TOK PISIN

Creole of Papua New Guinea
Tok Pisin is spoken in Papua New Guinea.

English is official language, but there are 760 local vernaculars.

Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu are the two national languages.

Tok Pisin is the language used in Parliament.
Historical Background

- Melanesia is the term for the islands north and northeast of Australia, including Papua New Guinea, where Tok Pisin is spoken.
- First contact was with European missionaries and traders on the coast.
- Whaling in early 1800s
- European trading in sandalwood and beche-de-mer (sea slug)
- Because of this contact, the Islanders picked up English and mixed it with their own various L1s.
- Establishment of cotton plantations in Queensland in 1863 and later in Samoa leads to early Melanesian Pidgin.
Back on the islands, Melanesian Pidgin evolved into multiple languages, one of which is Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea; Tok Pisin moved from a trade jargon to a stabilized pidgin.

It continued to become more complex, and it became the national language of Papua New Guinea, being used in religious ceremonies, newspapers, television, etc. Thus, it became an expanded pidgin used in all settings of everyday life for the speakers.
Characterization of Type of Contact Setting

- Tok Pisin began as a jargon and evolved into a plantation pidgin. When it was brought back to Papua New Guinea from Samoa, it became a stabilized pidgin and then a creole.
- It went through all phases of the creole life cycle (jargon, stabilized pidgin, expanded pidgin, creole).
- English-based, because most of its vocabulary is from English.
Tok Pisin background

- **Language sources**
  - Superstrate/Lexifier: English
  - Substrate: Tolai
  - Adstrates: German, Samoan, Huli, Enga; (and many other local languages)

- Contact language caused by trade and plantation development that occurred in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the surrounding islands

- Spoken in PNG, dialectal forms in the Highlands, the North coast, and the various islands

- Accurate records of populations and accounts pidgin use are varied and contradictory
Chronology of Tok Pisin

- **Missionaries (1600s – 1700s)**
  - Various attempts at converting local population, visitors learned local language
  - Early use of English terms documented

- **Commercial interactions (1700s): a simple sign language was used (miming of animals movement and sound) along with English terms**

- **Whaling (1789 – 1860)**
  - Interaction between PNG and ship crews caused a rudimentary Jargon to develop
  - Lexifier language was English
  - Huge variation in vocabulary in production throughout Pacific Islands
    - British and American English of various dialects
    - “Pacific Pidgin English” developed
Sandalwood and Bêche de Mer trade (began ~1840)
- Increased language contact: labor required on the islands themselves
- People were brought in from different islands with different L1s
- Used “South Seas jargon” that was developed during whaling
- Due to short stays on the labor camps, the jargon did not develop into a stabilized pidgin
- Largest language group was men aged 20-30, no children present or families
Chronology of Tok Pisin

- Plantation in PNG (began ~1880)
  - Many under German control
  - Indentured or contracted workers
    - Recruited from PNG to work on Cotton, sugar plantations
    - Started in the Bismarck Archipelago (1883)
    - Some laborers taken from PNG to nearby Queensland
    - Workers from New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) and the Solomon Islands brought in, some brought to Samoa
    - The Pidgin began to spread as more people were brought to the plantations
  - Early stabilized Pidgin developed called “Melansian Pidgin”
# Timeline of Worker Populations

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Chronology of Tok Pisin

- Since most workers were contracted, when their time of service was up they went home.
- As PNG did not previously have a lingua franca, the early Melanesian Pidgin became extremely widespread.
- Influence from local languages (Tolai, Enga, Huli) and the widespread use of the language in multilingual settings caused it to change yet again and form stabilized Tok Pisin.
  - used for: religious services, newspapers, television, and radio.
  - changed linguistically to become more complex (vocabulary and intricate grammatical rules and inflections).
Language Variation

- Bush, rural, urban varieties - determined by social class rather than location
- Most speakers in PNG are multilingual (speak >3 languages); ~4,000,000 L2 speakers of Tok Pisin

- **Basolect**: found in remote areas.
  - Tok Pisin is used, but not as main language
  - often is not “fully” acquired

- **Mesolect**: commonly found in Rural areas.
  - Tok Pisin usage > English use
  - used during church services, marketplace
  - Usually acquired fully as an L2

- **Acrolect**: only found in urban areas. Most widespread L1 use (~50,000 L1 speakers c. 2004)
  - informal speech between gov't officials and in Parliament
  - used in family homes, more common now as many children do not use the languages of their parents
Current Use of Tok Pisin

- High language variation in population - 823 languages and 5 million people
  - arguably highest of any country
  - many of the L1s in PNG are not spoken by very many people
  - Tok Pisin is the most widely used language
- Population contained in mostly rural settings, or isolated islands
- Tok Pisin is not spoken by older generations in all social settings
- Low rate of true creole use
  - probably caused by continued isolation of populations and the relatively short length of any contract worker's stay (fossilization)
- Used more commonly in urban areas, where the influence of English is still high today
- After educational reform, Tok Pisin taught in the schools
Current Use of Tok Pisin

- Is it a creole?
  - Large percentage of speakers
    - 4,000,000 L2 speakers (PNG population totals ~5,000,000 people)
  - Widespread use as a Lingua Franca for the speakers of the 800 language varieties
  - Some evidence of Nativization occurring in urban areas, where intermarrying of different language groups is more common
    - Children do not learn parent's language as Tok Pisin is the language in common
  - However:
    - not used heavily in rural areas (where >80% population lives)
    - Most of the speakers (~90%) retain their native L1s
    - English is still taught in the schools and is the official Language
    - Some varieties of Tok Pisin are not used in all social situations

- Conclusion:
  - A stabilized pidgin of Tok Pisin is used along with a true creole spoken in urban areas.
# Lexical Sources for Tok Pisin

<table>
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<td>Latin</td>
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# Phonology

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<tr>
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<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
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<td>t, d</td>
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<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
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<td>η</td>
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<td>Trill</td>
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<td>Flap</td>
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<td>h</td>
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<td>Lateral Approximant</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Vowels: /i, e, a, o, u/
Some phonological attributes

- **Labial Fricatives become stops**
  
  e.g. ‘fish’ -> /pis/

- **Most diphthongs are leveled into monophthongs**
  
  - e.g. ‘name’ -> /nem/; ‘road’ -> /rot/

- **No vowel rhoticity**
  
  - e.g. ‘work’ -> /wok/;

- **Word-final stops tend to be devoiced**
  
  - e.g. ‘pig’ -> /pik/; ‘dog’ -> /dok/;

- **Post-Alveolar fricatives become alveolar**
  
  e.g. ‘shame’ -> /sem/
Morphology

Main inflectional morphemes:

-im  indicates transitivity in verbs
e.g. kainkain ples i gat narapela kolim bilong dispela samting

Every other place has a different term for this thing

-pela  adjective ending
e.g. longpela bilong dispela bris i fifti yat

The length of this bridge is fifty yards

-pela  also indicates plural in personal pronouns
Morpho-phonological phenomena

Among L1 speakers, long (in, at, ‘location’) and bilong (of, ‘possessive’) are subject to reduction in form as follows:
- The final consonant /ŋ/ is rarely, if ever, produced
- The initial vowel /i/ in bilong is almost always deleted

Examples:

/putim lotebol/  ‘Put it on the table’  Putim long tebol
/givim lotupla man/  tupela man  ‘Give it to the two men’  Givim long
dok blomi/  ‘my dog’  Dok bilong mi
/pik blolapun manya/  man ia  ‘the old man’s pig’  Pik bilong lapun

Lynch (1972:2) argues that “these prepositions have become, if not prefixes, then at least proclitics to noun phrases.”
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<tbody>
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<td>mi</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>yu</td>
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<tr>
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<td>we two (incl)</td>
<td>yutupela</td>
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<td></td>
<td>mitupela</td>
<td>we two (excl)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>we three (incl)</td>
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<td>mitripela</td>
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<td>yumi</td>
<td>we (all) (incl)</td>
<td>yupela</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mipela</td>
<td>we (all) (excl)</td>
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</table>
The only true prepositions that are used frequently are *long*, *bilong*, and *wantaim*. *Long* translates to many English prepositions denoting spatial relations:

- **in:** *stap long haus* to *be in the house*
- **on:** *rait long pepa* to *write on paper*
- **at:** *long faiv klok* at *five o’clock*
- **to:** *go long gaden* to *go to the garden*
- **from:** *kaikai long plet* to *eat from a plate*
- **about:** *save long planti samting* to *know about many things*
- **because:** *Em i win long strong bilong em.* *He won because of his strength.*
- **for:** *Mi sori long yu.* *I’m sorry for you.*
- **during:** *Long nait em i kam.* *He came during the night.*
• **Bilong** indicates a closer relationship than **long**, and is used in situations:
  - to denote possession
  - to denote purpose
  - to denote origin
  - to denote a characteristic trait or quality
  - connecting part to whole
• Although considered a preposition, it could be argued that bilong is a verb, as it occurs in verbless sentences:
  Mi bilong Manus – *I am from Manus*; Tispela dok em i bilong mi – *This dog is mine.*
• If a more precise relationship must be expressed, it is done by adding nouns or adverbs of time and place in constructions such as **long + N + bilong** or **adv. + long**
  Examples:
  antap long - *on top of something*
  long insait bilong – *inside of something*
  inap long+time indication – *until*
  taim bilong – *during*
  long tispela hap – *on this side*
Wantaim originally meant *at the same time*, but is now frequently used as a preposition translating the concepts of *with, together with, and with the use of*.

Ex.

ol Nambole i bin singsing  
the people of Nambole

wantaim ol Tumam  
celebrated with  
the people of Tumam

mi stap wantaim ol  
I stayed with my family

famili bilong mi

ol nes i ken samapim maus  
The nurses can sew up your mouth

bilong yu wantaim string  
with string
Sentence Structure

● **Predicate Marker**

/i/ is used as a general predicate marker, although its use varies regionally
e.g. ol draiwa i smat mo – *the drivers are very smart*
    kakaruk i singaut – *the rooster is crowing*
    masta i singautim hauskuk – *the European calls for the cook*

However, the predicate marker /i/ is often deleted in declarative and interrogative sentences where the subject is a 1\textsuperscript{st} or 2\textsuperscript{nd} singular pronoun directly preceding the predicate:

mi wokabaut long rot – *I am walking on the road*

yu rausim meri a? – *you chased your wife away, didn’t you?*
Negation

The negative adverb **no** in Tok Pisin controls the scope of the full predicate, rather than individual constituents (a phenomenon found in many pidgin languages). **No** is positioned directly after *i*:

- *ol i no bin kisim independens yet* – *they haven’t got independence yet*
- *ol i no laik wok long biksan* – *they don’t like to work in the full heat of the sun*

Negation of nouns and noun phrases cannot be done by adding **no** to the constituent – Tok Pisin instead requires the embedding of a negative existential sentence containing the constituent to be negated:

- *i nogat wanpela man i kam* – *nobody came*
- *i nogat wanpela sevende i save dring ti* – *no Seventh Day Adventist drinks tea*
Bibliography

- Woolford, Ellen B. *Aspects of Tok Pisin Grammar*. Pacific Linguistics Series B, No. 66