The bastard language of Babel
Authenticating Tok Pisin

Christoph Neuenschwander
English Department
University of Bern
“We cannot allow ourselves to be – what did the Bible say? – the country of Babel or whatever they call it, where everyone speaks his own version of Tok Pisin.”

(BM, novelist, interview 2014)

“We continue to bastardise both English and Tok Pisin in our search for more words to fit into our modern Tok Pisin.”

(MD, poet, blog comment 2013)
“Every text incorporates, reformulates, reinterprets or re-reads previous texts, every act of communication is grounded in semantic and pragmatic histories which are not simple and linear, but complex, multilayered and fragmented.”

(Blommaert 1999)
Overview

• Tok Pisin: the lingua franca of PNG
• Terminology and theoretical approach
• Data
• Metalinguistic debates on Tok Pisin: examples
• Discussion
Tok Pisin and Papua New Guinea

- About 800 local languages/ 7 million inhabitants
- Approximately 10 percent speak English
- Around 50 percent speak Tok Pisin (English-based pidgin)

- Tok Pisin is increasingly spoken as a first language in urban areas (creolised)
- It is regarded as an expression of national identity

- Tok Pisin, English and Hiri Motu are sometimes considered official languages (Historical Dictionary of Papua New Guinea, Wikipedia, CIA)
The role of Tok Pisin?

- Awkward position between local language and language of colonisers
- Pushed in the 1970s (by linguists)
- Often described as successful pidgin (by linguists)
- But: stagnation since 1970s
- Today: almost no place in literature or education system
The status of Tok Pisin...?
The **status** of Tok Pisin is related to the variety’s perceived **authenticity**.

Authenticity and status are constructed in **language ideological debates**, which are constantly re-shaped by social, cultural and political context.

One constant **theme** that links metalinguistic debates to their context is the notion of **simplicity**.
“Discourse” is used in a “generic sense to denote a type of discourse, a collection of discourses, or a class of discourse genres, for instance, when we speak of ‘medical discourse,’ ‘political discourse’ or (...) of ‘racist discourse.’”

(van Dijk 2002)

- Discourse as “social practice” in a broader sense, but not as a specific social or in fact discursive event
- Discourse as “abstract form of knowledge”

(Fairclough 2003, Wodak and Meyer 2008)
Theoretical approach

Authenticity
Within the logic of authenticity, a speech variety must be perceived as deeply rooted in social and geographic territory in order to have value.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of authentication</th>
<th>Feature</th>
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<tr>
<td>Authentic language 1</td>
<td>Attested and attestable language</td>
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<td>Authentic language 2</td>
<td>Naturally occurring language</td>
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<td>Authentic language 3</td>
<td>Language encoding fact and truth</td>
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<td>Authentic language 4</td>
<td>Fully owned, unmediated language</td>
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<td>Authentic language 5</td>
<td>Language indexing personal authenticity</td>
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<td>Authentic language 6</td>
<td>Language indexing authentic cultural membership</td>
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Theoretical approach

Language Ideologies
Language ideologies

Geeraerts (2003): language ideologies are essentially cultural models that have been conventionalised to the point that people are not aware anymore that they are only dealing with models.
Language ideologies are seen as “sets of beliefs” (e.g. Watts 2000, Woolard and Schieffelin 1994) or sets of “language myths” (Watts 2000).
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→ Identifying the elements of language ideologies is crucial.
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→ Identifying the elements of language ideologies is crucial.

→ Themes
Authenticity

Status

effects/ processes

language ideologies

themes: beliefs/ myths, cultural models, topoi, conceptual metaphors
language ideologies

themes: beliefs/ myths
language ideologies

themes: beliefs/ myths
Authenticity

language ideologies
effects/ processes
Status

language ideologies

effects/ processes
Authenticity

Status

effects/ processes

language ideologies
And sometimes this happens
And sometimes this happens
Simplicity seems to promote authenticity of Tok Pisin
Data

What?
Newspaper articles, editorials, letters to the editor, official written documents, blog articles and comments

Interviews

When?
Second World War – now

includes the pre-independence phase of PNG

1960s and 70s are crucial in the acceptance of many non-standard varieties
SIMPLY EVERYONE READS THE POST-COURIER
Some examples

1950s
Towards the end of colonialism
Some examples

• UN Visiting Mission, 1953, urged to “eradicate” Tok Pisin

• Tok Pisin seen to have “characteristics (...) which reflect now outmoded concepts of the relationship between indigenous inhabitants and immigrant groups” (Report on New Guinea, 1953)
Some examples

“So rudimentary a means of expression causes a hobbling, a crippling of the most developed aspects of the indigenous mentality.”

French member of the UN Visiting Mission, 1953, quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *South Pacific Post*
Some examples

“It is Government policy to introduce standard English as soon as possible, but Pidgin has been used for generations as the only common talk between peoples divided by scores of different languages.”

Paul Hasluck (Australian Minister for Territories), reaction to the UN criticism, SPP 1953
Some examples

A different view:

Pidgin as “a language in its own right”

One major “reason for survival” of Tok Pisin was the “crude simplicity of pidgin”, which made it easy to learn.

Sidney J. Baker, philologist, July 1953, *Sydney Morning Herald*
Some examples

“Pidgin can be regarded as a full, mature language only if we expect the natives to settle down to their present level of culture.”

“[T]he natives themselves realise their limitations by being restricted to pidgin and crave instruction in English.”

Reaction to Sidney Baker’s article, letter to the editor, July 1953, Sydney Morning Herald
Some examples

“To most people (...) it would be hard to envisage any future for the incongruous violations of the principles of even simple English that pass in New Guinea as a language. At the very limits of toleration it could be conceded that Pidgin has a place as a make-shift (...).”

“Hundreds of natives in Papua speak pure English extremely well (...). The result is that Papuans have a tremendous advantage over their fellow-countrymen in New Guinea.”

Editorial in the South Pacific Post, 1953
Two contrasting ideologies

[Tok Pisin is simple; this reflects Melanesian culture; Tok Pisin is ‘violated’ English; English is the language of liberation]

[Tok Pisin is simple; but it is a language on its own; it serves well as a lingua franca across the country]

anti-colonialist vs. functionalist ideology?
Some examples

1970s

Nationhood and unity
1970s

- Around independence in 1975, Tok Pisin, together with English and Hiri Motu, had been established as a major lingua franca.

- Used in parliament, radio and one newspaper
Some examples

“If the language is properly to fulfil its rôle in the new functions into which it has recently been elevated (...), it is imperative that it be standardised without much delay. Its vocabulary especially needs to be expanded and enriched in accordance with the nature and character of the language.”

Stephen A. Wurm, Hemisphere 1974
Some examples

“I am beginning to detest the word ‘unity’. Not because I don’t believe in unity. I do. But most of those who use the word in Papua New Guinea equate it with ‘uniformity’. I believe in unity. I will fight with my last breath against uniformity.”

Percy Chatterton, missionary, politician and columnist, Pacific Islands Monthly 1973
Chatterton appreciated “the possibilities of Pidgin as a medium for creative writing”, but thought it pointless to make the language “an adequate vehicle for transacting the business of a nation caught up willy-nilly in the complexities of the 20th century world.”
Link between standardised language and efficient performance in highly complex world

Link between non-standard or standardless language and poetry

Same ideologies we find in Western metalinguistic discourse (Geeraerts 2003)?
Let's all speak the same language

Please allow me to comment on some points made in letters on the choice of a national language.

When trying to select our national language, some New Guineans say Pidgin and some Papuans say Motu, and note their obvious reasons.

I'd say that's fair enough, but on the other hand, there will be some disadvantages existing in future within or outside the country.

Some of the disadvantages could be:
- Future youngsters of PNG will have no knowledge of modern English.
- Wastage of Government time and money in printing and translating English versions into Pidgin or Motu.
- PNG will be regarded as difficult to communicate with or understand, by developed countries.
- There'll be a language discrimination if one of these two languages (Pidgin or Motu) is used as a national language in the country.

- No white teachers or lecturers would be allowed to train in the colleges, schools and universities. If they were, they would have to learn Pidgin or Motu thoroughly for say three or four years, to make their explanations clear to Pidgin or Motu speaking students.

How would you feel about that, teachers? I don't think you'd like the idea. And the students? They wouldn't like it, either, because some explanations mightn't be clear enough to understand.

Of course there are many more disadvantages but those above are likely to be confronted if one of the two languages is to be used.

If the English language is to be abolished, then how about introducing the Japanese language? This question may be thought funny, but that would be one way to settle the language argument between Pidgin and Motu.

Why I mentioned Japanese is that some of our students are already going over to Japan to learn the language and teach it when they return to PNG.

Let's stop chasing our own tails and acting stupid. English is the only language which has brought us into close contact with different countries of the world with religion, trade, sport and many other activities.

Remember that we Papua New Guineans are struggling to move forward, not backwards, like other under-developed or developing countries. If the Pidgin or Motu language is selected as our national language, we shall have been dumbed, in the eyes of the world today.

Don't anyone be surprised when I answer you in my own tongue when you speak to me in Pidgin or Motu as your national language. Then you and I will both realise that there is no communication breakdown.

Bai yu long long ia. Be o i basio dara dara danu?

SIKONI MAIATSIN
Kavieng

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We must choose Pidgin or English

I would like to make a comment on the article (Post-Courier, May 17) about Mr Sali and Miss Abaijah opposing Professor Dutton’s suggestion.

As a national of this country I am really hurt when the term ‘visiting foreigners’ is used in describing one of the essential people of this country.

May I remind my countrymen and women, that when we are making any comment on our brothers and sisters who are here to help us, we must select our words properly.

When Miss Abaijah used the term ‘visiting foreigner’ she might have seen it from another viewpoint, but I am taking it as it is written down, as what it means.

A large percentage of this country’s population are illiterate so to take one of the 700 languages to be the national language will cost the country a lot.

Also, it will be very difficult to teach to a person another dialect. People learn the language they are born into between the ages of 2 and 8, so it will be very hard to teach those who are older at present.

If we take one of the 700 languages, then we are putting down the other 699 language groups. To prevent this, let’s use Pidgin, since it is not one of the 700 languages.

It will be a great financial loss to teach the three-fifths of the population who are Pidgin-speakers to speak Motu, but only a small loss to the one-fifth Motu speakers to speak Pidgin; the other fifth already know Pidgin, so have no worries. I am using a wise estimation only.

I say PNG should take a language which won’t make another language group unhappy. Unity under one language is better. So we must take English or Pidgin.

YAME RUNEFA,
Nonambalo,
Watabung, of
Siane (lingua franca) of
the Eastern Highlands Province.
The question of a national language for Papua New Guinea is once again the subject of public debate, thanks to the vote for Pidgin cast recently by the new head of the University’s Language Department, Professor Tom Dutton.

**ONLY TOK PISIN CAN DO THE JOB**

By Dr. John Lynch
Senior Lecturer, Department of Language, UPNG

language which was spoken over much of the Pacific during the last century, which was learned by Pidgin Motu speakers in plantations in Queensland, PNG, and PNG itself.

It was spread very rapidly from Papua New Guinea to PNG, but it now needs only a small number of people who have been in PNG to stamp out Tok Pisin (because they thought it “inferior”), and with that result, it is now spoken by nearly 40% of PNG’s population. It is the language of communication between national and national.

Most of Tok Pisin’s vocabulary is “borrowed” from English — perhaps 75% of the English vocabulary is “borrowed” from other languages, yet no-one questions English’s position in today’s world.

Hiri Motu, on the other hand, is the language developed by the Motu and Gulf people for use as a trading language during the Hiri expedition.

Hiri Motu’s a *pidgin* language

It is a “pidgin” (or restricted) language, and thus no more or less “dignified” than Tok Pisin or English — it is a language that has managed to rid itself of Tik Tok from Papua.

To do this, he required his police to use the Pidgin Motu used in the Hiri trade in PNG, and not necessarily job efficiency — ensured rapid promotion to high levels.

The first point should be explicitly obvious. Anyone learns anything better in his own first or mother tongue than in any other language in which he is taught; and if the primary purpose of education is to impart information, skills, attitudes and values, this is best done in the student’s first language, or failing that, for practical reasons, in languages with which the student is familiar.

The third is, of course, that some international language will be necessary to diplomats, engineers, lawyers, and perhaps some others, for the furtherance of their professional education.

In this case, English is certainly the most likely and for this and for some may say that this is the language that is going to remain a dominant class-language, at least probably, that language will not be the cause of it, since the people involved will be necessarily few, and will achieve “upper-class” status through other means.

We come then to Prof. Dutton’s statement that Tok Pisin — a language which is the national language of PNG. Actually, his conclusion is that the language should be chosen as a national language, then Tok Pisin is the best candidate; this has been misinterpreted by his critics, but we can let that pass.

ly, tolerant of change so that speakers can express things in Tok Pisin that they could not before.

Granted, some of this change has to be curbed — and I return to this below — but nevertheless, Tok Pisin is the dominant language of PNG.

For example, surveys done by PNG show that, while very few New Guineans learn Hiri Motu while at UPNG, a substantial proportion of Papuans acquire working knowledge of the language there.

What disadvantages are there? The major one is that two major social dialects of Tok Pisin are arising—one a more “traditional” variety, is spoken by large numbers of people; the other, which is spoken by the Morobe and Eastern Highlands Provinces as a second language. And the other language, which is offered by their importance as mission languages.

Mr. Sall’s suggestion is open to two criticisms — one that these languages are not the languages of a great number of Papua New Guinean grandparents; and more importantly, each of these languages is restricted to a small area of PNG, and, if one of them was chosen as the national language, this would give such an unfair advantage to people from that region. And nobody would negotiate such a tremendous expenditure on teaching people from all other areas of PNG, that it would be politically and economically disastrous.
English gives PNG the chance to talk with the world

I have read the various articles and letters in the Post-Courier on the use of Pidgin as a national language, and have been provoked into defending English as the most suitable language to be used in education, and as the language of communication within this country.

I suggest that both Professor Dutton and Dr Lynch have been too selective in what they have chosen to say and write about Pidgin. They have mentioned the advantages of Pidgin as a language but have ignored its disadvantages.

Dr Lynch (Post-Courier, June 1) maintains that Pidgin is "an adaptable and vital language, able to be used in any situation, able to express almost anything the writer wants it to, and most importantly, tolerant of change so that speakers can express things in Tok Pisin that they could not before." I will accept that statement although I doubt it.

Recently someone remarked that even the Government's most important children do not speak Pidgin as their first language.

To quote Professor Dutton again, "an education project should be looked at like any other big project, eg, the Purari Hydro-electricity scheme". I quite agree. Therefore, perhaps Professor Dutton could provide us with a cost-benefit analysis of his Tok Pisin scheme.

I would also like Professor Dutton and Dr Lynch to make it clear to us just who are the "elite" who would be allowed to speak English. Obviously it includes technologists and technicians. Does it also include those who will follow a trade? Are rural workers to be allowed to read trade literature on farming techniques, fertilisers and pesticides?

Who is going to make this decision? Is it going to be the Government or the school system?

Or is trade literature going to be also translated into Pidgin? If so, who will do that? The teachers and students?

In the Post-Courier, June 1, there is an article about Mr. Osipit's attitude to language, and that Professor Dutton and Dr Lynch with their talk of the "elites" and "masses", are the colonists.

They want the democratic process, whereby everybody learns English and is given equal opportunity, to be negatived. It was found that this attitude existed in Polynesian societies in Wellington, New Zealand.

A lecturer from the English Language Institute at Victoria University started evening classes in English for Polynesians living in the suburbs and was surprised to find after a while that only the elders of the people were attending classes. "The others had been discouraged from attending, because the leaders wanted to maintain their control of the people through their control of the English language."

The leaders defined a new "elite" from among the people, and they are the ones who do the work. The ordinary people are not included in this new elite.

The post-war surplus was used to low...
Pidgin’s a national language already

Please allow me a bit of space in your paper to make a few brief comments on Professor Dutton’s ideas for making Pidgin Top National Language, (Post-Courier, May 14).

Firstly, what is there to nationalise? It has been, is and will be, the major language used in this whole country by the different groups of people who through this language make and unite PNG.

I can see nothing to nationalise. It’s not a language for PNG, I suggest.

"The few," now beneficial to everybody, who learned Pidgin were forced to physically, so that they could communicate with their masters.

Mind you, there were no texts whatsoever for those early learners of Pidgin English, now National Pidgin. Now do I need that?

Thirdly, what a waste of money it will be to write out texts for a language fluently, but cannot read?

It would certainly serve well as a pillow, or could hit the world record overseas as a tour attraction: “Learn Wild Pidgin While in Niugini”.

And lastly, now that everything is taking its turn to be “Nationalised”, what’s next? “National Niugini”?

I reckon I’d better stick to English also,
English is our international language

As long as Papua is politically dominated by New Guinea, passengers on the gravy train and those skilled in the art of short-term political expediency will continue to trot out academic arguments to support pidgin English at the expense of international English in Papua" (Page 5, Post-Courier, June 2).

Pidgin English started as a bad social habit thrust upon New Guineans solely as an instrument of colonialism and it is now being spread in Papua solely as an instrument of neo-colonialism.

You can chew the end of your ball-point pen as hard as you like or go blue in your pink face trying to make platitudes in pidgin English but it will still be nothing but a comic opera language.

Unbungen wantaim

Of course the move to join the East Sepik and the West Sepik Provinces should be opposed.

This dangerous centralising tendency must be reversed.

There is an urgent need for decentralising.

It is to be hoped that all provincial constitutions will include a provision for sub-provincial government and so on until every man is a Premier of something.

John Aoe, Boroko.

In every English-speaking country that I have visited, as well as such countries as the Philippines and Malaya, pidgin English can be guaranteed to produce a good laugh in almost any company.

Pidgin English and mudmen are leading topics of interest to uninvolved laymen and academics alike, so I wonder why the academics here are so serious about the matter.

Pidgin English is absolutely no use in Papua, where it is a social disease of colonialism which prevents the less privileged people from becoming fluent in our international language, which is English.

In Papua, pidgin English is in competition with international English and not with Motu, as foreigners mistakenly believe.

Simple English leads to better English but pidgin English only leads to better Pidgin and worse English.

I dislike Pidgin as a spoiler of international English, as an instrument of colonialism and as a creator of a privileged elite and Pidgin peasants.

English is our international language and, as such, it belongs to us as much as it belongs to the colonials who are telling us to use something else.

After all, who wants to speak pidgin to our Papuan people, other than the colonials and their servants? I look forward to the day when it will be official policy to stamp out pidgin English in Papua.

J.M. Abaljah, Mr National Capital

These statements were untrue

In your issue of June 15 on Page 10, in an article entitled "New Irelanders owe K500,000," you report the Chairman of the Papua New Guinea Federation of Savings and Loan Societies, Mr Anwo Ketauwo, as making various statements about the debts of New Irelanders and the operations of the Development Bank in that Province.

I accept that if you have reported Mr Ketauwo correctly. However, as it happens the statements are untrue and the public might have been better served if your reporter had checked with the Development Bank or with me.

The true figure for the debts of New Irelanders is K38,000, not K500,000. The total of loans made by the Bank in New Ireland to date is K344,000, so that it had already got back 75 per cent of total fund lent and will get much more, because many loans included in the K38,000 are recent ones which have just begun repayments.

In addition, it is not true that the Development Bank has closed its Kavieng office and considered doing so.

In fact it has recently opened a new office at Namatanai and increased its staff at Kavieng.

JULIUS CHAN
Minister for Finance

The Japanese company in the Biola oil project has been asked to consider withdrawing.

Speaking in Parliament yesterday, when the debate resumed on a motion by Mr Harry Humphreys (Talasea) Prime Minister, Mr Share, said the Government had written to the company seeking its advice on a negotiated withdrawal. We believe it may be possible to produce an arrangement that is acceptable to the company and reasonable in the Government's point of view," he said.

Humphreys' motion expressed outrage at the attitude of the company. Viscount Humphreys says the company and the Japanese Government are irresponsibly developing the oil on the motion scheme, according to estimates, the total project would be the largest in the country.

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For Dante, Italian
— for PNG, Pidgin

It is richly ironic that you should choose to quote from Dante to attack Pidgin. When Dante was writing, Latin was the only language fit for an educated man.

It was the only language capable of conveying the subtleties that marked true civilisation. It was elegant and refined, and so on.

Italian, on the other hand, was regarded as barbarous gibberish, a vile parody of Latin, fit only for peasants, quite unsuited for poetry or any civilised discourse, and so on.

Does this sound familiar? Of course it does; they said everything about Latin that they now say about English, everything about Italian that they now say about Pidgin.

Dante wrote his masterpieces in Italian, and single handedly gained recognition for the language.

Maybe Mr Gordon was right

(From Post-Courier, May 18)

The Solomons, PNG and the New Hebrides might not be so lucky, but it does not matter. English had no-one like Dante when it needed him, and some linguists say English, too, was once a Pidgin language.

Mr Leahy writes at some length in order to disprove that a plantation crop such as coffee distorts the economy of Papua New Guinea. However, he fails to see the weakness of his argument, which is the point of this article.
It is sad that some people still deride the most important island language of the South-west Pacific as a mutilated form of a foreign language or of the English language.

Pidgin, or Bislama, is the Melanesian Esperanto. It has had as much success as its East African equivalent, Swahili, for similar reasons.

Swahili is now the official language of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, their own international language, although a second language for most of its people just can’t afford to sell an official image to a world of cultists and nationalists.

But the whole idea of the basic language is to communicate with each other with many outsiders like myself, who appreciate the need to learn it.

One day, undoubtedly, it will be realised that Pidgin is a language of international importance, and that it will be the future language of the South-west Pacific.
English language is the greatest in the whole world

It is a normal rule that one should never dissect the literary standard of any letter to a newspaper, since the content is all important in these cases.

However, one really must draw the line at the drivel published over the signature of Provoked National Officers (Post - Courier July 13).

The reason for their complaint that there are several levels of payment for the teachers of this country is only too obvious.

Heaven help any child learning to speak and write English if he or she gets into the hands of these drudges.

No! Provoked national officers the reason your Government pays the huge salaries needed to attract overseas teachers is simple to find.

You yourselves are in need of a great deal more education than you have presently received, and only experts in the subject should be allowed to influence the minds of the next generation of Papua New Guineans.
Bais is wrong

Pidgin is easier for everyone

I would like to make a few comments on Mr Percy Chatterton’s letter (Post-Courier, July 15).

Firstly, he said Switzerland has three national languages. In fact, it has four. They are French, German, Romansch and Italian.

Secondly, he commented on the lecture given by Professor Dutton. He disagreed with the professor and said that Pidgin is a non-Melanesian language, which is absolutely rubbish.

How can people who don’t speak English understand it? I am not going to be rid of it. I am not going to be lobbied by while officers are wrongly criticised.

“I think that members of the Opposition, particularly the Deputy Chairman and Member for Southern Highlands (Mr Ron Neville) should think very carefully before using a body such as council.”

Women’s success

Greetings from our women’s fellowship. The first of our annual women’s show is over and as your paper expressed it, “it was a rip-roaring success”.

This was certainly a successful outing for the Sisterhood.
Papuan and Proud of It" (Post-Courier, June 10) on a national language for Papua New Guinea.

Surely it is ridiculous that Motu be spoken as our national language. Motu is pure to only a few like the proud Papuans who live in Hohola 1, 3 and 4 villages.

You fellows should try your best to go out of Hohola to places like Vanimo and Bougainville Island. These two places are many miles away from other places, but when the people come there they can easily learn to speak Pidgin in one or two days.

Delivering the statement, Mr Sali said any further delays would have set back the development program by 12 months.

He said such a delay would have caused political repercussions.

The statement follows a series of questions on Friday by Mr Harry Humphries (Talasea), who is a member of the Standing Committee on Public Works.

Mr Sali said the Government had decided to act when the committee deferred approval pending further technical details which were to be given at a later meeting.

The meeting was never held.

The committee examined the proposals but decided not to delay the project any further.

Mr Sali had not approved the proposal as such action could have negative effects.
→ Competition between English and Tok Pisin

→ Competition between Pidgin and local languages
Sali 'no' to Pidgin

The Minister for Primary Industry, Mr Sali, has supported a call by the Member for Central Regional, Miss Josephine Abaijah, not to have Pidgin as the national language.

Mr Sali said this was because Pidgin was not spoken by the great grandfathers of the PNG people.

Miss Abaijah believes Motu should be the national language — in Papua at least.

She described Pidgin as a "mutilated foreign language".

Her comments were prompted by a lecture given by the new professor of Language at the University of Papua New Guinea, professor Tom Dutton, who said he believed Pidgin should replace English as the national language.

Miss Abaijah described Prof. Dutton as a "visiting foreigner".

Mr Sali suggested that instead of Pidgin, one of the main dialects of the country's 700 dialects should be adopted.

Miss Abaijah said that if New Guineans did not want to learn Motu they should select a local language for themselves instead of spreading the influence of Pidgin, the language of their colonialism.

The National Weather Service forecast for today and tonight: Showers and isolated thunderstorms with rain areas mostly in the northern coast and western plains. Most areas will be fine with a few late afternoon and evening showers and morning coastal rain. Scattered morning fog areas in the Highlands. Light to moderate south-east winds with local afternoon sea breezes on coastal areas.

Weather details (24 hours to 3pm): Port Moresby 30 (maximum), 29 (minimum), 0 (millimetres rainfall); Lae 30, 29, 29, 29; Rabaul 31, 30, 7.0; Momote 31, 30, 0.4; Kavieng 31, 30, 8.0; Kieta 29, 29, 42.0; Mandang 30, 30, 15.0; Wewak 32, 27, 37.0; Milimina 29, 27, 41.0.
Proud Papians sometimes speak in Pidgin

Referring to Post-Courier, June 10, 1976, an unknown proud Papuan writer stated that Pidgin is ridiculous in Papua.

I, myself, am also a proud Papuan but I am ashamed to say that a proud Papuan does not practise Motu as a national language. I come from Lake Kutubu in the Southern Highlands Province, and my people are well known Motu speakers.

And quite often we do speak Motu to some of the Papuans who are working here. However, it makes me doubt that Motu was ever spoken, because we do not say it on television or in public places.

There are people from Central, Milne Bay, Gulf and Western Provinces working in the Southern Highlands who do not identify themselves as Motu speakers.

Here we are trying to use a language that is thought to be a national language of Papuan people, but some Papuans do not give a scrap whether Motu ever existed.

You think of how many Motu speakers there are in the Western, Gulf, Milne Bay and even in the Central Provinces.

As far as I know, there aren't too many, and what's more, the young generation of these Papuan provinces has forgotten Motu.

More often I hear a Papuan couple chattering away in Pidgin and all their children are taught Motu and not Motu.

Here Pidgin is always the common language spoken even by Papuan children. Therefore, who can deny that Pidgin will never be spoken by the Papuan people?

I have been in the Central Province for quite some time and I have realised that most of the young people of the Central, Milne Bay, Northern, Western, and Gulf Provinces do not understand Motu.

So who is going to teach Motu even to the Papuans if Motu is to become the National language of Papua New Guinea?

So there is no way in the world that Motu will become the National language in Papua New Guinea. Besides, Motu hasn't got all the required words in it, and it is inconvenient deriving words from English.

But as for Pidgin, most words come from English.

So it will be quite possible that Pidgin will eventually become the National language of Papua New Guinea. However, I am not really concerned which language becomes our national language.

A few years ago I asked you which age I am on.

BARIGI GESE
Social Development, Mendi.

No waiting for reserve teachers

I would like to comment on the letter "Reserve teachers" by Aiado and Raphael Soajoro (Post-Courier, June 10).

Both gentlemen must have not heard or did not fully understand what was said on the radio.

The main idea of this reserve position for teachers college graduates is to prevent delays in giving appointments to all graduates.

Also, it's an assurance to all graduates that after graduating, they are sure to get a teaching appointment, whereas in previous years many graduates were faced with no teaching appointments and were staying in their villages awaiting offers of appointment.

This year two schools have three or more teachers.

Non-urban areas which are not too remote.

Being put on the reserve position does not stop you from applying for a level one vacant position and I quote what was said over the air.

"Those teachers who are in their first year of teaching this year (graduates of 1975) are reminded that the position you are now holding is a reserve position; you have no right of tenure to that position.

I have been in the Central Province for quite some time and I have realised that most of the young people of the Central, Milne Bay, Northern, Western, and Gulf Provinces feel that they are not getting a chance to be trained as teachers.

Settlers in PNG

It is pleasing to see that the Manus islanders are interested in the welfare of their province and people.

It is even more pleasing to see that the islanders are putting their heads together to find possible approaches to develop their province, including the establishment of provincial government.

What is not pleasing to see is that the heads that are put together are few and belong to prominent bodies such as senior public servants and high-ranking academics.

It would only result in congestion of ideas and nothing productive would result.

On the other hand, a fair representation of all sectors of the Manus community would not be out of place.

The question of national standing is totally irrelevant. What is relevant and important is that a fair representation be made, to enable information on the progress and
Many people speak Pidgin
— even Papuans

May I make a few comments on the "National Language"?

I'd like to refer to Mr Boyamo Sali, Minister for Primary Industry, and Miss Josefine Abaijah, Member for Central Regional who made a statement saying that Pidgin is not to be a national language. (Post-Courier May 17).

Miss Abaijah has described Pidgin as a "multilated foreign language".

For my opinion, it is a multilated foreign language, but Pidgin has nearly covered the country.

Pidgin is a very simple language and it is spoken by many, many old men and women; and even a two to 10

we can't make Motu a national language, because we New Guineans don't know how to speak Motu. Pidgin is very simple and much easier to learn than Motu. Think back to the old people in the village, who don't know how to read and write and can't speak English, which I think will take them years to learn.

Pidgin is easily spoken and it's very easy to understand. We must make Pidgin our national language and I support Professor Tom Dutton.

REUBEN WARAKORI,
Citizen of Wewak

Reuben Warakori

Announcement about the Pidgin language

Mr Sopi's Budget

Mr Sopi's Budget signed to use of limited sources.

He said that he had been cut down spending not adequate.

The Budget Committee...
Local languages endangered because of Tok Pisin

But Tok Pisin is endangered, too
Pidgin is losing its meaning

Government pronouncements in Papua New Guinea could be meaningless to a large proportion of the country’s population because of the disintegration of the pidgin language, a linguistics expert has claimed in Canberra.

He said the disintegration process had already reached fairly serious proportions.

It was being caused by the borrowing of English words to cover, in Pidgin, new concepts and situations.

It was causing serious communications problems.

The expert is the head of the Department of Linguistics at the Australian National University’s Research School of Pacific Studies. Professor Stephen Wurm.

His claims are made in the latest issue of the university’s newspaper, “ANU Reporter”, in a front-page article headed: “English is being taken over by pidgin.”

Privatised terms used in the Papua New Guinea Parliament, many of the decisions in the House and pronouncements by the Government can be meaningless to a large proportion of the country’s population.

“At best, such Government statements are open to misinterpretation.”

Giving examples, he said a Government publication could quote a “board of management,” which would be written in the Anglicised version of pidgin as “bot ov menesmen.”

To villages this would at best mean a “boat” and a “man” with the words “bot” (boat in non-English is “water”) and “man” (men are men).

Mr. REA

Feedback committee

The Minister for Labor, Commerce and Industry, Mr. Rea, is planning to establish a consultative committee to provide feedback to the Government from the private sector in Papua New Guinea.

Mr Rea announced this when the National Investment and Development Authority met the Port Moresby Chamber of Commerce.

The new dates are March 31.
Keep Pidgin pure

The Pidgin language must not be allowed to disintegrate (Post-Courier, March 1). It is too useful to too many people.

The Pidgin language used in towns has changed in many ways from the language used in villages. The Anglicised urban form is meaningless to rural people.

At present, Pidgin is spoken widely and is helpful in many ways. If it ceases to exist, more and more people will be lost.
WE NEED AN ACADEMY TO STANDARDISE PIDGIN — PROFESSOR

Papua New Guinea needs to establish a language academy as a step towards standardising Pidgin, a leading authority on the language has said.

Dr Stephen Wurm, Professor of Linguistic Studies at the Australian National University, said the academy should examine the present use of Pidgin, look at its problems and make suggestions as to how the problems could be overcome.

He said the old standard structure of the language was starting to collapse.

In urban areas it was starting to become half English, half Pidgin — with the result that it was no language at all and could not be understood even by people in rural areas.

“What is required is some basic central organisation which does the job of establishing what is in the language and how new words could be incorporated into it,” Prof Wurm said.

However, any additions to the language should take account of Pidgin's grammatical structure.

Prof Wurm was speaking at the second of two public lectures on Papua New Guinea language at the University of Papua New Guinea.

He suggested that a language academy could be set up by the Government or university.

He was not in favor of the new urban Pidgin becoming a national language, he said, as it was too often changing.

Pidgin spoken in areas such as Madang and Wewak was more constant and more readily understandable throughout the country.

Prof Wurm said there was no reason for languages to be “fighting” one another.

While people should be free to speak their own particular languages, it was essential that there be a language which all people could understand.

“Language policy should not be looked at in terms of compulsion, but in terms of mutual advantage,” he said.

Prof Wurm said it was not sufficient for an organisation such as an academy to compile a new, standardised Pidgin dictionary.

“If a decision is taken that a language should be used, it is important that the Government and other authorities use it, and do not just tell others to use it.

“The Government could give preference for positions to people who have a good command of the language,” he said.

While it was difficult, anywhere, to standardise the speaking of a language, the important thing here was to teach people how to read a standardised, usable Pidgin, Prof Wurm said.

“Some people in the villages might not understand the language on the radio but if they were familiar with the written form, they would ultimately understand.

“It is essential to standardise the language, for this reason.

“If the people can see it written, they will have a better idea of the language,” Prof Wurm said.

He said the study of Pidgin had been looked upon for some time as being unimportant.

But now the world recognised it as an important subject and there was wide interest in what was happening with the language here.
Some examples

Today

Tok Pisin in a globalised world
Some examples

“We cannot allow ourselves to be – what did the Bible say? – the country of Babel or whatever they call it, where everyone speaks his own version of Tok Pisin.”

“There are more Tok Pisin speakers in this country (...) than any other language, even English. (...) Let’s write books, stories for that readership. Otherwise we are failing our people.”

“Hopefully we get some standardisation in place, so that way we monitor, if you wish, the development of our language.”

BM, interview 2014
Some examples

“We continue to bastardise both English and Tok Pisin in our search for more words to fit into our modern Tok Pisin.”

MD, blog comment 2013, PNG Attitude

“Tok Pisin works well in shared contexts, but can be difficult when expressing concepts because it is difficult to be precise and concise. But this kind of ambiguity is a useful trait in poetry (...) The most important point about using Tok Pisin is that it is uniquely Melanesian. (...)”

MD, blog article 2013, PNG Attitude

“It feels better to people to be able to speak Tok Pisin. There’s a better sense of ownership of that language, because we’re creating it as we go along.”

MD, interview 2014
We still find...

- language-culture equation from ‘anti-colonialist ideology’ (though, is it, really?)
- idea that Tok Pisin needs to be standardised
- fear that standardless Tok Pisin is not functional

→ The idea that Tok Pisin is a simple language is hardly ever questioned – because it has been deployed as an argument for and against the use of Tok Pisin.
PNG nationalism

simplicity + expression of Melanesian culture + functional in national communication
→ authentic, high-status variety
   (focus on cultural and oral production)

simplicity + expression of culture + disfunctional for international positioning
→ authentic, low-status variety
   (focus on educational and written production)
Conclusion

Continuing authentication of Tok Pisin through a growing sense of ownership, languagehood and geographical rootedness.

But status?

Similar to the Milroys’ (1999) distinction between covert and overt prestige of a language, i.e. solidarity and status. BUT not the same.

→ Tok Pisin has a very high status, but only in certain domains.
If we want to investigate the effects that language ideologies have on the status or authenticity of a variety, there are three issues we need to address. We need to establish 1) how we identify language ideologies, i.e. what elements they consist of and how we find these elements in discourse/texts, 2) how we categorise and define language ideologies (in order to make the analysis reproducible), and 3) how we determine the actual impact of the individual elements and the sum of these elements on abstract concepts such as status and authenticity.
Thank you very much for your attention
References


Appendix
Dialect Project (Laura Tresch)

New Zealand English

Estuary English
Southeast England

Creole Project (Christoph Neuenschwander)

Tok Pisin
Papua New Guinea

Hawaiʻi Creole

• More legitimised
• Local standard variety
• Overt prestige

• Less legitimised
• Non-standard variety
• Covert prestige
Qualitative study

Implications:

- Media discourse is not representative of people's beliefs
- Data sampling is not representative – but typical
- Aim of the project is not to describe the dominance or prevalence of certain ideologies in public discourse, but the description of the ideologies themselves
Authenticity

Status

effects/ processes

language ideologies

themes: beliefs/ myths
Effects of language ideological debates in public metalinguistic discourse/ processes
Authenticity

Status

effects/processes

language ideologies
(large analytical entity, formed by smaller entities, which I call themes)
Authenticity

Status

effects/ processes

language ideologies

metapragmatic commentary/ ideological production (Philips 2000)

themes: beliefs/ myths, cultural models, topoi, conceptual metaphors