

## 23: Discover Your Language training in Papua New Guinea

Michel Pauw

**Abstract:** The “Discover Your Language” (DYL) training course in Papua New Guinea (PNG) is an introduction to linguistics (morphology and syntax) for Papua New Guinean Bible translators. It brings native speakers of minority languages out of their language area to a central meeting location, where they spend four weeks with mentors, teachers, other translators, computers, and digital audio recorders and are immersed in essential linguistics. Our primary goal is educational, to train the students to see and appreciate the grammatical structure of their languages and to apply that insight to their translation work. The secondary goal of DYL is to produce descriptive grammars of undescribed or understudied minority languages. Typically, two native speakers and a linguistically trained mentor work together to discover the language’s grammar and then write it up using a Tentative Grammar Description template. A paper based on four weeks of grammatical study cannot be compared to a written grammar based on several years of research. However, opening the world of grammar and linguistics to educated speakers of an endangered or minority language is rewarding and motivating.

**Keywords:** course book, grammar template, native speakers, improved translation, tentative grammar description, text collection, posters, naturalness, linguistics

### 1 Introduction

The Discover Your Language Course (DYL) in Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a four-week course developed by the Pacific Institute of Languages, Arts and Translation (PILAT)<sup>1</sup> from a desire to provide basic training in linguistics to Papua New Guinean Bible translators with little formal education.<sup>2</sup> The foundation for this desire is the conviction that knowledge of and skills in linguistics will help translators be aware of the richness of their language and equip them to make their vernacular translation sound more natural. Therefore, the focus of this course is not on linguistics per se but on understanding how each participant’s language functions linguistically. That is why the course is called Discover *Your* Language.

### 2 Background

#### 2.1 Audience

In any course taught to speakers of a variety of minority languages, the material needs to be presented in an appropriate language of wider communication. In PNG, we have found it best

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<sup>1</sup> The Pacific Institute of Languages, Arts and Translation is a joint venture between the PNG Bible Translation Association and SIL PNG.

<sup>2</sup> I gratefully acknowledge Phil King and Ryan Pennington, who created the course in 2013. Modifications were made in subsequent years by Ryan Pennington, Ray Stegeman, Faith Turner, and Joyce Wood. In 2017, Moss Doerksen fully updated and revised the course notes, and the current Student Manual, Lesson Plans, and PowerPoints are the results of this major revision. Input and feedback, again, were given by Ray Stegeman, Faith Turner, Joyce Wood, and myself.

to use English as the language of instruction, supplemented by Tok Pisin, which is the second language of wider communication in the country.

This focus on English as the primary language of instruction significantly limits the number of people who qualify for DYL. Educational scores of PNG are among the lowest in the world, which is reflected in the student population of PILAT.<sup>3</sup> To ensure that students are sufficiently prepared for DYL, we require (1) a grade ten level, (2) the successful completion of previous courses in translation, and (3) a positive recommendation from both PILAT staff and the applicant's translation supervisor.<sup>4</sup> The required courses are not so much necessary as a foundation for DYL as they are to allow us to assess the student's academic performance in class. Even with participants who have finished grade 10, we cannot assume they are familiar with English grammar, including basic terminology like parts of speech, let alone other aspects of linguistics. This means that in DYL, we cover these basic topics as well.

Participants are asked to come in teams of at least two people, enabling them to discuss their language and discoveries and be a language resource for each other. DYL participants must have a working orthography of their vernacular in place, as it is much harder to analyze the language if there is potential disagreement or confusion about spelling.

For participants to meaningfully reflect on their language and to make it possible to discover linguistic features in their language and discuss them with their teachers or mentors, a *conditio sine qua non* for the course is to have access to a few well-written stories in the vernacular. Since it is logistically hard to inform participants before the course what kind of stories we expect, we spend the first few days of the course on guided text collection, which is further described below.

## 2.2 General course objectives

In the context of translation, DYL serves three goals. The first is to encourage and equip the participants to see their language as a real language with value. Many of our students begin their training as translators with a strong feeling of perceived inferiority of their vernacular language. The influence of Tok Pisin as one of the languages of wider communication in PNG is very strong and thus it often has a much higher status than the local languages. Throughout the course, we observe participants coming to realize that their language is a real language, even though it works differently from English (e.g., pronouns, demonstratives, agreement markers, word order). They get excited about linguistic features of their languages that do not exist or are not prominent in English (e.g., ergativity, tail-head linkage, pronominal clusivity, complicated verbal morphology). An alumnus once mentioned in a personal conversation that after finishing DYL, he gave a presentation in his community about a particular linguistic feature of their language, which was endangered, and this sparked a renewed interest in developing it. This person has met the first goal of DYL: to increase people's value of and appreciation for their local language.

The second goal of DYL is to equip the participants to talk about their language to strangers who do not speak it. Many local translators work with a translation advisor from outside of their language group. Later, their translation will also be checked by a consultant

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO. 2020. Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all. Paris, UNESCO, 222, mentions completion rates of 62% in primary education and only 17% in upper secondary education. The average finished grade level of 1200 of our students in translation, is just below grade nine and their English proficiency varies greatly.

<sup>4</sup> This includes at least the successful completion of the Translators' Training Course 1 (TTC-1), and ideally also TTC-2. Both courses contain Language Discovery components that cover a few linguistics aspects that are also covered a little more in-depth in DYL.

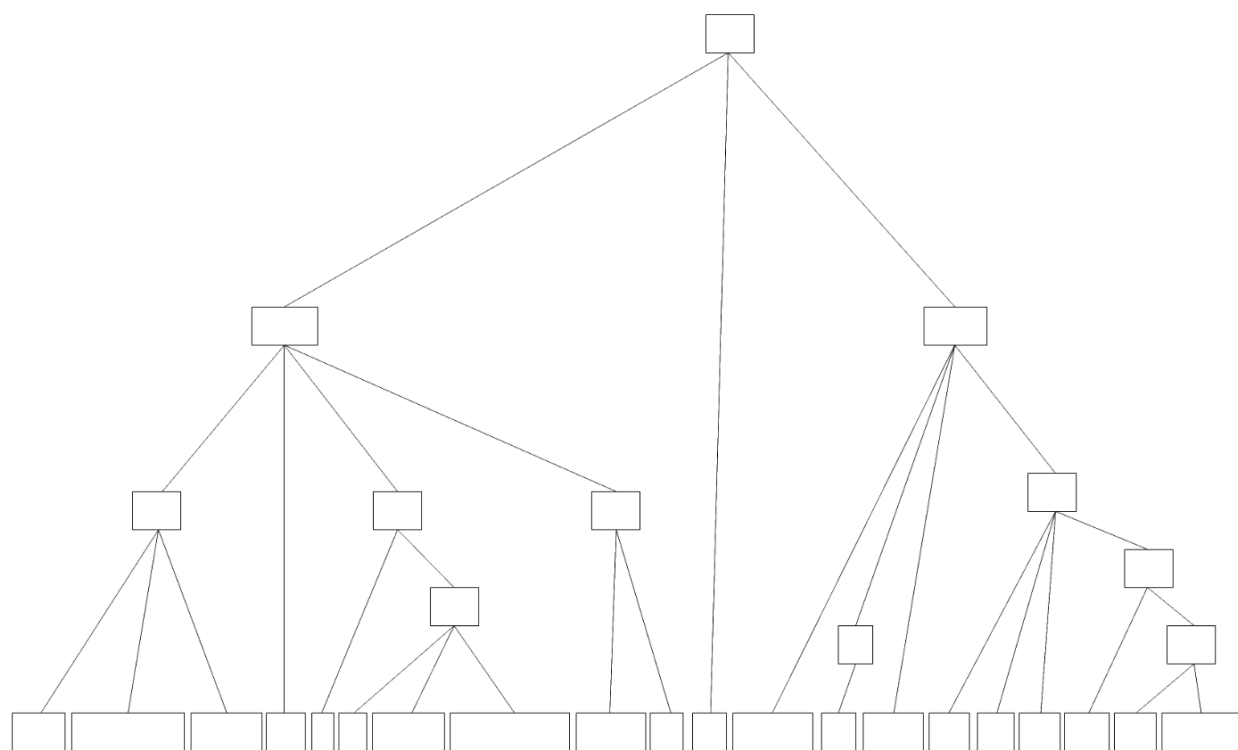
from outside. Providing translators with basic skills in linguistics significantly improves communication about the local languages beyond the level of responding to the question Q – “Why do you say it this way and not that way?” with the inadequate answer A – “Because that’s how we say it.” The idea that parts of words (morphemes) can have their own meaning is often particularly eye-opening and gets people thinking about the underlying linguistic explanation of why different but similar words (e.g., different forms of a particular verb) still have different meanings.

Lastly, the third goal of DYL is to give participants a better appreciation for translating in a way that makes the most natural use of their language. For example, beginning translators often have a strong inclination to follow the English word order as they translate from an English source text. Linguistic reflection on their vernacular language opens their eyes to the differences between the source and target language. This enables them to navigate the two languages better, resulting in more natural translation work.

### 3 Course content

#### 3.1 Course materials

Most course materials are bundled in an electronic teaching package, including the course book, lesson plans, and PowerPoints for each lesson. Besides these formal instructional materials, there are many visual aids such as props, posters, and other resources that are separately stored for DYL and other courses. Most of these materials are easy to recreate from the lesson plans.



These three hundred students came to the beautiful Training Centre to study hard and eventually they learned many new ideas about their languages.

Figure 1: Tree diagram at the beginning of the course book

A collection of published grammars and dictionaries are on display in the classroom, so participants can see what an academic grammar looks like. Sometimes we have a grammar of a neighboring language that can be consulted while participants discover their own language.

Finally, apart from standard teaching materials, several pieces of specific equipment are needed and usually provided in the course, including a computer with LibreOffice and Fieldworks Language Explorer (FLEX) installed, and a voice recorder.

### 3.2 Overview of the course book

The course book contains all the course notes plus additional exercises.<sup>5</sup> The linguistic domains covered in the course are primarily morphology and syntax.

We want the participants to understand that all the topics in this course are actually ‘building blocks’ for creating speech and that they all make sense as part of a ‘bigger picture.’ So, the course book starts out by presenting a tree diagram of a long sentence in English (see Figure 1): ‘These three hundred students came to the beautiful Training Centre to study hard and eventually, they learned many new ideas about their languages.’ Throughout the course, we return to this tree diagram as we explain and label the different parts of a sentence (words, phrases, clauses, sentences) and dive deeper into each part of speech.

Table 1: Course book chapter topics

Ch. 1: Introduction & Overview	Ch. 14: Transitivity and Clauses
Ch. 2: Nouns	Ch. 15: Equative, Descriptive, and Locative Clauses
Ch. 3: Verbs	Ch. 16: Verbs - Agreement Markers
Ch. 4: Introduction to Morphemes	Ch. 17: Verbs - Tense
Ch. 5: Singular and Plural Nouns	Ch. 18: Verbs - Aspect
Ch. 6: Adjectives	Ch. 19: Verbs - Realis and Irrealis
Ch. 7: Numerals and Quantifiers	Ch. 20: Adverbs
Ch. 8: Demonstratives	Ch. 21: Negation
Ch. 9: Noun Phrases	Ch. 22: Conjunctions
Ch. 10: Pronouns	Ch. 23: Serial Verbs
Ch. 11: Possession	Ch. 24: Commands
Ch. 12: Prepositions and Postpositions	Ch. 25: Questions
Ch. 13: Introduction to Clauses	Ch. 26: Reason/Result and Action/Purpose Sentences

By the end of the course, the whole tree diagram is filled with most linguistic labels that the participants will have learned. Table 1 gives a summary of the topics that are covered during the course.

### 3.3 Text collection

The first three days of the course are primarily devoted to collecting 6-8 short stories in the vernacular languages represented. This text collection aims to collect sufficient data to make meaningful linguistic research on each language possible. Participants are given instructions on constructing a natural-sounding story and are given a range of topics to choose from. These topics help us ensure that the stories contain the linguistic features we would like to cover in

<sup>5</sup> The DYL Course Book can be downloaded at <https://www.sil.org/resources/archives/95664>.

the course. For example, we ask the participants to tell an old ancestor's tale or a myth from their culture and a story about a recent past event, which we expect to elicit (different) past tenses. We also ask the participants to brainstorm and tell us what they would do if given a large amount of money or if their house burned down. We expect this resulting text to give us valuable linguistic data about conditionals and the irrealis mood.

For other topics, such as numerals, possession, and adpositions, we show a sequence of pictures per topic illustrating an unwritten story. We then ask the students to write a story in the vernacular that could be illustrated by those pictures. Through these elicited stories on predetermined topics, we try to ensure that the participants will have texts from which they can discover most of the linguistic features later discussed in the course.

For the participants to create these stories naturally, we ask them to think about the topic, discuss it within their language team and then appoint one person to tell the story orally, while the others use an audio recorder to capture it. After recording all the stories, participants work together to transcribe them and enter the texts in FieldWorks Language Explorer (FLEX) for later analysis during the course.

## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Staffing

DYL is a course collaboratively taught by a team of at least three teachers trained in linguistics. Besides the teachers, mentors are assigned to each language group, who work together with teachers and participants to make DYL a learner-centered experience for the participants. Ideally, these mentors are linguistically trained translation advisors who have worked with the language and thus know the language to a certain extent. When this is not possible, we assign mentors to the language groups who have at least received training in linguistics.

In an ideal situation, it is recommended to have a course coordinator solely responsible for all the course logistics so that teachers can focus on teaching and otherwise assisting the participants. This would include preparing teaching aids, printing materials, checking supplies, assigning lessons, maintaining the course schedule, and other supportive tasks.

### 4.2 Daily schedule

After the days of text collection, the rest of the course follows a largely predictable timetable that includes two lectures and exercise sessions for new content, each followed by a session for language groups to discover their language features and sometimes document their findings on posters.

08.00 – 08.30: morning devotions

08.30 – 10.00: presentation of a new grammar topic (lecture + exercises)

10.15 – 12.00: work time in groups (grammar descriptions + grammar posters)

13.30 – 15.00: presentation of a new grammar topic (lecture + exercises)

15.15 – 16.30: work time in groups (grammar descriptions + grammar posters)

In addition, participants of DYL are asked to spend about 2 hours per night on their homework, which consists of finishing their work of the day, reviewing what they have learned or preparing for the next day.

### 4.3 Presenting a new grammar topic

In class, one of the teachers will teach the topic using a PowerPoint as a guide, and later, participants can review the relevant chapter in the course book as a summary of the lesson. Thus, participants go over the material two or three times, reinforcing their learning.

Each new topic is introduced in a lecture of about 45 minutes. This is the least participatory element of the course, although teachers are encouraged to teach this session as much as possible in an interactive style. Several of these lessons in DYL involve role plays, games, or demonstrations, and often participants are asked to partake in these activities. These lectures are then followed by an additional 45 minutes for the participants to work through the exercises in the course book, which helps them reflect on what they have just learned and take the first steps to finding these features in their language.

Recurring elements in these lectures include definitions and terminology, a demonstration of the feature in English or Tok Pisin, and examples of how other vernacular languages express the same concept differently. A theme throughout these lessons is that languages are different and often express the same idea with different grammar, which is often a revelation to participants. For each topic, participants are encouraged to discover how their language differs from English and other languages, or perhaps how it is similar. This often leads to excitement and leaves the participants impressed by how their language is unique.

At the end of the discussion of each topic, the participants are asked to briefly describe what elements of that topic are present in their languages and give examples. These examples will help them describe their language in the group work session.

The role of the mentors in this part of the course is to ensure that the participants in each language group understand what is being taught. They can repeat things in their groups or explain them in Tok Pisin if needed. They ensure the participants understand the exercises in the course book and guide them in their discovery.

### 4.4 Example lesson

The lesson on demonstratives may serve as a typical example of presenting a new topic in DYL. The teacher starts with a Bible verse that contains one or more examples of a demonstrative in English.<sup>6</sup> In basic terms, the word ‘demonstrative’ is explained as ‘pointing words,’ thus connecting a linguistic term to the audience’s basic English vocabulary. Additional examples are given from daily conversations, and students are asked to share a few examples as well.

After this brief introduction, the teacher explains how demonstratives are used in English, agreeing with nouns in singular and plural.

Then the use of English demonstratives is compared to that of Tok Pisin, which only has one demonstrative *dispela* (this/that), and which may be pluralized by adding the pluralizer *ol*: *ol dispela* (these/those).

Next, a comparison is made with another PNG language that has an entirely different demonstrative system as compared to English and Tok Pisin. In this case, an example from Fore (ISO 639-3 for, Eastern Highlands, PNG) is given, which distinguishes nine different demonstratives, depending on variables like distance and elevation, but not number.

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<sup>6</sup> Since our students are all Bible translators, biblical examples are referenced throughout the course book. The main purpose of this is to demonstrate the relevance of the course for the work that the participants do. Exercises with sentences from the Bible are given in which the participants highlight linguistic features. And participants are regularly asked to check how they have translated particular features and how they would do it differently now that they have learned about that particular grammatical topic.

Table 2: Demonstratives in the Fore language<sup>7</sup>

	Low		Neutral		High	
<b>Near speaker</b>			<i>má</i>	‘this here’		
<b>Near addressee</b>			<i>pi</i>	‘that there’		
<b>Close</b>	<i>mé</i>	‘that down there’	<i>mí</i>	‘that over there’	<i>máe</i>	‘that up there’
<b>Mid</b>			<i>maré</i>	‘that over there’		
<b>Far</b>	<i>mó</i>	‘that down there’	<i>maró</i>	‘that over there’	<i>mayo</i>	‘that up there’

From this comparison, the participants begin to understand that demonstratives work differently in different languages. They realize that this is okay because that is how languages are. As students gain an appreciation for the differences between languages, they become motivated to learn how demonstratives are used in their own languages.

After discussing the morphology and semantics of demonstratives, the teacher continues by explaining possible syntactic usages of demonstratives. For example, in English, demonstratives can modify nouns (e.g., *this* child) or replace them (e.g., when will *this* happen?). It is explained that some languages may use different demonstratives in these two cases. Thus, a teacher should be trained in linguistics and have enough experience in comparative linguistics to be able to suggest different possible scenarios for the participants' languages.

The next part of the session is reserved for exercises. Participants work through an exercise in English where they underline each demonstrative. Then, they look into their vernacular stories or into their (draft) Bible translation to find sentences that exhibit examples of demonstratives and highlight them.

Finally, participants are given an exercise that bridges to the next session of working on the Tentative Grammar Description. They are asked to produce a list of all demonstratives in their language, give a gloss or a rough definition, and provide an example sentence for each. They are also encouraged to consider how each demonstrative is used in combination with other parts of speech (e.g., whether there is agreement or not) and what effect the choice for one demonstrative has on semantics (e.g. whether different demonstratives indicate differences in distance, elevation or maybe even emotional connotations).

#### 4.5 Tentative Grammar Description

Each session introducing a new grammar topic is followed by ample time for the students to work on their Tentative Grammar Description (TGD), which is the most participatory component of the course. For this task, a template in Libre Office Writer is used, which already includes all front matter, topics, and introductions to the topics so that participants can fill it in with data from their language discovery. Instructional sections in the TGD are marked in green, so these sections can be easily identified and deleted when a specific task is done. The template also includes macros that enable the user to include multiline text examples easily (vernacular, gloss, free translation), either written directly or copied from FLEx, and have them formatted consistently.

In cases where the participants do not have extensive computer skills, it is recommended that they focus on their language data and spend as much time as possible analyzing it while the mentor takes the responsibility of writing any findings into the TGD. This way, time is not wasted with slow typing or challenges with technology.

<sup>7</sup> This example in the DYL Course Book is taken from Foley (1986).

The texts collected at the beginning of the course form the most important data for this grammar description. Participants will analyze those texts to see which linguistic elements are present in their language. And as they describe those features in the TGD, they will include examples from those stories to provide evidence for their claims.

Although this TGD does not compare to a written grammar based on years of research, it is still an invaluable tangible outcome of the course that the participants can take home and present in their communities to promote linguistic awareness. The fact that their language can be described like a prestigious language such as English is, for many participants, an experience that makes them proud of their language, which is one of the purposes of the course. In many cases, this TGD is the first documentation of their language that has been published or written. As such, it will provide a welcome starting point for any future linguist or translator who will engage with the language.

#### 4.6 Example of a TGD section

The following description of demonstratives in Aramba (ISO 639-3 *stk*) of Western Province, PNG may serve as a typical example of a completed topic in the TGD (Baku et al. 2016:29-30).

Table 2: Example completed topic in the TGD

#### Demonstratives

A **demonstrative** (also called a “pointing” word) points you toward the place where the people or things are. They might be near the person speaking (for example, **this** dog), somewhere away from the person speaking (for example, **that** man), or in some other direction or place. In Aramba, we have found the following three demonstratives.

#### *Demonstratives in Aramba*

Demonstrative	English Equivalent
<i>ne (nàf)</i>	this (particular) person/thing near me
<i>fàn (fàf)</i>	that (particular) person/thing near you
<i>mbe (fàf)</i>	that (particular) person/thing over there

If someone talks about a particular person or thing, he would add a definite marker *nàf* or *fàf*. The choice for either one seems to be determined by the desire to harmonize the first consonants of each word.<sup>8</sup>

#### Example 43

*Árà ne ngarúwó thúwe?*  
what this man.ERG doing?

'What is this man doing?'

<sup>8</sup> Technically, this is called ‘articulation harmonization.’ In Aramba, ‘mb’ and ‘f’ are both bilabial consonants.



**Example 44**

*Mba krara to mamyabèrge themè e sàwáber*  
 then parrot.ABS REAL papaya.tree.on he.saw.it and bow.ABS

*fewes sàwaxus e thasuw fàn krarayàn.*  
 arrow.ACCOMP he.picked.up.it and he.pulled.it DEM parrot.towards  
 'He saw [the] parrot sitting on [the] papaya tree and picked up [the] bow  
 with arrow and pulled it towards that parrot.'

**Compound forms**

In Aramba, case marker suffixes can be added to demonstratives, resulting in compound forms.

***Demonstrative compound forms in Aramba***

Compound Form	Underlying Demonstrative	Underlying Suffix	English Equivalent
<i>nende</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>-nde</i>	'like this'
<i>fàndá<sup>9</sup></i>	<i>fàn</i>	<i>-nde</i>	'like that'
<i>mbende</i>	<i>mbe</i>	<i>-nde</i>	'like that there'
<i>nàmbá</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>-mbá</i>	'from here'
<i>fumbá</i>	<i>fàn</i>	<i>-mbá</i>	'from there'
<i>mbumbá</i>	<i>mbe</i>	<i>-mbá</i>	'from over there'
<i>nàndá</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>-ndá</i>	'towards here'
<i>fumbo</i>	<i>fàn</i>	<i>-fo<sup>10</sup></i>	'towards there'
<i>mbàndá</i>	<i>mbe</i>	<i>-ndá</i>	'towards over there'
<i>nàmbá</i>	<i>ne</i>	<i>-mbá</i>	'this side'
<i>fumbá</i>	<i>fàn</i>	<i>-mbá</i>	'that side'
<i>mbumbá</i>	<i>mbe</i>	<i>-mbá</i>	'that side over there'

**Translation issues for articles and demonstratives**

Since English has only one demonstrative for 'that' and Aramba has two, in translation we need to know where things and people are located. The Greek source text may sometimes help here, as Greek has different demonstratives.

<sup>9</sup> The word-final *-á* instead of *-e* is the result of vowel harmony.

<sup>10</sup> While one would expect the suffix *-ndá* as in the previous and the next example, in this particular case the demonstrative *fàn* combines with a different case suffix *-fo* that we find in nouns (e.g. *mèng-fo* 'to the house'). If *fàn* would combine with the suffix *-ndá*, then this would result in the same form *fàndá* that we saw above as a combination of *fàn* with the suffix *-nde* resulting in *fàndá* because of vowel harmony.

## 4.7 Grammar posters

On several days throughout the course, we ask the participants to choose one particular feature of their language and present it to the other participants. Through this activity, they gain practice in orally describing their language in linguistic terms and become aware of the linguistic wealth represented in the classroom.

Usually, participants work together as a language group to create an A2-size flip-chart poster of the feature they choose to present, using different color markers to highlight certain morphemes, markers, or patterns. Each presentation is followed by a brief group discussion to answer any questions. Teachers and mentors make sure that there are always at least a few questions.

At the final graduation ceremony, some of the best posters are presented to the public to celebrate the end of the course.

## 4.8 Learning assessment

Most learning can be identified by closely observing participants throughout the course in the various activities. The mentor assigned to each language group activity monitors the team dynamics. While the course is designed to allow each team member to contribute according to their strengths, it is the responsibility of the teaching and mentoring staff to ensure that all participants are actively involved and to assist them when they need help. Thus, it is relatively hard for struggling participants to remain unnoticed. When these struggles are noticed, the mentor is available to assist.

The TGD and the grammar poster presentations are indicators of group learning that show both quantity and quality of learning. Often those who learn the most describe a significant amount of data and present it well to others.

Throughout the course, three quizzes are given to test each participant's understanding of the concepts presented in the lectures. The quizzes are given on a Friday, so they can be graded over the weekend, returned to the participants, and discussed on Monday.

Finally, each individual is asked to present one grammar topic of their choice, for which they are also graded. In this presentation, participants score points for the content, its coherence, and how they present it to the audience. The final grade for DYL is a weighted average of all three grammar quizzes and this final presentation.

It should be noted that a final grade for DYL is not our ultimate goal. The course is successful when all participants are actively involved and participating, which is observed throughout the course in all activities. On the other hand, the final grade gives us a specific indicator of how successful each participant may be in other courses in our curriculum.

As the participants return to their communities, we give them the assignment of choosing one of the topics they have studied and presenting it to the community. If they want to apply for further training, they must send us a report with photos of this teaching event.

## 5 Evaluation of the course

### 5.1 Factors of success

One of the keys to DYL's success is having a mentor available for each language group. Since we teach this course to at least four and sometimes as many as ten different language groups, it is not possible for a few teachers to interact with all the groups at a deep level. Thus, having a

mentor for each is mandatory. This person can constantly monitor the situation in the group, explain things again if the participants did not understand certain concepts, assist the participants in doing the exercises and writing the grammar description, and provide feedback to the teachers if any concept needs more clarification.

A second key to success is the text collection sessions at the beginning of the course. In the early years, we elicited these texts throughout the course, but having all the texts available at the beginning provides the participants with enough data examples for all the language features they will discover in working through the coursebook from beginning to end.

Thirdly, participants appreciate the time designated for language discovery after they are introduced to each new topic. Without this time provided immediately afterward to look at their texts and to start describing their findings in the TGD, the learning would not be nearly as significant.

Finally, each printed TGD is a tangible reminder of the value of that particular language and an encouragement to develop the language through further linguistic research, language documentation, literacy, and translation.

## 5.2 Challenges

One challenge we face in teaching DYL in a linguistically diverse country like PNG, with its 800+ languages, is that we must deal with several different language families. Some linguistic concepts that feature in one language may not occur in another. Sometimes, this causes confusion, for example, when participants from an ergative/absolutive language try to apply the lesson on subject and object to their language. Sometimes it is even frustrating and discouraging, for example, when participants look for a particular feature in their language only to realize that it does not exist (e.g., serial verbs). Sometimes participants feel badly about this as if their language is 'lacking' something. In those cases, we emphasize that each language is different and has its own strengths and beauty.

Ideally, it would be helpful for the teachers to have a rough idea of the typology of the languages that are represented in the course to anticipate major differences like SVO/SOV word order, a nominative/accusative case system versus an ergative/absolutive case system, and whether or not languages have serial verbs or tail-head linkage. Then, language groups with similar typologies could be grouped. Unfortunately, this is not always possible due to logistical challenges and the fact that many languages in PNG have not been documented yet.

One of the biggest challenges is always the lack of time. Teachers often find it difficult to keep the introduction of each lesson short enough so that participants have enough time afterward to analyze their data and describe what they discover. When time becomes an issue, it is preferable to spend more time describing fewer topics in the TGD than to inadequately cover all of them. When completing the course evaluation, participants often say they wish that the course would be extended by another week.

Unfortunately, due to staff shortages, it is not always possible to assign mentors to each language group who match the profile of an ideal mentor. Generally, the more qualified the mentor is, the more quality output we usually see in the TGD.

Finally, our participants' range of academic skills is sometimes quite significant, even if we set grade 10 as the entry level for this course. Although a lack of academic skills is one of the greatest challenges for this training in PNG, it is rewarding to see all participants having this opportunity to expand their horizons.

## 6 Conclusion

The DYL course is about discovering and describing the participants' languages. First, participants learn about language features through lectures followed by exercises that apply these features to different PNG languages. After each lecture, participants from the same language group work together, under the guidance of a linguistically trained mentor, to describe each particular language feature using vernacular texts that are elicited at the beginning of the course.

The result of this course is an increased awareness of the participants that their vernacular languages are not inferior to the major languages of wider communication. Participants also gain a much better understanding of how languages can be similar or different from each other and how this affects their work of translation. The most tangible outcome of the course is the Tentative Grammar Description, which, for many endangered languages represented in the course, is the first language documentation.

Every time DYL is conducted, we see enthusiastic teachers and grateful participants who enjoy discovering how their languages work. Most participants return home with a new perspective on their language and are impressed by its beauty. Although there is no tool to measure the impact of this course on Bible translation, translation advisors sometimes say they find it much easier after the course to talk about language features with translators who have attended, and the result is an improved working relationship in the translation process.

In any case, all participants walk away from DYL with the same conviction: their language differs from English and Tok Pisin, and they understand and value the differences. As a consequence, they aim to follow the rules of their language as they write their vernacular in a way that is accurate, clear, and natural.

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