

First findings on Kalamang: The case of lost grammatical markers

Kalamang (ISO code kgv, previously known as Karas) is one of the understudied languages of West Papua. It is spoken by some 150 people living on the island of Karas, just west off the coast of the Bomberai Peninsula. None of the children currently living on the island are active users of Kalamang. The bulk of knowledge we have about Kalamang is based on data gathered during two months of field work by myself. In my presentation I would like to give a brief overview of Kalamang phonetics and phonology and highlight some interesting findings from these and other areas of the language, such as the non-predicatability of stress, special case markers for numbers and the apparent limits of SOV word order. The main part of the presentation will be used to explain a particularly interesting morphophonological problem that might hint at lost grammatical markers. The rest of this abstract will be used to summarize the morphophonological problem.

In a number of verbs, extra morphemes seem to appear:

	'to go'	'to eat'	'to return'	'to shoot'
bare form	bo/bot	na/nan	ecie/jecie	sair
VOL	bo- t -kin	na- t -kin	ecie- t -kin	sair-kin
NEG	bo- t -nin	na- t -nin	ecie- t -nin	sair-nin
CMPL	bo-i	na- n -i	ecie- n -i	n.av.
ET ¹	bo-et	na- n -et	ecie- t -et	n.av.

These morphemes, as the examples above show, do not always appear, neither do we find the same morpheme (-**t** or -**n**) on different inflected forms of the same verb, or on the same form of different verbs. The morphemes are neither explicable with help of phonological rules. The same morphemes seem to appear on question words and demonstratives, as the following examples illustrate:

<i>metko</i>	<i>watko</i>	<i>tamatko</i>
me- t -ko	wa- t -ko	tama- t -ko
there-?-LOC	here-?-LOC	'where'
<i>mengga</i>	<i>wangga</i>	<i>tamandi</i>
me- n -ka	wa- n -ka	tama- n -di
there-?-LAT	here-?-LAT	'how'

Usher (p.c.) has suggested that -**t** and -**n** reflect earlier suffixes -tV and -nV which have lost their vowels because they were destressed. It seems that final vowel loss is common in Kalamang, as there is a majority of consonant-final roots. Comparative data from other West Bomberai languages shows that these roots used to be vowel-final. Final vowel loss is found in other Papuan languages, such as the Anim languages (Usher & Suter 2015²), and South Bird's Head languages (Usher p.c.). Just what the meaning of -**t** and -**n** was remains for further research.

1 This suffix is thusfar unanalysed and therefore glossed as ET.

2 Usher, T. & Suter, E. 2015. The Anim Languages of Southern New Guinea. *Oceanic Linguistics* 54(1): 110-142.