

7.5.3. VERNACULAR EDUCATION, YAGARIA: A CASE STUDY

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7.5.3.1. INTRODUCTION

Yagaria, a non-Austronesian, i.e. Papuan language, is spoken by over 20,000 people who live in the area east and north of Mt Michael, in the Lufa District, Eastern Highlands Province. All of the inhabitants of the Yagaria Census Division speak Yagaria, but one of the dialects of the language extends into the Labogai Census Division. In addition, there are 360 Yagaria-speakers in Yagusa village, Okapa District, surrounded by a Keiagana-speaking population.

Yagaria is closely related to Keiagana, Kanite, and Yate, and a little more distantly to Kamano, and belongs, together with these languages, to the Kamano-Yagaria-Keiagana Sub-Family of the East-Central Family, of the East New Guinea Highlands Stock (see (I) 2.7.2.2.3.).

Yagaria consists of eight different dialects (and quite a number of sub-dialects) which are, however, all mutually intelligible. Because of the dialect situation, the speakers of Yagaria very seldom refer to their language as a unit, and until recently had no common name for it. The name 'Yagaria' originates from the people living in the areas adjoining to the north (Bena and Goroka), who call that area 'Yagaria', and consequently speak of the 'Yagaria people' and the 'Yagaria language'. The name 'Yagaria' for scientific classification was introduced by Wurm (1961).

Of the eight dialects, the Move (Kiseveloka) dialect, also known as the 'Filigano' dialect, was chosen for literacy purposes, for the following reasons: a) it carried a certain prestige already in the old times, b) it was the language of the people first to be contacted by Lutheran Mission workers, and thus by anyone from 'outside', and c) it also proved to be phonologically and morphologically the most regular

of the eight dialects. Anything said in the following about the structure of 'Yagaria' is therefore to be understood as referring to the Move dialect exclusively (Renck 1975).

7.5.3.2. STRUCTURE OF YAGARIA

7.5.3.2.1. PHONOLOGY

The phonemes of Yagaria (only the most important allophones are listed) are the following:

7.5.3.2.1.1. Consonants

- /p/ voiceless bilabial unaspirated stop
- /b/ with submembers:
 - [b] voiced bilabial stop occurring word initially
 - [ʔb] voiced bilabial preglottalised stop
- /t/ voiceless alveolar unaspirated stop
- /d/ with submembers:
 - [d] voiced alveolar stop occurring word-initially
 - [ʔd] voiced alveolar preglottalised stop
- /k/ voiceless velar unaspirated stop (occurs only word-medially)
- /g/ with submembers:
 - [k] voiceless velar unaspirated stop occurring only word-initially
 - [ŋ] voiced velar fricative occurring between [a] and [o]
 - [g] voiced velar stop
- /ʔ/ voiceless glottal stop
- /f/ voiceless labiodental fricative
- /v/ voiced labiodental fricative
- /h/ voiceless glottal fricative
- /s/ voiceless alveolar grooved fricative
- /m/ voiced bilabial nasal
- /n/ voiced alveolar nasal
- /l/ voiced velar lateral (This phoneme was previously described as a voiced heterorganic affricate, consisting of velar stop followed by alveolar lateral (Renck 1967))
- /y/ voiced alveopalatal continuant

In the practical alphabet, p, b, t, d, k, g, f, v, h, s, m, n, and y, have been used for the respective phonemes. The apostrophe ' has been used for the glottal stop, and l for the phoneme /l/.

7.5.3.2.1.2. Vowels

/i/ voiced high close unrounded front

/ε/ voiced mid open unrounded front

/u/ voiced high close rounded back

/o/ voiced mid close rounded back

/a/ voiced low open unrounded central

Besides the basic five vowels, there are four glides:

/εⁱ/ voiced mid open unrounded front gliding to high close unrounded front

/o^u/ voiced mid close rounded back gliding to high close rounded back

/a^ε/ voiced low open unrounded central gliding to mid open unrounded front

/a^o/ voiced low open unrounded central gliding to mid close rounded back

In the practical alphabet, i, u, o, and a are used for the respective phonemes, e is used for the phoneme /ε/. The glides are represented by ei for /εⁱ/, ou for /o^u/, and ae and ao for /a^ε/ and /a^o/.

7.5.3.2.1.3. Suprasegmentals

There is a combination of tone and stress in Yagarla, dominated by the stress factor, which causes the occurrence of completely reduced syllables with very short, sometimes hardly audible, vowels (Renck 1967). Quite a number of minimal word pairs can be found which are distinguished only by stress. Stress, therefore, has to be regarded as emic in Yagarla. It has, however, not been indicated in the practical orthography, since it would be beneficial for the non-indigenous reader only. For the indigenous unsophisticated reader, the indication of suprasegmentals has been found to be more confusing than helpful, since he will pronounce the words, especially within a given context, correctly even without stress being indicated.

7.5.3.2.2. MORPHOLOGY

7.5.3.2.2.1. Nouns

There are basically two sets or classes of nouns. Class I nouns occur in a long form carrying the suffix -na, and a short form in which the suffix is omitted and the syllable preceding it ends in a glottal stop. Morphemes indicating agentive, relation, location, time, and instrument, have a stop as their initial consonant and are suffixed to the short form of the noun.

Class II nouns have only one form which ends in an open syllable. The agentive etc. suffixes used with Class II nouns differ from those appearing with Class I nouns allomorphically in their initial consonant being a nasal, fricative, or lateral, instead of a stop.

There is a sub-class of nouns in Class II which behave somewhat like Class I nouns. (Most of them are nominalised verbs.) They all carry the suffix -'na, but also have a short form occurring without it and ending in a glottal stop. These short forms function generally as noun adjuncts. Agentive etc. suffixes are added to the form provided with the suffix -'na and appear in the allomorphic form in which they are added to Class II nouns.

There is a set of nine possessive morphemes which may be suffixed to nouns of both classes. With Class I nouns, they are suffixed to the short form.

A third class of nouns (neutral) has to be assumed for kinship terms. The majority of those have an obligatory suffixed possessive morpheme. Since they never occur without that suffix, they cannot be classified as belonging to either Class I or Class II. For reasons of simplicity, also kinship terms for which the suffixing is not obligatory, have been included in this class.

Four kinship terms have been found which have an obligatory possessive morpheme infix for all of the nine grammatical persons, and carry an optional possessive suffix in addition.

A special group of nouns whose members belong to different classes, includes the names of all body parts and other things which essentially belong to a person, and also a number of kinship terms. Prefixed possessive morphemes are obligatory for these nouns, with a zero morpheme for the third person singular. Except for these prefixes, these nouns behave like any other noun of the class to which they belong, they even show optional suffixing of possessive morphemes.

7.5.3.2.2.2. Verbs

Yagaría has four basic classes of verbs which are distinguished by their stem vowels. In each class, two stem vowels occur which are always the same in their height of articulation, but are distinguished as front or back vowels:

Class I	u	-	ɪ
Class II	o	-	e
Class III	ou	-	ei
Class IV	ao	-	ae

Thus every verb has at least two stem allomorphs. There are irregular verbs with up to six stem allomorphs.

There are five indicative tenses in Yagaria: Present, Present Progressive (actions which are still going on, or actions which always or customarily take place), Past, Future I (which, besides the indicative mood, may express intention), and Future II. Imperative forms exist for the second persons singular, dual, and plural, and a separate imperative form which is used for first and third persons. There are three conditionals: real, potential, and irreal (or contrary-to-fact) for all tenses. Every verb may be nominalised and adjectivised, and every indicative verb form may be turned into a participle. There are durative forms expressing long-lasting actions, for all tenses.

Tense, subject, and mood are expressed by morphemes suffixed to the verb stem. The present progressive morphemes are prefixed to the verb stem which otherwise carries the normal present tense suffixes. Negation of an action is expressed by the morpheme a'- prefixed to the verb stem. Both present progressive and negation morphemes are infixes into the verb stem if that stem has more than one full length, i.e. unreduced syllable. The interrogative morpheme is the suffix -vie (~ -pie).

One feature of verb structure which occurs in Yagaria as it does in other Papuan languages, is sentence medial verb forms which may never occur sentence finally. These sentence medial verb forms are of two categories: if in subsequent actions described in the sentence, the subject remains the same, the verb form used is inflected with regard to the subject, and may be inflected with regard to an action being completed, or still in progress. If in the subsequent action the subject changes, the verb form is inflected with regard to both the preceding and the following subjects, and also with regard to tense. All sentence medial verb forms may be negated by a prefixed a'-.

Objects, if they are other than the third person singular, are indicated by object morphemes prefixed to the verb stem. Verbs carrying object prefixes may belong to any of the four classes, and are basically transitive. There are, however, some verbs which are semantically transitive, but never occur with prefixed object morphemes.

A large number of Yagaria verbs consist of a complex of two words: a non-inflected word which carries the meaning of the verb complex (such words may occur otherwise as nouns or adjectives, or may be words limited in their occurrence to those peculiar verb structures), and a fully inflected verb which in many cases loses its original meaning completely, and here becomes the mere carrier of the verbal functions of the complex, an 'auxiliary verb'.

7.5.3.2.2.3. Other Words

7.5.3.2.2.3.1. *Adjectives*

There are some primary adjectives, but most existing adjectives are derived from nouns and verbs. Used as attributive adjuncts, the adjectives always precede the noun. Adverbs are morphologically not distinguished from adjectives, but quite often are linked with the verb by a succeeding sentence medial form of the verb hu- *'to be, to say'* which is the most common of the 'auxiliary' verbs mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

7.5.3.2.2.3.2. *Numerals*

There are only two basic number words, *'one'* and *'two'*. *'Five'* is *'one of my hands'*, *'ten'* is *'my two hands'*, *'fifteen'* is *'my two hands and one of my feet'*. The numbers in between are expressed by sums of fingers, toes, hands, and feet, with the help of the two basic number words. The number *'twenty'* is *'my feet and hands are finished'*.

7.5.3.2.2.3.3. *Personal Pronouns*

There are personal pronouns for all of the nine grammatical persons, three each in singular, dual, and plural. Each personal pronoun has, in addition to the full form with the ending -a, a short form without -a, with the last syllable ending in a glottal stop. This short form may function as a possessive pronoun, or it may take suffixes of the same kind as appear with Class I nouns. Nothing can be suffixed to the long form of the pronouns.

7.5.3.2.3. SYNTAX

The usual order in a clause is: Subject-Object-Predicate. In transitive clauses, the subject may be indicated by the suffixed agentive morpheme -ma' (Class I: -ba').

An unlimited number of clauses may constitute a sentence. There are, as in other Papuan languages, no principal and subordinate clauses in a sentence, but there are sentence medial and sentence final clauses in which the predicate is represented by sentence medial and sentence final verb forms respectively (see 7.5.3.2.2.2.). In a sentence, only the closing clause is a sentence final one, all preceding clauses assume the sentence medial form. It may happen, though very rarely, that a sentence medial clause is left without a succeeding final clause, but only if something ought to follow which is generally understood, and therefore does not have to be expressed.

Any clause can function as a subordinate clause (temporal, purposive, motivational, conditional) when the predicate is a sentence final verb form in which the indicative morpheme has been replaced by a morpheme denoting one of the functions listed above.

The negative morpheme a'- (see 7.5.3.2.2.2.), prefixed to a predicate, makes a clause negative. In order to negate a whole sentence, each individual clause has to be negated.

Questions, if not indicated by an interrogation word, are expressed by the interrogation morpheme -vie ~ -pie suffixed to a sentence final verb form without the indicative mood marker.

7.5.3.3. THE BEGINNING OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY WORK IN THE YAGARIA AREA

7.5.3.3.1. THE BEGINNING OF MISSION WORK

From 1949 on, the first people from outside who entered the Yagaria area in order to stay, were Lutheran evangelists mainly from the Kainantu and Henganofi areas, most of them speakers of the Kamano/Kafe language. In order to converse with the people, those evangelists learned Yagaria, i.e. each of them learned the dialect of the people amongst whom he lived. As Yagaria shows much more complexity than Kamano, not all the evangelists succeeded in acquiring a thorough knowledge of the language. That was especially the case if the evangelist found somebody who could understand and speak Kamano, and act as interpreter at the place at which he worked. Some evangelists went even so far as to teach the people Kamano, since they looked upon Yagaria as only a very peculiar and distorted form of their own language. Some of the Kamano loanwords now found in Yagaria are said to have entered the language in those years.

In the course of their work, the evangelists had to translate Bible stories, but that was merely done orally, usually from the Kâte Bible Story book, or from a collection of Kamano Bible Stories. Illiterate evangelists translated from memory. As the work progressed, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, and also the Words of Institution of Baptism and Holy Communion were translated, and some evangelists even ventured to write those translations down in order to have a fixed wording which the people could learn by heart. The writing down of those translations was certainly a great achievement. It was, however, not very advantageous to have as many versions of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer in the Yagaria area, as there were dialects, or even more, as in some instances evangelists working in the same dialect, but in different villages, produced separate translations (and separate versions) of

their own. Thus, for many years, Christians from different villages in the Yagaria area, when worshipping together, could never say the Lord's Prayer or the Creed together, for there simply was no common version of those.

7.5.3.3.2. EARLY SCHOOL WORK

In 1950 the first Lutheran Church schools (or Lutheran Mission schools, as they were then called) were established in the Yagaria area. The medium of instruction was at that time the Kâte language. The children enrolling in the schools, were taught Kâte orally (monolingually) by the teacher first, and usually acquired enough knowledge of that language within a few months that formal education could be started in it. Although in the Kâte schools, nothing was done with regard to Yagaria literacy, they did some ground work for the Yagaria language work which was carried out in subsequent years, since some of the former students of the Kâte schools later became excellent language informants, and Kâte, in a bilingual approach to a Highlands language, has been found much more suitable as a medium language, being Papuan in character itself, than for instance Pidgin.

7.5.3.3.3. EFFECTS OF THE AUSTRALIAN ADMINISTRATION'S SCHOOL AND LANGUAGE POLICY

When the use of *lingue franche* in school work was forbidden by the Australian administration towards the end of the 1950s, the Lutheran schools in the Yagaria area were also affected. The District Education Officer at Goroka had two alternatives for the teachers: English or the local vernacular (Pidgin was not even thought of by him as a possibility). The only other way out was to close the schools.

All teachers, even the ones who had never learned a word of English in their lives before, first tried to teach in English. It did not take long for everybody to realise the impossibility of that venture, and it was soon dropped. The question then arose as to what could be done next.

There was not much Pidgin material for schools available at that time which could have been utilised. Also, there was a certain aversion against Pidgin amongst most of the older mission workers, indigenous as well as expatriate. Yagaria had at that time not yet been analysed phonologically. Since something had to be done, however, the present writer, and some teachers and evangelists, ventured in 1961 to compile a Yagaria primer for use in the Lutheran schools. The system of spelling employed was partly that of Kâte, its special feature being

the use of the symbol *c* for the glottal stop. Word-initial [k], and the [ŋ] sound, had not been recognised yet as sub-members of the /g/ phoneme, and were therefore spelled with the symbols *k* and *r* respectively. The preglottalisation of word-medial *b* and *d* had not been detected yet as non-emic, and that caused the occurrence of many word-medial glottal stops in the writing. Lack of vowel interpretation, especially of *VV* sequences and glides, resulted in a lot of inconsistencies in the spelling.

The primer was illustrated, and duplicated in an edition of 500. It served for some years as the means by which Yagaria children learned the mechanics of reading and writing.

7.5.3.3.4. THE FIRST TRANSLATIONS

Early in the 1960s, an attempt was made to consolidate the until then only oral *ad hoc* translations of Bible Stories from the Kâte through writing them down. With the help of some Kâte-speaking Yagaria informants, most of those translations, first taperecorded and then written down, turned out to be good enough to require rather little revision afterwards. Kâte thus proved to be an excellent stepping-stone for translation work as well as for the learning of Yagaria by an expatriate.

In those years also, the above-mentioned translations of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Words of Institution of Baptism and Holy Communion were revised, and common versions agreed on. That was the starting point of the translation of the whole of Luther's Small Catechism for use in the congregations.

Orders of Service in Yagaria were also compiled at that time, most of those compilations being translations from the Kâte, or close adaptations of the existing Kâte formulas.

7.5.3.4. THE PRESENT SITUATION OF LANGUAGE AND LITERACY WORK IN YAGARIA

7.5.3.4.1. CONSOLIDATION OF THE SPELLING OF YAGARIA

In 1967, the spelling of Yagaria was consolidated by a phonological analysis of the language (Renck 1967). Although the phonemic statement was termed 'tentative' at the time, in subsequent years the practical orthography proved by its use to be quite adequate, therefore the system of spelling has remained unaltered since that time.

Unfortunately, the present writer was absent from the Yagaria language area for five years, which resulted in a setback to the language and literacy work.

7.5.3.4.2. REVISION OF TRANSLATIONS

In 1967, an effort was also made to revise and complete the translations mentioned in 7.5.3.3.4. The result was two booklets in duplicated form, one containing 92 Yagaria Bible Stories, the other one the Orders of Service and Luther's Small Catechism in Yagaria. The second booklet was put to use immediately by the pastors, whereas with regard to the Bible Stories, the majority of the congregational workers preferred to stick to the old practice of *ad hoc* oral translations from the Kâte, or from the Pidgin version which had been published in the meantime. It was found that quite a number of people who had become literate in Kâte (or, in the meantime, Pidgin), regarded it as too much of an effort to adapt their ability of reading and writing from one to another language. Even though that other language happened to be their mother tongue, the words appeared 'foreign' to them. Others, however, went to read the Yagaria texts right away, and the results were encouraging.

7.5.3.4.3. INTEGRATION OF YAGARIA INTO THE PIDGIN-MEDIUM SCHOOL SYSTEM

In the meantime, from the middle of the 1960s onwards, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Guinea had inaugurated, besides the official Primary School system of the Administration where English was the medium of instruction, its own vernacular school system with Pidgin as the language of instruction. Through newly trained teachers, or re-trained old teachers, this programme was introduced also in the Yagaria area. More and more textbooks and teaching aids in Pidgin were produced and used.

The question was now how Yagaria could be integrated into that system, or, to put it differently, how the system could be utilised for Yagaria literacy. It was obviously a waste of effort, with all the teaching means available in Pidgin, to teach reading and writing in Yagaria from scratch to children who learned the mechanics of reading and writing in Pidgin anyway in school. It would also have been very unwise to withhold from the children any education in the lingua franca of the country, for the sake of making them literate in their mother tongue only and thereby limiting their area of contact to their immediate neighbourhood.

The main task, therefore, was to help those children who had become literate in Pidgin to overcome difficulties which they had in making the transition from reading and writing in Pidgin to reading and writing in their mother tongue. For that purpose, a Yagaria reader was produced and printed (Renck 1971). This reader is accompanied by a teaching

guide which had to be compiled in Pidgin, since some of the teachers who were not indigenous Yagaria-speakers themselves, would have had difficulties in using a teaching guide compiled exclusively in Yagaria. This reader has now been in use in the schools from 1971 on. It is usually towards the end of the second or at the beginning of the third school year, when the children have become fluent in reading Pidgin, that they, with the help of the Yagaria reader, take up reading and writing in their own mother tongue. The reader starts off with words and brief clauses, aided by illustrations, eventually switches over to sentences, and ends with stories. In the course of 40 lessons, a Yagaria-speaker who is literate in Pidgin, can thus easily be guided into literacy in his own language.

7.5.3.4.4. PROBLEMS OF DIALECTS IN YAGARIA

People who have become literate in another than their mother tongue, can be quite fascinated when they discover that their own language can also be written and read. This experience was certainly made with the new Yagaria reading and writing course. When the course was taught first in the schools, the students were found quite enthused about it. The enthusiasm alone, however, could not overcome certain problems which were encountered. Not very many students have had any real problem with the reading, but quite a few have with writing, especially those who are speakers of any other but the Move dialect, since when writing, they quite often fall back into their own dialect, and since for those dialects no phonological analysis has been carried out and therefore no fixed system of spelling exists, the results of such writing are sometimes quite unintelligible. The only solution to this problem is, since the speakers of the other dialects have no difficulties reading and understanding the Move dialect, that they also adjust their speaking and writing habits to that dialect.

7.5.3.4.5. THE QUESTION OF FURTHER TRANSLATION AND LITERATURE WORK

Selections of translated Scripture passages have not been published as yet. It remains to be seen how much popularity literacy in their own language will yet gain amongst the Yagaria people. Unless it does, there would not be much point to produce any more secular and/or religious literature in Yagaria. The Yagaria people would, of course, benefit greatly from having more literature in their own language available to them for reading because that language is the means of conversational contact in the everyday village life of the Yagaria people, even of those who understand and speak (and are literate in)

Pidgin. Unless the people can integrate the matters of changing life, changing society, and all the 'modern world' offers, into their daily life (and that means the ability to express those matters in terms of their own language), they will retain a kind of schizophrenic attitude towards life: village life, social bonds, old tales and customs, old religion, on the one side, and economic and political progress, modern means of life, even Christianity, on the other. Misconceptions could be avoided if the process of conceptualisation could be aided by literacy in two languages, the lingua franca as well as their own.

7.5.3.4.6. ADULT LITERACY

Adult literacy has just recently been started on a very modest scale. Pidgin textbooks and teaching aids have been employed to teach adult people (mainly women show special interest in literacy at this time) the mechanics of reading and writing, even though some of those people know only a limited amount of Pidgin. Pidgin with its relatively short words, and often re-occurring syllable patterns makes literacy easy even for those people. The transition to their own language which alone could provide those people with meaningful reading, has not yet been carried far enough to say anything at the time of writing about its possible results.

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