

North Wahgi (Yu We) Language **[Western Highlands Province]**

Trans New Guinea Phylum; East New Guinea Highlands Stock; Central (Chimbu) Family; Wahgi Subfamily

Population census: 58,000 (2000)

Major villages: Banz, Banz No.1, Koskala, Nondugl, Karap

Linguistic work done by: SIL

Data checked by: Heather and Don Mc Lean (May, 2005)

Phonemic and Orthographic Inventory

a	m̥b	n̥d	e	ŋ̥g	i	ŋ̥dʒ̥	k	l	ɿ	m	n	ɳ	ɳ̥	o	p	r	s	t	u	w	j
a	b	d	e	g	i	j	k	l	ɿ	m	n	nn	ng	o	p	r	s	t	u	w	y
A	B	D	E	G	I	J	K	M	N	Nn	Ng	O	P	S	T	W	Y				

Consonants

	Bilabial	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar
Plosive	p		t		k
Nasal	m	ɳ	n		ɳ̥
Flap			r		
Fricative			s		
Approximant				j	
Lateral Approximant		ɿ	l		

- /m̥b/ voiced prenasalised bilabial plosive
/n̥d/ voiced prenasalised alveolar plosive
/ŋ̥g/ voiced prenasalised velar plosive
/ŋ̥dʒ̥/ voiced prenasalised dental affricate
/w/ voiced labial-velar approximant

p	[pi'su] pisu	'cucumber'	t	[tu] tu	'dog'
	[ɔ'bo] opo	'bow' (noun)		-	
	[ap] ap	'salt'		-	
mb	[^m bɑl] bal	'fish' (noun)	ⁿ d	[ⁿ dɔp] dop	'fire' (noun)
	[a ^m bɛl] ambel	'teenage girl'		[nɔ ⁿ do] nondo	'mushroom'
	[ka ^m p] kamb	'banana'		[b ⁿ t] ond	'tree'
m	[mi] mi	'taro'	n	[nɔl] nol	'water' (noun)
	[ku'ma ⁱ] kumai	'cassowary'		[ku'nape] kunape	'corn'
	[ma ⁱⁱ am] maiam	'blood'		[kon] kon	'string bag'
w	[we] we	'true'	r	-	
	[ke'wa] kewa	'cry' (noun)		[arua]	'pumpkin'
	-			[^m baɾ]	'bean'
ŋ	[nɪm] nnim	'you sg.'	s	[si ^m p] simb	'leg, foot'
	[mɪŋ'maŋ]			[' ^g ispe]	'yellow'
	minnmann	'shadow, spirit'		[kes]	'bad'
	[kɔŋ] konn	'cheek'			
ⁿ dz[ⁿ dzi ^m bɛm]	jimbem	'my namesake'	l	-	
				[a'lɑ]	'ala
					'mistake' (noun)
	[pu ⁿ dzip]	punjip	'they went'	[^m bɒl]	bol
	[ŋu ⁿ ts]	ngunj	'lizard'		'bed, table'
l	-		j	[je]	ye
	[a'lɑ]	alla		[mo'jao]	moyao
	[^m bɒl]	boll		-	'plural greeting'
k	[ku]	ku	'stone, money'	[ŋal]	ngal
	[a'ga]	aka	'sweet potato'	[a'ŋɛl]	angel
	[' ^g ro]	ak to	'turn around!' sg.	[kɔŋ]	kong
ⁿ g	[ⁿ gar]	gar	'house'		'child'
	[kɒ ⁿ gar]	kongar	'Christmas, year'		'arm, hand'
					'pig'

Vowels

i u

e o

a

i	[iʃ] ir [mɪŋ] ming [pi] pi	'tobacco' 'container' 'now'	u	- [wur pam] wur pam [bu] bu	'he, she, it is asleep' 'thought'
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e	[e] e [pli'kɛs] plikes [ɛ'lɛ] elle	'this is' 'many' 'here'	o	[ɒl] ol [ɒ̩mblɒm] omblom ['ɔbo] opo	'moon' 'bone' 'bow' (n.)
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a	[a'gɑ] aka [a'lɑ̩mɒp] alamb [mal'ma] malma	'sweet potato' 'people' 'highway'
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/ai/ /au/

/ei/

/oi/

a ⁱ	[a ⁱ] Ai [kʊm'ka ⁱ m] kumkaim [wa ⁱ] wai	'girl's name' 'butterfly' 'What did you say?'
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a ^u	[a ^u lom] aulom [ka ˈka ^u lo] ka kaulo [kɔŋ ka ^u] kong kau	'leaf' 'hornbill' 'cow'
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e ⁱ	[e ⁱ i] ei i [me ^{i̩m} bɛl] meimbɛl [me ⁱ] mei	(exclamation!) 'we two are' 'I am'
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o ⁱ	[o ⁱ ñe] oi nne [go ⁱ ŋ] going [mo ⁱ] moi	'to glide like an owl' 'is bending over' 'pitpit' sp.
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Suprasegmentals (tone, stress, length)

Stress is not written in the orthography. It is unpredictable but disyllabic names generally have the stress on the first syllable.

'Kere	'girl's name'	ke're	'little'
'Kanjip	'star, girl's name'	kan'jip	'they saw'
'Kupull	'man's name'	ku'pull	'sky'
'Kuru	'girl's name'	ku'ru	'white'

Tone is not written as the meaning can usually be determined by the context:

high [ˊ] low [ˋ] tone:

ká	'bird'	kà	'good'
kámb	'possum, small animal'	kàmb	'banana'
kánjíp	'star'	kàn'jíp	'they saw'
mí	'north'	mí	'taro'
mék	'vomit'	mèk	'black bird of Paradise'

Syllable Patterns

V	e 'this is'	a.lamb	'people'	a.ru.a 'pumpkin'
VV	ai 'girl's name'	au.lom	'leaf'	
VC	am 'breast'	as.pli	'sneeze' (noun)	
CV	ma 'no'	no.ndo	pu.na.mbel 'mushroom'	a.ka 'sweet potato'
CVV	koi 'rat'	mai.am	'blood'	ku.mai 'cassowary'
CCV	klu 'place'	kla.nde	'pillow'	ka.ple 'all right'
CVC	kong 'pig'	kum.kaim	'butterfly'	minn.mann 'shadow, spirit'
CVCC		kok.s.mbol	'we two are biting'	
CVVC	going 'is bending over'			kum.kaim 'butterfly'

Conventions: Phonological

/p k/ are pronounced [b g] word medially and /p/ is occasionally pronounced [β] as in ['jɪβe] yipe 'now'.

<b d g j> are prenasalised [^mb ⁿd ⁿg ⁿdz] word initially and intervocally, and voiceless prenasalised [^mp ⁿt - ⁿtʂ] respectively, word finally. There is sometimes a postalveolar quality to /j/ when followed by /i/.

In fast speech /t/ is pronounced [f] as in [wi ro] wi to 'shout', [ag ro] ak to 'turn around', ['pɪg ə'ro] pike to 'fill up'.

In normal speech, the final vowel is often elided and joined to the next word. Thus <we eri> becomes ['wəri] 'very true', <tuale to> becomes [tu'alto] 'among', <yipe eri> becomes ['jiperi] 'right now'.

/i/ can be pronounced [i] preceding a nasal, an exception being [ŋim] nnim 'you sg.' It is pronounced [ɪ] in a closed syllable and [i] elsewhere.

/e/ is pronounced [ə] in unstressed syllables, [e] word finally or in stressed open syllables and [ɛ] elsewhere.

/o/ is pronounced [ɒ] word initially, except before /p/, and in closed syllables, with the exception of [kɔŋ] konn 'cheek', [kɔn] kon 'string bag', [dɔp] dop 'fire', and [pop] pop 'wind' (noun). It is pronounced [ɔ] before /r/ and [o] elsewhere.

/u/ is pronounced [ʊ] in unstressed or closed syllables with the exception of [wur] wur 'sleep' and is pronounced [u] elsewhere.

/r/ is pronounced [ɹ] or [r] in free fluctuation.

Conventions: Orthographic

Tone is not written.

The prenasalised phonemes /^mb ⁿd ⁿg ⁿdz/ are written , <d>, <ng> and <j> word initially and <mb>, <nd>, <ng> and <nj> respectively, elsewhere.

<ng> represents both /ŋ/ and word medial /ⁿg/ in the orthography.

Transcription of a recorded passage

[kunum 'ɛ̄nde ŋal pli'kes ^mbal wuk ke'le kar nɔl tu'pam puⁿdzip̄. ε̄n̄d̄z̄ep̄ ^mbal pli'kes to'na^mbe ŋal 'kupie 'mɔlo 'ɛ̄mbe ŋim.

ke'ŋem ⁿdop̄ kir 'sepe 'ɛ̄nde ⁿdp̄n̄da a'lā^mp je mo'ra. mo 'ɛ̄nde noⁿdp̄n̄da a'lā^mp o'lōm a^mp mo'ra pa ŋim.

'ŋɪⁿde, 'kɒⁿdi 'mɒlo 'e^mbe ɳim, 'kable ke'ɳem kir se'^mba ɳim.
 'ŋɪⁿde, e^lŋdʐɛl kir se^ldʐɪ]. 'kɒⁿdi sem ⁿdɒm ba 'kupie no^lnɒm.
 no^lnɒmⁿdo, ⁿga 'pɔrɔ 'pɔrɔ 'mɒlo, 'kupie ɳim pe se a^mp kɒl pa
 ɳ^lŋdʐɪp'.]

<Kunum ende ngal plikes bal wuk kele Kar Nol tupam punjip. Enjep bal plikes tonambe ngal Kupie molo embe nnim. Kennem dop kir sepe ende donda alamb ye mora. Mo ende nodonda alamb olom amb mora pa nnim.

Nninde, Kondi molo embe nnim, kaple kennem kir semba nnim. Nninde, enjell kir senjill. Kondi sem dom ba Kupie nondom. Nondondo, ga poro poro molo, Kupie nnim pe se amb kol pa nninjip.>

One day many boys went down to the Kar River to fish. They caught many fish and Kupie said, “Let’s start a fire by friction. If anyone can do it he is a real man. Or whoever can’t light it will become a woman.”

Kondi spoke up and said, “All right, let’s start a fire by friction.” The two of them tried to start a fire by friction. Kondi was able to start one but Kupie couldn’t.

All the boys said, “Kupie, hurry up or you will turn into a woman!”

Bibliography

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