THE VOCABULARY OF NEW GUINEA ENGLISH AS USED BY EXPATRIATES[1]

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Papua has had a small, permanent, English-speaking population now for nearly a century; New Guinea, for more than fifty years. It would be surprising, then, if a distinctive, local, English vocabulary had not yet begun to emerge in the Territory to handle the expatriate population's ideas about, as well as its plans to change, the new and alien physical and cultural environment of Papua and New Guinea.

Because of the comparatively late, and then unevenly distributed, development of educational facilities in Papua and New Guinea, the indigenes' impact on, and use of, English has been rather slight. New Guinea English - more accurately, the English language as spoken and written in Papua and New Guinea - is still largely an expatriate creation, although the situation is changing quickly.[2]

Few Papuans and New Guineans hear English spoken outside school.[3] Outside the urban and peri-urban areas, their parents have usually never had the opportunity to learn English, while a majority of the age-mates of today's schoolchildren still cannot go to school. Nonetheless, as English spreads, so Papuans and New Guineans are likely to have a greater and more rapid influence upon its local use than have the indigenous inhabitants of those countries in which English as a second or third language has had to compete with an indigenous recorded literature for the allegiance of the literati. This article is, however, confined to a consideration of the vocabulary of what is - an expatriate New Guinea English - rather than the presently less stable, if ultimately more important, indigenous version.

New Guinea English as spoken by expatriates is not yet very different from Australian English. The Territory's expatriate population has tended to be too homogeneous, linguistically and nationally, at least since the Germans lost New Guinea in 1914, for Papua and New Guinea to become a linguistic melting-pot. In addition, the rate of movement between the Territory and Australia has been so high - on an average, a three-months' trip south at least once every two years even for the Territory's "permanent" expatriate residents - that Papua and New Guinea's expatriate society has never been as much cut off from its well-spring as Australia once was from Great Britain. It is to be expected, then, that most of the words that are peculiar to New Guinea English tend to refer to items, people, qualities and situations not found outside the Territory, or the local version of colonial society. At a guess, the general pronunciation of New Guinea English by expatriates is about the same, both as to its varieties and distribution, as that of Australian English.

The English vocabulary employed by most Australians in Papua and New Guinea contains not a few quite unique elements. Relatively few of them are direct borrowings from indigenous vernaculars - an interesting reflection perhaps of the infrequency and unidirectional quality (issuing orders in English, Pidgin or, more rarely, Police Motu, rather than conversing) of interracial interactions in Papua and New Guinea.

Very few Australians, and then usually only missionaries or anthropologists, have ever bothered to learn even a few words of greeting in an indigenous language. Just on two-thirds of the Territory's expatriate population aged ten years and over in 1966 claimed to speak Pidgin, and only 8% Police Motu - and both figures are, given the circumstances of the test, quite likely exaggerations. Probably one-third of the expatriate population of Papua and New Guinea could, therefore, converse only with the 13% of indigenous Papuans and New Guineans who claimed (on equally uncertain grounds as the expatriate Pidgin - and Police Motu - speakers) to speak English.[4] Small wonder that New Guinea English has borrowed even fewer words from the Territory's languages including the two principal lingue franche than Australian English has acquired from Australia's Aborigines.[5]

Most of the borrowings from indigenous vernaculars by New Guinea English have tended to come from the languages of the people who have been in contact with Europeans longest: Kuanua, the language of the Tolai of the Rabaul area, and Motu which is spoken around Port Moresby. Both of these languages have themselves been widely used as regional lingue franche - Motu, in a pidginised form, throughout Papua by the pre-war Administration, and Kuanua by both Roman Catholic and Methodist missionaries in New Britain and New Ireland. Most of the borrowings from both languages appear to have been made indirectly - through Pidgin in the case of Kuanua, and through Police Motu.

One of the few words to come directly from a vernacular into New Guinea English, however, did not come from either of the foregoing languages. Gamada, "a drug prepared from the root of a plant" by chewing the root, then spitting it into a vessel, and adding water which is drained off and drunk, was apparently used as an intoxicant by the Kiwai of Western Papua before contact.[6] It was the only Papuan term ever to be mentioned in the Papuan Native Regulations (from 1909 until 1962) - significantly perhaps, only to be outlawed.[7]

The Tolai have provided luluai and tultul as the titles for a government-appointed headman, and his assistant, respectively, although both of these terms have been inherited by New Guinea English from the German decision to give these officials Kuanua titles. In both cases, the words' original meanings seem to have been altered, although there is some dispute as to what they really were.[8] Other Kuanua terms that have entered New Guinea English are kina (originally a mussel shell, or any other broad, flat shell, used for scraping or grating up taro and coconuts, but now used in Pidgin and New Guinea English for the crescent-shaped goldlip shell which many Highlanders wear around their necks); tambu (from the Kuanua tabu, the shell money made of small shells threaded strips of cane); garamut (a slit-gong - a type of wooden drum); and kundu (a drum, tomtom, or hand-drum). All of these terms are used to describe objects for which there are no ready English terms, although all of those listed here, bar tambu, seem to have entered New Guinea English via Pidgin, as their ranges of reference have been expanded considerably to cover objects not found among the Tolai, but commonly referred to elsewhere (in pidgin) by these erstwhile Kuanua words.[9]

Motu has provided puripuri (sorcery), dubu (a church, sacred house, platform or carved post used for ceremonial purposes), lakatoi (a twin-hulled sailing-boat), guba (squall, storm or gale), and magani (wallaby - often used in a jocular way in New Guinea English).[10] Otherwise, the Motu have provided only a few of those terms required to bolster the social statuses and divisions of colonial society: taubada (literally, big man) and sinabada (big woman), which were originally used as terms of respect when describing or addressing important traditional leaders, but were subsequently expropriated, and insisted upon, even in English conversation, as the appropriate terms to be used by, to and before Papuans when describing Europeans. The Motu language is also the source of a derogatory title often applied to the Territory by expatriates anxious to emphasise the allegedly timeless quality of life here. Papua then becomes "the Land of Dohore" (the land of bye and bye, or wait a while).[11]

The Pidgin component in the vocabulary of New Guinea English is very much higher in New Guinea than in Papua, and in the bush than in the towns. The list of terms provided here is in no way definitive, and contains many words (shown in brackets where known)[12] that came originally from other languages but seem to have entered English via Pidgin. The first version is the English one in each case, underlined where its spelling or precise formulation coincides with the Pidgin form. The list represents something of a compromise then: it contains words that are thought (but not definitely known) to have come from Pidgin into English; while the actual items listed represent something of a middlepoint between the basically urban Australian vocabulary of Port Moresby's expatriate population and that of the New Guinea outstation. The list has been compiled primarily from firsthand observation; too little is published in Papua and New Guinea for an appearance in print to be the criterion for inclusion, as is the case with the Oxford English Dictionary.

Some relatively straightforward borrowings from and via Pidgin are:

baret[13]	ditch, drain, furrow, trench
bighead (Pidgin: bighet) bigheaded) bigheadedness)	proud, too proud, overweening, an upstart (usually a term of abuse)

bilum (Kuanua) — a net-bag suspended from the head and used as a carry-all by women throughout Papua and New Guinea

buai (Kuanua) — betel nut (Areca catechu)

bung (Kuanua) — as a noun : "(native) market"
as a verb : assemble, gather together, gather round, meet

court (Pidgin: kot) — to take someone to court
(N.B. "I will court you" means "I will take you to court" - an occasionally embarrassing ambiguity, no doubt, for the romantically inclined)

didiman — an agricultural officer

gumi (German) — "rubber" in Pidgin; in English, the inner tube of a tyre

guria (Kuanua) — earthquake or tremor

kai (Pidgin: kaikai)[14] — food (a colloquial expression in New Guinea English)

kaukau (Kuanua) — sweet potato (a species of Ipomea)

kiap (A Pidgin expression that probably came originally from the English word "captain") — patrol officer
(hence "number one kiap" - Pidgin: nambawan kiap - for the senior Administration field officer in a District or Sub-District)

kunai (Kuanua) — grass, grassland, thatch grass

kuskus (New Ireland) — clerk

laplap — waistcloth, loincloth

lapun — "old" in Pidgin; in English, a colloquial term for an old villager

longlong (Kuanua) — foolish, insane, stupid, drunk, inebriated, intoxicated (usually in a derogatory, rather than a descriptive, sense in New Guinea English)

lucky (Pidgin: laki, from the English word "lucky") — a card game, sometimes involving gambling, played by Papuans and New Guineans

mankimasta	domestic or personal servant
maski	it does not matter; no matter, leave it be (a colloquial exclamation of indifference)
meri (from the English words "Mary" or "marry"	in Pidgin, a woman generally; in New Guinea English, a derogatory colloquialism used to describe indigenous women
mumu	the food cooked, or the method of cooking, by steaming with heated stones in a hole in the ground
oli (originally from the English word "all")	a derogatory term used by many expatriates to refer to what they clearly regard as that great amorphous mass of Papuans and New Guineans "out there".
one-talk (Pidgin: wantok)	a speaker of one's own language; more generally, just "friend" (usually used in expatriate New Guinea English to describe the indigenous friend of another indigene)
raus (German)	to throw out, dismiss, get rid of, sack
sarif (also pronounced, and therefore spelt, sarep or sarip in Pidgin)	grass-knife (usually just a sharpened length of hoop iron)
singsing	an indigenous festival or ceremony, usually accompanied by singing, dancing and/or feasting.
tambu[15] (Kuanua)	forbidden (more specifically, forbidden to Papuans and New Guineans, often accompanied on public notices by a picture of a hand held up like that of a policeman stopping traffic)
tasol (originally from the English "that's all")	that's all, only, but, however

Some Pidgin terms have undergone a change in meaning in the process of entering New Guinea English. Many such changes have been of the kind that one has come to associate with the racial assumptions and social structure of colonial society (for example, meri, oli and tambu above). Other expressions have changed in rather less socially invidious ways: pas (Pidgin for "letter") or "pass"[16] now indicates in

New Guinea English a letter given to a Papuan or New Guinean explaining what he is about, or recommending him for employment; while "going finish" (from the Pidgin go pinis) now means more than "went" or "has gone". In New Guinea English "going finish" means "going to Australia for good, with no intention of returning". Other Pidgin expressions, such as man no gud ("man no good" in New Guinea English), no ken ("no can" - that is, cannot) nogat ("no got" - no, there are none) and rabis man ("rubbish man" - man of no account), have been absorbed into the colloquial speech of New Guinea English so as only to add local colour to conversation. They carry no more derogatory overtones in New Guinea English than their direct meanings imply.

Finally, some quite conventional English words and phrases that are but infrequently used in Australian English have acquired rather greater currency in New Guinea English conversation, probably because their similarity to certain Pidgin terms renders dialogue somewhat easier between expatriates whose mother-tongue is English and New Guineans who prefer not to speak Pidgin. Thus, "bugger up" and "buggered" are not swearwords in New Guinea English, although they are not quite as neutral in meaning as the Pidgin bagerap, which means "to be damaged, ruined, wrecked, spoilt, badly hurt, injured, out of order, very tired, not well, done for". The term's New Guinea English meaning is much the same as in Pidgin, but it is still not quite as polite as its more conventional alternatives. Words like "benzine" for petrol (Pidgin: bensin), "cargo" for baggage (kago), "humbug" (hambag), "calaboose" for gaol (kalabus), "kanaka" (a derogatory term, Polynesian in origin, for an indigene), "lollywater" for soft drink (loliwara), "piccaninny" for indigenous children (pikinini) and "savvy", a possible blending of the English colloquialism "savvy" and the Pidgin term for "knowledge" (save), are all standard English terms that are only infrequently used in Australia. In Papua and New Guinea, they tend to replace all of their alternatives because of their simultaneous use in Pidgin, and in some cases in Police Motu too, or because of their identity of meaning (if not spelling) with their Pidgin counterparts.

One of the most interesting gauges of the changing structure of Territory society and race relations would be a glossary of the terms used by expatriates to describe Papuans and New Guineans, and of the terms of respect (or apparently acknowledged racial supremacy) required in return. At the present time, such a glossary would

probably measure a second aspect of the same broad subject: the geographical dimensions of social change, or, put another way, the time-lag between, say, the change from "native" to "indigene" as between Port Moresby and other Territory centres. Broadly, such a study would show not only an increasing time-lag between the town and the bush, and between various urban mainland centres as one moves north and westwards from Port Moresby, but, secondly, a fantastic gap between public and official terminology, and private conversational usages among expatriates. Thus, such terms as "missus" and "master" for expatriate females and males respectively, when addressed by Papuans and New Guineans "respectfully", are as much part of New Guinea English as "boi" (sometimes less offensively spelt "boy", although still applied indiscriminately to adults) for indigenes generally, just men, or an expatriate's employees and underlings, and "bushkanaka" as a derogatory description of a villager. For what it is worth, "master" and "missus" (Pidgin: masta and misis; sometimes replaced by taubada and sinabada by Papuans) are still quite frequently insisted upon as the appropriate terms for Papuans and New Guineans to use when addressing Europeans in Port Moresby, which is, by far, the most "liberal", freely intermixing town in Papua and New Guinea. Papuans and New Guineans, in turn, are lucky if they are called nothing worse than "boy" or one of its variants, "cookboy" (Pidgin: kukboi), "bossboy" (bosboi - for an indigenous foreman or supervisor), etc., by expatriates.[17] The chain-wire covering over the windows of the houses of nervous expatriates is generally called "boy-wire" - because it is designed to keep out indigenous prowlers.[18]

Before leaving the rather tawdry, narrow-minded provincialism of New Guinea English as used by expatriates, one ought perhaps to point to the emergence of a few quite interesting neologisms. Time, for example, is measured in "company and government fortnights", stemming from the general practice whereby the employees of the government and of private enterprise are paid on alternate Fridays, presumably to prevent a run on the banks every two weeks as well as to lighten the work of the police hotel patrols (fotnait, incidentally, has now become an alternative Pidgin word for pe, "pay"). "European" in Papua and New Guinea, of course, means "white" or just "Australian", while "going south" or visiting "down south" means a trip, or sojourn in Australia (or perhaps to New Guineans, just "overseas"). In addition, general stores, many Chinese- and most of the few indigenous-owned and-habituated stores are still called "trade

stores" in memory of the time when copra was exchanged for trade goods in such stores rather than bought for cash from Papuans and New Guineans. "Compound", too, is used in a special sense in Papua and New Guinea: it designates a special housing area for indigenes, formerly a separate of most Territory towns, but now generally just the place where a company or the government provides accommodation for its employees. On the relatively rare occasions when they discuss the structure or customs of indigenous society, expatriates also use a few special terms, like "big man" for an important traditional leader, or "payback" to describe the tendency to reciprocity in many transactions among indigenes, from revenge-killings to the fulfilment of a debtor's obligations to his creditors.

Finally, some sets of initials and other abbreviations, seem to have been accepted as full New Guinea English terms: "P.I.R." (for the Territory branch of the Australian Army, of which the Pacific Islands Regiments are but a part), "D.C.", "D.D.C." and "A.D.C." (for District Commissioner, and his Deputy, and Assistants respectively,) "P.O." (for Patrol Officer) and "C.P.O." (for a Cadet Patrol Officer). Other individuals who are often referred to by their initials are the "D.M.O." (for District Medical Officer), the "E.O." (for Education Officer) and the "M.H.A." (for Member of the House of Assembly). At least six Administration departments and a number of Commonwealth government departments and statutory bodies with branches in the Territory, plus such bodies as "U.P.N.G." (the University of Papua and New Guinea) and "P.M.C." (for Papuan Medical College), are also regularly referred to in everyday New Guinea English speech by their initials, as in the "P.M.V." (for Public Motor Vehicle) which is usually a truck, used to carry - mainly indigenous - fare-paying passengers.

After considering the size and character of the foregoing vocabulary then, it seems clear that, but for some locally-derived colloquialisms and colour, New Guinea English ought probably still to be regarded as but a sub-type within the broad framework of Australian English, rather than a major deviant in its own right from Standard Southern English. Many specifically Australian words and phrases still appear quite regularly in the English vocabulary of Papua and New Guinea's expatriate population. Only when English becomes, and is felt to be, a language that Papuans and New Guineans can use as well as learn, will New Guinea English begin to acquire the rich local flavour deriving from a close identity with its environment that characterises the standard vocabularies of, say, Indian and Nigerian English.

Footnotes

1. This article is a revised and expanded version of E. Wolfers, 'New Guinea English: "Yielding to the Studical Means"', Newsletter EPW-19, Institute of Current World Affairs, New York, June 26, 1969, pages 1-7.

2. It seems superfluous to point out to readers of Kivung that New Guinea English ought not to be confused with New Guinea Pidgin. Fortunately, the tendency towards renaming "Pidgin English" as "New Guinea Pidgin", just "Pidgin" or (more rarely) "Neo-Melanesian", has tended to decrease the chances of confusing the names of the two languages. One can, therefore, only deplore a recent suggestion (in W. Burce, Notes on Melanesian English, New Guinea Lutheran Mission - Missouri Synod, Wabag (roneoed) 196?) that Pidgin be renamed "Melanesian English". However many supposed feelings of inferiority this change in name may assuage through deletion of all reference to "Pidgin", it only serves to create an additional possible source of confusion between two languages that are at last being separately studied.

3. English still seems to be learnt primarily at formally organised mission or Administration schools. It would be extremely interesting to know if there are any informally organised English schools at village-level in the Territory, as there have been Pidgin schools in a number of Highlands areas (see, for example, R.F. Salisbury, "Notes on Bilingualism and Linguistic Change in New Guinea", Anthropological Linguistics 4(7), October 1962, page 5). In other words, are Papuans and New Guineans learning or teaching English outside the Territory's formal educational system?

4. Territory of Papua and New Guinea, Bureau of Statistics, "Summary of Population", Population Census 1966: Preliminary Bulletin No. 20, Konedobu, pages 30-31.

5. Probably no more than forty Aboriginal words are widely known among Australian English-speakers, according to W.S. Ramson, Australian English: An Historical Study of the Vocabulary 1788-1898, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1966, page 131, although many more have come and gone, particularly before the names of flora and fauna were standardised (when they were often given English names) - see also S. J. Baker, The Australian Language , Currawong Publishing Co., Sydney, (second edition) 1966, page 322.

6. S.H. Ray, A Grammar of the Kiwai Language, Fly Delta Papua with a Kiwai Vocabulary, Government Printer, Port Moresby, 1932, page 98.

7. Sir Hubert Murray, who reluctantly acceded to its banning, which was carried out while he was overseas, described gamada as being rather like piper methysticum or kava, although the people of Western Papua drank it, he thought, with less ceremony than other South Pacific islanders (Sir Hubert Murray, Papua of To-Day or An Australian Colony in the Making, P.S. King and Son Ltd., London, 1925, page 64).

I have been unable to trace the precise meaning of "Pipe na loun", a compound which was also made from the roots of certain bush plants or trees by some Tolai, and which was banned (by a "Notice and Order" in the Government Gazette, British Administration - German New Guinea II (11), November 15, 1915, page 6) because of "the effect it induces of exciting a propensity to unrest and violence". My best guess is that it was, figuratively, a pipe of life or strength or health (from the Kuanua nilaun (life, strength, health) or lalaun (life) - see the comments on my Kuanua sources in Footnote 9, below).

8. See, for example, the discussion as to the origin of the word "luluai", and the functions of the position, in R.F. Salisbury, "Despotism and Australian Administration in the New Guinea Highlands", in J. B. Watson (ed.), "New Guinea: The Central Highlands", American Anthropologist Special Publication 66(4), Part 2, August 1964, pages 225-239.

9. The linguistic source of the Kuanua terms cited in this article was found, firstly, by checking Rev. F. Mihalic, Grammar and Dictionary of Neo-Melanesian, The Mission Press, S.V.D., Techny, Illinois, 1957, for the Pidgin words' likely origins and meanings, then by checking the Kuanua sources listed below, before attempting a New Guinea English definition:

P.A. Lanyon-Orgill, A Dictionary of the Raluana Language (New Britain, S.W. Pacific), published by the author, Victoria, B.C., Canada, 1960;

A. J. Mannering, English - Kuanua Dictionary, Methodist Overseas Mission, Rabaul (roneoed), n.d.;

Methodist Overseas Missions, New Guinea District, A Kuanua Dictionary, Methodist Mission Press, Rabaul, 1964;

and (the original source for the works by Lanyon-Orgill and the Methodist Overseas Mission)

R. H. Rickard, A Dictionary of the New Britain Dialect and English and of English and New Britain also a Grammar (roneoed), 1889.

Mr. Rabbie Namaliu's assistance in checking parts of what I thought I had researched was quite invaluable.

The spelling of New Guinea English words of Kuanua origin has here been standardised in what I take to be standard New Guinea English, rather than one of the (often varying) Kuanua renditions cited in the foregoing volumes.

10. It seems likely that most of these terms entered New Guinea English indirectly - via Police Motu. All of them appear in A Dictionary of Police Motu, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1962, although puripuri and lakatoi are not to be found in the Rev. R. Lister-Turner and Rev. J. B. Clark, A Grammar of the.....Motu Language of Papua, Government Printer, Sydney (second edition edited by P. Chatterton), n.d.

11. See, for example, Alice Jeannette Keelan, In the Land of Dohori, Angus and Robertson Ltd, Sydney, 1929; and O. Ruhen, Land of Dahori: Tales of New Guinea, MacDonald, London, 1957.

12. Rev. F. Mihalic, op. cit., was the first source consulted, and then checked in the dictionaries of the particular original vernaculars where these are cited (except kuskus which I was unable to check).

13. Mihalic gives Malay as the language of origin for baret. Lanyon-Orgill, however, lists two likely Kuanua antecedents: baret (gutter) and paret (trench).

14. Mihalic gives a Polynesian origin for Kaikai, whereas Lanyon-Orgill gives it a Kuanua meaning (food, meal dinner).

15. The Kuanua word "tabu" may be only one of many possible Melanesian, Micronesian, Polynesian, or Papuan sources for the Pidgin word "tambu" (the Oxford English Dictionary gives all of these sources for the English "taboo"), although the Kuanua source is the most likely one for both Pidgin (according to Mihalic), and New Guinea English.

16. "Pass" was twice used in The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Report to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the Administration of the Territory of New Guinea, From 1st July, 1952, to 30th June, 1953, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, 1954, page 62, and ibid., 1953-1954, page 65. At other times, and in other places, the term "written permission" as a prerequisite to being allowed lawfully to break the curfew regulations was used by officialdom, but "pass" probably more generally by the public. The present word may well be a blending of the general Pidgin word for "letter", and the 1950s' New Guinea English term.

17. "Houseboy" (for a domestic servant) and "boyhouse" (for his quarters) both seem to be as much part of Standard Southern English, when used in the colonies, as of New Guinea English. Both terms were widely used in the British African colonies.

18. It is perhaps worth pointing out that the sole piece of language-engineering the Administration has ever undertaken - apart from attempting to foster English (in place of Pidgin) as the national language of the Territory - has been to forbid the use of a number of derogatory terms when referring to Papuans and New Guineans in official documents. Internal Administration circulars concerning such words as "boi" have been issued intermittently for at least twenty years, with the use of "native" as a noun, for example, being forbidden by ministerial directive in 1954. Most recently, kanaka, boi, meri, masta (but why not misis?) and mankimasta have been forbidden for official use in Pidgin (but not in New Guinea English, in which language they are much more clearly, and often deliberately, offensive) by the Administrator, Mr. D. O. Hay (see "Hay Issues Order On "Offensive" Pidgin", Papua-New Guinea Post-Courier, Wednesday, September 17, 1969, page 3).