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Living in many languages: linguistic diversity and multilingualism in Papua New Guinea

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1 Papua New Guinea: the land of linguistic diversity

'Why was Babel transferred to Papua New Guinea?' a missionary 'cried in exasperation' (Frerichs and Frerichs 1969: 85). This sums up the reality of PNG: it is indeed one of the most linguistically diverse spots on earth. The state of Papua New Guinea features over 830 languages. Just about over two hundred languages belong to the Austronesian languages (one of the largest in the world). The number of non-Austronesian languages — known as 'Papuan' exceeds 600. Only about twenty percent of the population speak Austronesian languages. The term 'Papuan' is a short cut: it subsumes more than sixty language families which are not demonstrably related, and a fair number of isolates (not related to anything else). The approximate numbers of languages and their speakers are given in Table 1. The only language spoken by over 100,000 people is Enga (Engan family, EHP). [1]

Table 1. The languages of Papua New Guinea and approximate numbers of speakers

Number of speakers	Austronesian	Non-Austronesian
over 10,000 -100,000	about 12	about 60
1,000 -10,000	about 100	about 230
over 500 - under 1000	about 30	100 and more
between 100 - 500	under 50	170 and more
fewer than 100	about 10	about 50

The linguistic tapestry of PNG is made even more complex by people knowing and using several languages.

2 Papua New Guinea multilingual

Traditionally multilingual communities — where knowing and using several languages is a societal norm — are much more than a curious rarity in Papua New Guinea, as in many other areas (Aikhenvald 2014). Speakers of small and smallish languages are likely to know languages of their neighbours. Within the East Sepik Province, the Yalaku (Ndu family) speak the unrelated Kwoma. The Gala (also Ndu) know the unrelated Wogamusin. The Manambu used to know Kwoma and Western Iatmul. (See Sankoff 1980, for further examples of traditional multilingual situations).

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[1] See Grimes (2000); Nekitel (1998); Ford (ms.); Landweer (2000), Foley (1986: 1-3), and Dixon 1991: 245). For the numbers of languages. . Whitehead (1994) gives a figure of 870. Table 1 is based on Ford (ms.), Nekitel (1998: 90-116) and Grimes (2000); see a summary in Aikhenvald and Stebbins (2007).

In pre-colonial times, different language groups had to communicate with each other, mostly for trade. They would learn larger languages and use them as 'lingua francas'. Indigenous languages traditionally used this way would include the Austronesian languages Suau (Milne Bay), spoken over the southwest end of Papua New Guinea (now with only about 6,795 L1 users and about 14,000 L2 users), and Dobu (Milne Bay), spoken off the islands of Eastern Papua (now with 8,000 L1 and 100,000 L2 speakers). Kuanua (or Tolai), an Austronesian language with about 100,000 speakers, is still used as a lingua franca in East New Britain.

With the spread of Christianity in PNG, missionaries found it difficult to survive in the multilingual Babel. It was impossible to use all the languages in their churches and schools. As a result some languages were chosen as 'church languages'. Dobu (already a lingua franca) was used by the Methodists in the Milne Bay area. Kuanua was adopted by the Methodist mission in the New Britain-New Ireland region (Sankoff 1980: 120). The most successful non-Austronesian language used as a lingua franca of the Lutherans was Kâte, in the Huon Peninsula area. Kâte has c. 20,000 first language learners, and about 80,000 second language learners (Lewis, Simons and Fennig 2014). The traces of Kâte influence are there in many languages whose speakers no longer know it.[2]

New post-colonial situations required new languages for communication with the colonizers, and between indigenous people in the context of plantation work, schooling, new urban centres and the like. Three post-contact lingua francas dominate the linguistic scene in contemporary Papua New Guinea. Tok Pisin (Melanesian Pidgin) is currently the most important language spoken in most provinces.[3] The estimated numbers are 50,000 first language speakers, and 4,000,000 second language users (Lewis, Simons and Fennig 2014).

English was the official language of the colonial administration in the southern half of the country (formerly known as Papua) from 1875 and of the northern half (formerly called New Guinea) from 1919. It is now rapidly gaining ground as a means of schooling and communication, especially in East Sepik Province, Western province and a number of other coastal provinces (see Sankoff 1980: 126-70).

Hiri Motu is a Creole based on the Austronesian language Motu (still spoken by about 14,000 people in Central province). It developed around 1900 as a contact language for speakers from different language backgrounds in the Motu-speaking environment around Port Moresby (Dutton 1997), especially members of the indigenous police (hence its alternative name Police Motu). Hiri Motu is still widely used in the southern part of country (roughly corresponding to the old administrative division of Papua, covering Central, Oro, Gulf provinces, and parts of Milne

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[2] See Fry (1977), Sankoff (1980) and Paris (2012) on traditional and missionary linguae franche.
[3] Especially in the northern parts of New Guinea: see Ehrhart and Mühlhäusler (2007).

Bay, as well as of Western provinces), but appears to be receding under pressure from Tok Pisin. Tok Pisin and English are perceived as a threat to Hiri Motu (Dame Carol Kidu, p.c.).

It has hardly any mother tongue speakers. The number of second language learners for Hiri Motu is about 120,000 (Lewis, Simons and Fennig 2014).

The 1975 constitution of Papua New Guinea gives recognition to all languages, specifying that every citizen has the right to literacy in English, Tok Pisin, Hiri Motu, or a vernacular (Whitehead 1994).

According to materials in Sankoff (1980: 129-30), in 1971 the percentage of Papua New Guineans age ten and over who were unable to speak any of the official languages ranged from 5.7% in New Ireland to 82.9% in the Southern Highlands. Now the number of people with no knowledge of at least one official language is negligible.

Traditional multilingualism now tends to be replaced by new diglossic and triglossic patterns with Tok Pisin and English. This, typically unstable, relationship often results in the dominance of the two lingua francas and the loss of the vernacular.

What kinds of multilingualism do we expect?

3 Living with many languages

Multilingualism is complex in itself. Multilingual communities may vary in whether there is true multilingualism or simply bilingualism, and what proportion of the community and which social groups are involved. A stable societal multilingualism can go back a long way. Or it can be fairly shallow: in numerous areas of Papua New Guinea, bilingualism in the local language and in Tok Pisin, the country's major lingua franca, goes back only two or three generations.[4]

Languages can be roughly equal in status. Or one can be dominant over another, or carry more prestige — as does Tok Pisin, and now also English, in many areas of New Guinea.[5] Relationships between languages and their spheres of use can also involve diglossia. Diglossic language situations normally involve two (or more) varieties that coexist in a speech community, in complementary distribution according to the domains of usage. For instance, English or Tok Pisin may be used at school, and the vernacular, (Tok Ples) at home.[6]

Balanced and stable di- or tri-glossia involves Tok Pisin and often also English as the languages of government, local council, missions and schooling, with the vernacular used in day-to-day communication in other circumstances (including the domestic). The tendency towards a triglossic situation in Papua New Guinea was first identified by Sankoff (1980: 35). If the di- or tri-

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[4] See, for instance, Kulick (1992).
[5] See Kulick (1992), Aikhenvald (2004).
[6] See Ferguson (1964), Hudson (2000), and Dorian (2002), and see a summary and references in Aikhenvald (2014).

glossic situation is stable, the vernacular is not endangered, as appears to be the case with Kilmeri (Border family), and Kaki Ae (Eleman family, Gulf Province).[7]

The question is, how balanced is the relationships between the languages? If one group aggressively imposes its language on another group, contact may result in language displacement, and eventual obsolescence. Language endangerment may go hand in hand with 'endangered' multilingualism. This issue is, sadly, relevant for Papua New Guinea where English appears to be gaining the upper hand in many domains.

Language contact can be balanced or displacive. Table 2 contrasts these two.

Table 2 Balanced and displacive language contact: a comparison

PARAMETERS	BALANCED CONTACT	DISPLACIVE CONTACT
Relationships between speech communities	Roughly equal, or involving a traditional hierarchy; stable	Dominance of one group over the other; unstable
Multilingualism	Both languages known to all groups of population	Knowledge of 'displaced' language is diminishing; children tend to speak the dominant language more and more
Results	Language maintenance	'Language stress': Potential replacement of one language with another and language loss

In many communities, Tok Pisin and now also English are agents of displacive language contact.[8]

This is not to say that traditional multilingual contact situations were always happy and balanced. The history of the Manambu people (Ndu family, East Sepik) shows that numerous language groups were conquered and subsumed in the mainstream Manambu over the history which we learn from the oral tales of the people (also see Dye and Dye 2012).

Within a multilingual community, languages in contact borrow and develop new linguistic features — including phonetic traits and habits of pronunciation, distinctive sounds (phonemes), construction types, grammatical categories, and the organization of lexical and grammatical meanings. There can also be borrowing of lexical and of grammatical forms. The extent of this varies, depending on a number of cultural and social factors, including the degree of speakers' awareness and sense of purism, and also on the structure of the languages in contact. A researcher venturing into a multilingual environment will daily face a contact-induced language change 'in the making'.

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[7] Information on Kilmeri is based on Brown (1980) and Claudia Gerstner-Link, p.c.; for Kaki Ae, see Clifton 1994). Further examples are in Loving (1980).

[8] See Aikhenvald (2008) for Manambu, Kulick (1992) for Taiap, Yarupawa (1996) for Musom, Bradshaw (1978) for Numbami, Boettger (forthcoming) for Lele, Schokkin (2013) for Paluai, Dye and Dye (2012) for Wagu, Nigilu and Bahinemo.

If languages are in contact, there may be an influx of loans from a dominant language and some structural changes. These may include the use of prepositions, argument structure and development of future tense, as in Tigak which is undergoing restructuring under Tok Pisin influence (Jenkins 2005). Under the influence of English and Tok Pisin, Dobu uses a connector 'then' to link sentences (Lithgow 1989). There may be semantic changes. In Yagaria (Central Highlands), the word *halo* 'light' now refers to God's might, and *gokudana* 'sky' is used to mean 'heaven' (*galogina* 'empty space, air' means 'sky') (Renck 1990: 133-4). The impact of a Church lingua franca may remain in the language even if the Church lingua franca has fallen out of use. Nungon, a Huon-Finisterre language, has quite a few loans from Kâte, e.g. Nungon *daweng,* Kâte *taweng* 'Chinese taro', Nungon *bakbasu*, Kâte *kpakpazu* 'teacher', Nungon *karaut*, Kâte *kerauti* 'cabbage' (from German *Kraut* 'cabbage') (Sarvasy 2014).

Languages spoken in multilingual situations constantly influence each other. Analyzing their grammars forces a fieldworker to step beyond a purely synchronic approach, so as to account for linguistic systems in constant flux. The ways in which languages adjust to each other, and yet keep separate, depend on relationships between them.

Two forces are at work in multilingual situations. On the one hand, languages influence each other, become more similar, and converge. On the other hand, they preserve their own identity so as to continue to be separate.

The effect of language contact may be more complex. Manambu, a Ndu language from the Sepik area of New Guinea, now spoken alongside Tok Pisin and English, is evolving compromise grammatical structures: a Manambu form is used alongside its equivalent in Tok Pisin. The net result is new grammar, and enhancement of diversity rather than its reduction.

4 Tok Pisin as an agent of change: an example from the Sepik area

The Sepik River Basin is one of the linguistically most complex areas in PNG (at least 200 languages in two provinces, ESP and Sandaun; 8 genetic families and several score isolates). This diversity may be partly explained by difficult terrains (swamps and hills), small size of communities, and competition for hunting and fishing, and sago-collecting grounds. Map 1 shows the languages spoken in the area of the Middle Sepik I will be concentrating on.

Some of the languages of the area are known to have been in contact for a long time. This is the case for Yalaku, a Ndu language, and Kwoma, a Nukuma language. Yalaku is spoken by about 1000 people in three villages (Yalaku, Kumajuwi and Hambukaini) off the Sepik river. Kwoma is spoken by c. 3-4000 people in Bangwis etc. The Yalaku people intermarry with the Kwoma. The Yalaku-Kwoma bilingualism goes back several generations (Bowden 1997: xxii-iii). The Kwoma

impact on Yalaku can be seen in numerous loans, e.g. Kwoma *iñaka,* Yalaku *wuñaka* 'mind', Kwoma *hadebas*, Yalaku *hadepas* 'fine, nice', Kwoma *awo*, Yalaku *au* 'traditional frying pan'. There are also shared grammatical patterns, e.g. locative case and instrumental case expressed with the same marker: Yalaku *-mbu* (*hula-mbu* 'with axe', *horombu-mbu* 'in men's house') and Kwoma *-k* (*woyi-k* 'with adze', *akamak-k* 'in town': Kooyers 1974: 39). These loans and Kwoma patterns in Yalaku are not recognised as foreign intrusions by the speakers.

The situation with Tok Pisin is different. Yalaku-Tok Pisin bilingualism is recent. Now, everyone in Yalaku speaks Tok Pisin, at home and in church. Children and younger people use Tok Pisin when speaking to each other; older people do use Yalaku when they speak to each other, and occasionally to their children. Everyone in Yalaku knows the Yalaku language; but they use Tok Pisin more and more. Children are taught English at school, but there appears to be little active knowledge of it.

Manambu, also from the Ndu family, has no monolingual speakers. It is spoken by about 2,500 people in five villages in the Middle Sepik area of Papua New Guinea (the major ones are Avatip, Malu, and Yambon). Everyone is proficient in Tok Pisin. Papua New Guinea English is used in school, and by urban Manambu (whose role in the villages is marginal). Both Tok Pisin and Manambu are used at home, and also in rituals, still performed but in a reduced form (compared to what was documented earlier, e.g. by Harrison 1990). Tok Pisin is dominant in village meetings, parent-teacher meetings at school, and in church (where Manambu is also used, but to a limited extent). It is more and more dominant in peoples' home. That is, Tok Pisin and Manambu are in a partially diglossic situation which is now oscillating towards increasing dominance of Tok Pisin. The necessity for proficiency in Tok Pisin is enhanced by the number of outsiders living in the villages, mostly as the result of mixed marriages. English is taught at school, and also used by outsiders.

The Tok Pisin-Manambu-English multilingualism is fairly recent, just as in many other places in New Guinea (see Aikhenvald and Stebbins 2007). Proficient speakers of Tok Pisin were few and far between in the late 1950s. However, this does not mean that the Manambu used to be monolingual. Up until recently, the Manambu used to know a fair amount of neighbouring Iatmul (from the same family) — borrowed words, incantations and spells used to be the basis for ceremonial styles, now on their way out (more about this afternoon). The Manambu used to speak and understand the languages of their neighbours, the Kwoma. The Manambu-Iatmul contact has resulted in numerous loans. But this is now in the past.

What is the effect of Tok Pisin on the indigenous languages in these Sepik communities?

4.1 Between Tok Pisin and 'Tok Ples'

Let's start with a note about the status of Tok Pisin forms in other languages. If we see a Tok Pisin word or grammatical form in another language, it can be interpreted either as a loan or a code-switch. A loan is essentially part of the recipient language. A code-switch is an ad-hoc insertion from the donor language — in our case, Tok Pisin, or English. Table 3 offers some criteria which help us distinguish the two (see references in Aikhenvald 2008: 606):

Table 3 Loans and code-switches

FEATURES	LOANS	CODE-SWITCHES
1. Frequency	can be frequent	may be one-off, nonce occurrences
2. Phonological integration into recipient language	yes	no
3. Morphological integration into recipient language (e.g. nouns take cases, verbs take verbal morphology)	yes	no
4. Existence of an equivalent in the recipient language	no	yes
5. Use by monolingual speakers	yes	often no
6. Is the form in question considered to be part of the recipient language?	yes	often no

These criteria are not always watertight. Criterion 5 may not apply: some groups such as the Manambu have no monolingual speakers. Criterion 6 may be hard to use. I was witness to a heated discussion between a husband (one of the most respected teachers of Manambu) and his wife as to which term for 'peanut' is 'true' Manambu, *kasan* or *galip*. Both terms come from Tok Pisin. One can say that loans, on the one hand, and code-switches, on the other, form a continuum. Attitudes to Tok Pisin 'insertions' (inasmuch as speakers recognize them) tend to be negative: purists reject them.

We will now turn to lexical loans from Tok Pisin (§4.1.1) and then to grammatical loans (§4.1.2). Tok Pisin forms are in italics.

4.1.1 Lexical loans

These are Tok Pisin forms fully integrated into a languages. Examples include Tok Pisin *blu* 'blue', Manambu *blu* 'blue', *blu-ka-blu* (blue-INTENSITY-blue) 'very blue'; Tok Pisin *stret* 'right, straight', Manambu *stret*, Yalaku *stret* 'correct, right'; Tok Pisin *stat* 'start': Manambu *stati-wun* 'I start', Yalaku *stati-wuni* 'I start'.

4.1.2 Grammatical loans

Grammatical loans used by speakers of all generations include members of closed grammatical classes, such as conjunctions, indefinite pronouns, and number words.

• Disjunction *o* 'or' in Manambu: in the early 2000s not used by older speakers not very proficient in Tok Pisin, now used by everyone (Aikhenvald 2008: 512):

(1) *kofi* *o* *gu* ke-kna-ñin   *Manambu*
     coffee or   water eat/drink-FUTURE-2feminine.singular
     'Will you drink coffee or water?'

Older speakers in the late 1990s and early 2000s would not use *o*: they would just put two alternatives.

• Indefinite pronouns: *sampela*: Manambu *sampela ta:kw,* Yalaku *sampela takwa* 'some women'
• Number word 'one' in an indefinite sense: 'there was one woman' or 'there was a woman':

(2) *wanpela* ta:kw-al   *Manambu*
     woman   one-3feminine.sg
     '(there was) one woman' (beginning of a story)

• Tok Pisin conjunction *na* 'and' is used in Yalaku by all speakers (cf. a similar phenomenon in Tigak, an Austronesian language from New Ireland: Jenkins 2005:199).

• Tok Pisin negation *i no* appears in Yalaku as emphatic negation (not this, but something else):

(3) te   *i no*   paka   te-te   *Yalaku*
     he   NEGATION   doing.nothing   stay-3masculine.singular
     'He was not doing nothing' (em i no stap nating) (he was working)'

Grammatical loans can include bound morphemes, that is, suffixes.
• Manambu is now using the Tok Pisin linker *-nau* 'sequencing of events, and' (Smith 2002: 194):

(4) a   kwa-bana-*nau* (rising intonation)   wun   kelem   *Manambu* (2013)
     thus   stay-1plural-NAU   I   here

'Now that we live this way, here I am'

Older speakers would not use *-nau*: the two clauses will be linked just by rising intonation:

(5)   a   kwa-bana (rising intonation)   wun   kelem   *Manambu* (2004)

       thus   stay-1plural   I   here

       'Now that we live this way, here I am'

Tok Pisin forms often occur accompanied by the Manambu ones. That is, a loan does not force the native form out: it complements it. We now turn to such 'compromise' structures.

4.1.3 'Double talk': Creating composite structures

What are loan forms good for? In some cases, a loan may fill a 'gap'. Paluai, an Austronesian language of Baluan Island (Manus), borrowed Tok Pisin verb *gat* 'have, there is' (Schokkin 2013). There was no possessive verb in the language, and this one is now used to express possession or existence of something inanimate. Yalaku has at least seven ways of negating a verb. Adding Tok Pisin *i no* (in (3)) is a way of making negation more contrastive.

Manambu is evolving 'parallel' grammatical structures: a Manambu form appears accompanied by its equivalent in Tok Pisin, reinforcing it. A similar phenomenon has been described, for Tetun Dili (Timor Leste), as a mechanism for 'gradual mediation' of grammatical change in progress (Hajek 2006: 170).

In (6), from an old traditional speaker of Manambu, the verbal suffix *-taka* indicates that another action will follow immediately:

(6)   war-taka   ata   wa-di   *Traditional Manambu*

       go.up-IMMEDIATE.SEQUENCE   then   speak-3plural

       'Having gone up, they spoke thus'…

An alternative — used by younger people in the early 2000s and now by more and more people — is (7). The Tok Pisin *-nau* 'sequencing marker 'now' reinforces the form *-taka*:

(7)   war-taka-*nau*   ata   wa-di   *Innovative Manambu*

       go.up-IMMEDIATE.SEQUENCE-NAU   then   speak-3plural

       'Having really gone up, they spoke thus'…

A Tok Pisin quantifier *olgeta* 'all' can also be used to reinforce the Manambu form *aba:b* 'all'. But note that in Tok Pisin *olgeta* precedes the noun it modifies, e.g. *olgeta man-meri* 'all the people', and in Manambu it follows (that is, the Manambu grammar prevails).

(8)   du-ta:kw   aba:b   *Traditional Manambu*
         man-woman   all
         'all the people'

(9)   du-ta:kw   aba:b *olgeta*   *Innovative Manambu*
         man-woman   all   all:Tok.Pisin
         'all the people - all of them'

Number word 'one' at the beginning of stories is not used for counting: its function is to introduce new participants in discourse (see (2)). This is how a young speaker would start a story:

(10)   *wanpela*   ta:kw-al   *Innovative Manambu*
         one   woman-3feminine.singular
         'There was <u>a/one</u> woman'…

The Manambu number word *nak* 'one' — postposed to the head, similarly to a quantifier — is now also used this way, as in (11):

(11)   ta:kw   nak-al   *Innovative Manambu*
         woman   one-3feminine.singular
         'There was a/one woman'…

An alternative is a parallel structure:

(12)   *wanpela*   ta:kw   nak-al
         one(Tok.Pisin) woman(Manambu) one(Manambu)-3feminine.singular
         'There was <u>a/one</u> a/one woman'…

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The two synonymous forms appear on different sides of the head noun: *wanpela* preserves the Tok Pisin order and *nak* follows the Manambu order.

What is so special about this reinforcement of *nak* with *wanpela*?

The function of *nak* 'one' as a way of marking new participants comes in the first place from Tok Pisin influence. So it is *nak* in its new meaning that reinforces *wanpela*. The Manambu connectors and quantifiers, discussed in (6)-(9) above, did not bear any Tok Pisin influence in their meanings.

The process of 'pairing' is characteristic of all registers, and is increasingly found with speakers of all generations. We are faced with new 'fused' structures, each subtly different from both languages which are in contact.

How do these structures fit in with the functions of Tok Pisin in the Manambu discourse?

5 Why use Tok Pisin?

There are numerous reasons for using loans or code-switches. A language may not have a term for a concept or a phenomenon (Clark 1982, Clyne 1987). Then, a loan comes handy: Manambu did not have one single word for 'blue' (a traditional way of describing this colour was *tɛb ketek* 'like sky'). So the 'gap' was filled with a Tok Pisin borrowing. Same for modal verbs such as *mas* 'must' or *tabu* 'forbidden', and indefinites, such as *sampela.*

In the domestic environment and elsewhere, parallel structures (Manambu-Tok Pisin, or Tok Pisin Manambu) are a way of getting a point across (cf. Gumperz 1982 on 'reiteration' as a function of code-switching). A mother said (13) to her daughter who was clearly not listening:

(13)   ñin   awuk, *harim tok*   A mother to her child:
         you.feminine listen hear   talk
         'You listen (Manambu), listen (Tok Pisin)'

It is also a way of engaging your audience:

(14)   de   *bel hat*   ya:l   gral   A storyteller
         he   belly hard   belly   cry+3feminine.sg
         'He was angry (Tok Pisin), angry' (he was really angry)

A Tok Pisin form may accompany a Manambu one to make sure the audience understand what is being talked about. The Manambu speakers are proud of their proficiency in the counting

system; but not everyone in the community can really count beyond ten. This may explain why the speaker added 'fifteen' here:

(15)   Ke-di   ñanadi ñanugwam   tabeti maneb ata   tekna,   *fiftin*
        these   our   children   ten   foot.also then there.will.be   fifteen
        'This will make children of ours fifteen (Manambu), fifteen (Tok Pisin)'

Such parallelism as a way of integrating Tok Pisin loans or code-switches has its roots in switching languages as a discourse device for making sure your multilingual audience takes it in. What looks like redundancy — repeating the same form twice, once in Manambu and once in Tok Pisin — has a function of getting the point across.

These composite structures are indicative of a new compromise language style on the rise. The net result is enrichment of language, and gain rather than loss. Instead of losing to Tok Pisin, Manambu is deploying the new resources to enhance communication.

Tok Pisin can be useful for other purposes. One is 'status' and 'power'. As Bradshaw (1978: 34) puts it, the use of Tok Pisin suggests 'ties to the national community' and thus 'status'. This is similar to the association between Tok Pisin and the concept called 'save' and linked to 'reason' and modernity as discussed by Kulick (1992), for Taiap (the language of the Gapun village, ESP). This is perhaps the reason why 'big men' in the Manambu villages use Tok Pisin in rituals, such as the name debate. (16) is an expression of strong approbation for someone who got the genealogy right:

(16)   *Rait*-a!
        right-it.is
        'It is right!'

This function of Tok Pisin as 'power talk' is now being taken over by English. A group of youngsters were evidently up to no good next to a water tank. A speaker (who is very fluent in Manambu and Tok Pisin, but has difficulties with English) went out to confront them, and said:

(17)   Hello boys, what are you doing here?

They got her point — a hidden command to disperse — and disappeared.

The new languages — Tok Pisin and English — have now taken over new functions. Once again, their presence contributes to the rich tapestry of communication in Manambu, making it more versatile.

What may be interpreted as 'invasive' and displacive impact of Tok Pisin has so far resulted in an enrichment of the language, and of the ways people communicate. But how stable is this?

6 'Babel' in danger

Tok Pisin is gradually gaining ground as the main language in many communities in PNG. Avatip and other Manambu speaking villages, and the Yalaku speaking villages, are no exception. Children play, chat, and quarrel using Tok Pisin only. English is now used at school. Older people are concerned that the language is going. The remarkable Papuan New Guinean Babel is in danger.

And this seems to be a general trend. Numerous communities in the Sepik area with a small number of speakers have effectively undergone language shift. Children tend to acquire Tok Pisin rather than the vernacular as their first language, and full competence in the vernacular is only found among adults. A classic case of such shift is Taiap (an isolate spoken in the Gapun village, ESP, by about 100 people) documented by Kulick (1992). Language socialisation in Taiap involves the conceptualisation of Tok Pisin as a symbol of modernity and sought-after prosperity, while the vernacular is associated with 'backwardness'. A similar example is Yimas (Lower Sepik: Foley 1991: 4-6) spoken by about 250 people in two villages. Languages with fewer than fifty speakers have hardly any chance of survival.[9]

Processes of rapid language shift have been observed for languages with seemingly large numbers of speakers. Murik (1,200, Lower Sepik) is not being learnt by children, and neither is Abu' Arapesh, an ethnic group of over 5,000.[10]

A major issue in language endangerment is stylistic shrinkage. Even if the language is acquired by children, its acquisition may be incomplete. For instance, the knowledge of a ritual 'pandanus' language used by a number of peoples of the Southern Highlands Province during the harvest of pandanus nuts has decreased during the past thirty or forty years, as Franklin and Stefaniw (1992) report for Kewa and Imbongu (Kewa has over 40,000 speakers, and Imbongu has 16,000; neither of these languages are in immediate danger of becoming extinct). Stylistic reduction often predates language obsolescence. For instance, the oratorical style *sesade kwanif* associated

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[9] See Smith (1992), on the imminent extinction of Susuami, an Angan language from Morobe Province, and further examples in Loving (1980).

[10] See Nekitel (1985). A similar situation has been described for Cemaun Arapesh (Lise Dobrin, p.c.) and Makopin Arapesh (Nidue 1990: 65-6); see Aikhenvald (2004), for further examples.

with the ritual food exchange in Abu' Arapesh was dying out in the 1960s, long before children stopped acquiring the language.[11]

If multilingualism is restricted to a special speech style, it may disappear as the style gets forgotten. The major sphere of usage for Western Iatmul among the Manambu of the Sepik area of New Guinea used to be ritual discourse (e.g. spells, incantations and song genres: I will be talking about it this afternoon). Now that this ritual knowledge is on its way out, very few people know Iatmul. Hardly anyone under 60 knows special words belonging to each subclan. And many lexical and grammatical intricacies are on their way out.

In a situation where prestige and economic opportunities come to be associated with proficiency in Tok Pisin, diglossic relationships between languages often become unstable. Wom (Torricelli family: Moeckel and Moeckel 1980) had 2,500 speakers spread over five villages. Besides diglossic relationships with Tok Pisin, the Wom speaking villages preserved traditional patterns of bilingualism in Urat (Southern Arapesh) and Bumbita Arapesh. But most speakers regard Tok Pisin — and now often English — as the language of economic opportunity. As a result, numerous parents prefer speaking Tok Pisin to their children. This is indicative of a tendency towards destabilisation, at least in the long term. Destabilised diglossia is becoming the norm in many areas of Papua New Guinea, including the Sepik. This is conducive to increasing endangerment of the vernaculars.

However, the prospects for Manambu may not be that grim.

Firstly, despite the fact that the language is not taught at the Avatip Primary School (nor in any other Manambu-speaking communities), the authorities, parents and children appreciate having Manambu teaching and reading materials available in the library.

Secondly, the majority of the Manambu continue traditional patterns of subsistence agriculture; they are not fully dependent on Tok Pisin for economic transactions.

Thirdly, the language continues to be emblematic for the Manambu, with the rising importance of 'custom', the tangible cultural tradition. Language is viewed as its integral part. Cultural practices enhance the emblematicity of the language. These include traditional dances (adapted to the requirements of modern life, that is, alienated from their original context) in 'custom' performances which take place on important occasions, such as elections or a launch of the Manambu grammar in September 2013.

Manambu remains an emblematic language for the people who identify with it, and they are determined to pass it on — in a new form.

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[11] Nekitel (1985: 182). Similar observations on Ilahita Arapesh can be found in Tuzin (1976).

8 To sum up

• Language survival in the context of pressure from Tok Pisin and English may imply reduction in traditional multilingualism.

• The overall impact of Tok Pisin and English may be intrusive, threatening and potentially displacive, BUT

• At the same time, we discover new complexities: if the language does survive under pressure, it may take on a new form, creating new complex composite structures. This is what we have seen for Manambu and will perhaps see for other languages.

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