

Introduction

This paper is a tentative phonemic statement of the Urim language. Urim is a stock-level isolate of the Torricelli Phylum of the Non-Austronesian languages (Laycock 1973) spoken by about 3200 people in twelve villages in the southern foothills of the Torricelli Mountains. Ten of the villages are located south of the Sepik highway, east of the Bongos River, which is the border between East and West Sepik provinces, in the Maprik subdistrict. Two of the villages are over the other side of the Bongos River in the Lumi subdistrict of West Sepik Province.

A dialect survey is to be conducted in the future. In the villages east of the Bongos there are probably minor variations between the villages. The language of the two villages in West Sepik is more diverse from the others, since it is geographically and socially more separate from the main language area.

This analysis is based on about 2000 words, collected during 1979-81, while living in Laningwap village, which is the approximate geographical center of the language area. The villagers who have supplied and helped in checking of the data range from teenagers to elderly people, nearly all of whom speak Pidgin. Some of the teenagers speak some English and are literate in Pidgin and some of the young adults semi-literate in Pidgin.

*I owe special thanks to Joe Nicky and Josech Neson for their help in trying to analyze the suprasegmental features. I am grateful to Bob Bugenhagen for his assistance and help, and also to Bob Conrad. Last but not least, thank you to my partner Ritva Hemmila, especially for providing a dictionary computer run-off and a sound concordance of it.

Workpapers in Papua New Guinea Languages

Volume 31

Five Phonological Studies

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