

PIDGINEERING

D. C. Laycock

Australian National University

Mi laik makim tripela tingting ol i save tingim long Tok Pisin. Namba wan i olsem. Bai gavman na saveman ol i pasim sampela lo bilong Tok Pisin na olgeta manmeri i mas bihainim dispela lo ol i pasim. Dispela em i gutpela samting o nogat?

Namba tu i olsem. Sapos yumi tok em i gutpela samting, bai yumi mas makim wanpela komiti bilong stretim dispela lo. Wanpela man tasol i no inap.

Namba tri i olsem. Sapos dispela komiti ol i makim sampela lo bilong Tok Pisin, bihain yumi mekim wanem na ol manmeri i ken bihainim dispela lo.

Orait mi laik tokaut long pasin bilong stretim Tok Pisin na mi laik autim tingting bilong mi long faipela samting.

(1) Yumi ken kolim nem bilong dispela tok ples olsem wanem? I gat planti nem, tasol mi skelim na mi no laikim tumas. Ating i mobeta yumi kolim nupela nem bilong Tok Pisin. Na mi yet tingim wanpela nem i kamap olsem tok ples Kumula. Na mi laikim tumas dispela nem tok ples Kumula.

(2) Yumi ken raitim Tok Pisin olsem wanem? Orait ating yumi mas bihainim Tok Pisin ol i bin raitim long Nupela Testamen.

(3) Sampela manmeri ol i no raitim f na p, nogat. Ol i raitim p tasol olsem: paipela, piptin, popela, na potnait. Na olsem ol i no raitim v na j. Olsem taim yumi pulim sampela Tok Inglis i kam insait long Tok Pisin yumi no ken hariap na raitim f, v, j. Nogat, em samting bilong Tok Inglis. Yumi mas bihainim nek bilong Tok Pisin tasol.

(4) Yumi save pinis. Ol i bin pulim tok bilong planti tok ples i kam insait long Tok Pisin. Tasol nau ol i laik pulim planti Tok Inglis i kam insait long Tok Pisin. Na mi lukim i no stret. Sapos yumi laik pulim tok i kam insait long Tok Pisin, ating i mobeta yumi pulim tok bilong sampela tok ples bilong Papua Niugini o Indonesia.

(5) Orait mi laik tok long rot o pasin bilong Tok Pisin i skruim tok i go na i no kamap kranki. Sapos yumi laik tingim nupela tok i kamap yumi mas bihainim nek bilong Tok Pisin tasol.

Orait long dispela mi laik autim wanpela tok piksa. Orait yumi makim wanpela tok olsem strong. Na dispela tok i gat

planti hap liklik tok bilong en olsem: strongpela, strongim, strong bilong en, na tok strong.

Nau yumi makim narapela tok olsem tru. Na dispela tok i nogat planti hap tok bilong en. I gat tupela tasol olsem: tok tru, na trupela. Tasol sapos manmeri ol i laik mekim hap liklik tok moa bilong en ol i ken mekim olsem: tru bilong en, na truim em, olsem tasol. Yumi mas bihainim nek bilong Tok Pisin tasol na tingim nupela tok i kamap.

Orait sapos yumi laik makim wanem kain kain lo bilong Tok Pisin yumi mas mekim olsem. Pastaim yumi mas makim wanpela komiti bilong stretim Tok Pisin na ol i ken bosim dispela wok. Na olgeta manmeri bilong gavman na misin na kampani ol i mas bihainim wanpela rot tasol. Na ol i mas wokim planti kain kain buk moa long Tok Pisin. Ol i mas tok save long olgeta pipel na ol i ken save gut long wok bilong dispela komiti bilong stretim Tok Pisin.

The decline of colonialism since World War 2, with the concomitant rise of newly-independent nations, has brought many dramatic changes in its train. One less dramatic consequence of this decline in colonialism, but a significant one nevertheless, is the fact that linguistic engineering has once again become respectable. The idea of human monkeying with language was anathema to the founders of modern linguistics, the structural linguists of the 30s and 40s. They took the view that language was a natural phenomenon, with its own laws of change and development, and that the right attitude of scholars to adopt in the face of this phenomenon was to describe exactly what was found in the data, with the changes and developments analysed in their own terms. Such scholars were prepared to make only cautious predictions about the way a language might develop in the future--and they showed a general disinterest about whether the language did in fact change in the way predicted or not. To actively promote or discourage changes was far from their thoughts.

The slow filtering down of this attitude to the conservative body of the population responsible for the making of dictionaries led to a general decline in the production of the previously popular 'prescriptive' dictionaries, which listed only the ways in which an educated person was *expected* to speak, and which accordingly omitted, among other things, all the words that such a person should *never* use. Along with this decline went a rise in the production of 'descriptive' dictionaries, which included common speech errors as well as the many taboo words that even educated people *do* use. The howl of protest from the even more conservative purchasers of dictionaries showed, however, that the old prescriptive attitude was not quite dead, even in this age of permissiveness.

Linguists who are concerned with the status of their discipline as a science--scientific linguists or linguistic scientists, as you will--cannot fail to acknowledge that a detached and uncompromising attitude to data (that is, a 'scientific' or 'descriptive' attitude) is the correct one. No one would advocate a return to the prescriptive outlook of the nineteenth-century English grammarians, who among other things wasted a lot of time, and paper, castigating such 'solecisms' as 'It's me', or 'split infinitives', or prepositions at the end of the sentence. But a consequence of the broad interpretation of what constitutes data has been

that the mechanics of how people actually use language, and the ways in which language changes, are now somewhat better understood. We have evidence that the course of a language can be, and is, influenced by factors that are outside what descriptive linguists of the 30s would have regarded as relevant to the core description of the language. Such factors include the influence of prestige speakers of the language--kings, queens, politicians, educators, TV interviewers, pop stars, depending on where one's definition of where prestige lies--as well as normal processes of eroding of phonological and grammatical distinctions, folk-etymologising, and creation of new lexical items in the colloquial sphere, that play an important part in the development of any living language.

Although we have only recently started to take note of them, such processes can be documented for many languages, at almost any stage of their history. Modern German got its start in the early sixteenth century as the 'Kanzleisprache', or chancellor-language, of Nürnberg, which was a deliberate attempt to combine features of Northern and Southern German dialects--a language which, moreover, was assisted greatly by the translation of the Bible into it by Martin Luther. (In the same way, modern Pidgin may perhaps in the future be seen to date from the translation of the New Testament into it, in its new standardised form). It is also reported, although not reliably, that the pronunciation of modern standard Spanish, where *z* in all positions and before front vowels are pronounced as *th*, took its start from the prestige dialect of the Castilian court--perhaps a king who lisped. The speed with which new lexical items can enter a language is illustrated by the perhaps also apocryphal story of a Dublin theatre manager who, towards the end of the eighteenth century, bet that he could have the whole of London talking of a new word within 48 hours--and chalked the invented word 'quiz' over hundreds of walls in London. In more recent times, catch phrases have spread with alarming rapidity; in the 1830's everyone was saying 'Does your mother know you're out?', in the First World War 'Kitchener wants you' and 'That's the stuff to give the troops' --to mention only some among hundreds. In my more impressionable years, the catch phrases derived from the radio show 'The Goon Show', and everyone was saying 'Ying-tong-iddle-i-po' and 'He's fallen in the water' --which have in turn been superseded by catch phrases from television shows such as 'The Monty Python Show' (and there must be new trends even later, but I have to confess that I am not up with them).

Which brings us, by a somewhat roundabout route, to the subject of this paper, which is the possibility of language engineering with regard to New Guinea Pidgin--and I digress only long enough to explain that one of my prime motives in presenting this paper was to establish my claim to the invention of the very useful word 'Pidgineering' for 'Pidgin engineering': a linguistic creation which ranks, in my mind, as highly as the creation by another colleague (Dr. LaMont West) of a term for the science of describing sign-language among Australian aboriginals and American Indians, namely, 'finguistics'.

Given then that a considerable amount can be imposed on a language by people standing, as it were, outside the normal 'unconscious' use of the language, the only questions remaining are whether it is *desirable* to impose such changes, just what kind of engineering should take place, and the best strategy for introducing changes. In the case of Pidgin, the first question is fraught with political, social, and economic

considerations which are not in themselves the subject of this paper, but which may perhaps be discussed more fully at this conference. The second question is one for a committee, not for any one person to answer, since all the known factors of the Papua New Guinea linguistic and sociocultural scene will have to be considered. I confine myself here to giving my idea of the forms which 'Pidgineering' could take, arranged under sectional headings.

Name

The development of New Guinea Pidgin is greatly hampered by the lack of a suitable name. 'New Guinea Pidgin' is a description, not a true name, and is associated in many people's minds with a general attitude to all pidgins as inferior kinds of speech, or baby talk. 'Neo-Melanesian' is not much better; it is also a description, and a somewhat clumsy term for the name of what is certainly a significant language, even if it does not become a national one. The Pidgin term for Pidgin, 'tok pisin' or 'pisin', is an eminently suitable name as far as Niu Ginian speakers of Pidgin are concerned, carrying with it the connotation of 'totem'; but the unfortunate resemblance to the English word 'pissing' probably precludes it from acceptance by the English-speaking world outside Papua New Guinea. But it is likely to continue as a common name within Pidgin itself. Names like 'tok boi' are too much relics of the past to be considered. What is really needed is a totally new name, one that has no previous connotations, and one that will fit equally well into the sound systems of both English and Pidgin. With this in mind I very tentatively suggest three possibilities:

(a) *Niume1*. An arbitrary, shorter, and 'Pidginised' form of 'Neo-Melanesian'; but it has the disadvantage that there is no root *me1* in New Guinea Pidgin--or, if there is, it is likely to suggest something to do with the Post Office.

(b) *wantok*. A suggestion made by a scholar in our Department. (Mr. Peter Mühlhäusler) The word *wantok* is of course already in Pidgin, in the meaning of 'one who speaks the same language'; it is not a far step from this to an extended meaning of something like 'unifying language', and the word has powerful emotional connotations. But the extension of meaning may cause difficulty.

(c) *kumula*. My completely arbitrary formation from *kumul* 'bird of paradise'--an important bird in Papua New Guinea, and an important national symbol, appearing as it does on the country's flag and crest. This would be my choice; the word is euphonious, has positive emotional connotations (and no negative ones), causes no problems of homophony with existing words, and fits well into both English and Pidgin. In addition, a *kumul* is also a *pisin*.

Orthography

As a result of orthography conferences sponsored by the major missions in Papua New Guinea, there is already in existence a standardised Pidgin orthography--the orthography of the Pidgin New Testament and the dictionaries of Mihalic and Steinbauer--and I do not think any major changes should be made in this. Everyone, including myself, will have some preferences for some individual words to be spelt in different ways, and there will always remain the possibility of indicating regional or other

variations within the general frame-work. For the record, I list my own preferences for a few common words:

Standard Spelling: ai, beng, faipela, faiv, famili, fifti, fiftin, foa, fopela, foti, fotin, hamas, ia, ink, karanas, malomalo, ranawe, sutim, tispela, tromoi, tumora, twelv, wanem (cf. Mihalic and Sievert 1970).

My preference: hai, benk, paippela, paip, pemili, pipti, piptin, poa, popela, poti, potin, haumas, yau, ink, koronas, malomalo, ronawe/ronewe, siutin, dispela, troimwe, tumara, twelp, wonem.

This is quite a short list, which means that in general I am satisfied with the standardised spelling. The implications of some of the suggested changes are discussed in the next section. Some inconsistencies need to be removed from the suggested standard: note the occurrence of *pawa*, but *plaua* and *taua*; or the contrast between *nus* and *nius*, observed in this case, but not in the case of *siut* (*sut*) 'shoot' and *sut* 'suit'.

Phonology

Pidgin phonology makes less distinctions than English, which means that some English borrowings can be taken into Pidgin only at the risk of creating homophones (words which sound alike but have different meanings--cf. Laycock 1970 for a list of 28 common homophones). The question arises, whether it would be desirable to deliberately extend the sound system of Pidgin, by introducing new words in such a way that a distinction must be made between them and existing words. The major aspects of the sound system affected by this are the distinctions between *f* and *p*, *v* and *w* or *b*, *s* and *j* (as well as the additional English sounds represented by *ch* and *sh*), and differences in vowel quality. Already there are a number of words in Pidgin that are probably best spelt with *j* or *f* rather than *s* or *p*: *Janueri* and *Februeri*, to mention only two. But I feel that it is dangerous to extend this kind of distinction--that is, to introduce large numbers of words containing *f*, *j* or *v*--at least until such time as such distinctions are commonly made by a large number of Pidgin speakers. There are still many Pidgin speakers who do not distinguish between *s* and *t*, or *r* and *l*, distinctions which what we may call 'standard Pidgin' (if there is such a thing) cannot do without.

The same considerations apply to distinctions in vowel quality or vowel length. Many Pidgin speakers distinguish two vowel qualities in words like *pul* 'paddle' /*pul* 'fool' or *sol* 'salt' /*sol* 'shoulder'; many--perhaps even the majority--do not. All in all, therefore, it is best to treat Pidgin, as far as the introduction of new common words is concerned, as having only a five-vowel system, and lacking entirely phonemes *f*, *j* and *v*. A small number of words involving such distinctions will inevitably creep into the language anyway, but an attempt to restrict these to place names, personal names, and rare word, would certainly do no harm at present.

Lexicon

The total vocabulary of New Guinea Pidgin contains words from German, Latin, Malay, Portuguese, Spanish, Polynesian languages, and Austronesian languages of the Bismarck archipelago; but the sole source in recent years for lexical introductions has been English. This is not surprising, in view of the fact that English has a strong prestige value as the language of Australian administration and educated Niu Ginians; but it is not a trend that need be accepted passively in 'Pidgineering'. Many English lexical items are unsuited to be loanwords in Pidgin, either because their phonology is not readily assimilable, or because they are homophonous with existing Pidgin words, or because their length is greater than that expected of Pidgin words, or because they are inflexible in creating new lexical constructions in Pidgin. Linguistic engineers can deliberately turn to other languages, and there are a couple of good candidates in the region, whose phonology is adapted to that of Pidgin. These are:

Non-Austronesian Languages of Papua New Guinea.

These have to date contributed almost nothing to the vocabulary of Pidgin--I know of only one word, *sangguma*, from the Monumbo language near Bogia--but some of them could be systematically exploited, especially for names of flora and fauna, indigenous customs, house styles, artifacts, and so on. It is possible that the rapid spread of Pidgin in Papua New Guinea may lead naturally to a number of borrowings from, say, Enga or Chimbu (Kuman).

Austronesian Languages of Papua New Guinea.

With the important exceptions of Tolai (Kuanua) and Motu, these are in much the same position as the non-Austronesian languages. It is expected that their contribution would be mainly in areas connected with fishing, boat-building, and navigation.

Tolai (Kuanua).

The number of words from Kuanua in New Guinea Pidgin is already high (at least 11%); there is much more that Kuanua could contribute, but perhaps political and sociological factors may make increasing this percentage undesirable. Pidgin is already regarded by many Tolais as being pidgin Kuanua rather than pidgin English.

Motu and Hiri Motu.

Motu and its pidginised form Hiri Motu have as yet contributed nothing to Pidgin; but the deliberate introduction of words from Motu could assist in overcoming the feeling that many coastal Papuans have of Pidgin being a foreign--that is, New Guinean--importation. Also, Hiri Motu in particular has made its own creations to express technical words in English, and these could easily be adopted in Pidgin.

Malay and Indonesian.

The phonology of Malay and Indonesian closely resembles that of Pidgin, and new lexical items could easily be taken from this source--especially as both Malay and Indonesian have also had to cope with the impact of Western technology in recent years, and have already incorporated many of the new words required in Pidgin. In both Malaysia and Indonesia, national language committees have been active for many years

on the very problems that now face New Guinea Pidgin, and much could be learned from this source.

Grammar

The field of grammar is a much trickier one for linguistic engineering than any of the previous fields. The grammar of a language is a closely-interwoven system, and interference at any point has consequences that are noticeable throughout the system. (This is also true of the lexicon; and indiscriminate interference with the lexicon can have serious grammatical consequences.) The areas of Pidgin grammar that could perhaps be altered are the following:

(a) extension of the phrase-formation and compounding system, by which long phrases can be reduced to short, self-explanatory phrases; *man i gat save long stadi bilong tokples*, as an unwieldy term for 'linguist', can for example be reduced to *saveman tokstadi*.

(b) extension of the interchangeable base system. Pidgin has many 'bases', such as *strong*, which can be used as noun (*strong bilong en*), verb (*strongim*), adjective (*strongpela man*) and adverb (*tok strong*); other bases, such as *muruk*, *tru*, are more restricted in their use. But there is no linguistic reason why we should not have, for example, verbs like *murukim*, *truim*, with whatever meaning seems appropriate.

(c) extension of formative elements such as reduplication, and markers like *kirap* for inchoative actions, *hap* for incompleted actions, and *mek* for causative actions, along lines familiar from indigenous (mainly non-Austronesian) languages of Papua New Guinea--for example, *kiraplukim* 'start to look at', *haplukim* 'glance at', *meklukim* 'cause to look at'. But such innovations may be too dramatic at this stage of Pidgin, and may have little chance of acceptance.

(d) creation of a true passive in Pidgin. Many bases currently have passive meaning: *glas i bruk*, as against *ol i brukim glas*. But extension of this principle leads to difficulties: we cannot say **buk i kis pinis* for 'the book has been taken'; even less can we say **meri i kis pinis* or **man i sãut pinis* for 'the girl has been taken' and 'the man has been shot'.

(e) regularisation and extension of subordinate clauses. There is no real reason to substitute *bikos* for *bilong wonem*, or *wen* for (*wonem*) *taim*; but the more ready acceptance of sentences making use of these subordinate markers would increase the flexibility of Pidgin. Similarly, a convenient marker for relative clauses is needed; a sentence like 'I have seen the engine which my father brought to Rabaul' may go readily into Pidgin as *mi lukim dispela ensin papa bilong mi i bin kisim i kam long Rabaul*, but there are areas of ambiguity with this kind of construction; a sentence like *em i lukim wanpela man em i go antap na i godaun gen* requires careful intonation to resolve ambiguity.

Let us now assume that it were decided, on a high official level, that changes of the above type were to be introduced into Pidgin, and that systematic additions to the lexicon, in various technical fields, were to be made. How could this be carried out? The prerequisites would seem to be:

- establishment of Pidgin committee or centre with official or semi-official status;

- the preparation of publications at all levels: official news, children's books, story books, informative manuals, creative writing, and a national Pidgin newspaper (which should preferably not be entirely an organ of the Government);

- continuous plugging of the Pidgin committee's decisions and innovations on radio, and television when it comes, and in the newspapers.

Such things are easier said than done; but it is at least important to know that they can be done. With regard to publications at least, the cost need not be great, if offset printing is used; the many mission publications, and those of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, provide a good guide in this respect. Many translations can be provided by voluntary labour from University students, and perhaps mission personnel and academics--though all these would need to be checked by the committee for accuracy and consistency. It is a challenging prospect, even if it should never become reality.

Notes

¹ Laycock (1970) lists the following contrasts made by some speakers: *hat* 'hot'/*hat* 'hard', *wet* 'wait'/*bet* 'bed', *nil* 'nail'/*pis* 'fish', *kol* 'cold'/*dok* 'dog'/*bol* 'testicle', *pul* 'paddle'/*pul* 'fool'.

References

- Laycock, D.C. 1970. 'Pidgin English in New Guinea', in *English Transported*, edited by W. Ramson. Canberra: ANU Press.
- Mihalic, F. and J. Sievert. 1970. *Authorised Spelling List*, Madang: Kristen Press.