MEDIA TOK PISIN

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0. INTRODUCTION[1]

The creolisation of Tok Pisin (or New Guinea Pidgin) has been reported by
several authors, such as Mühlhäusler 1977 and Sankoff 1977. One of the socio-
linguistic changes that accompanies the process of creolisation is the extension
of use of the language into new domains. In recent years Tok Pisin has become
a widely used language in the mass media of Papua New Guinea. It is used almost
exclusively by 13 of the 19 provincial radio stations of the National Broadcasting
Commission and also for some news broadcasts, interviews and advertising on the
national service. It is used in a multitude of government and church publications
and in *Wantok Niuspepa,* a Tok Pisin weekly with a circulation of over 10,000.
A certain amount of language engineering has gone into the development of Tok
Pisin for this wider usage and many changes have taken place in the language,
both planned and unplanned, so that Media Tok Pisin can now be distinguished
from other varieties. This paper looks at some of the factors behind the
development of Media Tok Pisin, such as standardisation and choice of sociolect,
the influence of the medium of writing, and linguistic expansion to meet require-
ments of both the medium and wider use.

Media Tok Pisin can be defined as the variety used in widely distributed
publications and broadcasting, mainly for reporting, education, and advertising.
In the newspaper, for example, it is found in news reports, feature articles and
editorials, but not in literature such as traditional stories. In broadcasting
it is heard not in stories, dramas, or disc jockeys' patter but in news reports,
announcements, and educational programmes. Nearly all programmes of this kind
would be read from prepared scripts. Thus, by definition, Media Tok Pisin
involves the written channel. The data for this paper come mainly from *Wantok*
and from scripts of news broadcasts from Radio Morobe (RM), a provincial radio
station in Lae.

1. STANDARDISATION

Before Tok Pisin could be used widely in the media, it had to be standardised.
A standard orthography was first proposed in 1955 (Hall 1955a). Along with this,
a choice had to be made as to which particular regional dialect should be used for
the standard. The variety spoken along the north coast of the New Guinea main-
land was chosen because it appeared to be the most widespread (Mihalic 1971:xvi).

There is also a continuum of social varieties ranging from undeveloped Bush Pidgin to anglicised Urban Pidgin (Hall 1955b; Mühlhäusler 1975, 1979). Choosing a particular point along this continuum for the standard was more difficult. The majority of Tok Pisin speakers are found around the middle of the continuum, speaking Rural Pidgin, but the majority of writers and those readers with most access to published materials would be on the urban end. It was finally decided to choose the rural sociolect for reasons as summed up in the *Stail buk bilong Wantok Niuspepa* (p.13):

> The principle used by *Wantok* is that it wants to reach as many readers as possible. Rural speakers do not understand urban Pisin. But urban speakers understand both. So it will be our policy to prefer the rural word to the urban one.

The truth of this statement about intelligibility between sociolects can be verified only by research in this area; nevertheless it is widely accepted by both publishers and broadcasters.

The *Stail buk* presents a list of preferred rural words with their urban equivalents. Some of these are:

(1)	rural	urban	English
	tok gris	edvataismen	*advertisement*
	bungim	kolektim	*collect*
	pasin	kastam	*custom*
	meri	gel	*girl*
	as	risin	*reason*
	gat	hevim	*have*

But the line between urban and rural vocabulary is often a fine one, and it is hard to tell when what was formerly an urban (and thus non-standard) word is widely known enough to be considered a rural word (and thus standard). For example, the *Stail buk* (p.14) mentions several formerly urban words now considered standard: skwata *squatter*, dropaut *dropout*, wimins klap *women's club*, and pilaia *player*. However, use of the rural alternative is far from consistent and there are many instances of what the *Stail buk* indicates as the preferred rural word being replaced by the urban one in *Wantok*. Some common examples are:

(2)	rural	urban	English
	bosman	menesa	*manager*
	gohet	progres	*progress*
	ples	viles	*village*
	kibung	{ miting	*meeting*
		komprens	*conference*

The National Broadcasting Commission has no style book, and while those involved in broadcasting usually have similar ideas about using the rural word when possible, a lot more Urban Pidgin words or recent English borrowings are heard on the radio. For example, the following were heard in one newscast (RM 30.6.81): semina *seminar*, teknikol edukesen *technical education*, karikurum *curriculum*, institusen *institution*, and kolis stadis *college studies*.

A morphological rather than lexical feature of Urban Pidgin heard in radio broadcasts is the borrowing of the English plural suffix 's'. This has been pointed out by Lynch (1979:5): "Thus one hears, on the radio especially, ol ministas, ol tisas, ol studens and so on".[2] (This phenomenon has also been reported in Hall 1955b:99 and Mühlhäusler 1979:237.) Some examples from scripts

of radio newsbroadcasts are: ol tripela provinces (RM 29.6.81), ol high skuls, ol posters, ol stadis (RM 30.6.81).

In publications, however, this morphological borrowing has been avoided as well as other morphological changes in Urban Pidgin such as less frequent use of the predicate marker i (Lynch 1979:6). Tok Pisin of the published media, and written language in general, is also conservative in that it does not reflect phonological changes that have taken place in the spoken language. For example, among many Tok Pisin speakers phonological reduction of prepositions and non-singular pronouns has taken place so that long and bilong are realised as /lo/ and /blo/ and mitupela as /mitla/ (Lynch 1979:2-4). This conservatism, both planned and unplanned, enables people at the rural end of the continuum to understand the language of the media.

In addition to the desire for wider intelligibility, the choice of the rural sociolect may also be influenced by the strong negative attitudes of Rural Pidgin speakers towards anglicised Urban Pidgin (see Wurm and Mühlhäusler 1979). This attitude is summed up in this excerpt from a letter to *Wantok* (269:4):

(3)   Planti bilong mipela bilong Papua Niugini i save gut tru long pisin, tasol i no save long tok inglis liklik. Planti taim mi save harim long redio olsem, planti man husat i bin skul long inglis i save miksim tok inglis wantaim tok pisin.

A lot of us in Papua New Guinea know Tok Pisin well but don't know English even a little. Many times I hear on the radio many men who mix English with Tok Pisin.

Long dispela tasol, planti man long hap bilong mipela i save paul tru. Na tu planti bilong ol i no save harim na kisim gut wanem samting ol i toktok long en long redio.

Because of this many people from our area get really confused. And many of them don't understand well what they're talking about on the radio.

Olsem na mobeta ol redio anaunsa o ol manmeri husat i bin skul long tok inglis, i tingting gut pastaim na bihain toktok long pablik ples. Sapos wanpela brata o susa i save gut long tok pisin, na tu yu save yusim ol hatpela inglis yu mas tingting gut na yu no ken paulim man neks taim.

Thus, it would be better if the radio announcers or people who have learned English think before talking in public. If you're a brother or sister who knows Tok Pisin well and you used hard English, you should think carefully and you shouldn't confuse people next time.

A very recent innovation in *Wantok*, however, has been the use of Urban Pidgin in some advertising. This is exemplified in the advertisement for an insect spray from *Wantok* (370:15) shown here. The following Urban Pidgin words or expressions are used: hao *how*, piknik *picnic*, westim taim *waste time*, flais *flies* (note the plural suffix), enjoim *enjoy*, sikret *secret*, bodigad *bodyguard*, spreim *spray*, ken *can, tin*, hevim *have*, and tenks long *thanks to*. It is obvious that this advertisement is aimed at a certain social class in urban areas, namely the educated elite. Thus the problems of wider intelligibility and negative attitudes of Rural Pidgin speakers are not significant. And the potential buyer of the product may be influenced by the advertisement because 'it speaks his languages' (or in this case his sociolect). The advertiser is also making use

of the prestige, at least among the urban population, of anglicised Tok Pisin (Mühlhäusler 1975, 1979). An interesting question is why Urban Pidgin is used rather than English which is also found in some *Wantok* advertisements. Another question is whether the use of Urban Pidgin for the urban reader will remain just an advertising ploy or whether it will become more commonplace. It does seem that a more urban or at least colloquial style is used on the Yut Pes (*Youth Page*) and in the recently added sports section, but more definite research would be necessary to confirm this observation.

2. LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF MEDIA TOK PISIN

The previous section discussed the more or less conservative side of Media Tok Pisin in its use of standardised Rural Pidgin rather than rapidly changing Urban Pidgin. This section looks at the innovative side of Media Tok Pisin, showing how it differs linguistically from Rural Pidgin because of the use of the written channel and the need for greater explicitness through grammatical complexity.

2.1 The effects of the written channel

I have said that nearly all media Tok Pisin goes through the written channel. In another article (Siegel 1981) I have pointed out some general differences between the oral and written codes of a language. There was a time when most linguistic analysis was of written language with the assumption that the spoken was an inferior form. In recent years there has been a shift back to the spoken language, with the assumption that written language is merely spoken language represented in a different medium. This may be true when a language is initially written down, but eventually the spoken and written diverge into separate varieties because of some important basic differences between the oral (face to face) and written communication. One such difference is the 'multi-modality' (Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz 1978) characteristic of oral face-to-face communication, which is absent in written communication. Aural and visual cues such as intonation, pitch, gestures, facial expressions, posture and distance often go along with the linguistic content in oral communication and thus we would expect that any linguistic content which depends on such prosodic or visual cues would also be absent or modified (see also Stubbs 1980:117).

This point can be illustrated with an example from Tok Pisin. In spoken Tok Pisin, verbs are often repeated several times to indicate continued or repeated actions. For example,

(4) Mi ron yet i go i go i go i go   *I was still running and went*
    mi bagarapim lek bilong mi,   *on and on and on, I hurt my*
    skru bilong me, rausim skin,   *leg, my knee, lost skin, the*
    blut i ron nating, mi ron ron   *blood was running down like*
    ron i ron long en, mi go holim   *anything, I was running and*
    pas long en.   *running after it, and I went*
                      and held on to it.
                             (Wurm 1971)

But this repetition is often accompanied by other prosodic or visual cues such as rising intonation and lengthening of vowels and head and hand gestures. Thus this device is not commonly used in written Tok Pisin and if it is, the verb is repeated only once.

(5)   Kolkubi em krai krai i stap.   *Kolkubi was crying and crying.*
          (Sievert 1973:8)

(6)   Ol i mekim mekim, na long yia   *They did it and did it, and in*
      1950 samting ...   *around 1950 ...*
                  (*Wantok* 291:5)

Another basic difference between the spoken and written channels has to do
with the fact that whereas spoken language is transient, written language can
be preserved and referred back in a different time or place. Because of the
transiency of spoken language, there are often devices to aid in memory, to
focus the listener's attention on certain elements, and to help the flow and
cohesion of speech. One such device in spoken Tok Pisin is the repetition of
the main verb of the previous sentence to link sentences in a narrative for
example:

(7)   Orait, i go long raunwara,   *Well, they go to the pond,*
      pukpuk i ken kisim em, na   *they can get crocodiles, and*
      bikpela snek i stap long   *the big snakes that live by*
      wara, em i ken kisim em.   *the water. They get them,*
      Orait, ol i kisim i kam,   *smoke them, put them inside,*
      smokim pinis, ol i putim   *and go back. They go back,*
      gen, ol i go bek. Ol i go   *catch some more, catch*
      bek, ol i kisim, ol i kisim   *tortoises and all kinds of*
      torosel na wonem samting,   *things, crocodiles, they*
      pukpuk, ol i siutim long   *spear them. They spear them;*
      supia. Ol i siutim long   *but if the spirit comes up in*
      supia. orait, sapos dewel   *the water, the demon of the*
      i kamap long wara, i go   *mountain will go down and get*
      daun kisim nau ...   *them now.*
                                                  (Laycock 1977b:615)

This device is not found in Media Tok Pisin.

There are efforts being made, however, to prevent Media Tok Pisin from
deverging too far from spoken Tok Pisin. The reasons are obvious for radio
programmes which are read over the air. But also the *Stail buk bilong Wantok
Niuspepa* (p.6) states: "The basic assumption behind all Tok Pisin writing is that
it is going to be read aloud". Thus, for example, the style book prescribes use
of an oral transitional device orait (p.9):

        After a direct quotation is finished, it is good to continue
        with some word that lets the listener (more than the reader)
        know that the direct speech is ended, e.g. Em i tok, 'Mi go
        nau'. Orait, nau em i kirap i go.

Another example is the particle ya (also written ia) which has been
discussed in many articles on Tok Pisin (such as Sankoff and Brown 1976, Sankoff
1977). In spoken Tok Pisin ya has two main functions: first, it is used as an
exclamatory particle at the end of an expression, along with falling intonation:

(8)   Man Goroka i ples kol ya!   *Golly, Goroka is a cold place!*
                                                  (Mihalic 1971:206)

Second it acts as a generalised deictic marker in one of three ways: first, as
a demonstrative following the noun or pronoun:

(9)   Kar ya i no gutpela tumas   *This car isn't very good.*

second, in an anaphoric capacity, focusing on a noun phrase already referred to:

> (10) Long bipo bipo tru wanpela   *Long ago there was an old*
>   lapun meri i stap wantaim   *woman who lived with her*
>   pikinini bilong en ...   *children ... One time, this*
>   Wanpela taim nau, meri ya   *woman went to the bush ... .*
>   go long bus ...
>   (story in *Wantok* 263:21)

and third, as an element to focus on a noun phrase which is followed by an oppositive:

> (11) Mi laik bekim pas bilong   *I want to reply to the letter*
>   brata ya Lukas Hausing.   *of our brother, Lukas Hausing.*
>   (letter in *Wantok* 219:4)

Thus, ya is an example of an oral device which aids in memory and perhaps in flow of speech by directing the listener's attention to a noun phrase which has already been heard or one which will be further qualified.

The use of ya has only recently come into Media Tok Pisin. In *Wantok* it was occasionally used with a variety of spelling in traditional stories, in an anaphoric capacity, and in letters to the editor as an exclamatory particle and more frequently to precede appositives. It was not used in news or feature articles or editorials until April 1979 when it suddenly started appearing regularly in its deictic capacities:

> (12) Gavman is bin skelim   *The government has allocated*
>   K3,500,000 i go long Nesenel   *K3,500,000 for the National*
>   Yut Muvemem Program. Tasol   *Youth Movement Programme. But*
>   program ya i givim bun o   *the programme is only to direct*
>   polisi tasol. (375:8)   *the policy.*
>
> (13) Bai i gat filim bilong ol   *There will be films from these*
>   lain kantri ya Algeria, Cuba   *countries: Algeria, Cuba,*
>   Senegal, India, Bolivia,   *Senegal, Bolivia, America,*
>   Amerika, na Yurop. (265:7)   *and Europe.*

The then editor of *Wantok,* Kumalau Tawali, told me in an interview in July 1979 that it was decided at a staff meeting of the newspaper to use ya more frequently in order to make the written Tok Pisin more like the spoken.

2.2 Explicitness and grammatical expansion

Because of the lack of certain oral and visual cues referred to in the preceding section, written language and to some extent broadcasting language rely heavily on lexicon and morpho-syntax. Furthermore, because written language can be preserved and referred back to, it can be taken out of context or 'decontextualised' (Goody and Watt 1962:321) and thus cannot always rely on information from, for instance, a familiar setting or shared cultural knowledge of speakers and listeners. Thus, as a result of these factors, written language must be more explicit to compensate for lack of additional information that would usually be available in face to face spoken language. Olson (1977:258) argues that there is a transition from what he calls 'utterance to text' which is one of 'increasing explicitness with language increasingly able to stand as

an ambiguous or autonomous representation of meaning'. Thus, explicitness is
another effect of the written channel and we would expect Media Tok Pisin to be
more explicit than the spoken. Such explicitness comes from a wider vocabulary
and greater grammatical complexity. However, lexical and grammatical expansion
are also linguistic features of creolisation, just as widening scope of use (as
in the media) is a sociolinguistic feature. Therefore, we would expect greater
explicitness to be a result not only of using the written channel but also of
the process of creolisation.

Lexical expansion through the use of more English has already been mentioned
in the first section. But also many new words have been coined from Tok Pisin
elements, such as ranaweman *refugee*, grismani *bribe*, stapwok *strike* and wansolwara
Pacific Islander (see also Laycock 1977a). A feature of media Tok Pisin related
to lexical expansion is the use of synonym pairs to introduce lexical items,
discussed in detail in Mühlhäusler 1979. New items are paired with a more
familiar word or expression using o *or*. One example is in (12) above. Others
are:

(14) Madang i gat nupela Haus   *Madang has a new culture*
     Tambaran o Kalsa Senta.   *centre.*
              (375:5)

(15) Bai Gavman i autim tambu   *The government will strictly*
     tru long sampela kampani   *forbid some companies to*
     bai ol i no ken ekspotim   *export or send to other*
     o salim long ol arapela   *countries raw timber.*
     kantri ol diwai nating.
              (98:7)

Some examples of increased grammatical complexity reported in creolised
Tok Pisin are also found in Media Tok Pisin, for instance, use of bai as an
obligatory future marker (Sankoff and Laberge 1973). However, the most
innovative features of Media Tok Pisin is the use of husat and we to mark
subordinate clauses.[3] In spoken Rural Tok Pisin relative clauses are usually
unmarked. This is also true to some extent in written Tok Pisin, for example:

(16) I gat planti mama in no   *There are a lot of mothers*
     bihainim pasin tumbuna   *who don't follow tradition.*
              (233:7)

But in Media Tok Pisin there is now a very common use of husat, the interroga-
tive *who*, as relative pronoun in this pattern: N husat Pred. Some examples are:

(17) Na i gat planti nesenel   *And there are many national*
     politik man husat i givim   *politicians who are giving*
     sapot bilong ol i go long   *their support to this party.*
     pati ya. (379:6)

(18) Ol lain Banabans wanpela   *The Banabans, one group who*
     lain husat i laik kamap   *want to become free from*
     fri long Kiribati tu i   *Kiribati, also came.*
     kamap. (379:2)

(19) Ol lain husait bai kam   *The group who will attend the*
     long dispela woksop bai   *workshop will get more schooling*
     kisim moa skul long   *in accounting.*
     accounting.
              (RM: 21.5.81)

As with ya, the use of husat in *Wantok* began in April 1979. When asked about it the editor said it was adopted because it is 'broadcasting Pidgin'.[4]

Mühlhäusler (1977:573) mentions that an anglicised construction using husat is sometimes found in creolised Tok Pisin. However the English origins of this usage have now been obscured,[5] and it has been adopted and changed by Media Tok Pisin so that it can be used not only as *who* but also as *which* for inanimate nouns as seen in the following examples:

(20) East New Britain em wanpela
     long ol tripela Provinces
     husat i bin kisim ful pawa
     bilong em yet.
             (RM: 29.6.81)

East New Britain is one of the three provinces which has got complete power for itself.

(21) Em i bin tok olsem, dispela
     stopim bilong ship em i go
     long rong pipol, olsem na
     inap bringim piksa nogut i
     go German Kampani husat i
     bin rereim wokabaut bilong
     dispela ship.
             (RM: 15.12.80)

He said the ban was pushed on the wrong people which could reflect a bad picture to the German company that is arranging the cruise. (This is the English script from which the Tok Pisin translation was made.)

Mühlhäusler (1977:572) also reports the use of we, the interrogative *where*, as a relative marker as follows: N we pred. However, it appears that in Media Tok Pisin, husat is used for this type when the N is [+ human]. More often is used for clauses of the N_1 we N_2 pred pattern (with the meaning *where, at which, in which*, etc.), for example:

(22) I gat 6-pela rum we ol nes i
     glasim ol sikman. (375:3)

There are 6 rooms where the nurses can examine the patients.

(23) Em olsem wanpela pilai we
     wanpela tim i lus na
     narapela i win. (379:3)

It's like a game in which one team loses and the other wins.

(24) Yalamet Community Village
     organisation i papa long
     haus we han bilong bank
     bai istap. (RM:30.6.81)

The Yalamet Community Village organisation is the owner of the building where the branch of the bank will be.

(25) Em i tok Lae i gat gutpela
     hap graon wea ol Agriculture
     student i ken traim
     paractical farming.
             (RM:29.6.81).

He said Lae has a good piece of land where the agriculture students can try practical farming.

These adverbial clauses are usually unmarked in rural Tok Pisin, for example:

(26) Em i laik kam long ples mi
     stap long en.

He wants to come to the village where I live. (literally: ... *to the village I live at it.*)

3. CONCLUSION

I have tried to show what has happened to Tok Pisin as its use has been extended into the media. There seem to be two opposing forces acting on the language in its new role. The first is the conservative force resulting from the standardisation necessary for intelligibility in wider use. The second is the innovative force bringing about changes required by the wider use, such as adaptation to a new medium and linguistic expansion.

Many questions have been raised, some of which can be answered with further research, others only with time. For example, will the use of standard Rural Pidgin continue in the media and if so, will it remain a conservative influence? Also, are certain innovative features of media Tok Pisin also found in spoken urban and/or creolised Tok Pisin or have different features developed?[6] Finally, will innovations of media Tok Pisin find their way into rural areas as the media become even more widespread?[7] The answers to these questions may prove interesting not only to those concerned with the development of Tok Pisin but also to language planners, creolists, and others interested in sociolinguistic change.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this article was presented at the Australian Anthropological Society symposium: Language in Social and Cultural Context, held in Canberra, August, 1981.

2. ol is the Tok Pisin plural marker. Thus the Rural Pidgin forms would be: ol minista *ministers*, ol tisa *teachers* and ol studen *students*.

3. This use has accompanied the development of a media style corresponding to the easily recognisable style of media English which makes extensive use of relative clauses. Here are two examples from page one of *The Australian* 5311, 26 August, 1981:

> G. Gordon Liddy, the man who masterminded the Watergate breakings, is offering himself to businessmen as an industrial counter espionage consultant.

> A strike which began on the Queensland coalfields nine weeks ago over pay relativities and widened to cover the use of apprentices during stoppages could threaten the development of new mines in the State.

4. Andrew Taylor (personal communication) reports an analogous use of the Hiri Motu interrogative daika in the media.

5. See example (3) above in which the writer uses husat as a relative pronoun in a letter complaining about people mixing English and Tok Pisin.

6. Another way of marking relative clauses in creolised Tok Pisin has been described by Sankoff (Sankoff and Brown 1976, Sankoff 1977), that is 'ia bracketing' or setting off the relative clause boundaries with the ia (ya) particle. However, this construction is not found in Media Tok Pisin.

7. An example of linguistic change spread by the media in the past has been reported by Mühlhäusler (mentioned in Dutton 1973:79) who said the use of bin as an aspect marker was popularised by radio announcers.

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