Imperative Forms and Areal Features in the Madang Region of Papua New Guinea

Masahiko Nose
Professor / Shiga University

I Introduction

The island of New Guinea and its surrounding islands are located in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, a region where more than 1,000 languages are spoken. Approximately 13% of the world's languages are found here, including Papuan (or Non-Austronesian), Austronesian, Indonesian languages, alongside English, and the English-based creole Tok Pisin. This remarkable linguistic diversity distinguishes the area as a significant area of interest in linguistic studies (cf. Foley (1986)).

The focus of this research is the Madang region, specifically Madang Province in Papua New Guinea, which is located in the northeastern part of New Guinea Island. Madang Province, which is comparable in size to Taiwan, is home to approximately 270 languages. While the majority belong to the Papuan language group (or precisely Trans-New Guinea language family), approximately ten belong to the Austronesian language group. Given the substantial differences in vocabulary and grammar between these two language families, Tok Pisin functions as the primary lingua franca alongside English. This sociolinguistic environment facilitates widespread interlingual communication, resulting in extensive language contact within the province (Nose 2020).[1)]

This study investigates and analyzes the grammatical dimensions of language contact among the languages of Madang Province, with a specific focus on the imperative mood. It examines five distinct languages from the region: three Papuan languages, one Austronesian language, and Tok Pisin.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the research back-

1) The Madang area of Papua New Guinea has been a region of ongoing linguistic research by the author since his first visit in 2005.

ground of the New Guinea languages and introduces the sample languages under investigation. Section 3 articulates the research questions, and Section 4 details the methodology. Section 5 presents the empirical data from each language and highlights the observations derived from the analysis. Section 6 discusses the primary findings, and Section 7 provides concluding remarks.

II Research background of the New Guinea languages

This section outlines the linguistic diversity of the New Guinea region and introduces the languages sampled in this study. New Guinea Island and its surrounding areas, including Papua New Guinea, host nearly 1,000 languages. Over half of these are classified as Papuan (or Trans-New Guinea) languages, which are indigenous to the island and believed to have been spoken by populations who settled the region approximately 30,000 to 50,000 years ago. Subsequently, between 5,000 and 7,000 years ago, Austronesian-speaking populations arrived, settling predominantly along the coasts and on adjacent islands (cf. Lynch 2018; Foley 1986).[2)]

Western influence began in the 19th century, bringing contact with languages such as Dutch, German, and English. Extensive interaction with English, particularly from Australia, led to the development of Tok Pisin, a creole language that draws heavily on English vocabulary and grammar. Tok Pisin is now widely spoken as the lingua franca in Papua New Guinea, while Indonesian serves this role in West Papua on the western side of New Guinea Island.

Numerous studies have highlighted the extraordinary linguistic density of this region. For instance, Madang Province alone contains up to 270 languages, the majority of which belong to the Trans-New Guinea (TNG) phylum (see Figure 1 for a linguistic map of the area). Although these languages share certain broad typological features—such as complex verbal morphology with inflection for tense and person/number, subject-object-verb (SOV) constituent order, and noun–adjective or noun–numeral ordering—their specific lexicons and grammatical constructions diverge significantly, as illustrated in Table 1 (Nose 2020, 2022).

Table 1 provides an overview of personal pronouns (first, second, and third-person singular), the verbs 'go' and 'come', and the numerals 'one', 'two', and 'three' across the five languages examined in this and previous studies: Amele, Girawa, Waskia, Kobon, and Usan. Although all five are classified within the Trans-New Guinea phylum, they display distinct variations in these foundational lexical items. As Foley (2000) notes, while Papuan (or TNG) languages frequently exhibit complex verbal morphology, SOV word order, and verbal agreement for person, number, and tense, their pervasive lexical divergence makes it difficult to establish fine-grained grammatical commonalities across the family.

Indeed, although Amele, Girawa, Waskia, Kobon, and Usan are genetically related within the TNG phylum, their pronominal systems, verbal roots for *go* and *come*, and numeral systems (1–3) are entirely distinct. Structurally, these languages are loosely grouped together, yet their lexicons diverge to the extent that mutual intelligibility is nonexistent, and there is

2) In fact, within the author's research area, the New Guinea language Amele and the Austronesian language Bel are geographically adjacent, resulting in significant and ongoing language contact between them.

Table 1: Basic vocabulary of the Trans-New Guinea languages of Madang Province

	I, you, he/she	to go / to come	one, two, three
Amele	ija, ina, uqa	nuga/ hoga	osol, leis, ijed
Girawa	is, na, ko	man/ pe	karar, oirorer, (no three)
Waskia	ane, ni, nu	namer/ tair	itoketa, itelala, iteltoke
Kobon	yad, ne, nipe	ar/ au	nöbö, igwo, igwo aŋ nöbö
Usan	ye, ne, wo	isu/ di	gâri, ombur, ombur gâri

virtually no shared vocabulary. Nonetheless, certain structural shifts are observable across these systems; for instance, none of these languages grammatically distinguish gender (i.e., no distinction between 'he' and 'she') in their third-person singular pronominal systems[3].

This study selected five languages from Madang Province as representative samples: three TNG languages, one Austronesian language, and Tok Pisin, a creole language. All are spoken within 100 kilometers of Madang, the provincial capital, and may linguistically influence each other. Comprehensive descriptive grammar is available for each sample language. While some data in this study come from fieldwork, most information is sourced from these existing grammars.

The list of the five sample languages and the referenced descriptive grammars appears below in (1).

(1) Five sample languages spoken around Madang town

1:Amele: Trans New Guinea; Roberts (1987), my data (Nose 2024)

2:Bel (Takia)[4] : Austronesian; Dempwolff (n.d.), Ross (2002), my data[5]

3:Girawa: TNG; Gasaway and Sims (1992)

4:Waskia: TNG; Ross (1978)

5: Tok Pisin: Creole; Mühlhäusler (1985), my data

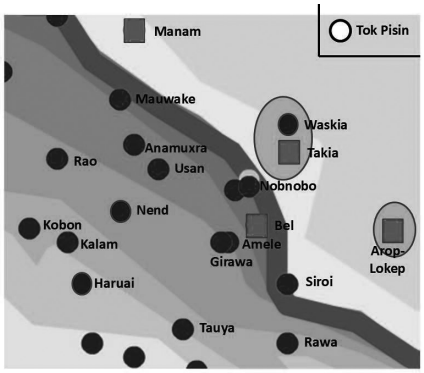
Figure 1 presents a language map of Madang Province, Papua New Guinea, which includes the sample languages listed in (1). In this map, circles represent TNG languages, while squares indicate Austronesian languages. The sample languages selected for this study, as shown in (1), are located relatively close to one another, suggesting the possibility of contact among them.

Earlier research has identified several grammatical characteristics in the languages of

3) Girawa lacks a numeral corresponding to "three." This phenomenon is observed in many languages of Papua New Guinea, where numerals typically exist only up to about five, with quantities beyond that generally expressed as "many." In fact, the Amele language possesses numerals only up to five. This raises the question of how Girawa expresses numbers greater than or equal to three. It is believed that such numbers are represented through combinations, such as "1 and 2" or "2 and 2." Similarly, in the Austronesian Takia language, only the numerals "one" and "two" exist, and numbers beyond two are expressed by combining these basic numerals.

4) Ross (1978, 2002) distinguishes between the Bel and Takia languages; however, the author's observations suggest that they are linguistically hardly distinguishable. Therefore, in this study, Bel and Takia are treated as a single linguistic entity. For clarity, the variety spoken on Karkar Island, adjacent to Waskia, is referred to as Takia, while the variety spoken on the New Guinea mainland is designated as Bel.

5) According to Figure 1, Bel is spoken on the mainland of New Guinea, while Takia is spoken on the nearby island of Karkar, where it is found alongside Waskia.



Based on the World Atlas of Language Structures, 2005

Figure 1: A partial linguistic map of Madang Province

Madang Province that are influenced by language contact: meatypy, linguistic convergence, borrowed vocabulary, and contact-induced grammatical changes.

1: Metatypy

(2)

Takia:			
ŋai	tamol	an	ida
I	man	determiner	with.him
Waskia:			
ane	kadi	mu	ili
I	man	determiner	with.him
"the man and I"			
Takia:			
tamol an		ŋai	i-fun-ag=da
man determiner		me	he-hit-me=imperfective
Waskia:			
kadi mu		aga	uno-so
man determiner		me	hit-present-he

"The man is hitting me."

Ross (2001: 140) described metatypy, a grammatical shift in the Takia (Austronesian) and Waskia (TNG) languages of Karkar Island, Madang Province. Through long-term contact, these unrelated languages have developed similar grammar, including syntactic and semantic borrowing, as shown in (2).

2: Sprachbund (Linguistic area)[6)]

The manifestation of Sprachbund phenomena is well-attested cross-linguistically. A notable example can be found among the languages of the Balkan Peninsula in Europe, where, despite belonging to distinct language families, verbs display significant grammatical convergence owing to prolonged language contact. Similarly, the languages spoken in Madang Province are considered to constitute a loose Sprachbund, encompassing both TNG and Austronesian languages. Although there are clear differences in their vocabularies, these languages demonstrate notable grammatical similarities.

3: Lexical borrowings (Loanwords)

Amele (TNG) and Bel (Austronesian) languages exhibit lexical borrowing, particularly in time-related vocabulary (Nose 2016). While Haspelmath and Tadmor (2009) studied loanwords broadly, Nose (2016) focused on specific terms. The findings show that Amele and Bel

However, based on the author's observations and the accounts of Takia and Bel speakers, Bel and Takia are so similar that speakers can readily communicate with each other, suggesting that they are essentially the same language. Of course, some works, such as Ross (2001, 2002), treat them as separate languages. Whether to classify these varieties as distinct languages or dialects is a complex issue, even for linguists. In this study, based on the grammars referenced (Dempwolff, Ross, and the author's field data), Bel and Takia are analyzed as a single language.

6) A prominent example of a Sprachbund can be found among the languages of the Balkan Peninsula in Europe, which include Albanian, Modern Greek, Romanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Serbian. Despite their differing linguistic lineages and vocabularies, these languages exhibit notable grammatical differences. Chief among these are the postposed definite article and the formation of the future tense using a verb originally meaning "to want," paralleling the development of the English future auxiliary "will" from the verb for "will" or "wish."

borrow vocabulary from each other, as illustrated in (3).

(3)

Amele, TNG; sain gaid (always), cabi gel (garden fence; year)

Bel (Takia), Austronesian; sain dagan (always), umaz (garden fence; year)

4: Contact-induced language change

(4) Contact-induced grammaticalization: Heine and Kuteva (2006:81)

a. Speakers notice that in language M there is a grammatical category Mx.

b. They create an equivalent category Rx in language R on the basis of the use patterns available in R.

c. To this end, they draw on universal strategies of grammaticalization, using construction Ry in order to develop Rx.

d. They grammaticalize Ry to Rx.

Heine and Kuteva (2006) suggest that Tok Pisin grammar has been incorporated into other TNG and Austronesian languages. In Amele, Tok Pisin words replace those not in its lexicon, and Tok Pisin (M) influences its grammatical structure. For instance, the Amele (R) temporal conjunction sain ("time") is borrowed and adapted from Tok Pisin's taim ("time"> "when").

III Research Questions

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the grammar of the imperative mood across five languages spoken in the vicinity of Madang City. Specifically, it addresses how each language formally encodes imperative semantics, whether these forms exhibit areal commonalities, and to what extent these parallel structures result from language contact (cf. Aikhenvald 2010; Crowley & Bowern 2010; Meyerhoff 2015; Heine & Kuteva 2005). Moving beyond the broader areal descriptions in Nose (2020), this study focuses strictly on the mechanisms of contact-induced change within imperative paradigms.

To achieve this, the study addresses the following three research questions:

1. What are the precise morphological and syntactic strategies used to express imperative meanings in each of the five sample languages?
2. Do these imperative constructions share structural features that cross genetic boundaries within the Madang region?
3. Can these shared features be attributed to language contact and convergence rather than genetic inheritance?

IV Methodology

The empirical foundation of this study relies on existing descriptive grammars (see reference list (1)) supplemented by the author's field notes on Amele and Tok Pisin. The analytical framework targets the morphosyntax of the imperative mood, alongside its sociolinguistic distribution in discourse.

Following Aikhenvald's (2010, pp. 1–2) typological framework, the imperative mood is defined as a speech act aimed at eliciting "obedience, execution, action, [or] obligatory" behavior from the addressee, whereas the prohibitive (negative imperative) functions to prevent an action. This study examines both affirmative and negative paradigms to map the

structural motivations and contact pathways driving imperative usage in Madang Province.

To systemize the cross-linguistic data, a typological checklist was implemented, as outlined in (5):

(5) Analytical Checklist for Imperative Paradigms

1. **Morphological Shape of Imperatives:** Evaluation of formal marking strategies, including bare verbal roots, inflectional paradigms, suffixation, and prefixation (e.g., English bare forms vs. Japanese inflected forms like *akete* 'open').
2. **Person and Number Distinctions:** Tracking agreement contrasts, particularly between second-person singular and plural subjects.
   - *Amele (2SG): ho-ga!* "Come (singular)!"
   - *Amele (2PL): ho-iga!* "Come (plural)!"
3. **Semantic Extensions:** Analysis of direct commands vs. hortative/cohortative forms (e.g., "Let's...") and modal nuances.
4. **Prohibitive Structures:** Formal strategies for negative imperatives and the morphosyntax of the negative marker (e.g., French *ne...pas*, German *nicht/kein*, Japanese *-naide*).
5. **Politeness Strategies:** Morphosyntactic modification for mitigated or polite imperatives (e.g., "Please do," "Could you please...").

Parameters 1 and 2 target the core morphosyntactic structure of the clause; parameter 3 examines semantic configurations; parameter 4 evaluates negative alignment; and parameter 5 assesses pragmatic and sociolinguistic mitigation.

V Imperative Data and Findings

This section reviews imperative constructions and data for each language, as detailed in the sample language checklists.

First, Amele (example set (6)), a New Guinea language, demonstrates the formation of the imperative mood via an imperative suffix attached to the verb. Previous research has established that Amele's verb morphology is notably intricate: the verb stem is followed by a tense suffix, an imperative suffix, and person and number agreement markers. Regarding person marking, Amele distinguishes between second-person singular and plural forms in its imperative sentences. Notably, the imperative form in Amele is generally regarded as lacking inherent mood-based semantics and instead conveys a direct or realis-based meaning. The negative imperative (prohibition) is achieved by prefixing the negative particle "ain," yielding a construction analogous to English prohibitive forms such as "Don't do." Politeness is expressed through the use of Tok Pisin "please" or through the construction "Please do," which signifies courtesy.

A closer analysis reveals that both second-person singular and plural imperative pronouns may co-occur in Amele alongside the verb's imperative inflection. Additionally, using the invitation marker "ke" before an imperative sentence allows speakers to express inclusive commands or suggestions, akin to English phrases such as "Let's" or "Shall we." In the formation of negative invitations ("Let's not..."), neither the 'ain' marker nor the 'ke' proposal marker appears; instead, future negative verb inflections are used, often corresponding to the

second-person plural forms. Furthermore, while "please," borrowed from Tok Pisin, is widely used to convey politeness, the native expression "odi ain" exists but is reportedly rare among Amele speakers (according to the author's language consultants).

(6) Example set of Amele:
1: Imperative verb forms: imperative suffix
Verb-today's past tense inflection(=imperative suffix)-person/number
2: Imperative persons: 2. sg/pl difference
(Ina: 2sg) English iwaldo-ga! "Study English"
(Age: 2pl) English iwal-do-iga!
3: Imperative meanings: not-mood, rather realis meaning
4: Prohibitive, negator: "Ain"
Ain nu-ag-aun! Don't go; toward 2sg "you"
5: Polite imperative
Please marasin jiga! "Please take medicine" (code-mixing)
Odi ain (thus+don't> please) + verb-today's past tense
Odi ain marasin ja-ga! "please take medicine": toward singular "you"

Turning to Bel (example set (7)), an Austronesian language, its imperative form consists of the bare verb accompanied only by person and number agreement. Although descriptive grammar lacks specific data on person distinctions, it is reasonable to infer differences between the second-person singular and plural imperatives, as follows. Unlike the realistic semantics observed in Amele, Bel's imperative can have non-real (irrealis-based) or even futurate interpretations. The negative imperative is formed using the particle "moi," which denotes unwillingness, and produces a serial (imperative) verb construction. Politeness may be conveyed via the enclitic suffix "-yan" or the affixes "-pa/-pe" attached to verb stems. (Dempwolff n.d.)

(7) Example set of Bel:
1: Imperative verb forms: Bare verb form-person/number agreement
Fud (banana) en (the) w-ani! (2sg-eat) "Eat this banana!"
2: Imperative persons
No data, but there may be 2nd person sg/pl difference
3: Imperative meanings: irrealis, future meaning
ø-moi (2sg-desist/stop) do-p (continuous-irrealis) "Wait!"
4: Prohibitive, negator "moi" (not want): imperative serial construction
Mau (taro) an (the) w-ani (2sg-eat) u-moi (2sg not want)!
"Don't eat that taro!"
5: Polite imperative: By using enclitic –yan/ suffix –pa/-pe
Uso-yan! "Please return"
Agaze-pe "Please write"

Girawa (example set (8)), another New Guinea language, shares similarities with Amele; specifically, the imperative is marked by an imperative suffix added to the verb. Second-person singular, plural, and formal distinctions are observable in the imperative sentences. An invitation meaning is expressed using first-person plural inflectional form. Prohibitive constructions employ the negative marker "wa" preceding the verb, coupled with the negative verb inflection "-au." No data on polite imperative forms was available in the data sources[7)].

7) Girawa is reportedly spoken in regions adjacent to Amele-speaking villages. However, despite conducting fieldwork for over ten years, the author has not encountered any speakers of Girawa. According to the Ethnologue website, the number of Girawa speakers is estimated to be fewer than 10,000, yet the language does not appear to be immediately endangered. It is possible that, although geographically proximate, there is limited interaction between Girawa speakers and the Amele-speaking community.
<<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/bbr/>>

(8) Example set of Girawa: Gasaway and Sims (1992)
1: Imperative verb forms: imperative suffix inflectional forms
Man-o (go-2 singular-imperative) "You (singular) go"
2: Imperative persons: 2. sg/pl difference
Man-e (go-2 plural-imperative) "You (plural) go"
3: Imperative meanings: First person plural: Let's meaning
Man-omwe (go-1 plural-imperative) "Let's go"
4: Prohibitive, negator "wa"
Wa wai-au! "Don't cry!" negative suffix: au
5: Polite imperative: No data

Waskia (example set (9)), a New Guinea language with significant contact with Austronesian Takia (Bel), displays unique grammatical features. Its imperative is realized using an unreal verb mood suffix, which also encodes future and desiderative meanings (see (10), irrealis subject-tense-mood suffixes). Second-person singular and plural distinctions are encoded in the unreal suffix paradigm. Prohibitive imperatives utilize the negative marker "me." There is no documented evidence of polite imperative forms in Waskia either. Importantly, the presence of real and unreal tense/mood suffixes (10)—where the former indicates present, past, and habitual actions and the latter denotes future, imperative, and desire—is attributed to prolonged linguistic contact with Takia(Bel); this real/unreal difference is absent in Amele and Girawa.

(9) Example set of Waskia: Ross (1978)
1: Imperative verb forms: irrealis-tense-mood suffix: -ko
Ul-ko: Take it!
2: Imperative persons: 2. sg/pl difference
Ul-ko (2 person singular)/ Ullw-anko (2 person plural) "Take it"
3: Imperative meanings: future, desiderative (optative: want to)
4: Prohibitive; negator "me"
Me no-ko! "Don't eat!"
5: Polite imperative: No data

(10) Two Realis-irrealis verb suffixes (Ross 1978: 67-68)
1: Realis subject-tense-mood suffixes: -sam > present, past habitual, past simple
2: Irrealis subject-tense-mood suffixes: -uki > future, imperative, desiderative

Tok Pisin (example set (11)), a widely spoken creole in Papua New Guinea, derives much of its structure from English and incorporates several elements from Malay. Imperatives are typically formed by placing the bare verb at the beginning of the sentence, sometimes preceded by verbs such as "come/go" (e.g., "come+do," "go+do"). Person marking does not distinguish between second-person singular and plural. The imperative exclusively conveys direct command. Negative imperatives employ particles such as "no ken" and "tambu." Polite requests are constructed by placing "please" at the beginning of the sentence, consistent with the Amele usage.

(11) Example set for Tok Pisin:
1: Imperative verb forms: bare verb form, "come/go"+verb
Study! Kaikai! "Eat (it)!", Sanap "Stop (it)!" ; Go study!

2: Imperative persons: There is no 2. sg/pl difference
3: Imperative meanings: Direct imperative only
4: Prohibitive; negator "no ken" "tambu"
No ken kaikai / Tambu kaikai "Don't eat (it)!"
5: Polite imperative: "Please Verb"
Please study, Please kaikai

In summary, the imperative checklists across the five sample languages reveal both cross-linguistic patterns and individual peculiarities, as shown in Table 2. Both TNG and Austronesian languages generally mark imperatives with specific suffixes, whereas Tok Pisin relies on an uninflected verb form. Most languages position negation markers before the verb, although Bel attaches "-moi" after the stem. Formal distinctions between second-person singular and plural forms are common among the TNG languages. The meanings of the imperative and prohibition forms vary, intersecting with invitations, unreality, and futurity. Morphological markers for politeness exist in Bel, while Amele adopts Tok Pisin borrowings for this purpose. Table 1 provides a synthesized overview of the imperative characteristics and tendencies of each language.

In the context of TNG and Austronesian languages, imperative constructions are typically marked with specific suffixes and inflectional patterns. Tok Pisin, by contrast, is notable for employing a distinct, uninflected form for the imperative. Generally, negation precedes the verb; however, the Bel negator "moi" ('not want') is an exception to this pattern.

TNG languages make formal distinctions between second-person singular and plural in their imperative forms. Certain imperative constructions may also express nuances such as "let's," irrealis mood, or future intent. Furthermore, Bel uses a dedicated morphological marker to indicate the polite imperative.

Amele adopts the Tok Pisin term "please" to form polite imperative expressions (see (13) below).

Table 2: Summary of contrastive imperative forms and functions

	Imperative forms	**Second person sg/pl difference**	**Irrealis meaning included**	**Negator form**	**Politeness nuance**
Amele (TNG)	Suffix	Yes	No	Ain+Verb	Please
Girawa (TNG)	Suffix	Yes	No	Wa+Verb	No data
Waskia (TNG)	Suffix	Yes	Yes	Me+Verb	No data
Bel (Takia) (Austronesian)	Bare form with second person marker	No data (probably, yes)	Yes	Verb+Moi (not want)	Suffix
Tok Pisin(creole)	No (bare form)	No	No	Noken+Verb	Please

VI Discussion

The contrastive data demonstrate that the morphosyntactic pathways driving imperative formation in the Madang region vary significantly. According to Aikhenvald's (2010) typological framework, the grammaticalization of imperative markers typically proceeds from a restricted set of lexical or grammatical sources, as summarized in (12).

(12) Cross-Linguistic Grammaticalization Pathways to Imperatives (Aikhenvald 2010, Ch. 10)

1. **Pathway 1**: Venitive verbs ("come") >>> Imperative marker
2. **Pathway 2**: Andative verbs ("go") >>> Imperative marker
3. **Pathway 3**: Desistive/Abandative verbs ("leave", "abandon") >>> Prohibitive/Imperative marker
4. **Pathway 4**: Second-person singular pronominal forms >>> Imperative syncretism
5. **Pathway 5**: Future tense / Irrealis modality / Subjunctive mood >>> Imperative paradigm
6. **Pathway 6**: Past tense / Optative mood >>> Imperative paradigm

In terms of regional alignment, Tok Pisin directly mirrors Pathways 1 and 2 through its use of directional serial verbs (*kam(come)/go* + Verb) to encode commands. Pathway 3 is not actively operational among the sample languages. Pathway 4, involving derivation from or syncretism with [2SG] features, characterizes the Girawa system. Crucially, Pathway 5—the structural evolution of imperatives out of broader future-oriented or irrealis domains—is prominent in Bel and Waskia. Finally, Pathway 6, where past-tense morphology shifts through an optative intermediary stage into an imperative, is attested in Amele.

When analyzed through the lens of contact linguistics, these findings offer compelling insights into areal convergence. Although the indigenous TNG and Austronesian languages exhibit profound structural and genetic distance, their imperative configurations display non-trivial architectural parallelisms. Bel (Austronesian) systematically derives its imperatives from an irrealis/future base; significantly, this exact typological profile is duplicated in Waskia. Because Waskia is genetically a TNG language, its alignment with a realis/irrealis binary system cannot be explained by inheritance; rather, it represents a clear instance of contact-induced structural borrowing from Takia (Bel).

Pragmatically, explicit bound morphology for politeness is absent across the TNG group, with honorific strategies predominantly restricted to Austronesian Bel. To fill this functional gap, Amele speakers structurally incorporate the Tok Pisin borrowing *plis* into their indigenous clause structures.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, these linguistic choices are deeply intertwined with community ecology. Except for Tok Pisin, these languages are spoken in small, highly integrated village societies where daily interactions are characterized by dense social networks. In the Madang hinterland, although TNG languages exhibit strong resistance to heavy lexical borrowing, their grammatical structures show clear signs of structural align-

ment. The strategic deployment of the Tok Pisin borrowing *plis* by Amele speakers (see 13) highlights a shift in pragmatic context.

(13) Sociolinguistic Code-Mixing for Pragmatic Mitigation

- *Plis kam!* (please come) — "Please come." [Pure Tok Pisin]
- *Plis ho-ga!* (please come-2SG.IMP) — "Please come." [Mixed Amele-Tok Pisin Structure]

In egalitarian, non-hierarchical village settings, highly articulated morphological politeness markers are functionally redundant because interactions occur among close kin. However, when communicating outside these immediate networks or engaging in inter-ethnic communication, the pragmatic demand for overt deference increases. This sociolinguistic pressure accounts for the borrowing and structural integration of Tok Pisin's *plis* into native imperative frames.

Ultimately, the imperative systems of Madang Province reflect a dynamic tension between genetic inheritance and areal convergence. TNG languages maintain conservative traits, such as robust second-person number contrasts and suffixal inflection. Concurrently, Austronesian contact has introduced innovative realis/irrealis binary oppositions into languages like Waskia, while the expanding role of Tok Pisin as a regional lingua franca provides a uniform template for pragmatic mitigation.

VII Conclusion

This study demonstrates that while the five sample languages of Madang Province exhibit minimal direct lexical borrowing, they form a distinct linguistic area characterized by structural convergence, with Tok Pisin acting as a primary catalyst for ongoing change. The grammatical architecture of the imperative mood reflects a clear typological divide: core TNG imperatives are anchored in realis-based paradigms, whereas Austronesian languages—and Waskia, via contact-induced convergence—subsume the imperative under an irrealis framework.

This structural distribution is geolinguistically bounded rather than genetically inherited. While profound differences in core semantic configurations remain, long-term bilingualism has fostered widespread structural parallelisms and shared usage patterns. Finally, the isolating imperative syntax of Tok Pisin continues to exert a powerful prestige influence, reshaping both the grammatical boundaries and the pragmatic mitigation strategies of the indigenous languages within the region.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Neret Tamo and his family for providing the data and their kindness. This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI (Grant Number 20K00541). An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2024 Workshop on Areal Linguistics & Areal Typology, November 30, 2024, Changshu Institute of Technology, Suzhou, China. I am grateful to the audience for their feedback.

References

- Aikhenvald, A. Y. (2010). *Imperatives and commands*. Oxford University Press.
- Crowley, T., & Bowern, C. (2010). *An introduction to historical linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Dempwolff. (n.d.). Grammar of Gedaged language. Mimeo. Narer, Karkar Island: Lutheran Mission.
- Foley, W. A. (1986). *The Papuan languages of New Guinea*. Cambridge University Press.
- Foley, W. A. (2000). The languages of New Guinea: *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 357-404.
- Gasaway, E. & H. Sims. (1992). Girawa grammar. <<https://www.sil.org/system/files/reapdata/10/05/27/100527615094733386150073114641232453013/Girawa_Grammar_Updated.pdf>>
- Haspelmath, M., & Tadmor, U. (2009). The loanword typology project and the world loanword database. *Loanwords in the world's languages: A comparative handbook*, 1-34.
- Heine, B., & Kuteva, T. (2005). *Language contact and grammatical change*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lynch, J. (2018). *Pacific languages: An introduction*. University of Hawai'i Press.
- Meyerhoff, M. (2015). *Introducing Sociolinguistics*. Taylor & Francis.
- *Mühlhäusler, P. (1985). Syntax of Tok Pisin*. In Wurm, Stephen A. and Mühlhäusler, Peter (eds.), *Handbook of Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin)*, 341-421. Canberra: Australian National University.
- Nose, M. (2016). Borrowing temporal expressions in New Guinea languages: A contrastive study of loanwords.「東北大学言語学論集」第24号95-104.
- Nose, M. (2020). Chapter 8: Persons and Address Terms in Melanesia: A Contrastive Study, In: T. Okamura & M. Kai, (eds.). *Indigenous Language Acquisition, Maintenance, and Loss, and Current Language Policies*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
- Nose, M. (2022). Negation during communication in Amele: A morphological analysis. Journal of *Asian Pacific Communication*, 32(1), 25-51.
- Nose, M. (2024). Imperatives and commands in Amele, Papua New Guinea. A paper presented at Sociolinguistics Symposium 25. June 24. Curtin University, Perth, Australia,
- Roberts, J. R. (1987). *Amele*. Croom Helm.
- Ross, M. (1978). *A Waskia grammar sketch and vocabulary*. Pacific Linguistics, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.
- Ross, M. (2001). Contact-induced change in Oceanic languages in North-West Melanesia. In: *Areal diffusion and genetic inheritance: Problems in comparative linguistics*, 134-166.
- Ross, M. (2002). Takia. *The Oceanic languages*, 216–248.

Imperative Forms and Areal Features in the Madang Region of Papua New Guinea

Masahiko Nose

This study examines imperative constructions across five languages in the Madang region of Papua New Guinea, an area characterized by extraordinary linguistic diversity and intense multilingual contact. Home to over 270 languages from the Trans–New Guinea (TNG) and Austronesian families, alongside the English-based creole Tok Pisin, this region offers a unique setting for investigating areal grammatical phenomena. Although these languages exhibit profound lexical and grammatical divergences, long-term contact has fostered notable structural convergence. Focusing specifically on the imperative mood—an understudied domain in Papuan–Austronesian comparative research—this paper analyzes how imperative forms are constructed, interpreted, and potentially reshaped by language contact in Amele, Girawa, and Waskia (TNG), Bel/Takia (Austronesian), and Tok Pisin.

Drawing on descriptive grammars and original field notes, the study employs a comparative checklist addressing imperative morphology, person/number distinctions, semantic extensions, prohibitive constructions, and politeness markers. The findings reveal substantial cross-linguistic parallels in imperative marking. The three TNG languages and Bel/Takia utilize suffixation, whereas Tok Pisin relies on uninflected verbal roots, often embedded in directional serial verb constructions. All TNG languages maintain morphological distinctions between secondperson singular and plural forms, contrasting with Tok Pisin's neutralized number alignment. Semantic configurations vary: Amele and Girawa express direct imperatives and hortatives through distinct inflections, whereas Bel and Waskia exhibit irrealisbased imperative semantics encompassing futurate and desiderative interpretations. Prohibitives predominantly employ preverbal negation, except in Bel, which utilizes a postverbal auxiliary construction (*moi*, 'to refuse'). Politeness strategies remain marginal in most TNG languages; however, Bel possesses dedicated polite suffixes, and Amele structurally incorporates the Tok Pisin borrowing *plis*, reflecting contemporary contactinduced change.

Areal analysis suggests that these imperative systems reflect a dynamic interaction between genealogical inheritance and contactdriven convergence. The syncretism of irrealis morphology and imperative functions in Waskia indicates structural borrowing from neighboring Austronesian languages like Bel/Takia. Conversely, Tok Pisin acts as a primary lexical donor for pragmatic mitigation in adjacent TNG speech communities. Despite pervasive multilingualism, direct lexical borrowing among indigenous Madang languages remains highly restricted; nonetheless, their imperative constructions exhibit parallel structural tendencies consistent with a loose Sprachbund. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that imperative systems in the Madang region provide critical evidence of contact-induced grammaticalization, morphological alignment, and sociolinguistic adaptation, advancing current understandings of areal typology and language contact dynamics.