



Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea Hybrid Zoom Conference, 2026

**Sustaining Melanesia's Linguistic Heritage
in IDIL 2022-2032**

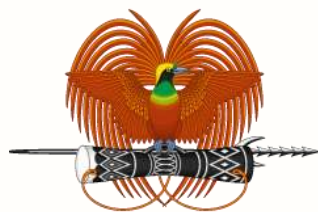
Hosted by The University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG)
and
Held at the National Research Institute (NRI) Conference Center
In Port Moresby, September 22-23, 2026



LSPNG 2026

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

& BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



DAY 1: 22-09-2026

7:00 – 8:00 ARRIVAL OF SPECIAL GUESTS DIGNITARIES, & OTHER PARTICIPANTS

OPENING SESSION

Chair:

SPECIAL GUESTS/ INVITED SPEAKERS

ED SHSS Professor Leo Marai

TITLE OF PAPER

08:00 – 08:05	President, LSPNG: Sakarepe Kamene	Welcoming Address
08:05 – 08:10	Dr. Patricia Paraide, Secretary LSPNG	A Word of Prayer
08:10 – 08:20	Prof. Ian Findlay, Vice Chancellor UPNG	TBA
08:20–08:30	Dr. Osborne Sanida, Director NRI	TBA
08:30 – 08:40	Mr. Michael Kumung, NDPM	TBA
08:40 – 08:50	Ms Dorish Apuka, NCC	TBA (conference declared officially open)

08:50 – 09:00

MORNING TEA BREAK

SESSION ONE

LANGUAGE, CULTURE & HISTORY

Chair:

Sakarepe KAMENE (UPNG)

PAPER TITLE [EACH PRESENTATION IS 20 MINUTES; Q&As – 10 mins.]

09:00 – 09:30	Plenary: Prof. Nicholas Evans (ANU)	Towards a full appreciation of linguistic diversity in Papua New Guinea: a case study from Nen (Morehead District, Western Province)
09:30 – 10:00	Amina Mettouchi (ANU)	Wrapped in leaves: food as a window to cultural contacts and linguistic history
10:00 – 10:30	Zhuang (FUT, China)	The Linkage Paradigm of Austronesian Linguistic Development and Regional Economy
10:30 – 11:00	Yu Jian (FUT, China)	Origins of Boat Culture among Austronesian, Kra-Dai, and Austroasiatic peoples
11:00 – 11:30	Joy Sanders (DIU, USA)	Filling gaps in the Kamasau [kms] language corpus guide
11:30 – 12:00	LML Cluster Research Team (SHSS UPNG)	Tok Ples @ Waigani Campus UPNG – preliminary results of recent survey

12:00 – 12:30			WORKING LUNCH BREAK
SESSION TWO	ON DESCRIPTIVE & SOCIOLINGUISTICS		
Chairperson	Dr. Apoi YARAPEA (UPNG)	PAPER TITLE [EACH PRESENTATION IS 20 MINUTES; Q&As – 10 mins.]	
12:30 – 13:00	Lauren Reed (ANU) & Noah + Lucia Agino (PNG Deaf Association)	Sign language diversity of Papua New Guinea	
13:00 – 13:30	David Gil (USP, Fiji)	Kode Papua: An Introduction	
13:30 – 14:00	Andreas Noreewec (UPNG)	Language Beyond Borders	
14:00 – 14:30	Marion van den Berg Baksteen (SIL-PNG)	Towards a standardised orthography for Aribwaung	
14:30 – 15:00	Benjamin Brancheau (SIL-PNG)	A Preliminary Sketch of the Ymap Noun Phrase	
15:00 – 15:30			AFTERNOON TEA BREAK
SESSION THREE	ON STRUCTURAL LINGUISTICS		
Chairperson	Dr. Andreas Noreewec (UPNG)	PAPER TITLE [EACH PRESENTATION IS 20 MINUTES; Q&As – 10 mins.]	
15:30 – 16:00	Roeland Luitwieler (SIL-PNG)	The tone system of Bauni-Pou, a Skou language of PNG	
16:00 – 16:30	Benjamin Pehrson (SIL-PNG)	The rise of clusivity and the loss of gender in Onnele pronominals	
16:30 – 17:00	Niko Kobepa & Gracia R.P.S Uaga (Universitas Cenderawasih Jayapura)	POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN WOLLO	
17:00 – 17:30	May Huvi (Bialla Secondary School, WNBp)	Linguistic heritage: Better now than never	
17:30 – 18:00	Kipli Joan Minol (UPNG)	Reflexes of Proto Oceanic *I, *r, *dr and *R in Lele, an Admiralty Islands Language	
18:00 – 18:30			GENERAL COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS BY COC

DAY 2: 23-09-2026

TIME

PLENARY

LINGUISTICS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA
Chair: Ms Kipli Joan Minol (UPNG)

08:00 – 08:30

Rene van den Berg (SIL-PNG)

More on an unusual passive in Vitu and some thoughts on linguistics in PNG

08:30 – 09:00

MORNING COFFEE

SESSION 4

09:00 – 12:00

STRATEGIZING TO SAFEGUARD MELANESIA'S LINGUISTIC HERITAGE

Chairs: Dr. Kilala DEVETTE-CHEE & Kipli MINOL

09:00 – 09:30

Robbie Petterson (SIL-PNG)

Demonstrating the value of heritage languages in education: A language and literacy assessment tool for the early grades

09:30 – 10:00

JV Teachers & Olga Temple (UPNG)

Can English save Tok Ples languages of Papua New Guinea?

10:00 – 10:30

Wigati Yektiningtyas (Cenderawasih University, Papua, Indonesia)

ONE SENTANI WORD TODAY, A LEGACY FOR TOMORROW

10:30 – 11:00

Gould (IRP Australia)

Towards an understanding of the dynamic interaction of the components of Language Policy and how that understanding may be used to 'sustain our linguistic heritage'

11:00 – 11:30

Richard Masese (UOG)

Phonetic and Morphological Dialectal Variations in Fore: Implications for Papuan Linguistics and Digital Preservation

11:30 – 12:00

Vicky Barneclutt (LSE UK) & Don Niles (NCC)

Language Groups and Cultural Representation in Papua New Guinea's Earliest Films (1904)

12:00 – 13:00

WORKING LUNCH

SESSION 5	Tok Ples Heritage in the Age of AI	
13:00 – 14:00	Chair: Dr. Andreas Noreewec	

13:00 – 13:30	Adelce Sisilia Ferdinandus (Universitas Cenderawasih, Indonesia)	Cultural Conceptualization
13:30 – 14:00	Clyde F. Smith (Christian Leaders' Training College, PNG)	Orality, Literacy and Communication
14:00 – 14:30	Peter Snow (IUE, PNG)	Rethinking Indigenous Data Sovereignty: The Future of Melanesia's Languages in the Age of AI

14:30 – 15:30	SPECIAL PANEL DISCUSSION: ON PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS
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Chair: Dr. Patricia PARAIDE (UPNG)

GROUP DISCUSSION

15:30 – 17:00	LSPNG ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) Reports by the LSPNG President, Editor, Secretary and Treasurers Elections of next Executive Agenda and QR code be posted latest by September 21, 2026
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18:30 – 21:00	CLOSING CONFERENCE CEREMONY
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BOOK of ABSTRACTS for LSPNG 2026

ALPHA ORDER by last name of presenter

SYNOPSIS OF PLENARY TALKS

1

Towards a full appreciation of linguistic diversity in Papua New Guinea: a case study from Nen (Morehead District, Western Province)

Nicholas Evans

Australian National University

Abstract for Plenary Talk, Linguistics Society of Papua New Guinea, September 2026

Papua New Guinea is justifiably famous for its linguistic diversity, with more languages than any other country on earth. But diversity means much more than just the number of languages. It can also mean the number of language families (where Papua New Guinea again tops the league). And arguably the most interesting is in how different languages are – both from other languages around them, and from those found around the world. In this article I delve into what diversity really means, and why it is so important in scientific, human and economic terms, I will focus on the languages of the Morehead District, Western Province, and particularly on the Nen language, primarily spoken in just one village, Bimadbn, and belonging to a family of around two dozen languages that has come to be called the Yam family based on the triple reasons that their grammars have a revealing pair of high-frequency verbs (*yəm* 'he/she/it is', *yəm* 'they are'), the word *yam* means 'custom, manner' in most languages of the family, and that yams are a vital staple crop.

The talk will be in five parts. In the first I give some background on the linguistic situation in Western Province, focussing on the Morehead district which is a zone of high linguistic diversity which is still being maintained today, and setting the languages within their traditional linguistic ecology of egalitarian multilingualism. In the second I look at the fascinating system of senary (base-six) numerals in Nen and related languages, how it evolved from yam-counting rituals, and its potential for sharpening mathematics education by being taught alongside the English base-ten system. In the third I look at the Nen kinship vocabulary, and some new techniques for measuring the structural diversity of kinship systems. In the fourth I pass to the realm of traditional ecological knowledge: I will show how, unlike in many parts of Papua New Guinea, even children possess detailed knowledge of birds and plants, and argue that this is vital for ensuring expert custodianship of the environment by local people. I conclude by arguing for the educational and cultural importance of supporting tok ples, and the realism of doing so in a culture of traditional multilingualism provided that appropriate policies are adopted.

More on an unusual passive in Vitu and some thoughts on linguistics in PNG

René van den Berg
 SIL Papua New Guinea

Plenary talk
Linguistic Society of PNG Annual Conference
22-23 September 2026
Port Moresby

The first part of this presentation will explore some recently discovered unusual aspects of the passive in Vitu [wiv], an Oceanic language spoken on the Vitu islands in West New Britain (van den Berg 2007). The fact that a Western Oceanic language has an agentless passive is already highly unusual, but the passive in Vitu is also striking in that it has three distinct allomorphs: one formed by ablaut and two by suffixes. These are illustrated in the following pairs: *hani-a* ‘eat’ – *hanua* ‘be eaten’, *haba-tia* ‘build’ – *haba-ta* ‘be built’ and *luga* ‘carry’ – *luga-nga* ‘be carried’. Even more remarkable is the novel fact that Vitu can also passivise oblique PPs in intransitive clauses, similar to the English pair *They shouted at him* – *He was shouted at*. In Vitu these passives from intransitives are marked by a distinct passive particle *voa* and a passive form of the preposition, illustrated in (2), which is the passive counterpart of (1).

- (1) *Dia ta pole zaha kiri-gu.*
 3PL REAL speak bad to-1SG
 ‘They verbally abused me.’ (Lit. ‘They spoke bad to me.’)
- (2) *Hau ta pole zaha voa kirua.*
 1SG REAL speak bad PASS to.PASS
 ‘I was verbally abused.’ (Lit. ‘I was spoken bad to.’)

Several examples of these structures will be presented in some detail, including a discussion of the typological oddity of a ‘passive preposition.’

In the second part of the presentation, I will give some brief personal thoughts on the state of linguistics in PNG. Having lived and worked in PNG for the last 23 years as a linguistics consultant, I would like to offer a few ideas and suggestions that will hopefully lead to some discussion and be beneficial for linguistics in PNG.

References

ABSTRACTS OF PRESENTATIONS @ LSPNG 2026

1 Marion van den Berg & Baksteen - Towards a standardised orthography for Aribwaung

In August 2026, we had the opportunity to work with two speakers of the Aribwaung language of Yalu, a village in the Markham valley of Morobe (Papua New Guinea). Aribwaung is an endangered Oceanic language from the North-New Guinea cluster of Western Oceanic, with an EGIDS level of 6b (Eberhard, Simons and Fennig 2025). So far, very little research has been conducted on this language. Holzkecht (1989) gives a brief overview of the phonology of Aribwaung, and mentions the language several times throughout her discussion of the Markham languages of Papua New Guinea, but she presents little data from the language.

During an intensive two-week workshop, we collected over 400 words and several texts. On the basis of these data, we drew some tentative conclusions on the phonology of Aribwaung, which shows some interesting features, especially with regard to a set of prenasalised plosives. Our findings formed the starting point for an informed discussion on the orthography of the language. Traditionally, Aribwaung does not have a standardised spelling, and speakers follow different conventions when writing the language. During the present workshop, we were able to formulate a set of spelling rules that help speakers write more consistently.

We encouraged the speakers to let go of some spelling conventions that unnecessarily complicated the orthography, such as the use of a hyphen in words like *iron* 'very, really', which some speakers spelled as <i-ron> to distinguish the word from English 'iron'. Also, we were able to help standardise the spelling of diphthongs, instead of varying between different ways of representing those in spelling. Following speaker preferences and intuitions, the proposed orthography is both under- and over differentiating with regard to the phoneme inventory of the language, resulting in a spelling system that is easy to apply for speakers, and gives some insight in the phonology of the language.

References

- Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons and Charles D. Fennig, eds. 2026. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. 29th ed. Dallas, Texas: SIL International
- Holzkecht, Susanne. 1989. *The Markham languages of Papua New Guinea*. Pacific Linguistics C-115. Canberra: Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University.

Vicky Barneclutt (London School of Economics) & Don Niles (NCC) – Language Groups and Cultural Representation in Papua New Guinea's Earliest Films (1904)

In 1904, members of the Daniels Ethnographical Expedition to British New Guinea, organised by the medical doctor and anthropologist Charles Seligmann, filmed twenty dances in Port Moresby using early moving-image technology. These reels, held at the British Film Institute, are the earliest known films from Papua New Guinea. As part of a new project funded by UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council connecting this footage with descendant communities, this paper asks a question the archive itself provokes: why these twenty dances?

We argue that there were a number of reasons behind the selection. First, sixteen dances filmed were Koita and/or Motu, reflecting Seligmann's sustained interest in the relationship between these two contrasting language groups. This interest was also visible in his written ethnography and contemporaneous wax-cylinder recordings, and reveals broader European fascinations of the period with language, racial classification, and cultural difference as markers of identity.

The remaining dances offer a different kind of evidence. The Mambare dance, which contrasts markedly from Central Province dances filmed the same day, was possible because of the deliberate recruitment of Armed Native Constabulary members from outside Port Moresby. Dances from Waima, Koiari, and Hula, meanwhile, correspond to places the expedition visited and stayed, or in which Seligmann had a particular ethnographic interest, suggesting that itinerary and personal relationships, rather than any strict principle of representativeness, also guided what was ultimately preserved. Practical concerns also influenced the composition of the films: the language groups present on the main filming day of 1 July 1904, and the technical challenges of filming in heat with limited film stock.

By reconstructing the historical and linguistic logic behind this selection, this paper contributes to a critical understanding of how early twentieth-century documentation practices shaped the cultural record of Papua New Guinea. It offers a case study directly relevant to the conference's "Language work in Papua New Guinea: 50 Years and Beyond" sub-theme, demonstrating how attention to archival absence, not just presence, is essential to understanding Melanesia's linguistic heritage today.

This paper also raises awareness of the project and invites collaboration. We are seeking researchers to undertake the reconnection work, ideally fluent in Koita, Motu, Mambare, Waima, Koiari or Hula, to ensure this process is grounded in the local languages the footage represents.

2

Benjamin Brancheau (SIL-PNG) - A Preliminary Sketch of the Yamap Noun Phrase

Yamap [ymp] is a Western Oceanic language spoken by about 1,860 people in the southern mountains of Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea, between Bulolo and Salamaua. This paper represents an initial sketch of the Yamap noun phrase, based on my early personal language learning experiences, and building upon previous research by Sonya Paoli (2021). I have not yet collected the texts or audio recordings that would allow a more thorough analysis. In this sketch I cover various aspects of the language such as pronoun paradigms, alienable and inalienable nouns and possessive constructions, demonstratives, quantifiers, numerals, adjectives, and noun phrase structure.

The Yamap noun phrase is typologically remarkable in several respects: reality status indexed on distal non-directional demonstratives, a rich system of directional demonstratives, an inclusory construction that uses a conjunction, highly irregular kinship paradigms with significant gaps, a mixed number system, double-marked possession on some body parts, optional suppression of subject-indexing prefixes by independent pronouns, and a demonstrative syncretism pattern in which nominal and adverbial forms are identical while adnominal forms are distinct.

Hopefully this description of Yamap noun phrases will serve as a small contribution to sustaining Melanesia's linguistic heritage through documentation. This description could not exist as it is without the expert advice and research of linguists who have been working with languages in several parts of Papua New Guinea including those who have worked in Yamap and neighboring languages in the past.

References

Diessel, Holger. 2013. Pronominal and adnominal demonstratives. In Matthew S. Dryer & Martin Haspelmath (eds.), *The world atlas of language structures online*. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. <https://wals.info/chapter/42> (Accessed 9 August 2026).
Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons & Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2026. *Ethnologue: Languages of the world* (29th edn.). Dallas, TX: SIL International. <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/ymp/> (Accessed 25 July, 2026).
Paoli, Sonya. 2021. *Orthography and Phonology Description for Yamap*. Ukarumpa: SIL-PNG, MS

3

Adelce Sisilia Ferdinandus (Universitas Cenderawasih, Indonesia) – Understanding the Unfamiliar through the Familiar: Cultural Conceptualization in Kimyal Technological Vocabulary

This paper explores how Kimyal speakers conceptualize modern technological objects through linguistic expressions grounded in familiar experience. The study asks which features of unfamiliar technologies become salient in the naming process and how these features are related to existing cultural and environmental knowledge. Drawing on insights from cognitive semantics and conceptual metaphor, the analysis focuses on

expressions in which technological objects appear to be understood through domains such as animals, movement, sound, shape, visible effects, or familiar human activities. A descriptive expression for an airplane, for instance, may foreground its resemblance to a bird and its visible trail in the sky rather than adopting the classificatory features conventionally encoded in languages with long-established technological vocabularies. Such expressions are analytically significant because they reveal not merely how a new referent is labelled, but how it is initially perceived, categorized, and integrated into an existing conceptual system. Based on qualitative lexical data elicited from Kimyal speakers, the paper identifies recurrent source domains and examines the culturally salient properties selected in technological naming. The study contributes to research on language, cognition, and culture by showing how lexical responses to technological change can provide evidence of culturally grounded conceptualization in an under-documented Papuan language.

Keywords: Kimyal; cultural conceptualization; cognitive semantics; conceptual metaphor; technology; Papua

4

David Gil (Independent Scholar, Fiji) - Kode Papua: An Introduction

In most or all of Tanah Papua (the western half of the island of New Guinea), most of the population enjoys mastery not only of various spoken languages, but in addition a shared conventionalized system of communication based on manual and facial signs, referred to here, following local usage, as Kode Papua. While Kode Papua is often used for communication between hearing and deaf people, it may also be used in other contexts, either in stand-alone form or in code-switching with spoken languages such as Papuan Malay. This paper presents a brief sketch of Kode Papua, based on data derived from elicitation, recordings of naturalistic conversations subsequently transcribed and glossed, and an experiment designed to assess the comprehension of a Kode Papua text by individuals in various locations.

This paper poses the question what kind of a communication system Kode Papua is. To do so, it positions Kode Papua within a typology of communication systems in the visual modality, making reference to four familiar types: (1) co-speech gesture; (2) general sign languages (e.g. PNGSL, ASL); (3) village sign languages (e.g. Kata Kolok, ABSL); and (4) homesign. While Kode Papua shares some features with each of these four types, it also exhibits significant differences with regard to each. Kode Papua differs from the familiar gestures used alongside most or all spoken languages primarily in its expressive power, which is much greater, and its concomitant ability to be used in stand-alone fashion in conversations of substantial length and complexity. It differs from typical sign languages in that it is used primarily by hearing people, and also with respect to certain structural features such as a wider signing space and the absence of mouthings and fingerspellings. And it differs from village sign languages, as well as homesign, in that it is used by a significantly larger population, and its existence is not contingent on the presence of deaf individuals. Kode Papua would seem also to differ from other reported sign languages that do not fit neatly into the above typology, such as some of the "culture" sign languages of Papua New Guinea, in that its existence and usage is not driven by the presence of deaf persons in the community. In conclusion, it is suggested that Kode Papua is representative of a hitherto undescribed sociolinguistic type, namely that of an omni-communal sign language.

Sydney Gould (Independent Scholar, Australia) – Towards an understanding of the dynamic interaction of the components of Language Policy and how that understanding may be used to ‘sustain our linguistic heritage’

Most analyses of languages, while useful knowledge per se, contribute little towards maintaining language use. This paper investigates the possibilities inherent in ‘language policy’ to attain that goal.

Usually, language policy is understood as directives laid down by an authoritative body about which language is to take priority and how and when which languages are to be used. That view has its shortcomings, as Spolsky (2012) points out using a parallel example of road rules, there is no guarantee that road users will adhere to the rules.

This paper takes into consideration the extra two components of language policy as posited by the seminal work of Spolsky (and others). The two additional components of language policy are the unwritten but acknowledged components by the speakers of a language. These are how a language community by unstated agreement uses their mother tongue, and the value placed on a language and how it is used in practice. This is not to exclude the component of an official language policy by an authoritative body, but to understand how the three components relate to each other.

Languages are used by living communities. “Language reflects culture at every point” (Kraft 1996:245). In addition we cannot investigate the ‘values’ component of language policy without understanding the dynamics of culture change.

The language that will be referred to in this paper is the Huli language, the dominant language of Hela Province, PNG. And it is hoped that discoveries in this language may be seen as valuable for application in other languages.

Using data from a survey amongst primary school students and participant observation of how the Huli language is used this paper presents findings of the two silent (or non-explicit) components of Huli language policy. How change is to be effected is yet to be addressed, and is beyond the scope of this paper; nevertheless, a couple of possible suggestions will be put forward.

References

- Spolsky, Bernard 2012, What Is Language Policy? The Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy. Bernard Spolsky, ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 3-15.
- Hornberger, Nancy H., ed. 2008. Can Schools Save Indigenous Languages? Policy and Practice on Four Continents. Basingstoke, England; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kraft, Charles H. 1996 Anthropology for Christian Witness. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Spradley, James P. 1980 Participant Observation. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

May Huvi (Bialla Secondary School, WNBP) - Linguistic heritage: Better now than never

The rise of technology in the new millennium has profoundly shaped many aspects of life, including cultural preservation. Despite the tireless efforts of scholars and individuals who have devoted years to research, technological inventions have dramatically transformed work, making tasks easier yet also accelerating the risk of traditional practices fading into obscurity.

Amid rapid innovations, the urgency to safeguard diminishing traditions has become critical. With this year's theme of embracing what is at risk of being lost, the revival of linguistic heritage is examined as a means of survival in a competitive technological world.

This paper focuses on the picturesque village of Ewasse, home to speakers of the Maututu dialect of the Nakanai tribe. Eleven years ago, villagers began reviving traditional Nakanai customs after decades of decline, though much of the human resource—the elders who carried ancestral knowledge—had already been lost.

In the absence of customary practices, traditional songs performed by indigenous musicians began to change in tone, reaching wider audiences through mass media. This modest exposure marked an important step toward language preservation. Beyond songs, renewed interest in showcasing other traditional practices has also emerged, sparking curiosity and engagement among the youth.

References

M. Rovou, 2026, Personal communication, Ewasse, Bialla, WNBP, 9 May

P. Jack and J. Sipu, 2026, Personal communication, Ewasse, Bialla, WNBP, 10 May

E. Lare, 2023, Personal communication, Ewasse, Bialla, WNBP, 11 April

D.L. Mundawi, 2022, Personal communication, West New Britain Division of Culture and Tourism, Kimbe, WNBP, 15 December

LML Cluster Research Team – Preliminary findings of *Tok Ples* proficiency among UPNG students: Survey 2026

The vortex of cultural change and convergence, powered by new technologies and increasing socioeconomic integration, threatens to swallow the indigenous languages of Papua New Guinea. This LML Cluster Research study aimed to gauge the extent of Tok Ples fluency on UPNG Waigani campus and examine the demographic factors that may contribute to the current situation. It is our hope that this knowledge will help find effective ways to sustain Melanesia's linguistic heritage for future generations. In this presentation, we discuss the preliminary results of this ongoing study.

7	Roeland Luitwieler (SIL-PNG) - The tone system of Bauni-Pou, a Skou language of PNG In this talk, I will share some preliminary results of my ongoing research on Bauni-Pou, a Skou language of West Sepik Province, focusing on tone. The (word) tone system of Bauni-Barupu, the other dialect of Bauni [bpe], has been described to some extent by Miriam Corris, but she writes “there is much to be discovered about the (...) tone system” (2005: 39). Complementing her work, I hope to share about a few of those discoveries. For example, where Corris found H and LH are in free variation in monosyllabic words, I will show that they can become contrastive in certain contexts. There also seems to be an extra tone class LHL, in addition to the five known melodies L, H, LH, HL and HLH. Overall, it looks like the tone systems of both dialects are the same, but there is indeed more to be uncovered. References Corris, Miriam. 2005. A Grammar of Barupu: A Language of Papua New Guinea. PhD thesis: University of Sydney.
8	Amina Mettouchi (ANU) - Wrapped in leaves: food as a window to cultural contacts and linguistic history In this talk, we present two case-studies involving food preparations wrapped in leaves, one in Malesia, following the start of the Austronesian migration from Tai̯wan to Indonesia and Madagascar, the other one in Melanesia. With a limited number of ingredients available, traditional preparations are elaborated around varied and precise techniques, passed down from generation to generation, and best described as “chaînes opératoires” (operational chains), in that they involve both practical and symbolic dimensions (Godelier 2012). While such preparations often are strong markers of cultural identity, they can be altered by changes that are traces of population movements or cultural contacts, either among neighbouring groups, or between groups of different origins. Taiwanese cinavu, Borneo kelupis, Filipino budbud and Malagasy koba rávina all involve steamed tightly-tied packets filled with glutinous rice and wrapped in leaves. In Kanaky-New Caledonia, the preparation known as bunyâ in Iaai (Ouvéa) itra in Drehu (Lifou), and ael in Nengone (Maré) involves taro or yams, wrapped and tied in leaves, and cooked under hot stones or in boiling water (Wacalie 2023). Similar preparations exist across Melanesia: kara piakau in the Solomons, tamatama in Bougainville, and saksak in the lowlands of Papua New Guinea, among others, which we hope to discuss with the audience at the conference. The variation among the names of a given preparation is particularly interesting when it occurs within a language family or branch: the names can be cognates, or they can be different, and cognate to other terms, in which case tracing their etymologies brings a rich perspective on the origins of these preparations, and the representations associated with them, e.g. budbud mentioned above is a reflex of Proto-Austronesian *bejbej, ‘to wrap around repeatedly, bind by wrapping’, and so is Amis (Formosan) fedfed.

The hypothesis explored in our presentation is that contacts and migrations can be traced adopting a method at the crossroads between linguistics and anthropology that involves both linguistic reconstruction and the analysis of operational chains.

References

Godelier M. 2012, « L'imaginaire et le symbolique », in Schlanger N. Et Taylor A.-C., éd., Actes du colloque La Préhistoire des Autres, Paris, La Découverte-INRAP, p. 59-66.

Wacalie, F. 2023. "Bougna" customary practices and representations, 1st FALAH Conference (Family farming, lifestyle and health), 20-22 June 2023, Port Vila.

Richard Masese (UOG) - Phonetic and Morphological Dialectal Variations in Fore: Implications for Papuan Linguistics and Digital Preservation

The Fore language, spoken by approximately 50,000 people in the Okapa District of Papua New Guinea's Eastern Highlands, is bisected by the Wanewindi Mountains into distinct Northern and Southern dialects. While anthropological interest in Fore surged during the 1950s kuru epidemic, a comprehensive linguistic account of its internal dialectal divergence has remained conspicuously absent. This presentation fills that void by providing the first systematic comparative analysis of the phonetic and morphological structures that differentiate these two speech communities, moving beyond anecdotal acknowledgment to robust structural description.

Phonetically, the dialects exhibit a striking pattern of consonantal alternation. Southern Fore systematically favors prenasalized plosives where Northern Fore employs simple alveolar nasals. For instance, Northern /n/ consistently corresponds to Southern /nd/ in lexical items such as yano vs. yando ('forest'), wani vs. wandi ('water'), and kinueh vs. kindueh ('ants'). Furthermore, word-initial alveolar nasals in the North shift to voiced alveolar plosives in the South, evidenced by noso → doso ('duck') and nama → dama ('house'). Additionally, the velar plosive /k/ in Northern forms is often realized as the labialized velar /kw/ in the South, as seen in karla vs. kwarla ('dog'). These shifts suggest a Southern preference for increased consonantal complexity and articulatory fortition.

Morphologically, the two dialects diverge fundamentally in their possessive marking strategies. The Northern dialect employs the free morpheme -waneh as a possessive suffix—e.g., Awai-waneh ('her husband'), Kara-waneh ('his dog'), and Yaku-waneh ('his firewood'). In stark contrast, the Southern dialect utilizes bound morphemes—variants of -eh, -ne, or -neh—that fuse directly with the root, yielding forms like Awai-eh, Yogah-ne, and Yaku-neh. This typological shift from a freer, more analytic possessive marker to a bound, synthetic one underscores a fundamental grammatical realignment across the mountain divide.

Documenting these phonetic and morphological nuances is far more than an academic exercise; it is a vital act of cultural stewardship. Native languages are living archives of ecological and social knowledge—they are the very embodiment of "our world, our language," encoding the unique environmental relationships (e.g., water, forest, fauna) that define Fore identity. As linguistic theory progresses, acknowledging this internal diversity

enriches our models of human cognitive and phonological variation. Critically, in the burgeoning era of Artificial Intelligence, granular dialectal documentation is imperative. Without such data, NLP models risk homogenizing Fore into a single, inaccurate standard, erasing the subtle phonetic and morphological markers that are central to community belonging. This research champions both scientific progress and proactive preservation, providing a foundational blueprint for future comparative studies. Ultimately, it contributes to the resilience of Fore against globalization and technological standardization, ensuring that these distinct voices remain audible—both in the highlands and in the digital future.

Kipli Joan Minol (UPNG) – Reflexes of Proto Oceanic *l, *r, *dr and *R in Lele (Ile), an Admiralty Islands language

The Admiralty Islands languages all spoken in the Manus Province of Papua New Guinea are classified by Ross 1988 as a primary higher order sub group of Oceanic languages with morphological and phonological innovations distinctly setting them apart from other higher order Oceanic language sub groups in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific. They are further divided in to the Western and Eastern Admiralties groups respectively. (Ross 1988)

In this study, an analysis of the reflexes of Proto Oceanic consonants *l, *r, *dr and *R in Lele (Ile) a daughter language of the Eastern Admiralty Islands sub group is carried out. Previous work on Lele by Boettger recognizes at least 4 dialects of Lele. (Boettger 2015) The comparative study involves the use of a 208 comparative Lele wordlist obtained by the author through a Lele Dialects Language Elicitation Workshop in 2024. The wordlist was adapted from Blust's description of 8 Languages of the Admiralties (Blust 2021). Using this Lele comparative wordlist, cognates are identified and analysed against Blust's Proto Oceanic and Proto Admiralties reconstructions. By focusing on full forms or root forms minus the obligatory affixes, this study tracks the reflexes of Proto Oceanic across the 3 main varieties of Lele. The following shows examples of cognate sets identified.

English Gloss	POC	PAdm	Lele Variety 1	Lele Variety 2	Lele Variety 3
Ear	*talɨŋa	*talɨŋa	ndelɨŋa-n	ndɨŋa-n	ndɨŋa-n
House	*Ruma	*uma	wum	wum	Wum
Bone	*ruRi	*drui	ndru-n	druwi-n	dru-n

Key comparative findings are discussed including rhotic lateralization and palatalization of the alveolar trill in the inland varieties of Lele located geographically adjacent to the Nali language, with the highly documented Variety 1 (Tingou) proving to be more conservative in its retention of Proto Oceanic consonants. This study is a work in progress and contributes to the area of Comparative Austronesian Language studies, particularly in understanding the phonological innovations and retentions within the micro groupings of Admiralties languages and the evolution of Proto Oceanic consonants as spoken in the modern daughter languages.

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Andreas Noreewec (UPNG) – Language Beyond Borders: Exploring Code-Switching and Multilingual Dynamics at the Skouw-Wutung International Border

The Skouw–Wutung International border between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea is a unique multilingual contact zone where economic activities and cross-border movement foster intense language interaction. During Hari Pasar (Market Day), also known locally as Batas Day, residents from both sides engage in commercial exchanges that require the flexible use of multiple languages, including Indonesian, Tok Pisin, English, and various indigenous Papuan dialects. This study explores the patterns and functions of code-switching during these interactions from a sociolinguistic perspective. Using a qualitative descriptive case study approach, this research examines naturally occurring conversations at the market to identify prevalent types of code-switching and their communicative roles. The analysis draws on Poplack's typology of code-switching, Gumperz's interactional sociolinguistics, and Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model. Results reveal that intra-sentential code-switching is the most common pattern, alongside frequent situational and inter-sentential switching influenced by interlocutors' identities and communicative goals. These multilingual practices are driven by economic efficiency, identity negotiation, solidarity-building, accommodation, and pragmatic effectiveness rather than language limitations. The Skouw–Wutung border market emerges as a vibrant linguistic ecosystem where speakers strategically use diverse languages to facilitate trade and sustain cross-border social ties. This study contributes to border sociolinguistics by highlighting multilingualism as a vital social and economic resource in one of the world's most linguistically diverse regions.

Keywords: Code-switching, Tok Pisin, Bahasa Indonesian, Multilingualism, Sociolinguistics, Skouw-Wutung International border

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Benjamin Pehrson (SIL-PNG) - The rise of clusivity and the loss of gender in Onnele pronominals

Onnele (Northern One, ISO 639-3: onr), a West Wapei Torricelli language of Sandaun Province, Papua New Guinea, displays an unusually rich pronoun system that blurs distinctions between pronoun, verb and conjunction. The basic pronouns continue originally monomorphemic proto-forms, yet speakers still productively form dual and complex pronouns by combining basic forms with a fully inflected comitative 'and'-verb. This yields ten pronoun sets (including possessive derivatives) exhibiting a clean continuum of morphological complexity from one to six morphemes. Comparative evidence shows that the inclusive pronoun mone originated as an emphatic form. Frequent use in inclusive (second-person) contexts led to its reanalysis as the basic inclusive, while the original monosyllabic form narrowed to exclusive. Parallel pathways (e.g. in Kâte) support this internal account. Onnele has also lost the gender distinctions characteristic of most other Torricelli languages.

These developments contrast with the reverse changes documented by van den Berg (2015) for neighbouring Western Oceanic (Siau) languages, where clusivity was lost and gender rose. Torricelli languages predate Oceanic arrival (Lapita/Proto-Oceanic expansion circa 3300–3200 BP). The Siau languages belong to the North New Guinea group, whose westward coastal expansion from New Britain dates to roughly 1500 BP or later (Pawley & Ross 1995). In moving west they contacted eastern Torricelli languages that retained gender—a plausible source of gender in Siau. The One languages migrated from south to north (Donohue & Crowther 2005). Gender loss in West Wapei predates the Siau innovations, while the rise of clusivity in Onnele occurred relatively recently, long after Siau lost clusivity. The two families thus show mirror-image changes on different time scales: contact is plausible for the Oceanic innovations, while the Onnele clusivity gain is internally motivated by politeness and mitigation strategies.

Documentation of such systems contributes to sustaining Melanesia's linguistic heritage. The analysis draws on data collected with speakers from multiple Onnele dialects during language-development workshops and offers material relevant to descriptive work, community language programs, and training Melanesian linguists.

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Robert Petterson (SIL-PNG) – Demonstrating the value of heritage languages in education: A language and literacy assessment tool for the early grades

This paper pertains to the theme of this conference, “sustaining Melanesia’s linguistic heritage”, and focuses on one way that we, as linguists and educationalists who may be connected with at least one of these languages, can help heritage-language speaking communities to become aware of one way that their language can have value – when it is used to lay a strong foundation in literacy as a basis for continuing literacy in the language of education for their children.

I have organised and carried out literacy assessments in many schools of communities in PNG which we have become close to, and in all those schools these have clearly demonstrated that there is a strong educational advantage for those school children who speak and have learned to read their heritage language, over those who have been taught only the language of higher education (e.g. English in PNG). Now I have put together a package of materials that others can also use to assess the literacy levels of students in schools in their communities of interest.

Language-related literacy assessment methods have been used before in Melanesia (e.g. Machuca-Sierra and de Silva, 2012), and in Africa (e.g. Mohohlwane, 2023), amongst other places where there are many minority languages. The assessment method that I will present has been developed and tested on 2,000 children of PNG over a period of fourteen years, and has helped change attitudes to the use of heritage languages in some places. It consists of a set of one-on-one tests: letter name and letter sound recognition abilities, and word and sentence reading abilities, in both the heritage language and English, taking about 5 minutes per child; the package also includes the means to analyse and graphically present the results, so that parents and community leaders can be aware of their language’s potential role in education, and be assured that it is worth sustaining.

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Lauren Reed (ANU) & Noah + Lucia Agino (PNG Deaf Association) – Sign language diversity of Papua New Guinea

Melanesia is a hotspot of linguistic diversity, with around 20% of the world’s languages in 1% of its landmass (Evans & Klammer, 2012; Rumsey, 2019). Little is known, however, about the diversity of sign languages in Melanesia, and in Papua New Guinea (PNG) more specifically. We present an overview of PNG’s sign languages: Papua New Guinea Sign Language (PNGSL) and ‘culture’ sign languages. We describe their histories and communities, and outline some structural features. We close with a call to action to protect and nourish PNG’s sign language heritage and its deaf people.

PNGSL emerged when deaf schools were first established in the 1980s. These schools imported Australasian Signed English materials (like dictionaries) from Australia. These materials featured many signs borrowed from Auslan, the language of the Australian deaf community. PNGSL now features many signs of Auslan origin, as well as signs of indigenous origin. It has a spatial grammar common to many sign languages of the world. PNGSL is used by small deaf communities connected to deaf schools. The largest community of around 40 people is in Port Moresby, which is also home to the PNG Deaf Association. Most marriages in this community are between deaf people and their children are the first generation to acquire PNGSL from birth.

Culture sign languages are PNG's indigenous sign languages. They are created by a deaf person and his/her hearing family and friends. Culture sign languages incorporate local gesture (e.g., a shake of the hand to mean 'no'). Culture sign languages in particular regions share signs (e.g., a hand grasping the wrist to mean 'pig' across the Highlands). Mostly, though, each culture sign language is an individual creation of a deaf person and their community, meaning that there are as many culture sign languages as there are deaf people in PNG. Every PNGSL signer is also a culture signer, but very few culture signers have access to PNGSL.

To thrive, the PNGSL community needs three things: (1) spaces to run sign language classes for deaf and hearing people; (2) PNGSL dictionary and grammar resources; and (3) support for deaf interpreters. Culture sign users need (1) to share the same human rights as hearing people in PNG, including respect and access to services in their own language and (2) the ability to access education in PNGSL. These actions will protect PNG's sign linguistic heritage, and ensure a strong future for deaf people.

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Joy Sanders (Dallas International University, USA) - Filling gaps in the Kamasau [kms] language corpus guide

This presentation discusses how gaps were addressed when compiling a guide to accessing the Kamasau language corpus. It is part of a larger paper which goes into detail about the creation, annotation, and completion of the corpus, which includes linguistic and ethnographic data gained over 49 years. The organizational guide primarily follows Sullivant's (2020) organizational schema, with additional input from documentary language corpus guides produced by Gawne ((2018), Caballero (2017), and Franjeh (2019). These guides revealed gaps in the documentation annotation data and the ways these were addressed can serve as input to others as they prepare similar documents for their own language and culture documentation corpora. The full guide, which contextualizes and summarizes the Kamasau corpus, is provided as an appendix to the full paper. It will not only to help users locate items in the corpus, but also provide a comprehensive model for others working on language documentation projects, and help them identify any gaps that should be filled in their own preparations of such corpus guides.

Key words: language documentation, corpus guide; Papua New Guinea (PNG), Torricelli Phylum, Marienberg subgroup, ISO 639-3 identifier [kms]

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Clyde F. Smith (Christian Leaders' Training College) & Steven Angkaki - Orality, Literacy and Communication

Most of the world live in multilingual and predominantly oral communities. At the same time, many in these communities can read and write at some level, and virtually all have connections to more literate people. This orality-literacy continuum and multilingualism interact in a predictable way: the language a community more typically uses for oral communication and the one they more typically use for literate communication is determined by how widespread each language is used beyond that community. Papua New Guinea's hundreds of local languages, used orally within small communities, stand in contrast to the two most important common languages: Tok Pisin, the language of everyday communication and informal education; and English, the language of formal education.

Based on this analysis, we show that effective communication in these communities makes oral use of local languages and literate use of common languages. As background, we address several historical imbalances in mission and church communication. First, we show that attempting to introduce mass local-language literacy in predominantly oral societies is unrealistic and has come at real financial and social costs. Second, we show that trying to 'develop' local languages into literate languages ignores their value as oral languages and the common languages' complementary value as literate languages.

We propose an approach that is more responsive to the local context. We emphasize, first, oral performance and group interpretation of Bible stories in the local languages and, second, literate Bible study in the common languages. This approach matches the way that the hundreds of local languages in Papua New Guinea are used in normal life, and builds on the existing roles of the common languages in education. To our knowledge, this pairing of orality with local languages, and literacy with common languages, is a new concept in the literature.

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Peter Snow (Innovative University of Enga) – Rethinking Indigenous Data Sovereignty: The Future of Melanesia's Languages in the Age of AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming language documentation, translation, education, and revitalization. For many of the world's dominant languages, AI promises increased accessibility and efficiency. For Indigenous languages, however, AI presents a more complex challenge. While advances in large language models, speech recognition, and automated transcription offer unprecedented opportunities to document and support Indigenous languages, they also raise critical questions concerning ownership, consent, cultural authority, and the governance of linguistic data.

This paper argues that discussions of AI and Indigenous languages must move beyond technical questions of corpus development and model performance to consider the principles of Indigenous data sovereignty. Drawing on the author's work developing an Iñupiaq Data Sovereignty Statement at Iḷisaḡvik College, a Tribal College in Utqiaḡvik, Alaska, the paper examines how Indigenous communities around the world are establishing ethical frameworks governing the collection, storage, use, and sharing of language data in the age of artificial intelligence. Rather than treating language as an open resource for technological development, Indigenous data sovereignty recognizes language as a form of cultural knowledge whose stewardship remains with the communities that create and sustain it.

The paper extends these principles to the context of Papua New Guinea, home to more than 800 languages and one of the world's richest concentrations of linguistic diversity. As researchers, governments, technology companies, and educational institutions increasingly seek to digitize Melanesian languages for documentation, literacy, educational materials, and AI applications, questions of governance become increasingly urgent. Who determines whether language recordings become training data for AI systems? How should communities benefit from technologies developed using their linguistic heritage? What mechanisms ensure informed consent, transparency, and long-term community control?

Rather than proposing a single policy model, this paper identifies a set of guiding principles for ethically integrating AI into language documentation efforts in Papua New Guinea. These include community-led governance, culturally appropriate consent processes, reciprocal partnerships between researchers and language communities, transparent data management, and equitable benefit-sharing. By placing Indigenous data sovereignty at the center of AI-enabled language work, Papua New Guinea has an opportunity not only to safeguard its extraordinary linguistic heritage from extractive data practices but also to provide an international model for ethical collaboration between Indigenous communities, linguists, educators, and technology developers. The paper concludes by suggesting that Papua New Guinea should adopt an Indigenous Data Sovereignty framework before large-scale AI systems are trained on Tok Pisin and the country's hundreds of Indigenous languages.

Rupa Maino, Jason Eric, Ninkama Kora, Ovene Valu (June Valley Primary School, POM) and Olga Temple (UPNG)

Can English Save Tok Ples Languages of Papua New Guinea?

This paper views the issue of ***Sustaining Melanesia's Linguistic Heritage*** from an unorthodox, wide-angle perspective. We challenge the widely popularized opinion that English is a foreign language – and a threat to the indigenous languages of Melanesia.

We argue that, on the contrary, ***Bilingual (Tok Ples + English) Early Childhood Education (BECE)*** is the only practical way to save ancestral languages from fading away. Why? Because it would embed Tok Ples in 3-to-5 year-olds' memory, while at the same time also equip them with the skills required to do well in PNG's English-based education system.

Our argument is supported by neuroscience and the solid and verifiable evidence obtained during this study. This research aimed to assess June Valley preschoolers' degree of preparedness for further education through the analysis of their background data, comprised of eight variables: Gender, Age at Enrolment, Home Language, Age at Onset of learning English (AOE), Spoken English skills, Reading Ability, and Academic Performance in English and Mathematics. Collected data were coded in MS Excel and analyzed using SPSS V28.

Findings:

- **Early English exposure** (before the age of 5) **is the strongest predictor of spoken English and reading ability.** The younger the AOE, the greater the long-term proficiency – especially in reading, followed by spoken English, and then grades [Spearman's rho coefficients - .618, -.500, and -.347, respectively; these negative correlations are significant at the 0.01 level].
- **Home Language English provides a clear advantage in oral fluency, literacy, and English grades.** Reading ability emerges as the central skill, bridging onset age with academic outcomes.

Conclusions Earlier exposure to English ensures stronger performance in literacy and English, the two prerequisites for academic success in Papua New Guinea. A bilingual ECE model (English + Tok Ples) will nurture bilingual talent from remote communities, enabling native Tok Ples speakers to become professional linguists who will then be able to document and preserve PNG's indigenous languages for future generations.

Recommendations Aligned with Papua New Guinea National Education Plan 2020–2029, government support is essential for bilingual (English + Tok Ples) preschools in every village. Such investment will secure PNG's independence in scientific expertise (also in linguistics) and thus safeguard the survival of Tok Ples languages.

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Niko Kobepa & Gracia R.P.S Uaga (Universitas Cenderawasih Jayapura) - POSSESSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN WOLLO DIALECT OF WALAK: A TRANS NEW GUINEA LANGUAGE

This paper presents an analysis of possessive constructions in Walak, a recently documented Dani language of the Trans-New Guinea family spoken in the central highlands of Papua, Indonesia. The study contributes to the cross-linguistic typology of possession and, more specifically, to our understanding of possessive systems in Papuan languages. Previous descriptions of possession in Papuan languages have generally focused on parameters such as alienability, animacy, and the locus of possessive marking. Drawing on original field data, this study proposes another perspective by examining the role of discourse participation in the Walak possessive system. Walak has two structurally distinct strategies for expressing possession. Human, supernatural, and animal possessors are marked by bound person-number prefixes attached to the possessed noun, whereas plant and inanimate possessors are generally expressed through noun–noun juxtaposition without possessive morphology. More importantly, the choice of person marking is not determined solely by the semantic properties of the possessor. Instead, it is closely related to the possessor's role in the speech event. Divine beings, animals, and other non-human entities normally receive third-person marking when they are referred to in discourse, but they may receive second-person marking when they are directly addressed in prayer, ritual speech, or everyday interaction. A similar pattern occurs when speakers address natural phenomena such as rain or abstract entities such as illness. These findings suggest that discourse participation is an important, but often overlooked, parameter in the analysis of possessive constructions. The Walak data therefore provide a new perspective on the typology of possession by showing that possessive person marking may be shaped not only by alienability or animacy, but also by the discourse role of the possessor. This analysis contributes to the broader documentation and typological understanding of possessive systems in Papuan and Trans-New Guinea languages.

Keywords: Walak language, possession, person marking, deixis, speech act participants.

Wigati Yektingtyas, Adolfinia Krisifu (Cenderawasih University, Papua, Indonesia)

ONE SENTANI WORD TODAY, A LEGACY FOR TOMORROW: Strategies for Teaching the Sentani Language to Children

Sentani language is in one of 273 local languages in Papua, Indonesia (Ethnologue, 2000). The Sentani language is an important cultural heritage that reflects the identity, history, and worldview of the Sentani people in Papua. However, like many indigenous languages, its continuity is increasingly challenged by language shift, limited intergenerational transmission, and the growing dominance of national and global languages among younger generations. Observation shows that Sentani children cannot speak their ancestor's language. Only some children who live in some islands in Lake Sentani can speak passively. This article explores strategies for teaching the Sentani language to children as an effort to strengthen language preservation and ensure its sustainability for future generations. It discusses the importance of early language exposure, family-based transmission, culturally relevant learning materials, community involvement, and the integration of the Sentani language into educational contexts, formally, non-formally and informally. The study highlights that children's engagement with their local language can be enhanced through interactive, meaningful, and context-based approaches that connect language learning with traditional knowledge, folktales, folksongs, and daily communication practices. By promoting collaborative efforts among families, educators, cultural leaders, and communities, the teaching of the Sentani language can become a pathway for maintaining linguistic identity and cultural continuity. This article argues that introducing "one Sentani word today" can become a meaningful step toward creating a lasting linguistic legacy for tomorrow.

Keywords: Sentani language, indigenous language preservation, language teaching strategies, Sentani children, Papua

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Yu Jian (Fujian University of Technology, China) – Origins of Boat Culture among Austronesian, Kra-Dai, and Austroasiatic peoples in the South China Sea region

Due to the complex historical backdrop of Austronesian peoples' origins and migrations, as well as their cross-border and transoceanic distribution, the Austronesian-speaking communities occupy a strategically pivotal intersection of the Chinese National Community and the Maritime Community with a Shared Future.

Since the 1980s, Western academia has generally held the view that Austronesian (AN) populations originated in Taiwan, China between 5,000 and 3,000 years ago before spreading across Insular Southeast Asia (ISEA). By roughly 1,000 years ago, they had expanded throughout Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia, and extended the Austronesian sphere westward to Madagascar on the eastern coast of Africa.

Prior to European westward expansion from the 15th to the 20th centuries CE, no comparable large-scale maritime human migration had occurred in recorded history—an achievement predicated on sophisticated seafaring expertise and watercraft. Among these vessels, outrigger canoes stand as the iconic embodiment of Austronesian maritime boat culture.

For more than half a century, Chinese ethnologists and archaeologists have strived to locate archaeological evidence of outrigger canoes along the coastal regions of South China, seeking to substantiate the theory that Austronesian boat culture originated on China's southeast coast; however, no definitive conclusions have yet been reached.

Against this backdrop, this paper draws on linguistic, archaeological and ethnographic evidence to examine the maritime boat cultures of Austronesian, Kra-Dai and Austroasiatic peoples within a broader chronological and geographical framework of the circum-South China Sea region. It attempts to clarify the origins of the boat cultures shared by Kra-Dai, Austronesian and Austroasiatic populations, as well as their interconnections.

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Weiqing Zhuang (Fujian University of Technology, China) - The Linkage Paradigm of Austronesian Linguistic Development and Regional Economy: A Theoretical Analysis Based on Language Economics

The Austronesian languages spread across numerous island regions in Southeast Asia and Oceania, and there exists a long-standing deeply coupled relationship between the process of linguistic evolution and regional economic development. Most existing studies separate linguistic and economic research perspectives, lacking a theoretical framework for their coordinated development. Based on the basic theories of language economics, this paper takes the evolutionary context of the Austronesian language system as the research object to construct a linkage paradigm for Austronesian linguistic development and regional economy. It clarifies the economic driving logic behind language differentiation, dissemination and survival, and analyzes the feedback effects of linguistic diversity, lingua franca popularization and language industries on island regional trade, cultural tourism economy and labor markets. This study sorts out the language-economy interaction mechanisms covering three major phases of Austronesian peoples: migration from Chinese mainland, civilizational exchanges, and economic and trade communications. It establishes a two-way linkage theoretical model between language and economy, explains how regional economic and trade exchanges shape linguistic shifts and how linguistic changes restructure the division of labor in regional economy and society, and explores the profound correlation between China's economic evolution and the linguistic development of Austronesian peoples. This research provides theoretical references and an analytical paradigm for the coordinated development of language, culture and economy in cross-border regions inhabited by Austronesian peoples.

Keywords: Austronesian peoples; Language economics; Regional economy; Linkage paradigm





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