

Words of Weaving: writing definitions with Longgu community

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Understanding our languages: linguistics workshop

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A dictionary on Weaving

- Who is the dictionary for?
- A dictionary can focus on one topic.
- Smaller number of words
- A definition can include information about culture.
- How are words collected?
- Some suggestions on defining (some) words in a bilingual dictionary

How words were collected in Longgu

- Two dictionary workshops (in Nangali and Longgu villages).
 - Exercise books and pens
 - Butchers paper
 - Morning tea and lunch
 - Run by Florence Watepuru and me
- Topics chosen (weaving, and some carving)
- Who should come to the workshop?
 - People from different lines
 - People who wove or carved or knew how to build houses
 - Men and women
 - People who could write, people who could not read or write.
 - Teachers and ministers

- In small groups people suggested words – we developed a word list
- In one village we had a ‘weaving morning’. People wove baskets, fans, mats. Then we recorded their descriptions of what they wove.
- In both villages we developed a ‘guide’ to definitions. Longgu people wrote the definitions, we discussed them and translated them into English.
- Definitions were developed from some of these descriptions – in small groups

Nangali has 'master weavers' – Alice Votaia

Video recording of the process of weaving a pera basket – Alice narrated what she was doing

Audio recordings of about 10 people describing their woven objects (different kinds of basket, a fan, a mat).

Photographs of weavers.

Photographs of dictionary workshop.

Documented names of weavers and carvers – found photographs of Longgu carvers in 1933 (e.g. carver Peter Meti's grandfather was a photographed in 1933 by anthropologist, Ian Hogbin, and photos are in Sydney University archives).



Peter Meti – carver and weaver – displaying the 'tako' shield



Longgu men

Longgu workshop included a smaller number of people – workshop 'by request'



Words of weaving: VAOVAO

- Vaovao 'weaving'
- Vaosia 'weave something'
- Varavara 'weave in and out'
- Itulia 'thread something'
- Nialia 'plait something'
- Tiatia 'sew' (e.g. calico, end of mat)
- Taitai 'sew' (e.g. roofing)

Bilingual Definitions

- Write the definition in Longgu first – includes information important to the people (small groups)
- Translate into English – free translation not word for word.
- Check the definitions with other Longgu people (in a different village; people who did not write the definitions)

Photographs used in the dictionary

Nialia – plait something



Taba'ai – wood is used for 'lali' bowls



Things that are woven: Ei

- Ei 'something woven; basket'
- Kinds of baskets
- Mats
- Walling

A guide to defining [woven] things:

1. A kind of _____ [basket; bowl]
2. It looks like _____ [another basket; big, small]
3. People [women/men] make it with _____ [kind of plant, e.g. coconut leaves; sago palm]
4. People use it like this _____ [say something about how it is used – e.g. to put rubbish in, in bride-price exchange; to carry clothes]
5. [You can add a photograph if it helps to understand.]

Activity – choose Section 1 or Section 2 from handout

- Handout – Section 1 El ‘woven things’ and RABO’O ‘bowls’
 - Read the ‘Guide
 - Read ‘What you can do’
 - Discuss the definitions
 - Do you have a similar basket? What is it called? Can you define it?
 - Write on the handout and/or in your exercise book

Activity

- Section B/2: AI 'Tree; wood; stick'
 - Read the Guide
 - What is the name of the tree/wood in your language?
 - Can you write a definition in your language.

Activity 2 – Write a definition of your own 'woven thing' (basket, bag etc)

- Write the definition on large paper

Activity 3

- Can you guess this tree?

- Definition:

A kind of tree. It grows along the shore. They take the fruit to cook with and to drink. They take the leaves to weave different kinds of baskets. They take the leaf to make a broom. They take the leaves to press down the top part of the roof of a house. They take the dead leaves to light a fire.

