

**Sociolinguistic Overview of the Irires Language:
A Native Speaker Perspective**
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Abstract

A few studies have been conducted in order to classify languages in the West Papuan phylum. Voorhoeve (1975) and Silzer and Heikkinen (1989; 1991) did a classification of languages in the Bird's head area based on a sociolinguistic survey and lexicostatistic studies. Meidema and Welling (1985) studied the distribution of languages in the area based on geographical location and also migration of the speakers in the area. Grimes (1992; 1996;2000) classifies languages of the Bird's head area. Flassy and Stokhof (1982) investigate the language situation based on the dialect distributions, a demographical study in order to group languages in the area. Studies by Wurm (1982), Sanggenafa (1986), Berry and Berry (1999), Galis (1955, 1956, 1960), and others contribute to the study of language groupings in the Bird's head area.

My study aims to revisit the classifications done by the above-mentioned linguists from my perspective as a native speaker of the Irires language. Those linguists have made significant classifications, especially in identifying the Irires language. Most of these linguists identify the Irires language based on outsider references, meaning that the name given to identify the Irires language derives from other languages around the Irires language, without regard to the original name from native speakers of Irires. Names such as Karon Dori, Meon, Maiyach addressing Irires are all outsider names.

Irires 'a small community among other big communities' call themselves by such a name; while its neighboring languages such as Karon people call Irires *Meon* 'people who speak language speedly'; Mpur people address Irires as *Bakatan* 'people who produce and wear bracelet'; while Meyah people call Irires *Meyah mewi* 'language root'.

In short, my paper provides a sociolinguistic perspective of a native speaker of Irires toward previous studies, which identify the Irires language among languages of the Bird's head belonging to the West Papuan Phylum.