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**A Brief Note on Elseng**  
**by Wiem Burung**

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## 0. Introduction

This brief note on *Elseng* ['ɛlsɛŋ]<sup>1</sup> presented in this paper is based on rather limited exposure, a total of six hours of data elicitation that took place at my office in Sentani, which yields my personal impression on the information given by Yustus Nisap.<sup>2</sup> In such a short time it was certainly not possible to obtain detailed information, let alone present a good analysis. Nevertheless, it is offered as a preliminary description pending further research on the language.

Concerning the name of the language: in ancient times<sup>3</sup> some Tidorenes came to Kemtuk Gresik, through Nimboran, hunting for birds of paradise. The people who lived in the jungle South and Southeast of Jayapura were known as *Tapu* ['tapu] 'undeveloped people'.<sup>4</sup> Later on the name was adopted by the government as *Tabu* ['tabu]. It is listed in the Ethnologue (Grimes. 1996) as an alternate name for *Janggu*. Grimes states,

“MORWAP (JANGGU, DJANGGU, ELSENG, TABU, SAWA) [MRP] 300 (1991 SIL). Jayapura kabupaten, Arso, Abepura, Kemtuk Gresi, Senggi kecamatans, south of Jayapura, northeast of Kaureh. Trans-New Guinea, Morwap. Not closely related to any other languages. Survey needed.” (1996: 616)

The term Elseng refers to both the language and its speakers that number about 300 people. Since the self-reference is Elseng, whilst the outsiders' term is Tabu – which might be derogatory in nature – I will use Elseng throughout this paper.<sup>5</sup>

The information herein is concerned with the language of Elseng with two goals in mind: (1) to record basic information pending further linguistic research because Elseng is in danger of vanishing, and (2) to inform about the need for possible Scripture translation work.<sup>6</sup> As we consider the first goal, let us remind ourselves of Dixon's plea, “The most important task in linguistics today – indeed, the only really important task – is to get out in the field and describe languages, while this can still be done. Self-admiration in the looking glass of formalist theory can wait; that will always be possible.” (1997: 144) since – as he continues in the same page – “Each language encapsulates the world-view of its speakers – how they think, what they value, what they believe in, how they classify the world around them, how they order their lives. Once a language dies, a part of human culture is lost – for ever.” Hence, this preliminary research.

## 1. Sounds and their possible structures

These are the phones that may potentially be determined as allophones or as individual phonemes in future analysis. Considering the short time spent to elicit these data, it is not realistic to decide their phonological position in this paper, yet some features presented here may be of help in describing the structures – and their functions – of sounds in Elseng.

In the following, I will sketch Elseng sounds and their distributions in words of the language, based on the 209 items of the Universitas Cenderawasih - Summer Institute of Linguistics (UnCen-SIL) wordlist, 3/85/1 (I presume this is the University's file record, perhaps meaning March 1985, page 1). I used approximately two hours to elicit the wordlist data and then spent an additional four hours

discussing other aspects with him. Data reliability is estimated to be only ‘fair’ (see appendix) due to the following reasons,

- 1) Out of 209 items I was given only 127 – My informant forgot some words and for some he took time to even recall the term.
- 2) My informant had left his village about 20 years ago, and went back once for only a short while. My impression is that he is more proficient in Indonesian than Elseng – but I may be wrong.

For the sounds actually occurring in Elseng, I propose the following:<sup>7</sup>

Table 1: Phones in Elseng

	CONSONANTS			VOWELS		
Plosives	p	t tʰ	k kʰ	i		u
	b		g	ə		
pre-Nasals	<sup>m</sup> b		<sup>m</sup> k <sup>ŋ</sup> g	ɛ		ɔ
Nasals	m	n	ŋ		a	
Fricatives	ɸ	f	s	Diphthongs	<sup>i</sup> ɛ <sup>ɛ</sup> u	<sup>u</sup> a
	β				<sup>i</sup> a	<sup>ɔ</sup> u <sup>u</sup> ɔ
Liquids	w	l			a <sup>i</sup>	a <sup>u</sup>
						a <sup>ɔ</sup>

### 1.1 Consonantal sounds

The voiceless bilabial plosive [p] is unaspirated, produced more like that in the Indonesian words *paku* ‘nail’ and *apa* ‘what’ but slightly released word finally. The phone occurs in all environments: word initially, medially and finally.

- |     |                                    |          |      |
|-----|------------------------------------|----------|------|
| (1) | [ <sup>l</sup> p <sup>ɔ</sup> ulu] | ‘skin’   | w.16 |
|     | [ <sup>l</sup> l <sup>ɔ</sup> upə] | ‘cold’   | w.64 |
|     | [ɸɛp]                              | ‘garden’ | w.79 |

The voiced bilabial plosive [b] occurs word initially and medially. It is pronounced, more or less, like the Indonesian [b] in words like *betul* ‘correct’ and *sabar* ‘(be) patient’.

- |     |                       |            |              |
|-----|-----------------------|------------|--------------|
| (2) | [ <sup>l</sup> bɛtɛɸ] | ‘water’    | w.29, 30, 31 |
|     | [ <sup>l</sup> sabas] | ‘mosquito’ | w.107        |

Occasionally, the pronunciation of [b] fluctuates with [β].

- |     |   |                    |       |
|-----|---|--------------------|-------|
| (3) | [bɛs] ~ [βɛs]                               | ‘leech’            | w.115 |
|     | [ <sup>l</sup> sɛbi] ~ [ <sup>l</sup> sɛβi] | ‘bird of paradise’ | w.101 |

The released voiceless alveolar plosive [t] occurs word initially and medially.

- |     |                      |          |       |
|-----|----------------------|----------|-------|
| (4) | [tɛs]                | ‘road’   | w.54  |
|     | [ <sup>l</sup> tɛti] | ‘father’ | w.147 |

The unreleased voiceless alveolar plosive [t̚] occurs only word finally. Such may be good evidence to suggest that [t] and [t̚] are allophonic variations of the phoneme /t/.

(5)	[ <sup>m</sup> but̚]	‘fire’	w.37
	[but̚]	‘stomach’	w.21

Further, these alveolar sounds seem to be pronounced similarly to those of Indonesian /t/ in words like *saat* ‘moment’, *angkat* ‘to lift up’ or *bangkit* ‘to arise’.

The same is true of the released voiceless velar plosive [k] and its counterpart, the unreleased [k̚]. The latter occurs word finally, while the first occurs elsewhere except word finally, suggesting that [k] and [k̚] are allophones of /k/. Like the alveolar sounds, the velar plosive sounds are pronounced similar to the Indonesian /k/ in words like, *kol* ‘cabbage’, *makan* ‘to eat’ and *lilik* ‘female proper name’.

(6)	[kɔl]	‘lower back’	w.22
	[ <sup>l</sup> məkən]	‘know (something)’	w.161
	[lik̚]	‘hurt’	w.28

There are only two words containing the voiced velar plosive [g], in which the phone occurs word initially. The sound is pronounced like that of Indonesian *gigi* ‘tooth’ or *garam* ‘salt’.

(7)	[gin]	‘heavy’	w.42
	[ <sup>l</sup> galam]	‘salt’	w.36

Notice that the word for ‘salt’ may be derived from the Indonesian *garam* ‘salt’, where [r] is realised as [l] since Elseng seems to lack vibrant sounds – cf. Table 1.

There are three pre-nasal sounds, [<sup>m</sup>b], [<sup>m</sup>k] and [<sup>ŋ</sup>g], which Elseng may employ. The prenasalised voiced bilabial [<sup>m</sup>b] is found word initially and medially. See (5) for examples. It is pronounced like that of many Papuan languages in Irian Jaya. Such as *mboid* ‘sweet potato’, *mbere* ‘two’ and *ambit* ‘for him/her/it’ in Wano, to mention but a few.

There is only one example in my corpus to support the presence of [<sup>m</sup>k] in Elseng. It occurs word initially in an open syllable with a perceptible stress on the nasal.

(8)	[ <sup>m</sup> ka]	‘this’	w.111
-----	--------------------	--------	-------

The prenasalised voiced velar plosive [<sup>ŋ</sup>g] is found word initially and medially.

(9)	[ <sup>ŋ</sup> gawən]	‘die’	w.175
	[ <sup>l</sup> a <sup>ŋ</sup> gan]	‘big’	w.30

Like pre-nasals, Elseng also employs three nasals, bilabial [m], alveolar [n] and velar [ŋ]. The three sounds are pronounced like the Indonesian sounds in words like *mama* ‘mummy’, *makmur* ‘prosperity’, *namun* ‘but’ – for [m] – *nama* ‘name’, *ani* ‘female proper name’, *aman* ‘safe’ – for [n] – and *angin* ‘wind’, *buang* ‘throw away’ – for [ŋ]. The [m], [n] and [ŋ] are found elsewhere.

(10)	[mu]	‘ear’	w.3
	[ <sup>l</sup> ukmɔlɔɸ]	‘fat’	w.18
	[mum]	‘sky’	w.66

(11)	[nʉn]	‘mud’	w.34
	[ <sup>l</sup> kɛnʉn]	‘three’	w.46
	[mʉn]	‘four’	w.47
(12)	[ <sup>l</sup> ŋ <sup>u</sup> a <sup>u</sup> m]	‘nose’	w.9
	[ <sup>l</sup> iɛŋli]	‘wind’	w.62
	[ <sup>l</sup> wasɪŋ]	‘day’	w.74

Notice that when occurring word medially, the sound [m] is either following or preceding a consonant.

(13)	[ <sup>l</sup> ukmɔlɔɸ]	‘fat’	w.18
	[ <sup>l</sup> amsan]	‘new’	w.129

Likewise, [ŋ] seems to occur word medially preceding either a liquid or another nasal.

(14)	[ <sup>l</sup> iɛŋli]	‘wind’	w.62
	[ <sup>l</sup> niŋni]	‘dry’	w.81

The possible fricative sounds that are available in my corpus are voiceless and voiced bilabial [ɸ], [β], voiceless labio-dental [f] and voiceless alveolar [s]. Whilst [β] is not found word finally, [ɸ] might be found finally (as well as initially and medially), in that it may fluctuate with [f]. On the other hand, [β] may occasionally fluctuate with [b] or [w]. The alveolar may be distributed in all three positions. The examples follow,

(15)	[ <sup>l</sup> ɸɛsɛn] ~ [ <sup>l</sup> fɛsɛn]	‘odour’	w.92
	[ <sup>l</sup> iɛɸɛn] ~ [ <sup>l</sup> iɛfɛn]	‘eye’	w.8
	[ <sup>l</sup> sasɔɸ] ~ [ <sup>l</sup> sasɔf]	‘white’	w.96
(16)	[βu]	‘stone’	w.41
	[ <sup>l</sup> sɛβi]	‘bird of paradise’	w.101 > side note
	[βi] ~ [wi]	‘soil’	w.33
(17)	[su]	‘flesh’	w.17
	[ <sup>l</sup> wasɔ]	‘person’	w.140
	[sas]	‘smoke’ NOUN	w.40

Elseng employs two liquids, bilabial [w] and alveolar [l]. In a future study, however, [w] might be considered a segment of the heavy diphthong – thus [<sup>u</sup>V]. In the wordlist, it is found word initially and medially only. When pronounced, it may sometimes fluctuate with [β].

(18)	[wi] ~ [βi]	‘soil’	w.33
	[ <sup>l</sup> wasis]	‘fish’	w.118.
	[sis <sup>l</sup> kɔwɔn] ~ [sis <sup>l</sup> kɔβɔn]	‘child’	w.149

The [l], on the other hand, is found word initially, medially and finally.

(19)	[lu]	‘wound’	w.27
	[ <sup>1</sup> ɸalə]	‘house’	w.128
	[kil]	‘night’	w.75

*Juxtaposition of consonantal sounds* described below might not be *consonant clusters* but it is worthwhile noticing. Again, from my corpus of 127 items, the sounds are as follows,

Juxtaposition of [b] and [l].

(20)	[ <sup>1</sup> b <sup>ə</sup> lentan]	‘few’	w.50
	[ <sup>1</sup> b <sup>ə</sup> lafka] ~ [ <sup>1</sup> b <sup>ə</sup> laɸka]	‘banana’	w.78
	[ <sup>1</sup> fɛb <sup>ə</sup> lap] ~ [ <sup>1</sup> ɸɛb <sup>ə</sup> lap]	‘to hit’	w.172
	[ <sup>1</sup> βulba]	‘tree’	w.82

Notice that schwa is inserted when [l] follows [b], whilst the insertion does not occur when reversal takes place.

The alveolar-fricative adjacency is that of [t] preceded by [f~ɸ]

(21)	[ <sup>1</sup> taftan] ~ [ <sup>1</sup> taɸtan]	‘one’	w.44
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The velar [k] adjacent to other consonants is that of [k] preceded by [t, f~ɸ, s, l] or followed by [m]

(22)	[ <sup>1</sup> watkəna]	‘to hold’	w.186
	[ <sup>1</sup> ɛfkəs] ~ [ <sup>1</sup> ɛɸkəs]	‘finger’	w.14
	[ <sup>1</sup> b <sup>ə</sup> lafka] ~ [ <sup>1</sup> b <sup>ə</sup> laɸka]	‘banana’	w.78
	[ <sup>1</sup> iski]	‘near’ DEICTICS	w.138
	[ <sup>1</sup> kiskis]	‘cassowary’	w.105
	[sis <sup>1</sup> kəwə]	‘child’	w.149
	[ <sup>1</sup> falkə] ~ [ <sup>1</sup> ɸalkə]	‘to shoot (an arrow)’	w.121
	[ <sup>1</sup> ukmələf] ~ [ <sup>1</sup> ukmələɸ]	‘fat’	w.18

The bilabial-alveolar nasal juxtaposition is the following,

(24)	[ <sup>1</sup> mna]	‘far’	w.139
------	---------------------	-------	-------

and the nasal-sibilant adjacent position displayed when [m] followed by [s].

(25)	[am <sup>1</sup> san]	‘new’	w.129
------	-----------------------	-------	-------

The juxtaposition of liquid-nasal – [l] following [ŋ] – is also found.

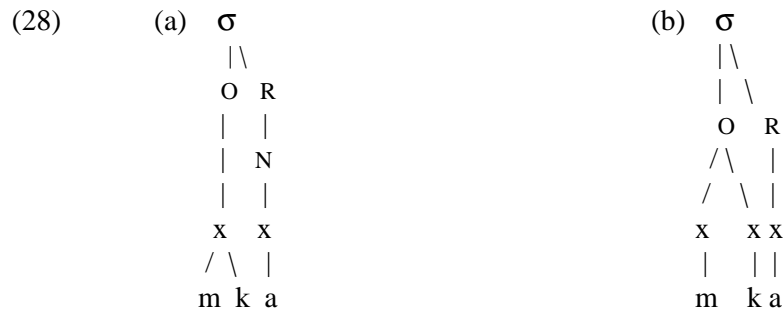
(26)	[ <sup>i</sup> ɛŋli]	‘wind’	w.62
------	----------------------	--------	------

Finally, the nasal-velar juxtapositions of [mk] and [ŋg] are also found in Elseng.

(27)	[ <sup>1</sup> mka]	‘this’	w.111
	[ <sup>1</sup> aŋgan]	‘big’	w.30 cf. 59, 127

Both combinations in 26 are listed above as pre-nasal sounds – in 8 and 9. While [ŋg] may have no problem since we have more data as to its distribution – word initially and medially – [mk] might be of further interest.

Considering the word *mka* ‘this’ in 26, two possible distinct syllable structures follow,



in which (28a) yields the pre-nasal [<sup>m</sup>k] and (28b) renders the consonant cluster [mk]. The same is true for the nasal-nasal adjacency [mn].

(29) [<sup>m</sup>mna] ‘far’ w.139

Considering all examples given in 20-29 above, possible syllable patterns in Elseng are V, VC, CV and CVC. Take *efkes* ‘finger’ – see 22 for instance – we may have either V.CVC > *e.fkes* ‘finger’ or VC.CVC > *ef.kes* ‘finger’ that yields two different syllable structures illustrated in (30a) and (30b) respectively.



With regard to possible *contrast segments*, the data shows one case as evidence for bilabials [<sup>m</sup>b], [b], [m] and [β] as shown in 31.

(31)	[ <sup>m</sup> but <sup>ɿ</sup> ]	‘fire’	w.37
	[but <sup>ɿ</sup> ]	‘stomach’	w.21
	[mu]	‘ear’	w.3
	[βu]	‘stone’	w.41

## 1.2 Vocalic sounds

Elseng may employ six vocalic sounds, [i, ə, ɛ, a, ɔ, u].

(32)	[ <sup>i</sup> iski]	‘near’ DEICTICS	w.138
	[lik <sup>ɿ</sup> ]	‘hurting’	w.28
	[mən]	‘four’	w.47
	[ <sup>i</sup> səpak <sup>ɿ</sup> ]	‘foot’	w.26
	[ <sup>i</sup> k <sup>ɔ</sup> laf] ~ [ <sup>i</sup> k <sup>ɔ</sup> laɸ]	‘bone’	w.19
	[ <sup>i</sup> b <sup>ɔ</sup> lɛntan]	‘few’	w.50
	[bə <sup>i</sup> tɛf] ~ [bə <sup>i</sup> tɛɸ]	‘full’	w.127
	[bɛs] ~ [βɛs]	‘leech’	w.115
	[ <sup>i</sup> a <sup>ɿ</sup> gan]	‘big’	w.30
	[sas]	‘smoke’	w.40
	[ka]	‘{ first person }’	w.150
	[kɔl]	‘lower back’	w.22
	[ <sup>i</sup> wasɔ]	‘person’	w.140
	[ <sup>i</sup> ukmɔlɔf] ~ [ <sup>i</sup> ukmɔlɔɸ]	‘fat’	w.18
	[mum]	‘sky’	w.60
	[su]	‘flesh’	w.17

Considering the list of Elseng words given in (32), it should be clear that the extreme high and low vowels [i, u, a] may occur in all positions (i.e., word initially, medially and finally), whilst [ɛ] occurs only word medially, and [ɔ] occurs medially and finally. Schwa only occurs word medially with the following features,

- (33)
- (i) schwa may bear stress.
  - (ii) schwa interrupts the plosive-lateral adjacency.
  - (iii) when it is bilabial-alveolar, schwa is stronger.

Out of the above vocalic sounds, there are possibly eight compositions of diphthongs composed. They are [<sup>i</sup>ɛ, <sup>i</sup>a, <sup>u</sup>a, <sup>u</sup>ɔ, a<sup>i</sup>, a<sup>u</sup>, ɛ<sup>u</sup>, ɔ<sup>u</sup>] in that the first four mentioned may be interpreted to begin with liquids [y] and [w], as well as the last four mentioned, to end with liquids. Thus [<sup>i</sup>ɛ, <sup>i</sup>a, <sup>u</sup>a, <sup>u</sup>ɔ] > [yɛ, ya, wa, wɔ], and [ɛ<sup>u</sup>, a<sup>i</sup>, a<sup>u</sup>, ɔ<sup>u</sup>] > [ay, aw, ɛw, ɔw].

(34)	[ <sup>i</sup> ɛβɛn]	‘two’	w.45
	[ <sup>i</sup> aŋga <sup>u</sup> n]	‘sun’	w.73
	[m <sup>u</sup> ɔl]	‘elbow’	w.13
	[tɛ <sup>u</sup> ]	‘tooth’	w.6
	[ <sup>i</sup> mənə <sup>i</sup> ]	‘what’	w.156
	[ <sup>i</sup> laba <sup>i</sup> la <sup>ɔ</sup> n]	‘dog’	w.108
	[sɔ <sup>u</sup> ]	‘that; { second person }’	w.112; w.151

Furthermore, there might be triphthong

(35)	[ <sup>i</sup> ŋ <sup>u</sup> a <sup>u</sup> m]	‘nose’	w.9
------	---	--------	-----

that may be interpreted labialisation, yielding [<sup>i</sup>ŋ<sup>u</sup>a<sup>u</sup>m] > [<sup>i</sup>ŋ<sup>w</sup>a<sup>u</sup>m] ‘nose’ in the future studies.

Finally, with regard to possible *contrast segments*, there is only one evidence as to the vowels [ɛ] and [ə], as given in 36.



(36)	[ <sup>1</sup> məkən]	‘liver’	w.25
	[ <sup>1</sup> məkən]	‘know (something)’	w.161

### 1.3 Suprasegmental properties: Metrical stress and Intonation

In six hours of data elicitation, it would not be appropriate to make sweeping statements as to stress and intonation. Nevertheless, it was observed in the word list that on bisyllabic words, stress is not predictable on the basis of position in the word.<sup>8</sup>

(37)	[ <sup>1</sup> məkən]	‘liver’	w.25
	[ti <sup>1</sup> tan]	‘straight’	w.68

It may not be the case that stress is penultimate, since on trisyllabic words it is also not predictable.

(38)	[ <sup>1</sup> wəmbiak <sup>1</sup> ]	‘head’	w.1
	[ <sup>1</sup> ukmɔləf]	‘fat’	w.18
	[a <sup>1</sup> la <sup>u</sup> tan]	‘dirty’	w.11
	[kəkə <sup>1</sup> laf]	‘hand’	w.10

Further it was noticed that schwa may carry stress.

(39)	[ <sup>1</sup> səpak <sup>1</sup> ]	‘foot’	w.26
	[ <sup>1</sup> məkən]	‘know (something)’	w.161
	[ <sup>1</sup> məna <sup>1</sup> ]	‘what’	w.156

From the above list, it may be suggested that stress in Elseng is unpredictable and upon further studies it is to be marked in any wordlist - moreover, when a dictionary is compiled it should be indicated for the benefit of those learning the language.

From two items – [aŋ<sup>1</sup>gan] ‘full’ (127) and [<sup>1</sup>teti] ‘father’ (147) – examples of intonation at the phrasal level triggered. The use of rising and falling intonation may indicate an interrogative discourse. (40) and a falling may be used for a simple statement (41) - (Note: POSS ‘possessive marker’, COMP ‘completive’ aspect).

(40)	PARTICIPANT A: sə <sup>1</sup> wanu <sup>1</sup> teti ) who POSS father	‘whose father?’
	PARTICIPANT B: ka <sup>1</sup> makən <sup>1</sup> teti ) I POSS father	‘my father’
(41)	bət <sup>1</sup> təϕ ti <sup>1</sup> tam aŋ <sup>1</sup> gan ) water COMP big	‘the bucket is full’

## 2. Possible morpho-syntactic structures

With regard to personal pronouns, I suspect that Elseng has first person, *ka*, against other persons, *sou* with no distinction between singular and plural.

(42)	PERSON	SG	PL
	1	<i>ka</i>	<i>ka</i>
	2/3	<i>sou</i>	<i>sou</i>

Such a system seems to be found also in Morwap according to Laycock (Foley, 1986:70).<sup>9</sup>

Further on morpho-syntax, my data shows some possible reduplicative words. They may be fully- or partly- reduplicated.

(43)	mna mna ‘very far’ (side note of w.139) < mna ‘far’ (w.139)
	kəkə'laf ‘hand’ (w.10) < 'kəlaf ‘bone’ (w.19)

There are some words which might be suspected to be reduplicative forms, 'kiskis ‘cassowary’ (w.105), 'laba'la'n ‘dog’ (w.108), taftan βu ‘one’ (w.44).

The structure of NPs, with adjective following noun, may be noted as well.

(44)	i'aipi aŋ'gan rain big	‘heavy rain’	side note of w.59
	'ieŋli 'lo'pə wind cold	‘cold wind’	w.64

Like most Papuan languages, Elseng seems to have two basic terms of antonymity bearing semantic meaning contrasting Good-like-quality (indicated in this paper: GLQ) and Bad-like-quality (BLQ).

(45.a)	kəkə'laf a'la'tan hand BLQ	‘dirty hand’	w.11
	'ɸalə a'la'tan house BLQ	‘old house’	w.130
	'wasə a'la'tan man BLQ	‘bad man’	w.142
(45.b)	kəkə'laf am'san hand GLQ	‘clean hand’	cf. w.11
	'ɸalə am'san house GLQ	‘new house’	w.129
	'wasə am'san man GLQ	‘good man’	w.141

The adverbial structure seems to operate in a similar way.

- (46)      sə<sup>lm</sup>bawɔn am'san                      'speak the truth'                      w.166  
              speak              GLQ
- sə<sup>lm</sup>bawɔn a'la<sup>u</sup>tan                      'speak evil'                      cf. w.166  
              speak              BLQ

Notice that the word [am'san] is also the gloss for 'alive' (w.176) as opposed to 'die' which is [ʔɨgawɔn] (w.175).

The imperative/hortative verb is located following the object. We will notice in (47) that the mode is marked syntactically. In some Papuan languages, the imperative/hortative mode is a morphological marking. See the example of Wano in (49) below.

- (47)      'βulba 'wani                      'chop the tree'  
              tree    chop:IMP/HOR

When the benefactor is required, the object may be dropped - thus giving zero anaphora.

- (48)      ka    βɛ'naŋnaŋ                      'give it to me/us'                      w.187  
              1s/p give:IMP/HOR

In some Papuan languages, the number distinction of addressee is marked in this mode. Compare the Wano data in (49).

- (49)      tu    nar-u                      'you (singular) close the door'  
              path close-2s:IMP/HOR
- tu    nar-eb                      'you (plural) close the door'  
              path close-2p:IMP/HOR

### 3. Cultural notes

The *Yanggaun* clan is believed to be descendant of the [ʰaŋga<sup>u</sup>n] 'sun' (cf. w.73). Such a belief seems to be a common feature in Papuan languages. In Wano, for example, a name may refer to (i) the original ancestor of a clan, which is commonly a certain animal, or (ii) the personal character usually identified with an animal or a plant. Thus, the *Weya* clan, is the descendant of wallaby, and the *Medenggwa* clan is 'the hot one' < *meden-* 'to roll (tobacco)' + *k* 'realis' + *-wa* 'habitual' implying 'the bad-tempered one'.

Finally, from the linguistic point of view, since there is no literature yet in Elseng, the orthography of the language must be defined. This is to say that, the phonological system of the language need to be worked out first, resulting in an orthography suitable for linguistic purposes (though perhaps not for a 'practical' orthography), before proceeding to its grammatical description—morpho-syntactic and discourse structures.

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## Appendix: Wordlist

The Wordlist used is that of Universitas Cenderawasih - Summer Institute of Linguistics (UnCen-SIL) 3/85/1.

Certain symbols are used by UnCen-SIL convention with the following meanings.

- ↓ The down arrows are the UnCen-SIL way of extending a lexical item in question to a syntactic structure. So, for example, item 11 is related to 10 where we get tangan 'hand' (in 10) to tangan kotor 'dirty hand' (in 11), etc.
- ~ The tilde indicates that the sound fluctuates between the two pronunciations shown.
- / A slash between two items indicates similar lexical in Indonesian - English, e.g. jari - finger (in 14).
- > The arrow refers to an alternative item (for a language in question), e.g. in item 27, bengkak - swell > luka - wound. In some Papuan languages, there is no distinction in 'swell' and 'wound', or when we ask for the word 'swell', the informant might give 'wound', etc.

BAHASA	Elseng ['elsɛŋ]		
Language			
NAMA/ISTILAH LAIN	Tabu ['tabu] atau Tapu ['tapu]		
Other Names			
KABUPATEN	Jayapura		
Region			
KECAMATAN	Kemtuk-Gresik, Kaure		
District			
DESA, KAMPUNG	--, Omon		
WORDLIST RELIABILITY	Fair		
PENUTUR ASLI	Yustus Hans Nisap	Male	30 yrs
Native Speaker			
AHLI BAHASA	Wiem Burung		
Linguist			
TANGGAL	28 April 1998		
Date			

1. <i>kepala</i> – head	<sup>1</sup> wɔmbiak	36. <i>garam</i> – salt	<sup>1</sup> galam
2. <i>rambut</i> – hair	wɔ <sup>1</sup> lɔmbiak	37. <i>api</i> – fire	<sup>m</sup> but <sup>1</sup>
3. <i>telinga</i> – ear	mu	38. <i>membakar</i> ( <i>makanan</i> ) – to roast (food)	<sup>m</sup> but bɛs HOR/IMP <sup>m</sup> but βas ‘sago’
4. <i>leher</i> – neck		39. <i>abu tungku</i> – ash (cooking fires)	<sup>m</sup> but sɔ <sup>1</sup> l
5. <i>mulut</i> – mouth	lɔ <sup>u</sup> p	40. <i>asap</i> – smoke	sas > <sup>m</sup> but sas
6. <i>gigi</i> – tooth	tɛ <sup>u</sup>	41. <i>batu</i> – stone	βu
7. <i>lidah</i> – tongue	sɔ <sup>u</sup> p	42. <i>berat</i> – heavy ↓	gin βu
8. <i>mata</i> – eye	<sup>1</sup> lɛfɛn ~ <sup>1</sup> lɛfɛn	43. <i>licin</i> – slippery ↓	
9. <i>hidung</i> – nose	<sup>1</sup> ŋ <sup>u</sup> a <sup>u</sup> m	44. <i>satu</i> – one ↓	<sup>1</sup> taftan βu ~ <sup>1</sup> taftan βu
10. <i>tangan</i> – hand	kəkə <sup>1</sup> laf ~ kəkə <sup>1</sup> laφ	45. <i>dua</i> – two ↓	<sup>1</sup> ɛwɛn βu ~ <sup>1</sup> ɛβɛn βu
11. <i>kotor</i> – dirty ↓	kəkə <sup>1</sup> laf a <sup>1</sup> la <sup>u</sup> tan	46. <i>tiga</i> – three ↓	<sup>1</sup> kɛnən βu
12. <i>bulu badan</i> – body hair	wɔ <sup>1</sup> lɔmbiak lɛ <sup>1</sup> f/φup	47. <i>empat</i> – four ↓	mən βu
13. <i>siku</i> – elbow	<sup>1</sup> m <sup>u</sup> ɔl	48. <i>lima</i> – five ↓	
14. <i>jari</i> – finger	<sup>1</sup> ɛf/φkɛs ~ ɛf/φ <sup>1</sup> kɛs	49. <i>banyak</i> – many ↓ ↓	aŋ <sup>1</sup> gani βu
15. <i>kuku</i> – nail ↓		50. <i>sedikit</i> – few ↓ ↓	<sup>1</sup> b <sup>1</sup> lɛntan βu
16. <i>kulit</i> – skin	<sup>1</sup> pɔ <sup>u</sup> lu	51. <i>semua</i> – all ↓	aŋ <sup>1</sup> gani βu
17. <i>daging</i> – flesh	su > flesh	52. <i>tanah</i> – soil	wi ~ βi > 33
18. <i>lemak</i> – fat	<sup>1</sup> ukmɔlɔf ~ <sup>1</sup> ukmɔlɔφ	53. <i>debu</i> – ash	<sup>m</sup> but sɔ <sup>1</sup> l > 39
19. <i>tulang</i> – bone	<sup>1</sup> k <sup>3</sup> laf ~ <sup>1</sup> k <sup>3</sup> laφ	54. <i>jalan</i> (k.b.) – road	tɛs
20. <i>susu</i> – breast		55. <i>sempit</i> – narrow ↓	<sup>1</sup> b <sup>1</sup> lɛntan tɛs > 50
21. <i>perut</i> – stomach	but <sup>1</sup>	56. <i>lebar</i> – wide ↓	aŋ <sup>1</sup> gani tɛs > 49
22. <i>punggung</i> – shoulder	kɔl	57. <i>gunung</i> – mountain	fɔf ~ φɔφ
23. <i>darah</i> – blood	mi <sup>1</sup> ã	58. <i>awan</i> – cloud	sas > 40
24. <i>jantung</i> – heart ↓		59. <i>hujan</i> – rain	i <sup>1</sup> a <sup>1</sup> pi
25. <i>hati</i> – liver	<sup>1</sup> mɛkɛn	60. <i>langit</i> – sky	mum
26. <i>kaki</i> – foot	<sup>1</sup> səpak <sup>1</sup>	61. <i>kabut</i> – fog/mist	sas > 40, 58
27. <i>bengkak</i> > luka – swell > wound ↓	<sup>1</sup> səpak lu	62. <i>angin</i> – wind	<sup>1</sup> ɛŋli
28. <i>sakit</i> – hurt ↓	<sup>1</sup> səpak lik	63. <i>panas</i> – hot ↓	
29. <i>air</i> – water	<sup>1</sup> bɛtɛf ~ <sup>1</sup> bɛtɛφ	64. <i>dingin</i> – cold ↓	<sup>1</sup> lɔ <sup>u</sup> pə
30. <i>danau</i> – lake	<sup>1</sup> bɛtɛf/φ <sup>1</sup> aŋgan	65. <i>guntur</i> – thunder	
31. <i>sungai</i> – river	<sup>1</sup> bɛtɛf ~ bɛtɛφ	66. <i>kilat</i> – lightning	
32. <i>mengalir</i> – flow ↓		67. <i>tongkat</i> – stick	
33. <i>pasir</i> > tanah – sand > soil	wi ~ βi	68. <i>lurus</i> – straight ↓ ↓ ↓	ti <sup>1</sup> tan tɛs ‘jalan lurus’
34. <i>basah</i> > lumpur – wet > mud ↓	<sup>1</sup> w/βi nun	69. <i>tebal</i> – thick ↓ ↓	
35. <i>laut</i> – sea	<sup>1</sup> bɛtɛf/φ <sup>1</sup> aŋgan > 30	70. <i>tipis</i> – thin ↓	

71. <i>tajam</i> - sharp ↓↓		112. <i>itu</i> - that	sɔ <sup>u</sup>
72. <i>tumpul</i> - dull ↓		113. <i>sama</i> - same	
73. <i>matahari</i> - sun	<sup>i</sup> an̄ga <sup>u</sup> n	114. <i>berbeda</i> - different	
74. <i>siang</i> - day time	<sup>u</sup> wasin̄	115. <i>lintah</i> - leech	bɛs ~ βɛs
75. <i>malam</i> - night	kil > ‘gelap; hitam’	116. <i>menggigit</i> > <i>makan</i> bite > eat	<sup>u</sup> silefən ~ <sup>u</sup> silefən
76. <i>bulan</i> - moon		117. <i>ekor</i> - tail	
77. <i>bintang</i> - star		118. <i>ikan</i> - fish	<sup>u</sup> wasis
78. <i>pisang</i> - banana	<sup>u</sup> b <sup>u</sup> lafka ~ <sup>u</sup> b <sup>u</sup> laɸka	119. <i>kutu</i> - lice (hair)	
79. <i>kebun</i> - garden		120. <i>babi</i> - pig	<sup>u</sup> m <sup>u</sup> bɛa
80. <i>alang-alang</i> - bush		121. <i>memanah</i> - to shoot ↓	<sup>u</sup> falkɔ <sup>u</sup> m <sup>u</sup> bɛa
81. <i>kering</i> -dry ↓	<sup>u</sup> niŋni	122. <i>cacing</i> ( <i>tanah</i> ) - worm (soil)	
82. <i>pohon/kayu</i> - tree/wood	<sup>u</sup> βulba	123. <i>ular</i> - snake	
83. <i>membabat</i> - cut ↓	<sup>u</sup> βulba wanu HOR/IMP	124. <i>panjang</i> - long ↓	<sup>u</sup> an̄gan
84. <i>membelah</i> - split ↓	<sup>u</sup> βubla wani HOR/IMP	125. <i>pendek</i> - short ↓	<sup>u</sup> b <sup>u</sup> lentan
85. <i>dengan</i> (mis., membela kayu dengan kapak) - with (instrument)	> mɛ <sup>u</sup> alu ‘parang’	126. <i>tikus</i> - rat	
86. <i>cabang</i> - branch		127. <i>penuh</i> (mis. <i>ember</i> <i>penuh</i> ) - full ( bucket)	<sup>u</sup> bɛtɛɸ <sup>u</sup> titan an̄ <sup>u</sup> gan > <sup>u</sup> titan ‘sudah’
87. <i>daun</i> - leaf		128. <i>rumah</i> - house	<sup>u</sup> ɸalə
88. <i>duri</i> - thorn	nis	129. <i>baru</i> - new ↓	<sup>u</sup> ɸalə am <sup>u</sup> san > ‘bagus’
89. <i>buah</i> - fruit		130. <i>lama</i> - old ↓	<sup>u</sup> ɸalə a <sup>u</sup> la <sup>u</sup> tan > 11
90. <i>biji</i> - stone ↓↓ ↓		131. <i>atap</i> - roof	
91. <i>busuk</i> - rotten ↓ ↓	a <sup>u</sup> la <sup>u</sup> tan > 11	132. <i>di depan</i> - front	
92. <i>berbau</i> - rotten ↓	<sup>u</sup> fɛsɛn a <sup>u</sup> la <sup>u</sup> tan	133. <i>di luar</i> - out side	
93. <i>hutan</i> - jungle	sɔ <sup>u</sup> m	134. <i>di dalam</i> - inside	
94. <i>tali</i> ( <i>pengikat</i> ) - string		135. <i>di belakang</i> - back	
95. <i>pengikat</i> ↓		136. <i>kanan</i> - right	
96. <i>putih</i> - white	<sup>u</sup> sasɔf ~ <sup>u</sup> sasɔɸ	137. <i>kiri</i> - left	
97. <i>hitam</i> - black	kil > 75	138. <i>dekat</i> - near	<sup>u</sup> iski
98. <i>merah</i> - red		139. <i>jauh</i> - far	mna > mna mna mna
99. <i>kuning</i> - yellow		140. <i>orang</i> - person	<sup>u</sup> wasɔ
100. <i>hijau</i> - green		141. <i>baik</i> - good ↓	<sup>u</sup> wasɔ am <sup>u</sup> san
101. <i>burung</i> - bird	<sup>u</sup> biseas > <sup>u</sup> biseas sɛβ/bi ‘cenderawasih’	142. <i>jahat</i> - bad ↓	<sup>u</sup> wasɔ a <sup>u</sup> la <sup>u</sup> tan
102. <i>telur</i> - egg ↓ ↓		143. <i>laki-laki</i> - man	<sup>u</sup> nɛni
103. <i>sayap</i> - wings ↓ ↓		144. <i>perempuan</i> - woman	kɛ <sup>u</sup> a <sup>i</sup>
104. <i>terbang</i> - fly ↓	<sup>u</sup> biseas u <sup>u</sup> naŋ	145. <i>suami</i> - husband	<sup>u</sup> tɛti
105. <i>kasuari</i> - cassowary	<sup>u</sup> kiskis	146. <i>istri</i> - wife	kɛ <sup>u</sup> a <sup>i</sup>
106. <i>lalat</i> - fly		147. <i>bapak</i> - father	<sup>u</sup> tɛti > 145
107. <i>nyamuk</i> ( <i>malaria</i> ) - mosquito	<sup>u</sup> sabas	148. <i>ibu</i> - mother	kɛ <sup>u</sup> a <sup>i</sup> > 144
108. <i>anjing</i> - dog	<sup>u</sup> laba <sup>u</sup> la <sup>u</sup> n	149. <i>anak</i> - child	sis <sup>u</sup> kɔwɔn ~ <sup>u</sup> siskɔβɔn
109. <i>besar</i> - big ↓	<sup>u</sup> laba <sup>u</sup> la <sup>u</sup> n <sup>u</sup> an̄gan	150. <i>saya</i> - I	ka
110. <i>kecil</i> - little ↓	<sup>u</sup> laba <sup>u</sup> la <sup>u</sup> n <sup>u</sup> b <sup>u</sup> lentan	151. <i>kamu</i> - you	sɔ <sup>u</sup>
111. <i>ini</i> - this	mka	152. <i>kita</i> - we	ka

153. <i>dia</i> - he/she/it	sɔ <sup>u</sup>	182. <i>jatuh</i> ( <i>buah jatuh</i> ) - fall (fruit)	
154. <i>mereka</i> - they	sɔ <sup>u</sup>	183. <i>berbaring</i> - to lie down	'nafɔf ~ 'naɸɔɸ
155. <i>siapa</i> - who	'mənə <sup>i</sup> 'məkən	184. <i>tidur</i> - to sleep	'nafɔf ~ 'naɸɔɸ
156. <i>apa</i> - what	'mənə <sup>i</sup>	185. <i>mimpi</i> - to dream	'fɛb <sup>i</sup> ɛf ~ 'ɸɛb <sup>i</sup> ɛɸ
157. <i>nama</i> - name		186. <i>pegang</i> - to hold	'watkəna
158. <i>datang</i> - to come	nə <sup>i</sup> na <sup>i</sup> > 'sɛɸnɛ 'besok'	187. <i>memberi</i> - to give	'kaβɛ 'naŋnaŋ
159. <i>berjalan</i> - to walk	'kates > 54	188. <i>tiup</i> - to blow	
160. <i>putar</i> - to turn around		189. <i>bernapas</i> - to breath	
161. <i>tahu</i> ( <i>sesuatu</i> ) - know (something)	'məkən	190. <i>batuk</i> - to cough	
162. <i>dengar</i> - hear		191. <i>hitung</i> - to count	
163. <i>lihat</i> - see		192. <i>gali</i> - to dig	
164. <i>cari</i> - to look for		193. <i>takut</i> - to be afraid	'sa <sup>u</sup> ən
165. <i>bicara</i> - to talk	sə <sup>im</sup> bawən	194. <i>malu</i> - shy	'sa <sup>u</sup> ən
166. <i>benar</i> - truth ↓	sə <sup>im</sup> bawən am'san	195. <i>menangis</i> - to cry	
167. <i>minum</i> - to drink	də <sup>u</sup> p	196. <i>menyanyi</i> - to sing	
168. <i>isap</i> ( <i>rokok</i> ) - to smoke (tobacco)	--	197. <i>bermain</i> - play	
169. <i>makan</i> - to eat		198. <i>mendorong</i> - to push	
170. <i>meludah</i> - to spit		199. <i>menarik</i> - to pull	nɛm
171. <i>muntah</i> - to vomit		200. <i>menggosok</i> - to rub	
172. <i>pukul</i> - to hit	ɸɛ <sup>i</sup> b <sup>3</sup> lap ~ 'ɸɛb <sup>3</sup> lap	201. <i>menghapus</i> - to erase	
173. <i>tikam</i> - to stab	'wani > 84 HOR/IMP	202. <i>mencuci</i> ( <i>pakaian</i> ) - to wash (clothes)	'f <sup>ə</sup> lfka ~ 'ɸ <sup>3</sup> lɸka
174. <i>bunuh</i> - to kill		203. <i>menjepit</i> - to clip	
175. <i>mati</i> - die	'ŋgawən	204. <i>melempar</i> ( <i>batu</i> ) - to throw (stone)	
176. <i>hidup</i> - alive	am'san > 129, 166	205. <i>enam</i> - six	bɔ <sup>u</sup> l
177. <i>garuk</i> - to scratch		206. <i>tujuh</i> - seven	
178. <i>duduk</i> - to sit down	ɸap ~ fap	207. <i>delapan</i> - eight	
179. <i>berdiri</i> - to stand up		208. <i>sembilan</i> - nine	
180. <i>tidak</i> - no ↓	'mɔ <sup>i</sup> a	209. <i>sepuluh</i> - ten	
181. <i>mandi</i> - to bathe			

<sup>1</sup> My wife Corrie assisted me by proof-reading this article. Ted Bergman has been particularly helpful to me in the final stages of the editing. It is he, George Huttar and Katy Barnwell who made this publication possible. My appreciation to them.

<sup>2</sup> Yustus, was born 11 January 1967, is (was?) a native speaker of *Elseng* who is now living in Sentani with his Kemtuk Gresik wife. He left his village 20 years ago (1978) to attend the elementary school in Nimboran. A year later he went back to his village only to find that his people had left due to a rebel activity. Since then he has never visited his people. In Sentani he went to Sekolah Menengah Pertama (a Christian Junior High School) which he finished in 1985). Following that he went to Sekolah Menengah Atas Negri III (a Senior High School), and didn't finish but passed an equivalency test in 1992. He then served in *Gereja Betel* (Bethel church) under the leadership of Rev. Terry Yoko from where he was sent to Institut Teologia Solo (for two semesters: 1994-1995). Beside *Elseng*, Yustus speaks Indonesian, the national language of Indonesia, well. At home, he also communicates with his wife in *Kemtuk*.

<sup>3</sup> According to Yustus as told by his father Gaspar Nisap.

<sup>4</sup> There is no reliable information available, at least in my corpus, to suggest that the term *Tapu* is either the loan word from Tidore or the Kemtuk word.

<sup>5</sup> There are at least nine villages where *Elseng* speakers make their dwelling; *Omon*, *Semsei*, *Penemon*, *Koya* (known also as *Arso-empat*), *Koso*, *Yaklam* (which means pandanus), *Kelapa-tujuh*, *Brunting* and *Yamas*. There was an airstrip once opened by a mission but it is not used now.

It takes about three weeks walking from Omon or Koya to Yamas. Access to Omon itself, can be done by bus from Abepura to Taja (about five hours) where the Hanurata company is based, then on foot south-eastward to Omon (approximately one day travelling). The area where Elseng is located is mountainous and people make their living by gardening and hunting. The main staples are sago (normally grow at the lower region) and pork. There is neither government or mission school available in those villages except for *Koya*. There is an oikoumene church established by the Hanurata workers.

<sup>6</sup> These could be any agencies or missions whose vision or ministry is Bible translation.

<sup>7</sup> Throughout this paper, all data under discussion will be given in the phonetic transcription using the IPA 1989.

<sup>8</sup> My personal impression is the informant's pronunciation is influenced by the Indonesian stress pattern - which is always penultimate except when the schwa falls on the penultimate syllable - while trying to produce his native words.

<sup>9</sup> See Laycock, D. 1977. *Me and you versus the rest: abbreviated pronoun system in Irianese/Papuan Languages*. IRIAN 7:33-41