

Mussau-Emira Dialect Survey

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Abstract: This paper describes the dialect situation of the Mussau-Emira language of Papua New Guinea. There are currently four dialects, three very similar dialects on Mussau Island, and one on Emira. Material is currently being produced in the Southern Mussau dialect, which should be adequate for the three Mussau dialects, but we recommend that the Emira dialect should use separate literature due to significant differences.

Key words: Papua New Guinea, Mussau-Emira language, Oceanic languages, dialects, literacy

We, John and Marjo Brownie, are SIL linguists working as translation advisors to the Mussau-Emira people. We have been working in the language area since December 1995, living in the Southern Mussau dialect area. At this point, we have produced various papers about the language and culture of the Mussau-Emira people, and published several literacy books, a book of stories, and two Scripture portions.

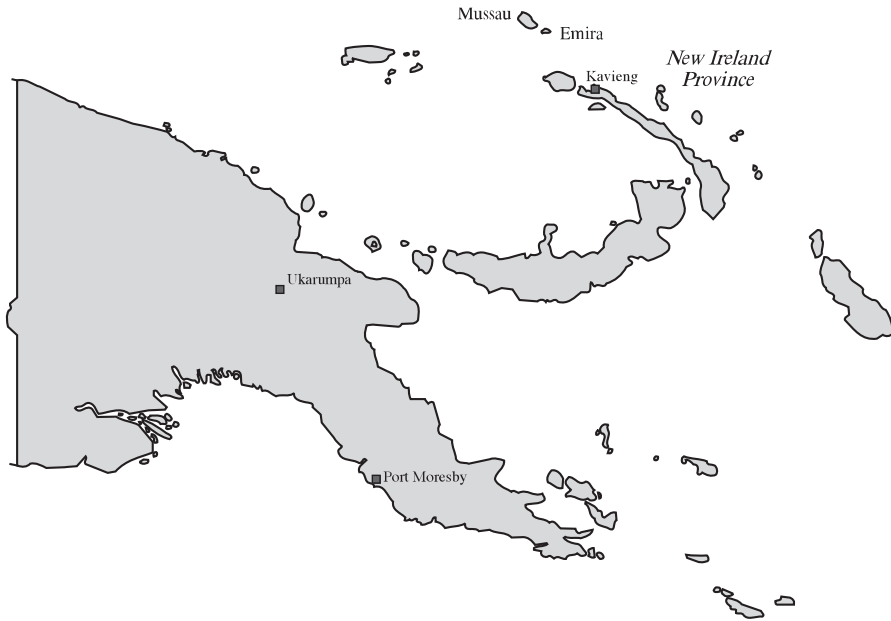
The aim of this paper is to describe the current dialect situation, and to document our decision to publish our materials in the Southern Mussau dialect, with the intention of producing an adaptation of translated Scripture into the Emira dialect, depending on interest by the Emira community.

1. Location

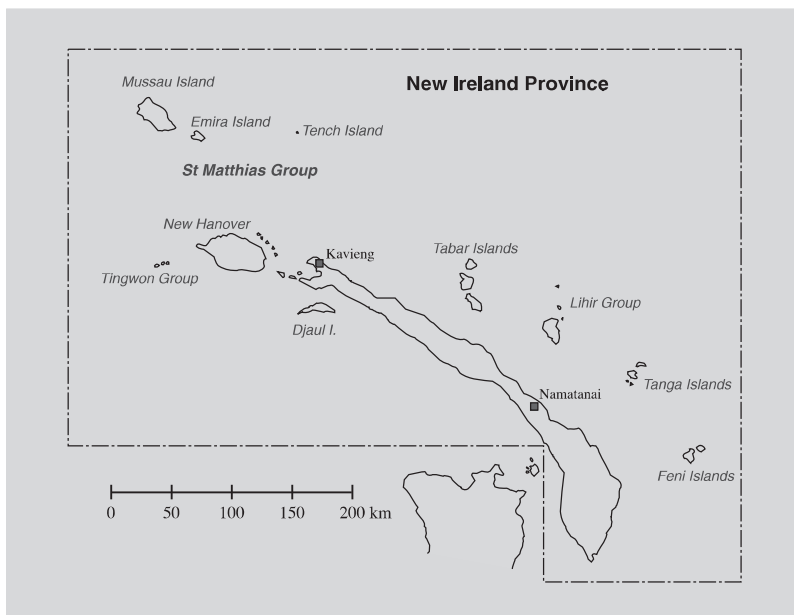
The Mussau-Emira language is spoken on the St Matthias Group of islands, in the north of New Ireland Province. The major islands are Mussau, Emira, Loaua and Mananus. There are several smaller islands, most of which have no permanent residents. Apart from these islands, speakers of Mussau-Emira can be found in the provincial capital, Kavieng, as well as many other locations throughout Papua New Guinea, the major concentrations being in Rabaul/Kokopo, Lae and Port Moresby.

Tench Island, while part of the St Matthias Group, has a separate, related language which is dying. Tench speakers are shifting to Mussau-Emira and Tok Pisin, partly due to

the fact that their children attend school on Emira, and also because of a conscious policy of marrying outside the group, so that Tok Pisin is the common language of all people on the island.



Map 1: Papua New Guinea



Map 2: New Ireland Province

Emira is a little south of east from Mussau, separated by about twenty kilometres of open ocean. This has contributed to Emira having a distinct dialect which is different to those spoken on Mussau and its satellite islands.



Map 3: Mussau Island

Mussau Island has a central peak which is a long-extinct volcano, but most of the island is raised coral, so that most of the rock is limestone. This means that there are many sinkholes on the island, so that there is very little surface water. All current villages are located on the coast, with the interior used for gardening. Historically, some people lived inland, but all have moved out to the coast since the years immediately following World War II. Traditionally, pigs were hunted in the interior, but the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has stopped the practice of eating pig meat, and so no hunting for food is done any more. Rather, the main means of obtaining meat is from fishing.

The nearest town is Kavieng, located at the northern tip of mainland New Ireland. It is

about 150 km from Mussau Island, and is reached by boat for most people. Travel is usually by one of the boats which run a passenger and cargo service to the islands, and travel time is approximately fifteen hours one way, depending on weather conditions and the exact destination. People also travel by dinghy, which is faster, but more expensive, and is not subject to the unreliable timing of the copra boats.

At any given time, approximately 1,000 Mussau-Emira speakers would be in Kavieng, or about 20% of the total population. A small proportion of these people live there permanently, but most are present for varying periods of time. Reasons for travel to Kavieng include visiting the hospital for medical reasons, buying items not available on Mussau or Emira, getting short-term employment to earn enough for expenses such as school fees, visiting relatives, and putting children in school beyond Grade 8, the highest level offered at Boliu School. There are several areas of Kavieng where Mussau-Emira speakers stay. There are a couple of settlements which have mostly people from a particular dialect area, Matlak (Western Mussau dialect) and the Emira Camp (Emira dialect), an area called Rawal which is mostly populated by Mussau people, but otherwise people from all areas of Mussau and Emira are mixed together, often among speakers of other languages.

There is an airstrip on Loaua and one on Emira. Up until 1999, there were regular services to both airstrips, but no commercial flights operate there any more. SIL aircraft are just about the only aircraft to use the Loaua airstrip, though the SDA mission plane has made occasional trips to both Loaua and Emira.

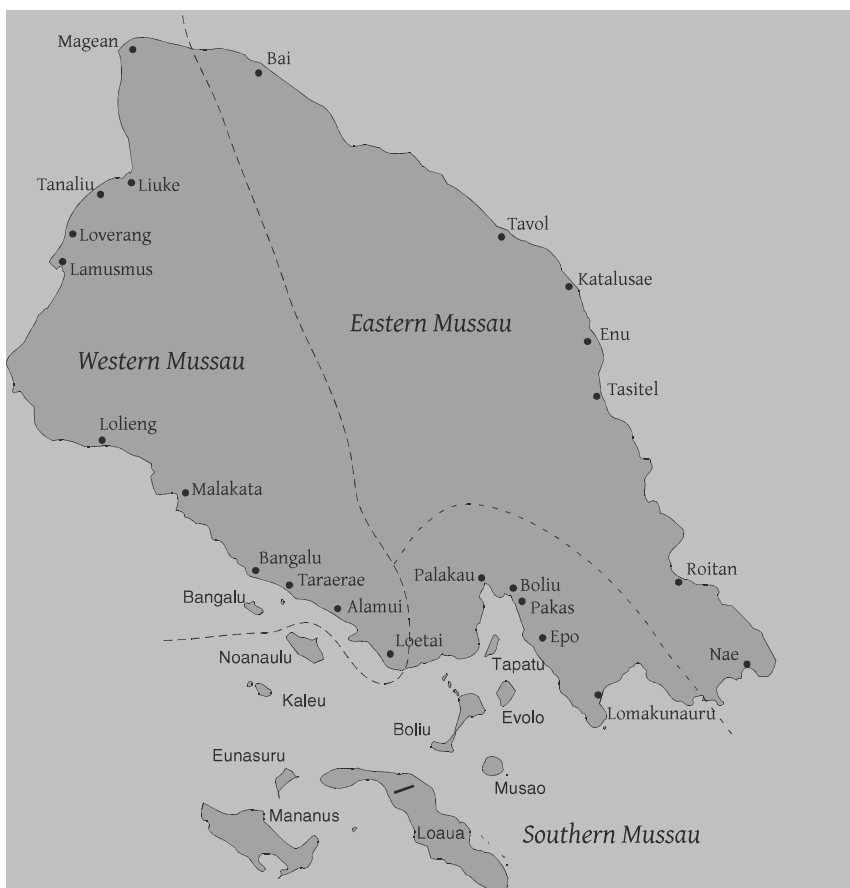
A particular historical issue with Mussau-Emira is the arrival of the Seventh-day Adventist mission in 1931. This was the first and only mission to establish itself on Mussau, Emira and Tench, and the vast majority of people in the language group would identify with the SDA church. There are some who do not attend church, but there is no other church present in the area. Thus the SDA church is a significant feature of the culture of the Mussau-Emira people, and changes brought about by the arrival of the mission have been quite profound, including the dialect situation.

Another factor resulting from the church's influence has been the spread of Mussau-Emira people across Papua New Guinea. The early missionaries died during the war, and the mission was largely locally led after the war. Many Mussau-Emira people went to other parts of the country as missionaries for the SDA church, and so there are many areas where Mussau-Emira people still live. A rough estimate is that about 500 people (10% of the population) live permanently outside of the St Matthias group and Kavieng, the main concentrations being in Rabaul/Kokopo, Lae and Port Moresby, with smaller groups in Madang, Goroka, Kimbe and other towns.

We have been working with the Mussau-Emira people since 1995, based in Lomakunauru village, in the Southern Mussau dialect area. Most of our data is gained from working in Lomakunauru, though we have visited many of the villages, and have writers' workshop materials written in Magean, Bai, Taval, Roitan and Lomakunauru villages, covering the three Mussau dialect areas. Apart from the writers' workshop materials, all material that we have published has been in the Southern Mussau dialect.

2. Linguistic Differences

There are four dialects recognised by the Mussau-Emira people: Southern Mussau, Western Mussau, Eastern Mussau and Emira. The three dialects spoken on Mussau and the southern islands are lexically very similar, while Emira is more distinct.



Map 4: Mussau Dialects

The following data is from taking the SIL standard word list of 170 items, which were

reduced to 151 comparisons, after eliminating words that do not exist in the language apart from as loan words, and after eliminating words that are duplicates of another entry. The words that do not exist in the language are 42 cassowary, 43 wallaby, 119 horn, 131 yam, 134 bean, 140 tobacco, and 150 green. The words eliminated as duplicates were 9 knee (same word for joint as 20 elbow), 15 foot (same as 22 leg), 28 girl (form of 32 woman), 29 boy (form of 33 man), 30 old woman (form of 32 woman), 31 old man (form of 33 man), 37 sister (same as 36 brother), 65 he kills (combination of 64 he hits and 66 he dies), 109 stick (same as 108 tree), 110 bark (combination of 8 skin and 108 tree), 149 red (derived from 26 blood) and 161 not (same as 160 no). See the appendix for the complete word lists and notes on the different forms.

The percentage of identical words is in the Table 1.

Table 1: Identical words

	Southern Mussau	Eastern Mussau	Western Mussau
Eastern Mussau	96%		
Western Mussau	91%	92%	
Emira	56%	56%	54%

The percentage of phonologically related words is in Table 2.

Table 2: Phonologically related words

	Southern Mussau	Eastern Mussau	Western Mussau
Eastern Mussau	100%		
Western Mussau	99%	99%	
Emira	81%	81%	82%

As can be seen from these tables, the Southern Mussau and Eastern Mussau dialects show almost complete identity in lexicon, while Western Mussau is a little more different, and Emira is quite distinct. Some examples are listed in Table 3 (the data are regularised to show the same form, such as person and tense/aspect).

Table 3: Examples from each dialect

	Southern Mussau	Eastern Mussau	Western Mussau	Emira
his head	uruna	uruna	uruna	uruna
his hair	u: ɲuruna	u: ɲuruna	u: ɲuruna	iraira uruna
his belly	kɔβana	kɔβana	kɔβanɛ	tɔβana
his mother	kin:a	kin:a	kin:a	inana
he comes	ɛmaɛmaɛ	ɛmaɛmaɛ	ɛmaɛmaɛ	ɛmaimai
he runs	ɛi:lou	ɛi:lou	ɛi:lou	ɛlayilayi
he laughs	ɛkaŋkaŋa	ɛkaŋakaŋa	ɛkaŋakaŋa	ɛlɔkɛlɔkɛ
round	tariena	tariena	tariena	kirikiriane
sand	rira	rira	rira	manaonɛ
moon	ulana	ulɛna	ulɛna	ulana
star	kat:ɔ	kat:ɔ	kat:ɔ	katɔtɔ
wing	kaekaena	kaekaena	kaekaena	aikaina
one	sesa	sesa	sesa	lei
two	lua	lua	lua	ɣalua
house	alɛ	alɛ	alɛ	anua
yesterday	ɣalail:ɔ	ɣalail:ɔ	ɣalail:ɔ	ɣainei
tomorrow	nimana	nimana	nimana	ɛpai
yellow	βaiβaiena	βaiβaiena	aitalake	tatalakiane
when?	lɔβisa	lɔβisa	ɛlɔβisa	ɛlɔβisa
no	karika	karika	karika	ka:pa
I	ayɪ	ayɪ	ayɪ	a:u
we (plural exclusive)	ami	amami	amami	a:mi

Probably the most prominent lexical difference is the most common classifier. In the three Mussau dialects, it is *ateva* [atɛβa] while in Emira it is *lei* [lei]. This word is very frequent in the language, and so is a clear marker of whether a person is from Mussau or Emira.

Other noticeable lexical differences between the Mussau dialects and Emira are the word for house, which is *alɛ* [alɛ] in the Mussau dialects, but *anua* [anua] in the Emira dialect, with *anua* meaning ‘ship’ or ‘nation’ in the Mussau dialects; and the words for yesterday and tomorrow. In the Mussau dialects, yesterday is *ghalaillo* [ɣalail:ɔ], whereas in the Emira dialect it is *ghainei* [ɣainei], which is similar to the Mussau *ghaine* [ɣaine] ‘today, now’. Similarly, tomorrow is *nimana* [nimana] in the Mussau dialects, but *ɛpai*

[ɛpai] in the Emira dialect, which means ‘it dawns’ in the Mussau dialects.

There are no regular sound correspondences. However, the Western Mussau dialect shows a slight preference for the [ɛ] sound over the [a] sound in some words. For example, the root *kila* [kila] ‘know’ is *kile* [kilɛ] in Western Mussau. There are some words that contain the diphthong /ae/ in the Mussau dialects which have /ai/ in the Emira dialect, such as *mae/mai* ‘come’ or *kaekaena/aikaina* ‘wing’. This leads to issues of spelling when writing the language, and the current solution has been for each writer to write as he or she pronounces the words. Almost all our materials have been produced in the Southern Mussau dialect, and there has not been any criticism of the spelling choices made so far.

Another feature of phonological differences is that the Southern Mussau dialect is more prone to abbreviating words, often dropping or devoicing final vowels, while the Western Mussau dialect is more likely to keep words at their full length. For example, the word *ghalasi* ‘dive with a mask’ is pronounced as [ɣalasi] or [ɣalasi̥] in Southern Mussau, and as [ɣalasi] in Western Mussau. However, when it comes to writing the language, the preference appears to be to write the full form, even if it is not pronounced as written.

Grammatically, there is very little difference between the four dialects, apart from the different classifier noted above. The only other known grammatical difference is that the three Mussau dialects have two forms of numbers below 100, one for counting and one used as pre-nominal classifiers. The Emira dialect only has one set, which is most similar to the classifiers of the Mussau dialects. See *Mussau Grammar Essentials* section 3.5 for more on the different numerals in the Mussau dialects.

The reported differences between the three Mussau dialects are neither lexical, phonological nor grammatical, but more a matter of intonation. The Western Mussau dialect is said to have more of an up and down intonation pattern than either Eastern or Southern Mussau dialects. In addition, some of the interjections and exclamations take different forms in the different dialects. For example, the tag question, *a*, is pronounced as a short sound with rising pitch in Southern Mussau, while it is given a longer sound with a more complex pitch contour in the Eastern Mussau dialect.

Taking all these considerations into account, it is likely that material written in the Southern Mussau dialect can be read by people from the other Mussau dialects by using their own intonation patterns, with the other lexical and phonological changes being seen as minor issues. The Emira dialect is sufficiently different, however, that materials in the Southern Mussau dialect are not likely to be easy to read, though many Emira people would be familiar with the Mussau dialects. Separate materials for the Emira dialect should not be too difficult to produce, given the great grammatical similarity between the dialects.

3. Social Differences

The major divisions within the community are the villages and the dialect areas. Stories say that each of the villages were in a state of hostility with all the others in the time before the arrival of the mission in 1931, and each village had its own distinctive style of speech. The arrival of the mission and the subsequent spread of peace has removed the constant fighting, but there is still a level of competition between the villages.

Competition is now seen in a variety of ways. There are various sports that are played at different times, such as basketball, volleyball, soccer, and touch rugby. Most villages have their own team, and there are inter-village competitions played regularly. Competition can also be seen in other ways, such as building fancy church buildings, and in putting on elaborate weddings.

From an anthropological perspective, the kinship system is characterised by matrilineal clans which form two moieties. The clans are named, but the moieties are not. In recent decades the practice of marrying across the moieties has fallen out of rigorous use, though marrying within a clan is not practised. In day to day life, the clans do not present a significant source of divisions within the community, apart from some land disputes. Traditionally, each village had a small number of clans present, but now clans are present in almost all villages to some degree, as marriages between villages have become quite common.

The three dialect areas on Mussau used to coincide with church district divisions, but the number of districts was reduced from three to two in 2008. The effects of this change are still being worked out, as various district meetings are reorganised to reflect the new districts.



Map 5: Church Districts

A further division of the area is the local-level government wards. These do not coincide with dialect divisions, but the two new church districts actually group wards 1 and 2 as Northeast Mussau, and wards 3 and 4 as Southwest Mussau.



Map 6: Local-Level Government Divisions

Populations of the various divisions are given in the following tables. All figures are based on the 2000 Census, which only reports those people resident in the villages. As our estimate is that about 30% of the population is outside the area at any given time, these population figures are lower than the numbers who would claim affiliation with the various groups.

Table 4: Dialect Divisions

	Households	Population	Male/Female
Western Mussau	193	863	415/448
Southern Mussau	280	1224	617/607
Eastern Mussau	258	939	491/448
Emira	112	501	243/258

Table 5: Church Districts

	Households	Population	Male/Female
Northeast Mussau	348	1389	717/672
Southwest Mussau	383	1637	806/831
Emira	112	501	243/258

Table 6: Local-Level Government Divisions

	Households	Population	Male/Female
Tasitel Ward (Ward 1)	231	844	446/398
Magien Ward (Ward 2)	117	545	271/274
Lolieng Ward (Ward 3)	93	413	189/224
Palakau Ward (Ward 4)	280	1224	617/607
Emirau Ward (Ward 5)	112	501	243/258

Prestige areas include Lomakunauru village, site of the first mission, Tasitel village, largest village on the Eastern side of Mussau, and Boliu, site of the first school (which is now the top-up school for the whole language area) and health centre. Even so, the amount of prestige associated with different villages is not particularly high. There is more of a sense of competition between the villages, and a belief that each village is as good as any other.

Among the people on Mussau Island, there seems to be some devaluing of Emira. When some written language is perceived to be not how people talk, it is often said to have been corrupted by the speech of Emira. For example, the early missionaries produced a hymn book in 1935. It was reprinted in 1968 with a change of orthography, and again in 1990 with the original orthography for the hymns themselves. However, people have commented that the 1968 version is incorrect, and has been influenced by the Emira dialect, even though very few of the words have been changed.

It is also reported that dialect differences between the three Mussau dialects and Emira are a source of amusement and joking. This shows that the two groups are well aware of the differences between them, and use the language as a marker of their difference. It may also be that each party sees their dialect as more correct than the other.

Another perception of Emira is that the people there are more focused on economic issues, and are always waiting for some sort of development which will provide them with a regular income. When we were visiting the area in 1995 prior to allocating, there was a proposal by a Russian consortium to build a spacecraft launch centre somewhere near

the equator, and one possible location was Emira. There appeared to be some excitement about this possibility, and one village was said to be putting off repairing their church building until they saw whether the Russians would come and there would be money for a new building. Similarly, there were great expectations from some unidentified “company” around 2005–6 that would provide employment for many people on Emira, though nothing seems to have come of this.

At this point, it seems that the slight prestige associated with the initial work of the SDA mission in the Southern Mussau dialect is promising for the acceptance of materials in that dialect. The original hymn book was the only book in the language for many years, and was used across the language area, possibly even in Tench, despite being a separate language. Hence there is a history of using material that is written in the Southern Mussau dialect.

Despite the majority of Emira people understanding the Mussau dialects due to their children having been to school at Boliu, the social and linguistic differences pose a significant barrier to the acceptance of material in the Southern Mussau dialect. These factors point to the probable need for separate materials in the Emira dialect, including both literacy materials and Scripture.

4. Effect of Other Languages

a. Language shift and multilingualism

There do not appear to be signs of a shift towards Tok Pisin or English. Most children learn Mussau-Emira as their first language, and only acquire Tok Pisin around the time that they start school, and English at school. Most people who marry into the area acquire at least a passive knowledge of Mussau-Emira, and many can speak it.

The main exception to this is with those people who live outside the language area. For those living permanently in Kavieng, Tok Pisin is of great practical value, and is likely to be a stronger language than Mussau-Emira, though Mussau-Emira can still be used in many situations. Those living in other parts of the country with smaller Mussau-Emira communities are less likely to be primary speakers of Mussau-Emira. It seems that some families who live in other places have chosen not to teach their children Mussau-Emira, but have used either Tok Pisin or English as their family language. For example, a couple from Lomakunauru village living in Madang have chosen to use English as the primary language for their children. They are a little atypical, having spent some time studying in Australia. It would be more common for Tok Pisin rather than English to be used in the family. In many families living outside a Mussau-Emira community, children acquire at least some passive

knowledge of the language.

The language repertoire available to people includes Mussau-Emira, Tok Pisin and English. There is no stable diglossic or triglossic situation, but the multilingualism appears to be fairly stable. Mussau-Emira is the normal language of choice in most domains. The major uses for Tok Pisin and English are where outsiders are present, church, school, government and sport (see the section on domains of use below for more detail). Even so, most of these have some use of Mussau-Emira.

b. Attitudes

Most people take a pragmatic attitude to the various languages. Mussau-Emira is used for most purposes, but loan words are common, integrated to various degrees to the phonological structure of Mussau-Emira. In church settings, Scripture readings are almost always done in English, often from the King James Version. Other parts of the church service are in various languages, depending on who is the person taking that particular part on that occasion. English is not seen as a “holy” language, with people happy to pray or discuss church things in Mussau-Emira.

The vast majority of children begin life as monolingual Mussau-Emira speakers, acquiring Tok Pisin as they get towards school age, and then learning English in school. This demonstrates that most parents consider the vernacular as the most important language for their children to be able to use.

For families living outside the language area, and especially those not living in Kavieng, the general practice is to at least ensure that the children acquire a passive understanding of Mussau-Emira. As noted above, the family language is more likely to be Tok Pisin or English, though parents may speak to each other using Mussau-Emira. Again, this shows that parents consider it important for their children to be able to understand relatives speaking to them in the vernacular.

c. Domains of use

As a general rule, the preferred language is Mussau-Emira. When outsiders are present, there is more of a tendency to switch to Tok Pisin. Government business, including courts, show more of a tendency to use Tok Pisin than Mussau-Emira, though people will use Mussau-Emira when they think it useful. In the schools, beyond the elementary level, English is used by policy. However, students will often use Mussau-Emira or Tok Pisin amongst themselves, and teachers will use either language on occasion. At present, all teachers in the schools are from the language area, so they are able to use Mussau-Emira with the students.

Sport shows a mixture of languages. Conversation at sporting events is mostly in

Mussau-Emira, with some Tok Pisin. Mussau-Emira lacks vocabulary for sports, so Tok Pisin terminology is used, and hence on-field talk uses a lot of Tok Pisin. When sporting associations are set up, their constitutions are always produced in English.

One interesting domain is that of writing on blackboards. Each village church has a blackboard behind the pulpit, and it is common for something to be written on it, often just a title of a sermon, but perhaps some sort of outline as well. There are also various reports presented in Sabbath School on posters or blackboards. Meetings will often have an agenda on a blackboard. In virtually every case, the language used is English. It would appear to be the perception that “official” things are best done in English, though it is possible that this is simply habit, and partly a reflection of the use of blackboards in school.

The church domain shows a mixture of languages. Scripture reading is done almost entirely in English, very occasionally in Tok Pisin. The English translation that everybody has is the King James Version, but other versions are used by individuals, including NIV and Good News. Singing in the church is almost entirely in English, with a few songs in Tok Pisin used in youth meetings. A hymn book was produced in Mussau-Emira by the early missionaries in 1935, but this is rarely used at present, perhaps because of some of the orthographic problems in it. Other parts of church services will be in any one of English, Tok Pisin or Mussau-Emira, or a mixture. The Sabbath School uses materials provided quarterly by the SDA church, including a “mission story” in English, but the person telling the story will most commonly translate it into Mussau-Emira or Tok Pisin when telling it. The lesson discussion in groups is dependent on the teacher and the individuals in the class. Materials are available in English and Tok Pisin, but discussion is more likely to be in Tok Pisin and Mussau-Emira. Sermons can be in any of the three languages, though very few people would choose to speak only in English. Rather, they would speak mostly in Mussau-Emira or Tok Pisin, and put in English phrases from time to time. Again, this is dependent on the preacher, with some who have been missionaries in other parts of Papua New Guinea more likely to use Tok Pisin, as that has been their practice elsewhere.

Young people are more likely to try to show off their English to outsiders. They also use more Tok Pisin, partly as a marker of group identity, and partly because of its association with the outside world. Some of the older people have adopted certain phrases from Tok Pisin into their language, such as discourse features like *orait*. People who have lived for long periods away from the area are likely to be self-conscious about their ability with the language, and may use more Tok Pisin in situations where they are speaking to a large group. Since many people from Mussau worked in other parts of the country as church workers, missionaries or teachers, especially in the years after World War II, there

are quite a number of adults who grew up outside the Mussau-Emira area, though they have generally learned the language in their family, and use it when they return. Those living permanently in Kavieng use more Tok Pisin, as they have less opportunities to use Mussau-Emira. However, there is a fairly strong sense of identity there, particularly associated with the SDA church. The high turnover of people living in Kavieng for short periods also helps to maintain the language among those living there permanently who do not live in settlements.

d. Code switching and code mixing

Code-switching and code-mixing are very common. Code-switching is often triggered by the use of non-Mussau-Emira words, so the language may switch mid-sentence when a Tok Pisin or English word is used, or at the beginning of a sentence where such a word will be used. Also, topic-based code-switching is common. When outsiders are present, and the dominant language in use is Tok Pisin, people may switch into Mussau-Emira to discuss something briefly, then switch back to Tok Pisin when the whole group is engaged again.

Code-mixing involves words or phrases of Tok Pisin or English dropped into an otherwise Mussau-Emira sentence, though the opposite can occur. Often these code-mixes can be looked at as part of the spectrum of loan words, which range from those completely assimilated to Mussau-Emira phonology to those that are identical to the source word. Code-mixing can be extreme, such as an utterance recorded some years back, “When *lotu eruu?*” (When will the church service end?) This involves either two or three languages, depending on how the word *lotu* is regarded, either as a Tok Pisin word mixed in, or as a borrowing. Although there is a word for worship, *kaua*, it is not always used to denote a church service, with *lotu* being used more commonly for this meaning, as well as for an equivalent of “denomination”.

Often, though there may be somewhat established phrases to express an outside concept, the English or Tok Pisin word will be dropped into a vernacular sentence. For example, someone said, “*Abraham ghe oghi lao sio ta kapuna servant alua.*” (Abraham went back to his two servants.) There is an established phrase, *tau ngai nongonongo anna* (literally “person hearing wishes”), to express the concept of “servant”, but sometimes the shorter English word is mixed in for convenience.

e. Loan words

Loan words are common in the language. These range from long-established borrowings which have become assimilated to Mussau-Emira phonological patterns to words borrowed on a single occasion, at which point they are really code-mixing. Some of the more established loan words include *roko* ‘dog’, replacing *paua*, presumably because

the Mussau-Emira word sounds too much like a Tok Pisin word, *pawa* ‘power’; *pisi* ‘fish’, replacing *kko* or *koko*, possibly because of an association with Tok Pisin *kok* ‘penis’; and *popo* ‘pawpaw’, replacing *paea*, again because it sounds like the Tok Pisin *paia* ‘fire’. Another example is that the Mussau-Emira word *nanasi* and the Tok Pisin *anas* have both been largely replaced by *paenepel*, from the English ‘pineapple’.

Other loan words are introduced to express concepts not in the traditional culture. Examples of these would include *leson*, derived from English lesson, used to denote the week number within the quarter, *vulumakao* ‘cow’, *kara* ‘car’, *sikulu* ‘school’, *dokta* ‘doctor’, *ooso* ‘horse’, *sambati* ‘sabbath’, *vini* ‘bean’, *marasina* ‘medicine’, *misinari* ‘missionary’ and *taoni* ‘town’.

Preferences for spelling loan words vary. For the more established loan words, spelling reflecting the Mussau-Emira pronunciation is preferred. The Mussau-Emira pronunciation can vary widely, sometimes being based on English spelling rather than actual English pronunciation. For example, the name James is pronounced and most often spelled as *Jeimis*. Problems occur with sounds that are common in English which are not present in Mussau-Emira, such as sounds spelled with j, d, ch, sh, or th. Sometimes, the sound is retained, while at other times it is adapted to the nearest Mussau-Emira sound. See some examples in the table below. However, it is now common for people to make up names for children, and these include sounds that do not otherwise occur in the language, and an English spelling is used.

Less common names, such as place names and people in the Bible, are generally pronounced much as in English, and spelling may either go with the English spelling, or by the pronunciation. For example, John may be pronounced more like *Sioni*, but is usually spelled *Jon*, while Isaiah is usually spelled *Aisaea*. Other names are slightly adapted to Mussau-Emira phonology, such as *Sales* for Charles, or *Jiudia* for Judea.

Mussau-Emira Spelling	English/Tok Pisin spelling
<i>Aisaea</i>	<i>Isaiah</i>
<i>ausiki</i>	<i>haus sik</i>
<i>Babilon</i>	Babylon
<i>Daniel/Deniol</i>	Daniel
<i>diskasen</i>	discussion
<i>enjolo/ensolo</i>	angel
<i>Esikiel</i>	Ezekiel
<i>God/goto</i>	God
<i>Gris</i>	Greece
<i>iut/yut</i>	youth
<i>Jeimis</i>	James
<i>jenereita/senereita</i>	generator
<i>Jeremaea/Seremaea</i>	Jeremiah
<i>Jerusalem/Serusalem</i>	Jerusalem
<i>Jiu</i>	Jew
<i>Jiudas</i>	Judas
<i>Jiudia</i>	Judea
<i>Jon/Sion/Sioni</i>	John
<i>marasina</i>	medicine/ <i>marasin</i>
<i>Matiu</i>	Matthew
<i>Nataniel</i>	Nathaniel
<i>opring</i>	offering
<i>pes</i>	page
<i>Pita</i>	Peter
<i>propete</i>	prophet
<i>rikini</i>	deacon
<i>Saelas</i>	Silas
<i>sapta/japta</i>	chapter
<i>Sein Mataeas</i>	Saint Matthias
<i>Sekaraea/Sekraea</i>	Zechariah
<i>senso</i>	chainsaw
<i>siosi</i>	church
<i>sioto</i>	shirt
<i>sipsip/sipisipi</i>	sheep/ <i>sipsip</i>

5. Language Work Already Done

Some early analysis of the Mussau-Emira language was done by Robert Blust, who in 1975 took a word list from a Mussau-Emira pastor who was working on Manus Island, where Blust was doing other research. He wrote three articles based on this data (Blust 1984, Blust 2001 and Blust 2007). Juliette Blevins has also published an analysis of syncope in Mussau-Emira (Blevins 2008), based on Blust's articles and our *Mussau Grammar Essentials* (Brownie & Brownie 2007).

Malcolm Ross has also written some analysis of Mussau-Emira, first as part of his general study of the Oceanic languages (Ross 1988), and later a short grammatical sketch (Ross 2002). A German anthropological expedition in the early part of the 20th century produced a description of the culture and some of the language (Nevermann 1933).

Apart from Blust, Blevins and Ross, the only analysis has been by John & Marjo Brownie. We have produced various papers on anthropology, phonology, and grammar. See the Bibliography for these.

As far as written materials in the language, very little has been produced apart from what we have done. The SDA mission produced a hymn book in 1935. This used an orthography based on Fijian, and it is difficult for those who have been educated in English to read. It was reprinted in 1968 using a different orthography (and a few word changes), and again in 1990, this time with the original orthography for the hymns, but a different (and somewhat inconsistent) orthography for the introduction and a series of Bible study lessons at the back. A few silk-screened materials were developed for the introduction of vernacular prep schools in the early 1990s, but these have since fallen out of use. None of these materials is currently in print.

We have produced various literacy materials, both for children's literacy and adult literacy, including a transfer primer for those who can read English. There are several titles available for use in the elementary schools. Two Scripture portions have been published so far, plus several calendars containing Bible verses. See the full list in the Bibliography.

There has been positive reaction to most of the materials. The latest Scripture portion has sold out, and was bought by people from all dialect areas. We have not heard specific feedback on how it was accepted by Emira people, though. Otherwise, materials are accepted well by the three Mussau dialects. There has not been any request for us to change the spelling of words to be more like another dialect, such as changing some words to be spelt as in Western Mussau. We have recommended to the Emira people that they choose some people to help us in doing an adaptation of translated Scripture into their dialect, but so far nobody has expressed interest in doing this work.

6. Churches and Missions

There is only one church active in the area, the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The mission arrived in 1931, initially based in Lomakunauru village, but later spreading to all villages in the St Matthias Group. Every village has a local church, which is in many ways the centre of village life. There are certainly people who do not belong to the SDA church, but they do not belong to any other church.

The SDA church is supportive of the use of vernacular in church activities. The early missionaries produced a vernacular hymn book, all translated from English hymns, in 1935, just four years after the mission arrived. A number of verses were included, as well as selections such as the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. The two resident expatriate missionaries died during World War II, and post-war missionaries focused more on education than church leadership, and so no more translation of Scripture was done. However, it is very common for people to use the vernacular during church activities, including prayer, preaching and discussions. English and Tok Pisin have their places, since many materials are not available in Mussau-Emira as yet, including most of the Bible, the Sabbath School lessons, and the works of Ellen G White, which are important to the SDA church. Indeed, some of these are still only available in English.

Official support of the translation of Scripture has been expressed at several levels, from the local church, to the District Pastors, to the New Britain-New Ireland Mission. Invited guests from overseas at the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the mission included church representatives from Australia, who were also supportive.

The recent reorganisation of the church districts is of interest at this point. The earlier structure mirrored the dialect areas, but now there are only two districts on Mussau, which divide the Western Mussau dialect between the two districts. It remains to be seen whether this has an effect on inter-village relationships and dialect. If this does lead to a levelling to two Mussau dialects, then it will remain to be seen whether the two dialects become more distinct or converge. As the Southern Mussau dialect is not divided by this reorganisation, it still appears that materials produced in this dialect will be acceptable across Mussau.

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Writers' workshop books

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Elementary school books

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- Taea ateva me kamarieriki eteva.* (Crab and Ant). 2001.
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- Kinatama uneghi airekati ko atea.* (My Big Hook). 2001.
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- Se eangini ativu etoa?* (Who will feed the visitors?) 2001.
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- Ninamanama 2009.*
- Ninamanama 2010.*

Appendix: Word lists

	Emira	Southern Mussau	Eastern Mussau	Western Mussau	Note
head	uruna	uruna	uruna	uruna	1
hair	iraira uruna	u: ɲuruna	u: ɲuruna	u: ɲuruna	
mouth	pa:na	pa:na	pa:na	pa:nɛ	
nose	ɲusuna	ɲusɯɲuna	ɲusɯɲuna	ɲusɯɲuna	
eye	matana	matana	matana	matana	
neck	alɔna	alɔna	alɔna	alɔna	
belly	tɔβana	kɔβana	kɔβana	kɔβanɛ	
skin	βilikina	βilikina	βilikina	βilikina	
knee	patupatu k:ɛna	patu k:ɛna	patu k:ɛna	patu k:ɛna	2
ear	taliɲana	taliɲana	taliɲana	taliɲanɛ	
tongue	ramuramuti pa:na	ramuramuti pa:na	ramuramuti pa:na	ramuramuti pa:nɛ	
tooth	ɲaluɲaluna	ɲaluɲaluna	ɲaluɲaluna	ɲaluɲaluna	
breast	s:auna	s:una	susuna	s:una	
hand	numuna	nimana	nimana	nimanɛ	
foot	kɛkena	k:ɛna	k:ɛna	k:ɛna	3
back	βilina	βilina	βilina	βilina	
shoulder	taβan:a	pap:ana	pap:anɛ	pap:anɛ	
forehead	patuna	patilakana	patilakana	patilakana	
chin	autuna	autuna	autuna	autuna	
elbow	patupatu numana	patu nimana	patu nimana	patu nimana	4
thumb	βuβu numana	βuβu nimana	βuβu nimana	βuβu nimanɛ	5
leg	kɛkena	k:ɛna	k:ɛna	k:ɛna	6
heart	uruɲuitana	uruɲuitana	uruɲuitana	uruɲuitana	
liver	ateana	atea:nɛ	atea:nɛ	atea:na	
bone	riuna	riuna	riuna	riuna	
blood	raena	raena	raena	raena	
baby	tuβura	tubura	tuβura	tuβura	
girl	aliki βause	βause ariyi	βause ariyi	βause ariyi	7
boy	aliki taita	taita ariyi	taita ariyi	taita ariyi	8
old woman	βause namu:	βause namu:	βause namu:	βause namu:	9
old man	taita namu:	taita namu:	taita namu:	taita namu:	10
woman	βause	βause	βause	βause	
man	taita	taita	taita	taita	
father	tamana	tamana	tamana	tamana	
mother	inana	kin:a	kin:a	kin:a	
brother	tua:na taita	tuena	tuena	tuena	11
sister	tua:na βause	tuena βause	tuena βause	tuena βause	12
name	arari	arari	arari	arari	
bird	yila	yila	yila	yila	

dog	paua	paua	paua	paua	13
pig	mōsu	mōsu	mōsu	mōsu	
cassowary					
wallaby					
flying fox	marieβa	marieβa	marieβa	marieβa	
rat	rario	rario	rario	rario	
frog	rōparōpa	rōparōpa	rōparōpa	rōparōpa	
snake	ōtuana	katu	katu	katu	14
fish	k:ō	k:ō	k:ō	kōkō	
person	taumat:u	taumat:u	taumat:u	taumat:u	
he sits	ētōkatōka	tōka siō	tōka siō	tōkatōka	15
he stands	eti:tijina	tijina	tijina	tijina	16
he lies down	ēasōasō	asō	asō	asō	
he sleeps	ēl:usu	l:usu	l:usu	l:usu	17
he walks	ekasukasu	kasukasu	kasukasu	kasukasu	
he bites	ekatie	kata	kata	kata	18
he eats	ēania	namanama	namanama	namanama	19
he gives it to me	ētauēla ētai ētayū	tau mae siō	tau mae	tau mae	20
he sees	ēta:tara	tarala	ta:tara	ta:tara	21
he comes	ēmaimai	mae	mae	mae	
he says	euliei	sama	sama	sama	
he hears	ēnōḡōnōḡō	nōḡō	nōḡō	nōḡō	
he knows	ekilakila	kilakila	kilakila	kilekile	
he drinks	ērōpirōpi	rōpi	rōpi	rōpi	
he hits	ēania	uβi	uβi	uβi	
he kills	ēaiuβi ēmate	uβi ēmate	uβi ēmate	uβi ēmate	22
he dies	ēmatela	mate	mate	mate	23
it burns	ēramerame	rame	rame	rame	
it flies	ēlō:lō	ēlō:lō:	ēlō:lō:	ēlō:lō:	24
he swims	ēasiasi	asa:sa	asa:sa	asa:sa	
he runs	ēlayilayī	ilou	ilou	ilou	
he falls down	ēka:katu:	katu:	katu:	katu:	
he catches	ēsaeinia	s:apō:	s:apō:	s:apō:	
he coughs	ekunukunu	kunu	kunu	kunu	
he laughs	ēlōkēlōkē	kaḡakaḡa	kaḡakaḡa	kaḡakaḡa	
he dances	ēsis:iuei	lōkulōku	lōkulōku	lōkulōku	
big	namu:	namu:	namu:	namu:	
small	pisike	ḡauna	ḡauna	ḡauna	25
good	masina	masina	masina	masina	
bad	sēsa	sēsa	sēsa	sēsa	
long	aluse	aluse	aluse	aluse	

short	tukuna	tukuna	tukuna	tukuna	
heavy	ma:tɛ	ma:tɛ	ma:tɛ	ma:ma:tana	26
light	saona	sauɛkana	saukana	sauɛkana	
cold	makar:iŋane	kak:aɪli	kak:aɪli	kak:aɪli	27
warm, hot	a:nasɛ	a:nasa	a:nasa	a:nasa	
new	ouna	ouna	ouna	ouna	
old	pəkana	pəkane	pəkane	pəkane	
round	kirikiriane	tariɛna	tariɛna	tariɛna	28
wet	marɔatɛ	pɔsɔna	pɔsɔna	pɔsɔna	
dry	malatjɔɛ	mal:atjɔna	mal:atjɔna	mal:atjɔna	
full	ɛpasu	pasula	pasula	pasula	29
road	sala	salana	salana	san:a	30
stone	atu	atu	atu	atu	
earth	kɔsa	kɔsa	kɔsa	kɔsa	
sand	manaɔne	rira	rira	rira	
mountain	mɔtouru	mɔtouru	mɔtouru	mɔtouru	
fire	kura	kura	kura	kura	
smoke	lɔβɔ	asu	asu	asu	31
ashes	kapu kura	au:	au:	au:	
sun	sinaka	sinaka	sinaka	sinaka	
moon	ulana	ulana	ulena	ulena	
star	katɔtɔ	kat:ɔ	kat:ɔ	kat:ɔ	32
cloud	urukɔ:kɔ:	urukɔ:kɔ:	urukɔ:kɔ:	urukɔ:kɔ:	
rain	βaɔ:	βaɔ:	βaɔ:	βaɔ:	
wind	ku:ku:	ku:ku:	ku:ku:	ku:ku:	
water	βanu	manu	manu	manu	
vine	ɔasa	uasa	uasa	uasa	
tree	ai	ai	ai	ai	
stick	ai	ai	ai	ai	33
bark	βiliki ai	βiliki ŋai	βiliki ai	βiliki ŋai	34
seed	atjɛna	katu ŋai	katu ŋai	katu ŋai	
root	ɔa	ɔa ŋai	ɔa ŋai	ɔa ŋai	35
leaf	uru ŋai	uru ŋai	uru ŋai	uru ŋai	
meat	malatau	malatau	malatau	malatau	
fat	i:na	ɔnɔsina	ɔnɔsina	ɔnɔsina	
egg	itɔlu	ɔtɔlu	ɔtɔlu	ɔtɔlu	
louse	lisa	lisa	lisa	lisa	
feather	u: ɣila	u: ɣila	u: ɣila	u: ɣila	36
horn					
wing	aikaina	kaekaena	kaekaena	kaekaena	
claw	karakɛ	karak:ɛna	karak:ɛna	karak:ɛna	37

tail	uina	uina	uina	uina	
one	lei	sesa	sesa	sesa	
two	yalua	lua	lua	lua	38
three	yatolu	tolu	tolu	tolu	
four	ya:ti	ata	ata	ata	
five	yalima	lima	lima	lima	
ten	yasajaulu	kasajaulu	kasajaulu	kasajaulu	
taro	asi	asi	asi	asi	
sugarcane	tou	tou	tou	tou	
yam		kau: kaikai	kau: kaikai	kau: kaikai	39
banana	uri	uri	uri	uri	
sweet potato	kau:	kau:	kau:	kau:	
bean	βini	βini	βini	βini	40
axe	kulum	kulum	kulum	kulum	
knife	iama	iema	iema	iema	
spear	βa:lau	βa:lau	βa:lau	βa:lau	
basket	isosa	keru	keru	keru	41
house	anua	ale	ale	ale	42
tobacco					
morning	elue talau	elue talaua	elue talaua	elue talaua	
afternoon	elo alai	elo alai	elo alai	elo alai	
night	eleiβo	eleiβo	eleiβo	eleiβo	
yesterday	yainei	yalail:ɔ	yalail:ɔ	yalail:ɔ	43
tomorrow	epai	nimana	nimana	nimana	44
white	usousɔana	usousɔana	usousɔana	usousɔana	
black	βoβoŋiane	βo:βoŋina	βo:βoŋina	βo:βoŋina	
yellow	tatalakiane	βaiβaiena	βaiβaiena	aitalake	
red	raeraeana	raeraeana	raeraeana	raeraeana	45
green					
many	ɔroi	ɔroi	ɔroi	ɔroi	
all	ila akapa	akapa	akapa	akapa	46
this	ie tao	ie tɔkɔ	ie tɔkɔ	ie tɔkɔ	47
that	ie ta:kɔ	ia ɔ	ia ɔ	ia ɔ	48
what	sa:ia	sa	sa	sa	49
who	se:ia	se:	se:	se:	50
when	eloβisa	lɔβisa	lɔβisa	eloβisa	
where	ea	ea	ea	ea	
yes	ɔe	ue	ue	ue	
no	ka:pa	karika	karika	karika	
not	ka:pa	karika	karika	karika	51
I	a:u	ayi	ayi	ayi	

you (singular)	iɔ	iɔ	iɔ	iɔ	
he	ia	ia	ia	ia	
we two (exclusive)	aŋalua	aŋalua	aŋalua	aŋalua	
you two	amalua	amalua	amalua	amalua	
they two	ilalua	ilalua	ilalua	ilalua	
we (plural exclusive)	a:mi	ami	amami	amami	
you (plural)	a:m	am	am	am	
they (plural)	i:la	ila	ila	ila	

Notes:

1. The root is *uru*, with *-na* being the third person singular possessive suffix.
2. The form *patu* or *patupatu* is used of the main joint of either the arm or leg, with the limb specified, so *patu kkena* is literally “joint of his leg”.
3. The word for foot also means “leg”. Note the instance of syncope, where *kekena* has become *kkena*.
4. This is the same construction as for knee, but with arm specified rather than leg.
5. In this phrase, the first word, *vuvu*, means “digit”, and the second word means “his arm”. So, the whole term means “his finger”. There is no separate word for thumb.
6. Again, this word means both “foot” and “leg”, and is the same form as in the previous instance.
7. The two different constructions are ways of saying the same thing. The word *aliki* means “young person”, with *vause* meaning “woman, female”. The other construction uses the classifier for small things, thus meaning “a small woman”.
8. These forms are similar to those for “girl”, but this time using *taita*, which means “man, male”.
9. Here we have the word *vause* “woman” along with *namuu* “big”, which is used for “old” when speaking of a person’s age.
10. Again, we have the word *taita* “man” along with *namuu*.
11. The word *tuena* or *tuaana* means “older sibling”. It can then be specified as “brother” by adding the word *taita* “man, male”.
12. To specify “sister”, the word *vause* “woman, female” is added to the term for older sibling.
13. Although all dialects gave *paua* as the word for “dog”, the term *roko* is also used, a borrowing from Tok Pisin where the /d/ has been replaced by the nearest equivalent, /r/, and an echo vowel has been added to make an open syllable at the end of the word.
14. The word used in Emira, *otuana*, is also known at least in Southern Mussau in a slightly different form, *otuena*, also one of the generic words for “snake”.
15. The root *toka* means sit. The form for Emira has the third person singular subject clitic, and

is reduplicated, so meaning “he is sitting”. The form *toka sio* is a serial verb construction meaning “sit down”.

16. Again, the Emira form has the third person singular subject and is reduplicated, whereas the three Mussau dialects give the root.
17. The Emira form has the third person singular subject, but is not reduplicated, so meaning “he sleeps”.
18. The Emira form has the third person singular subject and the third person singular object, so meaning “he bites it”, whereas the Mussau dialects have just the root.
19. The Emira form has the third person singular subject and the third person singular object, so meaning “he eats it”, whereas the Mussau dialects have the reduplicated root.
20. The root for “give” is just *tau*. However, it is usually used in a serial verb construction, *tau mae* or *tau mae sio*, indicating the direction of the giving (to the speaker in this case). The Emira form has a perfective marker, a different verb in the serial verb construction, and adds the preposition *etaghū* “to me”.
21. The root is *tara*, which is reduplicated as *taatarā*. The Emira form has the subject, while the Southern Mussau form has the perfective marker, and would be interpreted as the imperative.
22. The form for “kill” is a serial verb construction which is literally “hit cause to die”.
23. The root is *mate*, and the Emira form has the third person singular subject clitic and the perfective clitic, so meaning “he died”.
24. It is not clear whether the difference in length of the final vowel is correct or an error in hearing and transcribing.
25. Again, the word given in the Emira word list, *pisike*, is known as a synonym for *ghauna* “small” in at least the Southern Mussau dialect.
26. The form given for Western Mussau, *maamatana*, is also used in at least the Southern Mussau dialect. The difference is between a base form and its reduplication with an explicit suffix showing it as an adjective.
27. The Emira form, *makarringane* “cold”, is similar to a synonym for *kakkaili*, *makarri*, in at least the Southern Mussau dialect.
28. The form given for the Emira dialect, *kirikiriane* “round”, is derived from a verb *kiri* “turn”, but the derived form is not used in the Mussau dialects.
29. The root for “fill” is *pasu*. The Emira form has the third person singular subject, while the Mussau dialects have the perfective clitic, making the meaning “filled”.
30. The root for “road, path” is *sala*, which can take possessive suffixes. Most often it has the third person possessive, so is *salana*. In the Western Mussau dialect, the root has become *sana*, and adding the third person possessive suffix triggers syncope, making it *sanna*.

31. The form given for the Emira dialect, *lovo*, is used as a verb for smoking a cigarette in the Mussau dialects.
32. Note the syncope between *katto* and *katoto*.
33. The root *ai* can mean different things depending on the classifier and the context. In particular *ai eteae* is a tree, and *ai eteva* is a stick.
34. This is literally “skin of a tree”. The /ng/ is a construct form.
35. The root is *oa*, and the *ngai* is the construct form with *ai* “tree”.
36. This is literally “hair of a bird”. However, note that the Emira dialect uses *uu*, not *iraira*, as for human hair.
37. It is possible that this contains the form *kkena* “its foot”, in which case the root would be simply *kara*.
38. The Mussau dialects have two sets of numbers, counting numbers, as given in the word list, and pronominal numeral classifiers, which are very similar to the forms given in the Emira dialect, which has only the one set of numbers.
39. There is no term for yam in Mussau-Emira, but they have created a term which means “dug sweet potato”.
40. This is a borrowed word from Tok Pisin, with the addition of an echo vowel.
41. The standard word list uses net bag here, but these are not used in Mussau, so a common type of basket was substituted.
42. The Emira word *anua* means “ship” in the Mussau dialects.
43. The Emira word *ghainei* is similar to the Mussau dialects’ word for “now, today”, *ghaine*.
44. The Emira word *epai* is a verb form in the Mussau dialects, meaning “it dawns”.
45. This word is a derivation of the word for blood, *rae*, reduplicated and with an adjectival ending.
46. In the Emira form, *ila* is the third person plural independent pronoun.
47. In these forms, *ie* is the third person singular independent pronoun, so the actual form for “this” is *tao* or *toko*.
48. In these forms, *ia* or *ie* is the third person singular independent pronoun, so the actual form for “that” is *taako* or *o*.
49. The Emira form has the transitive marker plus the third person singular object clitic, making the meaning, “What is it?”
50. The Emira form has the transitive marker plus the third person singular object clitic, making the meaning, “Who is it?”
51. The word for “no” is one of the negatives, with *tam* being the other, used as part of the verb phrase, at least in the Mussau dialects.