

WHEN IS A WORD NOT A PIDGIN WORD?

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Bipo, long taim pait i no kamap, i nogat planti manmeri ol i save Tok Pisin. Tasol lain manmeri ol i save Tok Pisin ol i no save paulim tok, nogat. Ol i save tok stret tasol.

Orait, pait i kamap na bihain planti manmeri ol i go long taun na pulap long en. Na sampela i no kisim gut Tok Pisin. Na bihain sampela moa i go long taun na ol i bihainim nek bilong ol manmeri i no kisim gut Tok Pisin. Olsem olsem na tude yumi lukim planti manmeri ol i no save gut Tok Pisin.

Orait yumi lukim planti yangpela manmeri ol i bin skul long Tok Inglis. Dispela lain ol i no save gut Tok Pisin na ol i save miksim planti Tok Inglis wantaim Tok Pisin. Na mi lukim i no stret.

Em gutpela samting yumi pulim sampela Tok Inglis i kam insait long Tok Pisin. Tasol yumi mas tingim gut pastaim na kisim sampela tok bilong helpim ol manmeri long autim tingting bilong ol. Yumi no ken kisim nating na kisim nabaut nabaut, nogat.

Taim yumi kaunim sampela buk na niuspepa ol i bin raitim long Tok Pisin yumi save lukim planti Tok Inglis ol i bin miksim wantaim Tok Pisin. Orait yumi kaunim wanpela Tok Inglis na yumi ken askim olsem: Dispela Tok Inglis em i stap insait long Tok Pisin pinis o nogat? Ating nogat. Ating yumi mas makim dispela tok tasol na wet istap. Sapos bihain planti manmeri ol i mekim Tok Pisin na yumi harim dispela tok gen yumi ken tingim olsem: Tru, dispela tok istap insait long Tok Pisin pinis. Tasol yumi no ken pasim dispela tok. Ating yumi mas makim wanpela komiti bilong yunivesiti na ol i ken lukautim gut dispela wok bilong stretim Tok Pisin. Ol i ken tingim gut na pulim sampela tok bilong narapela narapela tok ples i kam insait long Tok Pisin. Na ol i ken stretim rot bilong raitim Tok Pisin. Em tasol.

"All languages are fit to express the concepts of those who use them; and if they should chance not to be, they [those who use them] make them so" (Hall 1966: 90).

In Papua New Guinea developments which require the assistance of language are occurring quicker than the development of the languages themselves. This is especially so with Pidgin which is used by many more speakers than is the widest spread indigenous language, and its users include a large component of workers and urban dwellers whose need

for an expanded vocabulary is greatest. It is thus reasonable to advocate a programme which would facilitate development. However, before embarking on suggestions for such a programme I would like to set down some observations based, not on formal linguistic grounds, but on the basis of personally using the language for many years, teaching Pidgin-speaking New Guineans and teaching Pidgin to expatriates and Papuans.

Pidgin is not spoken well by Papuans, or for that matter, by all New Guineans, and this applies especially to Highlanders who have been widely exposed to its use only since the second World War. The percentage of expatriates who speak with facility is low indeed; thus the lucidity of the language is often judged by people who barely understand it themselves. Someone who speaks the language well and who has the facial and bodily expressions that go with the language and who can speak with the correct accent and vocal intonation can communicate with surprising effectiveness even on relatively complex matters. Nevertheless, it is at this time essentially only a non-technical language of communication between speakers, but there has been over the last few years some development in its technical and administrative usage.

Linguistic development in well-established languages usually takes place at an appropriate pace. This is not so with Pidgin which continues to undergo change, but as it is a second or foreign language to most people, its development is slow whilst its spread is rapid. It seems certain that it will develop into Papua New Guinea's lingua franca and may even become, if development is adequate, the country's national language. As an indication of this, in my own time in Papua New Guinea I have seen it spread all through the highlands, from the early days when it was spoken by only one woman and four or five males in the Western Highlands, no one in the Southern Highlands, a handful of people in Chimbu and a larger handful in Goroka, and when no Highlander spoke any English. Pidgin was at that time almost unknown in Papua but was spoken with incredible facility by its exponents, such as long service police constables, especially by those from Manus, Madang and Rabaul. Pidgin is used by more people today than in the 30's and 40's but with poorer facility.

There are few things more satisfying to a person than the fluent and correct use of his own language, but with the multiplicity of Papua New Guinea languages a second language of communication is necessary. Based on this assumption it is of national importance for the Pidgin language to gain the status and admiration of Papuans and New Guineans alike so that the language can be developed quickly and aid in the task of nationalisation. To do this, much more must be written in Pidgin, and this mostly will have to be done by graduates from our two universities rather than by Australians who often have hang-ups as to the language itself. Some think it is 'quaint'; some think it should remain always as it is; and some see it as a remaining colonial anachronism, which explains why quaint stories and humorous renditions of fairy tales have been more widely translated than serious novels and technical manuals.

When listening to broadcasts, debates in the House of Assembly and reading articles written in Pidgin in magazines and journals, one is impressed by the number of English words and phrases which are being introduced into both written and spoken Pidgin. In fact any two Papuans and New Guineans, conversing either in their own language or in Police Motu or Pidgin, can be heard to include in their conversation English

words with their English pronunciation, presumably because the English word is more expressive or because there is not a suitable word in their own language to convey the desired meaning. Recently in a Port Moresby government office I overheard a conversation in Pidgin between a Port Moresby Papuan and a man from Kerema. They liberally sprinkled their Pidgin with English and Motu. This would not likely have happened a few years back. Out of this kind of spread and development the problem thus arises (more especially in the teaching of Pidgin) as to whether these English or Motu words can be considered as Pidgin words or whether they should be considered merely as casual insinuations into oral or written Pidgin by a less-than-competent Pidgin speaker who does not have sufficient facility to coin appropriate Pidgin phrases or does not know the correct Pidgin word to use.

In most linguistic situations a small group of language learners are added to a much larger pool of people using a language as their own, as for example, in Australia where some thousands of continental migrants are added yearly. In pre-war times the Pidgin language was used by New Guineans with different mother tongues to communicate with one another and to communicate with Europeans. The stock of Europeans was small and stable and most of them spoke Pidgin fluently, and the few people who were being continuously added to this stock learnt the language better than today's learners because of their greater exposure to well-spoken Pidgin. Today's learners are in contact with fewer Pidgin speakers, many of whom are Highlanders whose Pidgin is poor. The situation is much the same for Papuans as well as for New Guineans who are learning the language.

In pre-war times labourers and workers coming from areas where Pidgin was not widely used moved into plantation and urban situations where New Guineans were fluent in Pidgin. However, from the early forties the pool of non-speakers of Pidgin eventually greatly exceeded the numbers of fluent Pidgin speakers and the learning of Pidgin by the newcomers deteriorated in quality. This resulted from the rapid increase in the numbers of English speakers migrating to Papua New Guinea and from the release from the highland districts of thousands of non-Pidgin speaking Highlanders who came to work in urban and plantation situations.

It was also during this period that English education in schools advanced, and schools were opened in many new areas. Lots of young people as a result began to speak primary English. There was also the removal of the *Tok Boi* complex among expatriates. In this complex the local people in New Guinea were discouraged from using English when speaking to expatriates. These factors tended to quicken the introduction of English words and words from other languages because English was being taught. Furthermore a majority of expatriates spoke none or very bad Pidgin and insinuated English words into the language to cover their lack of knowledge, and Papuans, who also were not fully fluent in Pidgin, spoke Pidgin on the radio and wrote their own material.

A situation has consequently developed where many English words which are used in Pidgin could hardly be considered Pidgin words on the basis of linguistic evidence. Some words quickly catch on and at times get different or expanded meanings and find their way into Pidgin dictionaries. Many, however, appear in Pidgin on the one occasion and then seemingly disappear. For example, in a 1972 broadcast where an interviewer spoke with a student the conversation went something like

this. "Yu go long...Skul A?" "Yes, mi salim eplikeson bilong mi na skul bod i-konsiderim na bihain ekseptim mi na mi go skul long fama." How many of these words can now be considered Pidgin words? Should this sort of development be condemned or encouraged?

In the early days of Pidgin many words of German origin were commonly used, e.g., *sapfen* 'mortise', *maisel* 'chisel', *supkar* 'wheelbarrow', *hobel* 'plane', *sparen* 'rafter' and *yot* 'iodine'. These words and many like them have now almost vanished from use and have been replaced with substitutes of English origin. Thus not only are English words being introduced but some are replacing specific words formerly used in Pidgin. Pidgin as a result is experiencing a two-way change of losing and gaining words, and because of the wide use of English most of the words gained are English. The following points then arise:

- (1) May teachers and those preparing texts accept these words as being Pidgin words?
- (2) May those teaching and writing adopt a policy of introducing English words when there is no specific Pidgin word?
- (3) May they replace Pidgin's distinctive circumlocutions with more precise nouns, verbs and descriptive adjectives?

For example, 'game', 'beef', 'mutton' and 'shell foods' would be handy words to include in the Pidgin vocabulary as there really is no simple way now to distinguish varieties of meat and their source. The language would also improve if there were a greater variety of descriptive nouns. For instance in Pidgin a horse is *hos* and there is difficulty in implying the differences which are implied by the English variants of horse such as 'steed', 'charger', 'hack' and 'gelding'. Care would be necessary however not to make changes that would spoil the innate charm of Pidgin by too much linguistic interference, but changes are needed and quickly, especially if Pidgin is to become the national language. I think it essential that English words accepted into Pidgin be spelt phonetically in all Pidgin writings.

We have examples of English words at the present time which have been accepted into Pidgin either with a wider or varied meaning from their original English usage. Two fairly good examples of this are *spak* and *pasendia*. Before the word *spak* was introduced to mean 'inebriated' or 'tipsy', the word *drunk* or the phrase *longlong long drink* were used to refer to inebriated expatriates because native people legally did not have access to alcohol. (It is interesting to note that the word *spak* became necessary when Papuans and New Guineans, who now have access to alcohol, required a more polite word than *drunk* to describe their own inebriation or that of their fellows.) The word *pasendia* I understand arose out of the custom of young Highland girls travelling along the Highlands Highway as passengers in vehicles without paying a fare, and thus the word *pasendia* has now been extended to mean in Pidgin a 'free-loader' or 'someone who does not pay his way', a 'lodger', a 'non-paying guest' within the *wantok* system.

Maybe the language will expand quickly enough without assistance, but this in my opinion is doubtful and Pidgin is already inadequate for the needs of the urban dweller to communicate effectively. The needs of trades, professions and general technological learning will not be met unless the vocabulary is expanded deliberately, by exposing Pidgin

users to a greater aggregate of new words so that more words will be taken quickly into the language. This can be done most effectively if Pidgin is taught in both primary and secondary schools. This would also open up opportunities for involvement of the linguistic departments of universities and tertiary institutions.

It would aid the development of Pidgin if a university linguistic committee could be given the responsibility for listing suitable words to be used in written and spoken Pidgin. The criterion would be the need for providing words to eliminate excessive circumlocution, and for providing specific words for use in mathematics, technical and professional skills. This deliberate attempt to speed up the acceptance of new words should not affect the normal spontaneous acceptance of the words into Pidgin.

The committee would also be given the tasks of maintaining the currency of Pidgin dictionaries, including words that have been accepted by speakers, and of defining wider meanings of words if this should occur. Standard spelling in dictionaries is also essential to development. The current practice of giving more than one spelling to the same word in a dictionary should now be discontinued.

As an admirer of the uniqueness of Pidgin I would strongly advocate that the number of words introduced be kept to a minimum and be only those that cannot be covered or implied effectively by another Pidgin word or expression. To illustrate the kind of thing to be avoided I would like to cite the following classic example of how the language can be completely distorted if the introduction of English words is allowed on a scale which would overwhelm the existing Pidgin vocabulary without allowing the English words the chance of being adapted for Pidgin use. Some years ago a letter concerning the Administrator of the time appeared in a Rabaul publication and the opening paragraph read as follows: "His Honour, the Administrator of Papua New Guinea, Brigadier Sir Donald J. Cleland, Knight Commander of the Order of St John of Jerusalem, Commander of the British Empire, em i go long Nodup." It is certainly obvious that a Pidgin speaker would only grasp from this statement that the Administrator went to Nodup. It would have been better to have omitted the description of his titles and have stated the two important facts in Pidgin. I submit that the following would have been more in keeping with the Pidgin language; "Nambawan Gavman Sir Donald Cleland em i go long Nodup." This would have been better understood, would certainly not have been discourteous to Sir Donald and would have been more realistic as far as Pidgin is concerned. The other descriptive words change the sentence to an English sentence with a few Pidgin words rather than a Pidgin sentence with a few new words.

Having been involved in the teaching of Pidgin (mainly to expatriates), I have constantly faced the problem of when to teach a word as a Pidgin word. If one were to teach as Pidgin all the English words that can be found in Pidgin newspapers and other Pidgin oriented media, a vocabulary of three thousand words would not be unlikely. Consequently, there is a case for teaching Pidgin using the 'classical vocabulary', that is, the vocabulary of words tried by time and currently in use in rural areas. To do this would mean that although the Pidgin vocabulary would in time increase, the documented increase would be slower than the increase actually taking place now, because it would take time before some words now being used would be accepted and taught as part of the vocabulary. The language needs a bigger vocabulary to remove the

limitation on its professional and technical usage which is evident at the present moment. Out of the above problems an allied consideration arises, namely, should words be introduced into Pidgin in their English form (assuming that most of the introduced words would be English) or should they (especially the verbs) be Pidginised as, for example, adding *-im* to transitive verbs. There can be no specific plans for what will take place as it would be difficult to programme the inclusion of words, but there is the possibility of encouraging the introduction of words by teachers of Pidgin and by those who are responsible for producing written Pidgin.

R.A. Hall (1955: 90) states that a structural analysis "involving a classification and description of phonemes, morphemes, and combinations of morphemes, does for language, in a way, what anatomy does for the human body in pointing out the structure of cells, bones, flesh and vital organs. Yet an anatomical description of the human body, though essential for our understanding of its functioning, is far from giving us a picture of the person as he or she lives, breathes and acts...." Thus to get a language's personality we must see how it acts in society.

Hall goes on to mention that vocabulary, style, idiom and expression are all matters which go to forming the personality of a language, and he says: "Nobody 'invents' a language; you can't create a language by fiat or by deliberate introduction of terms. People will inevitably use words in accordance; not with someone's notion of what is 'correct', but with their own patterns of behaviour and outlook on life" (Hall 1955: 98).

Even though words cannot be introduced as Hall says by 'fiat', I see no reason why there cannot be a planned exposure of Pidgin speakers to new words. This has already been done to some extent in some publications which use many English words using phonetic spelling in an endeavour to shorten that which in Pidgin would take many sentences to explain. Examples of these recently introduced words and phrases are expressions such as *Tresuri Dipatmen*, *nesional baset*, *Haus Asembly*, *Minista bilong Edukesin*, *Lotu Anglican*, *trikim*, *kostim*, *fands*, *fan meri*, *lo na oda* and others which are now used regularly in Port Moresby conversational Pidgin.

The deliberate exposure of Pidgin readers to new words is not a new thing. A Rabaul publication of the early 40's made use of an expedient whereby a new English word was introduced into the text alongside the equivalent phrase in Pidgin in the following manner: "'Baset' o Pepa ol man bilong tresuri i raitim daun ol sampting bilong mani bilong gavman". Using this or similar methods the media could ventilate English words (or words from other languages) and expose those who use Pidgin to their meaning. It would not be unreasonable to expect that many of the words would be adopted into the language with their English meaning but with a phonetic spelling. Even if the words later were to acquire additional meanings this would be an advantage rather than a disadvantage to the development of Pidgin.

Papua New Guinea, more than many other countries, needs the help of a national language for unification. The national language, however, must be capable of handling the business, administrative and educational needs of the country. Pidgin, with assistance, will do this better than English for the majority of the country's citizens. It will have the

advantage of satisfying the need for 'our own language' felt by a great number of New Guineans. If some Motu words are included it will satisfy this need felt by Papuans also. There is no doubt in my mind of the 'own language' feeling amongst many of the country's citizens. This is evident by the quick acceptance and rapport achieved between expatriate and New Guinean strangers when the expatriate addresses them in Pidgin and by the constant use of Pidgin by university students and graduates and by those in senior administrative positions. This in itself is evidence of an incipient nationalism and as such should be encouraged for the help it will give to the Government's plans for unification.

In conclusion a 'word will be a Pidgin word' when it is included in a Pidgin dictionary, kept modern and up-to-date by a specific group whose task it is to constantly rewrite the official dictionary, to provide the appropriate people and organisations with words to use, and to force the pace of Pidgin development so that it will keep pace with the nation's total development. Not to do so will enhance the use of English but only for those who are fortunate to receive post-primary education. The result will be a further fragmentation of an already fragmented society.

References

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