

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC SURVEY OF BUSA AND NAGATMAN

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0. INTRODUCTION

This survey of the Busa and Nagatman languages was undertaken as part of a general effort by S.I.L. Sepik Region teams to gather sociolinguistic information on Sepik languages. The field work involved was done between the 2nd and 11th of July 1980 when I accompanied a government patrol which was carrying out the 1980 census in that area. The survey data was analyzed and incorporated into this paper after my return to our S.I.L. Center located near Amanab.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 Busa

The Busa language is a non-Austronesian language that is classified by Loving and Bass (1964) as one of two members of the Busa Phylum (the other being the Amto language); Laycock (1975) merely lists both on his map as being unclassified. It is bordered on the north and east by the Nagatman language, on the south and west by the Abau (Green River) language and on the north-west by the Biaka language.

The Busa language is spoken by approximately 238 people (March 1978 census figures) living in the three villages of Rawei, Busa, and Auya on the southwest side of the Nagu Census Division. The language area begins, on the west side, with the village of Rawei, which is approximately 22 kilometers or 7½ hours walk ENE of the Green River Administration Center. The three villages speaking the Busa language are all located within an area of approximately 11-12 sq. kilometers and may be located on the map within these coordinates: 3° 49'-54' south latitude and 141° 23'-27' longitude.

Of the three villages of the Busa language, the village of Busa (the largest of the three) is the only one in which Christian Missions in Many Lands (C.M.M.L.) is reported to be active. They sponsor church services and a "Kisim Save" school which promotes literacy in Tok Pisin. The only other schooling available to these people is the government primary school at the Green River Station. Parents object to sending their children there because it is too far away to easily provide food for them.

Access to this area is currently by trail from Green River--7½ hours walk to Rawei, 1½ to 2 hours more to Busa, and about 2 hours beyond Busa to Auya. The trail into the area from Green River goes through extensive sections of sago swamp where long sections are traversed on fallen tree trunks, which are often slippery and therefore treacherous footing for anyone wearing shoes or boots. Occasionally slipping off these tree trunks must be expected along with the accompanying cuts, scrapes, bruises and risk of serious injury. In the event of serious injury or even a broken limb, evacuation could be a very serious problem due to the nature of the trail. Therefore, I

strongly urge any team planning to allocate in the area to consider either (1) to be a helicopter allocation or (2) to enter the area via the Sepik and Bapi (Horden) Rivers by motor boat or motor canoe. From the point on the Bapi River opposite the Nagatman village of Tila, it is two hours walk into Busa village. From another point lower on the Bapi River it is about 2 hours walk into Auya village and then a further 2 hours into Busa. The government patrol officer who led the patrol which I accompanied reported that the government plans to get into the area by motor canoe for future patrols. He said they are waiting only on the arrival of the promised motor canoe from Ambunti.

Busa has the most houses of the three villages in the language area and Auya has the least. However, according to the March 1978 census figures, Rawei has more people than Busa. Houses and population figures for the three villares are:

Rawei	10 houses and 93 people
Busa	15 houses and 88 people
Auya	4 houses and 57 people

Rawei and Auya are both 1½ hours walk from Busa, or about 5 kilometers apart by map position. Trails between these villages pass through sections of sago swamp, and therefore travel on them involves the hazards already described. In wet weather the trails between the villages become virtually impassible for carriers with cargo. In fact the patrol which the writer accompanied had to be ted re-routed for this very reason, even during the dry season.

The people are involved socially in various ways between the three villages as well as being involved with villages of neighbouring language groups: through trade (food and weapons exchange); procurement of wives (sister exchange); participation in "singsings" (traditional dances); and group work projects on the trails (usually felling trees to walk on).

The area is politically unsophisticated. The government administers it through the old luluai system rather than the local government system.

1.2 Nogatman

The Nagatman language is a non-Austronesian language that is classified by both Loving and Bass (1964) and Laycock (1975) as an isolate. It is bordered on the north by the Kwomtari language, distantly on the east (across the Sand River) by the Namie (Yellow River) language, on the south by the Abau (Green River) language, on the southwest by the Busa language, on the west by the Biaka language and on the northwest by the Anggor (Senagi) and Amanab languages.

Nagatman is spoken by approximately 573 people (March 1978 census figures) living in six villages. The western boundary of the language area begins with the village of Tila, located on the eastern shore of the Bapi (Horden) River. Tila is about 11½ hours walking time east-northeast of the Green River administration station or about 31 kilometers as measured directly from the map. The language area may also be entered from the north, arriving at the northernmost village of Tera after a reported day's walk from the Kwomtari airstrip. It can also be entered by walking a reported 6½ hours from the airstrip at Guriaso to the northeast of the language area. The six villages of the Nagatman language may be located on the map within the following coordinates: 3° 40'-51' south latitude and 141° 26'-33' longitude.

Christian Missions in Many Lands is active in all six villages, conducting church services and either currently holding or having held "Kisim Save" literacy courses in Tok Pisin. Schooling outside of the language area is offered at the government primary school at Green River and at a primary school at Guriaso.

The villages of Karboni, Markoni and Tera have students attending the primary school at Guriaso--a total of 12 students from the area, including one girl. None attend the school at Green River. The village of Hera, besides having a "Kisim Save" school also has a short term Bible school and a government aid post. Parents in Tera anticipate sending their children to Kwomtari when a primary school is started there. Tila is the only Nagatman village where a negative attitude toward sending students away to school was encountered and that was because the school is so far away, they feel it is too hard to get food to children there.

As stated previously, the language area may be reached from several points. The only route I am familiar with is the one from Green River. The trail into the area going to and through the Busa area is very bad, but once into the Nagatman area trails are somewhat better, especially between northern village areas which seemed to be less swampy. The trail into the area, as it passes through the Abau and Busa language areas, goes through extensive sections of sago swamp where long sections must be traversed on fallen tree trunks which are very slippery and therefore provide treacherous footing for anyone who must wear shoes or boots. Occasionally slipping off these tree trunks should be expected. Due to these factors, advance precautions should be **taken** to account for possible injuries on the trail.

According to the government officer in charge of the patrol which I accompanied, the government plans to start sending patrols into the area by means of motor canoe.

The village of Hera is now by far the largest village in the language area. The former villages of Weitera, Hera, and Dila have all moved together and built a large village on the east bank of the Senu River, thus making it a major population center of the Nagatman language. The village of Marakoni, according to the March 1978 census figures, is the smallest. Population and houses for each village are as follows:

Tila	73 people	20 houses
Nogatman	99 "	9 "
Kaboni	55 "	12 "
Tera	42 "	12 "
Marakoni	41 "	9 "
Hera	263 "	37 "

The trails between villages alternate between good walking over firm ground and sloppy going in sago swamps, with the trails in the northern section generally having more firm ground. Hera, which is closer to the Sepik is somewhat swampier. However, in the wet season, the whole area is said to be subject not only to flooding but some areas remain under water for weeks at a time. At this time of the year travel between villages, especially if accompanied by cargo, would not be possible. Even in the dry season the area around Hera can be impassable to cargo carriers, as the census patrol which I accompanied had to both turn back and find a different route, and then wait for a flood to subside before reaching Hera. The area also has many leeches. Walking time between villages in the dry season is as follows:

Tila to Nagatman	1½ hours
Nogatman to Ka	2½ "
Karboni to Tera	1 " (reportedly)
Karboni to Marakoni	3 " (reportedly)
Marakoni to Hera	4½ " (estimated to new village site)
Nogatman to Hera	4½ "
Hera to Busa village	4½ " (includes 2 river crossings by canoe)

Some sections of the trails are about like game trails, and in other sections only those familiar with the area seem able to discern where the trail actually is. When crossing the Bapi River on the route between Hera and Busa, it is necessary to pre-arrange for a canoe to be present at the site, since there are no nearby villages to shout across to for transport.

The Nagatman people are involved socially within their own language group through trade (food and weapons exchange), sister exchange for wives, participation in "singsings" and group work projects on the trails. The villages of Tila and Nagatman also relate southward in social relationships with the two Busa speaking villages

of Busa and Rawei. Karboni villages seem to relate socially both south to the Busa people, north to some of the closer villages of the Kwomtari and Guriaso areas, and west to the village of Korobasi. They seem to prefer the people of the north and west to the Busa people and exchange sisters for wives and attend "singsings" in these directions. They say that they visit the government station at Guriaso more often than the one at Green River. Tera villagers likewise say that this is true of them, and they also have contact with the Amanab speaking village of Mol through road work. Marakoni villagers relate socially southward to the Busa speaking people through trade, exchange of women for marriage, and attendance of "singsings". They also relate northward to villages of the Kwomtari and Guriaso regions. They seem to prefer going to Guriaso for medical and store needs rather than to Green River. Hera villagers apparently go both north to Guriaso and west to Green River. They say they do not socialize with the Busa people, but only with people of their own language. Likewise they say that they get wives only from villages of the Nagatman language.

This is a politically unsophisticated area and the government administers it through the old luluai system rather than through the local government council system.

2. PRESENT LANGUAGE USE

2.1 Busa

Busa is by far the predominantly used language in the three villages which speak it. Tok Pisin is used only to communicate with outsiders. Rawei village borders the Abau village of Ogru and the two villages intermarry. Many Rawei people (both men and women) speak Abau, and the informant claimed that the normal means of communication for the people of Rawei with the people of Ogru was in the Abau language.

The village of Busa, however, communicates with Abau speakers through Tok Pisin. When Busa village people communicate with the speakers of Nagatman, informants said they use the Nagatman language. The people of Busa have a lot of social contact with people from Nagatman-speaking villages, and Busa village intermarries with Nagatman-speaking villages. People from Auya village speak only Busa and a little Tok Pisin.

Two Tok Pisin reading rests were conducted in the Busa language area, one in the village of Busa and the other in Rawei. No literate was available for testing from Auya Village. However, it was reported that some of their young men were currently attending the "Kisim Save" classes being conducted in the village of Busa.

The reading comprehension test in Rawei Village was given to a primary school-leaver who was reported to have finished standard six. He read the story of the six brothers (see Appendix B), reading relatively slowly and stumbling in paragraphs four and five. He answered correctly the questions about how many brothers there were and what they were doing in the bush. He was unable to answer the third question which required him to tell the point of the story. The second part of the reading test, the selection from Yangpela Didiman (also in Appendix B) was not given to him because I felt he was unable to cope with the more difficult material in that selection.

The test given in Busa Village was given to one of the men who had had completed two years of "Kisim Save" school. He read slowly, but well, and answered correctly all the questions on the six brothers story. On the other selection he read much slower and missed unfamiliar words. He answered correctly only the question involving the compost.

These tests indicate that only a simple story level of Tok Pisin is capable of being understood by literate readers. Anything of an expository nature involving non-culture material would probably be extremely difficult for them.

2.2 Nagatman

The vernacular is the predominant language in use. Tok Pisin is used only to communicate with non-Nagatman speakers. Tila uses the Nagatman language even with the Busa speaking village of Busa, even though Tila villagers admit to having some men who can hear the unrelated Busa language. My informant from the village of Tera maintained that in their contacts with some villages of the Kwomtari language they are able to continue to use their Nagatman language since some Kwomtari people know Nagatman.

Tok Pisin is reported to be known by most of the men in the Nagatman speaking villages. In addition, the villages of Karboni, Tera and Nagatman report that they have some women who speak Tok Pisin. Children are reported to know only the vernacular. Apart from communication with outsiders, use of Tok Pisin seems to be restricted to the worship services, and even here it is translated into the vernacular for the benefit of the women and others who do not know Tok Pisin.

During the survey I conducted a reading comprehension test in Tok Pisin in each village. The testees revealed various levels of ability in reading the selections, but even the three men who read with good speed did not comprehend the point of the story in the "6-pela Brata" selection. Because the testees both here and in Busa consistently missed the point of the story, I switched to another story. However, the "Blakbokis" selection used for the final two tests given

in Marakoni and Hera was no more satisfactory as the testees seemed to answer from their own knowledge of fruit bats rather than from the story itself. These two selections with the questions asked are included in Appendix B. I also administered a harder Tok Pisin reading test to the three fluent readers after they had read the first selection. In each case they read much slower on the harder test, missed a number of words and missed three out of the four questions. (The single question they each answered correctly was different in each case.)

The results of these tests indicate that only simple story level Tok Pisin material has any chance of being understood through reading. Anything of an expository nature involving non-cultural material would be extremely difficult for readers in this area.

3. ATTITUDES TOWARD LANGUAGES

3.1 Busa

The vernacular is the predominantly used language in the Busa language area; however, because of the low number of speakers and the relative isolation of the area, Busa is not a prestige language. Rawei villagers also learn Abau and Busa villagers learn Nagatman.

A Nagatman speaker from the Nagatman village of Tila confirmed that when visiting Busa village, people from his village spoke their own Nagatman language with the people of Busa.

All informants who had children responded that they would like their children to be able to read and write the Busa language. However, since the government patrol personnel widely advertized the writer in each village as being from S.I.L., and since the people were acquainted with the fact that there is an S.I.L. team working in Yuri, this response may have been the one they thought was wanted.

Although to be able to speak Tok Pisin is prestigious, there is no current or future problem of Tok Pisin displacing the Busa language. Busa speakers do admit to incorporating Tok Pisin words in their language, and they regard this as a good thing.

3.2 Nogatman

Of the two languages surveyed, Nagatman is the prestigious and has more than twice as many speakers. Busa speakers in the village of Busa learn Nagatman, but Nagatman speakers in the neighbouring village of Tila make no special effort to learn Busa. The status that Nagatman occupies relative to the other languages which border it is unknown apart from the single report in the village of Tera that they speak Nagatman in their communication with neighbouring Kwomtari villages.

When asked what language they wanted their children to learn to read, four of the responses were "Tok Pisin", one was "the vernacular" and a sixth was "both". Apparently they want their children to learn to read Tok Pisin because they realize there is really nothing yet written in their own language, while Tok Pisin offers a considerable body of material that is worth learning. Most seem to think that Tok Pisin is capable of expressing just about anything they want to communicate. All regard the incorporation of Tok Pisin terms into their language as a good thing.

Although it is apparent that Tok Pisin speakers, especially those who can read and write, enjoy more prestige, there is no current or long range problem of Tok Pisin ever displacing the Nagatman language. Responses to questions in this area were consistent and although most respondents expected the use of Tok Pisin to increase, none think that it will ever displace the vernacular.

4. DIALECT SURVEY RESULTS

In carrying out the dialect section of the survey, I took the complete standard SIL Survey Word List in the Busa village of Rawei and in the Nagatman village of Tila. The first page only back and front of this word list was taken in the remaining Busa and Nagatman speaking villages. The numbered items listed by Loving (1981) were deleted from these lists. In every case the word lists were elicited from Tok Pisin speakers. The results confirmed the villagers' insistence that there are no dialect differences within either the Busa or Nagatman languages. The few differences found in the lists can be attributed to either individual variations in the range of phonemes (especially vowels), synonymous terms, misunderstanding of what was wanted, or not hearing or recording an utterance correctly.

5. POSSIBLE ALLOCATION SITES

5.1 Busa

Of the three villages speaking this language the village of Busa would be the best allocation site because it has a fair water supply. In Rawei a team would be dependent upon swamp water until a device to collect rain water in sufficient quantities could be constructed. Since the people of Rawei themselves say that they have no place to wash, the lack of adequate water for bathing and washing would be a serious problem. The village of Auya with only four houses and 57 people is definitely not recommended as an allocation site.

5.2 Nogatman

If a team planned to enter the area by walking from the airstrip at Guriaso, then the best possible allocation site would be at Karboni. I was told by a C.M.M.L. missionary who did the hike that it

is about a 6½ hour walk to Karboni from Guriaso. It is not an easy walk, and there are two major rivers to cross. However, walking into the area from Guriaso would be both closer and less difficult than walking in from Green River. The village has a central area cleared and large enough for easy access by helicopter. However, the village is neither large nor regarded as of any particular importance by the other villages.

Another possibility for a team planning to walk into the area is the village of Nagatman. It's advantages are that it is geographically the most central village and second only to Hera in size. However, it is at least two hours further away from the airstrip at Guriaso, and at this time it has no clearing large enough for access by a helicopter. Also this village did not seem to be regarded as of any particular importance by the other villages.

If a team chooses to enter the area by canoe from the Sepik River, then the best allocation site would be the village of Hera situated on the east bank of the Senu River. Hera is a major population center with over twice as many people than any other village and it is regarded as an important village in the eyes of the other Nagatman villagers. It has a large, central cleared area, easily in excess of 125 yards, which would give plenty of room for use by helicopters. (Probably, even a heliocourier aircraft could land and take off there). Reasons against considering an allocation in Hera are that it is farther from the remaining villages of the language area than are any of the other three suggested sites. Also it is not known whether there would be difficulty in going up the Senu River by motor canoe during the dry season. Finally, it commits one to the use of outboard motors with their accompanying problems of unreliability and high fuel and maintenance costs.

Another possibility, if a team planned to enter the area by canoe, is the village of Tila, situated on the east bank of the Bapi (Horden) River. Its advantage over Hera is that it is closer to the other villages, and the Bapi River, being larger than the Senu, may have fewer obstructions in it during the dry season when the water is low. Disadvantages include more time on the river to reach it. It is neither a population center nor regarded as of any particular importance by the other villages. When the Bapi is in flood, the village center is reported to flood. Because of much intermarriage with Busa speaking villages, the speech of some potential language helpers may be less "pure" than in other Nagatman-speaking villages.

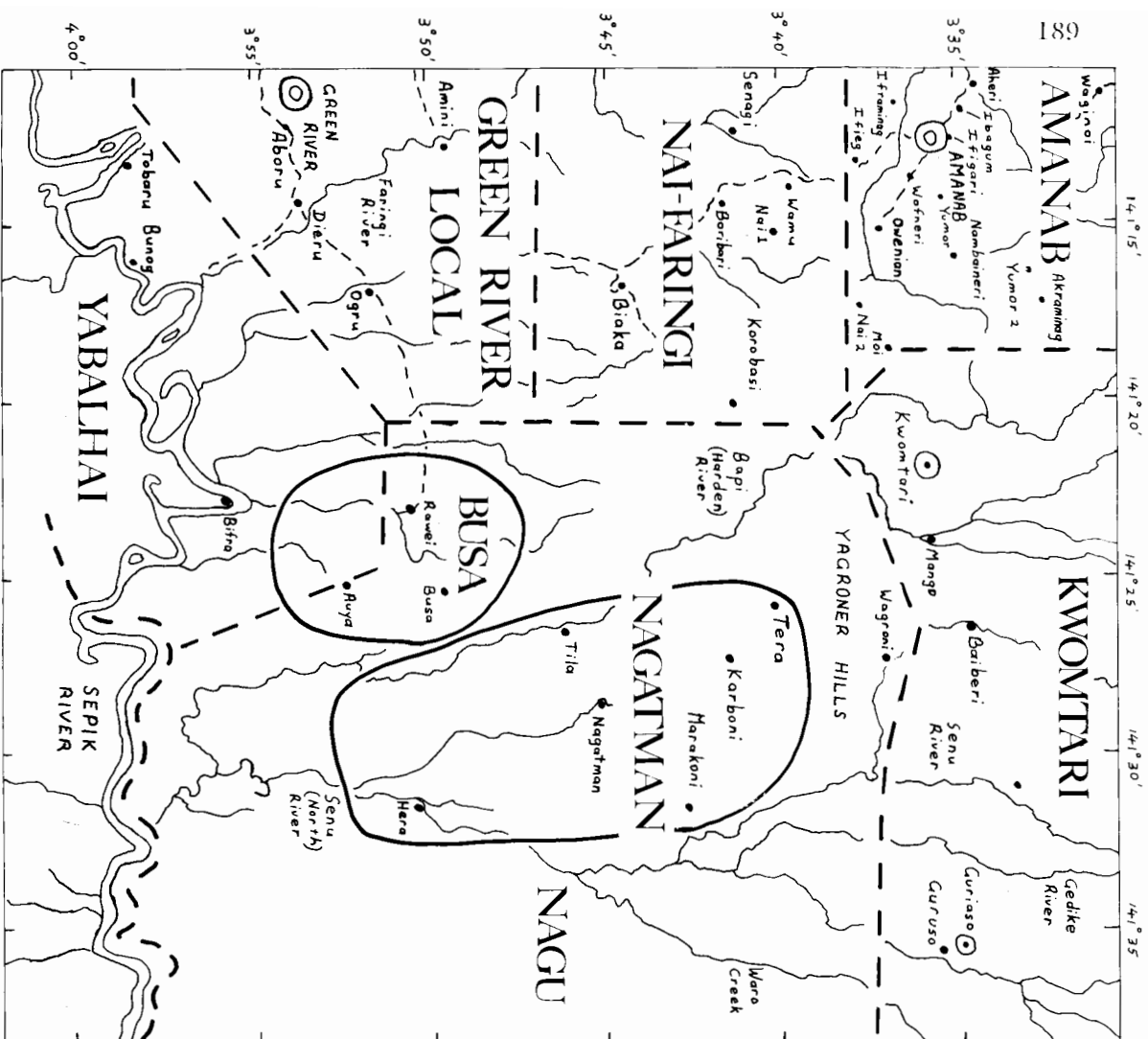
6. SUMMARY

Both the Busa and Nagatman languages are unique in that they have very few cognates with other languages in that area. There are no significant dialectal differences in either language. Present walking trails into the area go through swamps and are rough and in places

dangerous. Travel between villages during the rainy season is greatly hindered by flooding. Use of Tok Pisin in the area is increasing, but there is no current or long range threat of it ever displacing the two vernaculars. Of the two languages Nagatman has significantly more prestige than Busa.

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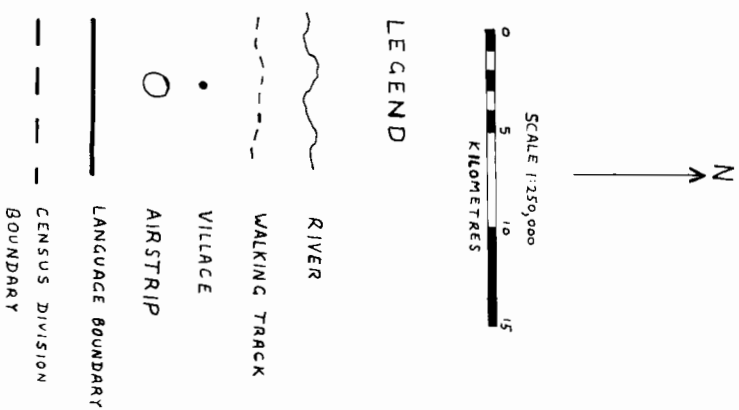
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Appendix A

MAP

(Nagatman and Busa languages and surrounding areas)



APPENDIX B.

TOK PISIN READING COMPREHENSION TESTS

Text 1: "6-pela Brata" from Stori Bilong Ol Abus Na Sampela Stori Moa Vol. 1 by Irene J. Hueter. Kristen Pres, Madang, New Guinea, c. 1969, pp. 20-22.

Long wanpela ples 6-pela brata i stap. Ol i laik i go long bus na painim welpik. Olsem na ol i kisim banara na supsup na spia bilong ol. Ol i kisim pinis na ol i wokabaut i go long bus.

Ol i wokabaut i go i go. Tasol ol i no painim wanpela welpik. Taim i pinis. Olsem na ol i laik i go bek long ples.

Wanpela brata em i tok olsem: "Yupela wet it stap. Yumi bin wokabaut long bus longpela taim moa. Olsem na mi laik save, yumi olgeta i stap yet, no nogat? Nogut wanpela bilong yumi i lus long bus. Olsem na mi laik kaunim yumi."

Em i tok pinis na em i kaunim olgeta brata bilong em, "Wan, tu, tri, foa, faiv. Namba sikis i stap we? Yumi 6-pela brata. Taso nau mi kaunim 5-pela tasol. Wanpela brata i lus pinis long bus."

Ol 6-pela brata ol i kirap nogut nau na ol i ran i go bek long ples. Ol i singaut long ol manmeri i helpim ol.

Ol manmeri ol i harim singaut bilong 6-pela brata na ol i kam klostu. Ol i askim, "Bilong wanem yupela i kirap nogut?"

Wanpela brata em i tokim ol olsem: "Mipela 6-pela brata i bin wokabaut i go long bus bilong painim welpik. Miepla i painim pik nogat. Na wanpela bilong mipela i lus long bus."

Ol manmeri i lukim 6-pela brata na ol i tok, i spik, "Tru, a? Wanpela brata i lus, a?"

Na brata i bekim tok, "Mi tok tru. Mipela i 6-pela brata. Tasol mi bin kaunim olgeta brata. Na 5-pela tasol i stap. Wanpela i lus long bus. Olsem na mipela i kam singautim yupela. Yupela i kam helpim mipela i painim brata bilong mipela."

Ol manmeri i tokim ol brata olsem: "Mipela i no inap helpim yupela. Yupela i longlong tru."

Bilong wanem ol manmeri i no helpim 6-pela brata long painim wanpela brata i lus long bus? Ating yu save?

Questions asked on this selection:

1. How many brothers were there?
2. Why did they go into the forest?
3. Why did the people say "Yupela i longlong tru?"

Text 2: "Blakbokis" from Stori Bilong Ol Abus Na Sampela Stori Moa, Vol. 2 by Irene J. Hueter. Kristen Pres Inc. Madang, New Guinea, c. 1969, pp. 14-15.

Bilong wanem yumi no save lukim blakbokis long taim bilong san? Bilong wanem em i save stap long ples tudak? Bilong wanem blakbokis em i save wokabaut long nait tasol? As bilong en i olsem.

Bipo tru bikpela pait i bin kamap. Ol abus ol i bin pait wantaim ol pisin. Blakbokis em i lukim ol i pait i stap na em i pret tru. Em i no laik pait. Em i ting olsem: "Bai mi helpim husat? Mi abus no mi pisin? Mi no save. Pes bilong mi em i olsem pes bilong rat. Tasol mi save flai olsem pisin. Bai mi helpim husat? Ating bai mi lukim strong bilong ol pastaim. Bai mi helpim ol man i gat strong moa."

Olsem na blakbokis em i lukluk long ol abus na pisin i pait i stap. Em i lukim ol abus i gat strong moa. Olsem na em i go helpim ol abus. Em i tokim ol, "Mi wanpela rat."

Tasol bihain strong bilong ol abus i pinis. Na ol pisin i gat strong moa. Blakbokis i lukim ol pisin i gat strong moa na em i ran i go hait. Em i hait i stap long ples tudak. Em i stap hait long hul i go insait long maunten.

Nau long dispela taim yu, yumi no save lukim blakbokis long taim bilong san. Em i stap hait long ples tudak. Em i no laik wanpela abus na wanpela pisin i lukim em.

Questions

1. Did the bat know which side he wanted to help?
2. Who did he help?
3. According to this story, why does the bat hide in the darkness?

Text 3: "Kerot" from Kain Kain Sayor na Kumu. Buk 2 of Yangpela Didiman bilong Niugini by R. Tietze. Kristen Pres, Madang, Papua New Guinea, c. 1971, p. 10.

Kerot i namba wan kaikai bilong vaiitamin A long bodi bilong yumi.

Kerot yu no ken planim long neseri. Nogat. Yu mas planim long gaden stret. Redim graun gut na putim kompos o pekpek bilong ol abus. Wokim sampela liklikpela stretpela baret. Givim spes olsem wan fit namel long olgeta baret. Na putim kiau long dispela baret. Givim spes inap olsem wan ins long kiau insait long baret.

Planim pinis, yu no ken lusim nating. Kiau i mas i stap klostu antap long graun. Olsem na yu mas putim mals (gras no pipia samting bilong pasim graun) bilong helpim liklik kru i kamap gutpela. Nogut graun i drai tumas. Sapos kerot i no gat spes taim em i kamap bikpela liklik, orait yu mas rausim wan wan.

Kerot em i gutpela long kukim long sup. Tasol sapos yu laik kaikai kerot nupela, em i gutpela tu.

Questions

1. What do you put on the ground to get it ready to plant the carrots?
2. How deep do you put the seed in the ground, near the surface or deep down?
3. What do you do if the carrots come up too thickly?

All reading selections were read by the testee directly from the published material given above, therefore there was no problem of typescript errors to complicate the situation.