1.   Introduction

Pidgin languages have their origins in the eighteenth century and arose from the need for two or more peoples to communicate where a common language did not exist. A pidgin can be described as one of four types depending on where in the process of development it occurs, jargon, pidgin, extended or expanded pidgin and Creole. The difference is best described as having "… a gradual increase in complexity." (McArthur 1998:450) with jargons being the most simplified: **jargon** – consists of a very small vocabulary and greater individual variation; **stable pidgin** – is more complex, has social norms but is still limited in vocabulary and structure; **extended or expanded pidgin** – has stabilised and expanded to develop more complex grammatical structures and is well-established, sometimes having official status; **Creole** – when a pidgin is used as the first language in a community. An expanded pidgin is not so easily definable from a Creole as both use complex structures and similar features. The main difference is not in the form or structure but in the way the pidgin is used (McArthur 1998:450).

2.   Aim

The aim of this study is to compare Tok Pisin with English and, in doing so, try to determine whether it is a developing language, moving forwards in its own right, or whether it is a language in the process of disappearing. This possibility was discussed in 1985 by Don Laycock in the article "The Future of Tok Pisin" in *Handbook of Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin),* where he predicts that the language will decline in popularity and use and that "… in perhaps 50 years time, Tok Pisin will most likely be being studied by scholars among a small community of old men." (1985:667). He foresees renewed interest

in the language "[b]ut this is only likely to happen at a stage when Tok Pisin is no longer serving any useful function." (1985:668).

3.   Materials and Method

In order to complete the aim of this study I have consulted two primary texts: the Tok Pisin newspaper, *Wantok*, June 20, 2002, and Frank Mihalic's *The Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin*, revised in 1971. Mihalic's dictionary was the first, and in many respects, the only comprehensive dictionary of Tok Pisin and thirty-one years have elapsed since its publication. Changes in a language can take several generations to seep through and become commonplace, but in a pidgin language thirty years is a very long time and many developments can be discovered. Will these changes support Laycock's claim that Tok Pisin is in a state of decline or will they show a pidgin developing into an independent language?

Ten pages were chosen from *Wantok,* dealing with various topics, e.g. local news, world news, the election campaign, social issues and sport. This corpus consisted of approximately 10,000 words. I decided to limit my study to neologisms and word formation, looking closely for examples of new vocabulary and forms entering the language in the last 30 years and comparing these with Mihalic's dictionary. I then attempted to determine the origin of these new lexical items and categorise them according to their domain.

4.   Background

4.1   Historical Background

Tok Pisin is the name given in 1981 to that which is also known as Melanesian Pidgin, Neo-Melanesian, Papua New Guinea Pidgin or sometimes Tok Boi, referring to the fact that it was predominantly the male Papua New Guineans in a servile position who used it. It was the men who moved to plantations in Samoa and Queensland to work between 1879 and 1912, bringing the language back with them, and in this way women were initially excluded from speaking Tok Pisin. Tok Pisin is considered by the majority of linguists to be an expanded pidgin, moving towards a Creole, although it is spoken in various forms in different areas of Papua New Guinea: in some areas it is little more than a stable pidgin and in others it functions more like a Creole.

Papua New Guinea is probably the most linguistically dense area in the world, with approximately 800 languages being spoken in the country. It has three official languages: English and two pidgins, Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu, formerly known as Police Motu, spoken by approximately 9% of the population, mainly in the southern area around the capital, Port Moresby. Hiri Motu and Tok Pisin gained their official language status in 1975 at the same time as Papua New Guinea gained its independence from Australia.

Tok Pisin has its origins in the 19th century when it became the lingua franca of traders from Europe and the Pacific islands. From initially being merely a way of communicating with the European traders and colonisers, it has grown into a language with about 50,000 native speakers (Crystal 1997:341) and just under half the approximately 5 million population of Papua New Guinea claim to speak it. Tok Pisin is spoken mainly in northern and eastern Papua New Guinea, although it is even spreading to urban areas in the southern part, due to greater population movement.

Figure 4.1.1 Map of Papua New Guinea with linguistic divisions marked.

The red area uses predominantly Tok Pisin as a lingua franca, the green predominantly

Hiri Motu, and in the small, blue section both overlap.

4.2 Current Areas of Use

English is still the main language used in government business but Tok Pisin is much used

in parliamentary debate. Education has traditionally been undertaken in English, but a

recent reform enabled authorities to choose which language should be used in elementary

school and a large number have chosen Tok Pisin. *Wantok* began publishing in 1970 and

has a distribution of approximately 15,000 giving a readership of approximately 50,000.

A number of television and radio programmes are in Tok Pisin although these are mainly

interviews. Due to Australia's geographical proximity to Papua New Guinea, Radio

Australia also broadcasts in Tok Pisin.

These facts combined with the fact that more and more children are acquiring

Tok Pisin as a first language have led to discussions in the last few years with regards as to

whether it should become Papua New Guinea's national language or not.

4.3 Simplified English?

Tok Pisin cannot be regarded as a mere simplified English with virtually no grammar as some lay-people have tried to claim, e.g. Ken Campbell, the legendary theatre director and actor who staged a production of *Macbeth* in Tok Pisin. He stated "… it takes but two days to learn, wherever you are from …Why is it so easy to learn? Because it's got virtually no grammar. It's got a few habits, that's all." (*The Guardian* 22 July 1998:15). Instead, it has a vocabulary of its own, albeit based on English for the most part, approximately 80%, and a set of grammar rules which differ from English. Some examples of these rules are the following:

> *Em i rit*　　　　　　　　　'He is reading'
>
> *Em i ritim buk*　　　　　　　'He is reading a book'

In the second of these examples we see the suffix *–im* on the verb. This marks that the verb is transitive, i.e. that it has an object following it. These examples also contain the word *i* before the verb. In Tok Pisin this is called a **predicate marker** and occurs when the sentence has the subject *em,* which means he, she or it, or when the subject is a noun or noun phrase, e.g. John or *liklik manki* 'the little boy'. These are grammatical features which do not occur in English and must therefore dispel any theory of it merely being simplified or 'broken' English.

The basic vocabulary of Tok Pisin as recorded in Mihalic's *The Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin* is only about 2000 words. This can be compared with the *Oxford English Dictionary* which "… provides authoritative definitions of over 500,000 words." (OED Online: About the OED). This does not mean that speakers of Tok Pisin cannot express themselves as comprehensively as speakers of English. On the contrary they have developed an ingenious method of combining words and phrases to build new vocabulary.

5.   Word formation

In general, word formation in English can take place in a number of ways**: borrowings** from other languages*,* e.g. *macho* from Spanish or *mafioso* from Italian; **coinage** where a totally new word is invented, e.g. *jeep*; **calque** or **loan translation***,* e.g. *superman* from German *Übermensch;* **compounding** of two separate elements to form a new word, e.g. *greyhound*; **backformation** where an imagined affix is removed, e.g. *laze* from *lazy*; **derivation** where affixes are added, e.g. prefix *re-* in *rewrite*, suffix *–ness* in *darkness*, infix '*bloody'* in the standard example *absobloodylutely;* **conversion** where words change word class, e.g. *to carpet*; **clipping,** e.g. *flu* from *influenza*; by forming **acronyms** where the first letters on a series of words is pronounced as one word, e.g. *SALT* from *Strategic Arms Limitation Talks*; **initialism,** where individual letters are pronounced in an abbreviation, e.g. *DJ* from *disc jockey;* **blending,** e.g. *smog* from *smoke* and *fog* and **reduplication,** e.g. *goody-goody.*

5.1   Word Formation in Wantok

In *Wantok* there were examples found from several of these categories, but they have most probably undergone semantic change at an earlier stage and have appeared in Tok Pisin as borrowings and so it is difficult to separate them into groups and categorise them. Some of the more obvious ones are the following:

acronyms: this area is quite small and only two examples were found in my corpus: *AIDS* and *NATO*.   These have most likely been borrowed into Tok Pisin from English. There are no examples of acronym creations in Tok Pisin in the corpus.

initialism: In the same way as English makes use of initialism, so does Tok Pisin. Nineteen types and a total of 72 tokens were found, exactly half of

which were in the sport and letters sections. This may be an indicator of an innovation in its early stages in Tok Pisin, as new forms are more likely to be found in the more informal sections of newspapers and in informal everyday speech. (Bauer 1994:71). In contrast to acronyms several examples of initialism were found which are Tok Pisin creations, albeit based on the English model, e.g. PMSA *Pot Mosbi Soka Asosiesen* 'Port Moresby Soccer Association' and PNGFA *Papua Niugini Futbal Asosiesen* 'Papua New Guinea Football Association'. These two examples show the influence of both British and American English on Tok Pisin, with *soka* coming from American English and *futbal* from British English.

	Types	Tokens
Total	19	72
From English	4	20
Tok Pisin creation	15	52
Sports page	5	18
Letters page	12	18
Other pages	12	36

Table 5.1.1 Initialism in Tok Pisin

However, some other ways of using Tok Pisin to form new words and expressions have traditionally been used and have stayed in the language for a considerable time. One of the most common forms according to Geoff Smith is *man bilong + noun or verb* to mean "the one who…", e.g. *man bilong pait* 'a fighter' or *man bilong stil* 'a thief' (1990:277).

Be that as it may, this form appears to be changing as well and there are actually no examples of this kind in the corpus. The form *wokman* 'workman' is found on one occasion , whereas Mihalic's record of the term, *man bilong wok,* which we would expect to find if we are to believe Smith, does not occur at all. A similar situation occurs with *man bilong pait* which does not appear in the corpus, while *paitman* does twice.

This would indicate that the traditional Tok Pisin creations are on the decline and that borrowings or formations are closer to English than they previously were.

5.2 Reduplication

A particularly interesting feature of vocabulary formation in Tok Pisin is **reduplication** where part of a word is repeated, or repeated with one sound change. Reduplication is found in a variety of languages as a grammatical or lexical function, e.g. in Malay *raja*, 'king', *rajaraja*, 'kings' to indicate plural; in English *tick-tock* as an informal suggestive word (McArthur 1998:500) In Tok Pisin it can be used for emphatic purposes, to change the meaning of the original lexical item or to signify an ongoing action.

There are several occurrences of reduplication in the corpus, but in total only 210 tokens were found, which is approximately 2% of the total corpus. Of these there were only 29 types, 21 of English origin and 8 from indigenous languages.

	Types	Tokens
English-based	21	150
Indigenous	8	60
Total	29	210

Table 5.2.1 Reduplications in Tok Pisin

The majority of reduplications are represented on between one and six occasions. However, there are those which are used more frequently:

Tok Pisin	English	Origin	Frequency
tingting	'thought'	English 'think'	47 tokens
toktok	'talk'	English 'talk'	43 tokens
liklik	'small'	Gazelle Peninsula *ikilik*	25 tokens
kaikai	'food'	Polynesian *kaikai*	22 tokens
lukluk	'look'	English 'look'	16 tokens

Table 5.2.2 The five most common reduplications in Wantok

It is interesting to note that 28% of reduplications are from non-European languages, whereas only approximately 15% of the total lexical corpus is reported to have its origin in these languages. The two lexical items in Table 5.2.2 which do not originate in English: *liklik* and *kaikai,* belong to the most basic in the language and they were probably already so common and established that English words were unable to replace them.

Among the 29 types we see several instances of reduplication as two words. Unfortunately there appears to be no recognised linguistic term for this phenomenon and so I choose to call it bilexical reduplication.

	Types	Tokens
English-based	11	16
Indigenous	1	2
Total	12	18

Table 5.2.3 Bilexical reduplication

The majority of these reduplications appear on only one occasion in *Wantok* and it would appear that in these cases the reduplication plays an emphatic role, as can be seen in the following examples:

narapela narapela, one token, meaning 'each other', in the sentence:

1. *Plis i tok tupela man i dai long sotgan pait taim ol sapota bilong tupela kendidet wanpela long Mul Baiya ilektoret na narapela long Hagen Open i birua long narapela narapela* (p.2)

   'Police say that two men died in a shoot-out when supporters of two candidates, one from the Mul Baiya electorate and the other from Hagen Open, opposed one another.'

The sentence could have been written without the reduplication and the meaning would not have changed, but due to its being there we understand that the report emphasises that only these two men were involved and no other.

nabaut nabaut, one token, meaning 'in various directions', in the sentence:

2. *Long ol maritman tu i gat ol lain ol i kolim ol, Ol marit bilong Krais na narapela ol i kolim Strongim Marit ol i save promis bai ol i no inap slip nabaut nabaut, na bai ol i stap wantaim meri bilong ol tasol.* (p.17)

'Among married men too, there are groups, one called Christian Men and another called Strengthen Marriage who promise they will not be unfaithful, but that they will be faithful to their wives.'

Again, in this case, reduplication is used to emphasise that the men will not be adulterous with several women or on many occasions. Had *nabaut* occurred on its own the interpretation would have been that the adultery was an isolated case.

sapot sapot, one token, meaning 'please support*', in the sentence*:

3. *Sapot sapot na votim em* (p 22)

' Please support and vote for him'

Similarly here, the sentence could have been written without the reduplication and the basic meaning would not have been altered, but *sapot sapot* appeals emotively to the reader.

Another reduplication as two words is *isi isi*, six tokens, meaning 'carefully' *or* 'slowly', in the sentence:

4. *Ileksen long planti hap bilong Morobe provins i wok long go isi isi yet na ol ilektorel opisa i wok long wok hat long traim mekim olgeta wok i ron gut bai taim bilong kaunim ileksen i mas kamap stret long Jun 27, 2002* (p.4)

''The election in most areas in the Morobe province is still progressing slowly and the election officers are working hard to try to make everything run smoothly so when it is time to count the result of the election on June 27, 2002, it will be the correct one.'

This shows a change in the meaning of the original lexical item. Mihalic records *isi* on its own as meaning 'softly' or 'gently' and *isi isi* as meaning 'carefully' or 'slowly'. Obviously there is a similarity in meaning here, but also a subtle difference, which can perhaps best be seen in comparing the following:

tok isi means 'to whisper', 'to speak softly'

tok isi isi means 'to speak slowly'

Some of the examples of reduplication found in *Wantok* can be found in Mihalic's dictionary in a different form, e.g. *kain kain* – 'all kinds of', is listed in the dictionary as two words, whereas in *Wantok* we find one token in this form and four tokens as one word, *kainkain*. This indicates a trend towards writing this word as one entity. On the other hand there are two examples of items in Mihalic as one word whereas in *Wantok* they are used as two separate words: *long long*, 'crazy' or 'insane', 2 tokens in *Wantok*, none as one word, and *was was*, 'wash' or 'bathe', 1 token in *Wantok*, 2 as *waswas*. The rarity of these words in *Wantok* means that any analysis of current trends would be mere speculation, and yet they warrant observation because they show variation which may spread in the near future.

5.3 Neologisms

A neologism is "… a new WORD or sense of a word and the coining or use of new words and senses." (McArthur 1998:393). Obviously this area is closely related to word formation and in this section I will look at new words and structures which have entered Tok Pisin in the last thirty years.

In the early stages of Tok Pisin there was a limited range of words and expressions and this disadvantage was gradually overcome by borrowing words from other languages and by using Tok Pisin's own basic vocabulary in the form of circumlocutions.

A few of these are perhaps more alleged than authentic, e.g. the way in which a piano was described, reported by a German traveller in 1902: "All in all the black does not lack a sense of humour. His description of the first piano brought to the German South Seas is also delightful. It was a Papuan who, horrified, told of big fellow box, white fellow master fight him plenty too much, he cry (of the box which the white man beats so much that it screams)." (McArthur 1992), referred to by Kaye and Tosco as "… *bigpela* [sic] *bokis bilong krai taim yu paitim na kikim em …"*. (2001:12)

However, the process of creolization in Papua New Guinea towns means that Tok Pisin now mainly implements **transliteration** of loan words and that traditional circumlocutions are rarer. Transliteration is "[t]he action, process, or result of converting one set of signs to another, usually involving at least one set of alphabetic letters. Transliteration becomes necessary when two or more writing systems differ greatly." (McArthur 1998:618).   In the immediate post-independence years, after 1975, a new administrative structure was established and one consequence was an explosion of transliterated words and expressions into Tok Pisin from English.   The National Broadcasting Corporation and *Wantok* attempted to provide an explanation every time they were used, e.g. whenever the word *independens* 'independence' occurred it was followed by the explanation*: em i min: yumi sanap long lek bilong yumi na bosim Kantri*, 'it means: we stand on our own legs and rule over our country'. Nowadays this kind of explanation is unnecessary as the word *independens* is accepted and well-known by speakers of Tok Pisin. Some other examples from that time which are not used today, together with their current equivalents, are:

1. *Minista bilong bosim ol Bisnis na Faktor*

   'Minister who rules over business and factories'

   Today the position is known as *Minista bilong Komes na Industri*

'Minister for Commerce and Industry'

2. *Minista bilong bosim ol Haus Sik na Wok Dokta*

'Minister who rules over the Sick House and Work Doctors'

Today the position is known as *Minista bilong bosim Helt*

'Minister for Health'

3. *Minista bilong bosim ol Mani bilong Kantri*

'Minister who rules over the money of the country'

Today the position is known as *Minista bilong Fainens*

'Minister for Finance'

The examples above all appear in Frank Mihalic's article "Obsolescence in the Tok

Pisin Vocabulary" (1990:271).

The majority of the new words into Tok Pisin in the last thirty years or so

have their origins in English. This is hardly surprising, for several reasons:

1   English is the **superstrate** language and over 80% of the basic vocabulary comes

     from English. A superstrate language is one "… which affects another less

     prestigious or socially and culturally dominated language …" (McArthur

     1998:591)

2   English has been the most borrowed-from language in modern times

It is interesting to observe not only the fact that Tok Pisin has borrowed a

great many English lexical items, but also to study in what form these items are borrowed.

Are they identical in spelling to the English words, or are they adapted to fit in with Tok

Pisin spelling norms? Can a development in the spelling norms be traced?

In the edition of *Wantok* used in this study, there are a great many lexical

items which have entered Tok Pisin since Mihalic's dictionary was published. I noted their

origins and was quite surprised at the result, shown in Table 5.3.1 on the following page.

	Types	Tokens
From English	327	1008
From other languages	0	0
Total	327	1008

Table 5.3.1 Neologisms in Tok Pisin

The neologisms found can be divided into a few main areas, namely:

geographical terms and locations, e.g. *eria* 'area', *provins* 'province', *rijon* ' region', *Yunaitet Stets* 'United States';

administration, e.g *edministresaen* 'administration', gavana 'governor', *dipatemem* 'department', *opisa* 'officer';

politics, e.g. *ilektoret* 'electorate', *poling* 'polling', *voting* 'voting', *Praim Minista* 'Prime Minister', *mausman* 'spokesperson';

education, e.g. *edukesen* 'education', *studen* 'student', *sekenderi skul* 'secondary school', *yunivesiti* 'university';

religion, e.g. *relijen* 'religion', *islamik* 'Islamic';

occupation, e.g. *niusman* 'journalist', *seila* 'sailor', *siman* 'seaman';

military terms, e.g. *jeneral* 'general', *militeri* 'military', *taget* 'target';

current affairs, e.g. *terorisim* 'terrorism', *refuji* 'refugee', *netwok* 'network'.

The administration and politics groups are perhaps over-represented as the General Election on Papua New Guinea was in its final stages when this edition was published. Nonetheless, they are interesting as they show that circumlocutions are rare and that transliteration is the norm.

There is a distinct lack of input from other languages besides from English. Does this indicate that Tok Pisin is disappearing and will be replaced solely by English in the future? I will not dare to make any predictions, but I will venture to say that had the

borrowings come into Tok Pisin and retained their original English spellings and pronunciations then the future might look bleak for Tok Pisin. As it is, spelling and pronunciation have been adapted to comply with Tok Pisin norms, eradicating the immediate concern that it is a dying language. Heavily influenced by English it may be, but it does not appear to be in danger of losing its own identity.

5.3.1   New Prepositions?

If we consult any of the recognised dictionaries or grammar books on Tok Pisin, e.g. Mihalic or Verhaar, we learn that it has by all accounts only two basic prepositions:

bilong, from English 'belong', which is used as a genitive to show possession, e.g.

1. *Gavana bilong Westen Hailans provins* (p. 1)

'The governor of the Western Highlands province'

2. *taim bilong ileksen* (p.2)

'election time'

long, from English 'along', which is used for all other prepositions, e.g.

3. *long provins* (p. 3)

'in the province'

4. *30 PNG manmeri i go long Japan long prensip progrem* (p.4)

'30 people from PNG are going to Japan as part of a friendship programme'

There are also **complex prepositions** in Tok Pisin, e.g. *ananit long* 'below' or 'under'; *insait long* 'inside'; *klostu long* 'near' or 'close to'; *namel long* 'in the middle of' or 'between'. In these examples *long* is an integral part of the preposition and is always found.

1. *Komisen i save kam ananit long Nesenel Gavman* (p. 3)

   'the Commission is subordinate to (beneath) the National Government'

2. *Tupela al-Queda grup i go insait long eria we India i bosim long*

   Kashmir (p. 14)

   'Two al-Quaida groups entered into the area where India rules over

   Kashmir'

3. *Nau mama i bihainim dispela blut na lek mak bilong masalai man na*

   kamap klostu long ston Ahiorira (p. 20)

   'Now his mother followed this blood and the footsteps of the ogre and

   arrived near the Ahiorira stone'

4. *Hevi namel long India na Pakistan* (p.14)

   'Trouble between India and Pakistan'

However, a few instances were found in the newspaper where these conventions with

simple or complex prepositions are ignored:

Yunivesiti ov teknoloji – University of Technology (p. 2)

Kaunsil ov Yurop – Council of Europe (p. 14)

Streti ov Gibralta – Straits of Gibraltar (p. 14).

The expected preposition in these cases is *bilong*, but instead, the English preposition 'of'

is used, with the spelling adapted. The reasons for this are unclear: the journalist may be

fluent in English and these expressions come more naturally; the expressions are fixed,

they are either geographical locations or established institutions, and in this way have

become accepted phrases in Tok Pisin. Whatever the reason, the occurrence of *ov* more

than once must be noted as it indicates that the power of English is greater than previously

shown .

The preposition *egensim* meaning 'against' was also found in *Wantok,* five tokens. It is not listed in Mihalic's dictionary and must therefore be considered to be a relatively new entry into the language. It is particularly interesting because it does not constitute a set phrase as in the examples above, neither is it formed in the same way as the complex prepositions in Tok Pisin, i.e. by taking the preposition *long* afterwards.

1. *Memba bilong Lae Bart Philemon tu i tokaut strong egensim gavman* (p. 3)

    'the member for Lae, Bart Philemon, also spoke out strongly against the government'

2. *ol al-Queda teroris grup i wok long plen long karimaut ol nupela rot long pait egensim ol taget bilong ol long ol kantri long Wes* (p.14)

    'al-Quaida terrorist groups are working on plans to carry out new attacks against targets in Western countries'

At the same time *long* is still used to mean 'against', e.g.

3. *Woa long terorisim* (p.14)

    'war against terrorism'

None of the consulted works refer to *egensim* and a check on Internet revealed only three instances of the word: Radio Australia's news in Tok Pisin of 18 August 2000, the Aitape Diocese news of April 2002 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, posted in January 2000. This suggests that this word is in its infancy in the language, yet I would expect a few more instances to occur in the near future.

Does this indicate that Tok Pisin will soon have a new range of accepted prepositions? It is too early to make this kind of prediction and the sample material is too small. Yet it is particularly interesting to follow this development because the majority of additions to a language take place within the category of **lexical morphemes,** such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs which carry the meaning in an utterance.

Occurrences of new words in a language are rarely found within the category of **functional**

morphemes, such as articles, pronouns, conjunctions and prepositions. The tendency in

Tok Pisin to introduce and use these prepositions indicates a development in the language.

The reasons for this are unclear but it may be due to a need in the language to clarify

meaning. The preposition *long* is used for so many different English prepositions and this

may be confusing. But does it denote a move towards becoming a fully-fledged

independent language or is it a move towards Tok Pisin becoming closer linked to the

superstrate language?

5.3.2   A new plural form

Another interesting innovation in Tok Pisin is the plural form.   Traditionally the structure

used to create the plural form is *ol + noun in singular*, e.g. *sapota – ol sapota,* supporter –

supporters, as can be seen in the phrase

> 1. *ol sapota bilong tupela kendidet* (p.2)
>
>   'the supporters of the two candidates'

Although the majority of plural forms in Wantok follow this pattern, there are some

interesting deviations. The English pattern of plural *–s* was found on several occasions in

the sample material, on some occasions on its own, on others together with the Tok Pisin

plural marker *ol.*

> 2. *Sampela nem bilong ol votas i no stap long ilektrol buk* (p. 1)
>
>   'some voters' names are not on the electoral roll'

In the phrase:

> 3. *ol sapotas bilong ol kendidet* (p. 3)
>
>   'the supporters of the candidates'

we can see both the new form and the old form occurring. At present there appears to be no rule as to which words form their plurals traditionally and which ones adopt the English method, both being used on occasions with the same word. However in the next few years a change may very well take place whereby we can see either English plurals taking over completely, or a defined set of rules emerging for the division into categories.

6.   Conclusion

In this study of Tok Pisin I have studied the vocabulary used in *Wantok*, Jun 20, 2002 and compared it with the entries in Mikalic's *Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin*. As mentioned at the beginning of the essay, the aim was to determine whether Tok Pisin is a developing language or whether it is following the fate foreseen by Don Laycock, i.e. that it will decline in popularity and use and that in the future it "… will most likely be being studied by scholars among a small community of old men.". (1985:667)

The results of my study lead me to believe that Laycock's prediction was erroneous. Tok Pisin has a growing number of speakers, both native and other and it would be quite remarkable, although admittedly not impossible, if the language should disappear.

One fact, however, is quite clear and that is that English has a tremendous impact on Tok Pisin at present. Approximately 80% of the lexis originates in English, 15% in indigenous languages, the remainder comes from other, mainly European, languages, e.g. German, Portuguese and Spanish. However, there has been an explosion of neologisms in the last thirty years, exclusively from English according to the corpus, and there is no reason to doubt that this situation will change in the near future given the status of English as a world language.

An area which is missing from the list of neologisms is technology. Initially this surprised me as this is an area in which we in industrialised Europe are used to encountering new terms, but no doubt in a few years time technology will be of greater importance in Papua New Guinea than it is today and I would expect to see a large number of lexical items in that group as well.

In brief, Tok Pisin appears to be alive and well, continually evolving into a language which will enable Papua New Guineans to deal with developments in the 21st century.