

Preface

The New Guinea area is not only the linguistically most complex and heterogeneous area of the world – but is, as a result of this situation, an area which offers a very rich field for the study of a seemingly endless variety of sociolinguistic phenomena. Problems of multilingualism, code switching, the questions of language boundaries, sociolinguistic phenomena observable in local languages in conjunction with certain features of culture, changes in indigenous languages in response to contact with the modern world, sociolinguistic factors involved in the transmission of information in chain-interpretation situations, the development and role of various types of *lingue franche*, the social roles of and the attitudes towards the various languages used in a multilingual society, facets and problems of language planning and engineering, contact between languages with associated phenomena and resulting problems are only a few of the fields of study inherent in this uniquely rich sociolinguistic laboratory.

This volume of contributions authored by present and past members of the Australian National University, mostly of its Research School of Pacific Studies – all scholars with years of first-hand experience in sociolinguistic research work in the New Guinea area – addresses itself to some of the sociolinguistic problems listed above in a concise form. It is hoped that the few glimpses offered through these essays may prompt other sociolinguistically interested scholars to take a first-hand look at some of the numerous problems inviting study and research in the New Guinea area.

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