

HEBOU

Newsletter of the Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea

The present newsletter is much later than was intended. Ideally, the society should keep its members and interested individuals up to date rather better than it has this last year, but the task of organising the newsletter fell to a somewhat busy and disorganised person. I apologise if you have been wondering about what we have been up to.

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL CONGRESS

The fourteenth annual congress of the Linguistic Society was held from September 25-27 1980. The host of the conference was the Department of Language at Unitech, Lae, and members of the department responded admirably by arranging the conference venue, and also by arranging billets for homeless UPNG and SIL people.

The conference itself went very well, and a number of people expressed satisfaction at the rising standard of papers each year. At this conference, we heard twenty papers on topics ranging over the areas of theoretical linguistics, descriptive linguistics, sociolinguistics as well as a significant number of papers on Teaching English as a Second Language from some participants from GTC, SIL and Unitech. The special guest lecture entitled "On Meeting a Language which Defies Description by Normal Means" was given by Andrew Pawley of the University of Auckland.

The first night of the congress was followed by a dinner at a restaurant in Lae, which had better remain unnamed. I am told it was the chicken, but it may have been the prawns, which kept many participants actively coming and going during the Friday papers.

The AGM was held before the Friday afternoon session. The minutes of this meeting follow for public information.

MINUTES OF THE FOURTEENTH AGM

Meeting opened at 1-45 pm

1. Attendance: John Lynch (chairperson)
 Michael Smithies
 Mike Olson
 Norman Mundhenk
 James Purapia
 Malcolm Ross
 Jeff Siegel
 Anne-Marie Smith
 Sue Holzknacht
 Bob Lomax
 Apoi Yarepea
 Andrew Kavana
 Otto Nekitel
 Eilene Gasaway
 Ken MacElhanon
 Ray Johnston
 Linda Lauck
 Terry Crowley
 Rev. K. Holzknacht

Apologies: Andrew Taylor

2. The minutes of the last meeting were circulated in Febou 9. Minutes accepted. Moved Ross/ Seconded Smithies.
3. President's Report. The president had very little to report in the way of special events for the past year.

Kivung Editor:	Ray Johnston	Nom. MacElhanon,
	Sec. Olson	
Committee:	Terry Crowley	Nom. Johnston
	(Associate Editor)	Sec. Ross
	Andrew Taylor	Nom. Ross
		Sec. Smithies
	Andrew Kavana	Nom. Siegel
		Sec. Smith
	Ger Reesink	Nom. Johnston
		Sec. Olson

Moved that nominations be closed: Mundhenk/ Siegel. The above candidates were declared elected unopposed.

8. Any other business.

(i) Otto Nekitel raised an important issue following on from papers given by himself and Bob Litteral during the session the previous afternoon. It was felt that there was a need to sponsor some kind of awareness workshops to bring people into contact with language related problems at the provincial and local levels, with an aim to influence decisions made at the national level. Malcolm Ross suggested that Otto and Bob keep in touch and think of some possibilities and that he would be prepared to be involved as an ex-officio member of this special group.

(ii) Printing costs are expected to increase for Kivung at SIL. It was proposed by MacElhanon/Ross that individual subscriptions be raised from K5 to K7 and institutional subscriptions be raised from K12 to K15. Motion carried.

(iii) James Purapia asked about publicity for Kivung, and suggested that we get in touch with High Schools. This could be done through Hebou.

(iv) If anyone has any ideas for a guest speaker for next year's congress, the suggestion should be handed on to Malcolm Ross.

Meeting closed at 2-29 pm.

LANGUAGE ISSUES AND THE MEDIA

Completely by chance, the Niugini Nius of the morning of the congress contained a statement by Mr. Moi Avei of the National Cultural Council calling for the replacement of English by Hiri Motu and Tok Pisin as official languages in Papua New Guinea. This was an issue also brought up in the first session of papers by Otto Nekitel, the first Papua New Guinean masters graduate in linguistics (University of Hawaii), who lectured in linguistics at UPNG in 1980. Unfortunately, rather than follow up the story from Otto's point of view, the newspaper then presented a very negative editorial entitled "Talking Turkey About Pidgin". A fairly strongly worded reply to that editorial was drafted by Otto Nekitel.

On a more positive note however, I feel we should welcome the appearance of the new Wantok publication, The Times of Papua New Guinea. This paper was widely praised after its first couple of editions for its sensitivity and depth of coverage on general issues. The editor also contacted members of the Language Department at UPNG to provide a series of articles on language in which we were given a free hand to 'raise awareness' about language issues in the community. The articles which appeared are included in this newsletter.

The Times, Friday, September 12, 1980

Language is ignored

By John Lynch

"DEVELOPMENT" has become a very common word in Papua New Guinea.

We hear people talk about economic development, social development, political development, and so on. We hear local and provincial leaders ask for more development in their areas.

If we wanted to define development — and hardly anyone does — we would have to mention such things as economic growth, broadening of awareness, improvement of the conditions of living, greater access to the process by which deci-

sions are made, and so on.

However, it seems to me that, in all the discussion of development that has gone on in Papua New Guinea over the past few years, one kind of development has been ignored: language development.

What do we mean by saying that Papua New Guinea needs language development as well as other kinds of development? What would we mean if we said that Papua New Guinea was linguistically underdeveloped? Perhaps I can answer both these questions together.

Any language has a number of purposes or a number of "jobs" to

do in the society in which it is spoken. Through language, we exchange information; we persuade others to our point of view; we give instructions and ensure co-operation in the running of the society; we educate our young people; we express those emotional and cultural things which we want to express; all of these, and many more, are the functions of language.

Because of what happened in colonial days, however, the whole of Papua New Guinea society contains a number of inequalities. In order to be a proper citizen of any country, people must,

above all, be informed about what is happening in that society, and must be able to gather information, make informed decisions, and communicate those decisions to their leaders.

But many Papua New Guineans are effectively second-class citizens in their own country, because their own country is linguistically underdeveloped.

Why is this? The basic reason is that the Government uses English a very great deal in providing information on other kinds of development to the people. However, only a fairly small proportion of Papua New

Guineans speak, read, and write English well enough to be able to take part in this part of the development process.

Government really makes little use of other languages in Papua New Guinea — Tok Pisin, Hiri Motu, Tolai, Enga, and so on. This means that, in order to be a "first-class" citizen, one really has to become fairly fluent in English; and people who are not fluent in English can be easily left behind in the development process.

Of course, many churches and missions in Papua New Guinea have made use of languages other than English for their own purposes. But, in the majority of these cases, not very much information of a general nature is published in these languages.

In order for proper development in social, economic, and other areas to take place, information is needed and people must be made aware of what is going on. Until such time as greater use is made of a number of large Papua New Guinean languages, the country will remain linguistically underdeveloped — and this, of course, has very serious implications for other kinds of development. ■

Grammar rules, okay?

By John Lynch

MANY people assume that PNG languages (including Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu) have no grammar.

This is probably for one of two reasons. Some people feel that PNG languages do not "work" in the same way as English does, and because they learn English grammar at school, they feel that such languages have no grammar.

Really, however, all that one could say about this kind of argument is that PNG languages do not have the same grammar as English.

The other reason why people make the assumption is that, while there are lots of grammar books about English, there are very few indeed which des-

cribe the grammars of PNG languages.

However, this again does not mean that PNG languages have no grammar; it just means that the grammars of most PNG languages have not yet been described and written down in books which are easily available.

What is meant by "grammar?" Grammar is a pattern or system of organisation in a language. It is the set of rules which we learn unconsciously when we are children, which allow us to produce and understand sentences which are acceptable to other people in our language-community.

While these rules may not be written down, they exist in our minds,

and we are able to say almost immediately whether a particular sentence is "right" or "wrong" according to the rules of our own language.

All languages have grammars. All languages have a pattern of organisation. If this were not true, then two conclusions would follow: first, anyone could speak any way he felt like, and make himself understood; and secondly, if there was no pattern to language, that language would be impossible to learn, since everything we learn is based on patterns.

Grammar makes itself obvious in a number of ways. One is the specific order in which words must be put.

English says *the big man*, but Motu says *tau badana* (man big). English says *the man killed the pig*, but Motu says *lau ese boroma ealala* (man subject pig he-killed-it)."

Each language, therefore, has its own rules about the order of words in phrases and sentences. And if it has its own rules, then it has a grammar.

Another area where grammatical systems are obvious is in the use of tenses. English says such things as *I laugh*, *I laughed*, and *I will laugh*; Motu says *lau nakiri* (I laugh), *lau nakirimu* (I am laughing), *lau nakiriva*, (I was laughing), *lau bainakiri* (I will laugh), and so on.

Each language uses its own system of tenses, and even if these are not the same as English,

the rules about tenses are often quite strict in various PNG languages.

But perhaps the easiest answer to the question about whether PNG languages have grammar, is this: If there are ways of saying things which are right or accepted, and other ways of saying things which are wrong or unacceptable, then a language has a grammar.

Just as PNG cultures are different from Western culture, so PNG languages have different grammars from English. But we would not say that Papua New Guinea has no culture, because their culture is not like Western culture. And similarly, we should not say that PNG languages have no grammar, because they are not like English grammar.

By Anne-Marie Smith

The Times Friday September 26 1980

FAVOUR! Like good one! See you sometimes. His wantoks are tokplesing again. You people. Please, the, way you laugh. Ma iau! LGO. I can dance Manus. It's too good. Anytime! Service!

If you are not an "up-to-date" person, you may ask: What are these? These phrases are part and parcel of the Papua New Guinea dialect of English which is gradually but firmly establishing itself around us.

Papua New Guinea English is emerging. We hear it on the news; we see it in notices; we use it all the time. If we can communicate with it, it has to be acceptable English, just as much as Australianisms ("No worries, mate") or Americanisms ("Can you guys loan us some gas?").

As anyone who is being addressed with the compliment *favour* must know, the reply has to come fast: *LGO* (*like good one*), or else how can we survive socially? *Ma iau*, of course, is still in use but one doesn't hear *haty* (the opposite of *favour*) so much these days. *Anytime* is not only the passport to Paradise biscuits, it's a form of praise to others or even often to one-self (*that's me, anytime*). The same applies to *service*. Some may argue that these words do not appear in the dictionary. But then, does the modern Australian usage of "thong" figure in the dictionary?

Words from various languages have made their way into the English vocabulary. Words from the Arabic (alge-

bra) or Indian languages (verandah, bungalow), we now constantly use. Papua New Guinean terms, given the time, will become just as integrated and constantly used. A *mumu* and *mumuing a pig* are now part of PNG life-style just as the "barbecue" represents the Australian or American cooking style.

For those concerned about international communication, suffice it to say that, wherever we may come from, we always have to adjust our form of English whenever we visit a different English-speaking country. Quicker than a *mumu* replaces a barbecue, American-Australian "thong" replaces British "flipflops" and is replaced by "jandals" in New Zealand.

It does not take more than a week in the country to adjust to *going finish* when referring to expatriates. As to people *being courted* (or "taken to court"), this seems to be a common occurrence. *Going sixty* is another phrase which taxi drivers have heard many a times. It has even changed to a new English verb: he *sixtied* into the bush to the sight of the *blues*. *Wantok*, *kaukau*, *bilums* and *bual* flourish in PNG English. If anything is needed to confirm communicability, *chewing buai* is the phrase. Not only do we write letters about it, we argue around it and share experiences in it.

On this topic, some may be *aftering* further *informations*, while on the other hand critics may say: This is a lot of *bullshits*, but all will understand it. ■

PNG f(1)avour!

By Anne-Marie Smith

A: "EH, *Wantok!* Sorry for interrupting. . . . You must remember me, we were schooling together."

B: "Yes, the *High School Life* was great. We used to have a good fun, ah?"

A: "We discussed about the future. Would we cope up with life's hardships?"

B: "We suffered some hardships right back there. I remember we used to be stic-
ked whenever we spoke language in the school-yard."

A: "To my opinion, that wasn't fair; and do you remember. . . ."

B: "Stop going about the bush and tell me why you are here."

A: "Well, I arrived at the Jackson's Airport couple of hours ago and I need you to lift me to Sogeri."

The main feature of the above dialogue is that it uses some of the Papua New Guinea-isms that we mentioned last week. This week we look at phrases rather than at single words. Some of the phrases we use in PNG are either variations on English phrases or inventions in English.

When we, second language speakers of English, get relaxed and communicative in our speech, we sometimes owe ourselves some freedom with the constraints of the English language.

A common variation is the one in which we combine two English phrases into

one PNG English one. So in PNG we can have a good fun which probably amounts to more than simply "having a good time", or "having fun".

Whilst the Poms either "beat about the bush" or "go on about something" we simply go about the bush when we politely try and avoid a confrontation. You can "go fast",

or even "go at sixty miles an hour", but you can't beat anyone going sixty, or giving sixty or even sixtying away, which can be done in PNG English.

Both phrases to give sixty and favour are so well established in the PNG variety of English that they are now being adopted in other languages; we hear them in both Pidgin and Motu.

Many PNG English phrases therefore, are coined as the result of fusion between two other English phrases. To name a few more: To cope up with, modelled on to "keep up with" and "to cope with". At the first place may stem from "at first" and "in the first place". but some are modelled on English grammatical rules:

To conclude, PNG English is thriving. Phrases seem to come in whenever an item is better expressed in a borrowed form (as in *wantok*, or when an expression gets fashionable and popular (like *favour*) or if the rules of English may seem too constricting (as in *elites*, *informations*). Another type we have seen to combine two English phrases into one (as in *we had a good fun*). ■

'Sea slug' becomes Tok Pisin

The Times Friday 10 October 1980

By Terry Crowley

"He, brat! Yumitu go luk sinoma. Mi harem ol i tal em se bae i gat wan gutwan naoia. Afta bae yumitu kam long taon bakagen mo dring smol bia."

"Ale, yumi go nomo. Mi ting se sinomia bae i gut we i gut."

Anyone got any ideas who is likely to speak like this? Is it Tok Pisin spoken by an Australian perhaps, or an English? Is it nothing more than the typical half-baked Tok Pisin we often hear from many foreigners? If we said this, we would be rather insulting to our newly independent wansolwara neighbours in Vanuatu, because this short conversation is an example of the Vanuatu form of Tok Pisin, which Vanuatuans call *Bislama*.

The name itself comes from the French word *beche de mer* the name for "sea slug". This was what the first speakers of Pidgin in the Pacific were supposed to have come looking for. The French origin of the name reflects the special colonial influences on Bislama. Apart from English words, Vanuatuans all the time use

French words like *sinoma* for *haus-piksa* (from French *cinema*) and *ale* for *kwan* (from French *allez*).

Vanuatuans often seem to make emotional exclamations using words of French origin. Papua New Guineans in Vanuatu are bound to hear expressions like *longkile*, *piteng*, *salo* and so on. Many of these expressions are hardly polite in French, though much of their original strength seems to have been watered down. The exclamation *longkile* comes from French *l'encule*, which is more explicitly crude than even the English *up yours*. But Papua New Guineans hearing *longkile* are likely to understand it to mean just *olaman!*

Papua New Guineans may be very surprised to hear people along the road offering to sell them *kokias*. Despite what this word *sounds* like, and despite what our fellow countrymen may fearfully *think* they are being offered, in fact all that is being offered are seashell as souvenirs. The word comes from French *coquillage*.

True, we may want to swear at the colonial French from time to time, but it would be unfair to say that French colonialism has only left behind a list of swearwords in Vanuatu Pidgin. Vanuatuans use French words for all sorts of other things in their daily lives. People do not talk about *muli* but about *sitrong* (from French *citron*). It is not *trak* but *kamiong* (from *camion*; not *glu* out *lakol* (from *la colle*). Terms to do with fine cooking are often French: *garlic* is *lai* (from *l'ail*) *lombo* is *pima* (from *piment*) and *sup* is *lasup* (from *la soupe*).

But we shouldn't think that Bislama is different from Tok Pisin just because of French colonialism. Other forces have been at work-most importantly, Vanuatu Pidgin speakers themselves have influenced the direction of their own language. Next time, we will look at some of the ways they have done this.

Sayè, hemia nomo.
Em tasol. ■

A source of pride for Vanuatu

By Terry Crowley

LAST week, we saw that people in Vanuatu speaking Tok Pisin (locally called Bislama) use a number of words and expressions of French origin.

But I hinted that there was more than just French influence that makes Bislama different from our own Tok Pisin.

More important than the French influence are the innovations that have come from the imaginations of the Vanuatu people themselves.

You will always hear characteristic and almost untranslatable expressions like:

Ti bilong mi i swit we i swit,
which may be cut down to just:

Ti bilong mi i swit we i . . . ,
meaning something like:

Ti bilong mi i swit nogut tru

If you ever get so sick that you have to say:

Mi traot-we mi traot,
you had better get yourself off to Vila Base Hospital or *bambae yu det (nogut bai yu indai)*. If you get caught in a real down-pour of rain, you might say:

Hem i ren we i mama ren which really is untranslatable unless you want to think of maternal rain.

Papua New Guineans always notice the use of *nomo* by people from

Vanuatu, and the Solomons too. *Nomo* means much the same as our own *tasol*, so:

Yu wandem sam kumala? No, mi laekem yam nomo.
meaning:

Yu laikim sampela kaukau? Nogat, mi save laikim yam tasol.

Not only is the grammar different as these examples show, but even the names of many common things are different. We just saw that *kaukau* is called *kumala*, and look at the list below for other examples:

<i>Pisin</i>	<i>Bislama</i>
<i>laplap</i>	<i>kalko</i>
<i>speret</i>	<i>alikal</i>
<i>slipas</i>	<i>sapat</i>
<i>laulau</i>	<i>kavika</i>
<i>salat</i>	<i>nangkalat</i>
<i>saman</i>	<i>nasama</i>
<i>saksak</i>	<i>natakura</i>
<i>kindam</i>	<i>naura</i>
<i>moriu</i>	<i>namarae</i>

Some of these Bislama words come from English, and some from languages of Vanuatu itself. The word *sapat* 'for thongs' is of Portugese or Spanish origin.

It should be clear that Vanuatu's own Bislama is distinctively 'Vanuatuan'. It is not by any means just "Pidgin English". The constitution of the independent Republic of Vanuatu declares Bislama to be the new nation's national language, and it is a language which can provide a sense of identity and pride to this nation. ■

What we say and what we write

By Terry Crowley

WHERE do we go to find the "best" Tok Pisin nowadays?

Many people seem to think that *Wantok Niuspepa* represents the best kind of standard to aim for. In the sports pages especially, we can read really nice idiomatic Tok Pisin. (*Meri ia kaikaim tit na wetim bal* appeared as a caption under one photo of a hockey game recently).

But does the *Wantok* Tok Pisin really correspond to what people actually say?

Take the example: *Dispela samting em i bilong yupela* which I might say if I were to present you with something. Or would I? Perhaps I would in fact be more likely to say instead something like this: *Dis'la samtin em' b'l' yup'la*.

This kind of "short-cut" Tok Pisin is now very common in the urban areas, and even in many rural areas, especially the Sepik it would seem, where people are renowned for their speed of delivery.

What other kinds of short-cuts do people make? Well, try reading this: *Em i no save waswas*.

Doesn't it sound better to say it this way? *Em' no sa' waswas*.

Save tends to shorten to just *sa'*. In the same way, *laik* tends to shorten to *lai'*. What we write as: *Mi no laik waswas* might actually be spoken as: *Mi no lai' waswas*.

The familiar ending *-pela* is almost never pronounced that way. You would be laughed at if you actually said anything but *-p'la*. So, you wouldn't really say: *Mipela bin baim wanpela dralpela waitpela pik*. Instead: *Mip'la bin baim wan'pla draip'la waitp'la pik*.

Spoken Tok Pisin in the towns is coming to add lots of plural - *s* onto nouns derived from English. So "flowers" will often be heard as *plauas*, and "slippers" as *sliips*. But you might even hear *wanp'la plauas* and *wanp'la sliipas!* Does this ever find its way into *Wantok*? *Nogat iaaaa!*

However far does this all go? Is the pronunciation of Tok Pisin changing so fast that we will eventually have a writing system as useless as that of English. Our English spelling reflects the pronunciation of seven hundred years ago. Writing and spelling are moving apart in Tok Pisin too. ■

Rich in words

THE Pacific area, of which we are part, has the largest concentration of languages in the world.

There are probably about 5000 languages in the world altogether, and about a fifth of this total can be found in our area.

When the forces of British colonialism first invaded and took control of Aboriginal Australia, there were about 300,000 people speaking about 200 quite distinct Aboriginal languages.

In Papua New Guinea today, there are about 750 languages, distributed among about three million people. In the Solomons, we have another fifty languages, in Vanuatu another hundred, in New Caledonia about twenty, and a further couple of dozen languages are spoken throughout the Polynesian islands.

Add to this a couple of hundred languages in Irian Jaya, and we are dealing with a huge number of languages spoken by people numbering less than the total population of the city of Jakarta.

Sometimes we can look at two languages and say that they are "related". What this means is that in the past, some language evolved differently in two different areas and the result is that there are now two different (though still partly similar) languages.

This has happened in the case of Tolai and Motu for example. Look at the numbers from one to five in Tolai (tikai, aurua, autul, aivat, ailima) and the corresponding forms in Motu (ta, rua, toi, hani, ima) and notice the similarities between the two languages.

To what extent, then, are all of these Pacific languages related, or derived from a single ancestor language? Some of the languages clearly are related in larger "families"

The largest and best known of these families is the so-called Austronesian family, which includes all of the languages of the Philippines, Indonesia, coastal Irian Jaya and Papua New Guinea (but not inland areas), the Solomons, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

Some of the best known languages of PNG belong to this family: Mekeo, Motu, Aroma, Dobu, Wedau, Yabem, Kate, Bukaua, Tolai.

The Australian Aboriginal languages also seem to belong in a single family, but this family does not seem to be related to any other language family (including Austronesian).

The remaining languages of inland Irian Jaya and Papua New Guinea are harder to deal with, because there are so very many of them and because they are so little studied by professional linguists.

One theory places the majority of these languages in a large family called the Trans-New Guinea family, which covers most areas except the Sepik and Ramu Rivers, and a few scattered smaller areas elsewhere.

The languages of the Torricelli Mountains inland from Wewak are said to belong to another, quite separate family, as are the languages of the Sepik and Ramu Rivers.

There are additionally a considerable number of smaller families, all apparently totally unrelated to each other, and to any of the other language families already mentioned.

When we say that languages are unrelated, we are saying that they are as dissimilar to each other as English is to Chinese or Swahili or Eskimo.

The Pacific and Papua New Guinea in particular, is therefore the area in the world with the greatest linguistic diversity.

However, we know from archaeological evidence that modern humankind has been in this area for up to 50,000 years.

Could it not simply be that any original relationships have simply been wiped out by the passage of time?

In Europe, where the languages are clearly related, we are dealing with a mere 5,000 years of linguistic history. Give Europe another 45,000 years and it might look just like PNG.

Dr Terry Crowley is a lecturer in linguistics with Language Department, University of PNG.

The Times Friday 8 November 1980

Saying what you are writing

IN THE last issue of *The Times* an article chided *Wantok* for not writing Tok Pisin as it is spoken.

The first one to concede that point would be the writer himself. If he tried to spell Pisin as it is spoken in Arawa or Wabag or Lae or Rabaul or Wewak, he would have problems on his hands. The rest of the country might not understand it.

We would have the very same problem in English if we spelled as the speaker in Sydney or Boston or Houston or Birmingham or Dublin or Glasgow pronounced his or her words.

In all countries where people have been literate for some centuries, the printed and spoken media have developed a "high" language which they use today in newspapers, periodicals, and on radio and television.

Only rarely does a native of any country speak the way he sees his own language written. He speaks in dialect, as we all do. Because these dialects can be mutually unintelligible, a standard spelling and pronunciation is agreed upon (or one prestige dialect is chosen as the norm) so

By **FRANK MIHALIC**

that readers and speakers in the same country can communicate.

Thus it is that when the Berliner sits down to his evening news programme, he hears a dia-

lect of German he never speaks. And when the Bavarian picks up *Stern* magazine, he reads words which no Berliner would understand if the Bavarian were to read aloud.

The same can be said of the Venetian reading *Il Tempo* and the Sicilian listening to what Italian television has to tell him.

Tok Pisin spelling, as *Wantok* uses it, was gazetted by the Education Department back in 1956. At that time there were eleven different versions, each claiming, of course, to be the real thing. As is the case with any spelling, one area's speech is taken as the norm. In Pisin's case it was the coastal dialect spoken from Vanimo to Lae, which later also spread into the Highlands.

It took almost twenty years before this "standard" or "high" spelling of Pisin was accepted even by the Government which decreed its existence. But within the last ten years, due mainly to the quiet influence of Nupela Testamen and *Wantok*, it is now fairly universally accepted.

Interestingly, *Wantok* receives an average of a hundred letters a week. Most of these seem to be written by people with a high school education. Hardly any of them has ever been taught to read or write Pisin. And yet, when they do write, most of them use the Pisin spelling they see in *Wantok*, no matter which dialect they speak. ■

The Times Friday 8 November 1980

The Times Friday 14 November 1980

Pride in the language

by Terry Crowley

A LOT of things have been said about *Tok Pisin* in the past, and the subject of its status continues to come up in the press and on the NBC.

What sorts of things have been said about it, and how true are they?

In colonial times, the only attitudes though worth making public were those of the colonialists, those foreigners who made it their business to maintain some kind of hold over Papua New Guineans, for whatever reasons.

People like Sir Hubert Murray, for instance, the former governor of Papua, said

Tok Pisin was nothing but an 'obscene jargon', or a kind of 'bastard English'. Unfortunately we don't really know much about what Papua New Guineans thought of the language at the time, except that many people were apparently pleased to have access to a wider community and to get jobs in areas other than their own.

The colonial administration of New Guinea used *Tok Pisin*, but reluctantly. The general feeling was that the language was at best 'inadequate' for all serious matters of discussion. The United Nations in 1953 con-

demned the Australian administration for not doing more to get rid of it, as the language was said to maintain colonial attitudes

But in the 1960s and the 1970s, as this country moved towards political independence, speakers of *Tok Pisin* themselves began to formulate their own opinions about the language.

Some *Tok Pisin* speakers began to question earlier attitudes, and expressed pride in their language, as it identified them as Melanesians. The often stated view that *Tok Pisin* is just "bastard English" was disputed,

noting that the people who criticised the most were the very people who spoke it the worst — the foreigners.

There is in fact, nothing more embarrassing to hear than bad *Tok Pisin* spoken by an Australian who thinks you just have to add a lot of 'long' and '-pela' to make it 'sound right' and without even any attempt to alter the pronunciation of the words.

However, many of the old colonial attitudes survive. Many educated Papua New Guineans seem to feel, that the old colonial masters must have been right, and that *Tok*

Pisin is a bastardised form of English, and that it has its rightful place, but that is one which is close to the bottom of the scale of Papua New Guinea society's communicative needs.

Tok Pisin could not, and indeed should not, be used as a language for serious and important discussion.

The vast majority of *Tok Pisin* speakers in this country who also speak English actually claim to feel more comfortable speaking in *Tok Pisin*, yet still prefer to use English even in informal situations such as parties. Can you think why? ■

Tok Ples as medium of instruction?

AT PRESENT, the policy of the Education Department regarding the use of language in schools is that English should be the sole medium of instruction, although in the earliest years of school, the student's vernacular or *tok ples* can be used to further explain or illustrate a point (if the teacher and the students are from the same language group, obviously).

To what extent is this policy unchangeable? Are changes, in fact, desirable?

In the North Solomons Province, there is a feeling that education entirely in English might be wasteful, as

the first few years of community school education in this country for most students are spent in a cloud of semi-understanding while people learn basic English.

So, *tok ples* schools are being set up to start students education entirely in *tok ples*, and to switch to English later, when the students are familiar with the school situation and how to read and write

Advantages

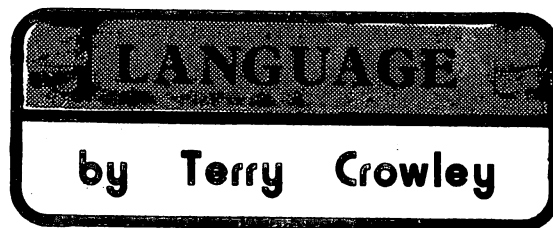
(in their own languages). This kind of system has a number of advantages over an all-English system.

First, it means the

in areas that use Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu in areas that use Hiri Motu.

This would still mean that schools would be integrated as part of the community. While many children do not speak these languages when they enter school, they certainly learn them very quickly, and certainly much more quickly than they learn English.

For instance, even though Papua New Guineans just "pick up" Tok Pisin and are "taught" English for six years at community school, six years at high school and another year at university if they



first years are not wasted because the students are schooling in a language they already speak. Second, it helps parents and students feel that the school is part of the community, rather than an alien attachment to it.

When you were studying in English, how many of you tell your parents about what you did in class that day for instance?

This kind of system

obviously has some disadvantages as well. The main problem is that with 750 languages in the country, we will have great difficulty providing educational materials (and teachers) for every single language.

Perhaps there is a second alternative to using English as a language of instruction in schools? Well, it could always be argued that Tok Pisin could be used

then go on to take a higher degree, the vast majority of Tok Pisin — speaking university students *still* feel more comfortable in Tok Pisin than English.

Comfortable

Ideally therefore, Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu would be more suitable than English for teaching purposes, even at the university level.

But of course, English has its advantages too. An immediate problem if we were to switch from English as a medium of instruction is that there are far too few materials available in the other languages.

Even preparing materials would be difficult at this stage, since English is the only language used in Papua New Guinea that has a sufficient range of vocabulary to express all the concepts involved in formal schooling.

This could only be a short-term problem however, as it has been overcome in other countries like Indonesia and Tanzania, where direct government engineering of language has successfully taken place to fill gaps in vocabulary.

Is there any reason why the same could not be done in Papua New Guinea?

The story of Hiri Motu

HIRI Motu is one of the three major languages of Papua New Guinea, along with English and Tok Pisin, and it serves as the language of contact across language boundaries in all of the coastal areas of former Papua, and many of the inland areas as well.

The language has acquired additional political importance, as there are supporters of a Papua Besena movement who regard this language as a symbol of Papuan unity and identity.

But what is the language like, and what is its history? Well, as for the first question, we can say that Hiri Motu is a pidginised variety of "pure" Motu as

spoken in the Moresby area. It is therefore in a similar relationship to "pure" Motu as Tok Pisin is to English.

So, while its vocabulary is largely the same as that of pure Motu, its grammar is much simpler. While in pure Motu, the word for "speak" varies according to who is doing the speaking, this is not the case in Hiri Motu. So, while someone from Hanuabada will say *lau nahereva* for "I speak" *oil ohereva* for "you speak" and *ia ehereva* for "s/he speaks," a Hiri Motu speaker will say only *lau, oi* or *ia hereva*.

How did the language get simplified like this? Well, this is an area where there is con-

siderable doubt. A number of theories have been proposed by scholars, and some of these theories are likely to be unpopular for political reasons.

The theory that is politically the most popular is the one that says that Hiri Motu is

ported because it means that Hiri Motu can be regarded as a genuinely "Papuan" language, with a history that is quite independent of European colonialism.

In fact, the change in the name of the language from Police Motu to Hiri Motu reflects a

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the direct descendant of the original language used between the Motuans and the Gulf people on the *hiri* trading voyages before colonial times. This theory is widely sup-

ported because it means that Hiri Motu can be regarded as a genuinely "Papuan" language, with a history that is quite independent of European colonialism.

There is a problem with this theory however, and that is of the few remaining old people still alive who actually remember some-

thing of the language used on these *hiri* voyages, the kind of language they remember is *not* the same as that Hiri Motu of today.

In fact, the vocabulary of the original trading language appears to have been half Motu and half Toaripi. If Hiri Motu were a direct descendant of this original *hiri* language, what happened to all the Toaripi words?

A second theory states that the Motu always had a special "foreigner-talk" that they used with people who did not speak their language well. The first European missionary to learn Motu did not realise it at the time, but he in fact learnt some kind of simplified

Motu from the people of Hanuabada.

He did not realise his mistake until his young son, who had grown up with Motu-speaking children, actually told him that his Motu Bible didn't sound anything like the way people spoke in the village!

A third theory, and this is the theory that is likely to be politically unpopular, is one that stresses the importance of the colonial police force in the original development of Hiri Motu.

The earliest policemen in Moresby were drawn from areas like Kiwai, the Solomons and Fiji, all of which were areas where varieties of Pidgin English

were known at that time (though not necessarily any longer).

It is quite possible that in a Motu speaking area, they simply replaced the English words with Motu words, and changed some of the Tok Pisin grammatical constructions with Motu ones. This theory, therefore, gives Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu both a very "colonial" origin.

What is the *real* story of Hiri Motu? Who knows? What *you* believe may well depend on what political beliefs you hold. ■

Tok Pisin is Melanesian

WHY is it, do you think, that in official documents, people prefer to speak of "Tok Pisin", even when everybody normally just calls the language "Pidgin"?

The reason is that when people use the term "pidgin", they tend to think of "broken English" and think that it is not a real language at all, just a half-half rubbish version of some other language.

But Tok Pisin is clearly not just a broken down form of English. True, about three-quarters of its vocabulary is derived from English (A substantial proportion of the rest is of Melanesian origin, including words like: *kakaruk*, *buai*, *diwai*, *masalai*, *kuka*, *kapul*, *kandere*, *tambu* and so on).

But if vocabulary were how we decided on the status of a language, then we would have little choice but to call English "broken French" as literally half of the English dictionary contains words of French origin.

If we look at the "grammar" of Tok Pisin, we find that the distinguishing features are Melanesian rather than English. The very common expression "*Givim i kam*" cannot be translated literally into English as "Give it come" as the Tok Pisin construction is simply not an English one.

But you will probably have little trouble

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giving a more or less literal translation into your Melanesian mother tongue. The frequent use of the small word 'i' in sentences like '*Em i no ken i kam*' derives from the language of the Tolai, who were among the first Tok Pisin speakers in Papua New Guinea. In terms of grammar, therefore, Tok Pisin is Melanesian, just as English is English (and not French).

But Tok Pisin is still a special kind of language. Technically, we like to call it a "pidgin" language (with a small "p") because it has a grammar that is much simpler and easier to learn than that of either English or Melanesian languages. Its simplicity is demonstrated by the fact that Papua New Guineans learn it without being taught, yet still find difficulty using English after years and years of formal schooling in the language.

Tok Pisin actually has a similar history to Hiri Motu, as this language too is technically a pidgin. It is a pidginised form of the Motu language of the Moresby area, which developed when the first colonial police force was established in

the new station of Moresby.

Hiri Motu was nobody's mother tongue, just like Tok Pisin in the early days, and it is also much easier to learn than Pure Motu because its grammar has been considerably simplified. Ask anybody who speaks Hiri Motu how hard they find Pure Motu!

Just as Tok Pisin has aroused many negative feelings in the past, the same has been true of Hiri Motu. Sir Hubert Murray for instance, once called it "Dog Motu," aware of the nature of the differences between the Motu of Hanuabada and the Motu used in remote areas.

But, such colonially inspired negative attitudes have started to give way as a sense of Melanesianism develops in Papua New Guinea. Niuginians, and many Papuans also, see Tok Pisin as a language they can identify with as Melanesians, and Hiri Motu is seen by many Papuans as a way of identifying themselves proudly as Papuans. While these languages are both "pidgin" language, there is no sense in which they are "broken".

The Times Friday 30 January 1981

The Times Friday 6 February 1981

“Primitive” and “different”

by Terry Crowley

WHEN I was going to primary school in Australia, I quite clearly remember my school-teacher telling me something about Australian Aborigines.

What he said was that when they spoke, they used only about three hundred words, and anything else they communicated by grunts and hand signals. To my young mind, this seemed unlikely, but since at that time, I knew no Aborigines, I was in no position to argue.

And in fact, my teacher's statements seemed to be strengthened when television came to our area in my final year of primary school. In all of the old "cowboy" movies we saw, the Indians didn't really seem to say much than "How?" and a few stuttered sounding phrases. But there was certainly a lot of "ugh" and "whoop-whoop" which fitted nicely with what my teacher told me.

This kind of attitude is not uncommon. In societies which are judged to be "primitive", people are assumed to speak "primitive" languages. While it is never clear what is meant by a "primitive" society (generally, it just seems to mean "different" from European society) it is even more unclear what is meant by a "primitive" language.

People might try to say that a "primitive" language has less "in it". But what could this possibly mean? Less grammar?

Well, compare the English sentence "I am laughing" with the (pure) Motu sentence "*Lau nakirimu*" which expresses the corresponding meaning.

How do we decide which of these sentences contains "less grammar"? Presumably neither has. In fact, linguists who study languages say that we cannot really speak of languages as having "more" or "less" grammar.

Maybe "primitive-ness" comes in vocabulary? After all, my teacher did say that Australian Aborigines have only three hundred words in their languages. But this is not true either.

But, you might argue, doesn't the dictionary of English contain maybe million of words? This is true, but it is only the specialist or the crossword fanatic who actually knows what words like "behe-moth", "transubstantiation" and "inchoative aspect" mean. Anyway, all of these words were not known in English before a few hundred years ago — they are all borrowed from other European languages — so the size of the English dictionary is only a fairly recent development.

The point is, if something *needs* to be talked about in a language, then the speakers will find a way of doing it. So, in a society in which yams are one of

the staple foods, there is likely to be a proliferation of different names for different kinds of yams. English, on the other hand, has only the single word "yam" because English speakers seldom eat yams.

Does this make English a primitive language then?

UPNG LINGUISTICS PUBLICATIONS

The linguistics staff at UPNG are trying to prepare a series of textbooks at University level in linguistics for Papua New Guinean students. The aim is to express all the necessary concepts in English that is easy to understand, and with examples that come from languages of this region rather than from European languages that students are often unfamiliar with. So far in the "Studying Pacific Language" series, we have the following by John Lynch:

Introduction to Phonetics and Phonology
Introduction to Morphological analysis
Readings in the Comparative Linguistics
of Melanesia

By Terry Crowley, there is also:

Introduction to Historical Linguistics

We also have a collection of readings for our foundation year language course entitled:

Readings in Communication and Language

If anyone outside the university is interested in using these textbooks, or perhaps in commenting on them in some way, they can be ordered from:

University Bookshop
P.O. Box 4820
University NCD

TEACHING OF FRENCH AT UPNG

A number of UPNG students have expressed an interest in studying French, and the French government has responded to this interest by providing a volunteer French teacher to run introductory courses on a trial basis. The teacher, Guy-Albert Wiggingshaus, arrived last month. Last year, in response to student interest, introductory courses were ran at UPNG by Anne-Marie Smith, Anne Davis and Jim Scarlett.

PNG LINGUISTS STUDYING OVERSEAS

Otto Nekitel, a Papua New Guinean lecturer in linguistics at UPNG, left Moresby in March this year to start his PhD in linguistics in the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University in Canberra. His thesis topic has not yet been finalised, but he stated before he left that he intended to concentrate on his own speech community in the

Sepik. It is expected that he should finish his degree in 1984.

Sakarape Kamene, who is also a member of the Language Department at UPNG, is currently finishing off his masters degree in sociolinguistics in Dar es Salaam and is expected back at the university before Christmas.

Thomas Tumun has also just returned from Brisbane where he was working on his masters thesis, and is currently finishing off, while teaching in sociolinguistics in the Department of Language.

KIVUNG SPECIAL PUBLICATION

The first Kivung special publication Tok Pisin i Go We? edited by Ken MacElhanon is to be followed by the second volume edited by John Lynch and Andrew Taylor. The topic of this is to be language policy in Oceania. The editors tell me that they hope to have the publication out early in 1982.

1981 CONGRESS

The formal invitation for papers at the 1981 congress will be made in Hebou 11. For your information however, it has been decided that the next congress will be held at Ukarumpa as decided at the last AGM, on September 11-12.

Terry Crowley,
Language Department UPNG