

Preface

Kemtuik is one of the many remote languages in Papua, Indonesia. The area is located on the North coast, close to the border with Papua New Guinea, south-west of Lake Sentani. It is spoken by approx. 4,000 people. Kemtuik is part of the Nimboran language family, together with Nimboran, Gresi, Mlap and Mekwei. This grammar and phonology write-up has as its main purpose: to support local field teams in the Kemtuik/ Klesi/ Nimboran region in the linguistic research of their own mother tongues.

These studies are not only done out of interest in so far unknown languages, but have also a practical focus: the study of these local languages in relation to the regional language ‘Papuan Malay’ and the national language ‘Bahasa Indonesia’. The past decades have shown a decrease in the use of the local languages and an increase in that of the regional language. Indonesian is the language of education. Papuan Malay however, is not accepted by the government as a formal language of education, neither is there an accepted standard of grammar and orthography of that language, on which basis a balanced community development can take place. An additional problem is that basic structures derived from the local languages play their part in the development of Papuan Malay. All over Papua, different varieties of Papuan Malay are in use. So, not only for identity purposes, but also for their own development it is important for local people to understand the main features of their mother tongue in relation to the regional and national languages.

The scientific status of this descriptive grammar is limited. The research has been done by practical linguists serving with SIL International, with a limited linguistic background but with speaking knowledge of Kemtuik and living amongst the local people for many years. Although the analysis may not be perfect and not meet strict scientific requirements, there may be much value in it. It can be regarded as a basic and simple description of a remote, unknown language, clearly laid out with copious examples and texts. It contains linguistic information collected over the past three to four decades and is proposed to be a model for the local teams, now and in the future, to build on with continued linguistic research.

The write-up is organized from phonemes all the way to text, in this way:

1. Phonology
2. Word level
3. Grammatical relationships
4. Phrase level
5. Clause level
6. Textual evidence
7. Word lists

The following comments about glosses need to be taken into account:

- Glosses show a uniform, basic meaning. Other related meanings are possible. When a word carries unrelated meanings, a foot note will be made showing the different meanings.
- The glossing of the Relational Postpositions (Chapter III) is done in a very basic way. The precise meanings of these relational elements are very dependent on the context in which they are being used. To help the reader to understand the grammatical structures, only basic glosses, printed in capitals, are being given. The meaning in the specific context shows up in the free English translation.