COMMENTS ON "TOLAI LANGUAGE COURSE": AN HISTORICAL NOTE

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0   INTRODUCTION

In 1959 the Summer Institute of Linguistics was asked by the then Administration of New Guinea to "assist the Administration in measures aimed at familiarising Administration officers with native languages and thereby improving communications generally between the Administration and the indigenous people".

Looking back from our present vantage point, the goals may appear quite paternalistic. Nevertheless, S.I.L. offered three types of assistance to achieve the stated goals of the Administration: (1) to conduct short courses of six weeks duration, "to teach the techniques of learning native languages; (2) to survey the languages in particular areas to provide information on languages spoken, the number speaking each and a brief description of the languages and dialects." Further, it was stated that "the most suitable language or dialect for general use will be recommended. Where different orthographies for a particular language exist, advice as to the form most suitable for general adoption will be given"; (3) to prepare materials on a specified language "to aid an officer who has taken the six weeks' course". The materials include an elementary dictionary and simple grammar as well as "speech models and exercises... recorded on magnetic tape".

During March-April, 1960 and October-November, 1961 S.I.L. held two short courses at Goroka, E.H.D. A total of 37 students, based on the selection of individuals who had been nominated by their departments, attended the courses.

From 1960 onward S.I.L. conducted several linguistic surveys[1] and prepared language learning materials on 4 specified languages.[2] One of these four was Tolai.[3] The remainder of this article is divided into two sections: the first outlines the methods employed in setting up the written and recorded Tolai course; the second comments on the examination used to test the students who went on after the short course and studied Tolai.[4]

1 THE COURSE

In the planning of the Tolai lessons it became apparent that the pronominal series would be the most important and probably most difficult to master. Tolai pronominal series includes singular, dual, trial, and plural with inclusive and exclusive forms. In considering this, a series of four lessons, each in three stages, was set up using these forms. These early lessons were not primarily for memorisation of the pronominal series. They were, rather, to point out the overt markers which signalled: (1) number, (2) exclusive-inclusive, (3) person.

In the students' identification of number a series of utterances were recorded on magnetic tape and the overt markers -tal 'trial', -r 'dual', and -t 'plural' were pointed out. The student was then instructed to listen to the examples and in this first stage simply identify quickly the persons being spoken about according to number. It was pointed out that the singular forms were of a different structure[5] and whenever the other markers were not heard the number was singular. The morphophonemic changes when the markers -t and -r were lost were also noted, i.e., before certain consonants.

For the quick identification (called "flash" identification) of exclusive-inclusive, a table of pronouns was first listed as follows:

	Singular	Dual	Trial	Plural
1st Person (excl.)	iau	amir	amital	avet, ave
2nd Person	u	amur	amutal	avat, ava
1st Person (incl.)	---	dor	datal	dat, da
3rd Person	i, ia	dir, di	dital	diat, dia, di

Because the exclusive forms are quite different they were grouped near the person markers most similar in structure for the students' ease of comparison. The student was instructed to practice including and excluding objects with himself as the speaker each time. He was also advised to record his answers and check them for any consistent "blind spots".

For the third lesson the student was instructed to replay the tape recordings of the two preceding lessons and identify quickly the person markers. With each lesson the approach was expanded, e.g., the first time through the recording to quickly identify the number, the second time through the tense and the third time through both. This technique of "flash" identification was also used in other lessons.

The technique of introducing transformations in learning Tolai fitted easily into the structure of the language. It was first introduced for teaching possessive pronouns and its usefulness became more apparent as the lessons progressed.

It was first pointed out that the pronouns beginning with /d/ (the first person inclusive and third person) formed the possessive by prefixing ka- only; e.g. dor becomes kador. The other pronouns[6] (the first person exclusive and second person) formed the possessive by prefixing ka- plus partial reduplication of the stem; e.g. amutal becomes kamumutal.

In the lesson there were two utterances. The first gave a statement, the main features of which were a pronoun and an object. After this there was a pause during which the student was to transform the nominal pronoun to a possessive pronoun. Following the pause the correct transform was given. Some examples will give a better idea of the method employed:

1. Dia tar gire ra pap.
   'They (pl.) saw the dog.'

1. Kadia pap.
   'It is their (pl.) dog.'

2. Amur tar kap ra mani.
   'You (2) brought the money.'

2. Kamumur mani.
   'It is your (2) money.'

3. Datal a puak ra lama.
   'We (incl. 3) will lift the copra.'

3. Kadatal lama.
   'It is our (incl. 3) copra.'

4. Amital a kul ra banam.
   'We (excl. 3) will buy the knife.'

4. Kamimital banam.
   'It is our (excl. 3) knife.'

Regardless of the tense given in the first utterance the transform was always given in the present tense in the second utterance. These transforms could have been expanded to include various tenses but for simplicity this was not done in the initial introduction of the pronominal transforms.

An important feature in Tolai is the use of ligatives i and na which show verbal and nominal relationships respectively. Some examples of transforms in introducing this feature are as follows:

1. A tutana i dekdek.
   'The man is strong.'

1. A dekdek na tutana.
   'He is a strong man.'

2. A davai i takodo.
   'The wood is straight.'

2. A takodo na davai.
   'It is straight wood.'

3. A vudu i ngala.
   'The banana is big.'

3. A ngala na vudu.
   'It is a big banana.'

This transform was to teach the student how to form the Tolai

equivalent of English adjectives.[7] The transforms were simple but they were teaching the student to think in Tolai.

Another important feature introduced in lessons by transforms were words of manner. In each example the first two utterances given on tape were followed by a pause. During the pause the student was to give the correct transforms. Some examples:

1. Iau vutvut. 'I run.'	1. Iau rurut. 'I am quick.'	1. Iau vutvut rurut. 'I run quickly.'
2. I vanavana. 'He walks.'	2. I vovovon. 'He is slow.'	2. I vanavana vovovon. 'He walks slowly.'
3. I tar varubu ma ra tutana. 'He fought the man.'	3. I dekdek. 'He is strong.'	3. I varubu dekdek ma ra tutana. 'He fought the man strongly.'

The transform of the third utterance was again kept in the present tense.

The three main Tolai negative markers were taught by transforms with the meanings pointed out in the lesson:[8]

1. Ina pait ia. 'I will do it.'	1. Pa ina pait ia. 'I will not do it.'
2. A tutana nam. 'That is a man.'	2. Vakir a tutana nam. 'That is not a man.'
3. Una long ra magit. 'You steal anything.'	3. Koko una long ra magit. 'Don't you steal anything.'

It was pointed out to the student that in the transform the negative markers should always be placed immediately preceding the pronoun, or in the absence of a pronoun, initially in the utterance or clause.

Some other ways in which transforms were used in the Tolai course were in the following situations.[9]

(1) From one word class to another, e.g. in changes from verbs to nouns where reduplication took place.

(2) Within a word class, e.g. when intransitive verbs were changed to transitive verbs.

On the basis of the structure of Tolai the use of transforms and flash identification seem to have a definite pedagogical advantage. The student becomes conscious of markers which signal structural changes and changes in meaning. He also is taught to construct utterances into Tolai from the very beginning. This helps the student to overcome his natural tendency to translate into English between pauses and before replying in Tolai.

2 THE EXAMINATION

As near as possible after three to six months of language learning, (which corresponded to the timetable given to the students[10]), students were checked.

The following is a prototype (excluding pictures) of the assessment tests administered to students. The tests were designed to check: (1) phonetic accuracy; (2) language comprehension; (3) some vocabulary; (4) the main pronouns and tenses. There were two sections, a written and an oral.

2.1 Written Section

This was to be done from memory and the student could take any reasonable amount of time. In each sub-section, however, the approximate time required was noted. Language material was written either in rough phonetics or in some other preferred orthography. The following ten English utterances had to be translated into Tolai:

1. Where are you going?
2. Where did you come from?
3. When will you go?
4. Where is it?
5. What are you doing?
6. What is this?
7. How much money is it?
8. What is in your bag?
9. Why are you going?
10. When did he come?

Following this the student was asked to translate ten Tolai sentences into English.

In the third section instructions were given to transform ten positive utterances into ten corresponding negative utterances. For example, if the sentence "Bill has a dog" was given the student was expected to reply "Bill doesn't have a dog." Or, if it was a positive question meaning "Did he go?", then the answer meaning "No, he did not go." was expected.

In the next section the students were asked to give Tolai equivalents for the following 25 English items: 1. pig, 2. man, 3. girl, 4. house, 5. water, 6. sun, 7. axe, 8. to yell, 9. to talk, 10. to hit, 11. to put, 12. to come, 13. to go, 14. to chop, 15. to carry (in a bag), 16. to carry (on the shoulder), 17. to cook, 18. to open, 19. to fill up, 20. to pour out, 21. go and get it, 22. bring it here, 23. sit down, 24. shut the door, 25. cook the water.

In the final part of the written section the students were asked to translate the following five <u>English</u> utterances into <u>Tolai,</u> and answer five questions:

1. I am going to the house.
2. I am inside.
3. He is outside.
4. I hit the man.
5. The man hit me.

1. Is there an Object marker? If so, what?
2. Is there an Instrument marker? If so, what?
3. What is the most common word order for statements?
4. For questions?
5. List 3 phonetic features of the language.

2.2 Oral Section

Students were asked to respond in a specified manner to Tolai utterances given by an informant and played on the tape-recorder. A definite time-limit was set for each response, the pause between successive utterances by the informant. At the end of each pause on the tape a signal indicated that a new utterance was coming. This allowed the student to clear his mind and concentrate on the utterance. During the oral section of the tests a second recorder was used to record all answers to facilitate an assessment of the results. The instructions were as follows:

1. Mimic the following ten Vernacular utterances.

2. Reply in the Vernacular to the following Ten Vernacular questions that will be asked about the pictures shown to you.

3. Reply in the Vernacular to the following Ten Vernacular questions that will be asked about the pictures shown to you. After each question and your reply, the examiner will stop the recorder to ask you an English question to which you should reply in English.

4. Reply in the Vernacular to the following Ten Vernacular questions that will be asked about the pictures shown to you.

5. Reply in the Vernacular to the following Ten Vernacular questions that will be asked about the pictures shown to you.

Finally, the examiner attempted to answer these questions:

1. Does he speak with fluency or hesitancy?

2. Was he apparently nervous during any part of the test?

3. Are his conversational intonation patterns vernacular or English?

4. How freely does he seem to converse with the people?
    (If possible, walk through a village with him.)

5. How many hours per day does he average in conversation?

6. In informant work?

7. In practice with the recorder?

8. How long has he been learning the language?

9. How good is his language learning situation?

10. Any other comments about his aptitude or opportunities?

2.3 Assessment

A marking scale was set up as follows:

WRITTEN SECTION:

1. 10 marks per utterance maximum based on correctness of seman-
    tic content, usage of the lateral morphemes (particles and
    affixes), and correctness of syntax.

2. 10 marks per utterance maximum on same basis as 1.1.

3. 10 marks per utterance maximum on the same basis as 1.1.
    Invariably this will partly measure comprehension.
    Watch for correct tenses.

4. 4 marks per item maximum. For 8-20 accept any form of the
    verb.

5. 10 marks per answer maximum - translations on the basis of
    1.1, and theory answers on basis of the apparent adequacy
    and accuracy of answer.

ORAL SECTION:

1. 10 marks per utterance maximum for phonetic accuracy, in-
    cluding missing syllables, metathesis, tone, stress,
    length, and segmental phonetic accuracy (especially
    vowels).

2. 10 marks per utterance maximum on same basis as 1.1.

3. Comprehension:
    5 marks per correct comprehension.

4. 10 marks per utterance maximum on same basis as 1.1.
    (Invariably this will also measure comprehension.)

5. 10 marks per utterance maximum on same basis as 1.1.

MARKING CHART

	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	2.1	2.2	2.3	Comp.	2.4	2.5
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
Totals											

3 THE RESULTS

Although the 4 students who were studying Tolai showed reasonable progress, most of them had little more than one to two hours per day to study the language. In addition, none of them lived in an area where they could hear Tolai spoken regularly for several hours every day. Consequently, the programme was doomed to mediocracy from the onset. However, in other areas where certain characteristics of the languages were much more difficult, students who had the first months free to study the language and had adequate materials, showed very good progress. Subsequent experience by members of S.I.L. has shown that, given 6 months of consistent language exposure once basic materials are in hand, most individuals can then speak fluently in limited cultural domains. There is every reason to believe that, given the same time, help, and adequate motivation, field officers of the Administration could also have learned Tolai.

APPENDIX

Suggested Three Month Timetable for Learning Tolai (following the
first edition of the Tolai Assimilation Course as prepared by Franklin
and Kerr)

1. Month One (Initially become familiar with the sound system as
    presented on pages 1-7.)

    1.1 Spend 4 hours per day with Tolai speakers practicing hearing
         and speaking the language.

    1.2 Memorise early the questions which will be most helpful, e.g.
         Supplementary Lesson 1 is primarily for help to those dealing
         with education, Appendix E contains question forms some of
         which will be needed immediately (2, 4, 8, 16). Also check
         with Lesson 13 and mark useful questions.

    1.3 Plan on memorising and using three lessons the first week.

    1.4 In addition, plan on studying the pronominal series (Appen-
         dices A-C) twice daily during the first week (preferably at
         times when there is little or no opportunity to be directly
         listening to or speaking the language). This should be done
         with the tapes.

    1.5 Week two   - Lessons 4-6; Appendix D.

    1.6 Week three - Lessons 7-9.

    1.7 Week four - Lessons 10-12. A general review of all the
         preceding Lessons.

    1.8 Appendix F is a lesson set up specifically to aid you in your
         language learning. You should begin memorising them imme-
         diately.

    1.9 During the first month do not go through any lesson without
         having the tape or an informant to help you at the same time.

2. Month Two

    2.1 Continue to spend at least 4 hours per day practicing hearing
         and speaking the language.

    2.2 Week one   - Lessons 13-16.

    2.3 Week two   - Lessons 17-20.

    2.4 Week three - Lessons 21-23.

    2.5 Week four - Lessons 24-26.
         Note: Become familiar with the short grammatical rewrite
         (92-96) and the function morphemes as presented on pages
         87-91.

3. Month Three

    3.1 Continue to spend at least 4 hours per day practicing the
         language with Tolai speakers.

    3.2 Week one   - General Review. Lessons 27-28.

    3.3 Week two   - Lessons 29-30.

    3.4 Week three - Lessons 31-32.

    3.5 Week four - Test your comprehension on Advanced Lessons 1-6.

    To complete this three months' timetable the average student needs
to spend approximately 6-8 hours per day in language learning.

                                NOTES

[1] The surveys published were on Motu and Police Motu (Brett, et.al,
1962), Mount Hagen Sub-District (Bunn and Scott, 1962), Chimbu Sub-
District (Deibler and Trefry, 1963); Talasea Sub-District (Allen and
Hurd, 1963), Goilala Sub-District (Steinkraus and Pence, 1964), Amanab
Sub-District (Bass and Loving, 1964), Maprik Sub-District (Glasgow and
Loving, 1964), Bougainville District (Allen and Hurd, 1965), D'Ent-
recasteaux Island (Lithgow and Staalsen, 1965), and New Ireland District
(Lithgow and Staalsen, 1968). Language Courses were on Tolai (Franklin
and Kerr, 1962), Halia (Allen and Allen, 1965), Nasioi (Hurd and Hurd,
1966), and Kuman (Trefry and Trefry, 1967). One dictionary, on Police
Motu, was completed (Brett, et. al, 1962).

    All of these materials were published by the Department of Infor-
mation and Extension Services. The early surveys in particular con-
tributed substantially to our present knowledge of the languages of
Papua New Guinea.

[2] Actually 6, if we include Gahuku, used as a laboratory language in
Goroka, and Kamano, near Kainantu where the 3rd 6 weeks' course was
to have been held. It never took place, in that the Administration
had already decided it was impractical to keep officers in one place
long enough for them to learn a local language.

[3] Also called Kuanua by the United Church and Tinata Tuna or Tuna
by the Catholic Church.

[4] Data was gathered during November and December, 1959, by the author
and Harland B. Kerr. The first edition of the course was published
in 1962. Clive C. Beaumont revised it for the second edition (1968)
and the present author revised it for the third edition (1974). In
each case S.I.L. members prepared the language courses without a
speaking knowledge of Tolai.

[5] They were simply yau 'I;, u 'you', and i '3rd person'.

[6] Again all singular possessive pronoun forms were different. These were formed by the root ka- and/or a suffix and were introduced in a later lesson.

[7] Certain descriptive words did not require ligatives and these were taught in a separate lesson, e.g. the word pal 'house' as in nam ra pal i tabu 'that house is sacred' becomes a pal tabu 'it is a sacred house'.

[8] Vakir 'negative statement'; pa 'emphatic negation'; koko 'negative command'.

[9] Although these were used it is felt that the results were less rewarding because the transforms from one example to the next were not regular and the student could not be sure immediately which transform was expected from him.

[10] See Appendix.