

2.3.2. GENERAL PAPUAN CHARACTERISTICS

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2.3.2.1. GENERAL REMARKS

On the phonological level, no phonemic contrast exists in many Papuan languages between *r* and *l* sounds which, mostly in the form of flaps, often are members of a single phoneme. (This feature is however present in many Austronesian languages of Melanesia as well.) Similar remarks tend to apply to *p* and *f* sounds and, in general, there is a quite widespread tendency for stops and fricatives to be in allophonic distribution. Uncommon consonant types and consonant clusters such as velar stops with lateral release, labio-velar stops and nasals, uvular or post-velar stops, implosive stops, bilabial trills, and pre-glottalised voiced and voiceless stops, are met with in some Papuan languages. Uncommon vowel types are rarer, but complex suprasegmental systems are frequently met with. The frequent interchange of *k* and *t*, and *n* and *ŋ*, in dialects of the same language and in closely related languages, is a typical feature.

On the morphological level, the following features are frequently found in Papuan languages: a) a dual number in person markers (this does not apply to several of the groups included in the Sepik-Ramu Phylum); b) a mostly covert noun classification either through classificatory verbs or person marking in pronoun and verb systems, more rarely through complex concordance systems; c) a usually very considerable morphological complexity of the verb system; d) special sentence-medial verb forms denoting the subordination of the first of two verbs, frequently with different forms denoting identity and non-identity of the actors of the actions referred to by the two verbs (such medial verb forms are uncommon outside the Trans-New Guinea and Sepik-Ramu Phyla); e) the rare occurrence of morphologically signalled non-singular forms of nouns (this statement does not apply to members of

the Torricelli Phylum, to some of the Sepik-Ramu Phylum and some others which have such forms); f) only two or three mono-morphemically signalled numerals in many languages, but the appearance of complicated counting systems based on parts of the body used as tallies in others.

On the syntactical level, the almost universally present word order subject-object-verb, with the verb constituting the last word in a clause or sentence, may be mentioned.

However, while these features are far too few and far too general to be indicative of a notable typological cohesion between different Papuan languages, some factors emerge from an assessment of the Papuan languages as a whole which may be interpreted as betraying a closer (albeit in some ways secondary) affinity of these languages to each other than has been believed to be the case. Some of these have for instance been touched upon below in 2.3.3.

2.3.2.2. PAPUAN LANGUAGE TYPES

In the discussion of the distribution of personal pronoun forms in Papuan languages in 2.3.3., attention will be drawn to the presence of some correlation between the occurrence of pronouns of certain sets and of certain typological characteristics in given Papuan languages and language groups. In the light of this, it may be mentioned that in many languages whose pronouns belong exclusively or very predominantly to set I (see 2.3.3.2.), the following typological features tend to prevail: absence of gender and noun class systems showing concord and overt indication with nouns and/or pronouns, but presence of noun-classification through the appearance of classificatory verbs; a general tendency towards suffixing, though object markers with verbs may be prefixes; absence of overtly marked number forms of nouns; presence of sentence-medial verb forms as distinct from sentence-final verb forms; morphological complexity on the verb level is usually very high - though often markedly less so with languages with pronouns of the set I which are outside the Trans-New Guinea Phylum - with great development of aspectal, modal and temporal references, and references to varied sets of persons (subject, object, beneficiary, etc.).

Languages whose pronouns belong largely to set II (see 2.3.3.3.) tend to display the following features: presence of a two-gender system overtly indicated with pronouns and person markers with verbs; a general tendency towards prefixing, especially with regard to subject-markers with verbs and possessive affixes with nouns; presence of overtly marked number forms of nouns; absence of sentence-medial verbal forms; morphological complexity on the verb level is usually very high, though less on

the aspectual, modal and temporal levels than on the levels of person, gender and number indication, with many languages showing verb stem changes and suppletion in connection with the indication of the number of the object and subject, and the marking of tense; morphological complexity on the nominal level can be quite high, in particular in connection with the number forms of the nouns.

Languages whose pronouns are largely members of set III (see 2.3.3.4.) show characteristics which are either those associated with the pronoun forms of set I, or with those of set II, with the first possibility predominating.

In many instances, the differentiation between these two sets of typological features is not clear-cut. So for instance, many languages which have pronoun forms of set I and, in general, display typological features associated with this set according to what has been said above, also have a two-gender system overtly indicated with pronouns and person markers in verbs. Other such languages show an even more strongly mixed type in having, in addition, prefixed subject markers, and lacking utterance-medial verbal forms. Some also have number forms with nouns.

As a general observation, the presence of a two-gender system is a feature of a large number of Papuan languages belonging to several unrelated groups. The forms of the free and bound person markers and the principles underlying their appearance and functions are, in several cases, suggestive of the possibility of a common origin even if they appear in languages believed to be unrelated to each other. In terms of linguistic prehistory, it may well be possible to see in this feature a characteristic of an old group of Papuan languages which may have, in part, been interrelated and otherwise typologically similar, and may have occupied a large part of the New Guinea mainland before they were largely swamped by later Papuan languages unrelated to and typologically different from them and in which this characteristic is today only present as a substratum feature, often in languages which are generally more or less aberrant within particular groups (see 3.4.1. in this volume). The obvious correlation between the distribution of set II pronouns and gender distinction has been mentioned above, but there are some regions in which gender distinction is present and set II pronouns are lacking, and vice versa. It seems that in some such cases, the original gender distinction has been lost under the impact of non-gender languages (e.g. in the south-east of the mainland and in some areas in the Highlands in Papua New Guinea), whereas in other areas (e.g. the centre and central south of the mainland) the gender distinction has been preserved and the set II pronouns replaced by pronouns

of other sets, largely of set I.

Languages whose pronoun range includes the 2 sg. member of (sub)set Ia (see 2.3.3.5.) display features of either of the two main types, with several instances of mixture between the two. The same applies to most of the languages with pronouns of set x (see 2.3.3.6.). Many of these show the somewhat simplified version of the characteristics of the first main type as referred to above in the discussion of that type with reference to languages with pronouns of set I which are not members of the Trans-New Guinea Phylum.

A considerable number of the languages whose 1 sg. pronoun belongs to set B (see 2.3.3.7.) are characterised by a multiple-classifying system with elaborate concord, though they sometimes lack a two-gender system. Their morphologies are mostly extremely complex and display features of either or both of the two main types, sometimes plus features which are quite unusual for Papuan languages in general.

In addition to the types discussed so far, two further types may be mentioned which cannot be directly correlated with the occurrence of pronoun forms of one of the sets discussed, though with the first of these types, pronouns belonging to sets I, Ia and x predominate, whereas with the second type, the pronouns tend to belong to sets I, II and Ia.

The characteristics of the first of these types are essentially those of the first of the two main types discussed above, usually in a somewhat simplified form, but in addition, a two-gender system is present, as well as a multiple-classifying system with concord. In view of this, this type does not constitute a basic type like the first two mentioned above, and the additional one discussed below, but is a mixed type containing characteristics of the first two with those of the first predominating, plus a substratum feature. However, seeing that this particular combination of features constitutes a characteristic trait of a number of languages, with this set of features cutting across stock and even phylum boundaries, it has been decided to regard it as one of the main types of Papuan languages though its non-basic nature is clearly recognised. Languages belonging to this type are for instance in the Upper Sepik area in the vicinity of multiple-classifying languages to whose substratum influence the presence of multiple-classifying systems in the languages under discussion may well be attributable.

The second of the two types under review is a comparatively simple type with relatively little morphological elaboration of a specific type. Such languages are mostly members of the Sepik-Ramu Phylum though some have been included with the Trans-New Guinea Phylum, or are

outside of both. It appears that this feature may be original rather than resulting from a loss of complexity, and it may constitute the original type of the Sepik-Ramu Phylum languages.

Some other types still exist - e.g. languages of the Sko phylum-level Stock on the central north coast of the mainland have a tonal morphology - but their importance for the Papuan languages as a whole is limited.

2.3.2.3. SUBSTRATA

The presence and influence of substrata in Papuan languages and language groups constitutes a problem of prime importance in Papuan linguistics and has to be taken account of in many aspects of it as has been implied in much of what has been said in 2.2.0., especially 2.2.2.. Substrata phenomena have been mentioned in various chapters in this book which deal with Papuan languages, and the reader will find additional information there (e.g. in several sections of 2.7.).

In essence, substrata phenomena are either a) features associated with the four main language types mentioned above in 2.3.2.2. (of which, as has been pointed out, the third is itself a mixture of characteristics of the first and second types plus an added substratum feature), with features of any of these four types appearing as a subsidiary characteristic in a language or language group whose main characteristics belong to another of the four types, or are typical of that language or group only, or b) other characteristics of a particular language group which appear in languages which stand outside that group, or c) regional characteristics not ascribable to either a) or b). Because of the diffuse nature of the distribution of the four main types and their extensive interaction, the following distinctions are of practical value from the point of view of descriptive convenience:

1) Some substrata features can constitute characteristics of a particular language group which appear in other, unrelated, languages and language groups and which are attributable to the interaction, and influence upon each other, of the two language groups involved.

The question of the appearance of pronoun forms of particular sets in several unrelated language groups can be marginally included here with regard to the presence of set I (and Ia) pronoun forms which constitute a typical Trans-New Guinea Phylum feature (and are ascribable to the same migration which is assumed to have spread the Trans-New Guinea Phylum languages through the New Guinea mainland (see 3.4.1.)), in languages of other phyllic groups where their appearance is clearly attributable to Trans-New Guinea Phylum influence. The situation is

rather different with sets II and III pronoun forms which cannot, to the same extent, be directly associated with present established phyllic groups (except perhaps to some degree with the West Papuan Phylum), only with postulated past language migrations (see 3.4.1.). At the same time, set B pronouns appear to be largely associated with substrata as described below under 2).

2) Some other substrata features observable in several, often unrelated or only distantly related languages and language groups cannot be directly associated with known characteristics of other languages, or with characteristics believed to be attributable to postulated language migrations, but seem to be attributable to the earlier presence, in certain areas, of languages and language types upon which later language migrations ultimately resulting in the present-day linguistic picture in the New Guinea area have been superimposed. Such substrata manifest themselves in the form of regional characteristics which are not associated with the features diagnostic of the four main language types described above in 2.3.2.2., or which, within a language or language group not closely related to other languages, are typical of that particular group or language alone. Language groups or isolates unrelated to other languages may have unique features which are however not regarded as substrata features, but as characteristics of these unrelated languages themselves. If such languages show basically typological features clearly belonging to one of the four main types or a mixture of them, and have only one or a few unique features of relatively minor importance added to them, these features may be attributable to a substratum, but in view of the unique nature of such unrelated languages, this remains questionable.

Such regional characteristics have been observed on the phonological and morphological levels, and good examples are the following:

The abundant presence of nasal vowel phonemes, in many instances correlated with a lack of bound subject markers with the verb, simplicity or complete absence of sentence-medial verbal forms and a proliferation of aspectual markers, is typical of many languages of the Southern Highlands, Western, and Gulf Districts, as well as of the adjacent parts of the Eastern Highlands and Chimbu Districts, with these languages belonging to different stocks and sub-phyla within the Trans-New Guinea Phylum. This regional characteristic is obviously ascribable to the influence of a substratum in that area and may be the consequence of the immigration of a language element from the area of the phylum-level Left May Family in the Sepik Districts (see 3.4.1. in this volume).

Similarly, languages of the Lower Sepik (Nor-Pondo) Sub-Phylum and the Upper Sepik Super-Stock of the Sepik-Ramu Phylum, some of the Torricelli Phylum and languages of the East Papuan Phylum share a somewhat varied, complicated, in some languages overt, noun class system which is accompanied by a concordance system of sometimes quite formidable complexity. This feature which for some of the language groups referred to coincides with the appearance of the set B 1 sg. pronoun form and constitutes one of the composing elements of the third of the four main language types mentioned in 2.3.2.2., is also likely to reflect substratum influence.

The languages of the Leonard Schultze Sub-Phylum of the Sepik-Ramu Phylum show a multiple classifying system which is quite different from the ones referred to in the above paragraph and is quite unique in Papuan languages. It is undoubtedly attributable to the presence of a strong substratum.

2.3.2.4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

To prevent any possible confusion arising in the mind of the reader over the multiple aspects of the distribution of typological features as mentioned and discussed in this chapter and elsewhere in this volume, it has to be kept in mind that this description and discussion of such features follows four different points of view: 1) that of the distribution of the pronoun forms belonging to the different sets discussed in 2.3.3.; 2) that of the nature and occurrence of the main language types (see 2.3.2.2.) of which the latter shows some correlation with the distribution of some of the pronoun sets; 3) that of the nature and occurrence of substrata of various kinds (see 2.3.2.3.); 4) that of the characteristics of individual languages and language groups which are to a great extent the result of an interaction of the various aspects of what has been said above under 1), 2) and 3), plus special features which may be characteristic of individual languages and language groups.

For the discussion of the features of individual languages and language groups from descriptive and comparative angles, what has been said above under point 4), with some regard to the fact that those factors are the result of what has been mentioned under points 1)-3), will be regarded as primary and basic.

2.3.2.5. AUSTRALIAN, PAPUAN AND AUSTRONESIAN CHARACTERISTICS IN CONTRAST

As has been mentioned in 2.3.1., only characteristics of languages of the Trans-New Guinea and Sepik-Ramu Phyla will be included in this contrastive statement.

The choice of the features contrasted or introduced as titles in this section has been determined by the presence of these features and their special nature in any one (or several) of the four language groups included here.

	Australian	Trans-New Guinea Phylum	Sepik-Ramu Phylum	Austronesian in Melanesia
PHONOLOGY:				
Consonant Phonemes:				
Linear				
Distinctions:	at least four, usually five to six, maximally seven. Numbers of linear distinctions identical for stops and nasals (disregarding the glottal stop) and often identical for oral stops and laterals	usually three to five. Number of linear distinctions in stops and nasals often different, those in stops and laterals always different	usually three to five. Number of linear distinctions in stops (disregarding the glottal stop) and nasals not commonly identical, those in stops and laterals always different	usually three to five, predominantly three. Number of linear distinctions in stops and nasals often different, those in stops and laterals always different
Series of Stops:	mostly only one; if two (or more), the difference between them rests on voicing or length, or aspiration	generally two, the difference between them rests mostly on voicing and/or prenasalisation	mostly only one; if two, the difference between them rests on prenasalisation or fricativisation, rarely on voice	almost universally two, very rarely more. Difference between two series rests on voicing often accompanied by prenasalisation. If more than two, aspiration usually plays a part.
Retroflexed Consonants:	very common: stops, nasals and laterals	almost absent	absent	rare
Interdental Consonants:	very common	absent	absent	almost absent

	Australian	Trans-New Guinea Phylum	Sepik-Ramu Phylum	Austronesian in Melanesia
r-Sounds:	almost universally two, sometimes three; always in phonemic contrast with l sounds of which there are often more than one	one, very commonly not in phonemic contrast with l which is allophonic	one, often not in phonemic contrast with l	one, often not in phonemic contrast with l which is frequently allophonic
ŋ:	universal, statistically very frequent per language, occurring in all positions	uncommon*, except for some regions, e.g. Trans-Fly and Huon Peninsula, statistically not very frequent in languages of such regions, occurring in all positions	uncommon*, occurring only medially and finally	uncommon*, occurring in all positions
Palatalised Consonants:	universal	present, but not very common	fairly common	rare
Fricatives:	very rare	present, but predominantly only one (s) per language	present, more than one per language	present, often more than one per language
Labialised Consonants:	absent	rare	common	very common
Uncommon Consonants:	rare	present: laterally released, labio-velar, implosive, pre-glottalised voiced and voiceless stops; labio-velar nasals; bilabial trills	rare	uncommon

* Except as a phonetic element in prenasalised g

	Australian	Trans-New Guinea Phylum	Sepik-Ramu Phylum	Austronesian in Melanesia
Phonetically widely varying Consonant Allophones:	absent	present	absent	absent
Stops have Fricative Allophones:	no, except in phono- logically aberrant languages (Papuan influence?)	very commonly	rarely (only in Lower Sepik and Ramu areas)	no
Fricatives have Stop Allo- phones:	no	rarely	sometimes	no
Vowel Phonemes: Basic Vowel System:	usually three vowels a i u, with a statistically pre- valent per language; higher numbers of vowels occur in- frequently	usually five vowels, lower and higher numbers of vowels occur infrequently	low number of vowels: usually three to five; frequent occur- rence of a schwa- phoneme largely functioning as auto- matic consonant sep- arator	usually five vowels, higher numbers of vowels occur in certain areas
Nasal Vowels:	almost absent	frequent in some areas	rare	rare
Uncommon Vowels:	rare	not very frequent	rare	frequent in some areas
Vowel Phonemes have a wide Range of Allophones:	yes	no	yes	no

	Australian	Trans-New Guinea Phylum	Sepik-Ramu Phylum	Austronesian in Melanesia
Vowel Sequences :	rare	present	absent	present
Suprasegmentals:				
Suprasegmental Systems are Complex:	no	yes	no	no
Phonologically relevant Tones:	probably absent	frequently present	largely absent	largely absent
Morphophonemics:				
Sound Assimilation:	very rare	frequent	rare	rare
Elaborate morphophonemic Changes :	restricted to a few affixes, otherwise largely absent except in north and north-west	common	few	few
MORPHOLOGY :				
General:				
Complexity of Morphological Systems:	medium to high	mostly very high to extreme	low to medium (except for languages of three aberrant sub-phyla in which it is high to extreme)	very low to medium

	Australian	Trans-New Guinea Phylum	Sepik-Ramu Phylum	Austronesian in Melanesia
Nature of Morphology:	elaborate affixation, transparent, except for subject-object markers with verb in most languages in north and north-west	elaborate affixation and inflection, trans- parency often veiled through morphophonemic changes	uncomplicated affixat- ion, mostly trans- parent; use of part- icles regionally common	uncomplicated affix- ation, generally transparent; use of particles common
NOUNS:				
Noun Class Systems:	absent from the bulk of Australia; overt class systems with elaborate concord systems, some with cross-cutting gender systems, in the north and north-west and very few isolat- ed areas elsewhere	covert class system through classificatory verbs very common; in parts of the centre, central south, the south eastern section of the central part, the west, and the north-west, a co- occurring, often rudi- mentary, two-gender system mostly only manifested in third person singular free and/or bound person markers with verbs	overt two-gender system manifesting itself in free and bound person markers of the third (and some- times also the second) person singular fairly common; covert multiple class system in Upper Sepik Super-Stock (cross-cutting); overt multiple class system in Nor-Pondo Sub-Phylum (not cross-cutting) and in Leonhard Schultze Sub-Phylum	noun classification through a range of semantically deter- mined markers indicat- ing possession universal
Morphologically signalled Plural Forms:	rare	very rare	common in Lower Sepik area and in Ramu Sub- Phylum	absent

	Australian	Trans-New Guinea Phylum	Sepik-Ramu Phylum	Austronesian in Melanesia
Incorporation of Object Noun into Verb in supplet Form:	in some languages in the north	absent	absent*	absent
Person Markers:				
Comparability of Personal Pronouns within Interrel- ated groups:	generally comparable except for very few areas	comparable over wide areas, especially the central regions, and belonging to set I (and Ia). Set III forms very strongly in evidence in some well-defined, pre- dominantly sub-phylic, regions. Set II forms strongly present in largely sub-phylic marginal areas	seven root forms observable for all pronouns in the greater part of the area, each language containing about five of them, with the relationship between form and meaning often changing from language to language. As a result of this, pronouns in individual languages tend to for- mally belong to differ- ent sets (e.g. the 1sg. pronoun form wan is a member of set Ix, but 2sg. wan one of set IIIx). Set x is strongly in evidence	universally comparable

* Except that in the highly aberrant sub-phylic Leonhard Schultze Family, a somewhat similar system of supplet nouns functioning as class markers has been observed in connection with the adjective system.

	Australian	Trans-New Guinea Phylum	Sepik-Ramu Phylum	Austronesian in Melanesia
Dual Forms:	widespread	widespread	regionally common	very general
Trial Forms:	present in a few areas	present in some areas	lacking	fairly common
Inclusive- Exclusive Forms in First Person non-Singular:	fairly frequent	rare	rare	universal
Subject Marking on Verb through bound Person Markers:	quite widespread	very common	fairly common	universal
One bound Subject Marker denoting two or several Different Persons:	absent	common, especially in second and third person non-singular; found in a few areas also with regard to the free personal pronouns	present in some areas; a comparable phenomenon occurs in other areas with regard to the free personal pronouns (usually of the second and third person non- singular)	absent
Object marking on Verb through bound Person Markers:	quite widespread	quite common	uncommon	universal

	Australian	Trans-New Guinea Phylum	Sepik-Ramu Phylum	Austronesian in Melanesia
Position of bound Subject and Object Markers in relation to each other:	together, predomi- nantly subject- object	separated or together with approximately equal frequency. When occurring together, their order is mostly object-subject	together, mostly sub- ject-object	separated
Appearance of bound Subject (and Object) Markers with words other than Verbs in a Sentence:	frequent	absent	absent	absent
Indication of Possession:	through special forms of the personal pronouns; not uncommonly through affixes	through the personal pronouns usually in a modified form; fairly commonly through affixes. Some languages, most of them adjacent to Austronesian languages, show possession indi- cation systems based on principles similar to those present in the Austronesian languages of Melanesia	through the personal pronouns with or without suffixes added to them, fairly commonly through affixes	nouns denoting body parts and relation- ships, and a few other nouns, are provided with possessive suffix- es; with other nouns, the same suffixes are added to a usually quite small series of possession nouns, with the appearance of any particular one of these possessive nouns determined by semantic criteria, and the possessive nouns + suffix constituting an adjunct to the noun denoting the object possessed

	Australian	Trans-New Guinea Phylum	Sepik-Ramu Phylum	Austronesian in Melanesia
ADJECTIVES:				
Appearance of Reduplicated Adjectives:	rare	rare	not uncommon	common
Number Systems:	almost universally binary and additive	mostly binary and additive; in some areas systems based on body parts used as tallies	trinary, quinary and mixed binary-quinary additive systems; regionally, systems based on body parts used as tallies	quinary, imperfect decimal, decimal and vigesimal multiplic- ative systems
VERBS:				
Presence of a Range of dif- ferent Exist- ential Verbs:	no	yes	no	no
Verb Stem under- goes Changes according to the Person of the Object or Beneficiary:	no	in several areas	not common	no
Verb Stem under- goes Changes according to Number of the Object:	no	in several areas	no	no
Indication of the Negative:	separate from the verb	part of the verb	separate from the verb	separate from the verb, sometimes combined with bound subject marker in particle form

	Australian	Trans-New Guinea Phylum	Sepik-Ramu Phylum	Austronesian in Melanesia
A Declarative Marker appears with the Verb:	no	commonly in several areas	no	no
Indication of the Interrogative:	mostly by inton- ation only	frequently by an affix which is part of the verb complex	generally by a particle loosely connected with the verb	mostly by intonation only
Distinction of Realis and Irrealis Forms:	rare	common	rare	rare
A Passive is Present:	in a few areas	no	no	no
Special Sentence- Medial Verb Forms are present:	in some areas	very common, uni- versal over a wide area	in a number of areas	no
SYNTAX :				
Basic Word Order:	mostly very free, preferred order often subject- object-verb	rigid: subject- object-verb	rigid: subject-object- verb	right: subject-verb- object
Subordinate Clauses:	precede or follow main clause; sub- ordination is mostly expressed by juxta- position, in some areas by special medial verb forms	precede main clause; subordination is expressed by a set of elaborate special medial verb forms	precede main clause; subordination is expressed by a set of verb forms less complex than in the Trans-New Guinea Phylum	precede or follow main clause; subordination is expressed by particles

This short contrastive statement may amply illustrate the typological differences between the Trans-New Guinea and Sepik-Ramu languages on the one hand, and those present between them and the Australian and the Austronesian languages of Melanesia on the other.

