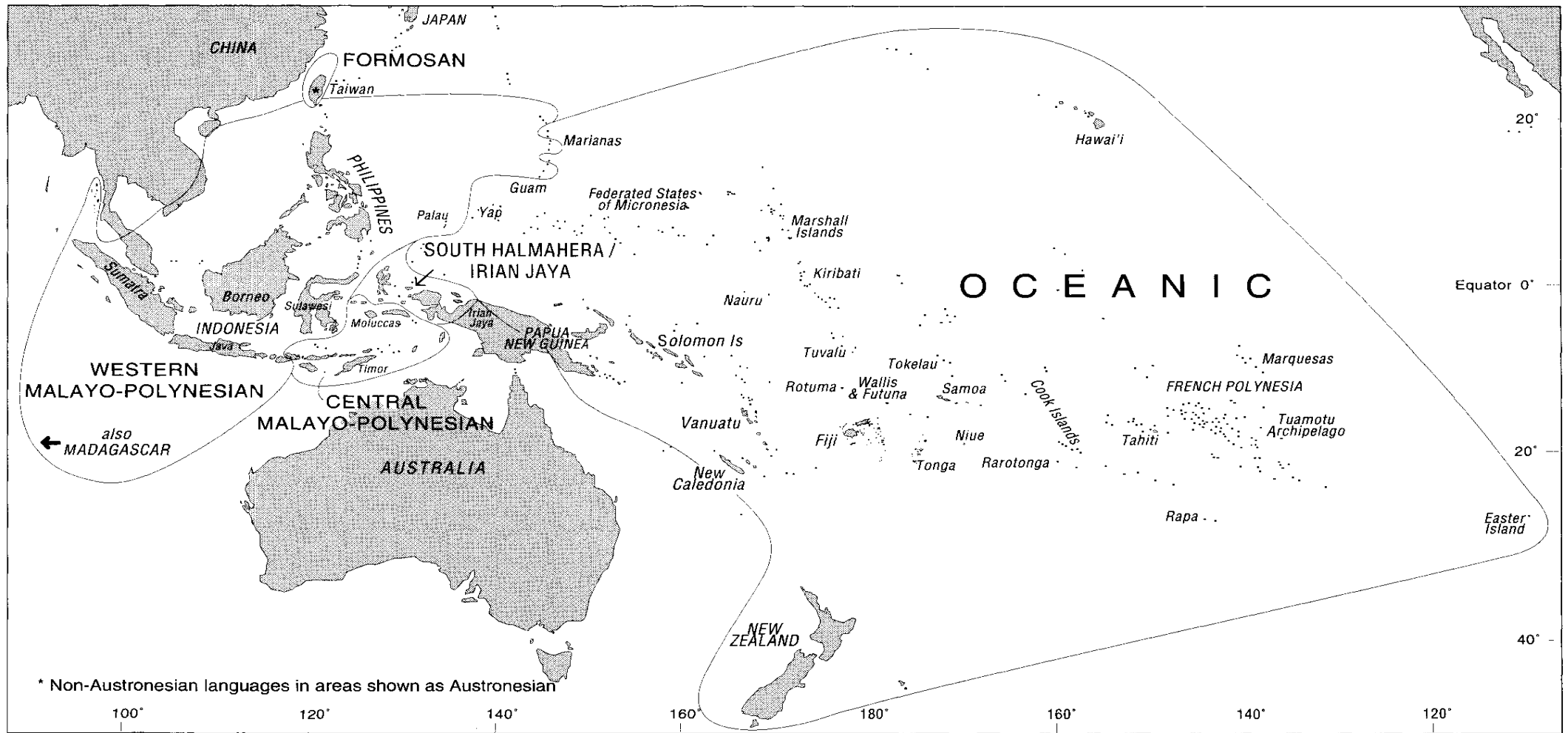


# Exploring Linguistic Diversity in Malekula

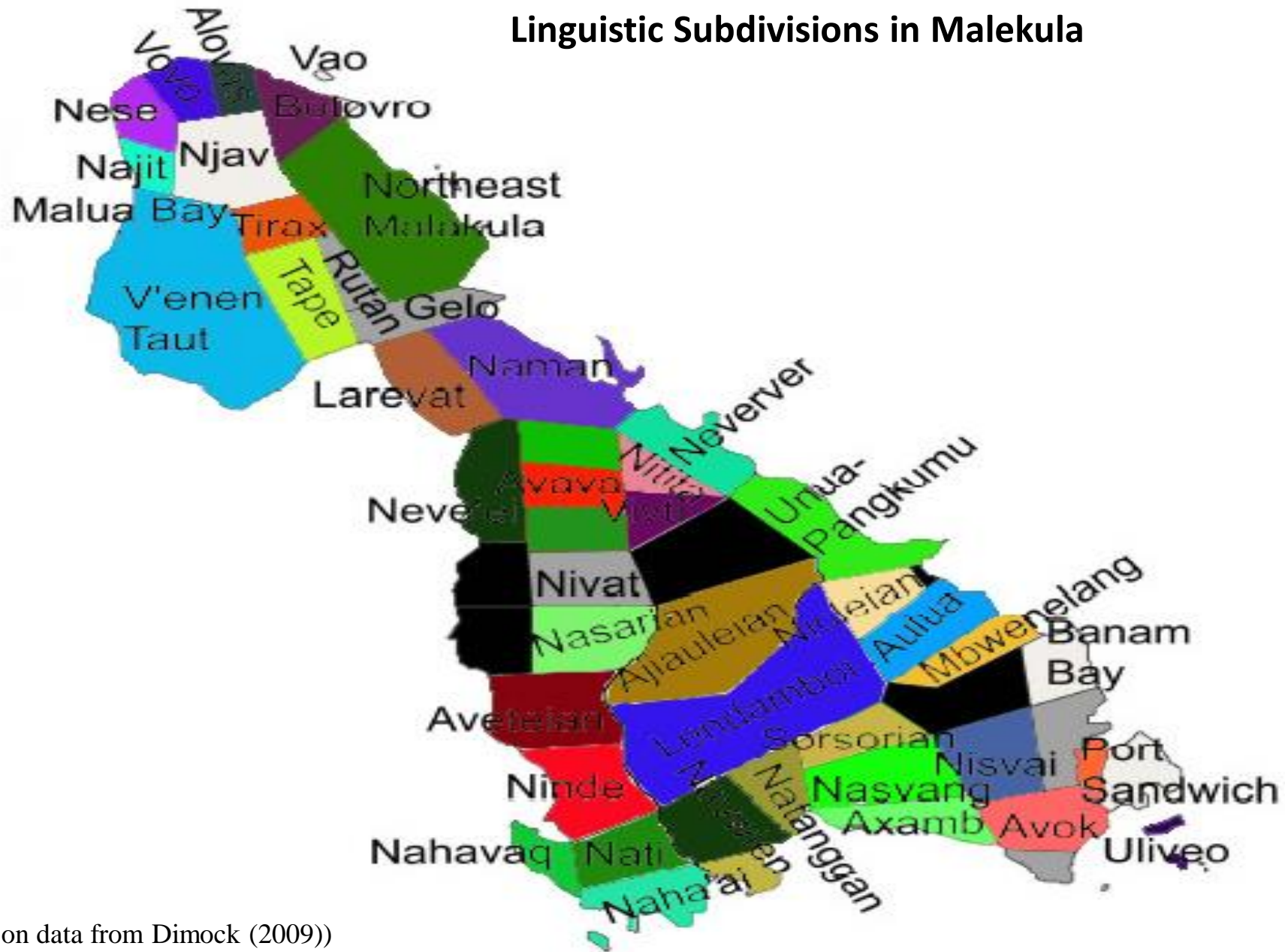
Nese, Njav and Najit

## Aims of this talk

- Generally explore phonological similarities and differences in three neighboring communalects spoken in Malekula island which are called Njav, Nese and Najit.
- Discuss possible socio-cultural practices which may have given rise to this linguistic homogeneity



## Linguistic Subdivisions in Malekula



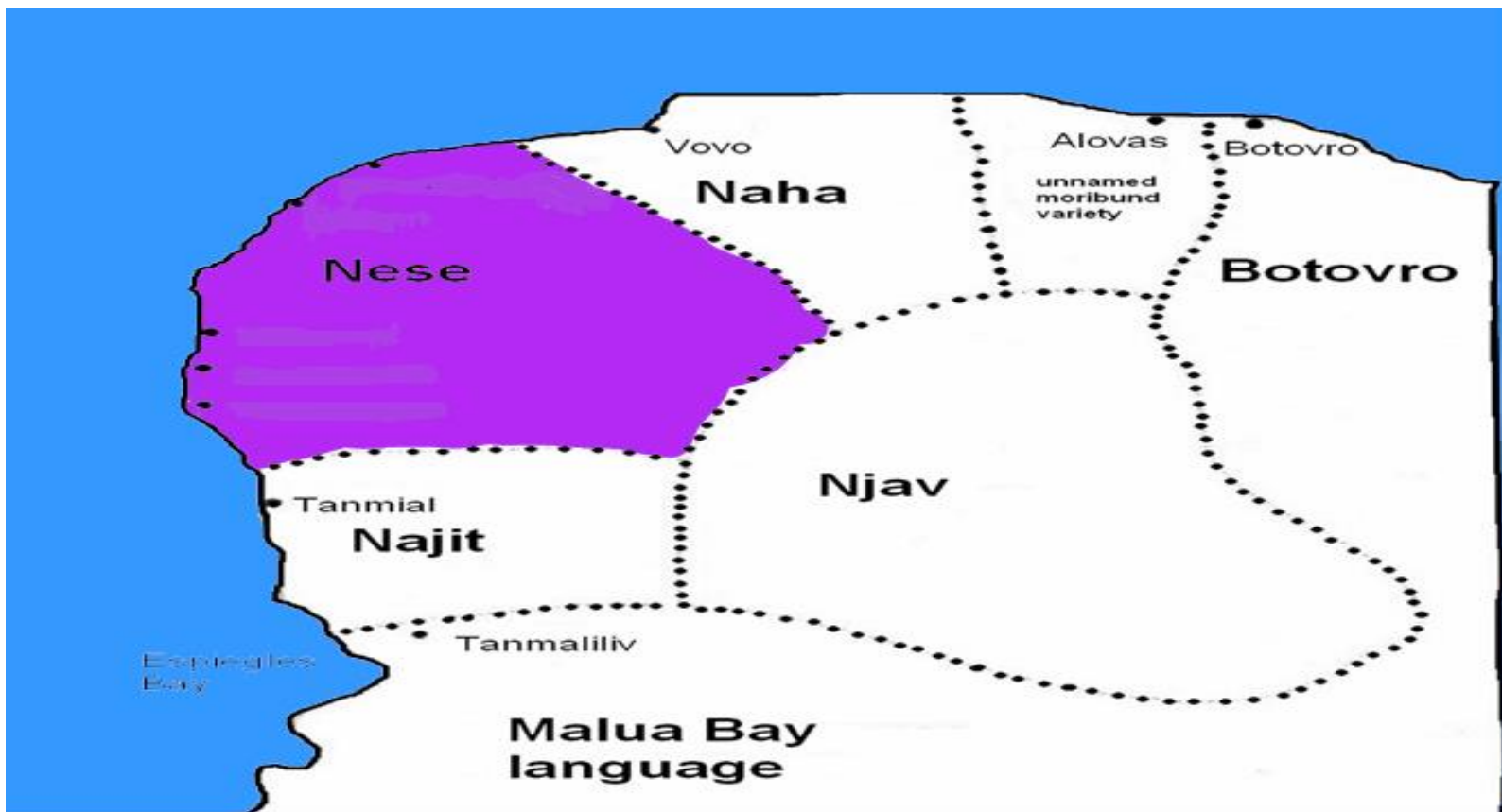
(Based on data from Dimock (2009))

- (Wurm and Laycock, 1961 p.137) 'the ultimate classification of given forms of speech ...as dialects or as distinct languages is **a very complex matter**'.

## Communalect

This term refers to a **community** whose native-born inhabitants share a homogeneous speech tradition.... Normally, such a completely homogeneous language is confined to a relatively small area—a **single village or group of villages occupying a small island or other naturally bounded geographic region**.

In most cases, **the differences between neighbouring communalects are small—a few differences in vocabulary**, and possibly a difference in intonation or other habits of pronunciation. **Communication is not impeded in any way**. But to speakers of these communalects the few distinctive features are significant enough to be able to pinpoint a man's home locality by his speech... (Pawley & Sayaba, 1971 p. 405)



(from Crowley (2006, p.3))

## Sociolinguistic characteristics of Nese, Njav, Najit

	Nese	Njav	Najit
<b>Speaker Population</b>	<b>less than 20</b>	<b>200-300</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Total population</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>200-300</b>	<b>Less than 100</b>
<b>Mutual intelligibility</b>	Mutual intelligibility in both Njav and Najit <i>(only for adult/elderly speakers)</i>	Mutual intelligibility in both Nese and Najit	Mutual intelligibility in both Nese and Najit
<b>Language Use</b>	No longer actively spoken on a daily basis.	Actively spoken on a daily basis, even by children	No longer used on a daily basis

- Phonological similarities and differences

- Kinship Terms

	Njav	Najit	Nese
mother	mama	pepe	<sup>n</sup> deðe, <sup>n</sup> deð̃e
father	tate	tate	tate
Father's sister	wawe	v <sup>w</sup> av <sup>w</sup> e	vave
Mother's brother	bene	pəne	coxok



➤ common nouns

	Njav	Najit	Nese
shark	<sup>m</sup> baxe	<sup>m</sup> baxe	na <sup>n</sup> daxe, na <sup>m</sup> ḅaxe
owl	nalul	<sup>m</sup> berkav	nalul
flying fox	ŋgara	ŋra	nakara
wild yam	na <sup>m</sup> buc	<sup>m</sup> bucram	na <sup>m</sup> bco
cyclone	laŋ	laŋ ruprup	nalaŋ ru <sup>m</sup> b
eel	mere	nəmere	nenere
sun	nɪal	nel	nɪal
karen	naut	no:t	naute
grave	<sup>n</sup> damb	<sup>n</sup> dap	nata <sup>m</sup> b
worm blong solwota	ixpas	naul	nau <sup>n</sup> du
breadfruit	<sup>m</sup> betav	<sup>m</sup> bətav	na <sup>n</sup> datav, na <sup>m</sup> ḅatav
female pig	verep	xərep	nevera <sup>n</sup> d
leaves for mat	vao	nəva	naḏau
leaves for houses	nɪat	ro <sup>w</sup> at	norojat
canoe		nok <sup>n</sup> das	nu <sup>w</sup> ak nakis
circumcision	mbayo	ne <sup>m</sup> baxo	na <sup>m</sup> ḅaxo

➤ the use of pronouns

<i><u>Kani</u></i>	<i><u>kirr-v'an</u></i>	<i>kirr-num</i>	<i>nanalokh</i>	<i>be</i>	<i>kirrse-ma</i>
2PL	2PL:REAL-go	2PL:REAL-drink	kava	CONJ	2PL:IRR-come

<i>khota</i>	<i>kirr-sbe-worr-te</i>	<i>sana</i>	<i>neten</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>khina</i>	<i>no-rongo</i>
PROHIB	2PL:IRR:NEG1-eat-NEG2	today	PURP2	SUB	1SG	1SG:REAL-want

<i>sikha</i>	<i>de-tu-tun.</i>	<i>khe.</i>
NEG	1SG:IRR-REDUP-roast	DEM

‘You guys go and drink kava but when you return, you won’t eat today because I am really tired of roasting (cooking).’ (naanhy01001.eaf; 00:01:39.000-00:01:43.000)

*[Khina ne-najnge de-ma akaev Ø-ma*

1SG 1SG:REAL-agree 1SG:IRR-come archive 3SG:REAL-come

‘I agree that I will come, the archive will come

*se-tekh ralo-k.]<sup>a1</sup> [Khina ne-yat khe.]]<sup>b1</sup>*

3SG:IRR-take voice-1SG:POSS 1SG 1SG:REAL-stay DEM

‘it’s going to take my voice (my voice will be recorded). I stay here.

<i>[Khina</i>	<i>neng</i>	<i>sa-k</i>	<i>Annie Hymak.]<sup>c1</sup></i>	<i>[Ne-yat</i>
1SG	name	CLGEN-1SG:POSS	Annie Hymak	1SG:REAL-sit

‘My name is Annie Hymak. I stay

<i>rengen</i>	<i>nev'enua-k</i>	<i>Senbokhas...]</i> <sup>b2</sup>	<i>[ne-najnge</i>	<i>te</i>
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LOC	place-1SG:POSS	Senbokhas	1SG:REAL-agree	SUB
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at my place Senbokhas.

I agree that

<i>se-tekh</i>	<i>ralo-k...]</i> <sup>a2</sup>
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3SG:IRR-take	voice-1SG:POSS
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it’s going to take my voice (record my voice.)

(obanhy01001.eaf; 00:00:00.500-00:00:30.500, natural text)

- Extended function of pronouns and corresponding subject cross indexes. Not only are they used to track/reference of participants introduced before in discourse but they are also used to reference an already mentioned topic.

## Communalect

...In most cases, **the differences between neighbouring communalects are small**—a few differences in **vocabulary**, and possibly a difference in intonation or other habits of pronunciation. **Communication is not impeded in any way**. But to speakers of these communalects the few distinctive features are significant enough to be able to pinpoint a man's home locality by his speech... (Pawley & Sayaba, 1971 p. 405)

- how is 'small' defined?
- **vocabulary** – lexemes from varying word classes

## Possible causes of linguistic homogeneity

- Isolation

*Before the arrival of missionaries, there were a lot of tribal wars and so people kept within their own boundaries. Cannibalism was also practiced and it was practiced until the 1940s so people did not move around easily and freely because of fear of being killed or eaten.*

- Contact

*- marriages: In the past people tended to marry within their own tribes because tribal wars did not allow a lot of mingling between the tribes.*

- Customary practices

Tooth avulsion (apicolabials) (Lynch 2005p. 16)





- Speaker attitudes towards their vernacular language

In the past all languages were simply oral mediums of communication, they weren't written or used as signs of prestige so there is no pressure of pronouncing words in a 'correct' way and having to be grammatically correct to an already existing speech variety.

## References

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