

Endangered languages listing: AK [akq]

Number of speakers: 75 (2000 estimate)

Ak is one of the Yellow River family of languages, within the larger Sepik family. Its closest relatives are Namia and Awun. According to Laycock (1973), Ak is spoken only in the village of Kwieftim, now in Sandaun (West Sepik) province, Papua New Guinea. Kwieftim is situated east of the Sand River, which flows south from the Torricelli Range and ultimately into the Sepik River. Neighbouring languages include Seta and Seti to the north, Yis to the east, Pouye to the south-east, Namia to the south and Kwomtari to the west.

The current vitality of Ak is unknown. The most recent language survey appears to have been Laycock's, conducted in 1970-71. However, there are several indicators that language shift is likely to be occurring (cf Grenoble and Whaley 1998). One such indicator is the small size of the language. Stephen Wurm gave the population as seventy-five in 2000; this appears to be an estimate based on the population figure given by Laycock (eighty-three at the January 1970 census). Another indicator is the level of multilingualism recorded. Laycock says the villagers of Kwieftim "claim that they are fully bilingual in Fas, and that they can interpret in Yis, Bouye [Pouye] and Namie [Namia]". If language shift is occurring, it is most likely to Pouye, Namia (both neighbouring languages of high prestige) or to Tok Pisin. A language shift to Fas is less likely, because its language area is located about forty kilometres north, on the far side of the Torricelli Range. A new survey is needed for the current status of Ak to be known.

Language resources:

None.

References:

- Ethnologue (15th edition)*. 2005. Ed. Raymond G. Gordon. Dallas: SIL International.
<http://www.ethnologue.com/>
- Grenoble, Lenore A. and Lindsay J. Whaley. 1998. Toward a typology of language endangerment. In Lenore A. Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley, eds. *Endangered languages: language loss and community response*. 22-54. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Laycock, Donald C. 1973. *Sepik languages – checklist and preliminary classification* (Pacific Linguistics B-25). Canberra: Australian National University.