

Se zokwasi - a register of public speech in Komnzo

Christian Döhler, Universität zu Köln

This paper describes a speech register called *se zokwasi* in Komnzo. Komnzo is spoken by around 250 speakers in the village of Rouku in the south of Papua New Guinea (Döhler, 2018). *Se zokwasi* can be translated as ‘bark language’ and it is performed during all night dances when a person picks up a bark torch and circles the dancing ground while the dancers are resting. The descriptive part of the paper is based on two recordings of *se zokwasi* from 2012 and 2013 in Rouku village. I will use subtitled video and audio to illustrate the features of *se zokwasi*.

In the literature, registers have been approached from two very different angles. The first concentrates on corpus analyses and characterizes a register in terms of linguistic structure (Biber, 1995). The second has been developed by Halliday and it highlights the importance of the context of a situation (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). In the paper, I will follow Hoenigman (2015) and show that a combination of both approaches is not only possible, but results in the richest characterization of a register. As a working definition, I adopt Agha’s definition of registers as “a linguistic *repertoire* [emphasis in the original] that is associated, culture-internally, with particular social practices and with persons who engage in such practices” (2004: 24).

References

- Agha, A. (2004). Registers of language. In: A. Duranti (Ed.), *A companion to linguistic anthropology*, pp. 23–45. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.
- Biber, D. (1995). *Dimensions of register variation: A cross-linguistic comparison*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Döhler, C. (2018). *A grammar of Komnzo*. Berlin: Language Science Press.
- Halliday, M. and R. Hasan (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Hoenigman, D. (2015). *The talk goes many ways - Registers of language and modes of performance in Kanjime'i, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea*. PhD thesis, Australian National University.