IDIOMATICITY IN A PAPUAN (NON-AUSTRONESIAN) LANGUAGE

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1. INTRODUCTION.

Linguists generally agree that a true idiom is a polylexemic expression of a single semantic unit which cannot be understood by simply regarding its constituent parts in any literal sense. Rather, the meanings of idioms are the result of the process of idiomatization in which the total expression receives a new meaning not logically deducible from the meanings of its parts. Thus the English idiom 'he has a soft heart' does not refer to the physiological condition of one's heart but rather that the person so described is kind and sympathetic. Similarly the Tok Pisin idiom bel belong em i kirap does not refer to the upward movement of one's belly but that the person is excited.

The purpose of this paper is to examine a subclass of idioms in a Papua New Guinean language, to present some observations on the semantic and grammatical structure of these idioms, and to test these observations against data from related languages as a first step towards a statement of common Papua New Guinean idiom structure. Theoretical issues raised by these observations are to be discussed in more detail in another paper.

The data used for this study are from the Selepet language which is spoken in the Kabwum Subprovince of the Morobe Province.[1] The language belongs to the Huon Peninsula Family, a subgroup within the Trans-New Guinea Phylum (see McElhanon & Voorhoeve, 1970; Wurm, Voorhoeve & McElhanon, 1975; and McElhanon 1975a).

The greater proportion of Selepet expressions which linguists would usually consider to be idiomatic represent a subclass of expressions consisting of nouns (usually the terms for body parts) plus predications (usually a verb or an adjective).

The decision as to whether or not these expressions constitute true idioms in Selepet is difficult for the expatriate analyst. The difficulty arises in part from the fact that the Selepet speakers themselves do not readily make a distinction between idiomatic and non-idiomatic expressions. Thus, dihinyeŋe gikpok miai (lit. 'they split their chests') 'they are fatigued from hard work'[2] is not regarded as being an expression different in type from biwiŋe gikpok miai 'they split its insides', i.e., 'they split the tree trunk into slabs'. Although the first expression is only understood idiomatically and the latter expression only understood literally, the Selepet speakers simply say that each has its own meaning without any assertion that the expressions differ in any way other than meaning.

Moreover, the same is said for some Selepet expressions which are understood both idiomatically and literally. E.g., hâmeŋe kâlep ('his long nose')[3] refers idiomatically to people who are sociable and literally to people whose noses have a high bridge. Eŋgaŋe pato ('his long neck') refers idiomatically to men with deep voices and literally to men who have large necks. Each of these expressions is simply regarded as having two meanings.

Within this subclass of expressions some nouns occur in a large number of apparent idioms whereas other nouns occur in only a few. The range of meanings manifested by the various nouns and predications reflects everything from apparent idioms to nonsense. In illustration of this consider the various combinations of the nouns hâk 'skin' and hep

'blood' with the following predications:

herong oap	'it is happy'
kâlâp oap	'it is hot'
pâlâmng oap	'it is dull'
kasap	'he put it'
hapaheap	'it is hard, congealed'
yâkâlen gâisap	'he hung it at her (place)'

One would normally regard the following expressions as being idiomatic:

hepng herong oap	('his blood is happy')	'he reached puberty';
hepng kâlâp oap	('his blood is hot')	'he is successful at hunting';
hepng pâlâmng oap	('his blood is dull')	'he is unsuccessful at hunting';
hâkng pâlâmng oap	('his skin is dull')	'he has no opinion at the moment';
hâkng kasap	('he put his skin')	'he has recovered from sickness';
hâkng hapaheap	('her skin is hard, tough')	'she is past the marriageable age';
hâkng yâkâlen gâisap	('he hung his skin at her (place)')	'he wants to marry her'.

Other collocations involving these same nouns and verbs, however, may yield a variety of non-idiomatic, or at best quasi-idiomatic expressions. For example, hâkng kâlâp oap 'his skin is hot', i.e., 'he has a fever' is fully understood from the literalization, and so one would not normally consider it to be an idiom. The same may be said about hepng hapaheap 'his blood congealed', i.e., 'a scab has formed'.

In the expression hâkng herong oap ('his skin is happy') 'he is happy' the noun hâkng 'his skin' may be deleted with no resulting change in the meaning. Because of this, one could regard the expression as not truly idiomatic.

The expression hepng kasap 'he put his blood' has only a literal sense and would not normally occur. It has been noted in a legend where an old woman cut herself and then caught her blood on a leaf and set it aside. It is currently used when someone donates blood to a blood bank and the container of blood is set aside.

Hepŋe yâkâlen gâisap 'he hung his blood at her place' yields only nonsense. Thus, of the twelve possible combinations of these nouns and verbs, the expatriate linguist would normally regard only seven of them as representing true idioms.

In attempting to identify vernacular idioms in Papua New Guinean languages, the expatriate analyst will have additional difficulties stemming from several factors: (1) interference from the transfer process to his own language (usually English), (2) divergence in the semantic domains of English terms and vernacular terms which have very similar basic meanings, (3) imperfect understanding of the semantic components of the vernacular terms, and (4) his own psychological orientation. All of these factors make it difficult for the analyst to recognize which expressions have meanings which are logically deducible from the meanings of its constituent parts.[4]

Interference from the transfer process is realized in that the English translation of the Selepet literalization may be quite different from the English translation of the meaning of the Selepet idiom. This difference, however, is not a valid indicator that the Selepet expression may be regarded as idiomatic. It has been noted that hâkŋe kâlâp oap 'his skin is hot', i.e., 'he has a fever' may be regarded as non-idiomatic. Other expressions are not so obvious. For example, bâtŋan teteap 'it appeared in his hand', i.e., 'he was successful' may be regarded as idiomatic at first sight. In a culture where material gain is the chief means of recognizing success, however, it may be a normal non-idiomatic way of expressing such success. Moreover, success in getting someone to change his mind would be indicated by another expression.

When the expatriate linguist learns a new vernacular term, he tends to ascribe a primary meaning which is quite similar to the primary meaning of what he regards as the corresponding English term. In effect he regards the semantic domains as very similar. Further occurrences of that term in collocations which seem unusual are frequently regarded as being somehow idiomatic, particularly if the resulting expression yields an apparently unrelated English gloss.

In illustration of this consider the use of the Selepet word sât 'tooth'. Some of the expressions built upon this word appear to be clearly idiomatic; e.g., ekmun sâtne biuk yap ('I see it (and) my teeth shudder') 'it is amazing', sâtŋe heroŋe oap ('his teeth are happy') 'he is friendly', sâtŋe hewewen oap ('his teeth are light in weight') 'he is fluent' and sâtŋaŋe lawisap ('he mows with his teeth') 'he is insulting'.

Other expressions thought to be idiomatic may be later regarded to be non-idiomatic in light of the analyst's broadened understanding of the semantic domains of the terms. Note the following: tâpikuap yakât sâtŋe yâkâlen arap ('he erred (and) the teeth of that (action) went to him (another)') 'another person bore the responsibility of his action', sâtŋe hapaheap ('its teeth are tough') 'it (the dog) is unsuccessful in hunting' and imbi sâtŋe kârikŋe ('woman, tooth, strong') 'strong-toothed woman', i.e. 'she is argumentative'.

The semantic domain of sât is so broad as to include quite a wide range of English terms. Obvious extensions include the meanings of 'edge', 'ridge' and 'sharp'. Further extensions of meanings along these lines include 'dangerous, deadly, painful, capable' and 'powerful'[5] as in such expressions as hambe sâtŋe ('snake, sharp') 'deadly snake', mesek sâtŋan ('sickness, at the edge of') 'at the point of dying from the illness', sâtŋe naŋgap 'he feels its teeth' i.e., 'it is painful' and ekmunŋe sâtŋe oap 'we saw it (and) it was sharp' (i.e., 'it had power') 'it was amazing'.

In the light of the meanings of sât it is not difficult to see that in the expression 'strong-toothed woman' the meaning of 'strong teeth' may be better translated as 'very biting'.[6]

In the expression 'the teeth (of the action) went to him', the meaning of 'teeth' would be better glossed by 'pain' or 'responsibility' and the expression translated as 'he bore the pain, carried the responsibility of another's act'.

The expression 'its teeth are tough' is more difficult to understand by its literalization because the term hapaheap 'it is tough' is also used with an extended meaning. The primary sense of this word is that bananas which are picked when they are immature will remain tough and never reach the softness of ripe mature fruit. 'Its teeth are tough' is better translated as 'its (the dog's) power will never be enough', i.e., the dog will never be able to catch game.[7]

An imperfect understanding of the semantic components of given vernacular words would probably result in the analyst positing more idioms than necessary. For example, on the one hand, one might not regard den bâleŋe ('talk, bad') 'vulgarities' as an idiom. On the other hand, one might be inclined to regard den golâ (talk, living) 'baseless rumour' as an idiom. However, even as living things are only temporary and eventually die and therefore may be regarded as having no permanent substance in themselves, so also may 'living talk' be regarded as a message without any substance. A better understanding of the semantic components of the vernacular terms reveals the cultural logic behind various expressions earlier thought to be idioms. As the expatriate analyst understands the logic underlying the formation of idioms in the vernacular, he reduces the number of expressions which he earlier classified as idioms.

In addition to these three factors the analyst has further interference which stems from the fact that his psychological orientation is very different from that of the vernacular speaker. Before he seeks to discover the logic of the vernacular system he must recognize the influence of his own psychology.[8]

This psychology includes for example, his own assumptions regarding the existence of a metaphysical world. If his psychological predisposition is that there is no metaphysical world, and that man does not have a spirit which is just as real as his body, then his predisposition makes it more difficult for him to recognize the logic in the vernacular system.

This point may be illustrated by a number of Selepet expressions. The expression umutŋe ariap ('his shadow, reflection (spirit) went away') 'he is frightened' would be considered to be an idiom by most expatriate analysts. However, it is a common belief of Papua New Guineans that one's spirit is capable of leaving the body and that it does so during dreams. This belief underlies the practice of never awakening someone abruptly lest his spirit does not get back to the body in time, and the individual suffers as a result. When a Selepet's spirit leaves his body during his waking hours the result is that the person becomes frightened. Thus, the expression 'his spirit went away' accurately describes what the Selepet person regards as reality, and the state of fright which follows is the normal result. The relation is simply that of cause and effect.[9]

Similarly, many Selepet speakers regard a person's 'inside' as having a reality beyond that of the physical inside.[10] As one's inside undertakes certain actions or is variously affected, the result is that one's emotional state changes. Thus if one withholds his inside, he is noncommittal. If his inside is asleep, the result is that he does not pay attention. Love for someone is the result of one's inside going over to another person, and devotion is the result of one's inside staying with that person. Drunkenness is the result of one's inside disappearing.

A lesser number of Selepet people apparently regard the word hep 'blood' as reflecting a separate non-physical reality. The use of hep reflects the belief that the woman is the primary agent in the development of the child and that after birth the individual's own blood is the agent for his or her physical development.[11] Consider the following expressions:

hepŋe menduhuaksap	('her blood gathered together') 'it is in the embryonic stage';
hepŋe kuap	('she hit her blood') 'she induced an abortion';
hepŋe tak yap	('her blood broke loose') 'she miscarried';
hewâk tap	('it is only with blood') 'the child is only newly born';
hepŋaŋak waŋsap	('she gave it only with its blood') 'she gave it for adoption in early infancy';
hepŋahât uai	('they cook for its blood') 'they held a feast for the child at its birth';
hepŋaŋe oap	('she (the mother) did it with her blood') 'the child is stunted in growth';
hepŋahât oap	('he happened to be (that way) because of his blood') 'he is weak and emaciated'.

Note that the expressions 'her blood gathered together' and 'her blood broke loose' appear to be readily understandable from the literalization. Moreover, the expressions 'it is only with blood' and 'she gave it only with blood' may be understood from the literalizations if they are viewed in reference to other expressions such as hakŋe tiŋtiŋyap ('his skin is tight') 'he has developed, filled out' (usually about after the baby is a month old) and hahitŋe tiŋtiŋyap ('his bones are tight') 'he is moving about' (usually at three months of age).

The expression 'they cook for its blood' states the purpose of the feast and the associated rite of passage. The expressions 'his mother did it with her blood' and 'he happened to be (that way) because of his blood' state the physiological cause of the

adverse development of the ill health of the child. In the former expression the responsibility for the child not developing normally is attributed to the mother through her blood but in the latter expression the child's own blood caused his own ill health.

The following expressions more clearly indicate the belief that the blood has a reality beyond that of a substance which flows through veins and arteries:

hepŋe heroŋe oap	('his blood is happy')	'he is entering puberty';
hepŋe kâlâp oap	('his blood is hot')	'he is a successful hunter';
hepŋe pâlâmŋe oap	('his blood is dull')	'he is an unsuccessful hunter';
hepŋe lohotŋe oap	('his blood is weak')	'he was unsuccessful in hunting'.

Other Selepet terms for body parts do not seem to the writer to represent any reality beyond that of the physical body part. Further insights into the language and psychology of the people, however, may force a reappraisal even of this cautious judgment.

The point is that although Papua New Guinean vernaculars do have idioms which conform to the standard definition, the expatriate analyst is ill-qualified to judge the idiomaticity of individual expressions. The best course for the expatriate is to operate within a more general definition of idiom such as the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary's (1956:952) third sense of the term: "A form of expression, construction, phrase, etc. peculiar to a language. ..." That is to say that the languages of Papua New Guinea do have a characteristic idiom which distinguishes them as a group of languages. This idiom embraces many similarities in their semantic structures, not only in the semantic domains for particular vocabulary but also in how the primary meanings are extended.[12] It also includes a core of idiom structure which includes the subclass of expressions built upon the terms for the body parts. It is this subclass of expressions which is the concern of this paper and it is as a representative of this common core of Papua New Guinean idiom structure that this Selepet material is presented.

2. IDIOM GENERATION AND CONTEXT SENSITIVITY.

In the early stages of compiling a vocabulary and developing a dictionary of Selepet, the writer and his wife simply recorded the various morphemes and noted any unusual collocations. Ultimately a class of idioms was posited and the membership of this class was gradually expanded as newly observed idioms were added. Because the idioms in this class were apparently based upon a closed subset of nouns (chiefly the terms for the body parts) which occurred with an apparently open set of verbal elements, the nouns were considered basic to the idiom structure and the idioms were listed in the dictionary under the appropriate noun roots (see McElhanon and McElhanon, 1970).

As the list of idioms was expanded it became apparent that many of the verbal elements were recurring with greater frequency than others. At this stage a simple chart was prepared with the nouns listed on one axis and the verbal elements on the other axis. Initially only nouns and verbal elements observed in recorded idioms were included in the chart. It was hoped that more idioms would be discovered as the cells of the chart were filled in with the various possible collocations.

As the new collocations revealed more idioms it became apparent that these idioms represented a system of idiom generation and not just a stock of idioms waiting to be discovered. What was revealed is that the Selepet speaker regularly generates or coins new idioms according to contextually defined semantic units. Moreover, the Selepet speaker has considerable latitude in the generation of idioms, a fact which was confirmed when the class of verbal elements was treated as open-ended and the nouns were then collocated with all the verbal elements thus far recorded.

This greatly expanded inventory allows one to set forth a hypothesis for the generation of Selepet idioms based upon the terms for the body parts. The present stage of analysis, however, does not allow for more than broad statements regarding the more obvious features of this process. Furthermore, one could expect the model to be modified to account for

further types of idiom generation, e.g., metaphor, litotes, hyperbole, taboo speech, innuendo and allusion.

Although the generation of these idioms is based upon the total context of the speech act and therefore exceedingly complex, the linguist need not despair in his attempt to formulate an adequate theory of idiom generation. The obvious starting point is for the analyst to discover and understand which features the Selepet speaker considers when he generates an idiom. What are the emic boundaries (if any) of the context, and may the context be divided into meaningful categories such as historical context, cultural features, behaviorial patterns, value systems and emotional states? What degree of latitude does a speaker have in generating an idiom to fit a particular context? Within the internal structure of an idiom, are some components more basic than others and function as a starting point? These are the types of questions which are obvious in the study of Selepet semantic structure, and as the study deepens one would expect that a repertory of questions would be built up which would be useful for the investigation of the semantic structure of related languages. Moreover, because these questions would reflect a Papua New Guinean idiom structure one would expect them to be quite different from the questions which would characterize the idiom structure of other groups of related languages.

It is quite common in Selepet that idiom A is chosen over idiom B because of a cultural value, but idiom B is chosen over idiom C because of the attitude of the speaker. This situation may be illustrated by the possible choices the speaker has in relating the fact of someone's death. These choices are based upon such factors as the social situation (presence of various classes of people), attitude of the speaker and factors causing the death.

There are several lexemes which express the semantic unit 'to die'. The third person singular forms of these are:

tepŋe pârâŋ yap ('his belly burst') is spoken in the presence of children to avoid any direction reference to death;

ŋereŋsap 'he died, good riddance' indicates that the speaker is glad that the individual has died;

hiliwahoap ('he destroyed himself') denotes that there were no external circumstances which contributed to his death;

bâleap 'he turned out bad' denotes that the person died from an illness.

In the following expressions the choice is based upon such factors as the kinds of possessions involved (their importance), the frequency of the event (habitual or not), social situation (casual eating, a feast, or a long visit) and causative factors:

tepŋe ŋatak oap ('his belly is tough') 'because his food is so tasty, he does not share it';

lauŋe hâlâlâŋ yap ('his mouth is parched') 'he is not sharing his food' (not a matter of habit);

kalamŋe bia (his hospitality, not) 'inhospitable' denotes that the person never provides enough food to satisfy his visitors;

tepŋe umatŋe ('his belly is heavy') 'he is not generous with the things that really count' (usually items which are exchanged or borrowed);

wawi ('totally selfish') 'he shares absolutely nothing'.

Another important factor is kin relationship. Emotions in respect to the members of one's own family are generally stated by expressions built upon biwi 'inside', whereas those in respect to more distant kin and non-kin are stated by expressions built upon tep 'belly'.

biwine tok yap ('my inside broke loose') 'I am sorrowing at the loss of one of my family';

tepne tok yap ('my belly broke loose') 'I am sorrowing at the loss of a relative or a friend; I am sorrowing over another person's family loss'.

The following expressions which relate to disobedience are differentiated by the nature of the individual's reaction in his act of disobedience:

iliwesap 'he defied the orders through counteraction';

biwiŋe kârikŋe oap ('his inside is strong') 'he rejected the order';

ândâpŋe kârikŋe oap ('his ear is strong') 'he listens to the orders but doesn't obey';

hâmeŋe kârikŋe oap ('his nose is strong') 'he listens to the orders but only obeys the ones he wants to obey; he does what he likes';

kuŋe kârikŋe oap ('his head is strong') 'he rejected the orders without giving them due consideration.

In some situations the intensity of one's emotions may determine which expression is generated. Since degrees of intensity do not usually represent observable behaviour, they often have to be stated by the person feeling them:

kuk oap 'he is angry' represents an intense emotion which is expressed by moderate to strong behaviour;

hâmeŋe bâleap ('his nose is bad') 'he is visibly upset about it; he is disgruntled';

biwine hârean ('I cut my inside') 'I am so angry that I could scream' (i.e., 'I am angry to the point of expressing it');

biwine hâuneksap ('it pierces my inside') 'I am so angry that I want vengeance';

biwine kâlâp oap ('my inside is hot') 'I am angry over it; it burns me up';

biwine kak kâlâp sem tap ('my inside burns and blisters') 'I am very angry; it really burns me up';

biwine bâleap ('my inside is bad') 'I am displeased' denotes a more general feeling of dissatisfaction and so one may say it of others as well.

In the following expressions the previous state of affairs is important:

biwiŋaŋe mânuŋaksap ('his inside filled itself up') 'he recovered from a faint';

biwiŋe pârâŋ yap ('his inside burst') 'he recovered from drunkenness, he got a new idea (sudden revelation), he remembered something long forgotten';

biwiŋan teteap ('it appeared in his inside') 'he had a new idea' (after contemplation);

biwine tom tomŋe oap ('my inside decreased') 'I am dissatisfied with the way the state of things is deteriorating';

biwine ki ârândâŋ oap ('my inside is insufficient') 'I am dissatisfied with things as they now are' (without any reference to a previous state).

The person's assessment of the prospects for success may determine which expression is used:

biwinaŋe memâk tan ('I hold it with my inside') 'I hope that I will be successful';

biwine orotak yap ('my inside slipped down') 'I realize my chances have slipped; I have less of a chance for success';

biwine holaŋaksap ('my inside is untied') 'I am no longer certain of success';

biwine umatŋe oap ('my inside is heavy') 'I think it is useless to carry on any further';

biwine hâuŋ yap ('my inside has wilted') 'I despair over it';

biwinaŋe pesuk yap ('my inside is finished') 'my failure is complete';

biwine muap ('my inside died') 'I have given up completely; I don't care'.

These factors are indicative of the wide variety of factors which are relevant to the generation of an idiom in Selepet. Whereas some of these may represent universals, e.g., the intensity of one's emotions or the cause of death, others are definitely culturally defined, e.g., the class of people present and the kinship of the person referred to by the speaker. An attempt to catalogue all of them may be as difficult as an attempt to account

for all the factors behind Selepet behaviour. It is in the richness of the Selepet idiom structure that one most clearly sees the blending of language and behaviour, and the formulation of an hypothesis to account for the generation of idioms may be not unlike the formulation of an hypothesis to explain the processes regulating one's behaviour.

One of the most noticeable features of Selepet idiom structure is the heavy use of the body parts to express one's attitudes, one's emotional and physical states and responses, and one's ability and performance. This heavy use of idioms contrasts vividly with English which expresses many of these same semantic units with single lexical units. Because of the role played by the body parts in Selepet idiom generation an understanding of the psychological functions attributed to these body parts is basic to an understanding of the semantic structure.

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE BODY PARTS.

A careful study of the expressions based upon body parts reveals an underlying system with some clearly discernible characteristics.

The first of these characteristics is that the body parts express definite psychological and sociological functions, and that the function of the body part plays the key role in the applicability of the expression to the context. In this sense the term for the body part is more context-sensitive and more basic to the expression than the verbal element. In all probability the speaker generates the expression by first selecting the nominal element and then adding the verbal element.

To date twenty-eight terms for body parts have been observed occurring in idioms. These nouns are: amun 'buttocks', ândâp 'ear', bât 'hand, arm', biwi 'inside', dihin 'chest', eŋgat 'neck', hahit 'bone', hâk 'skin', hâme 'nose', hep 'blood', kahapoŋ 'breath, vapour', kambe 'shoulder', kambiam 'liver, heart', kâi 'foot, leg', kâkâ 'molar', kun 'head', lau 'mouth', nâŋgân nâŋgân 'understanding', nekam 'chin',

nelâm 'mind', nimbilam 'tongue', sât 'tooth', sen 'eye', tâp 'saliva', tep 'belly', umut 'shadow, image, spirit', we 'soul' (?) and wât 'strength'.

The psychological or sociological functions attributed to these various body parts can only be discovered through a careful comparative study of the total idiom structure of this subclass of idioms. The analyst must examine the use of the term for a given body part in as many contexts as possible and then compare its use with the use of all the other terms for the body parts. The function of each term has to be defined within the total system.

The terms biwi 'inside' and tep 'belly' most frequently occur in expressions which represent one's emotions. The former primarily reflects one's personal attitude or frame of mind. Beyond this it is used of one's emotions or attitudes about others only if they are members of one's immediate family. It expresses such feelings and attitudes as diligence, faithfulness, tenacity, eagerness, anticipation, excitement, satisfaction, despair, anxiety and regret. The latter term, tep 'belly', represents one's emotions in a sociological context and expresses such feelings as generosity, approval, desire, lust, jealousy, loneliness, pity, selfishness and reconciliation. These distinctions are clearly brought out by the differences between the following expressions:

biwine tok yap ('my inside broke loose') and tepne tok yap ('my belly broke loose'). As has already been noted, the former indicates sorrow at harm done to a family member and the latter expresses sorrow at another person's family loss.

biwine yâkât kinsap ('my inside stands for her') 'I am devoted to her' and tepne yâkât kinsap ('my belly stands for her') 'I approve of her behaviour'.

biwiŋe kaak oap ('his inside is white') and tepŋe kaak oap ('his belly is white') may both be translated by 'he is calm, at peace'. The former, however, expresses an inner personal peace, whereas the latter expresses a peace which is the result of reconciliation with one's fellows.

biwine yâkât hindaksap ('my inside pulls itself out for that') and tepne yâkât hindaksap ('my belly pulls itself out for that') may be translated by 'I am afraid'. The former, however, expresses a fear of personal harm, whereas the latter expresses a fear over another's safety.

The terms eŋgat 'neck', lau 'mouth' and nimbilam 'tongue' all have to do with the spoken word. Eŋgat is regarded as the source of the voice and expresses matters related to voice quality, e.g., hoarseness, the loss or regaining of one's voice, the pitch of one's voice, and to one's singing ability. Nimbilam is used to express matters related to pronunciation such as dialectal differences, correct pronunciation, coherent speech and the ability to pronounce a curse effectively. Lau, on the other hand, focuses upon the content of the message. It includes such concepts as the distortion of a message, prevarication, plausibility, contradiction and effective oratory. Compare the following expressions:

lau meloŋ otap ('he turns over his mouth') 'he distorts the message';
nimbilamŋe meloŋaksap ('his tongue turns over') 'he tried to speak but was incoherent; he couldn't enunciate clearly';
eŋgatŋe keteraksap ('his neck steps aside') 'he sings well'.

Eŋgat is also distinctive from nâŋgân nâŋgân 'thoughts, understanding'. The former represents the basis of one's intellect and includes all aspects of intellectual development, stimulation, response and maturity. As such it includes such concepts as accountability, persuasion, assurance, awareness (of facts), originality and the ability to learn. The latter term refers more to the application of knowledge and includes the concepts of stupidity, cleverness and shrewdness. This distinction is clearly shown by the expressions eŋgatŋe bia ('he has no neck') 'he has not reached the age of accountability' and nâŋgân nâŋgânŋe bia ('he has no thoughts') 'he is stupid'.

Four terms are used regularly in reference to one's disposition: hâme 'nose', kun 'head', ândâp 'ear' and sât 'tooth'.

Hâme is used to describe a person's disposition and expresses such traits as one's sense of humour, friendliness, disagreeability or pleasantness. Ândâp is used in stating one's responsiveness to external stimuli. Expressions referring to the loss or regaining of hearing and one's response to orders are built upon this term. It contrasts with kun which refers to one's personal behaviour apart from external stimuli. Kun is used in referring to behaviour which is culturally unacceptable or foolish, e.g., eating things regarded as inedible or going into forbidden places. Sât is used to describe aggressive behaviour and as such it usually carried a negative connotation. Someone who is offensive, insulting, overbearing, bossy or dangerous is usually described with expressions built upon this term. Note the following expressions:

hâmeŋe hikinŋe oap ('his nose is tinder dry') 'he is unsociable';

kunŋe kârikŋe oap ('his head is strong') 'he is stubborn';

ândâpŋe kârikŋe oap ('his ear is strong') 'he is disobedient';

sâtŋe kârikŋe oap ('his teeth are strong') 'he is very bossy'.

The terms wât 'strength' and hahit 'bone' are used to express one's strength, but these terms exhibit significant differences. On the one hand, the strength that is located in the bones is the performing strength, the strength that one needs to accomplish a task, but also the strength which one easily loses during work. Wât, on the other hand, denotes a more basic supporting strength. It is the strength which develops as a child grows into manhood. It is the strength which sustains a person. This difference is illustrated by hahitŋe kasap ('he put his bone') 'he is refreshed (after having rested)' and wâtŋe kasap ('he put his strength') 'he has the resources to complete the task'.

The terms biwi 'inside' and hâk 'skin' both refer to one's life, but they differ in terms of meaningfulness. The former expresses the depth of character in one's life but the latter expresses the superficiality in one's life. It may be that this distinction has developed in part as a consequence of Christian teaching. Compare hâkŋe yâkâlen kinsap ('his skin stands at her place') 'he wants to have an affair with her' with biwiŋe yâkâlen kinsap ('his inside stands at her place') 'he is devoted to her'. Moreover, biwiŋe pâlâmŋe oap ('his inside is dull') 'he is indifferent, unconcerned' shows a more permanent state than hâkŋe pâlâmŋe oap ('his skin is dull') 'he is disinterested, unenthused'.

Bât 'hand' is used as the basis for expressions concerning one's ability, skill or craftsmanship. Compare the following expressions:

hepŋe pâlâmŋe oap ('his blood is dull') 'he is an unsuccessful hunter';
umutŋe pâlâmŋe oap ('his spirit is dull') 'he was luckless on his hunting trip';
bâtŋe pâlâmŋe oap ('his hand is dull') 'he shot but failed to hit any game on his hunting trip'.

Hepŋe pâlâmŋe oap states a characteristic of the hunter, and as such it puts the blame for the failure on the hunter's lack of innate skill. Umutŋe pâlâmŋe oap places the blame on circumstances not attributable directly to the hunter. In this regard some

Selepet speakers believe that one's shadow (spirit) does assist one in locating game. Bâtŋe pâlâmŋe oap implies that the hunter was successful in locating game, but that his ineptitude caused him to miss in shooting.

Umut 'shadow, image, spirit' is used in expressions regarding one's vulnerability. When a person's spirit is said to be absent from the body is susceptible to disease or death. A man's vulnerability was based in his spirit, so that in days of pre-European contact a man was careful with his excuviae and food scraps lest women walk over it. In warning a young man to follow these customs the speaker would say umutge loŋgemai 'they must not climb over your spirit'. This warning reflected the belief that if women obtained access to a man's spirit by stepping over his exuviae or food scraps, then that man's masculinity would deteriorate.

4. GENERATION OF THE VERBAL ELEMENT.

After he selects the body part which is most applicable to the context to which he wishes to address himself, the speaker then adds the appropriate verbal element.

In the following hypothetical generation of an idiom we will assume that the speaker has already decided to express a personal feeling, i.e., one not conditioned by social factors. Therefore his choice of the body part is biwi 'inside'.

Once the nominal element is selected, the speaker has considerable selectivity in the addition of the verbal element. His selection of the verbal unit is based upon other factors applicable to the situation, factors such as the permanence or change in his attitude, the intensity of his emotion, the possibility of success, the degree of hope to which he holds, and many more.

It is evident in the choices made by Selepet speakers that the semantic components of the verbal elements play an important part in expressing the finer nuances of meaning. It is also evident that the lexical hierarchy resulting from the formation of these lexical

units from the semantic components directly reflects a hierarchical arrangement of one's emotions. This hypothesis is derived in part from the following observations.

In expressing his emotions the speaker may state them in positive terms, neutral terms, or negative terms. In their broadest sense the emotions are indicated respectively by verbs denoting (1) an increase in size, volume, strength or height, (2) a maintenance of the status quo, and (3) a decrease in size, volume, strength or height. These are indicated respectively by the following expressions:

(1) biwiŋe yahasap ('his inside got up') 'he is excited' (e.g., at the point of action);

(2) biwiŋe miap ('he holds his inside') 'he is noncommittal' or biwiŋe memâk tap ('he is here holding his inside') 'he is still hoping' (neither an increase nor a decrease in his emotional state);

(3) biwiŋe giap ('his inside descended') 'he is over his excitement; he is satisfied; he is disappointed'.

Note that because the system is generative and allows the speaker to select near synonyms, similar emotions may be stated with alternative verbal elements, e.g., biwiŋe uk yap ('his inside raised up') and biwiŋe yahasap ('his inside got up') both mean 'he is excited'. Both biwine hârean ('I sawed my inside') and biwine lawisan ('I mowed my inside') mean 'I was very angry'.[13]

That the verbal elements reflect a hierarchical arrangement of one's emotions is evident in that biwiŋe giap ('his inside descended') 'he is over his excitement' simply indicates that the person's excitement has ended, and the context determines whether the excitement ended in satisfaction or disappointment.

Verbal elements at a lower level of the lexical hierarchy, however, may be used to clearly specify whether the cessation of the excitement ended in satisfaction or disappointment. Both expressions biwiŋe hiriŋ yap ('his inside abated' (as an earthquake abates)) and biwiŋe huruŋ yap ('his inside sunk' (as fresh grave sinks)) mean 'he is satisfied' and may be regarded as occurring at a lower level of the hierarchy than biwiŋe giap. At the same level as these two lower level expressions is the negative counterpart biwiŋe orotok yap ('his inside slid down') 'he is disappointed'.

An underlying hierarchy is also indicated by the fact that semantically similar verbs yield semantically similar idioms. Compare the idioms within the following groups:

(1) biwine bâp yap ('my inside is shut tightly') 'I failed to learn it';
biwine bâwâk yap ('my inside is always shut tightly') 'I consistently fail to learn';

(2) biwine kâlâp oap ('my inside is hot') 'I am angry';
biwine kok kâlâp siap ('my inside burns and blisters') 'I am very angry';

(3) biwine yahasap ('my inside got up') 'I am excited';
biwine âwiliŋguap ('my inside raised up slowly like a snake') 'I became more and more excited'.

These three groups of expressions show how fine nuances of meaning in the idiomatization are reflected in the modification of the literalization.

In the group (1) the adjunct bâp of the verb phrase is intensified with the suffix -âk to become bâwâk. In the group (2) the morpheme kok from kok yap 'it blistered' is compounded with kâlâp 'hot' to express an intensification of the idiom. In the group (3) the verb is replaced with another more specific verb. The term âwiliŋguap denotes the slow swaying motion of the upper part of a snake as it uncoils and probes its environs. The nuance in the meaning of the idiom is that the person's anger has been slowly becoming more intense.

5. VARIATION IN THE GENERATION OF IDIOMS.

The three previous groups of expressions illustrate how the speaker may express nuances of meaning in an idiom by grammatical modifications or lexical substitution. The following modifications are representative of the variety of possible grammatical modifications.

5.1. DELETION.

When an expression includes such verbs as those meaning 'to see, speak, hear, do' and perhaps a few others, the nominal elements are frequently deleted. The noun most frequently deleted is biwi 'inside'. The deletion of the nominal element indicates a weakening in the resultant meaning. Note the following examples:

nâŋgâmune biwine bâleap ('I heard it and my inside became bad')
'I certainly did not like what I heard';

nâŋgâmune bâleap ('I heard it and it became bad') 'I did not like what I heard';

ekmu biwiŋe bâleap ('he saw it and his inside became bad') 'he detested what he saw';

ekmu bâleap ('he saw it and it became bad') 'He did not like what he saw'.

5.2. NEGATION.

The most frequent method used to express the antonym of an idiom is the addition of the negative adverb ki 'not' to the expression: biwinaŋe âràndaŋ oap ('it is enough with my inside') 'I agree' and biwinaŋe ki âràndaŋ oap 'I disagree'.

Some expressions, however, are not normally negated with the negative adverb. Rather the antonym is expressed by substituting an antonymous verb: e.g., nâŋgâmu bâleap ('he heard it (and) it became bad') 'he did not like what he heard' and

nâŋgâmu ârândaŋ oap ('he heard it (and) it was sufficient') 'he approved of what he heard' or nâŋgâmu âlipŋe oap ('he heard it (and) it was good') 'he liked what he heard'.

For a number of idioms, however, there are no antonymous idioms; neither can the idiom be negated; e.g., biwiŋaŋe nelâmâk mansap ('he lives forgetting with his inside') 'he completely stopped doing what he used to do' and nimbilamyeŋe kulem oap ('their tongues are marked') 'they speak another dialect'. The antonyms of these idioms would be respectively emelâk manop, yawuâk mansap 'as he lived before, so he lives now' and nenŋe den sâmai 'they speak our language'.

5.3. ADJUNCT TRANSFORMATION.

Many of these expressions may be transformed to adjuncts by compounding the noun root (or stem) and the main element of the verb. Usually such adjuncts occur with the auxiliary verb ot 'to happen, occur'. The resulting expression denotes that the action was prolonged or customary:

biwiyeŋe konok olop ('their insides were one') 'they came to an agreement';
biwi konok otbi ('they did one inside') 'they lived in harmony'.

5.4. CAUSATIVE TRANSFORMATIONS.

When an idiom contains an Auxiliary Verb Phrase, a causative actor may be introduced by the following transformations: (1) the auxiliary verb is replaced by a verb from a closed subclass of transitive verbs which includes the verbs tuhu- 'to do', kat- 'to put', ot- 'to do, happen', pan- 'to throw' and hâu- 'to spear'; (2) the nominal possessive suffixes are deleted from the noun and the noun root is compounded with the adjunct from the Auxiliary Verb Phrase:

biwiyeŋe hewewen oap ('their insides are light') 'they are willing';
biwi hewewen tuhuyeksap ('he did light insides to them') 'he encouraged them to do something';
biwiyeŋe sânduk yap ('their insides cooled off') 'they calmed down';
biwi sânduk katyeksap ('he put cool insides to them') 'he calmed them down'.

Many idioms occur with an impersonal actor expressed in the third person singular number: biwine hâuneksap ('it spears my inside') 'I feel compelled to do it'. When the person-number indicates personal actors, then the nominal element is optionally marked by the locative clitic to state the goal of the action: biwinan hâuneksai ('they speared on my inside') 'they urged me to do it'.

5.5. INTENSIFICATION.

Idioms belonging to this subclass are usually intensified by adding an adverb to the verbal element: e.g., biwiyeŋe kâlâp oap ('their insides are hot') 'they are angry' and biwiyeŋe kâlâp punduŋ yap ('their insides flare up') 'they are very angry' or biwiyeŋe kok kâlâp siap ('their insides burn with a blistering heat')'they are incensed over it'; biwiyeŋan hâuyeksap ('he speared them on their insides') 'he urged them' and biwiyeŋan kuiŋ kuiŋ hâuyeksap ('he speared them sharply on their insides') 'he strongly urged them'.

6. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PSYCHE.

This partial analysis of Selepet idiom structure reveals that the Selepet belief regarding the relationship of the body to the psyche is important in the generation of semantic structures. The Selepet person conceives of his psyche as being intimately related to his total physical being. In a sense it is co-existent with the body in such a

way that there is a part of the psyche corresponding to every part of the body. It is the portion of the psyche which is co-extensive with a body part that accounts for the behaviour which is attributed to or expressed by that body part. Thus it is that the failure of the hunter to shoot his game is attributed to the weakened condition of the psyche which controls the performance of his arms. It is the weakened condition of the psyche which motivates the body that accounts for the lack of enthusiasm which one might show.

It is probable that the Selepet person conceives of the parts of the body and of the psyche as being taxonomically ordered. It is apparent that the blood is regarded as more basic than the skin or limbs. This is obvious in the concept of the physical body which, of course, can survive without limbs but not without blood. It is revealed in the case of the psyche in idioms which only differ in terms of the component body part. Because the hunter has never evidenced an ability in hunting, this inability is attributed to a condition of the psyche underlying the more basic element, the blood, rather than of that underlying the arm. Just as the blood is more basic, so also is the condition expressed by the psyche of the blood more permanent. A person whose blood is regarded as being dull is considered as being likely to never capture or kill game. Not so with the person whose arm is regarded as being dull; he can always look forward to exhibiting more skill on the next hunt.

Assuming then that the Selepet person has a self image which consists of hierarchically arranged parts of the psyche, how does such a structure serve as a base component in the generation of semantic structures? The answer to this question is too complex to be considered in this paper, but it does point to the need to develop an adequate theory to account for the notion that in the Selepet idiom structure the nominal element rather than the verbal element appears to be more basic.[14] Theories which are built on the hypothesis that the predicate is basic to the grammar (e.g., tagmemics and case grammar) may have to be modified to account for this notion if under scrutiny the notion proves to be valid.

Moreover, the theory will have to account for the fact that in generating an idiom the Selepet speaker's input consists of a variety of features relevant to the speech act. It has been asserted that the features relevant to the nominal element can be categorized in certain domains such as the kin relationship of the referent to the speaker, the presence of various classes of people, the historical factors which have given rise to the current situation, etc. Furthermore, it has been asserted that the features determining the choice of the verb include such features as the permanence or change in the speaker's attitude, the intensity of his emotion, etc. It seems reasonable to assume that all these features are specified in terms of semantic components. If this is the case then one may wish to distinguish between linguistic semantic components and contextual semantic components, bearing in mind, however, that such a distinction may well be only in the mind of the analyst. If such a distinction were posited, it would be necessary, of course, for the theory to account for the correlation between the emotional (contextual) semantic components and the linguistic semantic components such as those pertaining to the generation of ('my inside is hot') 'I am angry' and ('my inside burns and blisters') 'I am very angry'. It may be that the emotional features operate at a deeper level in the semantic structure than do the linguistic features, and that the former in some sense specify the latter.

It seems probable, however, that the Selepet speaker does not make any such distinction, but that it is the final mix of the various components, whether they be linguistic, historical, emotional, genealogical, or whatever, which determines his output, i.e., the generation of the particular idiom.

7. INTRODUCING NEW CONCEPTS.

Because the generative potential of this subclass of expressions is so great, one would expect that it would be an excellent means whereby new concepts could be introduced into the language. For example, some novel collocations of the terms for the body parts

and verbal elements may result in an idiomatization which could be adapted to promulgate a related concept. In other cases novel collocations which are meaningless could be taught with a proposed meaning.

There have been no known direct attempts to utilize this potential by non-native speakers of Selepet. There have been, however, indirect attempts to do so, although these indirect attempts were more the inevitable outcome of cross-cultural communication than the result of conscious manipulation of the language. These indirect attempts stem from the attempts of missionaries to evangelize the Selepet people through the Kâte and Tok Pisin languages.[15] Of these two languages, Kâte has undeniably had the greater influence upon Selepet. All local church services and many of the church services held at urban centres for people of this region are conducted in Kâte. Tok Pisin, on the other hand, is only used in some of the urban churches and by particular missions in their attempts to influence the people living in the urban centres.

Expatriate missionaries have introduced foreign concepts through Kâte and Tok Pisin by forming new expressions and teaching new meanings for them. In understanding these Kâte or Tok Pisin expressions, the Selepet speaker first translates the literalizations into Selepet and then idiomatizes them to produce Selepet semantic units. In most cases the Selepet semantic unit differs from that in Kâte or Tok Pisin. Various aspects of the transference of such expressions between Selepet and Tok Pisin are noted in McElhanon and Barak (1975). In the discussion which follows we will consider the possible reasons for the acceptance or rejection of the introduce expressions.

The following expressions represent Selepet literalizations and idiomatizations of Kâte expressions based upon the Kâte term <u>maŋ</u> 'inside':

Group I

1. <u>biwine galemguan</u> ('I guard my inside')
'I live circumspectly';

2. biwine heleŋ oap ('my inside is black')
'I have resentment; I hate someone';

3. biwiŋe kâtâpkuap ('he shielded his inside') or

4. biwiŋe kurihiap ('he covered his inside')
'he made excuses for his behaviour';

5. biwiŋe omoŋ oap ('his inside is dark')
'he is unenlightened';

6. biwiŋe salek oap ('his inside is clean')
'he is free of sin';

Group II

7. biwiŋe bumbumguap ('his inside is moldy')
'he ceased to attend church';

8. biwine dâiap ('he pulled my inside')
'he enticed me';

9. biwine gâwâreap ('it swept my inside clean')
'it cleansed my life';

10. biwiŋe heŋgemahoap ('his inside repaired itself')
'he straightened his way of life';

11. biwinenŋe menduhuaksap ('our insides meet together')
'we are joined in a common cause';

12. biwiŋe purik yap ('his inside turned around')
'he repented, he had a vision';

13. biwiŋaŋe sapa mansap ('he fasts with his inside')
'he refrains from doing evil';

Group III

14. biwiŋe meloŋaksap ('his inside turned over')
'he repented'.

Group I includes those idioms which have been accepted and are in use; Group II includes those which are acceptable but rarely used by other than church officers; Group III includes those not accepted.

The characteristics of those in Group I are that they represent literalizations which reasonably reflect the semantic units created by the idiomatization. Moreover, they do not compete with similar expressions which are synonymous or nearly synonymous.

The characteristics of those in Group II are that many of them have literalizations which when idiomatized do not readily yield the assigned semantic units. Consequently the meanings of these expressions have had to be taught, and because of this the expressions are largely used in the very limited context in which the particular meaning was applied.

Within this group a number of expressions have never gained wide usage because they have apparently competed with already established expressions. Number 8 ('he pulled my inside') 'he enticed me' competed with established systems of magic covered by the term imbi saitŋe 'charm for women'. Number 9 ('it swept my inside clean') competed with the fertility and cleansing rites of the established cult. The replacement of the cultic activities with the church related activities reinforced the restriction of this expression to the context of the church. Number 11 ('our insides meet together') is very rarely heard since common work projects are denoted by nep konok ('work, one') 'common effort', and unity in other contexts is often expressed by biwi konok ('inside, one'). Number 13 ('he fasts with his inside') is more easily expressed simply by bâleŋe ki olop 'he did not act badly'.

Expressions 12 and 14 represent particular difficulties. Number 14 ('his inside turned over') was generated to overcome the ambiguity in Number 12 ('his inside turned around') which has two unrelated semantic units, 'he repented' and 'he had a vision'. These two unrelated meanings were brought together in a single Selepet expression because the Selepet expression biwiŋe purik yap ('his inside turned') coalesces two distinct Kâte literalizations, viz., maŋne ('his inside') ŋe-risiekac ('sit--it turned') 'he had a vision' and maŋne bâ-risiekac ('he turned his inside') 'he repented', the latter expression having been introduced into Kâte by expatriates.[16]

A Selepet pastor has stated that the Selepet pre-contact religious system never included the concept of repentence. Rather than feeling a need for repentence, the people were afraid of vengeance from the offended spirits. It was the fear of vengeance that motivated their religious life, not feelings of guilt. The writer's experience is that only those men who are active in church service speak about repentence and they do so only in deference to expatriates. Because the two Kâte expressions are very similar in their literalizations, and because only the expression denoting a vision represents an indigenous belief, it is not surprising that in the transfer process the two expressions were not differentiated and were assigned the only culturally compatible meaning.

8. IN OTHER PAPUAN LANGUAGES.

Is the Selepet system representative of Papua New Guinean languages in general? In seeking to answer this question the writer carefully checked for similar expressions in a number of dictionaries of Papua New Guinean languages.

In one case, that of the Kâte language, the dictionary checking was followed by further work with Mr. Somba. A chart was set up with the terms for 13 body parts and 21 verbal elements listed on the opposite axes. As the cells of the chart were filled in, it became apparent that the Kâte language exhibited many of the features found in the

Selepet system. In illustration of this, Table A gives thirty-three expressions which resulted from the various collocations of five nouns with seven verbal elements. Only two of the collocations yielded nonsense.

Note that numbers 1, 5 and 10 are built upon the term 'inside' and that numbers 2, 6 and 11 are built upon the term 'belly', but that the English glosses do not reflect that this difference has any significance in the resultant meanings. There is a likelihood, however, that a difference does exist, and that the difference is based upon the psychological or sociological functions attributed to the body parts just as in the case of Selepet. This difference is more clearly shown by comparing numbers 15 and 16 and numbers 20 and 21. Number 15 ('it speared her inside') 'it caused her to be agitated' denotes a personal state of excitement apparently not affecting social relations, but in number 16 ('it speared her belly') 'it incited her to action' one may assume that the action affected the person's social relations. Number 20 ('her inside is bad') 'she is sad' denotes a personal feeling, whereas number 21 ('her belly is bad') 'she is jealous' denotes a social basis for the feeling.

Number 24 ('her throat is bad') 'she distorted the message' is similar to the corresponding Selepet expression ('he turns over his mouth') in that a body part associated with the speech mechanism is used to refer to the content of a message.

Number 28 ('her neck is heavy') 'she is slow at learning' and 29 ('her neck is closed up') 'she lost her voice' exhibit identical literalizations as the comparable Selepet expressions. One would expect therefore that for Kâte speakers, one's neck also represents one's intellect and one's singing ability.

During the checking of the data, additional examples were offered by Mr. Somba which reveal that Kâte speakers select the verbal element in much the same way as do Selepet speakers. There is also evidence of a lexical hierarchy and that the semantic components of the verbal elements determine the nuances of meaning for the expressions. This evidence is apparent in a comparison of the expressions referring to deafness:[17]

TABLE A: Kâte Idioms

1. maŋticne zoc zakac ('her inside burns') 'she is angry'
2. buticne zoc zakac ('her belly burns') 'she is angry'
3. kpizecticne zoc zakac ('her head burns') 'she has a headache'
4. upeticne zoc zakac ('her neck burns') 'she has a fever'
5. maŋticne mâteŋkekac ('her inside cools') 'she is calm'
6. buticne mâteŋkekac ('her belly cools') 'she is calm'
7. sâketicne mâteŋkekac ('her nose cools') 'her nose no longer aches'
8. kpizecticne mâteŋkekac ('her head cools') 'her headache is finished'
9. upeticne mâteŋkekac ('her neck cools') 'her neckache is finished'
10. maŋticne dockekac (her inside is soft') 'she is peaceful'
11. buticne dockekac ('her belly is soft') 'she is peaceful'
12. sâketicne dockekac ('her nose is soft') 'her nose no longer aches'
13. kpizecticne dockekac ('her head is soft') 'her headache is finished'
14. upeticne dockekac ('her neck is soft') 'her neckache is finished'
15. maŋticne âeckekac ('it speared her inside') 'it caused her to be agitated'
16. buticne âeckekac ('it speared her belly') 'it incited her to action'
17. sâketicne âeckekac ('it speared her nose') 'she has a sharp pain in her nose'
18. kpizecticne âeckekac ('it speared her head') 'she has a piercing headache'
19. upeticne âeckekac ('it speared her neck') 'she has a sharp pain in her neck'
20. maŋticne sâkporekac ('her inside is bad') 'she is sad'
21. buticne sâkporekac ('her belly is bad') 'she is jealous'
22. sâketicne sâkporekac ('her nose is bad') 'her nose has sores on it'
23. kpizecticne sâkporekac ('her head is bad') 'she has a headache'

24. upeticne sâkporekac ('her neck is bad') 'she distorted the message'
25. maŋticne ŋemâcnekac ('her inside is heavy') 'she is uninterested'
26. buticne ŋemâcnekac ('her belly is heavy') 'her illness lingers on'
27. kpizecticne ŋemâcnekac ('her head is heavy') 'she feels draggy'
28. upeticne ŋemâcnekac ('her neck is heavy') 'she does not learn quickly'
29. maŋticne bâzickekac ('it plugged her inside') 'she did it without thinking'
30. buticne bâzickekac ('it plugged her belly') 'she has constipation'
31. sâketicne bâzickekac ('it plugged her nose') 'she has a stuffy nose'
32. kpizecticne bâzickekac ('it plugged her head') 'her fontanel is fused'
33. upeticne bâzickekac ('it plugged her neck') 'she lost her voice'

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hazec kpepoŋ 'deaf';

hazecticne gâckeyec ('his ear became firm'); note that gâckezo describes milk that curdles and an egg that becomes solid during cooking;

hazecticne fâŋkeyec ('his ear is jammed tightly');

hazecticne ŋemâckekac ('his ear is heavy');

hazecticne bâzickeyec ('it plugged his ear').

Mr. Somba stated that ('his ear is heavy') and ('it plugged his ear') indicate only a temporary loss of hearing. Furthermore, the last expression is only rarely used. This statement is supported by Keysser (1925:147) in the meanings he assigns to two of these expressions. The last expression ('it plugged my ear') is said to indicate that a person is deafened by a loud report. Such a deafness would certainly be temporary and not often experienced. The second expression ('his ear became firm') is said to indicate that the person so described is obstinate and does not listen to anyone. This more permanent 'deafness' is reflected in the permanence of a fried egg and curdled milk; neither condition is reversible.

Further indication of the importance of the semantic components of the verbal elements is found in the difference between the following expressions:

kpizecticne fâuckekac ('his head burst') 'he has a throbbing headache'

kpizecticne zaŋkekac ('his head crumbles') 'he has a dull headache'

kpizecticne zoc zakac ('his head burns') 'he has a headache' (no special characteristics)

kpizecticne sâkporekac ('his head is bad') 'he has a headache' (no special characteristics)

kpizecticne âeckekac ('it pierces his head') 'he has a piercing headache' (with highly localized intense pain).

In the Daga-English Dictionary[18] the Muranes have recorded a large number of "idiom-clauses" which are of the same form as the subclass of expressions in focus in this paper. The nouns serving as the basis for the Daga expressions include 'belly', 'bone', 'ear', 'inside', 'liver', 'mouth' and 'nose'.

A difference between ('she feels her belly') 'she has pity' and ('she feels her liver') 'she is very sad' may indicate that the terms for the body parts are context-sensitive in much the same way as the Selepet and Kâte terms.

Furthermore, a number of expressions based upon 'inside' and 'belly' have the same English gloss, but a detailed investigation of the use of these terms in the total idiom structure may reveal a subtle difference. Note the following:

('her belly is good') or ('her inside is good') 'she is happy',

('her belly is bad') or ('her inside is bad') 'she is sad',

('her belly is hot') or ('her inside is hot') 'she is irritated, upset'.

A comparison of some expressions suggest that the semantic components of the verbs may determine fine nuances of meaning as well:

('his belly is black') or ('his belly has turned black from cooking') 'he is sad';

('he feels his belly') or ('his belly is bitter') 'he has pity'.

At least one expression may have been introduced by expatriates:

('he guards his skin') 'he is self-controlled'.

After attending a seminar in which an earlier version of this paper was read, Mr. Darryl Wilson (personal communication) conducted a similar investigation of the idiom structure of the Suena language.[19] He set up a chart consisting of the terms for twenty body parts on one axis and twenty-seven verbal elements on the other axis. Of the 540 possible combinations 257 occurred expressing idioms. The most productive terms for the body parts were 'head, neck, intestines, thoughts, skin, mouth and back'.

The results were encouraging and Wilson is continuing his studies in this area.

As more becomes known of the semantic structures of Papua New Guinean languages it is very likely that extensive similarities will be recognized and a definitive statement will be possible. It is hoped that this Selepet material will encourage such studies.

NOTES

1. Fieldwork among the Selepet people has been carried out since 1964 while the writer and his wife have been under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Australian National University. This paper has been benefitted from the writer's discussions on the subject with K.J. Franklin and M. Olson.

2. Literalizations of idioms are given in parentheses.

3. Noun roots manifest the following suffixes indicating possession: -ne 'my', -ge or -he 'your', -ŋe 'his, her, its', -neŋe 'our (du.)', -yeŋe 'your, their (du.)', -neŋ e 'our (pl.)' and -yeŋe 'your, their (pl.)'. The letter â represents a vowel with a phonetic norm of [ɔ]; h represents [h] word initially and [g] intervocalically; ŋ represents the velar nasal.

4. It may be assumed that the expatriate would overcome the difficulties stemming from factors 1-3 as he becomes more familiar with the language. It is more difficult, however, for one to recognize the fourth factor and overcome the difficulties associated with it.

5. Unfamiliarity with the semantic domains of vernacular terms precludes the analyst categorizing terms as 'restricted' idioms. Chafe (1970:42ff.) states that because 'red' in 'red hair' is actually closer in colour to 'orange', it represents the sprouting of a new meaning from an old one in a particular context; hence it is a 'restricted idiom'. However, if one simply expanded the semantic domain of 'red' to include a sufficiently wide section

of the colour spectrum one could include as 'red' the colour of blood, sunsets, sunburn and red cabbage. The choice of one sense over another would depend upon which semantic components are selected or omitted as the semantic domain is delineated (cf. Weinreich 1969:31-2).

6. The word kârikŋe also serves as an intensifier and could be translated as 'very'.

7. The understanding of the literalizations of these expressions through a broadened semantic domain is not to be confused with the assignment of subsense mentioned by Weinreich (1969:42) and rejected by Makkai (1972:49); i.e., in the expression 'red herring', 'red' may be said to mean 'phony' and 'herring' to mean 'issue'. In the case of 'red herring', because there is no direct logical progression from 'red' to 'phony' and 'herring' to 'issue', the analyst needs to know the meaning of the idiom in order to assign the subsenses. This is not the case in Selepet where the logical progression is obvious to speakers of Selepet.

8. Note, for example, Weinreich's (1969:77) remark: "I can conceive of no correct finite analysis of the entry harts ('heart') in a Yiddish defining dictionary from which a learner of the language could infer that the first idiom [literally, 'make heart for oneself'] actually means 'to give oneself courage,' and the latter [literally, 'beat (somebody) to the heart'] means 'nauseate, disgust'." Such a conclusion may well result from Weinreich's belief that "the relation between idiomatic and literal meanings is so unsystematic as to deserve no place in the theory" (p.76).

9. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (Little, et al., 1956: 1972) dates the word 'spirit' to the period of Middle English (A.D. 1150-1450) with the meaning as "the animating or vital principle in man (and animals); that which gives life to the physical organism, in contrast to its purely material elements". In the late Middle English period (A.D. 1350-1450) the word was used "in contexts relating to temporary separation of the

immaterial from the material part of man's being, or to perception of a purely intellectual character" (loc.cit.).

The limited amount of Middle English literature available to the writer suggests that the Middle English speakers' concept of a person's spirit was not unlike that of many Papua New Guineans today. It seems likely therefore that statements about the activities of one's spirit which were regarded as factual by speakers of Middle English were perhaps viewed by later speakers of English as quaint fantasies and ultimately given the status of idioms. Note that at the present time the expression 'to give up the ghost' is regarded by some English speakers as idiomatic but by others as depicting reality.

10. The term 'inside' denotes that which is inside an enclosure. As such it refers to the inside of containers, the pith of fruit (enclosed by the skin) and the water below the surface. It may be assumed that not all speakers of Selepet would regard the terms for the body parts as denoting a reality beyond that of the physical body part. Many others who do have such beliefs would not readily admit them to an expatriate whom they regard as possibly unsympathetic with their beliefs.

11. The belief that the embryo develops from the coagulation of its mother's blood underlies the avuncular relationship. A man's sister passes his mother's blood (which is the source of his own) to her own children, and therefore a man refers to his sister's offspring as 'my blood' and they are in a special relationship to him.

12. This similarity in the semantic structure accounts in part for the vitality of Tok Pisin. It conditions not only how words which are borrowed into Tok Pisin are extended in meaning, but also which newly coined idioms are accepted (see McElhanon 1975b).

13. The writer agrees with Chafe (1970:58, 137) that true synonymy is much less frequent than commonly assumed. One would expect that further research would reveal subtle differences in these expressions.

14. This all the more interesting in view of the fact that Papuan languages have been regarded as event-dominated (cf. Capell 1962, 1969) and verb-centered. Note that the morphological features characteristic for the verb as given in Wurm, Laycock and Voorhoeve (1975:183-9) are lengthy and complex in comparison with those given for the noun.

15. Kâte is one of the official languages used by the Lutheran Mission New Guinea in its church and school programmes. In the Kate examples the letters â and ŋ have the same value as in Selepet. Letter h represents only [h]; z represents [ts] inter-vocalically and [dz] elsewhere; c represents a glottal stop; and kp and gb represent respectively voiceless and voiced labio-velar stops.

16. It is possible that biwiŋe purik yap 'he had a vision' also is introduced. One informant has stated that the expression umutŋe heweweŋ oap 'his spirit became light in weight' was used in the days prior to the Europeans arrival to express that a person had a vision or saw an apparition.

17. Mr. Somba and the writer conversed in Tok Pisin. Mr. Somba's statement that all of these expressions constituted ia pas ('closed ear') supports the findings of McElhanon and Barok (1975) that one Tok Pisin expression often encompassed several Selepet idioms.

18. Daga is a Papuan language spoken by five thousand people living in the Abau Subprovince of the Milne Bay Province.

19. Suena is a Papuan language spoken by two thousand people living in the Lae Subprovince of the Morobe Province.

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