

Comparative Grammar

Yessan-Mayo — Yawu

Uelma Foreman

February 1995

COMPARATIVE GRAMMAR

YESSAN-MAYO - YAWU

Velma Foreman

Ma 499.1275

YSS

1463

1995

TECHNICAL LIBRARY  
SUMNER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS  
PO BOX 415, UKARUMPA VIA LAE  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

February 1995

m86

~~ma 499.1275~~  
For

E. Sp...

# COMPARATIVE GRAMMAR YESSAN-MAYO - YAWU

Velma Foreman

March 1995

## OUTLINE

0. Introduction
1. Grammatical Differences
2. Semantic Differences
3. Conclusion
- Appendix

## 0. INTRODUCTION

The Yessan-Mayo language is classified by Don Laycock, Languages of the Lumi Sub-district (West Sepik District) New Guinea, as a member of the Tama Family of the Upper Sepik Phylum. It is located in the Ambunti District of the East Sepik Province in Papua New Guinea. The language has two major dialects, the Yessan-Mayo and the Yawu dialects. The Yessan-Mayo dialect speakers live in villages along the banks of the Sepik River 20-30 miles upriver from Ambunti. Yawu speakers live in villages 13-18 miles north and west of the Yessan-Mayo villages on the river.

A language programme was begun in the Yessan-Mayo dialect in 1962 under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and was completed in 1985. Most of the language goals were attained at the time of completion. One of the goals was a writeup of the grammar of the language and a Grammar Of Yessan-Mayo was published in Language Data, Asian-Pacific Series, Number 4 in 1974.

There was minor contact with the Yawu dialect during this period of working in the Yessan-Mayo dialect. It was thought that the translation of the New Testament in the Yessan-Mayo dialect would suffice for the speakers of the Yawu dialect. A dialect survey showed that the two dialects were very closely related, with the cognate count being in the mid high 90s. We could find no major differences in the phonology or in the grammar, although there were differences in vocabulary.

Men from the Yawu dialect were part of the committee which read through and revised the entire Yessan-Mayo New Testament before publication. Those men assured us that they were able to understand the translation in the Yessan-Mayo dialect and that a translation in the Yawu Dialect was not needed.

When the Yessan-Mayo programme was completed in 1985, we moved up to the Yawu area and began a literacy and Scripture-In-Use programme. As we started literacy, we soon realized that the Yessan-Mayo translation was not adequate for the Yawu dialect.

There were a number of reasons why it was felt that the Yawu dialect needed its own translation of the Scriptures. This paper will discuss only the grammatical and semantic differences that indicate that a separate translation is needed.

The purpose of this paper is to show the grammatical and semantic differences between the Yessan-Mayo and Yawu dialects, and to show that the differences are significant enough to warrant a separate translation of the New Testament for the Yawu people.

### Conventions Used

Examples throughout the paper will use the following conventions:

- written in the orthography of each dialect
- no morphemic breakdowns
- first column will be Yessan-Mayo, the second column will be Yawu
- verbs will be given in the present tense form, -ba in Yessan-Mayo and -be in Yawu. The vowel difference in this tense suffix will not be in focus in the examples.

## 1. GRAMMATICAL DIFFERENCES

Basically, the grammatical structure of the two dialects is the same. There are some differences and those will be noted below. The lexical forms may be, and often are, different, but the structure is the same.

### 1.1. Word Level

On the word level, in particular situations there may be more or there may be fewer allomorphs in Yawu than in Yessan-Mayo. For example, the far-past tense morpheme in Yessan-Mayo (pg.40 Grammar of Yessan-Mayo) has two phonologically defined allomorphs, -m and -im. In Yawu there are two additional phonologically defined allomorphs: -om which occurs contiguous to 'w', and -em which occurs contiguous to all consonants except 'y'.

ya <u>am</u>	ya <u>m</u>	'came'
haab <u>om</u>	ab <u>om</u>	'thought'
simen <u>im</u>	simen <u>em</u>	'sat'
mat <u>im</u>	met <u>em</u>	'heard'
ee <u>yim</u>	ey <u>im</u>	'burned'
	warwi <u>yim</u>	'gave birth'
yaaw <u>im</u>	yaw <u>om</u>	'went up'
wosow <u>im</u>	wesow <u>om</u>	'told'

Also there are some affixes in Yessan-Mayo which do not occur in Yawu. Yawu has no number/gender suffixes (pg.30 Ibid) and no emphasis prefix (pg. 37 Ibid).

### 1.2. Phrase Level

In Yessan-Mayo the General Verb Phrase (pg. 94 Ibid) has an inflected verb manifesting the Action slot. In Yawu if a negative is in the construction, the verb is always an uninflected verb stem and would carry the meaning of past tense. Future tense is indicated by a verb phrase which has the future marker Kip.

<u>an</u> <u>bi</u> <u>yim.</u>	<u>an</u> <u>beke</u> <u>yi.</u>	'I didn't go.'
I not go-pst	I not go	

<u>an</u> <u>bi</u> <u>yite.</u>	<u>an</u> <u>beke</u> <u>Kip</u> <u>yi.</u>	'I will not go.'
I not go-fut	I not fut go	

### 1.3. Sentence Level

There are just a couple of differences between the two dialects on the Sentence level.

Yawu does not have an Immediacy Sentence (pg.144 Ibid).

In Yawu the form which manifests the Base 2 of the Certainty Sentence is the same form which manifests Base 2 of the Yessan-Mayo Immediacy Sentence; that is, nenbe 'to do.

<u>Aan</u> <u>yite</u> <u>nenba.</u>	<u>An</u> <u>yite.</u>
I will-go doing	I will-go
'I am about to go.'	'I will go.'

<u>Aan</u> <u>yite</u> <u>tetaana.</u>	<u>An</u> <u>yite</u> <u>nenbe.</u>
I will-go be-stative	I will-go doing
'I will definitely go.'	'I will definitely go.'

## 2. SEMANTIC DIFFERENCES.

The area which accounts for the major difference between the two dialects is the area of semantics. There is vocabulary that is completely different between the two dialects and this causes no problems. For example, the word for 'tobacco' in Yessan-Mayo is wuraamsi and in Yawu it is sakwei.

In other instances, the forms of the words are identical and are in the same semantic domain but relate to different things. The word for 'tomorrow' in Yessan-Mayo is ware and in Yawu it is Kipi. Yessan-Mayo also has a word Kipi meaning 'a little later today'. Both of them are time words, but refer to entirely different times.

Much of the vocabulary is common to both dialects. However, the ways in which many of the words are used are quite different between the two dialects. In some situations where both dialects use the same word, but where there is more than one word that could be used, there is a definite preference in the Yawu dialect

for a particular word to be used. The Yessan-Mayo dialect word could be used and it would be understandable and acceptable to a certain degree, but there is this strong preference to use the word that is less commonly used in the other dialect/for one word over another.

The area of semantics is probably what led us astray in our thinking that the two dialects could use the same translation. The differences are subtle and not immediately obvious.

### 2.1. Words completely different

Looking at the dictionary entries of both languages, a rough estimate shows that approximately one third of the vocabulary is completely different. Examples follow:

aagerbba	akeite	'another'
eeysow	nubele	'small'
bukra	eisau	'big'
raana	kau	'some'
worya	memake	'a carving'
maata	yabel oub	'clothing'
saambon	dere	'a hook to hang things on'
serba	wan getbe	'to forget'
lagaba	omobe	'to finish'
tupaaba	tukbe	'to buy'

### 2.2. Same form but different meaning

There is a small percentage of words which have the same form, but have entirely different meanings. Examples follow:

puromoba	'to vow'	puromobe	'call the spirits'
tumaa tobo	'meaning'	tuma tobo	'not all has been said'
kipi	'later today'	kipi	'tomorrow'
rerr	'teeth'	rer	'lizard species'
taama tiy	'friend'	tame ti	'stretcher'

### 2.3. Words that are the same

A comparison of the dictionary entries shows that approximately a third of the vocabulary is the same in both dialects. Many of the words are exactly the same:

wus	wus	'skin'
por	por	'pig'
yenbo	yenbo	'good'
wuri	wuri	'one'
ok tiba	ok tibe	'get water'

Many of the words are phonologically the same but have a different orthographic symbols:

tumaa	tuma	'words, language'
aap	ap	'bird'
laaba	labe	'to see'
haaboba	abobe	'to think'

Many words are basically the same, but there is a change in the vowel. Some of these changes are predictable; for example, a Yessan-Mayo final 'a' goes to a Yawu 'e'. Other changes are not predictable.

kelow	Kelu	'road'
was	wos	'thing'
morgu	mergu	'chest'
nogwaapa	nogwape	'many'
potba	potbe	'to get'
matba	metba	'to hear, understand'
saylaaba	seilabe	'to try'

In another set of words there is a change in a consonant. These consonants are usually phonologically related. There are many instances where 'l' changes to 'r', and limited examples where 'r' or 'rr' changes to 'l'. Some words have both and 'l' to 'r' and an 'r' to 'l' change.

naamreba	namdebe	'to converse'
sokwunba	sogwunbe	'put down into water'
dididaaw	sididau	'new butterfly'
laabe	rabe	'stem; vein in leaf'
wulaara	wurare	'each one'
laaborrba	raborbe	'clean the ears'
tikliliba	tikrinibe	'to make a quick movement'
gerraani	gelani	'pandanus root fibre'
rigelba	ligerbe	'to turn over'
waarrgal	walger	'scorpion'
keraaruw	kelaru	'other side of road, lake'

Another group of words have the same basic form, but there is an extra syllable or one less syllable:

nem	nema	'we plural'
nes	nesa	'we two'
sekene	seken	'true'
paa	pape	'stone'
kirrsiy	kirsisiy	'marsupial animal species'
tuknaaba	tukunabe	'to sleep'
laakeraba	lakrebe	'to care for'

There is a group of phrase constructions where the words are the same, but the order is different. This change of ordering is not consistent, but are peculiar to certain combinations.

yaam bor	bor yam	'banana species'
aalwo sokwo	sokwo alwo	'taunting songs'
naawa haa	a nawo	'parents, mother and father'

## 2.4. Words not the same, but related

The words in this group share something of the basic form, but are not as closely related as the words in 2.3.

kubuseel	kubusei	'measuring stick'
paap	selpap	'inner being'
baarana	barapai	'wide'
paap yokba	pap wayebe	'angry'

<u>pus</u> <u>kitiy</u>	<u>pus</u> <u>a</u>	'fish bait'
hook meat	hook food	

<u>towa</u> <u>aaka</u>	<u>tewo</u> <u>lu</u>	'scab'
leg house	leg road	

<u>lat</u> <u>maama</u>	<u>ya</u> <u>mame</u>	'right hand'
hand big	bone big	

<u>wule</u> <u>saba</u>	<u>wule</u> <u>tobobe</u>	'follow the law'
law hold	law follow	

<u>yaakwu</u> <u>nenba</u>	<u>yaku</u> <u>kerebe</u>	'to work'
work do	work hold	

a yaakwu om yaakwu  
food work meat work

a om yaku 'work of providing food'  
food meat work

## 2.5. Preferences in shared words

There is a group of words which in one or other of the dialects has two forms and one of those is preferred and used by the other dialect.

Yessan-Mayo		Yawu	
Common	Not Common	Same as Y-M but not used much	Different but preferred
akwul		akwul	Kom
hayarr		eyar	noub
bas rasba		bas rasbe	basbe
womat		womet	wola
			'home, village'
			'well'
			'to write'
			'to ask'
		Same as Y-M uncommon form	
raana	kaaw	kau	'some'
yaakwu	yaakwu	yaku kerebe	'to work'
nenba	kerraba		
lagaba	homoba	omobe	'to finish'



### 3. CONCLUSION

In Appendix 2, Text - Translated, three very short passages of Scripture are given in both dialects. A count was taken in each text of the differences (vocabulary and spelling) between the two dialects:

John 3:16

33 words in each dialect translation  
Word differences other than spelling - 17  
Words that are spelt differently - 33

Acts 13:42-43

68 words in each dialect translation  
Word differences other than spelling - 10  
Wprds that are spelt differently - 42

Philippians 3:15-16

31 words in Yessan-Mayo, 31 in Yawu  
Word differences other than spelling - 7  
Words that are spelt differently - 26

If Yawu people were trying to read the Yessan-Mayo New Testament, this number of changes makes it very difficult, if not impossible for many people, to read and understand what is being read.

After comparing the phonemics (cf. Appendix 1) and grammar of the two dialects, we concur with the Yawu people that in order for them to understand the Scriptures in their own language, it has to be written in their own dialect.

APPENDIX 1  
ORTHOGRAPHY

Yessan-Mayo Orthography

Consonants:

b, bw, d, g, gw, h, k, kw, l, m, mw, n, p, pw, r, rr, s, t, w, y

Vowels:

a, aa, e, ee, i, o, u

Yawu Orthography

Consonants:

b, bw, d, g, gw, k, kw, l, m, mw, n, p, pw, r, s, t, w, y

Vowels:

a, e, i, o, u

## APPENDIX 2

### TEXT - TRANSLATED SCRIPTURE

A sampling of Scripture texts is given (the same text is given in both dialects) to show the number of changes that actually do occur between the two dialects.

Jon 3:16 - Yessan-Mayo

God rre aaboyeey nowselre taataama rremne paap matem, rre rrene  
God he all ground's people them liver felt he his

yen wuriwow rrene werraasen yaam, rre nowselre taataama rremne  
child one-only him sent came he ground's people them

kwoba laan saam. Saam, taataama rrem rrene omuteke haabote, rrem  
help see died. Died, people they him believingly thought they

yaaperr bi tate, rrem haayarr som som temente tetaana.  
bad not will-be, they well still still will-be certainly

- Yawu

God ere akei nowselri tatame emne pap yewom, ere eri yen wurisubu  
God he all ground's people them liver put-into he his child one

erne won yam, ere nowselri tatame emne kwobo lan sam.  
him spoke-and went, he ground's people them help see-and died.

Sam, tatame eme erne kenawaike abote, eme yaper beke kip te,  
Died, people they him very-much will-think, they bad not will be

eme nouh som temente nenbe.  
they well still will-be certainly

Acts 13:42-43 - Yesssan-Mayo

Polkene Banabaskene prep God eterne aakak wurraabem, taataama prem  
Pol-with Banabas-with they-2 God his house came-out people they

preppe op wom. Yuri aagerrbo aga si yaabel, kep sene yaate,  
to-those-2 this said. Later another rest sit day, you-2 again will-  
come

nemne tumaa sene wosowte. Op wom, prem God atarre aaka  
to-us-pl talk again will-tell. That said, they-pl God his house

meeseqenen Juda taataama noowaapa, aagerrbo taataama noowaapa  
left-and Juda people many other people many

prem Juda atamne wule samenem taama, prem Polkene Banabaskene,  
they-pl Juda their law held men they Pol-and Banabas-with

atapne sumowen yim. Sumowen yim, prep premne tumaa  
to-those-2 follow-and went. Follow-and went, those-2 to-them talk

omuteke op wom. God ere Kemne paap matba. Kem atop  
believingly this said. God he to-them liver feeling. You-all that

omuteke haabote. Op wom,  
believingly will-think. That said.

- Yawu

Polken Banabasken ege God eteri akek wurabetem, tatame eme  
Pol-and Banabas-with they-2 God his house came-out people they

egne ep wom. Yuri akeite ege si yabel, kep sene yate,  
to-those-2 this said. Later another rest sit day, you-2 will-come

nemne tuma sene wosoute. Etep wom, eme God eteri ake  
to-us-pl talk again will-tell. That said, they-pl God his house

mesqinin Juda tatame noqwape, akeite tatame noqwape eme Juda  
left-and Juda people many, other people many they Juda

etemri wule tobobetem tame, eme Polken Banabasken egne  
their way followed men they Pol-and Banabas-with those-2

semowen yim. Somowen yim, ege emne tuma noubke ep  
follow-and went. Follow-and went, those-2 to-them talk stong this

wom. God ere Kemne Kobo labe. Kem etep Kenawaike  
said. God he to-you-pl help sees. They-pl that very-strongly

abote. Etep wom,  
will-think. That said.

Philippians 3:15-16 - Yessan-Mayo

Nem saspa Kristen, nem atopkaap wurbaay tete.     Yika taataama  
We-pl mature Christian, we-pl that-like mind will-be.     Who people

nrem atopkaap wurbaay bi tetaana, God nre nremre wurbay haayarnte.  
they-pl that-like mind not be,     God he their mind will-fix.

Matya, God nre nemne wurbaay yenbo nowamkaap, nem atop haayarr  
Listen.     God he to-us-pl mind good gave-like they-pl that well

omuteke sabot.  
believingly will-hold

- Yawu

Nema Kristen sespe, nema etepkap porere kir tete. Yike  
We-pl Christian mature, we-pl that-like mind also will-be.     Who

tatame eme etenkap porere beke te, God ere emne peterate.  
people they that-like mind not be,     God he to-them will-show

Matya, God ere nemne porere yenbo newomkap, nema etep eyar  
Listen.     God he to-them mind good gave-like, they-pl that well

noub tobobetete.  
well will-follow.

# APPENDIX 3

## TEXT - NATIVE AUTHOURED - YAMU

Peikri wos moqworken waseken etepri sike.  
river's things crocodile-with turtle-with their story

Mogwor eme peik meiwaika temenbe.  
crocodiles they river deep-very-at live  
'Crocodiles live very deep in the river.'

Eme yen barke sene wayen taibe.  
they children shore-at again come-up-and bear.  
'They come up to the shore and have their children.'

Taibe yen e noowapewai.  
bear children that very-many  
'They have many children.'

Kau 24, Kau 30, Kau 40, Kau 44.  
some 24, some 30, some 40, some 44  
'Some have 24, some 30, some 40, some 44.'

E moqwor etemri yen ete.  
that crocodile their children that  
'Those are the crocodiles children.'

Wase eme etepou, eme yen barke wayen ek  
turtles they that-only, they children shore-at come-up-and then  
taibe.  
bear.

Turtles are the same, they come-up to the shore and bear their children.'

Emri yen noowapekap berai.  
their children many-like not  
'They do not have many children.'

Kau 12, Kau 8, Kau 6, Kau 10.  
some 12, some 8, some, some 10  
'Some have 12 children, some 8, some and some 10.'

Wase emri taibe yen ab ete  
turtle their bear children all there  
'That's all the children the turtles have.'

Mogwor etemri taibe yen etem, eme noowapewai.  
crocodile their bear children they they very-many  
'The children of the crocodiles are very many.'

Mogworken waseken epri sike ab ete.  
crocodile-with turtle-with their story all there  
'That's the story of the crocodiles and turtles.'

# YAMU FIRST PERSON NARRATIVE TEXT

Kixi an por nebetem sike  
before I pig shot story  
'The story of a pig I shot before.'

Kixi an gan sen boulke yim.  
before I gun held-and bush-to went  
'Once I took a gun and went to the bush.'

An por wuri lam. ere sal pisbetem.  
I pig one saw, he ground rout-pst  
'I saw a pig and he was routing in the ground.'

An lam. an pen ere sam.  
I saw, I shot-and he died  
'I saw, I shot him and he died.'

An wus take kayen subruwum.  
I skin leaves cut-Ad covered  
'I scraped off the hair and covered it.'

An kelu belen berke yim.  
I road foul-and how-to went  
'I got lost and didn't know where to go.'

An boulke belen yin an kixiri komsukke lam.  
I bush-at foul-and go-and I before's old-village saw  
'I was lost and went and saw an old village site.'

Komsuk siq Teyabuqke yawen.  
old-village name Teyabug-at went up-and  
'I went up to the old village site called Teyabug and'

an lam. tame kau eme etek temenem.  
I saw, men some they there were  
'I saw that some men were there.'

Emri siq Yabetub. Gaireka. Amokus.  
their name Yabetub, Gaireka, Amokus.  
'Their names were Yabetub, Gaireka, Amokus'

Bur tame pes epri siq Nokumuken Miginuyaken.  
Bur men two their name Nokumuken Miginuyaken  
'The names of the two Bur men were Nokumuken Miginuyaken.'

An ope etek lam. Lam. epe ane sane panen yam.  
I they-2 there saw. Saw, they-2 me back brought-and came  
'I saw those two there. Having seen, those two brought me back.'

Yan. etepri boul wakek ete nema tukunam.  
came-and their bush house-at there we-pl slept  
'We all slept there at their (dual) bush house.'

Tukunem, boui ake siq Gwortake.  
slept, bush house name Gwortake.  
'The name of the bush house was Gwortake.'

Ed ten, ei beramke, an yan yerem.  
that be-and, dawn broke-when, I came-and came-down  
'When it dawned, I came down.'

Ari temenem kom siq Bur. Gwopte an som siten gwote.  
my be village name Bur. Today I still sit here  
'The name of the village where I live is Bur. Today I still live here.'

TECHNICAL LIBRARY  
SUMNER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS  
PO BOX 415, UKARUMPA VIA LAE  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA