

DESCRIPTIVE AND PRESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR IN NEW GUINEA PIDGIN¹

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The various regional dialects and sociolects of New Guinea Pidgin differ amongst themselves in a number of ways, with the differences manifesting themselves predominantly on the phonological and lexical levels, with idiomatic usage, as an extension of the lexical sphere, also showing quite marked variation. With the differences in lexicon, the rules underlying the nature and formation of lexical items also differ appreciably. In this field, the differences between various sociolects in particular consist of a greater or lesser disturbance through the introduction and adoption of foreign, usually English, lexical items whose internal set-up violates the Pidgin rules of word-formation which are near-identical in all Pidgin regional dialects, but which are basically different from those valid for English (Wurm, Mühlhäusler and Laycock 1977).

Apart from these areas of dialectal and sociolectal differences, a certain amount of difference is noticeable between regional dialects and sociolects, and to a limited extent, between idiolects or small-group sub-dialects, on the levels of morphology and syntax, with the differences manifesting themselves essentially in a greater or lesser elaboration and realisation of morphological and syntactic possibilities, with some dialects, sociolects, idiolects and sub-dialects showing greater differentiation and complexity in certain areas of grammar, with a resulting increase in clarity and unambiguity of expression than others.

One particular local dialect, i.e. the one spoken on the north-east coast of the New Guinea mainland with its focal point in Madang and Wewak, has, in a non-urbanised sociolectal form, achieved a considerable amount of standardisation through its widespread use in print,

essentially by the Lutheran Kristen Pres in Madang and the Catholic Mission Headquarters in Wewak which amongst other publications, issues the Pidgin newspaper Wantok which has a wide circulation.

It is somewhat unfortunate that this dialect, though quite elaborate in some respects, compares somewhat unfavourably with some other dialects, sociolects, idiolects or sub-dialects observable in the New Guinea Pidgin language as a whole, with regard to its elaboration and differentiation in some areas of the morphological and syntactic fields, and in the realisation of morphological and syntactic possibilities which are observable in some of the other forms of Pidgin.

In New Guinea Pidgin, in common with Pidgin languages in general, increased grammaticalisation compensates for a characteristically reduced lexicon. At the same time, there is a comparatively low degree of elaboration in surface features of morphology resulting in a multiple signalling function of certain morphological forms, with increased areas of ambiguity. It is this particular area of grammar in which differences between various forms of Pidgin are observable, and differences in the level of ambiguity are present between them.

One example may be given:

In the northern coastal standard form of Pidgin, future tense can be signalled by pronoun + the basic verb-form, with an adverbial expression denoting futurity present in the clause, e.g. *tumara mi kaikai* = '*I shall eat tomorrow*'. General futurity is denoted by *bai* before the pronoun + verb (or pronoun + *bai* + *i* + verb with the 1st and 2nd person sg.), e.g. *bai mi kaikai* (or *mi bai i kaikai*) = '*I shall eat (sometime)*', and near future by *laik* between the pronoun and verb, e.g. *mi laik kaikai* = '*I shall soon eat*'. The same form denotes intention or desire in this dialect, i.e. '*I want to eat*'.

The present writer observed that in the Highlands Pidgin dialect, especially as spoken by the Chimbu, the first form mentioned above, i.e. *tumara mi kaikai*, was commonly used, as in northern coastal Pidgin, whereas the form with *bai*, though known to quite a few speakers and applied with the same meaning as in the northern coastal dialect, occurred only very rarely. However, two other forms were frequently employed: pronoun + *ken* + *i* + verb to denote a definite future, e.g. *mi ken i kaikai* = '*I shall definitely eat*', and *nau* + pronoun + verb to indicate an immediate future, e.g. *nau mi kaikai* = '*I am about to eat*'. A form identical with the northern coastal dialect form pronoun + *laik* + verb was employed to denote near future, but to express intention or desire, *i* was interposed between *laik* and the verb, i.e. *mi laik i kaikai* = '*I shall soon eat*', but *mi laik i kaikai* = '*I want to eat*'. In addition, the pronoun + *klosap* + *i* + verb was frequently

observed as denoting a very near future, e.g. *mi klosap i kaikai* = 'I shall eat very soon'. This form is met with also in the northern coastal dialect, but seems to be rare in it.

A unified list of the forms encountered in the two dialects would be as follows:

<i>tumara mi kaikai</i>	<i>'I shall eat tomorrow'</i>
<i>bai mi kaikai</i>	<i>'I shall eat sometime'</i>
(or: <i>mi bai i kaikai</i>)	
<i>mi ken i kaikai</i>	<i>'I shall definitely eat'</i>
<i>nau mi kaikai</i>	<i>'I am about to eat'</i>
<i>mi klosap i kaikai</i>	<i>'I shall eat very soon'</i>
<i>mi laik kaikai</i>	<i>'I shall eat soon'</i>
<i>mi laik i kaikai</i>	<i>'I want to eat'.</i>

What has been outlined above concerning the morphological differences between two regional dialects of Pidgin in one particular narrow field of verb morphology appears to have considerable significance for the nowadays very topical question of the standardisation of New Guinea Pidgin. The unified list of forms given above constitutes a larger inventory than either of the two dialects possesses, and allows for greater clarity and precision of reference, and disambiguity of denotation.

The question of the standardisation of Pidgin in the framework of language planning, has been predominantly concerned with matters of the lexicon, the introduction of new words into the language and the problems of the acceptability or otherwise of the nature and formation of new words and items introduced, and the rules and models which newly introduced terms should follow in their formation (Wurm, Mühlhäusler and Laycock 1977). These procedures constitute prescriptive acts whose guidelines are based on the study of descriptive analyses of observed Pidgin usages. It seems that a similar approach with regard to morphological and syntactic phenomena as illustrated by the examples given above, would come very much under the same heading. The purpose of the standardisation and language planning procedures on the lexical level is to enrich the vocabulary of Pidgin in a manner which does not violate the rules of word formation and creation inherent in Pidgin as is done by the wholesale introduction of foreign, mostly English, terms whose underlying word formation rules are quite different from, and alien to, Pidgin. In the same way standardisation and language planning on the morphological and syntactic levels would prescriptively aim for an enrichment and greater differentiation and disambiguity of New Guinea Pidgin on these levels on the basis of the results of described observations of usages in various forms of New Guinea Pidgin.

As a further example, a unified presentation of some of the most important functions of the particle *i* in New Guinea Pidgin will be given in a popular descriptive-prescriptive style (Wurm 1971):

The Particle *i*

The functions of the particle *i* - usually referred to as the predicate marker - are fundamental for many parts of Pidgin grammar. A summary of its most important functions is given below:

1) *i* appears before a verb or non-verbal predicate if the subject is the third person, e.g. *em i toktok* = '*he talks*', *man i toktok* = '*the (indigenous) man talks*', *ston i hevi* = '*the stone is heavy*', *diwai i yar* = '*the tree is a casuarina*'.

Exceptions:

a) *i* is often omitted under the above circumstances after *em* = '*this is*', '*he is*', etc. if *em* is the first word of a sentence, e.g. *em papa bilong mi* = '*this (or: he) is my father*', but: *dispela man, em i papa bilong mi* = '*as far as this man is concerned, he is my father*' (this is the idiomatic way of expressing this concept in Pidgin). This rule overrides rule b) below, e.g. *dispela, em i wonem* = '*this one, what is it?*'

b) *i* does not appear before an interrogative word which constitutes a predicate, e.g. *dispela wonem?* = '*what is this?*' Similarly, *i* does not appear before *bilong* and an interrogative even if the combination of the two constitutes a predicate, e.g. *dispela dok bilong husat?* = '*whose is this dog?*'; *dispela man bilong we?* = '*where is this (indigenous) man from?*'

It is more idiomatic, however, to render the concepts expressed by the above two sentences in the following manner:

dispela i dok bilong husat? = '*this is whose dog?*'

dispela i man bilong we? = '*this is an (indigenous) man from where?*'

c) Before predicative *pas* = '*stuck*' in expressions referring to '*blind*', '*deaf*' and '*dumb*' *i* is often omitted, e.g. *ai bilong mi (i) pas* = '*I am blind (lit. my eye is stuck)*'; *yau bilongen (i) pas* = '*he is deaf (lit. his ear is stuck)*'.

2) *i* + *bilong* + noun or pronoun cannot constitute a predicate by itself. *i* must be preceded by *em* (or: *tupela*, *tripela*, *ol* in the case of non-singular subjects) or followed by a noun, e.g. *dispela dok em i bilong mi*, or: *dispela dok i dok bilong mi*, or: *dispela dok em i dok bilong mi* = '*this dog is mine*'. *Dispela dok i bilong mi* is not idiomatic. (Note what has been said above in 1b, in this connection.)

3) *i* can appear instead of the repeated simple pronoun after an emphatic pronoun, even if the latter is not of the third person, e.g. *mi yet (or: tasol) mi save*, or: *mi yet (or: tasol) i save* = '*I myself*'

know', mi wanpela (tasol) i no inap = 'I by myself am not able to...'

4) i appears between some auxiliary verbs denoting tenses and other features, and the main verb, i.e. ken i + verb: definite future; laik i + verb: desire, intention, 'to want'; bai i + verb: indefinite future (i is only used if the subject is mi = 'I' or yu = 'you (one)', and bai follows the subject); optionally: inap i + verb: physical ability. Examples: mi ken i kaikai = 'I shall (definitely) eat'; yu laik i wokim spia = 'you want to make an arrow'; mi bai i wokim haus = 'some time I shall build a house' (more commonly: bai mi wokim haus); mi inap (i) brukim stik = 'I am able to break the stick'.

5) After singaut long = 'to call out to (for information)', singautim = 'to call (to move someone)', larim = 'to let (someone do something)', 'allow (someone to do something)', tokim = 'to tell (someone to do something)', helpim = 'to help (someone to do something)', mekim = 'to cause (someone to do something)' and a few other verbs, i appears between the object of these verbs and the next verb, irrespective of the subject of the latter, e.g. em i singautim mi i bringim i go wara longen = 'he calls me to take water to him'; mi larim yu i kaikai kaukau = 'I let you eat sweet potatoes'; em i tokim mipela i katim diwai = 'he tells us to cut trees'; mi helpim yu i liptimapim diwai = 'I help you to lift the tree'; mi mekim yu i kaikai = 'I make you eat'; etc.

Also, i appears after hariap = 'to hurry' and a verb following it and determining it, e.g. em i hariap i kaikai = 'he eats hurriedly' (more commonly, this is expressed by em i kaikai hariap).

Similarly, i is placed between larim = 'to let, allow (somebody to do something)' and a verb following it immediately, without an intervening object. If the clause contains an object indicated by a separate word (noun or pronoun), it is usually placed between larim and the other verb (see the first paragraph of 5)). Examples: larim i go = 'let him go'; larim i kaikai = 'let him eat'; but: larim em i kaikai = 'let HIM eat'; larim dok i kam insait = 'let the dog come in'; etc. However, if the object consists of a noun with adjuncts, it can optionally be placed after the verb which follows larim. In such a case, no i appears between larim and the second verb, e.g. larim dispela tupela man i kaikai, or: larim kaikai dispela tupela man = 'let these two (indigenous) men eat'; larim ol dispela draipela pik i go, or: larim go ol dispela draipela pik = 'let all these big pigs go'.

If, in such sentences, the object consists of a noun determined by a (relative) clause, the placing of the object after the second verb is obligatory, e.g. larim kaikai man i sindaun i stap lohap = 'let the man eat who is sitting over there'.

The situation is somewhat comparable with regard to mekim = 'cause (someone to do something)', except that with a few verbs, notably dai = 'to die, cease to exist', and save = 'to know', no i appears between them and the mekim precedes them immediately if the clause contains no object. The rules governing the position of the object, with or without adjunct, are comparable to those mentioned above with regard to larim, except that with some sequences of mekim + a verb, especially mekim dai = 'kill (a living being)' and mekim save = 'to teach a lesson, punish severely', the object tends to be placed after the second verb even if it has no adjunct, unless it is a singular pronoun (mi, yu or em). Examples: mekim i kaikai = 'make him eat'; mi mekim dispela tupela dok i dring, or: mi mekim dring dispela tupela dok = 'I make these two dogs drink'; mi mekim dai dok (or: mi mekim dok i dai) = 'I killed the dog'; mi mekim save dispela tupela dok (or rarely: mi mekim dispela tupela dok i save) = 'I taught these two dogs a lesson, punished them'; mi mekim kaikai ol man i kam kamap asde = 'I made all the men eat who arrived yesterday'; mi mekim go ol man i stap long haus = 'I make all the men go who are in the house'; but: em i laik i mekim mi i dai = 'he wants to kill me' (rarely: em i laik i mekim dai mi); mi mekim yu i dai = 'I('ll) kill you' (rarely: mi mekim dai yu).

It must be noted that with mekim + dai referring to the extinction or destruction of an inanimate object, i is placed between them, e.g. mi mekim i dai = 'I put it out (i.e. the light)' (but: mi mekim dai = 'I killed it or him'). In contrast to mekim (and larim) + other verbs, this i appears even if an object follows dai in such instances, e.g. yu mekim i dai paia (or: yu mekim paia i dai) = 'extinguish the fire'; em i mekim i dai wara (or: em i mekim wara i dai) = 'he poisoned the water'.

With traiim = 'to try', no i is placed between it and the verb following it (unless the latter is go = 'go away', kam = 'come', or stap = 'to be; to continue; to be at rest; to stay', see 6)). The object usually follows the second verb.

Examples: mi traiim wokim spia = 'I try to make an arrow'; em i traiim liptimapi diwai i hevi = 'he tries to lift the heavy tree'; but: em i traiim i kam long dispela pies = 'he tries to come to this village'.

The concept of trying to do something can also be expressed through placing the verb indicating the attempted action first, with the object following it, and traiim, with i preceding it, placed after it, e.g. mi wokim spia i traiim = 'I try to make an arrow'. This construction is also used if the object is accompanied by adjuncts, but not if the object consists of a noun determined by a relative clause, e.g. mi wokim longpela spia bilong yu i traiim = 'I try to make a long arrow

for you', but: *mi wokim traiim spia em yu laik i peim* = 'I try to make the arrow which you want to buy'.

If the object of a clause or sentence containing a reference to an attempted action is placed at the beginning of the clause or sentence for emphasis, *traiim* follows the verb which it determines, without *i* appearing between the two, e.g. *akis mi wokim trailm* = 'I try to make an axe'; *dispela spia bilong yu em yu laik i peim, mi wokim traiim* = 'I try to make this arrow for you, the one which you want to buy'. If the object is not overtly indicated, a clause such as *mi wokim traiim* = 'I try to make it' denotes emphasis on the object.

To end this section 5), it may be mentioned that if *stap*, as the marker of continuing action, is placed directly before the verb which it determines, no *i* appears between the two, e.g. *mi stap kaikai* = 'I am eating', *em i stap go* = 'he is going away'.

6) Before *go* = 'go away', *kam* = 'come' and *stap* = 'to be; to continue; to be at rest; to stay', *i* appears after some auxiliaries which are not usually followed by *i* if other verbs follow them, i.e.

ken = 'may'
laik = 'near future'
mas = 'necessity'
traiim = 'attempted action'
kirap = 'starting action'

Examples: *yu ken i go* = 'you may go away' (but: *yu ken kisim dispela* = 'you may take this'); *mi laik i go* = 'I shall soon go away' (but: *mi laik kaikai* = 'I shall soon eat'); *yu mas i stap* = 'you must stay' (but: *yu mas wokim haus* = 'you must build a house'); *yu traiim i kam* = 'try to come!' (but: *yu traiim wokim spia* = 'try to make an arrow'); *em i kirap i go* = 'he began to go away' (but: *em i kirap toktok* = 'he began to speak').

In the case of *ken* and *laik*, this can lead to confusion, because before *go*, *kam* and *stap* the distinction between *ken* = 'may' and *ken i* = 'definite future', as well as *laik* = 'near future' and *laik i* = 'desire, intention, to want', is obliterated because of the obligatory appearance of *i* before *go*, *kam* and *stap*.

However, after *larim* = 'to let, allow (someone to do something)', *mekim* = 'to cause (someone to do something)', and *stap* as the marker of continuing action, no *i* appears before *go*, *kam* and *stap* in those instances in which the former are followed by other verbs without the insertion of *i* between them (see 5)).

7) *i* is always present in the direction of action markers *i go* and *i kam* which respectively denote movement of the action away from the speaker or focus of action, or towards him or it, and in the marker of

continuing action i stap. All these markers follow the verbs which they determine, either immediately or separated from them by one or several words, e.g. salim i go pas, or: salim pas i go = '*send the letter away*'; em i lukluk i stap long mipela, or: em i lukluk long mipela i stap = '*he is looking at us*'.

8) Before a verb, i appears optionally if the subject is a non-singular first or second person pronoun, e.g. yumitupela i kaikai kaukau, or: yumitupela kaikai kaukau = '*we two(incl.) eat sweet potatoes*'.

However, if an order (an imperative or hortative concept) is expressed, i does not appear, e.g. yumitupela kaikai kaukau = '*let's eat sweet potatoes*', yutupela wokim banara = '*make a bow, (you two)!!*'.

However, in sharp commands addressed to first or second persons, singular or non-singular, i, with a clause stress, can be placed between the pronoun and the verb, e.g. yu i kaikai = '*eat!!*', yupela i kaikai = '*you (all) eat!!*', yuml i kaikai = '*let us eat!!*'.

9) i can be used instead of na = '*and*' between those adjectives which cannot accompany a noun on the same side of it without a connecting word or particle, e.g. bikpela i planti bun, or: bikpela na planti bun = '*many big bones*'.

10) i is often used to link co-ordinate clauses if the actions referred to in the two clauses are very closely connected and are either simultaneous, or follow each other closely, e.g. em i go i brukim paiauwut = '*he went and chopped firewood*', ol i bung i toktok = '*they got together and talked*'.

11) i before verbs with a third person subject is often dropped if a number of such verbs follow each other in a narration.

Similar cumulative prescriptive statements based on observations of various forms of New Guinea Pidgin can for instance be made regarding a) aspects of verbs and their combination in individual verbal forms; b) qualitative noun adjuncts of various kinds; c) the linking of co-ordinate clauses in sentences, etc.

What is required for this work is a detailed study and exhaustive description of such features and their variations in all observable forms of New Guinea Pidgin which would provide the basis for cumulative prescriptive statements of value for standardisation and language planning and engineering.

N O T E

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