

Re: New Methodology on Analysis of Language Change

Source: <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2006-01/msg01278.html>

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 - *Date:* Thu, 12 Jan 2006 19:57:22 GMT
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On Thu, 12 Jan 2006 15:14:36 GMT, Peter T. Daniels wrote:

- > Thanks for the article — just as I thought, they don't provide the
- > actual data, but they admit it's "typological."
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- > The article is worth the paper it was printed on here.
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- > And, of course, it appears in *Science*.
- >
- > (I still hope you didn't pay \$10 for it.)

And Joe Murphy responded:

No, all free. But this is all new. A couple of days ago, when I first looked for the article, there was a \$10.00 charge for a day-pass to view it. Today when I looked again, it was available in full. Go figure.

Not only that, I glanced at the "Content" page that is supplied as a supplement to the article and the 125 "Linguistic Characteristics" that we used as comparison criteria were listed. All are shown as either/or type things.

I've listed some examples below to give you a flavor for the factoids employed and how the inputting seems to have been done. The 125 characteristics were broken up under 9 or 10 headings, all of which are capitalized below. Under each capitalized heading there are numbered subheadings reflecting the factoids employed and how the weighting was done. Everything seems to have been inputted on an either/or or yes/no basis based upon the presence or absence of a given characteristic in the language analyzed.

I can't tell how the particular Papuan languages selected for analysis were chosen. Possibly the basis was just their location and the fact that there was data available on those selected.

Anyway, the following will give you a flavor for how things were done:

A. STRUCTURE OF THE SOUND SYSTEM (11 Factors):

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1. Fricatives: 1. No phonemes for which a fricative is the major realization; 0. One or more fricative phonemes

2. Prenasalized stops: 1. There are one or more stops for which the major realization is prenasalized; 0. No prenasalized stop phonemes.

B. ORDER OF NP ELEMENTS (4 Factors):

12. Definite or specific articles (i.e. articles whose major purpose is to mark definiteness and/or specificity): 1. present, 0. absent

13. Indefinite or non-specific articles (i.e. articles whos