INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL LINKAGES

Language

TRADE LANGUAGES AND LINGUE FRANCHE

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THE MELANESIAN RESPONSE TO LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY:  
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INTRODUCTION

Given the linguistic diversity of Melanesia that has been described by 
earlier speakers in this seminar (and which, it should be recalled, is 
actually promoted in certain ways, as we have also heard) it is reasonable 
to ask: How do Melanesians cope with this diversity since they surely 
cannot, and do not, remain totally isolated from each other? In other 
words, what strategies do they adopt for overcoming the communication 
problems imposed by different language boundaries?

Briefly, the answer to this question is that they do very much as 
anyone else does, or would do, in such situations, namely, they learn 
whatever languages are necessary to obtain the things they want (including 
to survive). In theory there are four possible strategies available from 
amongst which Melanesians, or anyone else for that matter, must make a 
choice depending on the social conditions operating at any time. These 
four strategies are: one can either learn the language of one's intended 
or actual contact,1 or he can expect the contact to learn his, or if those 
two solutions are not possible for some reason he can use a completely 
different language that is known by both himself and the contact, or 
failing that, he can invent a new language (with the cooperation of his 
contact of course).2

In practice Melanesians make use of all four of these strategies, in 
varying combinations, and in the rest of this paper I would like to 
illustrate this by referring to that part of Melanesia that I know best, 
notably Papua, or that part of present-day Papua New Guinea that used to be 
called that. Other speakers will discuss particular situations elsewhere 
in more detail. In so doing I will focus on the kinds of languages that 
are used as languages of wider communication or lingue franche3 in Papua 
and which originate as a response to different social conditions there over 
time.

LOCAL LANGUAGES USED AS LINGUE FRANCHE

Any particular Papuan's communication problems depend, as they have 
always done, on a wide range of factors that have to do with the size and 
location of the group he belongs to, his position and status within that 
group, and his 'profession' (e.g. whether he is or was a trader or not). In the simplest situation where in pre-European contact times one did not
travel much beyond one's borders most Papuans probably learned at least one other language besides their own, most commonly that of their nearest neighbour, although if one belonged to a small society surrounded by several others one probably learned most, if not all, of the languages of one's neighbours. In certain circumstances one did not have much choice in the matter as one was forced to learn a second language as a matter of survival. In this situation the second language usually spread at the expense of one's first language and the first language could be expected to change quite drastically in the process and probably eventually die. There are a number of recorded examples of this having happened in Papua and probably many many more that we do not know anything about because they happened too long ago.

Take, for example, Magori, which is a small Austronesian language spoken by about 150 people in the Amazon Bay area of southeast Papua. When Europeans arrived in the early part of this century these people (and other small groups related to them) were under threat of extinction by their non-Austronesian neighbours, the Magi (or Mailu), and because of this they had all learned and spoke Magi besides their own language(s). The result of this was, and still is, that Magi is gradually taking over from Magori as the mother tongue of the community and their own language has changed so much that it now looks like some 'bush' variety of Magi. If this trend continues, and I do not see it being reversed in the near future, then the language will be dead in a generation or so's time, just as dead, in fact, as if all the Magori had been killed off by the Magi before Europeans arrived.

However, while we should not mourn the death of languages in such situations, except perhaps for humanitarian reasons, since language death is the natural outcome of a condition where a community has lost its ability to attract learners, these particular languages are extremely important because of the evidence they contain of the relationships and history of contact between different groups of peoples.

Thus Magori and the several other remnant Austronesian language groups closely related to it that have already been referred to contain important clues to what happened historically between Austronesians and non-Austronesians in the Amazon Bay area of southeast Papua. For one thing their very existence and present distribution shows that Austronesians were once more widely distributed along the Papuan coast than had hitherto been realized. For another both sets of languages contain numerous borrowings from each other's languages and a study of these shows that after Austronesians arrived in the area non-Austronesians entered into a very close relationship with them, most probably attracted by their knowledge of sailing and trading. Subsequently the non-Austronesians turned on their former 'friends' and drove them into the hills and swamps where they attempted to survive by learning the non-Austronesians' languages (amongst other things of course) (Dutton 1980c). This complete reversal in relationships between Austronesians and non-Austronesians seems to have been associated with, if not the direct result of, the rise in power of one group of non-Austronesians, notably those living on Mailu Island, who at the time of contact had a monopoly on pottery manufacture and long-distance trading in the area. What we see here is probably the end result of a situation in which non-Austronesians, having entered initially into a symbiotic relationship with the immigrant Austronesians gradually learned
the skills and techniques of their Austronesian 'friends', eventually
becoming strong enough to take over their trading system from them, and to
drive off their former friends and to colonize the area left vacant by
them.

But so much for the simplest case in which individual local languages
served as lingue franche in areas where villagers did not travel far beyond
their own borders. In the more complex case where villagers did travel
farther afield (for whatever purposes, although this was mostly for
trading) one common solution to the communication problem posed was to
learn and use a language that was known beyond the area occupied by its
native speakers, or in other words to learn and use a regional language.

It is not possible to say how many native languages are, or were, used
in this way throughout Papua at any one time but most probably only a small
proportion of the several hundred languages available ever did. But those
that were so functioning when the missionizing and colonizing European
arrived were quickly seized upon by the newcomers and adopted for contact
and instructional purposes. The most important of these languages, which,
because of their association with missions became known as 'church
languages' or 'mission lingue franche', were Dobu (used by the Wesleyan
Methodist Mission), Suau (used by the Kwato Mission), Wedau and Binandere
(used by the Anglican Mission), Motu, Magi, Toaripi and Kiwai (used by the
London Missionary Society), and Gogodala (used by the Unevangelized Field
Mission).\footnote{3}

The importance of these lingue franche declined, however, from the
late 1950s onwards when the Department of Education in Papua New Guinea
decided that English should become the language of education in the country
and that financial assistance would be withheld from anyone using languages
other than English for educational purposes. But these languages are
re-emerging as important languages of wider communication since the
administrative system began to change in Papua New Guinea following the
introduction of local government councils and Provincial Government. Since
most council areas are defined in terms of language, and since each area
council is composed of members elected from that area, members tend to use
the most widely known and prestigious language for council business; and
since this is usually the mission lingua franca regional languages are
naturally becoming reemphasized at the expense of Hiri (or Police) Motu
which was the lingue franca when Europeans and administrative servants, who
came from other areas, controlled things.

INVENTED LANGUAGES AS LINGUE FRANCHE

Trade languages

In cases where travellers crossed several linguistic boundaries at one
go, as in long-distance trading, and got beyond the boundary of a commonly
known regional language Papuans were faced with overcoming the imposed
communication problem by other means. And here the most common practice
was for the incoming trader to attempt to learn the language of his contact
or partner but to actually end up falling short of that goal by either
simplifying it or by developing a new one based on his own and that of his
partner.
The best documented cases of these are in central coastal Papua where the Austronesian-speaking Motu sailed forth on annual trading voyages to the Gulf of Papua to exchange pots and other things for sago and canoe logs with two different groups of non-Austronesian-speaking people, the Elema and the Koriki. In the process they attempted to learn the languages of the Elema and the Koriki but ended up, in the former case, developing a completely new language which we shall call the Hiri Trading Language, Elema variety (HTL(E)), and in the other case, a simplified form of Koriki which we shall refer to as the Hiri Trading Language, Koriki variety (HTL(K)). These languages belong to the general class of languages that we call pidgins, which are special languages that are native to no one and are simplified in structure compared with the native languages on which they are based. They are also usually composed of elements from two or more languages.

Both these hiri trade languages had these features in more or less degrees. The HTL(E) was a combination of elements from most of the Elema languages around the coast of the Gulf of Papua and from Motu in the proportion of approximately 80 per cent Elema to 20 per cent Motu. It was nobody's first language and it was simplified in structure compared to the Elema languages and Motu (Dutton and Kakare 1977; Dutton 1978, 1980b). The HTL(K) on the other hand contained few Motu elements but was a simplified form of Koriki. In this sense it was less of a pidgin than HTL(E) was (Dutton 1980a, 1980b).

In keeping with the definition of a pidgin, however, it is to be noted that these languages were restricted to certain social situations, notably to contact between trading partners. They were not used around the village for ordinary conversation purposes. This was not for any religious, political, economic or other reason, but simply because there was no need for them to be so used. Everyone was better off speaking his own native language. And besides, women and children usually knew little of them so that they were potentially excluded from any conversation they were used in. That is not to say that they were never used around villages by men as secret or in-group languages from time to time, for they probably were, but all speakers emphasize that they were merely languages of business—necessary instruments to achieving one's goals in trading. As such they were not taught in any formal sense: aspiring traders learned them as a matter of course and as best they could as they participated in the apprenticeship of trading as it were.

In the given social conditions it is easy to see why these languages developed, although it is not so easy to see why two developed or were necessary or survived, since presumably the trade developed from one point to another, and if so, why then was one language not spread with it, or alternatively, why did one language not die at the expense of the other?

At the time of contact these languages were quite strong and like the regional languages described above were used by the first missionary to the area, Chalmers, as contact languages in spreading the good news about the coming of the White Man (Dutton and Brown 1977). They did not survive the disruption of the trade that followed European colonization and especially that of the Second World War, however, and died along with the trade that gave rise to them and sustained them. Today these languages linger only in the memory of a few old men who were former traders. It is not likely that
they will ever be revived as the social conditions that gave rise to them are now gone and are not likely to reappear. Besides, even if those social conditions were to revive, there are other languages available that could, and most likely would, be used in their stead because of their wider currency. Such languages include Hiri (or Police) Motu, Tok Pisin and English that we will come to in a moment.

Unfortunately too it is not known how common this kind of phenomenon was - few have certainly been described or reported and it seems that that was not because those in a position to report on such things at contact were not interested in doing so, but rather because they were indeed rare phenomena, requiring special social conditions to produce them. If we can hypothesize from the cases we have just looked at the crucial condition for the development of such languages appears to be that the incoming trader had to be in a vulnerable position at the trading point, that is, being cut off from support from his home community. Distance was a part of this but it was not merely distance. Where distance was important was in having unfriendly territory or conditions interposed between oneself and one's home community. In the Motu case this involved being in a foreign port on canoes that were unwieldy and easily immobilized at the best of times, but actually dismantled for much of the time, outnumbered, and with unfriendly tribes and uncertain winds and seas between them and their homes. Elsewhere in Melanesia trade did not involve this kind of vulnerability and so few trade languages actually developed despite the large number of languages and the amount of trading that was carried on.

And that was the situation at the time of first contact.

**Hiri (or Police) Motu**

Accompanying and following contact a powerful new force in the form of the English language and culture was introduced into the scene which Melanesians tried to cope with in the same way as they had done in other situations. However, they were frustrated in this by the White Man himself, who, because he came with ideas about what kinds of beings black men were, how they should be addressed and treated, etc. used only simplified versions of his language with them. These languages, or trade jargons, were easily learned by Melanesians who soon developed them into a fully fledged pidgin English which spread through Melanesia in different forms. The descendants of these pidgins are today known as Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea, Bichlamar (or Bislama) in Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides), and Solomon Island Pidgin in the Solomon Islands. As the special conditions surrounding the development and use of these different varieties will be the subjects of Dr Laycock's and Dr Tryon's papers in this volume these languages will not be considered any further here. Instead we focus on what happened in Papua, or British New Guinea as it was first called.

There the response to the colonizing foreigners produced another, quite different result, notably a pidgin based on a local language, which after a short time in competition with a variety of pidgin English similar to that that developed into those mentioned above and referred to in the literature as Papuan Pidgin English (Mühlhäusler 1978), became the *lingua franca* of that political unit. This is the language known today as Hiri Motu but formerly as Police Motu.
It is not yet clear, and may never be, precisely how this language came into being but this is currently the subject of a major project of mine. So far I have shown that this language was not, as it was previously though to be, a continuation of one (or more) of the trade languages HTL(E) and HTL(K) used by the Motu and which I have already discussed. It may, of course, have been influenced by these languages indirectly, but it cannot be said to be a continuation of them in any real sense. There is some evidence that suggests that the Motu may well have had a simplified version of their own language which they used in their contacts with foreigners other than their trade partners in the Gulf (Taylor 1978), but more work needs to be done on this and other aspects of the language before we can attempt to say with any confidence how Police Motu developed out of this, if it did.

One aspect that I am working on at the moment and which has never been taken into account is the social conditions obtaining in and around Port Moresby where the language originated, at about the time the language appears to have really begun developing, that is, between the arrival of the first missionaries in 1874 and that of the first Lieutenant-Governor, Sir William MacGregor, in 1888. One thing that surprises me about this period and which I think probably has an important bearing on the history of the language is the number of non-European expatriate foreigners that appear to have been in the Port Moresby area at that time. Some of these came from the southwest Pacific (e.g. New Caledonia, Lifu, New Hebrides [now Vanuatu], Solomon Islands) to Port Moresby via Queensland and the Torres Straits; others came from the Southeast Asian area (but mostly Malaya and western Indonesia) by very much the same route. Most came of their own accord to fish for bêche-de-mer and shell of different kinds, and to trade along the Papuan coast. Some were brought as government servants and unofficial policemen.

Presumably these immigrant foreigners attempted to learn local languages, but particularly Motu, since most married Motu or Koita women from around Port Moresby and have descendants still there today. Unfortunately we do not know anything about the strategies adopted by these foreigners to learn Motu nor how successful they were but presumably there was considerable variation depending on background, attitudes, natural abilities etc. What was probably the most significant thing about this group, however, was that they were foreigners and that other non-European foreigners coming into the area would naturally have been attracted to them as, as they say in Papua New Guinea English today, wantoks (lit. speakers of the same language but now broadened to mean friends, anyone that comes from the same general area as the speaker, any who takes one's side in a fight etc.). And this is where, as the early name for the language suggests, the first police force came in.

In response to demands by missionaries and others that something be done to stop foreigners coming into the country disturbing the peace the colony of British New Guinea was formally and finally established by the arrival of William MacGregor in 1888, one of whose first acts was to establish an official police force. The nucleus of this force was a band of a dozen Solomon Islander constables and two Fijian non-commissioned officers whom he brought with him from Fiji. To this he added seven men from the Kiwi area in what is now the Western Province and one from what is now the Milne Bay Province. These men signed on for three years (except
for the non-commissioned officers who only signed on for one year) and were to be repatriated at the end of that time. As it turned out, however, most were not repatriated as they married local women and preferred to settle down in the Port Moresby area where the Governor gave them blocks of land in lieu of their return passage. Although it is not yet clear what the background to these men were we do know that they were recruited from coconut and sugar plantations in Fiji by MacGregor to come to British New Guinea with him. Some had been there as long as ten years, others for a shorter time, so that it is presumed they spoke Pidgin Fijian (if not true Fijian), and probably Pidgin English as well. In addition they would have known their own native languages which were all Austronesian and relatively closely related to Fijian and Motu.

When they arrived in Port Moresby my guess is that they would immediately have recognized wantoks there who would have introduced them to the Motu and their language, teaching them what they considered to be the most useful words, phrases and/or sentences. At the same time the police force was a tightly controlled group who were expected to speak English and since at least the Papuans in it spoke a pidgin English, and perhaps the Solomon Islanders did so too, I presume the lingua franca of the force was pidgin English, not proper English as officially claimed. Given then these factors, together with the fact that (a) the force was there to enforce law and order while at the same time expecting to receive certain favours from the local communities (e.g. food, women) and that (b) the Motu were experienced in getting on with foreigners and inventing new languages the stage was set for an interesting linguistic outcome. And even though it may never be possible to go beyond elaborating on this scenario in certain respects it is pretty clear that, as the early name for the language suggests, the stimulus for the development and stabilization of it (as distinct from the origin) is to be traced to the formation of MacGregor's official police force.

As already indicated this language was a pidgin language based on the native language Motu. It has interestingly enough, however, remarkable structural similarities with Tok Pisin spoken in Papua New Guinea today but naturally totally different from it in vocabulary (Dutton 1976). Indeed except for a few points which probably can be traced back to the HTL(E) and/or HTL(K) it almost looks like a relexification of that language. But as so much research still remains to be done and as no one who was in a position to do so at the time appears to have commented (linguistically or otherwise) on the development of the language in its formative period, at least not in any records I have seen to date, we cannot put forward a clear-cut hypothesis at this stage. In fact the language does not appear to have been commented on officially until some fourteen years after the formation of MacGregor's police force and then only to bemoan the fact that police (by then all Papuans) were using a 'pig Motu' that was hardly intelligible to anyone who only knew village Motu.

Nevertheless in spite of its still obscure origins after it was developed it was spread by the police and others throughout the whole region. Over time and with the help of official Government policy which promoted it in favour of what Murray called that 'vile gibberish' (i.e. Pidgin English), it gradually replaced the different varieties of Papuan Pidgin English that were spoken in parts of the area before the coming of the first policemen.
Today there are two main varieties — one spoken around Port Moresby and in coastal areas of the Central Province and one outside that area. It is the principal *lingua franca* and unofficial language of administration throughout much of the southern half of the country. It probably reached its heyday in the period between the Second World War and the early 1960s when government by patrol was still the order of the day and previously uncontrolled areas were brought under Government control. Subsequently as conditions in the public service changed (Dutton 1977) and as administration began to be decentralized, firstly into local government councils and subsequently into Provincial Governments so the need for a *lingua franca* such as Hiri Motu to communicate across many language boundaries at once declined and local regional languages came back into their own (as has already been suggested above). At the same time English was being vigorously promoted by the post-war Administration and Tok Pisin which had developed much more prestige than Hiri Motu ever had spread into areas previously the preserve of Hiri Motu. Thus there have been a number of factors working towards the demise of the language in the past two decades and their effect is evident in villages where previously Hiri Motu was spoken by everyone so that it is now difficult to find good Hiri Motu speakers amongst the youngest generation. How far this trend is likely to continue depends, as always, on the social conditions operating at any one time and at different levels. Thus as the country approached Independence in the early 1970s the language was given a boost by becoming associated with the Papua separatist movement, Papua Besena, which tried to obtain separate independence for Papua instead of being brought into an unequal union (in its view) with New Guinea as the one new nation of Papua New Guinea. The result of this action and others has been to ensure that the language is given the same official status as Tok Pisin. Since Independence, however, the Papua separatist movement has fragmented into a number of different factions and has lost power in areas outside the coastal zone of the Central Province around Port Moresby with the result that it is no longer the force it was and no longer has the supportive power of Hiri Motu that it once had. At least that is my impression. In short although Hiri Motu may be officially recognized I think there are forces at work which are leading to a decline in the use of the language as a regional *lingua franca* and which, if the social conditions do not change to stimulate a renewed need for this language, it will eventually recede into oblivion except in areas like Central Papua where it is associated with the old Papua Besena movement.

Introduced languages as *lingue franche*

In Papua (as in most of Melanesia) English is the introduced language of education and the official language of the Government. Since the end of World War II it has been taught vigorously and at great expense throughout the country but so far only a small percentage of the population is sufficiently fluent in it for it to serve as a *lingua franca* in preference to any of the others discussed above (or to be discussed in other papers).

CONCLUSION: FUTURE RESPONSES TO DIVERSITY

No one knows of course what the Melanesian response to diversity in the future is likely to be but one thing is certain, and that is that, as I have assumed and tried to demonstrate in the foregoing sections to this
paper, languages only survive and are used as long as they fulfil a social need. No amount of legislating or wringing of hands will keep a language alive or force people to learn and use it if it is not tied to some social or other advantage.

If we assume then that present conditions are not likely to change in the near future it would seem to be the case that at the local level Melanesians are still likely to go on learning one another's languages much as they did in the past, although if the present trend towards local autonomy continues the value of some of these is likely to decline, and some may even die, as regional languages are strengthened. At high levels, if governments continue to promote English with the same vigour as they have done in the past, and if this is tied to social and other rewards, English of some kind will probably eventually become the principal lingua franca, and other languages of wider communication that now exist, but especially Hiri Motu, will fade away and/or become restricted to certain areas to function as ancillary regional languages in competition with other native regional languages. While this may not be a very happy picture for some it is the natural and inevitable outcome of the human condition at any time.

NOTES

1 I use the terms 'learn' and 'know' in this paper to include both active and passive control or understanding of a language.

2 I include here silent communication or sign language as part of the strategy for achieving any and each of these, and so do not discuss it separately, although there are cases recorded where it is the only strategy used in trading (Harding 1976:64).

3 The term lingue franche, or, as it is sometimes written now, lingua francae, is the plural of lingua franca, which in turn is the term used to denote any language that is used as a means of communication between groups of people who speak different languages (which by definition are mutually unintelligible). There are two main possibilities: either that language will be the mother tongue of one of those groups or it will not be the mother tongue of any of them. In fact it may not be anyone's mother tongue, as we shall see when trade languages and pidgins are discussed. It is of course possible that one person may know and use several lingue francae. In fact most Melanesians do and are regarded as good linguists for that reason, in contrast to us English who are notoriously bad linguists. Note, however, that a language does not have to be written to serve as a lingua franca. Indeed most lingue francae were not written until recently.

4 It should be noted, however, that this was not necessarily as difficult as one might tend to think as most languages are fairly closely related to one another within the broad classes of Austronesian and non-Austronesian. Consequently it would be rather like a German speaker learning English or a French speaker learning Italian, unless of course one were an Austronesian surrounded by non-Austronesian speakers when the task would be more like a Chinese speaker having to learn English.
Probably the most famous example of all mission lingue francophone in Melanesia comes from the northern side of Papua New Guinea. It is Kake, a non-Austronesian language originally spoken only by about 600 people living in a handful of villages in the mountains northwest of Finschhafen on the Huon Peninsula. However, even though it was originally only so small, it was spread by the Lutheran Mission right throughout that peninsula and up into the highlands as far west as Mt Hagen, so that by the 1950s it was known by about 75,000 people. For more detailed accounts of individual mission lingue francophone see section 7.4.5 in Wurm, ed., (1977).

In fact only four cases have ever been reported. See Dutton 1978:352, fn.12.

The same could be said of German and French elsewhere in Melanesia.

For further details on this name change see Dutton (1976).

Investigation into this is continuing but is made more difficult by large gaps in the early records. I should, however, like to thank Mr P. Grimshaw, Business Manager of the Research Schools, for his help in locating some early police records for me.

As I have already indicated I suspect some, if not all, had had previous work experience in Queensland. If so they certainly would have spoken Pidgin English.

For a more detailed review of the issues and problems involved in detailing the history of Police Motu as seen in 1978 see Dutton (1978) and Taylor (1978).

This promotion of Police Motu at the expense of Pidgin English is often hailed as one of the great language planning success stories of all times. Clearly, however, had there not been a Police Motu already widely spread and with clear advantages over Pidgin English this policy would never have succeeded. It was already a fait accompli when Murray arrived.

REFERENCES


TOK PISIN: A MELANESIAN SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF MELANESIAN LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

D.C. Laycock

There are at least twelve hundred languages in Melanesia, and several hundred more in the regions in which Melanesians had contacts—an incredible linguistic diversity—whose problems, nevertheless, had been solved, long before the advent of European and Asiatic foreigners, in a typically Melanesian way. Some of the reasons for the diversity have been suggested elsewhere (Grace 1975; Laycock 1980); the solutions to the diversity are not known in full detail, but the outlines are clear.

Firstly, the contacts of many of the small language communities of the Pacific were relatively limited. A problem of twelve hundred languages simply did not exist for a community whose linguistic contacts were limited to half a dozen languages, or even a score of languages. The growth of regional lingue franche (Wurm 1971; Dutton 1980), the use of silent trading (Laycock 1966; Sankoff 1977), and the extensive and intelligent use of multilingualism (Sankoff 1968, 1969; Laycock 1979) sufficed for most practical purposes in most areas.

Secondly, however, the areas of wide-ranging trading contacts were almost exclusively dominated by speakers of Austronesian languages, a group of closely-related languages whose affinities have always been apparent to their speakers, so that there was usually some uncertainty whether the speech of one's trading partners was really a distinct language, or just a strange version of one's own language. It was as much this linguistic network as the maritime technology that allowed speakers of Austronesian languages to dominate coastal trade from Indonesia to the Tuamotus—and, with few exceptions (Laycock 1975a:249) to force those speakers of Papuan languages who wished to participate in trade into learning the locally dominant Austronesian language.

But this situation was changed, with increasing speed from the seventeenth century onwards, by the advent of far-ranging vessels, mainly European, that carried Pacific Islanders—as curiosities, boatscrew, concubines, mission helpers, and plantation labourers—far beyond their original linguistic world.

The beginnings were slow, and allowed originally for gradual adjustments. The early Dutch voyagers, such as Le Maire and Schouten in 1616, attempted to use Malay everywhere they stopped (Dalrymple 1771); and here and there in the Pacific some cognates should have been close enough to be recognized.¹ Cook on his first voyage carried a Tahitian to New
Zealand, and recognized the similarities between Tahitian and Maori. A more leisurely development of Western interests in the Pacific might well have led to the development of a pidgin pan-Pacific.

But the leisurely pace could not continue. Too many Europeans, of too many different backgrounds, complicated the picture. There were missionaries, whose earnest attempts to learn the local languages were always tempered by the desire to spread education (and civilization) in English or, in appropriate areas, in German or French. There were whalers, adventurers, and pirates, whose needs on shore could often be satisfied by minimal communication, and who found that they could spread sufficient broken English around the Pacific for this purpose. There were traders in sandalwood, bêche-de-mer, copra, and men, who picked up smatterings of local languages here and there, and who also found that they could not only use the pockets of broken English that were growing up, but could extend it by importing elements from the already more developed pidgin of the Chinese coast (Charpentier 1979).

But it was, in the final analysis, the Melanesians themselves who drew these various threads together—probably, as Mühlhäuser (1978) suggests, on the German plantations in Samoa, in the middle of the nineteenth century. The sudden bringing together of Melanesians (and Polynesians) from many diverse areas, who had no common language except the incipient English-based Pacific jargon, forced a rapid solution to the problem of communication. It is a fallacy, as has been said many times, to see the development of a plantation pidgin in the orders given by white overseers. The pattern was for the orders to be transmitted by a trusted foreman, who would communicate with the white overseers in whatever linguistic compromise had already been established: broken or good English or German, or even Malay, Samoan, or Fijian. These orders were then passed on in the increasingly flexible plantation pidgin.

The blackbirding industry, which carried Melanesians from the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides to Queensland, and back again, contributed greatly to the development of Pacific pidgins in general, but, because of the areas involved, coupled with the increasing differentiation of the Pacific into German, English, and French spheres of influence, the input into New Guinea Pidgin (Tok Pisin) was slight. Nevertheless, the availability of a form of pidgin almost everywhere in the Pacific must have aroused expectations in the minds of the more mobile whites that pidgin or broken English was the appropriate form of address to all Pacific islanders.

For Tok Pisin specifically, however, the road seems to lead directly from Apia to Rabaul and Madang. The fact that these were German colonies was particularly fortunate for the new language. The Germans were in no position to influence the plantation pidgin by additional English input, or to provide an English target to which the plantation workers could aspire (see Mühlhäuser 1975a). In most areas of the world where a pidgin has developed, a linguistic continuum has been formed, linking the speech of the plantation workers, through various intermediate stages, with the language of the administering elite. This happened elsewhere in the Pacific; the faster rate of development then led to the total disappearance of any English-based pidgin in Fiji, but the linguistic continuum has developed in recent times at least in the Solomon Islands,
and to a lesser extent in the New Hebrides (where the additional presence of French was undoubtedly a mitigating factor). But in German New Guinea, with the greatest linguistic diversity in the Pacific, the conditions were perfect for a Melanesian expansion of Tok Pisin, without the crushing force (in spite of the presence of fairly large numbers of English speakers) of an elite language from which the pidgin was derived. There Germans might as they did — decry the use of pidgin in their territories, and attempt to introduce German, or even Malay; but they were powerless to stop it once the seeds had been sown, and some of them even began to take Tok Pisin seriously as a language. Their scant three decades of influence in the New Guinea area enabled them to introduce a few German words into Tok Pisin, and their Malay-speaking staff also contributed a few items; but their greatest service to the developing language was to leave it alone. And the years of World War I, and the delay in re-establishing effective control and substantial white settlement in the area until the 1920s, also assisted the Melanesians of the north coast and Bismarck Archipelago in developing the language without outside interference.

The spread and stabilization of Tok Pisin was remarkably rapid in this period. There were Pidgin words in Kuanua (Tolai) by 1900 that are still in use today. The pidgin quoted in early Rabaul newspapers (McDonald 1976a) is already recognizable as New Guinea Pidgin, and not just an undifferentiated Pacific pidgin. Also, by the time of the first substantial accounts of Tok Pisin (e.g. Brenninkmeyer 1924) the language is in all essential respects the same language that is spoken today, given a few inevitable, but relatively minor, lexical replacements in the direction of English.

It is not my intention to survey all the developments of Tok Pisin from that time on, for which Muhlhausler (1977, 1979) is the best source. Suffice it to say that it went on spreading with the further development of plantations, and the disruptions of World War II. At every stage there has been an urban elite who were acquiring some English, and feeding it into their pidgin, while at the same time Tok Pisin has been finding its way into new areas, giving rise to new Bush Pidgin varieties. Over most of New Guinea, and increasingly in the jointly-administered area of Papua, a common Rural Pidgin served the needs of most of the community. These three sociolects — Urban, Bush, and Rural (named and characterized by Muhlhausler (1975b)) are still found in Papua New Guinea today. The relative proportions of speakers of the varieties must be variable over time — but this is the sort of data that is inaccessible without extensive sociolinguistic surveys.

But the history of Tok Pisin from the end of World War II to the present can best be seen as a history of attitudes (for which see Wurm 1977). From about 1955 — the date of Robert A. Hall's polemic defence of Tok Pisin, in response to United Nations pronouncements that its use was not to be encouraged in Papua New Guinea — to the present, most persons actively concerned with Tok Pisin as a field of study have been involved in the Great Pidgin Debate. The debate was carried on in scores of newspaper and periodical articles in the 1950s and 1960s, with a subtle change of emphasis in the 1970s. On the one side were the linguists, who were concerned to make the point that Tok Pisin was as valid a language as any other, and capable of serving all administrative and educational purposes (with perhaps some manipulation — Laycock 1975b) in a country that was
rapidly moving towards independence. Ranged against the linguists were the administrators, the educators and many Papua New Guineans, who continued to see Tok Pisin as a makeshift hangover from the colonial period that had no future in the administrative and educative future of Papua New Guinea, and that should be replaced by English as soon as possible.

Point by point the linguists' claims were gradually conceded - all but one or two. Opponents of Tok Pisin became ready to see the language as a valid one for certain limited purposes of communication - but none were prepared to support any moves to make it a national language, and/or to attempt to develop a primary school syllabus in which Tok Pisin would play a significant part. The linguists had to shift ground, and tackle the educational problems squarely as a separate issue; the clearest case, largely on economic grounds, was put by Dutton (1976) in his inaugural lecture as Professor of Language at the University of Papua New Guinea. The reactions to this - largely a counter-blast - were collected by McDonald (1976b).

And at that point the Great Pidgin Debate came to a close. The war was over; the last shots had been fired. The many papers appearing in the volume edited by Wurm in 1977 are simply those of the war correspondents, reporting on the history of the conflict.

The reasons for the ceasefire are complex, but in 1980 it is possible to see them all as a direct consequence of the granting of independence to Papua New Guinea in 1975. The role of expatriate observers, especially those not resident in Papua New Guinea, became increasingly irrelevant. But, more importantly, any plans for regularizing the future status of Tok Pisin ran foul of the Melanesian habit of deferring decisions until a crisis developed, or until the road ahead became apparent to all. (In the case of Tok Pisin, and the associated linguistic and educational problems in Papua New Guinea, the crisis is not yet apparent to all - and it may never be.)

The third factor has been the increasing regionalization of administration. The rise in power of provincial governments has meant a decrease in the power of the central government in Port Moresby - and an increasing reluctance to pass legislation binding on the whole country of Papua New Guinea.

Regionalization has also brought about an increase in regional solutions to linguistic problems - in particular, an increased use of local languages and *lingue francoe*. I estimate that within five to ten years, virtually all officials at provincial government level will be from that province, and the officials (and missionaries and teachers) in the smaller centres will be almost all local people, using local languages for their work. The need for using Tok Pisin must necessarily dwindle.

Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea today, five years after independence, is accepted at all levels as a useful language; but it may never have any status or prestige. It carries no stigma; conversations are carried on in the most appropriate language for the subject of discourse, and for the participants, whether this be English, Tok Pisin, Hiri Motu, or one of the vernaculars. Tok Pisin is still the major language for relaxing in, in the bar or club after the day's work is over; it is still the major contact
language for outsiders of any description - government officials from other areas, and expatriates - in rural situations; and it is still the first language of a large number of households. Organizations consisting of individuals from all over Papua New Guinea, such as the police and defence forces, still run internally on Tok Pisin; but the administration, and contact with expatriates, is carried on in English. Records of village government are kept in Tok Pisin - but the increasing availability of acceptable orthographies for vernacular languages will probably mean a decline of Tok Pisin in this area also. Schools and churches use English, vernacular languages, and Tok Pisin, according to local needs. In other words, Tok Pisin continues to serve a Melanesian community in a Melanesian way: used where it is useful, and abandoned where it is not.

It is possible that Tok Pisin may be very close to reaching its maximum expansion. It is still expanding in rural areas, and among migrants from rural areas to the towns. But the townspeople are increasingly learning English, as are large numbers of rural children. The decline of an indentured labour system, or any exploitation of a labour pool which carries people from their villages into other language areas, means that more and more Papua New Guineans - except for government officials - will be staying at home in their own villages, and carrying on their daily activities in the vernacular. Regionalization has seen an increase in the use of the large regional languages. Only in areas of extreme linguistic fragmentation, such as the Sepik, Manus, Madang and Morobe, does it seem likely that Tok Pisin will continue to play a major administrative role. (And there remains the possibility that one or more of the provincial governments may give some formal recognition to Tok Pisin, if no other linguistic solution is obvious.)

Otherwise, it seems that Tok Pisin has nowhere to go but down in the future. But this will not happen as a result of contamination from English; the fears expressed by Bickerton (1975) that Tok Pisin will disappear in a linguistic continuum between it and English seem groundless, as the two languages fall more and more into distinct slots: Tok Pisin as the socializing language across linguistic boundaries, and English as the elite administering language of a government network. There is no doubt that Tok Pisin speakers at all levels will use more English words in their Tok Pisin - 'yumi mas allocitim planti resources i go long diapela hydroelectric development project' is the type of phrase that can be commonly heard - but the heavily anglicized varieties of Urban Pidgin are, for most of Papua New Guinea, as dead as Tok Masta. But Tok Pisin will decline because, however appropriate it may seem as a solution to linguistic problems on a national level, there are other ways of solving the linguistic dilemma at regional levels. In a modified form, what we are likely to see is a return to the local solutions of the pre-contact era - at least until such time as English is widespread enough to serve as a truly national language.

This does not mean that Tok Pisin will die a rapid, or even an easy, death. There are still children being born who will never really acquire English; and if they move from their own linguistic areas, the only language that will serve them is Tok Pisin. But it does mean that, in perhaps fifty years' time, Tok Pisin will most likely be being studied by scholars among a small community of old men.
Since this paper is full of predictions, I venture to make another. When the decline of Tok Pisin begins to be apparent to all, I predict that there will be a revival of interest in the language - a resurgence of Tok Pisin creative writing, courses of study at the universities, and a strong vocal minority who wish to keep the language artificially alive (as has happened with Hawaiian Pidgin). But this is only likely to happen at a stage when Tok Pisin is no longer serving any useful function.7

As scholars with a soft spot for Tok Pisin, we may regret these trends, but it is no longer our problem. As expatriates, we all share a common disability - the ability to see too clearly, and too far ahead (and this paper is no exception). But what we saw in the pre-independence era was the way things should have gone in an ideal world, without taking into account Melanesian attitudes - especially the pragmatic tendency to let problems find their own solutions. A dramatic new policy on the part of the Papua New Guinea government could upset these predictions - but, in view of the Melanesian tolerance, even preference, for diversity, this seems unlikely.

NOTES

1In a wordlist elicited on this voyage from the island of Liki, in the Kumamba group just off Jayapura, the word sugu is given for 'bread' - suggesting that the islanders were attempting to speak Malay even this far west. (Austronesian languages along the north coast of the island of New Guinea have quite different words for 'sago', mainly reflexes of PAN rumbia.)

2A list of loanwords from Bley (1900): œaka 'anchor', *bök, dum 'chest', *böl 'ball', *buk 'book', bulmakau 'cow', *kadel 'candle', *kanda, *konda 'carpenter', *ki 'key', kogkog (= kongkong) 'Chinese', *kom 'comb', kuri 'Samoan mat', la 'crockery', lavalava 'loincloth', *lok 'lock', lotu 'church', *mæne, *man 'money', *magi (= manki) 'monkey', me 'goat', melen 'melon', *nil 'needle', pot 'boat', *nop 'rope', tapioka 'tapioca', *tin 'tin', *top 'soap'.
The asterisked forms are identified as coming from English.

3However, one sociolect identified by Mühlhäuser - the variety known as Tok Masta - is in post-independence Papua New Guinea virtually dead. This was the fluent but anglicized variety of Tok Pisin spoken by long-resident administrators and businessmen - a group which has largely departed from Papua New Guinea. In the place of Tok Masta is a superficially similar variety of Tok Pisin spoken by the new generation of expatriate advisers and businessmen; but as this variety no longer carries any prestige, and is unsupported by a white power structure (Sankoff 1976), it is more readily characterized as bad Tok Pisin. In addition, it lacks the fluency and self-satisfaction of Tok Masta.

4I have also observed that bars in towns like Rabaul and Lae tend to have a regional clientele, so that local languages again predominate.
But many of the first-language Tok Pisin speakers are likely to go on to learn English.

Even radio broadcasters have largely given up the extremely anglicized Tok Pisin of a few years ago, perhaps because of complaints from listeners, and certainly because of the increasing use of provincial stations. And it is only as a joke today that one is likely to hear such linguistic mixtures as 'yu ni mas tok long grass-roots level na' or 'yu no ken putim cart before the horse' – that is, as a relaxed form of speech among speakers at home in both English and Tok Pisin.

For an account of creative writing in Tok Pisin, see Laycock 1977b. Again, the beginnings were too soon, and too expatriate-dominated, and have had little follow-up. Wantok newspaper was founded in 1970, since it seemed obvious that there should be a Tok Pisin newspaper; but it is only in the last few years that it has started to circulate in the villages, away from the mission stations and schools.

REFERENCES


THE SOLOMON ISLANDS AND VANUATU: VARYING RESPONSES TO DIVERSITY

D.T. Tryon

The combined populations of the Solomons and Vanuatu scarcely exceed 300,000, yet more than 170 distinct languages, nearly all Austronesian, are spoken in this area. The response to this situation, in terms of communication strategies and lingue franche, has differed in the two countries, largely as a result of their rather different histories.

In the Solomon Islands, Solomon Pidgin is now spoken widely, although not by as many women as men. Bennett (1979:68) estimates that Solomon Pidgin is spoken by about 50 per cent of the population. My own estimate would raise that figure substantially. Certain mission lingue franche, Austronesian languages, have great currency in the Western District, Roviana, Babatana and Marovo being used as languages of communication within certain evangelical areas. Nggela has wide currency within the Church of Melanesia area, while Gari is used extensively on Guadalcanal. All of the lingue franche which have developed in the Solomons, then, are directly linked to the colonization and evangelization of this group of islands.

When the first whalers visited the Solomons about 1800, there were probably much the same number of local languages as today, around sixty. The whalers and early traders used a kind of trading jargon, the precursor of Solomon Pidgin, visiting mainly the eastern half of the group. In the 1870s Solomon Islanders, mainly from Malaita and Guadalcanal, were recruited for work in the canefields of Queensland and Fiji. In Queensland a plantation pidgin grew up, as a response to the diverse linguistic backgrounds of the labourers. In Fiji the recruits were exposed to both English and Fijian, so many Solomon Islanders learning Fijian that there were government hopes that it would become the Protectorate's lingua franca. However, this was not to be, Fijian soon falling into disuse in the face of the larger number of plantation workers returning from Queensland.

After the turn of the century, plantations were developed in the Solomons and many of the returning labourers were employed on them, passing on their Pidgin to plantation workers who had not been outside the Solomons. Once again, men from Malaita and Guadalcanal made up the majority of the plantation labour. It was on these local plantations that Solomons Pidgin stabilized and developed its own characteristics.
By 1914 five Christian missions were at work in the Solomon Islands. In the western district, in New Georgia, Choiseul and parts of the Shorlands local vernaculars were used as Church languages, referred to above, while in the central and eastern districts Mota (a language from the Banks Islands, Vanuatu) was used by the Church of Melanesia until 1931. The Catholics adopted Gari, establishing a church newspaper in this language in 1911.

The only mission to use Pidgin, almost exclusively, was the South Seas Evangelical Mission, centred on Malaita.

By the 1930s Solomons Pidgin was the *lingua franca* of all the major recruiting areas (Malaita, Guadalcanal and San Cristobal (Chapman and Pirie 1974:234)). In other words Solomon Pidgin was known and used in all areas except the western district, where mission *lingue franche* remained predominant. This position has remained unchanged, largely, until the present, although English has become widely used and encouraged in the urban centres. Solomons Pidgin is now well known in the western district, also, as Solomon Islanders from other areas, especially Malaitans, have migrated there. The church *lingue franche* remain strong, however.

In the present-day Solomons, Pidgin is the common language between islanders of different linguistic backgrounds. However, the language of the administration is English. Solomon Pidgin tends to be the language of oral communication between Solomon Island administrators, at all levels, there being an emotional attachment to its use even between Solomon Islanders who have an excellent knowledge of English. This experience is paralleled in the Vanuatu situation.

Attitudes to Solomon Pidgin vary. After the departure of many of the old expatriate administrators at Independence in 1978, the educated elite still expressed an aversion to Pidgin, prolonging the prejudices of their colonial masters. It must be stressed, however, that most of the opposition to the official use of Pidgin comes from the urban areas. In the other districts there are no real objections to Pidgin, at least objections of the same nature as those expressed in some urban areas. In non-urban areas, where languages tend to be very closely related on all of the major islands, local languages and dialects are used between geographically contiguous groups, Pidgin being reserved for communication with people from more distant regions.

Pidgin has had two major problems in the Solomons. Although it is used in daily radio broadcasts, there is very little written in Pidgin apart from the *Gospel of Mark* (1976). This problem springs, in part, from the fact that there is no official standardized orthography for Solomon Pidgin. Since an official orthography implies an official acceptance of Pidgin by the government, it is not hard to see why the problem has not been resolved.

Solomons Pidgin has a long way to go before winning universal acceptance, for much of the Pidgin broadcast is heavily influenced by English, with phrases such as *ol i developem economic infrastructure* being not unusual in news programmes. The result is incomprehensibility for rural-based Solomon Islanders, the vast majority of the population. This problem, combined with a strong attachment to local and provincial
government has tended to work against the full development of Solomon Pidgin, and to favour the continuation of the use of local vernaculars and regional *lingue franche*, even to the point where regional radio broadcasts in such *lingue franche* have begun from provincial centres.

One of the unusual features of the Solomon Islands, then, is its multi-faceted response to linguistic diversity, rather unlike the Vanuatu situation, as will be discussed below.

In Vanuatu, formerly the New Hebrides, Bislama has been favoured since contact times by the fact that French and English were spoken by administrators and missionaries, and by the fact that apart from Mota, in the northeast corner, no local language achieved the status of a *lingue franca*.

Bislama is different from the English-based Pidgins of the Solomons and Papua New Guinea in that it has been adopted as the National Language of Vanuatu and an official language along with English and French, this in spite of the fact that no official orthography, as yet, exists for it.

The early history of Vanuatu in many respects parallels that of the Solomons. Whalers and sandalwood traders began operations here in the 1830s, encountering the same linguistic diversity (over 100 local languages) as exists today. Here again, a trade jargon developed, a stabilized pidgin not really developing until about 1900. It is likely that the earliest pidgin development in Melanesia was in Vanuatu (Clark 1977:24), the earliest 'pidgin' found so far by the present writer dating back to 1846, at Mele on Efate.

Of course the first missionaries (1839) used local vernaculars for their evangelical work, efforts centring on the southern islands until the 1860s. From that time until the end of the nineteenth century Vanuatuans were recruited as labour for the sugar plantations in Queensland, Fiji and Samoa, the first group leaving Vanuatu in 1864. In the nineteenth century there was little inter-island contact between Vanuatuans, except on the localized trading routes, the only European contact being recruiters, sandalwooders and missionaries. In this period Bislama cannot be said to have passed the 'jargon' stage of development.

In 1906 an Anglo-French Condominium was proclaimed, both sides attempting to impose their own language and culture. Education was entirely in the hands of the missions, nearly all of whom opted for local vernaculars for church purposes, at that stage.

By the end of the first decade of this century most New Hebrideans had found their way home from the plantations overseas. While much research remains to be carried out on this subject, it appears that by about the time of World War I a number of regionalects of Bislama had evolved, reflecting a particular contact history. The strong regional flavour of Bislama varieties is still discernible among older speakers in various rural areas today. (A study of these regionalects should be investigated as a matter of urgency.) The physical disposition of the islands, the dual administration and the lack of regular inter-island contact, to say nothing of the mutual suspicion of Vanuatuans from different islands, contributed to the isolation required for the preservation of the
regionalects. Since the 1960s, of course, communications have improved immeasurably, resulting in a more standard Bislama, at least in the administrative centres.

As stated above, the only vernacular with any currency to speak of was Mota, confined to a small corner of the group. So Bislama was the uncontested *lingua franca* of Vanuatu, a fact which was reinforced by the introduction of two competing education systems throughout the archipelago, one in French and one in English, once the two colonial powers finally assumed responsibility for education in the mid-1960s.

However, European attitudes to Bislama were predictable. It was regarded simply as a dreadful corruption of English, unworthy even to serve as a language of evangelism. (For details of attitudes see Charpentier 1979.)

By the late 1960s many factors were working in favour of the development of Bislama, among which was the emergence of politics, and a need for a vehicle of communication on a country-wide scale. The two administrations also made increasing use of Bislama to explain their policies. At the same time, the then New Hebrides Christian Council decided that Bislama was indeed a suitable vehicle in which to convey the evangelical message, news-sheets in Bislama began to appear from government agencies and broadcasting on a limited scale in Bislama was initiated.

There was, then, a great surge forward for Bislama, as the country bumped along the road to Independence in July this year, this *lingua franca* being seen as the great unifying bond between (then) New Hebrideans as they strove to attain their Independence. The fact that no standardized orthography had been developed did not deter the Vanuatans from giving Bislama number one place on their Constitution, a symbol of nationalism and national unity.

For the time being, at least, the problem of linguistic diversity has been overcome by the use of Bislama as the national language. The future roles of the metropolitan languages will doubtless be seriously considered in the coming months, as will those of the regional vernaculars, as Vanuatu settles down to try to develop a unified and coherent education system as the euphoria of Independence gives way to practical planning.

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