • Kerewo – 5 vowels, 13 consonants
6. Tones - 5 word tone patterns

Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tone Type</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Example 1</th>
<th>Example 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-level</td>
<td>/kóí/ ‘cloth’</td>
<td>[kóí bá]</td>
<td>[kóí véí-bà].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-level</td>
<td>/kòi/ ‘selfish’</td>
<td>[kóí bà] /</td>
<td>[kòi véi-bà]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[kòi↓bà]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising</td>
<td>/mèrī/ ‘road’</td>
<td>[mèrī bá]</td>
<td>[mèrī véi-bà]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falling</td>
<td>/mérì/ ‘pandanus’</td>
<td>[mérī bà]</td>
<td>[mérì véi-bà]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaking</td>
<td>/pàkúmì/ ‘feather’</td>
<td>[pàkúmī bà]</td>
<td>[pàkúmì véíbà]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- All other neighbouring languages also tonal (except Baimuru)
7. Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Pronouns</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Porome</strong></td>
<td><strong>Urama</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1s I</td>
<td>1s I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2s thou</td>
<td>2s I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3s s/he</td>
<td><em>(y)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Porome</strong></th>
<th><strong>Kerewo</strong></th>
<th><strong>Rumu</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ipiko</strong></th>
<th><strong>Folopa</strong></th>
<th><strong>Baimuru</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duals</td>
<td>-kai</td>
<td>-iti</td>
<td>-ti</td>
<td>-amo</td>
<td>-reʔe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Some resemblance**
- **n- g- V**
- __ Plural with /i/
8. Vocab – sample for comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Porome</th>
<th>Urama</th>
<th>Rumu</th>
<th>Ipiko</th>
<th>Folopa</th>
<th>Baimuru</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>head</td>
<td>kikimi/kikima</td>
<td>epu</td>
<td>wotu</td>
<td>abe</td>
<td>topo</td>
<td>uku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye</td>
<td>ipiri /ipiro</td>
<td>idomai</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>kele</td>
<td>inamu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house</td>
<td>mapi /mapiro</td>
<td>moto</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>aho</td>
<td></td>
<td>marea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>village</td>
<td>kuri /kuro</td>
<td></td>
<td>yọ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pa?iri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place</td>
<td>dabu /dabo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pa?iri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tree</td>
<td>kubi /kubo</td>
<td>nu?a</td>
<td></td>
<td>de</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fire</td>
<td>erei /erei</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tae</td>
<td></td>
<td>iʔau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dog</td>
<td>kumi /kumo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>haɔ</td>
<td></td>
<td>oroko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bird</td>
<td>kumi /kumo</td>
<td>kikio</td>
<td>ka</td>
<td>tipemu</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>nako</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>ubi /uburo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ogo</td>
<td>węi</td>
<td>ere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earth</td>
<td>ei /ero</td>
<td></td>
<td>pɛkɛ/</td>
<td></td>
<td>goʔeto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>base</td>
<td>makiri/makiro</td>
<td>mabu</td>
<td>mate</td>
<td>kama</td>
<td>baale</td>
<td>?aia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sago</td>
<td>i /iro</td>
<td></td>
<td>kɛi</td>
<td></td>
<td>o</td>
<td>pu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 9. Case (clitic after the noun)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Porome</th>
<th>Urama (Kiwaian)</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>eitā=romi</td>
<td>abea=ro</td>
<td>Father (did it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manner</td>
<td>kēnini=ki</td>
<td>hio=ha</td>
<td>quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>kūrī=iei</td>
<td>go’oto=iti</td>
<td>to the village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“with”</td>
<td>eitā=ra</td>
<td>abea=rautu</td>
<td>with Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td>māina=ro</td>
<td>meaha=ra</td>
<td>All right?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative</td>
<td>māina=ba</td>
<td>meaha=ka</td>
<td>All right!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Verbs – person marking

- **Porome pe "go"**
  - Urama odau "go"

- **pee "went"**
  - odau "going/went"

- **1s**
  - pee -me  n- odau

- **2s**
  - pee -ke  (v-) odau

- **3s**
  - pee -ba  (v-) odau

- **1p**
  - pete -ke  n- odau  -mo

- **2p**
  - pete -ka  (v-) odau  -mo

- **3p**
  - pete -ba  (v-) odau  -mo

s = singular  p = plural  1 = l/we  2 = you  3 = he/she/they
11. Verbs – tense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Porome &quot;3s go&quot;</th>
<th>Urama &quot;2/3s go&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Far Fut</td>
<td>pe</td>
<td>-ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near Fut</td>
<td>pe</td>
<td>-ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pres</td>
<td>pe</td>
<td>-ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near Pst</td>
<td>pe</td>
<td>-ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yest Pst</td>
<td>pe</td>
<td>-ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far Pst</td>
<td>pe</td>
<td>-ba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 12. Nouns – two forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Form 1</th>
<th>Form 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>head</td>
<td>kikimi</td>
<td>kikima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye</td>
<td>ipiri</td>
<td>ipiro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house</td>
<td>mapi</td>
<td>mapiro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>village</td>
<td>kuri</td>
<td>kuro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place</td>
<td>dabu</td>
<td>dabo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tree</td>
<td>kubi</td>
<td>kubo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fire</td>
<td>erei</td>
<td>eria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dog</td>
<td>kumi</td>
<td>kumo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bird</td>
<td>kumi</td>
<td>kumo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>ubi</td>
<td>uburo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earth</td>
<td>ei</td>
<td>ero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>base</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sago</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Nouns – two forms

- **Form 1** (ends in /i/ or /u/ mostly)
  - first or only word in a NP
  
  e.g. **kikimba** "it is a sago palm"

  **mapi** "it is the base"

- **Form 2** (ends in /a/ or /o/ mostly)
  - second or later word in NP
  
  e.g. **kumiro** "it's the base of a sago palm"

  **kumiro** "it's your sago"
13. "Construct state/form"

• Martin Steer (p.c.)

• Denis Creissels: "Construct forms of nouns in typological perspective".

• Modified (e.g. Possessed) nouns get special marking. Modifier (e.g. Possessor) nouns may be unmarked.

\[\begin{align*}
\text{e.g.} & & \text{e.g.} \\
\text{sago} & & \text{base-CSTR} & & \text{"base of the sago"} \\
\text{medicine} & & \text{house-CTSR} & & \text{"clinic"}
\end{align*}\]
14. Possession Constructions

• ENGLISH - possessor is marked (genitive case or PP)
  • The [country-'s] queen (genitive case)
  • The queen [of-the-country] (Prep Phrase)

• Re-group the morphemes
  • The [country] [the queen] [of-the]
  • The [country] [the queen] [of-the]

• Head noun is now marked with a marker that signals that it is possessed by something. This marker is the "Construct" form. Possessor noun forms are "Absolute".
15. Possession Constructions - Hebrew

- malkah /מַלָּהּ/ "queen"
- medinah /מדִינָה/ "country"

- HEBREW – possessed thing is marked (construct state)
  ha-מַלָּהּ queen-CSTR the-country
  "The queen-of the country"

- "The country of Israel"

- Possessed noun comes first in phrase, and is marked by Construct (typically /-t/ for feminine nouns).
- Possessor comes last, and is "absolute" form.
16. Possession Constructions - Porome

- ENGLISH - possessor is marked (genitive case or PP)
- [God-'s] word (genitive case)
- The word [of-God] (Preposition)

- Porome – possessed thing is marked (construct state)

```
God word-CSTR
daru / dara "word"
Eitaua / Eitaua "God"
```

- Possessed noun comes last in phrase, and is marked by Construct (typically /-a/ or /-o/)
- Possessor comes first, and is "absolute" form.
17. Qualifying NP Constructions

- ENGLISH - qualifier is marked
- A wall lamp (N+N:Modifier-Head)
- A wall-type [of lamp] (using "type"/"kind of")
- A lamp [for a wall] (using Prep Phrase)

- Re-group the morphemes
- A [lamp] [for a wall]

- Qualified noun is now marked with a marker that signals that it is qualified by something. This marker is the "Construct" form.
18. Qualifying Noun Phrases - Hebrew

- **ENGLISH** - qualifying noun
  - A [**wall**] lamp (precedes)
  - A [**wall-type**] lamp (marked as qualifier)
  - A lamp [for-a-**wall**] (PP)

- **HEBREW** – modified thing is marked (construct state)
  - lamp-CSTR **wall**
  - "a wall lamp"
  - "a lamp-for a wall"

- Qualified noun comes earlier in phrase, Construct form
- Qualifying noun comes last, Absolute form.
19. Qualifying Noun Phrases - Porome

• ENGLISH - modifying noun
  • A [tree] fruit (precedes)
  • A [tree-type] fruit (marked as qualifier)
  • A fruit [from a tree] (PP)

• HEBREW – qualified thing is marked (construct state)

  tree  fruit
  "a tree fruit (a tree-type fruit)"

  karei / kara "fruit/seed"
  kubi / kubo "tree"

• Reverse order from Hebrew
• Qualified noun comes after, Construct form
20. Longer noun phrases

- "Construct chains"
- Hebrew: C C C ... A
- Porome: A C C C C ...
21. Longer Noun Phrases – Example 1

- karei/kara "fruit/seed"
- kubi/kara "tree"
- do "you"

- \(\text{"fruit"}\)
- \(\text{"tree fruit"}\)
- \(\text{"your tree fruit"}\)

- Only first word in phrase is Absolute – all other nouns are Construct
### 22. Longer Noun Phrases – Example 2

- **naku/nak-a**  "excreta, dung"
- **ubi/ubu-ro**  "water"
- **keiviri/keivir-o**  "sickness"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>excreta</th>
<th>water</th>
<th>sickness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|          | "excreta" |"diarrhea (substance)"
|          |         |"diarrhea (sickness)" |

**Example:**
- naku/nak-a  "excreta, dung"
- ubi/ubu-ro  "water"
- keiviri/keivir-o  "sickness"
23. Other points for Porome

• Heads of relative clauses are in Construct form
  viki        ka-i        kub-o
  paddle.ABS  make-PRES  tree-CSTR
  "a tree for making paddles"

• Articles go with Absolute forms, not Construct forms
  bobi____da  peiavo
  pig.ABS  the  small.CSTR
  "the small pig"

  bateri____nai  tero
  white.ABS  a  male.CSTR
  "a white man"
24. Creissels – essential characteristics of construct marking

1. "it is obligatory if the noun fulfills the role of head in a given type of noun–modifier construction;"

2. "it does not cross-reference features of the modifier that conditions its use."

Very difficult to understand!!
25. Creissels – essential characteristics of construct marking - paraphrased

1. "it is obligatory if the noun fulfills the role of head in a given type of noun–modifier construction;

Construct marking on a noun is obligatory if that noun is the head of certain types of modifier-noun (or noun-modifier) construction [i.e. the modified noun]. E.g. kubi\textsubscript{Mod} kar-a\textsubscript{Head} "tree-type fruit"

2. "it does not cross-reference features of the modifier that conditions its use."

Construct marking on that [modified] head noun does not cross-reference the person/gender/number (etc) of the modifier noun. (E.g. possessor person marking on possessed noun does not count as construct marking.)
26. Distribution around world

- Under name "Construct" in Semitic, Nilotic, and Oceanic languages
- Under other names in languages of sub-Saharan and East Africa, Hungarian, Karbi (Tibeto-Burman), Martuthenira (Australian).
- Creissels has no examples listed for Papuan (non-Austronesian New Guinea) languages.
27. Question – *Is this feature found in any other Papuan languages?*

- Other possible names for "construct form": "genitive linker", "antigenitive", "general possessive marker", "appertentive", "pertensive", "modified noun form", and "modified" (but beware – check they meet Creissels' 2 criteria).

- Forms like:
  
  - children 's-mother
    (but not: children their-mother)

  - medicine type-of-house
    (but not: medicin-al house)
28. References


