

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE LINGUISTIC SOCIETY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA  
ON THE OCCASION OF ITS TENTH BIRTHDAY

by

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The Linguistic Society of PNG is ten years old this year so as President I thought it appropriate that some kind of review of its foundation and development should be attempted for this conference -- not that I can claim to be any kind of historian nor any kind of authority on the Society but in the circumstances I left my run too late to get someone more knowledgeable about it and/or perhaps better trained in history than I do it. Actually in a way it is poetic justice that I have been forced into this position for when the Society was first formed I was invited to become a member (along with lots of others) but rejected the opportunity to do so when I heard that it was going to cost five bucks a year. I remember saying to someone--I think it was Andrew Taylor, now Dr. Taylor of the Department of Language and Social Science, UNITEC, in Lae --, "Hell what do they think they are, it only costs eight bucks to be a member of the Linguistic Society of America" and in those days that was something. So I did not join and it was only after inflation and production costs began to push up the prices of other journals that I came around to thinking that five bucks a year for Kivung wasn't bad value after all especially seeing that the Society had, in the meantime, published some respectable papers. Besides, was I not interested in things linguistic in or about Papua New Guinea? And so I joined the Society rather late thereby putting myself at some disadvantage in trying to write about its history. Still here I am and so have to do the best with what I know and with what I have been able to piece together from the rather skimpy and incomplete records of the Society and from conversations I have had with some of those who have been involved in its activities for a longer period than I have. I did write to some others but left it too late to get any useful feedback and this pretty well explains why I have called this account a "short history". I leave the full history to someone more knowledgeable about the things than I. And so to the beginning....

According to Circular UP67-1950 the Society was founded in 1967 "at a meeting of staff and students of the University on October 11th. Professor Francis C. Johnson, Foundation Professor of the English Department, was elected Interim President, Dr. Andras Balint Secretary, and Mr. George Obara Treasurer." The new society was to be known as Kivung, the Linguistic Society of the University of Papua and New Guinea, and its aims were:

- 1) to hold meetings at regular intervals at which members or invited guests present papers on current research in the languages of Papua and New Guinea as well as on Problems of general linguistics with special emphasis on anthropo-linguistics, socio-linguistics, and psycho-linguistics. Presentation of papers will always be followed by discussion.
- 2) to publish the papers presented together with subsequent discussion in Kivung, the Journal of the Linguistic Society. The journal will also contain articles of interest to member of the Society, book reviews and information on forthcoming meetings.
- 3) to promote on the languages of Papua and New Guinea and on linguistics in general.

- 4) to put at the disposal of members books, periodicals and manuscripts on these subjects from its library. To serve this aim, the library of Kivung will solicit donations from linguistic societies, from Departments of Linguistics, of English, and of Foreign Languages, from Linguistics Institutes, from publishers and from interested individuals all over the world. In the circular it was also noted that the library of Kivung had already received a substantial donations from members of the Interim Executive Committee and from the Sacred Heart Mission on Yule Island.
- 5) to promote the publication of research on the languages of Papua and New Guinea in mimeographed or printed form through its own facilities, through the facilities of the University, and through grants and fellowships from the financial holdings of the Society as well as from other sources.
- 6) to devote concentrated research on developing the lexical and grammatical stock of Neo-Melanesian which appears on the way to becoming a creole language for the Territory.

These aims, and one other that appeared in Kivung 1(1), viz., to describe a New Guinea dialect of English, were presumably written into a constitution at the time but there is no present-day record of this. Still the various points listed as aims herein will serve as convenient pegs upon which to hang this brief account of the Society's origin and growth. Let us begin with <sup>the</sup> name of the Society.

(a) The Title of the Society

Present-day members will notice that the title of the society's journal Kivung derives directly from the original title of the society (see aim 2). This name, and the restrictive subtitle, The Linguistic Society of the University of Papua and New Guinea, apparently persisted until 1971 when there was a review of the constitution on 24.1.71 and the name changed to the more inclusive one, The Linguistic Society of Papua and New Guinea, but one still reflecting the political distinction between Papua and New Guinea. Kivung Volume 4 was the last volume to use this title; volume 5, number 1 appears under the title Kivung, journal of the Linguistic Society of Papua New Guinea.

The title Kivung is particularly interesting in view of aim 6 and subsequent developments more of which will be said later. It is clear from this evidence, however, that right from the beginning the Society has had a strong and continuing interest in Tok Pisin (then called Neo-Melanesian) and has done much to promote knowledge and acceptance of the language.

The old title also explains why some old members of the society still refer to congresses as Kivung congresses, a point which has long confused me.

(b) Meetings

The Society has always acted as a platform for disseminating information on current research and in PNG where the linguistic picture changes so rapidly this has provided a valuable professional and public service.

*all* The first meeting of the society at which papers were presented was on the 4th November, 1967, at the Recreation Hall of the Administrative College, June Valley, Port Moresby. This meeting was in fact, the first Congress of the Society and papers were given by members between 8.30 am and 12.00 noon and was followed by a "business luncheon" at 1.30 pm. There is no indication of when this luncheon finished and what transpired at it but I am willing to bet it continued for some time. Since then luncheons have given way to dinners and these have become a central feature of all the Society's congresses. Anyway amongst those who were listed to give papers were none less than Professor Max McKay, now Pro-Vicechancellor, Dr. Prithyindra Chakravarti who is still with us in the Literature Department, Mr. Ulli Beier, now Professor, Dr. Andrew Taylor of our sister institution in Lae, and the foundation president, then Professor of English Language, since departed for Hawaiian shores.

There has been a congress every year since then. These were held on the following dates and in the following places. Presidents elected at each meeting are also shown. A full list of executive members elected at the same time is given in Appendix 1.

<u>Congress No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location Held</u>	<u>Presidents Elected</u>
1	4.11.67	AdCol	Professor F.C. Johnson
2	12.10.68	AdCol	Professor R.N. Bulmer
3	3-4.10.69	UPNG	Professor M. McKay
4	20-21. 8.70	Ukarumpa	Dr. P. Chatterton
5	27-29. 8.71	UPNG	Mr. N. Draper
6	8-11. 9.72	Goroka	Mr. J. Noel
7	14-16. 9.73	UPNG	DR. B. Hooley
8	26-30. 9.76	Ukarumpa	Professor T.E. Dutton
9	19-21. 9.75	Goroka	" " " " " " "
10	17-20. 9.76	UPNG	Dr. A.J. Taylor

The records of the minutes of these meetings are incomplete so it is not possible to tell what particular things each president emphasised during this term of office. In my own case, however, I have been focussing on increasing membership, restoring the balance between TESL and "pure" linguistics, and increasing national participation in the society. I think it is a shame that president's reports have not been kept and published by the Society.

In the early days of the society there was quite a strong emphasis on TESL<sup>1</sup> but this seems to have changed five years ago for some reason and in most peculiar circumstances.

The back<sup>2</sup> ground to this was that following the 1970 Congress Professor F. Johnson wrote to the secretary of the society pointing out that:

"The arrangements in the past where there have been only either Linguistic sessions or Language Teaching sessions I think does not cater for the groups of people we have in the Society. There doubtless should be plenary sessions which would be of interest to both Linguistics and Language teachers, but having sat thru many tortuous esoteric papers on Linguistics, I can assure you that language teachers have found parts of our conventions extremely dull. I feel sure that linguists, who have had to suffer the banalities of descriptions of classroom procedures, have found some of the Language Teaching sessions equally dull. I think it would benefit Society and ATEPANG to combine and have an annual convention.... I am wondering if we ought to begin negotiations immediately with the Association of Teachers of English in PNG to hold a combined convention in 1971."

This suggestion<sup>was</sup> incorporated into the 1971 Congress and there were eleven TESL papers listed for that Congress as against 14 on other topics. However, following this congress there seems to be not only a sudden drop off in numbers of TESL papers given but also a return to former organizational patterns.<sup>3</sup> I am afraid I am unable to explain this turn of events but the record is like Brer Fox's tar-baby, "I say nathin". Perhaps others of you who know more about this could enlighten us.

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- 1) This emphasis is not reflected in the society's published papers. Only 6 TESL papers have been published out of 138 though there have been a significant number of papers published on English linguistics (viz., 24 out of 138).
  - 2) F.C. Johnson, letter to the secretary, dated 12th November, 1970.
  - 3) The following chart shows the number of papers listed on TESL and other topics for the ten congresses so far:

Congress	TESL	Other
1(1967)	1	8
2(1968)	?	?
3(1969)	13	10
4(1970)	4	15
5(1971)	11	14
6(1972)	1	15
7(1973)	0	16
8(1974)	1	17
9(1975)	0	11
10(1976)	6	24

(c) The Journal

This was first published in 1968 and as already noted was titled Kivung, the Journal of the Linguistic Society of the University of Papua and New Guinea. The publication has not kept pace with the production. At the moment we are only up to volume 8 no 2. The reasons for this have to do with problems of preparation of manuscripts and with editorship. The society's foundation and longest standing editor was Dr. Andras Balint who immortalized himself with (amongst other things) longish tendentious editorials in the journal until voted out of office and replaced by Dr. John Lynch on 15.7.74.

An analysis of the articles published in Kivung over the years shows that, excluding Tok Pisin which was the subject of a special conference here in 1973, the proceedings of which were subsequently published as Tok Pisin i Go We?, the journal has published mostly articles concerned with linguistic theory and analysis, descriptions of aspects of PNG languages, English, and languages, teaching, and in that order.<sup>1</sup> For further details see the author and categorial indexes attached.

On 12th November, 1970 Professor Johnson wrote to the secretary of the society at that time pointing out that<sup>2</sup>

"As the journal represents the Society as a whole it would seem appropriate for the Society, through its Executive Committee, to take final responsibility for the Journal. I therefore wish to propose that the Executive Committee appoint an Editorial Board to manage the affairs of the Journal. This of course, contravenes our non-existent constitution which calls for the appointment of an editor only. However, I think that the responsibility for the production of the Journal is such an important aspect of the Society's activities that it should not be left to one person to decide what happens with the Journal.

Professor Johnson went on <sup>to</sup> point out that he was not in any way decrying the work of Dr. Balint as editor, nor was he trying to appear wise after the event in criticising the selection of articles, or the editing and general management of the production of the Journal, but he said he did feel that

"it is the responsibility of the Executive Committee to ensure that the Journal represents the views of the Society and not those of one official of the Society."

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1) See Appendix 2.  
2) This was the same letter as that referred to in subsection (b) above.

Professor Johnson therefore proposed that in future the journal of the society should be managed by an Editorial Board of three members nominated by the Executive Committee. This proposal was subsequently put to the executive committee and incorporated into the constitution which was being revised at that time. The first Editorial Board to be so elected included the indefatigable Dr. Andras Balint, Dr. John Lynch, and Keith Johnson.

(d) The Library

This is an enigma. It is not mentioned in the files from that day to this. I am not aware of its existence though I have heard it said that there was some dispute about what happened to certain materials loaned to the Society by the Catholic Mission Yule Island. I am however, in no position to comment on this.

(e) Tok Pisin Research

Tok Pisin has always been a major concern of the Society and I think this concern reflects an avid interest on the part of the first editor of the Society's journal, Dr. Andras Balint, who published (albeit not under the Society's auspices) what is probably the most famous Tok Pisin dictionary ever published. This was the South Pacific Games Dictionary in three languages: Tok Pisin, English and French. It was a limited edition published by the author himself and is now a collector's piece, eagerly pursued by those in the know around rare bookshops everywhere.

Dr. Balint's interest in the language shows through clearly though he did admit in 1967 at the first Congress in a paper titled "Cultural Conflict in the Time Concepts of New Guinean Speakers: a Linguistic View" that he did not know much about PNG languages at that time. I think the society was fortunate in having someone of Dr. Balint's foresight at that time since Tok Pisin has continued to go from strength to strength, and language planning as a result, has become one of the most important issues in the country today.

Most congresses of the society have included two or three speakers on some aspect of Tok Pisin and the society has sponsored Tok Pisin classes annually between 1968 and 1973 when Dr. Balint left and the Department of language was formed and took over this function. The Society also sponsored a special congress on Tok Pisin in 1973. Several lectures were also given on Pisin at normal meetings of the society between times. The special conference came out in support for TP and made a number of recommendations about setting up research and collection of materials. The Government did not accept these proposals but a Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu Research Unit was established in the Department of Language and is attempting to achieve the same goals by different means. I spoke at some length about this unit at the 9th Annual Congress and referred to it again in my president's report again this year.

(f) The Constitution

The aims of the Society were as listed earlier but there is no extant copy of the first constitution into which these aims were incorporated. Members in the know say that there was a constitution of sorts accepted but it was not until 1970 that the constitution was discussed in some detail. At that time a dispute developed over the constitutionality of the AGM that year which apparently arose because there was no readily available constitution to which members could refer about a dispute over the size of a quorum at AGM's. As a result the executive took the opportunity to make other changes and I have already referred to Professor Johnson's letter of 12th November that year proposing that the editor be replaced by an editorial board. A special meeting of the Executive Committee was held on 27.1.71 in which these were discussed and the present constitution drafted. The main changes introduced at this point concerned:

- (a) a name change. The Society was hereafter to be known as The Linguistic Society of Papua and New Guinea. That is the Kivung title was dropped and the name was widened to include more than the UPNG.
- (b) editorial policy as already outlined;
- (c) quorums for general and executive committee meetings;
- (d) the publication of Kivung monographs and occasional papers;
- and (e) voting rights.

Well these seem to me to be the main points in the history of the origin and development of the society. However, no account of the history of the Society could be or would be complete without some reference, however brief, to the dynamic character of Dr. Andras Balint, foundation Secretary, and foundation Editor of the Society's journal. The Society reflects his energy, drive, and enthusiasm at all levels. ~~we have that~~ He was instrumental in getting the Society moving in the first place and in having certain clauses written into its aims, e.g., 2. I have already made some reference to these in appropriate places above.

Subsequently he carried the responsibility of editing and producing the journal single handed until forced, after complaints of interference, and threats to resign by other members of the executive (from the president down), to resign early in 1974 while in Sydney. He was moreover, responsible for organizing Tok Pisin classes from 1968 onwards. His attitude here was very much the same as that in the foundation of the journal earlier on, namely, to give value for money. Anyway the Society lost some of its glow and charm and sense of purpose when Dr. Balint left.



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There was only one position that he failed to achieve -- perhaps he never wanted it or perhaps others didn't want him to have it -- and that was the presidentship. As many people have said after seeing the listing of past presidents that somehow it seems empty -- somewhere there should be Dr. Blint. He so dominated the scene that there should really be some reference to him in any list. Perhaps the whole listing should have been mounted on one large background photo of Dr. Balint, that was the power of man.

In retrospect then the Society has evidently much to be proud of -- it is after all the oldest academic society in PNG (except for the Scientific Society) and it has done an important job in keeping language to the fore in PNG. In this way it has served a very important role in a country in which there was little provision for teaching and learning about PNG languages as a subject of some import and where language attitudes of Tok Pisin in particular have been very negative and based largely on ignorance. These important achievements but I do ~~not~~ think that now that a department of Language has been established that the Society ought to be devoting more of its energy towards increasing PNG membership and control of the Society. We are attempting to do this and it takes time but I do hope that by the time the next 10th birthday comes around it will be a society run entirely by PNGeans but <sup>one</sup> containing both nationals and non-nationals as ordinary members. I am sure that all of you who are present today will join with me in pledging support in helping to achieve this.

Thanking you  
Tom Dutton

APPENDIX 1

Executive Committees, 1967-1976

October 1967 to October 1968

President: Francis C. Johnson  
Secretary: Andras Balint  
Treasures: George Obara  
Executive Members: Moeke Helai  
Brian Hull  
Margaret Saville

October 1968 to October 1969

President: Ralph N. Bulmer  
Secretary: Andras Balint  
Treasures: Margaret Saville  
Copy Editor of  
Kivung: Elizabeth Sunderlin  
Executive Members: Moike Helai  
Brian Hull  
Rea Miria

October 1968 to August 1970

President: Maxwell Mckay  
Secretary: Andras Balint  
Treasurer: R.Keith Johnson  
Executive Members: Ronald Forrest  
Alan Healey  
John Noel  
Percy Chatterton

August 1970 to August 1971

President: Percy Chatterton  
Secretary: John Lynch  
Treasurer: Keith Johnson  
Executive Members: Andras Balint  
Edmund Burke  
Thomas Dietz  
Alan Healey  
Francis Johnson  
Ralph Wingfield

August 1971 to September 1972

President: Norman Draper  
 Secretary: John Lynch  
 Treasure: Frans Liefrink  
 Executive Members: Andras Balint  
 Ray Brown  
 Barry Irwin  
 Keith Johnson  
 Heiko Schaefer  
 Ralph Wingfield

September 1972 to September 1973

President: John Noel  
 Secretary: R. Keith Johnson  
 Treasurer: Frans Liefrink  
 Executive: Andras Balint  
 Ray Brown  
 Bruce Hooley  
 Tom Dietz  
 Ralph Wingfield

September 1973 to September 1974

President: Bruce Hooley  
 Secretary: Frans Liefrink  
 Treasurer: Ralph Wari  
 Executive Members: Boio Daro  
 Tom Dietz  
 Keith Johnson  
 John Lynch  
 Nicholas Peta

September 1974 to September 1975

President: Tom Dutton  
 Secretary: Bob McDonald  
 Treasurer: Frans Liefrink  
 Executive Members: Boio Daro  
 Ray Nicholson  
 Keith Johnson  
 Ali Laeka  
 John Z'Gragger

September 1975 to September 1976

President: ~~Bob~~ Tom Dutton  
 Secretary: ~~Bob~~ Bob McDonald  
 Treasurer: ~~Frans~~ Frans Liefrink  
 Members: ~~Ray~~ Ray Nicholson  
 Malcolm ~~Mc~~ Ross  
 Andrew ~~Mc~~ Taylor  
 Bruce ~~Mc~~ Cheetham  
 Ali ~~Mc~~ Laeka

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