

THE QUESTION OF LANGUAGE STANDARDISATION AND PIDGIN

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I gat planti nek bilong Tok Pisin tasol i nogat wanpela nek i winim olgeta narapela nek, nogat. Na sampela man ol i laik pulim Tok Pisin i kam insait long skul na ol i tingting olsem. Yumi mekim wanem nek bilong Tok Pisin na i kam insait long olgeta skul. Na narapela tingting i olsem. Yumi mekim wanem na stretim wanpela nek bilong Tok Pisin na ol manmeri na pikinini ol i ken bihainim dispela nek tasol. Orait, mi laik tokaut long dispela samting ol i laik mekim.

Orait, sapos gavman i laik stretim wanpela nek bilong Tok Pisin, ol i mas makim wanpela komiti pastaim. Na olgeta dipatmen bilong gavman, na yunivesiti, na misin, na olgeta kampani ol i save wokim buk o niuspepa, olgeta i mas save gut long wok bilong dispela komiti na harim tok bilong en.

Na dispela komiti ol i mas tok save long faipela samting bilong stretim Tok Pisin.

(1) Nau i gat planti rot bilong raitim Tok Pisin. Tru ol i bin makim wanpela rot pinis, tasol planti man i no bihainim. Gavman i mas makim wanpela rot na olgeta manmeri i mas bihainim.

(2) Ol i mas lainim olgeta liklik tok bilong Tok Pisin na wokim buk na ol manmeri i ken kaunim na save gut long wanem tok em Tok Pisin tru. Na ol i mas bosim rot bilong pulim nupela tok i kam insait long Tok Pisin.

(3) Ol i mas tingim gut long rot o pasin bilong Tok Pisin i skruim tok i go na i no kamap kranki. Na sapos ol manmeri bilong wanpela nek bilong Tok Pisin ol i save autim tok na tok i kamap stretpela tru na ol manmeri i ken klia gut long as bilong tok, ating ol komiti i mas makim dispela pasin bilong autim tok na olgeta manmeri i ken bihainim.

(4) Sampela manmeri ol i save toktok, tasol tang bilong ol i save bihainim Tok Inglis na tok i kamap kranki. Ating dispela komiti ol i ken tok save long olgeta manmeri na ol i ken bihainim Tok Pisin tru.

(5) Ol i mas helpim ol manmeri na ol i ken tingim kain kain stori na raitim long Tok Pisin na wokim buk. Em gutpela samting ol manmeri i ken autim tingting bilong ol na raitim long Tok Pisin na ol wantok i ken kaunim.

General Remarks

The question of the standardisation of a language arises if it displays a number of diverse parallel forms on one or several levels, such as its phonology (pronunciation), lexical composition, and morphology and syntax (grammar), and is to serve as the common medium of intercommunication on advanced levels to a community within which several of these diverse parallel forms of the language in question can be encountered. The problem is simple if one of these parallel forms carries general prestige over the others, be it through its use by what is regarded as an elite group which need not be numerically important, or be it for some other reason. In such a case, the wide or general acceptance of the language form endowed with such a prestige, by the whole community, and its use as a high 'form' of the language by it, constitutes the required standardisation.

The situation is more difficult if none of the diverse parallel language forms carries general prestige over the others, and it may be aggravated by the fact that all of them may display some deficiencies when looked upon as means of general intercommunication on an *advanced* level, with such deficiencies manifesting themselves especially on the lexical level, i.e., in inadequacies in their vocabularies. In such a case, the problem of standardisation is associated with the one of the necessary enrichment of the language.

Before going further and beginning to apply these considerations to Pidgin, it may be useful to look at two particular facets of the problem of standardisation in general, i.e., (a) What levels in a language are more or less amenable to standardisation; and (b) How can standardisation take place, or be put into effect, in general terms.

Concerning (a), it must be borne in mind that standardisation is very much simpler, and easier to put into effect, with regard to the written form of a language, than to its spoken form. The standardised European languages, especially English, German, Dutch, Italian etc. provide ample evidence of this. In this respect, standardisation of the written language form can, in increasing order of difficulty, apply to orthography (i.e., spelling systems), vocabulary (i.e., the use of words and their meanings), grammar (i.e., morphology and syntax) and discourse patterns (i.e., systems of address and reference to persons, style of expression, composition of written passages and the like). Applying the same standardisation principles to the spoken forms of a language encounters greater difficulties in view of the fact that the spoken language is more illusive than the written, less subject to conscious control by the speaker, and that, because of the much more fleeting and transient nature of a spoken passage when compared with a written one, automatic pressures from non-standard forms already accepted and normally used by the speaker upon the standard forms are much greater. In addition, factors which affect the form and nature of passages, such as emotional attitudes, are much more strongly present in spoken expression than in written. In contrast to the written form in which the external form of the expression, i.e., the writing system and orthography, is most easily accessible to rigid control and standardisation, the external form of the spoken expression, i.e., the phonology (or pronunciation), is most difficult to control and standardise--even in highly standardised European languages such as English and German traces of non-standard spoken language--in the form of the 'local accent'

of speakers of the standard language who come from different parts of the language area, have persisted tenaciously in spite of all standardisation efforts through the educational systems, and the--not always successful--attempts involving the use of spoken standard language forms by auditory mass media such as radio and television.

With (b), the question as to how standardisation can take place or be put into effect, the size, nature and composition of the community concerned is an important factor. With very small speech communities, it can come about as a result of mutual consent, but under ordinary circumstances it will have to be a process directed from a focal point and take the form of a teaching and implementation procedure, not uncommonly against considerable resistance which will have to be overcome through various methods.

This teaching and implementation procedure will have to be primarily the concern of education, in particular through the school and training systems present in a community. This will have to be strongly supplemented, and put into practical application, through the mass media, i.e., the press and publication facilities for the written form, and radio and television for the spoken. The success of the standardisation process initiated through the school system really depends on the cooperation and effectiveness of these mass media.

However, in addition to these factors, the chances of a widespread, or general, acceptance of a standardised written--and spoken--language form are greatly enhanced if this form is persistently adhered to and used by a prestige group which is regarded as such by the great majority of the community, and especially by the authorities in their dealings with the community on all levels.

Furthermore, the standardised language form is much more likely to gain general acceptance if it carries some prestige value of its own, e.g., if mastery of the standard language leads to economic advantages. So for instance, one prerequisite for obtaining coveted jobs and positions could be a good mastery of the standard language. Such a situation would result in the standard language, and a good mastery of it, commanding general respect and esteem.

Various Forms of Pidgin

If these general observations are now applied to the situation surrounding Pidgin in Papua New Guinea, the following becomes evident:

Unquestionably, Pidgin displays on the general, and particularly on the spoken, level a number of diverse parallel forms, or dialects. These are to a lesser extent regionally determined, though minor differences attributable to local dialectal variations are observable. The main diversities are attributable to social dialects or sociolects, and constitute the direct consequence of English influence, i.e., the greater or lesser contact of the speakers of a given sociolect with English, with expatriate speakers of Pidgin, and of exposure to education, especially through English. On the written level, several quite markedly different forms are in evidence which are in part attributable to the use, in writing, of Pidgin by indigenes as opposed to expatriates, and to the amount of English influence to which indigenous writers have been exposed, or which they wish to introduce into their written Pidgin, believing such a process to be prestigious. Also, especially in

the case of expatriate writers, the written forms tend to reflect attitudes towards Pidgin itself, i.e., whether the writers recognise Pidgin as a full language in its own right, or simply look upon it as a more or less inadequate tool for conveying meaning as best they can, with little regard for the nature and character of the language itself.

As far as the prestige of the various general and spoken parallel forms of Pidgin is concerned, it seems that none of them carries particular prestige outside its own sociolectal (or regional) speech community. The prestige of the various written forms differs considerably and appears to be in direct proportion to the amount of printed, and generally available, material extant in them, and the consistency of the language use displayed in them. Some forms, in particular the one used in the Pidgin New Testament and the publications put out by Kristen Pres for instance, carry quite widespread prestige, but this appears to be predominantly passive; while they are largely regarded as 'good' forms of written Pidgin, they are not necessarily used actively in writing by Pidgin writers looking upon them as 'good'.

In addition to the more or less general absence of a fully standard form of Pidgin, it seems that, as a means of general intercommunication on an *advanced* level, Pidgin is still to some extent deficient, particularly on the lexical level. As a result of this, both the problems of standardisation, and of enrichment of the language, have to be faced in the case of Pidgin.

Should Pidgin Be Standardised?

If, at this point, the question is asked whether or not a need exists for the standardisation of Pidgin, it may be pointed out that this matter is directly associated with the nature of the role and future envisaged for Pidgin in Papua New Guinea, which is a policy matter for the Papua and New Guinea Government. If, as seems to be the case, Pidgin is to be used for educational pursuits and is to play a role as a national language, its standardisation and enrichment is a matter of absolute necessity. But even without these two spheres of its application, its increasingly general use as an almost country-wide, both spoken and written, *lingua franca* on all levels of intercommunication would make its standardisation and enrichment a matter of great importance for the advancement of the Papua New Guinean nation.

Such a standardisation and enrichment of Pidgin would, in the first place, have to be concerned with its written form--a measure of standardisation of its spoken form can be achieved almost as a by-product of the use of a written standard form in education, by the press and publishing agencies, and the authorities, and the adoption of a standard spoken form by the auditory mass media such as radio, and television when available.

Available Standard Forms

What standard forms are available now with regard to the various facets referred to above under *General Remarks*?

Orthography

Various attempts at the standardisation of Pidgin orthography have been undertaken to date, with varying degrees of success. At present, a

standardised orthography is in use by the publishing agencies of the Lutheran and Catholic Missions, and appears in the Pidgin New Testament, the publications put out by Kristen Pres for instance, the current edition of Mihalic's Pidgin dictionary and grammar, some other Pidgin dictionaries and vocabularies and also for instance in Dutton's extensive practical introduction to Pidgin (*Conversational New Guinea Pidgin, Pacific Linguistics, D.12*). A standard orthography is therefore available in a range of published materials, but its use by writers of Pidgin, both indigenous and expatriate, outside the orbit of the two Missions mentioned is limited, and the orthography still appears to lack government sanction and is not used in written expression by Government instrumentalities and in the House of Assembly--a variety of unsystematic and often inconsistent spellings hold sway.

Vocabulary

A measure of standardisation of a core vocabulary is available through the publication of the present edition of Mihalic's dictionary, and a few other dictionaries, but the vocabulary offered by them is limited, and unsystematic additions to the lexicon of Pidgin occur almost daily in response to need in the various sociolects, and under the auspices of establishments, organisations and groups such as vocational and other training centres, the House of Assembly, groups of persons engaged in certain trades, etc. At the same time, relatively little notice is taken of the usages and meanings as laid down in Mihalic's and other dictionaries by Pidgin speakers whose sociolects or dialects differ from the one on which those dictionaries are based, and sociolectal and local usage is commonplace and the norm.

Grammar

Again, a certain measure of the standardisation of some aspects of present-day Pidgin Grammar has been proposed by the grammar parts of Mihalic's dictionary, and more extensively, by those of the present writer's materials (*S. Wurm, Highlands Pidgin Course Materials, Pacific Linguistics, D.3*) and of Dutton's practical introduction. However, all three of these grammar descriptions are practically oriented, sketchy and restricted, and are to some extent at variance with each other because of differing interpretations of phenomena, and differing importance attached to purely descriptive and prescriptive approaches. Even less notice is taken of the grammatical facts described in these and other comparable publications by most extant speakers of Pidgin--disregarding expatriates now studying Pidgin from such publications--than of vocabulary as laid down in dictionaries, and sociolectal and dialectal usage is rife. At the same time, grammatical differences between the various Pidgin sociolects and dialects are relatively minor and less pronounced than the lexical differences.

Pronunciation (phonology)

The pronunciation of Pidgin as used by various sociolectal and dialectal groups varies quite extensively, and to a very considerable extent, reflects the varying degrees of direct and indirect influence of English. Again, some brief suggestions concerning a possible 'standard' pronunciation of Pidgin have been made in the three publications mentioned above under *Grammar*, but differences of opinion, especially between Mihalic and the other two authors, are strongly in evidence as a result of the differing degrees of tolerance towards English influence

by them. The present writer takes the view that the standard pronunciation of Pidgin should be based on the regionally little differentiated pronunciation of indigenes who show as little as possible English influence in their Pidgin so as to ensure that the language remains a language fully in its own right. At the same time, as has been pointed out above under General Remarks, the standardisation of pronunciation is a long and extremely difficult task which even most European countries have not yet fully achieved with regard to their languages. It is also of subsidiary importance when compared with that of the standardisation of orthography, vocabulary and grammar, as long as differences in pronunciation do not reach such a degree that they interfere with intelligibility, or some pronunciations reflect ranges of foreign sounds such as English vowel sounds.

In the light of what has been said above, it seems clear that there is a need for standardisation procedures involving Pidgin, especially with regard to its orthography, vocabulary and grammar. At the same time, the language is in need of enrichment, in particular on the lexical level.

Standardisation Procedures

The following remarks concerning procedures may be made about the points discussed above under Available Standard Forms:

Orthography

Standardisation, in terms of the availability of a standard orthography, seems closest with regard to orthography. The following points come to mind:

Firstly, is the orthography used by Kristen Pres, in Mihalic's Dictionary etc. adequate and fully acceptable?

It appears that it is the best of all available orthographies, though it does not fully reflect common indigenous Pidgin pronunciation in a number of instances, but instead shows leanings towards English spellings, e.g., with the word *helpim* 'help' commonly pronounced [ˈaɪ^uvim]. Also, the use of *ng* for the two distinct Pidgin sounds *ng* and *ngg* may be a disadvantage, though most indigenes do not appear to object to it. At the same time, the use of different letters for rendering the same sound (e.g., *j*, *s*) in different words is a distinct advantage, because this reduces the number of homographs, i.e., makes identically pronounced words look different, and therefore more easily recognisable, in writing, e.g., *sip* 'ship', *jip* 'jeep'--both pronounced [sip]. Many Pidgin speakers do not distinguish between *l* and *r*, but use a flap for both: nevertheless, the use of both *l* and *r* in writing is commendable, because the use of only one letter for both would significantly increase the number of homographs.

The pros and cons of this orthography do however not really constitute a topic of discussion here--suffice it to say that it is the best of all existing orthographies, containing only a few possible shortcomings.

Secondly, a standard orthography--be it the one already in existence and referred to above, or a modified form of it, as the case may be--will have to be accepted *universally*. In the first place, this can be ensured through its exclusive use in education on all the levels on which Pidgin is to be employed. At the same time, the orthography will

have to be officially sanctioned by the Government and designated as the only admissible one for use in Government instrumentalities and agencies. The press and publishers will have to be encouraged to use that orthography exclusively, with the exception of the sphere of dialect literature mentioned later in this paper (see Pidgin Literature). Special bonuses placed on mastery of that orthography, e.g., the requirement of being able to spell in it as a prerequisite for obtaining Government positions, would enhance its spreading considerably.

Vocabulary

As has been pointed out above under *Vocabulary* in Available Standard Forms, a beginning has been made with the collection and presentation of a standardised vocabulary, but new items are added to the Pidgin lexicon almost daily, and systematic work is needed to record, collect and classify such new items. An official body or institution of some kind, something like a Pidgin Academy comparable to the institutions concerned with the national languages in European countries, would be the obvious agency to carry out this task properly, and it would also act as the arbiter for the acceptance or rejection of observed new items into the standard vocabulary of Pidgin (see A Pidgin Institute or Academy below). At the same time, such an institution would, in addition to its collecting, assessing and sorting of Pidgin lexical items, be directly concerned with the active enrichment and enlarging of the vocabulary of Pidgin. It is very important that the process of the enlargement of Pidgin vocabulary, and the introduction of new items into it, be carefully supervised and controlled, because there is a very real danger that, in response to the need for new lexical items, the line of least resistance is followed and English loan-words are taken over indiscriminately. This may easily lead to the overloading of Pidgin with recent English loans and eventually result in an extensive 'watering down' of its distinctive character as a separate language. Pidgin has adequate facilities for word-formation through composition, and affixation, the extension of semantic ranges of bases, the creation of new bases through analogy, etc., to make it possible to create a large number of new lexical items in accordance with the special nature and character of the language. Recourse to direct loans from English, while of course unavoidable, should be restricted to those instances in which this seems the best approach. Such words should however always be spelt in accordance with Pidgin phonology, and one of the tasks of the institution mentioned above would be the determination of the Pidgin spelling of newly introduced English loan-words.

Grammar

Again, as has been mentioned above under *Grammar* in Available Standard Forms, a beginning has been made with a sketchy description of Pidgin grammar, though much remains to be done. As with Pidgin lexicon, the task of fully establishing standard Pidgin grammar falls within the orbit of the activities of the institution already mentioned in this section under *Vocabulary*. One very important point has to be kept in mind in this:

As has already been mentioned, the grammar of Pidgin shows relatively little sociolectal and dialectal variation, but some dialects display a somewhat greater elaboration of forms than others which greatly adds to the clarity of expression in them, and to the reduction of possible misunderstandings. Unfortunately, some of these more elaborate forms are

regionally and otherwise quite restricted in occurrence, and are therefore not looked upon by many as forming a part of Pidgin in general. It seems however that the inclusion of such more elaborate forms into standard Pidgin would contribute to the enrichment of the language, and add to the preciseness of expression of which it would be capable, and it could well be suggested that it would be within the competence of the institute referred to above to declare such forms as part of standard Pidgin and to prescriptively rule them as norm. Such forms would for instance be the distinction between *laik* + Verb for intention and desire (e.g., *mi laik kaikai* 'I shall eat soon', *mi laik i kaikai* 'I want to eat'), the use of *kirap* + Verb for inchoative (beginning) actions (e.g., *mi kirap kaikai* 'I start eating'), the distinction of *laik* + Verb for near future, *bai* + pronoun + Verb for general future, *ken* + *i* + Verb for definite future, and *ken* + Verb for permission (e.g., *mi laik kaikai* 'I shall eat soon', *bai mi kaikai* 'I shall eat sometime', *mi ken i kaikai* 'I shall definitely eat', *mi ken kaikai* 'I am allowed to eat'), etc.

The question of the standardisation of discourse patterns which have been briefly referred to in General Remarks also falls loosely under *Grammar* and also constitutes a task of the above-mentioned institute. Discourse patterns show little sociolectal and dialectal differentiation in Pidgin, and their standardisation is a comparatively simple task.

Pronunciation

The difficulties facing a standardisation of the pronunciation of Pidgin have been referred to several times in this paper (see General Remarks and Available Standard Forms--*Pronunciation*). It appears that, as has been pointed out in the latter reference, the main point to bear in mind would be that it is important that a standard Pidgin pronunciation should aim for the closest possible approximation to the pronunciation of Pidgin by indigenes who had as little as possible contact with English, and for keeping Pidgin as far as possible from English pronunciation. The above mentioned Institute could again well constitute the final authority with regard to Pidgin pronunciation.

A Pidgin Institute or Academy

In the above section on Standardisation Procedures, the establishment of a Pidgin Institute or Pidgin Academy has been advocated. It is proposed that it play the role of a central authority in matters relating to Pidgin on the scientific level, in connection with its form, content and use. The possible nature of its official standing is a matter for the authorities and will not be speculated on here--suffice it to say that it would greatly benefit from being broadly based, with the University, the Department of Education, the Ministry of Education and other interested bodies such as Missions, the Public Service, the Press and publishing institutions, and broadcasting stations taking a close interest in it, and taking full notice of its activities, findings and results. It is essential that the Institute and its findings and results receive official governmental sanction, and that the use of Pidgin forms, lexical items and other features of Pidgin declared by the Institute as standard be made obligatory by Government decree, and become the sole forms etc. to be used in education and schooling by government instrumentalities and agencies in the widest sense, the press and publishing institutions, and, on the oral level, by the broadcasting and

telecasting stations.

Some of the possible tasks of such a proposed Pidgin Institute have already been referred to in some detail above under Standardisation Procedures. It is envisaged that the activities outlined there result in the compilation of a standard Pidgin Dictionary (perhaps including a standard Pidgin Pronouncing Dictionary), a standard Pidgin Grammar, and perhaps studies on Pidgin dialects, sociolects and other sociolinguistic aspects of Pidgin. At the same time, an important concern of it would be Pidgin Literature.

Pidgin Literature

A very special position in the development of Pidgin is occupied by the newly emerging Pidgin creative literature which is rapidly gaining momentum. In contrast to the fairly extensive Pidgin translation and prescriptive literature such as Mission publications, handbooks issued on health, agricultural and other matters, training handbooks, teaching materials and the like which are largely authored by expatriates and predominantly contain a standardised form of Pidgin, indigenous Pidgin creative literature uses almost exclusively a Pidgin which is non-standard on all levels including orthography. It is vital that the development of this literature is not stifled in any way through the imposition of standardisation principles upon it, because the language is badly in need of creative spirits contributing to its development and enrichment. Only the utilisation of a standard orthography could well be suggested when such literature is published.

The Pidgin Institute referred to above would encourage the development of creative literature and act as a depository for literary products. At the same time, this creative literature would constitute one of the most important sources on which the Institute would draw for its collection of new Pidgin vocabulary and usage. Of course, not all new words and usages appearing in such literature, or observed in colloquial usage, will be suitable for acceptance by the Institute and for incorporation into standardised Pidgin. The Institute's task would be to aim for a considered balance between the observation, collection and utilisation of spoken popular and colloquial Pidgin, and selective and prescriptive attitudes. Only such new items and usages would be suitable for incorporation into standardised Pidgin which would clearly contribute to the lexical enrichment of Pidgin, as well as to the widening of the semantic ranges of words, and to the clarity and power of expression in it, and which constitute references to new concepts in the language, and add to its productivity.

In this, it is important that the excessive encroachment of urban Pidgin with its multiform slang expressions and heavy English influence upon standardised Pidgin be avoided. Urban Pidgin has much to contribute to standardised Pidgin, but to accept it in all its features as *THE* Pidgin would be a great mistake and would do the language a disservice. To strike the proper balance in this would again be one of the tasks of the suggested Pidgin Institute.

Concluding Remarks

What has been said above constitutes some ideas in connection with the necessary and urgently needed standardisation of Pidgin without

which the utilisation of the language for its envisaged functions in education and for wider national purposes would be difficult and the results unsatisfactory.