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Introduction

John W.M. Verhaar

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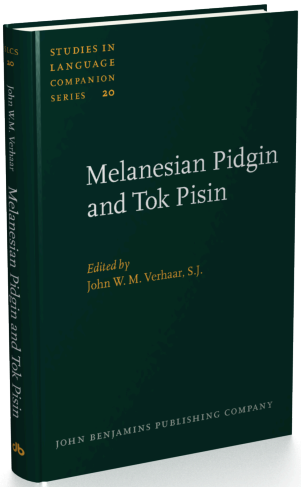

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Introduction

John W.M. Verhaar, S.J.
Research Centre, Divine Word Institute
Madang, Papua New Guinea

The present volume contains a selection of papers presented during the First International Conference on Pidgins and Creoles in Melanesia, held in July 1987 at Divine Word Institute, Madang, Papua New Guinea. Papers presented but not included are those of which no final version was available. Some of the papers were presented by proxy, and one paper included here, by T. Givón, was not presented at the Conference but solicited shortly after.

The Conference had been planned and announced as a Conference on Tok Pisin. We were fortunate enough, however, to have also two papers on Bislama, by Terry Crowley. During a business meeting on follow-up Conferences, it was decided regularly to include in those also other pidgins and creoles in the South Pacific, especially Solomon Islands Pijin and Bislama. The Second International Conference on Pidgins and Creoles in Melanesia was held July 1989 at The University of Papua New Guinea, and the 1987 Madang Conference has been rechristened retrospectively as in harmony with that name.

At that Second Conference in July 1989, the expression "Pidgins and Creoles in Melanesia" was soon shortened informally to "Melanesian Pidgin", which has always been a collective name for English-based pidgins in the South-Western Pacific, and appears, for example, in this volume in the title of one of Crowley's papers. It does also in Keesing's (1988) book *Melanesian Pidgin and the Oceanic substrate*. One is reminded here of Robert A. Hall, Jr.'s name for Tok Pisin, "Neo-Melanesian", some 40 years ago — a name that never caught on. The present volume joins a growing tendency in favor of a more widespread use of the expression

"Melanesian Pidgin", which appears in its title.

The Madang Conference conducted three days of sessions for a smaller group of linguists and a few invited guests; all papers but one were presented during these sessions. The Conference concluded with a public session, to which the entire campus community and others were invited. At this session John Lynch presented his address "The future of Tok Pisin". The address was followed by a panel discussion and by questions and comments from the audience. Most of the discussion centered on the function and social status of Tok Pisin in the nation. This had also been a frequent topic of discussion during the earlier sessions.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the support given to the Conference by the Hans Seidel Foundation Branch in Papua New Guinea, and especially to extend our appreciation to its national representative in Papua New Guinea, Mr. Sam Piniau. After the public session, Mr. Piniau invited the participants for an informal discussion, addressing what all regarded as urgent priorities for the role of Tok Pisin in the nation. Thus the Conference was more than an exercise for specialists in the field of linguistics. The motivating interest of all participants was very much one in favor of grassroots issues.

This interest had been the motivation for having such a Conference in the first place. The initiative had been that of Father C. van der Geest, S.V.D., President of Divine Word Institute, and he had asked me to organize the Conference. I gratefully acknowledge Father van der Geest's continuing support during the preparation of the Conference.

Unfortunately, typesetting and proofing problems with some of the papers have led to some delay. Hence the volume appears almost a year later than originally foreseen.

The position of Tok Pisin, one of the two national languages of Papua New Guinea (with Hiri Motu as the other), alongside English (as the official language), has been much discussed in the literature. In a variety of ways, the position of Tok Pisin is like that of many other pidgin and creole languages elsewhere, in that the superstrate language commands a social esteem not generally accorded to the language most used by the general population, in part because of provisions by law. Thus, in Papua New Guinea, English is the language of instruction in education at all levels (except in preschool and one or two years of elementary education, with the vernacular as the medium), and Tok Pisin is not the object of instruction in any school except in a few specialized courses at the tertiary level. Not sur-

prisingly, there are various schools of thought about the relative merits of having Tok Pisin (and Hiri Motu in the mainland South) as the language of instruction in education, ranging from practical considerations like those about textbooks to more "principled" ones (though not, to my knowledge, held by anyone trained in linguistics), such as that the nation should speak English in a community of nations familiar with English.

While the advancement of Tok Pisin in direct ways still largely lacks support from the Government and other influential agencies, there has in recent years been a change of climate potentially favorable to the advancement of Tok Pisin. One way this has come about is in the increasing importance attached to courses in literacy for children (already in preschool) as well as adults in their native vernacular. The Government is now strongly promoting and supporting such courses, and recent reports are that children who have become literate in their native vernacular afterwards perform much better in other subjects, including especially English. Recent reports have it that now the Governments of the Solomon Islands and of Vanuatu have expressed interest in such courses in their own nations, which are also multilingual societies. In Papua New Guinea, cooperation has been established, especially, between The University of Papua New Guinea and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (which has always conducted literacy programs in the vernacular as part of their project of making translations of the Bible available in the vernacular), and students of the University have been actively involved in such programs in various parts of the nation.

Though literacy in the vernacular does not directly affect the status of Tok Pisin, yet a more favorable climate is created for literacy in Tok Pisin, which, indeed, is in some areas the object of literacy — depending upon what the local community is found to prefer. Literacy in the last analysis looks to the general population for their large potential of participation in the life of the nation. The basic interests and perception underlying this orientation towards the general population was clearly present with all participants of the Madang Conference, most of whom have a long record of participation in the life of the people on a day-to-day basis. This interest has been one of long standing, and it seems appropriate to review it briefly, mainly in relation to work done at the Conference.

First of all (because oldest), there has been the work of the Churches. While some Churches in the past have concentrated on the local vernacular in the area where they worked, such approaches were eventually abandoned in favor of Tok Pisin, which is now almost everywhere the language

of worship in most Churches, and which has always been and still is the medium of instruction in schools and courses not supervised by the Government, such as catechetical schools, and pastoral in-service courses of various kinds.

The Tok Pisin Bible translation, of course, stands out as a major part of Tok Pisin for worship services. The New Testament has already gone through several versions, and the Old Testament will appear this year. Though the Tok Pisin Bible has, in the nature of the case, its own specifically religious register, the translating teams have concentrated heavily on accessibility of the text to the general population, and the actual and potential standardizing effect of the Bible translation is such that it would be difficult to overestimate. Biblical texts are listened to weekly by huge sectors of the population throughout the nation, and those exposed to it comprise also a large number of people not yet literate.

The Churches have been active also in the production of nonreligious texts, comprising a variety of practical self-help books relating to home, family, agriculture, animal husbandry, and small business. Among the Presses that have spread this literature far and wide are the Wirui Press in Wewak, and Kristen Press in Madang. Finally, the only Tok Pisin newspaper, the weekly *Wantok*, now wholly edited by Nationals, was started by Frank Mihalic.

Missionaries over the years have been engaged in writing grammars and word lists. In published form there is Frank Mihalic's (1971 [1957]) grammar and dictionary, still the only such reference work available in print. It seems relevant to note that the preparation of such works by far antedated any notable interest on the part of linguists in Tok Pisin, with as virtually the only and illustrious exception the work done by Robert A. Hall, Jr. in the 40s and the 50s (notably 1942 and 1943). Hall invariably supported Mihalic's work, and wrote a "Foreword" to his 1957 grammar and dictionary.

In view of all this, it is a pleasure to acknowledge here the contributions by Frank Mihalic and Norman Mundhenk to this volume. Mihalic recently published his translation of the Papua New Guinea Constitution into Tok Pisin (1986), and has lately turned to writing homiletic material in Tok Pisin; he is also still a regular columnist for *Wantok*. Mundhenk heads the Bible Society of Papua New Guinea, and has for years been involved in Bible translation.

Another important working group has been the Papua New Guinea

Branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, currently at work on almost 200 vernaculars. S.I.L. members translate the New Testament into the vernacular, a ten to fifteen year job for each language. Because this is the S.I.L.'s principal task, the influence of their work on the study of Tok Pisin has been largely indirect — as in trilingual dictionaries of vernaculars, with glosses in English and Tok Pisin (an example, Barker and Lee 1985), but some of their linguists have been active more directly in the study of and publication on Tok Pisin. This volume has contributions by Bob Conrad, Karl Franklin (see the advanced Tok Pisin course, Scorza and Franklin 1989), Bob Litteral (known for his textbook of Tok Pisin, 1969), and Ger Reesink. Conrad and his team recently finished their Mufian translation of the New Testament, and they have also been involved, as this volume shows, in translations from Tok Pisin into Mufian. Reesink published his grammar of Usan in 1987 — a work of strong generalist interest (Reesink 1987).

I already mentioned the important role of The University of Papua New Guinea in the advancement of the role of Tok Pisin. The University was represented at the Conference by its Vice-Chancellor John Lynch, who has in recent years been involved in various projects towards the advancement of Tok Pisin and other Melanesian Pidgin dialects, especially in tandem with Terry Crowley, for Bislama (for earlier work, see *e.g.* 1975a; 1975b; 1979a; 1979b). Dicks Thomas teaches Tok Pisin at The University of Papua New Guinea, and is involved in various research projects regarding Tok Pisin. He was associated with Tom Dutton for their 1985 Tok Pisin textbook.

The Australian National University was represented at the Conference by Tom Dutton, veteran in Tok Pisin (and Hiri Motu) studies, author of a textbook and other publications (*e.g.* 1973; 1976; 1985), and formerly of The University of Papua New Guinea, where he was the founding Chair of the Language and Literature Department.

The Conference was fortunate in having contributions by a number of other linguists: from Oxford University (Suzanne Romaine; and Peter Mühlhäusler, now at Bond University, Australia). The Papua New Guinea University of Technology was represented by Geoff Smith, and there were participants from other Universities, as apparent from this volume.

Though selection of topics for presentations had been left to the individual participants and thus no effort had been made to concentrate on any specific predetermined theme, the contributions clearly show concentration

on some major issues.

One of those is a renewed interest in substratology. Crowley's paper on serial verbs in Bislama shows this, and substratum influence more in general is a major focus of the paper by Faraclas, in a comprehensively areal fashion, and comparing Nigerian Pidgin with Tok Pisin in a large number of features of generalist interest. Givón's contribution on verb serialization in Tok Pisin links that topic with the same syntactic property of a few Highlands languages. Other papers concentrate on one particular substrate language (or at least the possibility of its influence), as shown in the papers by Dutton and Bourke and by Conrad — the latter is about the inverse relation: in translations from Tok Pisin to the vernacular. Reesink's paper also has the substrate-Tok Pisin orientation, and this is true of the "translation" papers in general. In the discussions, however, substratology figured prominently also in relation to papers not presented with that focus.

It seems relevant to note that Faraclas's paper derives much inspiration from Keesing's "forthcoming" work — now published (Keesing 1988). (In editing the volume, I have left the "forthcoming" reference as it was, to keep the chronology in proper perspective.) Keesing's work argues for an Oceanic substrate of greater (and earlier) influence on the origin of Melanesian Pidgin than assumed before, and from him Faraclas has also taken over new views on grammatical properties of Tok Pisin in that light (notably concerning the "Predicate marker" *i*) and on issues of a more generalist nature such as the distinction of word classes — also rather in discontinuity with previous work in Tok Pisin. Debate about such issues will probably continue for some time to come, but what seems striking is that a somewhat new perspective has been opened on the "substratologist" *vs.* "universalist" controversy. That is, if "universalist" is replaced by "generalist" (which of course does not necessarily need a "bioprogram" of any kind), or "typological", approach, the entire set of issues becomes rather different — and seems somehow less daunting. A "generalist" rather than a "universalist" point of view prevails also in other papers, Givón's among them. I should mention here that, in a second paper, Faraclas reviewed the "universalist" issue in more detail. That paper is not contained in the present volume, and has been published elsewhere (Faraclas 1988).

Themes such as these overlap with other studies of more narrowly defined problems regarding Tok Pisin in its own terms: Mihalic's paper on obsolescent items of the lexicon, Romaine's paper on the use of the tense/

aspect marker *bai* in creolized Tok Pisin, Smith on "referential adequacy" of Tok Pisin vocabulary. The problems of Tok Pisin as supposedly a "special case" in pidgin and creole studies is dealt with by Mühlhäusler, who also presents, in a second paper, interim results of ongoing archival work on the origin of the "Predicate marker" *i*. Sociolinguistic issues in regard to the use of Tok Pisin are dealt with in general by Litteral, and by Kulick and Stroud for one small community where the native language, Gapun, is on the way to extinction and is being replaced by Tok Pisin — this paper is also an important addition to the growing body of literature on language death.

The present volume is offered to honor Tok Pisin, and its speakers.

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