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An investigation of language change and contact effects on aspect and mood in languages of New Guinea

Linguistic research on New Guinea languages extends back only to the early-mid 1800s (Hammarström 2014), piling in comparison to the amount of time in which the spoken languages of the area have been extant and evolving. As such, diachronic analysis is severely limited when it comes to understanding how the languages came to their present state. Work has been done by scholars to investigate the effects of language change and contact in New Guinea's languages (both endemic and Austronesian), but the majority of this work has focused on vocabulary, and occasionally tense and noun marking (e.g. Aikhenvald 2008 on the Sepik River area; Schokkin 2017 on Paluai; and Smith 2016 on Papapana). Relatively little research has investigated effects on the complex areas of aspect and mood.

This study aims to use findings from comparison and appraisal of theoretical literature on aspect, mood, and contact change (e.g. Reesink & Dunn 2018; Thomason, 2008), as well as typological work conducted on language areas including the Sepik River, Northwest New Guinea, and Bougainville (among others) and analysis of language data and corpora, in order to identify possible examples of contact-induced aspect and mood features and present cases for and against these findings. Particular focus is paid to language groups (such as those in the Sepik River area and those influenced by lingua franca) which previous studies reveal as being in contact, and exhibiting language contact effects, but whose aspectual and modal properties were not compared and examined in the course of those studies.

References

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