

## Endangered languages listing: MAGORI [zgr]

Number of speakers: 100 (2000 estimate); total population of language area: 1,012 (2000 census).

Magori is an Austronesian language of Central province, Papua New Guinea. It is traditionally spoken in the villages of Deba (at the eastern end of Table Bay, near the mouth of the Bailebo River) and Magori (on the lower reaches of the Bailebo). When first recorded by Europeans, the Magori language was thought to have been a variety of Mailu (or Magi), which is a neighbouring Papuan (non-Austronesian) language. Dutton (1976, 1982) established that Magori and the related languages Ouma, Yoba and Bina were in fact Austronesian languages that had borrowed much of their vocabulary from Mailu. This borrowing has been quite heavy but does not seem to have had much effect on the phonology or grammar (Dutton 1995).

The current status of Magori is unknown. The combined population of Magori and Deba villages, according to the 2000 census, was 1,012. However there have been reports that speakers of Magori were shifting to Mailu, Suau or Hiri Motu (Police Motu). Barbara Grimes (2002) comments, "Magori was on a preliminary Papua New Guinea list as endangered with two hundred speakers, who represent 40% to 60% of the ethnic group, and a few to half the children. The second language was reported to be used for all important functions, the people were negative to neutral about Magori. Russ Cooper has heard others from Papua New Guinea make the claim that Magori is not endangered. He says, if Magori is surviving, and holding its own, that would be worthy of study, because 'we've been reporting its near demise for decades now.'" The situation will only be clarified by a survey of the current linguistic situation.

### **Language Resources**

Two wordlists compiled by Tom Dutton: (a) 100 entries in Dutton 1976 (Table 2); (b) 173 entries at <http://language.psy.auckland.ac.nz/austronesian/language.php?id=164>.

### **References:**

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