

An examination of possession in Panim, a non-Austronesian language of Papua New Guinea

Panim (pnr) is a Gum language of Madang Province, Papua New Guinea with fewer than a dozen fluent speakers. It is bordered by Amele and Isebe, fellow Gum languages, on the south and west. This study investigates the possessive strategies of Panim and compares them to those of Amele and Isebe (Mirkuk dialect) with data from published and unpublished sources. This investigation reveals differences among the three languages, which include the retention of different reflexes of Proto Gum inalienable possessive suffixes in each language, the presence of genitive pronouns in Panim and Isebe (absent in Amele), and a three-way number distinction in alienable possession in Panim (also absent in Amele). These differences in the grammaticization of alienable and inalienable possession among the three languages are used to confirm Panim's status as a separate speech community and to posit the origins of possessive strategies in Proto Gum.