

## AUTHORS FOR PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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Mitupela wokim ripot bilong wanpela skul ol i kolim olsem 'Skul Bilong Raitim Ol Stori'. Na mipela laik toksave long dispela.

Orait, em gutpela samting ol manmeri bilong tok ples ol i yet raitim stori long tok ples bilong ol na ol wantok i ken kaunim. Olsem mipela pulim sampela man ol i kam long tesin bilong Institut Bilong Tok Ples na skulim ol long dispela. Em tasol.

### Introduction

'Skul Bilong Raitim Ol Stori' was held at Ukarumpa, the Summer Institute of Linguistics' Papua New Guinea Headquarters, from 22 May to 8 June, 1973. This paper is about the experimental course that we ran to meet the need in a new way for reading material in Papua New Guinea villages. It was specifically intended to train P.N.G. authors to write for their own language areas. We are concerned that new literates be kept literate by doing plenty of reading. From reports of experience in other pre-literate communities, we believe that without a variety of interesting titles available in varying degrees of reading difficulty, new literates will quickly lose interest and thus will lose many reading skills through lack of practice. Therefore, we see the need to provide new literates with plenty of literature.

S.I.L. members working with village authors in Mexico have found that literature that will be the most appealing is that written by members of the reader's own cultural group. The work of an outsider, no matter how great his command of the language and knowledge of the culture, is often inadequate. On the other hand, we feel that the local writer has the potential to reach his reading audience on the most meaningful level.

Experience gained in two other workshops, one led by Roy Gwyther-Jones at Ukarumpa in 1972, and another led by Glen Bays of the Creative Training Centre, Madang, in West New Britain earlier this year, has helped us design this longer three-week course.

I hope that the experiences recorded in this report will be of value to those in the University interested in finding and training writers in New Guinea Pidgin.

### Guiding Principles

The two guiding principles were non-criticism and production.

We, (Ray Johnston and myself), decided to follow the lead of the Mexico Branch Literacy Department of S.I.L. We believed with them that

new writers, often very sensitive and doubtful of their capabilities, need an atmosphere of freedom, appreciation, non-criticism, and encouragement. Although we gave suggestions, on the whole, each budding writer was allowed freedom to produce what he wanted. This was in contrast to the typical composition class in grammar. We did not criticise punctuation, style, content, penmanship, or anything else. We only expressed appreciation for what they produced. We only edited for spelling and punctuation as we typed manuscripts and stencils.

As regards style and content, we assumed that we were really not the ones to judge anyway. It seems that ultimately, the reading public should be the final judge of style and content.

This was a production workshop. That is, the men were told on the first day that they were going to produce 50 copies of a 10 to 12 page booklet for their own people to read. The reasons for this were two-fold: (1) to have something to show for their work, and (2) to learn something of the cost and labour involved in producing a book. So the men actually collated, stapled, and assisted with duplicating their own books. They all drew their own illustrations and cover designs. Plates were made from these and run off by offset process. By actually handling the money to pay for materials, we hoped that some of the men would begin to realise how much it costs to prepare books.

We felt that these two factors, an appreciative, non-critical atmosphere, and the prospect of a finished product at the end of the course were largely the reason for the phenomenal output and cheerful enthusiasm of the men.

### The Participants

Each of the 13 original participants was sponsored by an S.I.L. worker or a missionary. Each of the sponsors was interested in producing more literature for the new literates in his area. We and the sponsors tried to explain to each of the prospective writers that he would be helping his people by providing reading material for them. A few of the men had this purpose in mind as indicated by their writings, others obviously did not. But whatever their motivation, all worked hard to produce books.

The most formal education any of the men had was about six years. Some had only learned to read and write in an adult literacy programme.

### Practical Considerations

In such a production oriented workshop, certain practical considerations should be noted: (1) Typing facilities, (2) Printery facilities, (3) Duplicating, and (4) Finances.

#### *Typing Facilities*

The physical and nervous drain on the supervisors was intensified by the need to keep up with the typing. We had help from a part-time typist for four days. We felt that the students and sponsors should have copies of everything they had written, not just the published material. Therefore, the typing of these manuscripts put an additional load on us all. Even considering the probability that lecture time could be cut down in future workshops, more typing personnel would be needed. I

consider that a half-day typist is necessary for every five writers. If the course were all in Pidgin, the typists would probably have to be able to edit as they typed.

#### *Printery Facilities*

Pages of text were duplicated while covers and illustrations were printed by offset process. With the offset facilities and inexpensive plates available, covers and illustrations were no problem. The men drew their own covers and illustrations with nylon-tip black drawing-pens.

#### *Duplicating*

We had planned that, after a minimum of training, the prospective authors themselves would be able to operate the duplicator. However, because of its duplicity, (*non-duplicating ability*), Ray Johnston had to run it. Lesson -- be sure the duplicator is fool-proof.

#### *Finances*

We took in \$33.00 in course fees. We spent \$130.00. This amount included polaroid films, photographs of the participants with quite a few copies and enlargements, stencils, stencil ink, correction fluid, bond and mimeo paper, (including 2.6 reams of duplicating paper lost due to the perversity of the duplicator), printshop charges, typewriter use, mileage on vehicles, pencils, biscuits, tea, sugar, staples, and drawing pens.

#### *In Retrospect*

We believed the fact that the writers had a definite production goal was highly motivating. Each was eager to produce a book with his own name on the cover.

The atmosphere of non-criticism, acceptance, and appreciation for all work produced was necessary and good. I felt it contributed greatly to the writer's self-confidence. However, it would have been better if we could have had more time on a personal level to suggest ways they could have improved their stories.

Our main problem was lack of typists. Fortunately the sponsors typed any manuscripts and stencils for stories in the vernacular. These were approximately 66% of the total. If we hadn't had this help we would have needed a full time typist for every five authors. One partial solution would be for at least some authors to type their own.

We would definitely include time for making covers and illustrations in future workshops. Admittedly, some of the designs and pictures were inferior, (from our viewpoint only!), but at least the authors enjoyed doing them. On the whole, pictures would enhance the value of the books in both the author's and readers' eyes.

One of the participants was at a disadvantage because he really did not speak Pidgin. Therefore, we would be sure that each sponsor checked up ahead of time on the writer's facility in the language of teaching.

During the next course we want to localise more by training a Papua New Guinea man in the job of co-supervisor/instructor. We would have appreciated some local typists who could edit Pidgin also.

The plan for book distribution that evolved was that 30 copies go

to the sponsor -- (sold at ten cents each they would cover the fee), ten copies to the Literature Development Office and ten copies to the author. This plan should have been set out clearly at the *beginning* of the course.

It was apparently helpful to the writers to work together at long tables in one room. Sharing tea and biscuits at the tables seemed to build a unity in the group and increased production. Working to a schedule was productive also.

A problem to us was the lack of self-criticism or desire for self-improvement on the part of the authors. However, perhaps these attitudes will develop as they hear the reactions of their readers. Perhaps too, their greatest need at this time was to build up self-confidence.

With more time, we could have done more to help authors develop a greater awareness of: (a) words and how to use the right one to give a sharp edge to the writing, and (b) words to describe what is conveyed by the five senses -- e.g., some exercises in observation and written reporting would have made the men more aware of their own feelings at the time we staged an 'electrocution' and therefore more able to verbalise what they saw.

In conclusion, for prospective authors not used to the discipline and sometimes critical attitudes of professional teachers, we believe our two-fold emphasis was good.

Early in the author's experience we tried to build up his confidence. The appreciative atmosphere not only caused production to go up, but also we feel we won some new friends because we appreciated their work. (I did not have to fake my enthusiasm. Some of the social criticism was powerful and some of the humour was rib-tickling.)

In one sense, the workshop can take the role of the publisher. He is one who stands between the author and his prospective reading audience. On the one hand, he encourages and directs the creativity of the author. On the other, he tries to determine the reading interest of the 'public' and promote the author's work to that public.

I have reported on the course we ran and the books produced, but the real test of success is how they are accepted by the readers. The feedback from two areas so far is that the general reception has been good, but more investigation needs to be done among the readers in the villages.

However, in Papua New Guinea, at least at the village level, there is little 'reading public' to speak of, so it is still difficult to determine its interests and book promotion is even harder. We are trusting that, with feedback from the production of 'Skul Bilong Raitim Ol Stori', we can begin to find out something about the potential reading tastes of Papua New Guinea's villagers. Then, we can help prospective authors to write better for their people.

We are just beginning.

#### Note

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