3.1 TOK PISIN AND THE CENSUS

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3.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The three major censuses of Papua New Guinea over the last 20 years (1966, 1971 and 1980) have yielded various types of information about language data - especially about the extent of knowledge of Tok Pisin, and its geographical distribution. The data, however, are of varying reliability, and are capable of being analysed in various ways. The questions asked at the three censuses were not the same, and different samples of the population were surveyed. This paper does not attempt to analyse all the data; rather, it is a brief overview of the main conclusions which can be reached at present. As far as possible, the data are presented without analysis, so that the reader can draw his own conclusions.

3.1.2 1966 CENSUS OF THE TERRITORY OF PAPUA AND NEW GUINEA

The 1966 census attempted to cover all the non-village population, and approximately 10% of the rural village population. The language and literacy questions, as given in the Preliminary Bulletin No.20 of the census, were as follows:

Language

Persons who completed a Householder's Schedule were asked to state language in accordance with the following instructions.

"For persons 10 years and over, Language -

(a) Can the person speak simple English? ..... ANSWER 'YES' or 'NO'
(b) Can the person speak simple Pidgin? ..... ANSWER 'YES' or 'NO'
(c) Can the person speak simple Police Motu? . ANSWER 'YES' or 'NO'

For persons whose information was collected by means of an Interview Questionnaire a similar series of questions were asked in order to determine whether simple English, Pidgin or Police Motu were spoken. The test of whether such persons were able to speak a language was whether they were able to answer Census questions in that language.

Literacy

Persons who completed a Householder's Schedule were asked to state literacy in accordance with the following instructions.

"For persons 10 years of age and over, literacy -

(a) Can the person read and write simple sentences in English? ..... ANSWER 'YES' or 'NO'

S.A. Wurm and P. Mühlhäusler, eds *Handbook of Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin)*, 223-231. *Pacific Linguistics*, C-70, 1984.
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(b) Can the person read and write simple sentences in Pidgin? ..... ANSWER 'YES' or 'NO'
(c) Can the person read and write simple sentences in Police Motu? ..... ANSWER 'YES' or 'NO'
(d) Can the person read and write simple sentences in any other language (indigenous or foreign)? ..... ANSWER 'YES' or 'NO'

For persons whose information was obtained by means of an Interview Questionnaire a similar series of questions were asked. Where the interviewer was not sure whether a person was literate or not in a particular language he adopted the following procedure. The person was shown a simple picture depicting common objects and then asked to fill in a literacy Test Card. The card asked a few simple questions about the content of the picture.

For example, "How many pigs can you see in the picture?",
"I can see ..... pigs."

The overall results of the census are given in Tables 1 to 5 (non-indigenous population excluded).

In evaluating these tables, the nature of the questions asked should be borne in mind. In the case of forms completed by the respondent, it is likely that in many cases competence in the prestige languages of English, Tok Pisin and Motu may have been exaggerated. In addition, the 'test of literacy' administered by interviewers was not very searching, and may also have led to some inflation of the figures. A further consideration that may have led to distortion of the figures is the fact that some respondents may have been confused as to the difference between Tok Pisin and English; in even well-contacted areas in the Sepik region in 1959, many persons encountered thought that Tok Pisin was the 'white man's language'. However, in the case of the 1966 census, the testing techniques (filling out the census form in either Tok Pisin or English, or personal interviews by a census officer) should have minimised the possibility of confusion on this account.

Taking the figures at face value, however, we see that Tok Pisin then had, overall, almost three times as many speakers as English, and over four times as many speakers as Hiri Motu. The literacy figures, however, are very different; almost all the English speakers were literate in that language, but only about a third of the Tok Pisin speakers claimed literacy in Tok Pisin, and only some 40% of the Hiri Motu speakers were also literate in the lingua franca.

Languages spoken	Papua			New Guinea			Total			Percentage Distribution
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	
English	14,464	13,338	27,802	5,884	5,228	11,112	20,348	18,565	38,913	2.67
Pidgin (a)	12,687	1,945	14,632	254,877	123,725	378,602	267,564	125,669	393,233	26.97
English and Pidgin	5,398	1,113	6,511	63,761	29,951	93,712	69,159	31,064	100,223	6.87
Police Motu (b)	36,224	17,147	53,371	163	125	288	36,387	17,272	53,659	3.68
English and Police Motu	16,970	9,455	26,425	176	81	257	17,146	9,536	26,682	1.83
Pidgin and Police Motu	6,655	839	7,494	2,701	520	3,221	9,356	1,359	10,715	0.74
English, Pidgin and Police Motu	19,181	2,934	22,115	4,595	809	5,404	23,776	3,743	27,519	1.89
Other (c)	97,089	142,100	239,641	218,100	348,001	566,101	315,189	490,553	805,742	55.26
Not Stated	348	302	650	387	333	720	734	635	1,369	0.09
TOTAL (10 years of age and over)	209,015	189,625	398,640	550,643	508,771	1,059,414	759,658	698,396	1,458,054	100.00

(a) Lingua franca of the Territory of New Guinea; (b) Lingua franca of a large area of Papua;
(c) Persons who cannot speak simple English, Pidgin or Police Motu.

Table 1: Languages spoken by the population of 10 years of age and over: Territory of Papua and New Guinea, Census, June-July 1966

Language	Papua			New Guinea			Total			Proportion of total population 10 years of age and over
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	
English	56,013	26,840	82,853	74,416	36,069	110,485	130,429	62,908	193,337	13.26%
Pidgin	43,921	6,831	50,752	325,934	155,005	480,939	369,855	161,835	531,690	36.46%
Police Motu	79,030	30,375	109,405	7,635	1,535	9,170	86,665	31,910	118,575	8.13%

Table 2: Population of 10 years of age and over speaking English, Pidgin or Police Motu: Territory of Papua and New Guinea, Census, June-July 1966

Classification	Papua			New Guinea			Total		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
English	6,130	3,956	10,086	7,508	4,666	12,174	13,638	8,622	22,260
Pidgin (a)	1,039	155	1,194	24,452	7,663	32,115	25,490	7,817	33,307
English and Pidgin	1,062	180	1,242	17,911	9,086	26,997	18,974	9,266	28,240
Police Motu (b)	1,930	1,968	3,898	91	32	123	2,020	1,999	4,019
English and Police Motu	4,085	2,279	6,364	88	47	145	4,173	2,336	6,509
Pidgin and Police Motu	292	45	337	224	51	275	516	96	612
English, Pidgin and Police Motu	1,491	245	1,736	511	105	616	2,002	350	2,352
Other Language (c)	13,459	14,656	28,115	18,439	21,825	40,264	31,898	36,481	68,379
English and Other	11,366	9,421	20,787	3,341	3,570	6,911	14,707	12,992	27,699
Pidgin and Other	1,642	224	1,866	33,151	11,590	44,741	34,793	11,814	46,607
English, Pidgin and Other	2,696	413	3,109	35,460	15,234	50,694	38,157	15,647	53,804
Police Motu and Other	5,161	2,837	7,998	173	130	303	5,334	2,966	8,300
English, Police Motu and Other	9,234	4,390	13,624	436	106	542	9,671	4,496	14,167
Pidgin, Police Motu and Other	1,005	100	1,105	788	100	888	1,794	200	1,994
English, Pidgin, Police Motu, and Other	6,968	1,135	8,103	2,824	429	3,253	9,792	1,563	11,355
Illiterate	141,088	147,319	288,407	404,849	433,739	838,588	545,937	581,058	1,126,995
Not Stated	364	305	669	398	387	785	763	692	1,455
TOTAL (10 years of age and over)	209,015	189,625	398,640	550,643	508,771	1,059,414	759,658	698,396	1,458,054

(a) Lingua franca of the Territory of New Guinea; (b) Lingua franca of a large area of Papua; (c) Indigenous or foreign.

Table 3: Literacy of the population of 10 years of age and over: Territory of Papua and New Guinea, Census, June-July 1966

Classification	Papua			New Guinea			Total			Proportion of population 10 years of age and over
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	
English	43,032	22,019	65,051	68,079	33,253	101,332	111,114	55,272	166,386	11.41%
Pidgin	16,195	2,497	18,692	115,321	44,258	159,579	131,516	46,755	178,271	12.23%
Police Motu	30,166	12,999	43,165	5,135	1,010	6,145	35,301	14,009	49,310	3.38%

Table 4: Population of 10 years of age and over literate in English, Pidgin or Police Motu: Census, June-July 1966

Further bulletins gave the breakdown of the same tables by each of the then Districts - which by and large are the same as the present Provinces. Most of this data has been analysed by Sankoff (1977c), from which article Table 5 is taken:

Districts		Tok Pisin No.	Tok Pisin %	English No.	English %	Hiri Motu No.	Hiri Motu %
Papuan Coastal	Central	25,630	28.2	37,381	*41.1*	55,018	*60.5*
	Northern	7,267	19.1	13,464	*35.4*	14,686	*38.6*
	Gulf	2,873	8.0	7,189	*20.1*	12,097	*33.8*
	Milne Bay	3,547	5.2	16,169	*23.9*	16,714	*24.7*
	Western	1,844	4.5	5,305	*12.8*	9,825	*23.8*
New Guinea Islands	New Ireland	32,550	*94.2*	8,687	*25.1*	253	0.7
	Manus	11,784	*89.2*	4,639	*35.3*	211	1.6
	West New Britain	21,026	*75.7*	5,577	*20.1*	207	0.7
	East New Britain	48,464	*69.5*	20,299	*29.1*	1,356	1.9
	Bougainville	31,843	*68.0*	11,036	*23.6*	253	0.5
New Guinea Coastal	East Sepik	79,680	*76.6*	11,962	11.5	756	0.7
	West Sepik	45,208	*67.4*	4,314	6.4	318	0.4
	Madang	62,426	*61.5*	11,293	11.1	957	0.9
	Morobe	65,634	*47.1*	14,942	10.7	2,582	1.9
Highlands	Eastern Highlands	35,237	26.3	7,296	5.4	1,252	0.9
	Chimbu	20,706	17.4	3,519	2.9	339	0.3
	Western Highlands	26,385	13.0	6,922	3.4	687	0.3
	Southern Highlands	9,592	7.7	3,346	2.7	1,065	0.9

Note: For each language, percentages in italics are those which exceed the national average for that language. (Data abstracted from Table 11 of the 1966 Preliminary Census Bulletins for each district.)

Table 5: The number and proportion of Papuans and New Guineans age 10 and over speaking Tok Pisin, English and Hiri Motu in each district

Her summary of the regional distribution of Tok Pisin, from this table, is as follows:

> Tok Pisin is the most widely spoken official language in all but five Papuan Coastal Districts, i.e. Central, Northern, Gulf, Milne Bay, and Western. In all of the New Guinea Coastal and Islands Districts, Tok Pisin is spoken by a proportion of people considerably higher than the national average of 36.5%. And even in the New Guinea Islands Districts, where the proportion of English-speakers is far ahead of the national average of 13.3%, the number of Tok Pisin speakers is in every case more than double the number of English-speakers, and there are very few 'English only' speakers. Tok Pisin currently dominates as the language of widest currency in the largest proportion of districts.

In particular, one should note the very high proportion of Tok Pisin speakers in New Ireland and Manus, and the quite low figures for all Highlands areas. A major expansion of Tok Pisin in the Highlands was yet to come.

3.1.3 1971 POPULATION CENSUS OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In the 1971 census, the language questions, for all persons over the age of 10 years, were the following:

(10a) What language does this person usually speak at home?
(10b) Can this person speak simple English? Write Yes or No.
If Yes - can this person read and write simple sentences in English? Write Yes or No.
(10c) Can this person speak simple Pidgin? Write Yes or No.
If Yes - can this person read and write simple sentences in Pidgin? Write Yes or No.
(10d) Can this person speak simple Police Motu? Write Yes or No.
If Yes - can this person read and write simple sentences in Police Motu? Write Yes or No.
(10e) Can this person read and write simple sentences in any other language? If Yes, write name of language.
If No, write No.

The 'other languages' were not tabulated, except as totals of persons literate in other languages. No real attempt was made to check on language claims, whether for speaking or literacy, and it is likely that competence in more languages was claimed than was really the case.

Table 6 gives the summary data for each District/Province, in terms of claimed knowledge of Tok Pisin and other lingue franche; this should be compared with Table 5.

Districts		Tok Pisin No.	%	English No.	%	Hiri Motu No.	%
Papuan Coastal	Central	41,772	36.0	52,779	*45.5*	70,671	*60.9*
	Northern	11,989	28.5	18,682	*44.5*	18,684	*44.5*
	Gulf	4,446	12.5	8,491	*23.9*	12,701	*35.7*
	Milne Bay	5,742	8.1	25,020	*35.3*	17,665	*24.9*
	Western	4,198	9.5	10,627	*24.0*	12,742	*28.8*
New Guinea Islands	New Ireland	37,443	**93.1*	14,013	*34.8*	508	1.3
	Manus	14,231	*93.1*	7,031	*46.0*	236	**1.5*
	West New Britain	34,090	*89.4*	11,377	*29.8*	623	1.6
	East New Britain	54,208	*73.4*	29,758	*40.3*	2,009	2.7
	Bougainville	45,285	*75.6*	21,570	*36.0*	1,596	2.7
New Guinea Coastal	East Sepik	91,031	*82.1*	19,862	17.9	1,127	1.0
	West Sepik	39,223	**63.9*	7,547	12.3	422	0.7
	Madang	74,949	*68.9*	21,522	19.8	1,215	1.1
	Morobe	93,175	*59.3*	25,941	16.5	4,333	2.8
Highlands	Eastern Highlands	50,863	33.5	13,588	8.9	1,569	1.0
	Chimbu	27,604	26.4	6,909	6.6	536	0.5
	Western Highlands	56,228	24.3	19,900	8.6	1,460	0.6
	Southern Highlands	20,356	15.9	9,110	7.1	1,567	1.2
	NATIONAL	707,126	44.5	323,767	20.4	150,652	9.5

Note: For each language, percentages in italics are those which exceed the national average for that language; an asterisk denotes a decline in the percentage since 1966. (Data abstracted from Table 8 of the 1971 Population Census Bulletins for each district.)

Table 6: The number and proportion of Papuans and New Guineans age 10 and over speaking Tok Pisin, English and Hiri Motu in each district

It will be readily seen that knowledge of all lingue franche increased in all provinces, with the exception of the three figures marked with an asterisk. In the case of the decline in Hiri Motu in Manus, the number of speakers is so small that this probably has no significance. However, the apparent 1.1% decline in Tok Pisin in New Ireland, and, more importantly, the apparent 3.5% decline in Tok Pisin in the West Sepik, is inexplicable. It probably reflects an error in the figures at some point.

The largest increases in Tok Pisin are in the Highlands provinces, but the increases in Central and Northern provinces are also considerable. The traditional Tok Pisin speaking areas of the north coast and islands increased in knowledge of Tok Pisin, but less dramatically. All provinces which in 1966 had a higher proportion of knowledge of lingue franche than the national average retained that lead in 1971, but no new provinces were added to the list.

Laycock (1979) compared the overall data for the use of Tok Pisin, lingue franche, and vernacular languages; the results are given in Tables 7 and 8.

Languages	1966 Census			1971 Census			Changes 1966-1971		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Tok Pisin (TP)	267,564	125,669	393,233	287,633	162,118	449,751	+20,069	+36,449	+56,518
%	35.25	18.01	27.00	35.06	21.07	28.29	-0.19	+3.06	+1.29
Police Motu (PM)	36,387	17,272	53,659	33.512	21,488	55,000	-2,875	+4,216	+1,341
%	4.79	2.48	3.68	4.09	2.79	3.46	-0.70	+0.31	-0.22
English	20,348	18,565	38,913	24,266	25,429	49,965	+3,918	+6,864	+10,782
%	2.68	2.67	2.67	2.96	3.31	3.13	+0.28	+0.64	+0.46
TP and English	69,159	31,064	100,223	131,053	63,331	194,384	+61,894	+32,267	+94,161
%	9.11	4.45	6.88	15.98	8.23	12.22	+6.87	+3.78	+5.34
PM and English	17,146	9,536	26,682	18,420	14,241	32,661	+1,274	+4,705	+5,979
%	2.26	1.37	1.83	2.25	1.85	2.05	-0.01	+0.48	+0.22
TP and PM	9,356	1,359	10,715	13,712	2,793	15,965	+3,816	+1,434	+5,250
%	1.23	0.19	0.74	1.60	0.36	1.00	+0.37	+0.17	+0.26
TP, PM, and English	23,776	3,743	27,519	37,913	9,114	47,027	+14,137	+5,371	+19,508
%	3.13	0.54	1.89	4.62	1.18	2.96	+1.49	+0.64	+1.07
none of the above	315,189	490,553	805,742	274,320	470,792	745,112	-40,869	-19,761	-60,630
%	41.53	70.30	55.31	33.44	61.20	46.87	-8.09	-9.10	-8.44
not stated	734	635	1,369	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total indigenous population	759,659	698,396	1,458,055	820,289	769,306	1,589,595	+60,630	+70,910	+131,540
% increase	–	–	–	–	–	–	+7.98	+10.15	+9.02

Table 7: Competence in non-indigenous languages among indigenous Papua New Guineans over the age of 10 years

Language	1966 Census			1971 Census			Changes 1966-1971		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Tok Pisin	369,855	161,835	531,690	469,771	237,356	707,127	+99,916	+75,521	+175.437
%	48.73	23.19	36.50	57.27	30.85	44.49	+8.54	+7.66	+7.99
English	130,429	62,908	193,337	211,652	112,115	323,767	+81,223	+49,207	+130,430
%	17.19	9.02	13.27	25.80	14.57	20.37	+8.61	+5.55	+7.10
Police Motu	86,665	31,910	118,575	103,017	47,636	150,653	+16,352	+15,726	+32,078
%	11.42	4.57	8.14	12.56	6.19	9.48	+1.14	+1.62	+1.34

Table 8: Total numbers of speakers of major lingue franche among indigenous Papua New Guineans over the age of 10 years

From these tables it is apparent that the fastest growing language, overall, in the period in question was Tok Pisin; but Tok Pisin is only marginally ahead of English, and, in fact, the percentage increase for English is greater among males than it is for Tok Pisin. Many women are acquiring Tok Pisin as their first non-vernacular language, but many are also acquiring it along with English.

It is likely that many of the changes between 1966 and 1971 reflect the addition of children who were too young to be censused in 1966, but who are now at school and are acquiring Tok Pisin and English, and, to a lesser degree, Hiri Motu.

However, the census figures should be treated with caution. The National Statistician of Papua New Guinea, writing in the Preliminary Bulletin of the 1980-81 census, points out that the original figures for the census involved a severe underestimation of the population; when these figures were adjusted for publication, too big an adjustment factor was used, so that the population was overestimated. Whether these adjustments greatly affect the language data, at least in terms of percentages of speakers of the various languages, is difficult to determine.

It is also impossible to estimate from the census data the number of first-language Tok Pisin speakers.

3.1.4 1980-1981 PAPUA NEW GUINEA NATIONAL POPULATION CENSUS

The first census of an independent Papua New Guinea took a form different from that of previous censuses. Firstly, the census was spread over a long period, and did not count the population in respect of a single night. Secondly, the census was administered with two questionnaires, called the 'short form' and the 'long form'. All urban areas, rural non-villages (non-traditional settlements, missions, work camps, and the like), and a sample of rural villages were surveyed with the 'long form'; the remaining rural areas used the 'short form'. No language questions were included on the 'short form'; on the 'long form' the questions were as follows, for all persons 10 years of age and older:

A In your house what language do you speak most?
Use list of languages

17 _____

B When buying at the market what language do you speak most?
Use list of languages

The 'list of languages' referred to was an arbitrary list of major languages likely to be encountered, given as follows in the interviewer workbook for the 'long form':

English, Motu, Pidgin - All P.N.G.
Enga - Enga Province
Tolai/Kuanua - East New Britain
Melpa - Western Highlands
Kuman - Simbu
Huli - Southern Highlands
Mendi - Southern Highlands
Kate - Morobe, Madang and Eastern Highlands
Yabem - Morobe, Madang and Eastern Highlands
Tok Ples or Other - All other languages

The census data obtained from this questionnaire have not yet been published, but even when they are available, it is difficult to see how they can be compared with the language data of previous censuses. The data on language USE will certainly be valuable, but information on language COMPETENCE will be lost. In a region such as Buin, for example (North Solomons Province), almost all the 17,000 or so speakers of Buin will give 'Buin' as their answer to both language questions: however, most of these also speak Tok Pisin, and a reasonable number speak English. These facts will not appear in the census data, so the number of speakers of all lingue franche, across the country, must necessarily appear to be less.

Laycock (1982b) has argued that Tok Pisin may have already reached its point of maximum expansion, but the data to support this are not yet available. Perhaps when the data do become available, the language may have already started to decline - but in any case it is clear that Tok Pisin will continue to serve the provinces of maximal linguistic diversity (East and West Sepik, Madang, Morobe, and Manus) for many years yet.

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