

Endangered languages listing: TURAKA [trh]

Number of speakers: 25 (1997).

The Turaka language is spoken only in the village of Kapotaki, Milne Bay province, Papua New Guinea. The village is situated about 4 km east of Biman, in the mountains west of Goodenough Bay at an altitude of 2300 feet (700 metres). Turaka is evidently a member of the Dagan family of languages (part of the Trans New Guinea phylum), since its lexical similarities to the Dagan languages Mapena, Umanakaina (Gwedena) and Ginuman are all in the range 24-26%. The language has an SOV structure, with verb serialisation and adjectives following head nouns.

An SIL survey (Troolin 1998), which was carried out in October 1997, found that Turaka was clearly in decline. Only about twenty-five people had some understanding of the language. Of these, only one elderly speaker was fluent, about ten spoke some Turaka and about fifteen had only a passive understanding of the language. Adults used Daga, Mapena and Umanakaina in most domains. Children learned Daga and Mapena as their first languages. Daga was considered the highest prestige language, whereas Turaka had low prestige. While parents indicated they wished their children to speak Turaka, this was not borne out in their behaviour.

Language Resources

Parallel wordlists for Turaka and two Mapena-speaking villages (167 items), and two short stories in Turaka: appended to Troolin 1998.

References:

Ethnologue (15th edition). 2005. Ed. Raymond G. Gordon. Dallas: SIL International.

<http://www.ethnologue.com/>

Dutton, Tom. 1975. South-eastern Trans-New Guinea Phylum languages. In Stephen A. Wurm, ed. *Papuan Languages and the New Guinea Linguistic scene 1* (Pacific Linguistics C-38). 613-664. Canberra: Australian National University.

Troolin, David. 1998. Turaka preallocation survey report [Ethnologue code – TRH]. Unpublished manuscript. Ukarumpa: SIL.