

PIDGIN AS A MEDIUM
FOR TRAINING TRANSLATORS

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Orait, mitupela wokim ripot bilong wanpela skul bilong skulim ol manmeri long wok bilong tanim tok. Na mipela laik toksave long dispela.

Tripela ten man ol i laik kisim save long wok bilong tanim tok. Olsem na mipela pulim ol na toksave long ol long dispela wok bilong tanim Tok Inglis na Tok Pisin i go long tok ples bilong ol. Orait mipela bung na mipela i no mekim long Tok Inglis, nogat. Mipela mekim long Tok Pisin tasol.

Orait long olgeta moning mipela bung na wokim toktok, na long apinun mipela bruk na wanpela wanpela ol i tanim tok i go long tok ples bilong ol yet.

Orait, planti man ol i tingim olsem: Ating yumi inap autim tingting bilong yumi na toksave long wok bilong tanim tok, tasol Tok Pisin i no inap. Yumi mas pulim sampela Tok Inglis i kam insait long Tok Pisin na toksave long ol.

Na mipela i no laik long dispela tingting na mipela traim Tok Pisin inap. Mipela toksave long as bilong wanpela wanpela Tok Inglis na mipela makim wanpela tok piksa olsem: "Ol han diwai i olsem nek bilong tok na ol rop i stap ananit long graun ol i olsem as bilong tok. Man i no inap lukim tasol i pilim long tingting bilong em". Olsem mipela makim wanpela as bilong tok na tanim i go olsem: (1) "Bikos mi gat sik mi no ken i go. Yu wanpela i go. (2) Mi gat sik na long dispela mi no ken i go. Yu wanpela i go. (3) Mi no ken i go. Mi gat sik. Yu wanepela i go." Olsem olsem tasol.

Orait na mipela save skelim Tok Pisin na wanpela wanpela tok ples bilong ol na lukim as bilong tok na rot o pasin bilong skruim tok i go. Yumi save pinis. Tok bilong ol nambis i gat as bilong en yet, na bilong maunten i gat narapela as, na Tok Pisin i gat narapela. Orait mipela mekim olsem olsem tasol na ol i klia gut long as bilong dispela wok. Na mipela tingim Tok Pisin inap. Em tasol.

In April and May of 1973 the members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics conducted a training course in translation theory and practice. About thirty Papua New Guinean students attended a six-week course held at Ukarumpa, Eastern Highlands District. None of this would be especially noteworthy or of special interest to this body except for the fact that the entire course was taught in New Guinea

Pidgin.

The purpose of the course was to train Papua New Guineans to translate written materials from Pidgin or other vernaculars into their own vernaculars. Special emphasis was given to the translation of New Testament materials.

The majority of the students attending this course had little or no formal education. A few spoke English and several others had from 1 to 6 years of primary education. The requirements for the course were that the students be able to read and write Pidgin and be fluent in their vernaculars. Each of the students was joined by an expatriate supervisor who in most cases was also fluent in the vernacular of the student. While most of the students would later work alongside the expatriate in translation production, five of the students were expecting to translate into languages that were not known by expatriate linguists. At present four of these are engaged in producing vernacular translation materials.

The course was organised with lectures in the mornings and assignments in the afternoons. There were four staff members who gave the lectures. In the choice of staff, ability to communicate in Pidgin was given precedence over the degree of competence in the topics to be taught. The lecture sessions were not quite as formalised as we usually expect in school. A high degree of participation by the students was encouraged. If a lecturer felt he was not getting his point across he would ask other staff members if they had any ideas as to how the point could be gotten across. In some cases the other staff member might then take over the lecture.

Extensive use of illustrations was helpful to the students. Analogies were drawn between the structure of items found in nature and the structure of language. We found this method of proceeding from the known to the unknown the most effective.

For example, form versus meaning was illustrated from the structure of a tree, the trunk and branches representing the form of the utterance and the roots representing the meaning. From time to time a root would be exposed and above ground and so in language certain semantic elements were overtly signalled. *Ol han diwai i olsem nek bilong tok na ol rop i stap ananit long graun ol i olsem as bilong tok. Man i no inap lukim tasol i pilim long tingting bilong em.* Thus, like seven trees, each with differing trunk and branches but identical root structure, the underlying meaning of the following seven utterances is the same, but the manner of expressing (or not expressing) the cause-effect relationship is different.

- (1) *Bikos mi gat sik mi no ken i go. Yu wanpela i go.*
- (2) *Mi gat sik na long dispela mi no ken i go. Yu wanpela i go.*
- (3) *Mi gat sik na olsem mi no ken i go. Yu wanpela i go.*
- (4) *Mi gat sik na mi no ken i go. Yu wanpela i go.*
- (5) *Mi gat sik. Mi no ken i go. Yu wanpela i go.*

(6) *Mi no ken i go. Migat sik. Yu wanpela i go.*

(7) *Mi gat sik. Yu wanpela i go.*

The coining of new Pidgin words or use of English words in a Pidgin utterance was avoided in almost all cases.

In the afternoons the students did assignments which covered the topics for that day. These afternoon assignments were done with the help of the supervisor. This made it possible to set assignments using the vernaculars of the students.

The content of the course was devised by the staff members, all of whom had been involved in vernacular translation work for a number of years.

One of the initial topics covered was the nature of the New Testament text, its origins and transmission. The students needed to be prepared to meet variant readings in versions that differed. An understanding of the method of transmission of the New Testament also helped the students not to be afraid of attempting to pass it on also to the people who spoke their language.

Related to this was the matter of formal versus dynamic translation. The natural tendency of an untrained translator is to reproduce the form of the source text in the language into which he is translating without taking into account the resulting meaning. He is not usually concerned that he is reproducing the meaning of the source in his translation. A dynamic translation seeks to translate in such a way that the carry-over of meaning takes precedence over the carry-over of form where the two are in conflict. For example, "He saw a lot of new houses going up." This could be translated literally *Em i lukim planti nupela house ol i kirap i go antap*, but it would not convey the right meaning. *Ol i wok long kirapim planti nupela haus na em i lukim* is not quite a literal translation but it does convey the meaning. *Maski autim dispela tok long arapela man, haitim tasol* has hardly any formal correspondence to the English idiom "Don't spill the beans", but who would understand correctly if we translated *Yu no ken kapsaitim ol bin?*

We dealt quite extensively therefore with surface or formal structure of language in contrast with deep or semantic structure. This was done in part by contrasting sentences in Pidgin and vernaculars. Each sentence would contain two or more clauses in a given semantic relationship to each other but with that relationship signalled formally in quite different ways in Pidgin and in the vernacular.

Sentences in Pidgin were also parsed using the Object, Event, Attributive, Relational model. These were called, *Nem bilong samting*, *Tok wok*, *Tok save*, and *Tok bilong skruim tok* respectively. The results of this exercise were then used as a basis for putting all the information expressed or implied in these sentences into 'kernel sentences', each containing a single proposition. These 'kernel sentences' could then be easily translated into the vernacular and re-ordered, amalgamated, or otherwise linked together to express the full content of the original sentences in the most natural way.

An important application of the deep-surface concept is figures of speech (e.g., metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole, hupbole, litotes, hendiadys, and chiasmus) and these were quite

extensively dealt with. Once the students understood the concept of a figure they readily supplied them in their own vernaculars thus demonstrating their grasp of the concept. Terms such as *tok bokis*, *tok hait*, and *tok piksa* were used to describe various figures.

Another type of figure-like structure dealt with was the rhetorical question. Four semantically different types of questions were handled:

- (1) *askim bilong kisim save:*
yu go we?
- (2) *askim bilong givim save:*
Pilate said to Jesus, *Ating mi Juda a?* meaning
"I am not a Jew".
- (3) *askim bilong girapim tingting:*
teacher says to class, *Asde yumi toktok long wonem samting?*
Jesus says to people, *Kingdom bilong God i olsem wonem?*
- (4) *askim bilong tok kros:*
Dispela samting bilong yu na yu bagarapim a?
Yu olsem wonem na yu bagarapim dispela samting?

These sentences were shown to have the same formal structure in Pidgin but differing semantic structures. They would therefore probably need to be rendered in more than one form in most vernaculars.

Other topics dealt with during the course were: problems of writing the vernacular, the need to adjust the person and number of pronouns in the original to suit the usage of the vernacular when the two systems differ, differences in taxonomies of different cultures, finding cultural equivalents for non-cultural items or concepts, the translation of weights and measures, how to use reference apparatus such as indexes, cross-references, footnotes, and glossaries, the need to make explicit information left implicit by the original writer when this is unlikely to be understood by readers of the vernacular translation, discourse structure, that is, re-ordering of the elements of the original when this is required by the normal structure of the vernacular, the use of proper connectives, and maintaining prominence of the theme of a section of discourse.

The response of the students was one of bewilderment for the first week, glimmers of understanding the second week, and thereafter greater and greater enthusiasm for what they were learning. Those who had the greatest degree of formal education were the first to begin to understand what the course was all about. This does not we feel indicate that those with more formal education were more intelligent but rather that the whole approach of the course was very much in the mold of the Western model of education which itself was foreign to those not initiated into it and became a stumbling block to their understanding of the material at least initially.

The results of the course were very positive. The expatriate supervisors reported that their Papua New Guinean translation assistants were able after the course to make a much greater contribution to the translation programme. They were able to move ahead more independently and in many cases prepare first draft materials on their own. They also were able to understand the problems in translation that the expatriate

faced and be of greater assistance in finding a solution to these problems.

Four of the students are currently working on translation of Biblical materials into their own vernaculars. Among those we have observed we have noted the effects of the course.

They are freely re-ordering the sequence of Pidgin clauses to achieve a more natural vernacular sequence. They often replace pronouns with the name of the referant when it becomes unclear to whom the pronoun refers. Although there are presently inadequate exegetical materials in Pidgin for these translators to exegete figures of speech they do recognise them and do ask their supervisors to provide an exegesis for them. They also recognise areas of meaning and will sometimes translate one Pidgin word with several vernacular words which are needed to cover the area of meaning of the one Pidgin word. They also demonstrate the basic principle that one must first ascertain the meaning of the material to be translated before any translation can begin. Probably the single most important concept they have gained from this course was that the writings of the New Testament were meant to be understood and are capable of being rendered in any language.

The results of this course have, we feel, ramifications relative to Pidgin itself. We often hear of Pidgin as an adequate means of communication for basic economic transactions and perhaps certain simple concepts. Along with this goes the idea that Pidgin is inadequate to communicate abstract ideas. We think we have proven this to be false. Language itself is an abstraction of reality, and linguistics as a study of this abstraction uses abstract models and concepts to describe it. Perhaps the most abstract area of linguistic science is the field of semantics and deep structure. If this can be taught using Pidgin as the language of instruction anything can.

Another ramification of this course relates to education as a whole. Is formal Western style education indispensable for the acquisition of further knowledge? The majority of the students in this course had little or no formal education, yet they grasped and have since applied some very esoteric concepts. The unschooled are quite capable of learning if we are willing to meet them where they are.

Note

- 1 The preparation of this paper was supported in part by funds from the Papua New Guinea Research Fund of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (PNG branch).

Appendix I

Some Terminology Used During The Course

adjective/adverb	<i>tok save</i>
conjunction, preposition, etc.	<i>tok bilong skruim o joinim</i>
figurative or non-literal language	<i>tok</i>
(a) general term	<i>tok bokis</i>
(b) illustrative	<i>tok piksa</i>
(c) secretive	<i>tok hait</i>

form (in contrast with meaning)	<i>maus o nek bilong tok</i>
grammar	<i>lo bilong tok</i>
literal or non-figurative language	<i>tok stret</i>
meaning (underlying; contrasting with form)	<i>as bilong tok</i>
non-cultural concept	<i>tingting i no bihainim pasin bilong ol man bilong ples</i>
non-cultural item	<i>samting ol man bilong ples i no save yusim</i>
non-cultural or foreign customs	<i>narakain pasin ol man bilong ples i no save long en</i>
noun (or solid object)	<i>nem bilong samting</i>
object	<i>i wok long wonem samting</i>
parts of speech	<i>ol narakain narakain lain tok i stap insait long tok ples</i>
pronoun	<i>tok senis long nem bilong samting/tok senis</i>
question	
(a) general	<i>askim</i>
(b) information question	<i>askim bilong kisim save</i>
(c) rhetorical question	<i>askim i no bilong kisim save (1) askim bilong givim save (2) askim bilong girapim tingting (3) askim bilong tok kros</i>
statement	<i>tok bilong givim save o autim tok</i>
subject	<i>wonem samting i wok</i>
verb	<i>tok wok</i>

Appendix II

Participants of the 1973 P.N.G. Translator Course

Name	Language & District	Classification
Matthew Beaso	Petats, Bougainville	translator
Elias Ambuwat	Gaikunti, East Sepik	translator
John Nate	Gaikunti, East Sepik	translator
Gabriel Sisikila	Wosera, East Sepik	translator
Stephen Sawa	Halia, Bougainville	trans. helper
Wanua Daru	Yareba, Northern	trans. helper
Yapua Kirapeasi	Kewa, Southern High.	trans. helper
Peter Skyuewa Eru	Kanite, Eastern High.	trans. helper
Tony Tofunama	Kanite, Eastern High.	trans. helper
Sonny Banaefa	Kanite, Eastern High.	trans. helper

Kapun	Nii, Western High.	trans. helper
Onum	Nii, Western High.	trans. helper
Timoti	Sepik-Iwam, West Sepik	trans. helper
Joel	Sepik-Iwam, West Sepik	trans. helper
Imaaqo	Usarufa, Eastern High.	trans. helper
Ogiyaa	Usarufa, Eastern High.	trans. helper
Waf	Anggor, West Sepik	trans. helper
Koiyao	Anggor, West Sepik	trans. helper
Roy Gejenai	Maring, W. Highlands	trans. helper
Abraham Reemanai	Maring, W. Highlands	trans. helper
Mao	Gadsup, Eastern High.	trans. helper
Mandani Koni	Biangai, Morobe	trans. helper
Kabazo Bazanimi	Gimi, Eastern High.	trans. helper
Christine Sela	Yessan-Mayo, Sepik	trans. helper
Thomas Metanu	Tinputz, Bougainville	Auditor
Munkar Waring	Atzera, Morobe	Aud. (part-time)
Oveti	Kosena, Eastern High.	Aud. (part-time)
Robert Merkuse	Yessan-Mayo, Sepik	trans. helper