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Manambu

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Manambu belongs to the Ndu language family, and is spoken by about 2500 people in five villages: Avatip, Yawabak, Malu, Apa:n and Yuanab (Yambon) in East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea. Between 200 and 400 speakers live in the towns of Port Moresby, Wewak, Lae, and Madang. Most Manambu speakers are proficient in Tok Pisin, the *lingua franca* of Papua New Guinea; many know English. In terms of number of speakers, the Ndu family is the largest in the Sepik area, comprising 32% of the Sepik basin dwellers (Roscoe, 1994). It consists of at least eight languages spoken by over 100 000 people along the course of the middle Sepik River and to the north of it. Other documented languages in the family are: Abelam or Ambulas (ca. 40 000; this number includes speakers of a variety of dialects under the names of Maprik, Wosera, West Wosera, and Hanga Kundi); Boikin (ca. 30 000); Iatmul (ca. 12 000); Sawos (ca. 9000); Yelogu (ca. 200); and Ngala (ca. 130). No genetic links between Ndu and other languages of the Sepik area have been proved. The origins, protohome, and the internal classification of the Ndu languages remains a matter for debate. Manambu's closest relatives are Iatmul and Ngala. The trade relationship and marriage exchange with the Iatmul contributed to a large amount of lexical diffusion between the two groups in close contact.

Manambu is synthetic, agglutinating with some fusion, mostly suffixing, and predominantly verb-final. The phonology of Manambu is complicated,

with 21 consonants, nine vowels, and contrastive stress. Nouns distinguish eight cases (subject, definite object/locative; dative/aversive; allative/instrumental; comitative; terminative 'up to the point'; and two cases referring to 'means of transport'). Three numbers (singular, dual, and plural) and two genders (feminine and masculine in the singular) are expressed via agreement on demonstratives, interrogatives, in possessive constructions, on verbs and on two adjectives ('big' and 'small'). Singular and plural numbers are marked on kinship nouns, and on a few nouns from other semantic groups. The noun 'child' has a semisuppletive form for the dual number. Associative plural is marked on kinship nouns and personal names, as in *Tanina-b,r* 'Tanina and others.' Gender is distinguished in second and third person singular independent pronouns, and neutralized in the plural. Nouns are assigned genders according to the sex of a human referent, and to shape and size of any other referent. That is, men are assigned to the masculine, and women to the feminine gender; a large house is masculine, and a small house feminine. By semantic extension, an unusually big or bossy woman can be treated as masculine, and a squat fattish man as feminine. Personal names are a distinct subclass of nouns, with special derivational suffixes not used anywhere else in the grammar.

Verbs have a plethora of grammatical categories, covering person, number, gender, tense, numerous aspects (e.g., completive, habitual, and repetitive) and modalities including irrealis, purposive, desiderative, and conditional. A verb in the declarative mood can cross-reference the person, number, and gender of the subject. Or, if a clause contains a constituent that is more topical than the subject, this constituent can also be cross-referenced alongside the subject. The

imperative mood also marks person and number of the subject employing a different set of markers. The only fully productive prefix in the language is *a-*, the marker of second person imperative. Three suffixes expressing prohibition differ in their illocutionary force. Many of the verbal categories – including person and tense – are neutralized in negative clauses. Verb compounding is highly productive; up to three verbal roots can occur together, but the meaning of the combination is frequently unpredictable. Directionality (up, down, inside, outside) is marked both on verbs and on demonstratives. In addition, demonstratives encode six degrees of distance and visibility.

Similarly to other non-Austronesian languages of New Guinea, Manambu has extensive clause-chaining and a complex system of switch-reference, whereby a nonfinal clause is marked differently depending on whether its subject is the same, or differs, from that of the main clause. See Aikhenvald with Laki (forthcoming) for a full account of Manambu grammar, and also Aikhenvald (1998) and Allen and Hurd (1972). The relative complexity of Manambu could be partially accounted for by the substrata of languages spoken by members of neighboring tribes conquered by the Manambu as a result of inter-tribal warfare (Harrison, 1993).

Manambu culture places particular importance on ownership of personal names and various kinds of cultural knowledge. Ritualized debates among rival leaders and the clan groups they represent are, traditionally, the main political forum, and ownership of names is an oft-debated issue. A detailed study of Manambu ethnography is in Harrison (1990, 1993), which also contains a detailed analysis of the kinship system and relationships (of Siouan type). Traditional genres include mourning songs *grakudi* and foiled marriage songs *namai* (Harrison, 1982; Takendu, 1977).

Manambu is an endangered language. All the Manambu are bilingual in Tok Pisin (and some also

know English). Children in the villages prefer using the local *lingua franca*, Tok Pisin, in their day-to-day interaction. A literacy program in Manambu is currently being implemented at the local school at Avatip.

See also: Gender, Grammatical; Papua New Guinea: Language Situation; Switch Reference; Tok Pisin.

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Manchu-Tungus *See:* Tungusic Languages.

Mandarin *See:* Chinese.