A Linguistic History of Awyu-Dumut Languages

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Awyu-Dumut languages were spoken by generations of people in the Digul River basin when Petrus Drabbe started his study of them in 1940. My PhD thesis, to be published nearly 75 years later, builds on Drabbe's rich research and subsequent research on Awyu-Dumut languages undertaken by Alan Healey (1970), Bert Voorhoeve (2001, 2005) and Lourens de Vries (1992, 1993, 1997).

The Awyu-Dumut language family consists of eight languages, which can be divided into three subgroups: Awyu languages, Dumut languages and Kombai. A strict application of the comparative method resulted in an extensive reconstruction of Awyu-Dumut proto morphology; Table 1 contains a summary of this proto morphology. In reconstruction, a strict form-function constraint was followed, which required both the forms and functions of cognate morphemes to be the same, or traceable in a non ad-hoc manner, resulting in the discovery of diachronic paths, such as in the development of Awyu double negation. In addition to the comparative method, computational phylogenetic methods were applied to Awyu-Dumut lexical data.

In my presentation, I will present a summary of my thesis. The internal subgrouping of the Awyu-Dumut family will be discussed and the reconstruction of proto morphology will be highlighted through a look at the reconstruction of Awyu-Dumut mood markers and pronouns. I will conclude by pointing out areas for further research.

	Proto Awyu	Proto Dumut	Kombai	Proto Awyu-Dumut
nominal morphology				
nominal coordinator	*ku	*kup, *te	xu	*kup
kinship plural marker	*-gi	*-ŋgu(i)	–	*ŋgV
possessive marker	*-nV	*-nV	–	*-nV
pronouns				
1SG	*nu	*nup	nu(f)	*nup
2SG	* gu	*ŋgup	gu(f)	*ŋgup
3SG	**eke	*yup, *eke	xe	*yup,*eke
1PL	*nüku	*nakup	nagu	*nakup
2PL	*güku	*ŋgakup, *nakip	nage	*ŋgakup, *nakip
3PL	*yaku	*yakup	ya	*yakup
subject person-number				
1SG	*-e(fe)	*-ep	-e(f)	*-ep
NON1.SG	*-en	*-n	-n, -e	*-en
1PL	*-efan	*-ewan	-efo	*-epan
NON1.PL	*-enan	*-enan	-eno	*-enan
deictics				
near deictic	*ne	*me, *ne	me(ne)	*me, *ne
far deictic	*(e)wV	*ep	mofe(ne)	*ep
distant deictic	*xa/*xo	*kop	maxo	*kop
tense and mood				
future tense	*-e	*-en/*-in	-i, -e	*-en/*-in
past tense	–	*-an	–	–
realis mood	*-d, *-k	*-t, *-ken	-d , -x	*-t
irrealis mood	*-ø	*-ø	-ø	*-ø
negation				
double negation	*fa/*fe...(*de)	–	(fe)...do	*pa...(*nde)
single negation	–	*ndV		–
switch reference				
same subject marker	*-bu, *-di	–	–	–
simultaneity marker	–	*-no	–	–
'non-close' marker	–	*-ro	-ra	*-rV

Table 1: Awyu-Dumut proto morphology

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