

5.6.0. OBSERVATIONS ON LANGUAGE CHANGE IN PARTS OF THE NEW GUINEA AREA

D.C. Laycock and S.A. Wurm

5.6.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Change in language is a linguistic universal; but the rate of change probably is not. The evidence (admittedly scant) that we possess on the development of languages in Papua New Guinea over the last 100 years suggests that these languages may now be changing at a faster rate than in the past.

Estimates of language change in the past can of course be based only on examination of the present-day languages. There is some indication, in the high degree of interlinguistic borrowing¹ at all levels of the lexicon (and even of morphology), that languages in this area have always had a tendency towards a fairly rapid assimilation of new linguistic features; nevertheless, the rate of change has not been great enough to obscure linguistic relationships that date back perhaps 10,000 years in the past. The 20th century changes certainly give the impression of being much faster.

The main cause of change appears to be the influence of widespread *lingue franche* such as Malay, New Guinea Pidgin, and Hiri Motu; from these languages, many new lexical items have entered the vernaculars, and these have also adopted much of the simpler morphology of the *lingue franche*. However, the causes of change may go deeper, and may reflect instead the general culture shock of the New Guinea area; this would certainly be the case if languages out of contact with the *lingue franche* were also undergoing similar changes - but evidence on this point is lacking.

Specifically, the observed changes involve the following categories:

1) Decay of native vocabulary. Many words referring to facets of indigenous culture fall into disuse with the disappearance of these facets of the present-day culture. Members of the younger generation are frequently unfamiliar with words still known to older speakers.

2) Introduction of new lexical items, mainly from the *lingue franche*, referring usually (but not always) to new cultural concepts. Such new lexical items may function as bases in the borrowing language, and take local language inflections.

3) Decay in morphological complexity, affecting especially the verb complex, noun classification, and numeral systems.

These changes may be exemplified by examples from a number of representative languages.

5.6.2. KIWAI

The local *lingue franche* of the Southern Kiwai area (Western Province) are now the Southern Coastal and Daru dialects of Southern Kiwai, both of which have simpler morphologies than the neighbouring dialects of Island Kiwai. In both the Southern Kiwai dialects, though to a lesser extent in Southern Coastal Kiwai than in Daru Kiwai, the elaborately inflected verbal forms of Island Kiwai tend to be expressed by verbal nouns in which only the inflection for the number of the object remains, while person and number of subject, and tense, are not indicated - for example:

Island Kiwai *nimo-to-go* *n-* *iauri-* *ama-* *duru-* *mo*
we -du-erg *I*Sbj-*see*(non-sgObj)-duObj-pres+plSbj-non-sgSbj

Daru Kiwai *nimo-to k-* *iauri-* *-ama*
we -du v.n.-*see*(non-sgObj)-duObj

Young speakers of Island Kiwai now also tend to use such forms as *nimo-to-go k-iauri-ama-mo* or *nimo-to-go iauri-ama-[duru]-mo*. The same speakers also show a tendency towards a general simplification of the verb morphology of Island Kiwai, disregarding the distinctions between present/near past and immediate future/indefinite future, using only present and indefinite future forms. The four-way distinction is maintained by middle-aged speakers of Island Kiwai, as follows (S = verb stem):

		Present	Near Past	Imm. Future	Indef. Future
speaker	sg.	n-S	n-S	n-S-ri	ni-do-S-ri
	du.	n-S-duru-do	n-S-do	n-do-S-ri	ni-du-do-S-ri
	pl.	n-S-duru-mo	n-S-mo	ni-mo-S-ri	ni-du-mo-S-ri
	tr.	ni-S-bi-duru-mo	n-S-bi-mo	ni-bi-mo-S-ri	ni-bi-du-mo-S-ri
non-speaker	sg.	r-S	w-S	w-S-ri	wi-do-S-ri
	du.	r-S-duru-do	w-S-do	wi-do-S-ri	wi-du-do-S-ri
	pl.	r-S-duru-mo	w-S-mo	wi-mo-S-ri	wi-du-mo-S-ri
	tr.	r-S-bi-duru-mo	w-S-bi-mo	wi-bi-mo-S-ri	wi-bi-du-mo-S-ri

The same distinctions are also maintained by many middle-aged speakers of Southern Coastal Kiwai, although Coastal Kiwai has in most other respects a simpler morphology than Island Kiwai.

5.6.3. MUYUW

Lithgow (1973) reports rapid changes in the Austronesian language of Muyuw, on Woodlark Island (Milne Bay Province), over the last 50 years. The changes listed are mainly lexical; 27 items from the Swadesh 100-word lexicostatistical list have undergone at least partial replacement in the period covered. Most of the new words are borrowings from the adjacent language of Kilivila (Trobriand Islands), while others come from Budibud (Laughlan Islands). Other new words have entered from English, both words for which there is no indigenous word (*kɔbɔl copra*, *ap half*, *sɛlɛm sell*) and words which are used as alternatives to the local word (*palap proper* - Muyuw *bwen*; *iwsɛm wash* - Muyuw *iwid*). Lexical taboo on uttering words resembling the names of the deceased, or of certain relatives, accounts for some of the other observed changes. Function words have also changed:

The translator complained to me about the particle o which means "yes" and "and", which was not in the language fifteen years before. It may have come from the Dobu o "yes" and/or the Tubetube yo "and". From this it would appear that people adapt to changing function words more readily than they do to changing vocabulary. (Lithgow 1973:102)

The grammatical changes indicated by Lithgow involve only the possessive affixation on three borrowed words. Muyuw distinguishes three possessive affixes for first person singular: *-gw* '[intimate]', *ʌg(u)* - '[intermediate]', and *gun(ʌ)* - '[distant]'; with the new words for 'knee', 'ear' and 'back', the 'intermediate' and 'distant' prefixes have been replaced by the 'intimate' suffix - 'which is a change towards the Kilivila pattern and away from the Budibud pattern':

English	Muyuw: old form	Muyuw: current form
<i>my knee</i>	gun-kitut	kitɔtu-gw
<i>my ear</i>	ʌg-padid	tega-gw
<i>my back</i>	gun-tubwʌbubw	tʌpwa-gw

The remark is often made on Woodlark Island that 'young people can't understand the old people's talk' (ag-wuliweil *the language of the old people*).

5.6.4. ABELAM

Laycock (1966) reported a large number of Pidgin words which have been borrowed into the Abelam language, in the East Sepik Province, and which are used freely in all contexts. Such Pidgin borrowings may occur with Abelam affixes (bikples-bʌ *village-in*, maritbənw *you two get married*), and may give rise to new syntactic usages:

Normal Abelam (Wosera dialect):

dʌy nʌk bʌpmw kəty- r- w
they one moon dance-habitual-nonpast

Abelam construct with Pidgin *save*:

dʌy save nʌk bʌpmw kəty- w
they habitual one moon dance-nonpast

Pidgin bases also frequently occur in Abelam in conjunction with the verb *yʌ make, do*:

brukim marit yʌ *commit adultery*
kalap nabaut yʌ *jump about*
hadwok yʌ *work hard*
bikhet yʌ *act conceited*
kros yʌ *be angry*
poto yʌ *take a photograph*

Pidgin *sapos if* is also used as a conditional-clause introducer, in conjunction with the normal Abelam construction without introducer, but with a special sentence-medial suffix. Other Pidgin subordinating conjunctions such as *bikos*, *behain*, and *wonem taim* are also frequently used; Abelam, like most other non-Austronesian languages of the New Guinea area, has virtually no subordinating conjunctions. (For further information on 'normal' Abelam, see Laycock 1965.)

5.6.5. BUANG

Sankoff (1968, 1972) discusses in detail the various linguistic choices made by the multilingual speakers of Buang (Austronesian, Morobe Province), and presents in her data examples of code-switching

between Buang and Pidgin, including the use of Pidgin bases in a Buang context and with Buang morphology and syntax; the following instance comes from her 1972 paper (Pidgin words underlined):

Orait, su rek be winim ke, be winim olgeta direkta, ga be winim ol pepul, olo ba kamap vu bumbum re.

('And it's not too much to handle for me, or for the directors or for the people, that it has to be taken to the white man'.)

Her comment on the text from which this is taken pinpoints some of the sociolinguistic factors influencing language choice:

Although some of the words in question (e.g. moni) might be classed as loan words, representing items or concepts for which there is no analogue in Buang, this is certainly not true for all, and there are many Neo-Melanesian words which could easily have been replaced (referentially) by Buang equivalents. For example, it seems that the Neo-Melanesian conjunction orait is being used stylistically, for greater emphasis, in place of the Buang conjunctions olo ba or olo ga. But for many other segments, there appears to be no very satisfying explanation in terms of the social meaning of that particular element, and I would argue that what carries weight in this 'marking' of Buang sections of the speech with extensive use of Neo-Melanesian is best analysed as a matter of degree, not in terms of showing what each element contributes. In addition, we are still faced with the problem that there does not appear to be any obvious way in which the larger segments in Neo-Melanesian differ from the basically Buang segments.

Similar phenomena could be presented in hundreds of other languages of the New Guinea area, a fact which makes unsurprising the penetration of large segments of the Pidgin lexicon into languages of Papua New Guinea. However, the influence of Pidgin on Buang does not appear to have resulted in a simplification of morphology or syntax - perhaps because Buang is an Austronesian language whose morphology and syntax is largely comparable with that of Pidgin.

5.6.6. YAGWOIA AND MARALINAN

Fischer (1962) examines in detail the words for 50 introduced cultural objects in a non-Austronesian language of the Upper Banir and Tauri Rivers, and an Austronesian language of the Lower Watut, both in the Morobe Province; from comparison with other sources, these appear to be the languages now called Yagwoia (Anga Stock) and Maralinan (Azera Family). The words expressing the cultural innovations are partly new derivatives, partly loan-translations, and partly borrowings from other languages, especially Pidgin, but sometimes also Laewomba or Jabêm. The two Yagwoia dialects discussed show a predominance of native language formations over loanwords, whereas the two dialects of Maralinan show the reverse. Fischer attempts to find explanations for the differing choices, and summarises his results thus:

1. Es gibt eine ganze Reihe von Möglichkeiten, neue Objekte zu bezeichnen. Die Beachtung von Lehnwörtern allein ist viel zu einseitig und wird häufig überbetont.
2. Die Anwendung der einzelnen Möglichkeiten der Benennung ist z.T. abhängig von den Möglichkeiten der Sprache (etwa: Zusammensetzungen, Ableitungen, deskriptive Termini usw. zu bilden).
3. Die Art der Benennung einer neuen Sache ist ausserdem abhängig von der Kenntnis der Sprache der Gruppe, von der das Element übernommen wird. Je geringer deren Kenntnis, desto mehr eigene Termini werden gebildet und umgekehrt.
4. Die Benennung neuer Objekte ist ebenfalls abhängig von dem Bestand eigener. Dies ist dann der Fall, wenn etwa ein neues Objekt mit einem alten vergleichbar ist und die alte Bezeichnung ausgeweitet oder übertragen wird.
5. Im ersten Stadium des Kontaktes werden häufiger als später eigene Bezeichnungen auf neue Elemente übertragen oder deskriptive Termini gebildet.
6. Bei der Übernahme fremder Wörter erfolgt im ersten Stadium eine phonetische und z.T. formale Angleichung an die eigene Sprache, sowie hybride Bildungen.
7. Bei fortschreitendem Kontakt und sich entwickelnder Zweisprachigkeit werden besonders anfänglich gebildete deskriptive Termini zugunsten von Lehnwörtern wieder aufgegeben.
8. Es erfolgt im Verlauf des fortschreitenden Kulturwandels auch eine allmähliche Rück-Anpassung der Lehnwörter, die ursprünglich phonetisch der eigenen Sprache angeglichen wurden, an die Modellsprache.²

Fischer's observations are important ones for language contact and language change in the New Guinea area, and should be further tested with data from other languages.

5.6.7. BUIN

The Buin (Rugara, Telei) language on Bougainville has undergone morphological and lexical changes in the last seven decades, as evidenced by a comparison of data collected by Thurnwald in 1908 and 1933-34 (Thurnwald 1912 and typescript dictionary compiled after the second period of fieldwork) with data obtained by Laycock in 1966-67. Lexical changes involve the disappearance from the language of many words relating to currently non-existent activities (warfare, sacrifice to spirits, cremation), and the introduction of many words from Pidgin dealing with religious concepts, and new tools and foodstuffs. A handful of words come from German (*arapaïta work*, *uaïta white man*) and from archaic Pidgin (*tinatō Chinatown*, *pororin florin*); one word is taken from Japanese (*tomotat friend*). Pidgin words are freely used with Buin affixes, and combine with the verb *ee- make, do* to form verbs:

uaka eeta	<i>they work</i> (Pidgin wok)
amamati eeta	<i>they are happy</i> (Pidgin amamas)
kuki eeta	<i>they are cooks</i> (Pidgin kuk)
ruutiŋ eeta	<i>they loosen</i> (Pidgin lusim)
ruuti eeta	<i>they get lost</i> (Pidgin lus)
neeti eeta	<i>they do nursing</i> (Pidgin nesil)
pirati eeta	<i>they decorate</i> (Pidgin bilas)
karapuutie eeta	<i>they are prisoners</i> (Pidgin kalabus)
toore eeta	<i>they are sorry</i> (Pidgin sore)
mairiŋ eeta	<i>they measure</i> (Pidgin metaim)
korotuu eeta	<i>they approach</i> (Pidgin klostu)
papitema eeta	<i>they baptise</i> (Pidgin baptismo)
raitiŋ eeta	<i>they light</i> (Pidgin laitim)
pooriŋ eeta	<i>they pour</i> (Pidgin porim)
titoori eeta	<i>they tell a story</i> (Pidgin stori)
uitiri eeta	<i>they whistle</i> (Pidgin wisil)

Such forms conform to the usage in Buin of noun plus performative verb, such as *kogu eeta they do a shit*, *uumo eeta they get angry*, *kopiro eeta they put it down*. Nevertheless, Buin derivatives are also frequently used for foreign concepts, e.g. *uuupammoi washing machine ('the thing with which they frequently wash')*.

Buin morphology has been simplified only slightly. One additional tense form, expressing an additional remote past (habitual), has virtually disappeared from the spoken language (being replaced by the normal remote past) and occurs only in odd stories and songs (verb *pii-pull*):

	Remote past (habitual; archaic)	Remote past (current)
1sg.	piipiipokiro	piipotu
2sg.	piipiipegiro	piipeu
3sg.	piipiipugiro	piipuu
1du.	piipiipogegiro	piipogeru
2du.	piipiiperegiro	piiperu
3du.	piipiipuregiro	piipuru
1pl.	piipiipogigiro	piipogiru
2pl.	piipiipengiro	piiperu
3pl.	piipiipagiro	piipau

A number of other archaic (or perhaps now merely 'poetic' - see Laycock 1969) forms also occur in songs: *aapuŋomaine* for *aapummoi* *what they told me*, *iaiatanamoro* for *iaiamoro* *I wander about*.

The wealth of noun-classes in Buin, as expressed by numeral-sets (and occasionally by other noun-adjuncts), has also been considerably

reduced by young Buin speakers. Grisward (1910) lists about a dozen numeral-sets; I obtained about 30 sets, but only three are in common use: that referring to male humans, that referring to female humans, and a general set for everything else. (Unlike the situation in most other languages of the New Guinea area, the Pidgin numerals are rarely used in Buin.)

5.6.8. OTHER LANGUAGES

Similar developments to those outlined above have been reported informally by linguists and anthropologists for other languages of the New Guinea area. Particularly common is the use of *lingue franche* numerals in place of vernacular numerals, especially for numbers greater than 'two' in languages whose system is binary or binary/quinary only. (In Papua, Koiari has taken over many words from Motu or Hiri Motu, and in the case of numbers, speakers may use their own numbers, or those of Motu or English, depending on the context of the conversation (T. Dutton: personal communication).) The lexical developments of loss of traditional vocabulary, and introduction of new words for cultural objects, are also common, but the new words do not always come from the *lingue franche*; wordlists collected in the Warkai language of Irian Jaya, on the border of the Asmat-speaking area, show a considerable increase since 1955 in the number of Asmat loans (C. Voorhoeve: personal communication). Perhaps more significant are the ongoing syntactic and morphological changes. Young speakers of Yagaría, for example, are reported to use shorter sentences (and consequently fewer sentence-medial forms) than older ones (G. Renck: personal communication), while young speakers of the Iha (Kapaur) language of Bomberai Peninsula go so far as to use the verb stem plus a suffix *-anggè* in place of all the affixed tense forms of the verb (Coenen 1954); these changes are perhaps, but not necessarily, due to the influence of the *lingue franche* Pidgin and Malay respectively. Two languages of the Sepik region, namely Murik and Buna, are reported by Laycock (1973, and (I) 2.11.3.3.) to have lost, or at least simplified, their system of multiple noun-classes in the last 70 or so years. Similarly, the obligatorily-possessed category of nouns (principally body parts and kinship terms) has largely disappeared in the Austronesian languages of Sissano and Tumleo ((II) 4.4.8.1.).

Such developments do not, however, mean that languages of the New Guinea area are 'breaking down' in any significant way. They retain a solid core of indigenous lexicon and structure which can be expected to resist swamping by innovations, regardless of what adjustments their speakers may make to a changing world full of foreign linguistic influences.

5.6.0. OBSERVATIONS ON LANGUAGE CHANGE

N O T E S

1. Perhaps as a result of widespread multilingualism, as suggested by Salisbury (1962).

2. Translation (by D.C. Laycock):

1. There exists a whole range of possible ways of designating new objects. The consideration of loanwords alone is much too one-sided, and is often overemphasised.

2. The use of a particular way of designation is in part dependent on the possibilities of the language (such as the formation of compounds, derivations, descriptive terms, etc.).

3. The designation of a new object is also dependent on how well the source language is known. The less it is known, the more will creations be internal, and vice versa.

4. The designation of new objects is also dependent on what objects are already present. When the new object is comparable with an old one, the old designation can be extended or adopted.

5. It is in the early stages of contact, rather than later, that vernacular terms are most often adopted, or descriptive terms created, for new objects.

6. When loanwords are taken over, one finds in the first state phonetic (and to some extent also formal) assimilation to the native language, as well as hybrid formations.

7. With increasing contact and developing bilingualism the predominantly descriptive terms of the early stage are replaced by loanwords.

8. With increasing cultural change one finds a gradual reassimilation (back to the source language) of loanwords which were originally modified to the phonetic patterns of the vernacular language.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

COENEN, J.

1954 De Ihandin Taal. Mimika. Typescript.

FISCHER, H.

1962 'Einige linguistische Indizien des Kulturwandels in Nordost-Neuguinea'. *Sociologus* 12:18-36.

GRISWARD, J.

1910 'Notes grammaticales sur la langue des Teleŷ, Bougainville, Iles Salomones'. *Anthropos* 5:82-94, 381-406.

LAYCOCK, D.C.

1965 *The Ndu Language Family (Sepik District, New Guinea)*.
PL, C-1.

1966 'Papuan and Pidgin: Aspects of Bilingualism in New Guinea'.
Te Reo 9:44-51.

1969 'Sublanguages in Buin: Play, Poetry, and Preservation'.
PL, A-22:1-23.

1973 *Sepik Languages - Checklist and Preliminary Classification*.
PL, B-25.

LITHGOW, D.

1973 'Language Change on Woodlark Island'. *Oceania* 44:101-8.

SALISBURY, R.F.

1962 'Notes on Bilingualism and Linguistic Change in New Guinea'.
AnL 4/7:1-13.

SANKOFF, Gillian

- 1968 Social Aspects of Multilingualism in New Guinea. Ph.D. thesis, McGill University.
- 1972 'Language Use in Multilingual Societies: Some Alternate Approaches'. In: Pride, J.B. and Janet Holmes, eds. *Sociolinguistics: Selected Readings*. 33-51. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

THURNWALD, R.

- 1912 *Forschungen auf den Salomo-Inseln und dem Bismarck-Archipel*. vols 1 and 3. Berlin: Reimer.

DIVISION 6

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

