

Endangered languages listing: MAKOLKOL [zmh]

Number of speakers: 7; population of language area: 35 (1988).

Makolkol is a Papuan (non-Austronesian) language spoken in the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain, Papua New Guinea; it belongs to the Baining family of languages. Wurm (1975: 789) commented that “Baining itself consists of five very divergent dialects... which are almost sub-languages.” Rosensteel (1988) argued that Makolkol was in fact a distinct language on the basis of cognate levels between 36 – 48% with other Baining “dialects”.

Makolkol speakers appear to be restricted to the village of Gunapeo. When last surveyed in 1988 (Rosensteel 1988), the language was dying; language shift was both to Tok Pisin and the neighbouring Austronesian language Meramera (the villagers said children were mixing Makolkol with Meramera). Rosensteel was able to get a wordlist from a young man, perhaps twenty-five years old, but he did not feel confident to tell a story. There were perhaps seven fluent speakers of the language from a village population of about thirty-five; these were aged between forty-five and sixty in 1988.

Language resources:

Wordlist from Makolkol (174 words): appended to Rosensteel 1988.

References:

Ethnologue (15th edition). 2005. Ed. Raymond G. Gordon. Dallas: SIL International.
<http://www.ethnologue.com/>

Rosensteel, Gary L. 1988. A sociolinguistic survey report on five Baining languages: Kairak, Makolkol, Mali, Simbali and Uramët. Unpublished manuscript. Ukarumpa: SIL.

Wurm, Stephen A. 1975. The East Papuan phylum in general. In Stephen A. Wurm, ed. *Papuan languages and the New Guinea linguistic scene: New Guinea area languages and language study 1* (Pacific Linguistics C-38). 783-804. Canberra: Australian National University.