LINGUA FRANCA AND VERNACULAR: LANGUAGE USE AND LANGUAGE CHANGE ON SIKAIANA

William W. Donner
Kutztown University
and
Millersville University

In many Pacific communities, an important element in social change is the changing use of languages. This article describes language use on Sikaiana, a small isolated atoll in the Solomon Islands. Sikaiana is a multilingual community in which three main languages are used: English, Solomon Islands Pijin, and the Sikaiana language. Historical and cultural factors affect the use of different languages in different contexts and no single language is dominant. Pijin, however, is gaining frequency of use at the expense of the Sikaiana language. Pijin is used among schoolchildren, and many young people feel more comfortable speaking it rather than the Sikaiana vernacular or English. Although the Sikaiana language is not likely to be completely replaced by Pijin in the near future, it is under pressure.

FOR MANY YEARS linguists have recognized the importance of studying language use in communities where multilingual speakers use different languages (Haugen 1953; Ferguson 1959; Weinreich 1962). In many multilingual communities one language is more prestigious than others, reflecting political and economic relationships (Ferguson 1959). The languages of colonizers--in the past few centuries these are mostly European languages--come to be dominant over local languages. In some newly created nations, regional lingua francas emerge reflecting new nationalistic identities (see Anderson 1991). Sometimes, dominant languages have overpowered local languages, resulting in the loss or "death" of the local language, as young speakers lose fluency (Dorian 1981, 1989). The self-conscious preservation

Pacific Studies, Vol. 19, No. 2--June 1996

of local languages, for example, the recent efforts among the Hawaiians and the Maori, may reflect the desire to preserve a separate identity in protest of foreign economic and political institutions.

These processes of language change and replacement are at work in many of the small societies in Oceania. Local vernaculars are under extreme pressure from lingua francas, including various regional pidgins and English (see Kulick 1992a:5-8; Romaine 1992:8; Wurm 1991; Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo 1991:553). In this article, I will examine the use of different languages among the Sikaiana, a Polynesian people from a very small and geographically isolated atoll located in the Solomon Islands. I will describe the local factors that shape decisions about language use (see Kulick 1992b; Jourdan 1991a:202-203).[1]

My interest in language use on Sikaiana is derived from a broader research interest concerning the manner in which a regional culture and social system are developing in the Solomon Islands and the manner in which local communities, such as Sikaiana, are maintaining, redefining, or replacing their indigenous traditions and practices. Four different languages reflect these international, regional, and local influences. First, English was the language used by the British colonizers of the Solomon Islands. English remains the official language of the government and schools, although it is not spoken fluently by most Solomon Islanders. Second, Solomon Islands Pijin is a regional lingua franca, related to Tok Pisin of Papua New Guinea. Pijin is the main language in the Solomon Islands for informal communication between different ethnic groups.[2] Third, Mota, a language from the Banks Islands in Vanuatu, was originally used as a lingua franca by the Christians who missionized Sikaiana and is still spoken by some elderly people. Fourth, the local vernacular is a Polynesian language.[3] Almost all Sikaiana people are bilingual in Pijin and Sikaiana.

For the Sikaiana people, decisions about language use depend on values and attitudes associated with each language in a particular context. No single language is clearly dominant across all contexts; rather a confluence of historical, cultural, and interactional factors shape preferences for using different languages in specific contexts. There are some factors, however, that increase the use of Pijin. Pijin is not a prestigious language, but people rarely lack confidence in speaking it. In contrast, people are criticized for mistakes in both English and Sikaiana, and such criticism can inhibit the use of these languages. Pijin also gains momentum because there are high rates of migration from Sikaiana to other parts of the Solomon Islands where Pijin is the lingua franca. Although these factors do not yet "tip" the vernacular toward rapid extinction (Dorian 1981:51), they do "tilt" language use toward Pijin.

Background

Sikaiana is located about one hundred miles east of Malaita Province in the Solomon Islands. The Sikaiana are Polynesian and have cultural and historical relationships with other Polynesian societies. Over the past sixty years, the Sikaiana people have incorporated outside institutions, practices, and technology into their social life. These new practices include Christianity, formal education, courts, and labor for wages. At the same time, the Sikaiana people have developed indigenous institutions that preserve a distinct ethnic and community identity (see Donner 1987, 1992, 1994). During my fieldwork periods of 1980-1983 and 1987, Sikaiana had a resident population that fluctuated between 200 and 250 people; about 400-500 other Sikaiana people were living and working in other areas of the Solomon Islands. From 1897 to 1978, Sikaiana was administrated by the British within the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. When the protectorate became independent in 1978, Sikaiana became a separate administrative "council area" or "ward" within Malaita Province. The capital of the Solomon Islands is located at Honiara on Guadalcanal. The Solomon Islands is a diverse nation that consists of over sixty different language groups (see Tryon and Hackman 1983), among a population that at the last complete census in 1986 was approaching three hundred thousand.

Sikaiana has a long history of contact with Europeans. During the nineteenth century, its population had a reputation for being hospitable and it was a popular stopping place for traders and whalers. Visitors in the mid-nineteenth century reported that some of the population could speak "broken" English (Schertzer 1861:602; Webster 1863:51-52; Anonymous 1848:575). In the late nineteenth century, Sikaiana was incorporated into the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. By the early 1900s visitors' accounts report that some of the population was speaking Pijin, the emerging lingua franca of the Solomon Islands. Although Sikaiana was not heavily recruited as part of the notorious "blackbirding" trade, there was steady, albeit sporadic, interaction with European traders.[4] There were European beachcombers and occasional resident traders in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By this time, manufactured trade goods were essential in the atoll's economy: tobacco, steel tools, flint, flour, and even tinned beef were available at several different locally managed stores that were supplied by European traders. Moreover, Sikaiana men were recruited to work on trading and government vessels.

In 1929 the (Anglican) Melanesian Mission sent missionaries to Sikaiana.[5] In the 1930s there was a very rapid and almost complete conversion to Christianity. Starting in 1930, many younger people left Sikaiana to attend

mission schools located elsewhere in the Solomon Islands, usually with the encouragement of Sikaiana parents who wanted their children to learn how to read and write. In the early 1930s, the language of instruction in these schools was Mota, an Oceanic language used by the Melanesian Mission as its lingua franca.[6] There are prayer books, hymns, and sections of the Bible translated into Mota. Later, the Melanesian Mission changed its language of instruction to English. Outside of the classroom, despite school policies discouraging its use, Sikaiana pupils learned Solomon Islands Pijin.

Since World War II, increasing numbers of Sikaiana people have left the atoll for education and employment. The number of Sikaiana people has almost tripled between 1900 and 1980, but the number of people resident on the atoll has remained approximately stable at about 200-250. About two-thirds of the present-day population has emigrated away from Sikaiana, although most of these emigrants try to maintain close ties with the atoll. Following World War II, children of emigrants matured in towns, especially Honiara, Yandina, and Auki, where Pijin was the primary means of communication with other Solomon Islanders. Sikaiana migrants living in and around Honiara maintain close ties with each other, cooperate in fundraising activities, encourage marriages among their children, and participate in festive events (see Donner 1992, 1993).

The present-day Sikaiana population is very mobile, and people frequently move back and forth between Honiara and Sikaiana. Many Sikaiana emigrants take their yearly leaves on Sikaiana. It is not uncommon for people to live for several years on Sikaiana, leave to work for wages for several years, and then return again. Sikaiana is the home of last resort for people who have lost their jobs or are retired. Cash is less important on Sikaiana than in towns, and it is easier to live on local resources.

In the following discussion, I will describe language use among the Sikaiana, including both those residing on the atoll and those who have emigrated to Honiara. The Sikaiana people form one speech community, and most of them reside in these two locations. This article focuses on situations in which Sikaiana people are interacting with other Sikaiana; interactions with people from other ethnic groups in the Solomon Islands usually take place in Pijin.

Overview

As discussed above, there are four main languages used by the Sikaiana: Mota, English, Pijin, and the Sikaiana language. These languages are interrelated. Both Pijin and Sikaiana are constantly influenced by borrowing English words and morphology. At least some of Pijin's grammatical features are derived from Oceanic languages (see Keesing 1988).[7]

English is the official language of the Solomon Islands, and government documents are written in English, including those documents pertaining to institutions affecting the daily life of Sikaiana such as the cooperative store, the clinic, the court, and the government council. The government's educational policy, moreover, establishes English as the official language of instruction in public schools (see Keesing 1991; Jourdan 1991b; Romaine 1992:339). Pijin, however, is the usual language for communication between government administrators and local officials when conversing and conducting government business. A few well-educated Sikaiana men claim that they "think" in English (rather than Pijin or Sikaiana). Most of these men have spent long periods abroad in schools and nations where English is the main language for communication and now work in professional occupations where it is used frequently. Ability in English varies. Many Sikaiana can read and understand some English, and a few people are completely fluent and literate. Spontaneous conversations in English are very infrequent among the Sikaiana, although Sikaiana men try to speak English when they are in drunken quarrels.

All Sikaiana men and almost all women (excepting some of the eldest) are fluent in Pijin. In 1987 on the atoll, there were only eleven adults (all women) who described themselves as unable to speak Pijin (in a total population of 236). Most of these women were born before the arrival of missionaries in 1929; the youngest of these women was born before 1935.[8]

Some people who attended schools in the late 1950s and early 1960s claim that they learned English in schools before they learned Pijin. Formerly, Melanesian Mission schools discouraged the use of both Pijin and vernaculars, and many of the mission's teachers spoke English as a first language. Eventually, the government established a national educational system, replacing most of the mission schools, and now most teachers are not native speakers of English. At present, both on the atoll and in Honiara, people learn Pijin before English. Many Sikaiana people assert that this impedes their mastery of English.

Within the last twenty years, Pijin use has increased. One Sikaiana schoolteacher told me that when he started teaching in 1976 at the primary school on Sikaiana, none of the children could speak Pijin, but that by 1981 (the time of that interview) most children were fluent in it. In 1987 Pijin use by youngsters was more pervasive on the atoll. I was surprised when young children of five and six years, who had been raised on the atoll, used Pijin with each other in spontaneous conversations (such conversations in Pijin between young children were rare in 1980-1983). In July 1987 I did a survey on language use on the atoll and found that there were only two children older than six who were described by their parents or guardians as unable to speak Pijin.

In Honiara, Sikaiana children learn Pijin before attending school. In the Honiara household where I lived in 1987, a young boy of about three was a gregarious speaker of Sikaiana but was just beginning to understand, although not speak, Pijin. His six-year-old sister was bilingual, using both languages with adults and peers, as were all other children older than her in the household. The teenagers and young adults in the household spoke to one another almost exclusively in Pijin. Mature adults communicated to one another in a mixture of Pijin and Sikaiana.

Adults and older children usually used Sikaiana to very young children when they were beginning to speak. Children, however, learned Pijin before starting primary school. When I returned to the Solomon Islands in 1993, the three-year-old boy described above was about ten and held almost all conversations in Pijin. By this age, children have considerable exposure to schoolmates from other linguistic groups and speak to them primarily in Pijin (see also Jourdan 1991b:169-170). A young preschool child of about three whose parents were living with this same family in 1993 always spoke in Pijin, although he could understand some Sikaiana.

Parents do not restrict their children's use of the Sikaiana language or encourage the use of Pijin. If anything, parents prefer that their children learn Sikaiana and English. But both on Sikaiana and in Honiara, Sikaiana children learn Pijin from other children, and this gives the language momentum.

Many young adults, especially males who were raised in Honiara, speak to each other very frequently in Pijin and often claim to be uncomfortable speaking in Sikaiana. There is a frequent assertion that the Sikaiana spoken by younger people is "incorrect." Often younger people told me that they could not understand the Sikaiana speech of their elders.[9]

Young adults residing on the atoll mixed their speech between Sikaiana and Pijin (many of these younger people had only returned to Sikaiana recently after living elsewhere for an extended period). Most informal conversations among mature adults residing on Sikaiana were conducted in the Sikaiana language. In Honiara, Pijin is used more frequently in conversations.

Mota is not used frequently and is known only to old people who studied at the mission schools in the 1930s. These elderly people sometimes use it to write letters and for silent prayer. It is used in conversations when older people do not want younger people to understand them.

In 1987 I conducted interviews with eighty-two Sikaiana people concerning language use.[10] All those interviewed were fluent in Pijin and Sikaiana, and sometimes in other languages. As a general measure of attachment to language, I asked interviewees which language they "think" in. I have grouped responses under three headings: those residing on Sikaiana, those residing in Honiara, and finally a total combining both groups. Not infre-

TABLE 1. Languages That People Think In

	Sikaiana		Honiara		Total	
Language	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sikaiana	18	60	17	33	35	43
Sikaiana-Pijin mix	5	17	8	15	13	16
Pijin	5	17	16	31	21	26
English-Pijin mix	0	0	2	4	2	2
English	1	3	4	8	5	6
Mota-Sikaiana mix	1	3	0	0	1	1
Other mix	0	0	5	10	5	6
Total	30		52		82	

quently, people replied that they used several different languages, and these responses are recorded in Table 1.

My initial interview questions assumed that only one language would predominate, but the large number of people who replied that they think in different languages reflects the degree of integration of these different languages into daily life.[11] Not surprisingly, there is a definite shift away from using the Sikaiana language toward using Pijin and English among the residents of Honiara.

Speakers describe their ordinary speech as "mixing" both Pijin and Sikaiana. (In Sikaiana, they describe this with the phrase *talatala hakasoasoa,* from *hakasoa,* which means "mix, especially of liquids.") One longtime Honiara resident explained to me that he spoke in one language until he came to an idea that could be better explained in the other and then switched languages, and then switched back to the first language when a similar situation arose again.[12]

As part of the interviews, I asked individuals which language they use when talking with specific alters. Most people claimed that they make an assessment about their listener's or their audience's ability and then use the language that they consider to be appropriate for the listener. Some younger people claimed that certain older alters feel more comfortable using the Sikaiana language and that they use it when speaking to them, while older people claimed that they use Pijin so younger people can understand them. Many people assumed their command of languages was better than the alter?. When I interviewed the same alters in separate sessions, they sometimes did not agree in describing which language they use with one another, but they did agree about the factors that determine their choice of language. For example, several times a younger informant would tell me he spoke in

Sikaiana with an older alter because the alter was more comfortable speaking in Sikaiana. Later, when I interviewed this older alter, he claimed to speak in Pijin with the former informant because the former had trouble using Sikaiana.

Contexts for Language Use

In present-day Sikaiana society, several important social contexts are derived from Western institutions. Language use in these contexts is affected by the history of the introduction of these institutions and Sikaiana understandings about these institutions.

Schools

The Sikaiana are highly committed to formal education and encourage their children to stay in school as long as possible. Formal education is equated with opportunity and financial success, especially important since the atoll does not have the resources to support the entire Sikaiana population.

English is taught at all levels of the government school system but is taught most effectively at the secondary level (only the best students are admitted to secondary schools). In 1987 parents told me that instruction in Honiara primary schools is supposed to be in English but that normally it is in Pijin. Among students, who come from many different ethnic groups in the Solomon Islands, Pijin is the primary language for informal conversations. In Honiara this use of Pijin by classmates is probably one of the greatest pressures that tilts the language use of Sikaiana children toward Pijin.

Sikaiana primary school teachers on the atoll told me that they usually use Pijin or a mix of Pijin and English in their instruction. The Sikaiana teachers emphasized that they felt it was important to encourage the use of English as much as possible during the school time. They added, however, that because of their own lack of ability in English, they often used a mix of Pijin and English in instruction. The teachers know many English terms that are not normally used in colloquial Pijin speech; however, they find English grammar difficult.

Meetings

The Sikaiana frequently hold meetings to build a consensus for various community activities. Public meetings on the atoll are conducted in the Sikaiana language, including general community meetings, meetings of the govern-

ing council, the school committee, the custom committee, and the committee that oversees the cooperative store. Meetings involving outside government representatives or religious officials who visit the atoll are conducted in Pijin when these visitors are non-Sikaiana.

In 1987 in Honiara there were frequent meetings of two committees: a disaster committee, organized to help the atoll recover from a cyclone; and a sports club named Vania, whose membership included most Sikaiana emigrants living in Honiara (see Donner 1992). Meetings of both committees were usually conducted in Pijin. The disaster committee was composed of younger people, many under forty, who felt more comfortable conversing in Pijin than in Sikaiana.[13] In 1987 I attended two meetings of extended families in Honiara concerned with preparations for a traditional activity, a wedding exchange *(penupenu)*. Both meetings were conducted in Pijin, although I considered everyone present to be fluent in Sikaiana.

In 1980-1983 most meetings in Honiara were conducted in the Sikaiana language. In part, the increased use of Pijin in 1987 at these meetings can be attributed to a demographic factor: by 1987 the first generation of people raised away from Sikaiana (those born after 1945) were approaching middle age and becoming more influential in community matters, and many of them prefer to use Pijin.

Court

In 1980-1983 and in 1987, land and criminal court cases involving mature adults in the Sikaiana local court were usually conducted in Sikaiana and testimony was transcribed in Sikaiana. In several cases, however, the justices used Pijin when younger males were defendants. These younger people claimed that they had difficulty understanding the Sikaiana language and preferred that the proceedings be conducted in Pijin, although the testimony was transcribed in Sikaiana. In 1982 during one major land case, some testimony was given in English and Pijin because the person representing one of the litigating lineages claimed that he had been away from Sikaiana for so long that he felt more comfortable using these languages. A translator was provided who translated this litigant's arguments and questions into Sikaiana for witnesses and the court.[14]

In court cases, language can be used to express differing identities. The young male defendants are usually being tried for some minor misbehavior. Using Pijin to older justices demonstrates rebelliousness toward the proceedings and the authority of the justices. From the view of the justices, the lack of understanding of the Sikaiana language reflects a lack of understanding of Sikaiana cultural traditions, which results in improper conduct.

Church

On Sikaiana, church services are conducted twice a day and are well attended. Bible readings, liturgy, and prayers are all conducted in English. Hymns are sung in English. Some hymns translated by missionaries into the Sikaiana language are sung at Christmas; they are rarely sung at other times.[15]

In 1981, at the suggestion of visiting church officials, the daily Bible readings were followed by translations into the Sikaiana language (although there was no translation into Sikaiana when I returned in 1987). During my stay in 1980-1983, the priest rarely gave sermons. The one sermon I heard was delivered in the Sikaiana language. In 1987 a new priest and a new catechist, both from Sikaiana, gave regular sermons in Sikaiana every Sunday, although the priest claimed that he would have been more comfortable giving them in Pijin (he had spent most of his adult life away from Sikaiana). In 1987 the Sunday school teacher told me that she taught her classes in Pijin. Most of the Sunday school songs are sung in English (with some interference from Pijin in their performance). One young Sikaiana man had converted to the Seventh-day Adventist religion and was trying to convert other residents of the atoll. His Sunday school classes were conducted in Pijin. He had been raised away from Sikaiana but also probably found it easier to explain Seventh-day Adventist religious beliefs in Pijin, the language in which he learned them.

Some sections of the Bible have been translated into Pijin, but several people told me that they do not like to hear scripture read in Pijin, because they consider it to be too colloquial, and I never heard it read in Pijin during my stay. So far as I know, no Sikaiana person owns a Pijin version of the Bible, although almost every family has at least one copy of an English version. Visiting officials from the Church of Melanesia delivered their talks and occasional sermons in Pijin but read from an English Bible in the church services.

Table 2 is based on another interview question, about which language is used for silent prayer. People prefer to pray in Pijin or English rather than in Sikaiana. Although a total of 43 percent of the respondents said that they "think" in Sikaiana, only 13 percent use it for silent prayer; only 6 percent said that they "think' in English, but 28 percent said that they use it for prayer. The preference for Pijin and English in prayer is probably a result of the fact that most exposure to Christian concepts is in English. People use Pijin in silent prayer for similar reasons. Although it seems to be too colloquial for Bible reading, it offers people the opportunity to use English terms. Many people learned religious concepts at mission schools in English.

TABLE 2. Languages Used for Silent Prayer

	Sikaiana		Honiara		Total	
Language	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sikaiana	8	27	3	6	11	13
Sikaiana-Pijin mix	5	17	8	15	13	16
Pijin	4	13	16	31	20	24
English-Pijin mix	0	0	4	8	4	5
English	8	27	15	29	23	28
Mota-other mix	5	17	1	2	6	7
Other mix	0	0	5	10	5	6
Total	30		52		82	

The preference for Pijin in prayer is probably a result of the fact that it incorporates the English lexicon, and some people remain unsure about the legitimacy of Sikaiana religious terms. Some older people who learned Mota in mission schools use it in prayer.

Most Christian concepts were translated into Sikaiana words by the missionaries, but there is still disagreement about the accuracy of these translations. Most likely the glosses were developed by the Solomon Island missionaries who first converted the Sikaiana in the early 1930s. These missionaries were members of an indigenous religious order, the Melanesian Brotherhood, or Tasiu, and several were native speakers of other Polynesian languages in the Solomon Islands (see Capell 1935-1937). It is also possible that some translations and glosses were developed by pupils while at mission schools located elsewhere in the Solomon Islands. Nevertheless, the Sikaiana people do not seem to be satisfied that these translations properly convey Christian concepts.[16] During my stay in 1987, there was considerable interest in translating the Bible into the Sikaiana language, in part supported by the efforts of foreign Bible translators who were developing Bible translation projects among other Polynesian speakers of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

Guitar Songs

In the 1960s some young men learned to play the string guitar, and soon this became a popular form of song composition for young people (Donner 1987). Many tunes are taken from English school songs and cassettes. Guitar songs were being composed and were quite popular during both my stays, in 1980-1983 and in 1987. The songs usually recount events or themes that are

important for the Sikaiana people: transgressions of social norms, family arguments, love affairs, and departures from the atoll are common themes. Songs about Western occupations and institutions are rarely composed.

The Sikaiana people are proud of their ability to convey metaphoric or hidden meanings through their language. The use of metaphors *(hulihulisala)* was an important part of traditional song composition and remains important in contemporary song composition for the guitar. Metaphors are used in songs to convey secret meanings understood only by the composers and the people to whom the composers explain their meanings, although others are free to suspect or infer the songs' meanings. Figurative speech is also used in ordinary conversation to convey hidden meanings or enrich conversation. I very rarely heard this type of metaphorical speech used by Sikaiana speakers speaking in Pijin.[17]

Song composition is a medium in which younger Sikaiana people can still express distinctively Sikaiana concerns and events. Many younger men claim to be more comfortable speaking Pijin but when they compose songs, they always do so in Sikaiana. Thus, song composition is an area of Sikaiana life in which the Sikaiana language is an important medium for communication, even among the younger people who claim to be more comfortable speaking Pijin in most other social contexts.

Literacy

The most widely read book among the Sikaiana is the Bible, and most families have a copy of an English version. Portions of the Bible and liturgies were translated into Mota, but none of these are currently in use on Sikaiana.

People also read comics, magazines, and some books in English. In addition, people working in administrative positions read handbooks that are written in English, and read and write reports in English. English permeates all areas of present-day Solomon Islands life, including schools, radio, videos, Western rock and popular music, magazines, and newspapers. When a group of women bought a cake mix, they followed the baking directions on the box, which were in English.

Although Pijin is the lingua franca of interethnic spoken communication in the Solomon Islands, throughout the 1980s there was no standardized orthography of Pijin that was taught in schools. Linguists working on a Bible translation project, the Solomon Islands Translation Advisory Group, proposed standardized spellings for some words, but this orthography did not have wide acceptance.[18]

The Sikaiana language does have an orthography, which was introduced by the missionaries, and many Sikaiana people use it in writing letters. It

TABLE 3. Languages Used for Letter Writing

	Sikaiana		Honiara		Total	
Language	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sikaiana	10	33	17	33	27	33
Sikaiana-English mix	7	23	15	29	22	27
Pijin	0	0	1	2	1	1
Pijin-other mix	4	13	7	13	11	13
English	4	13	8	15	12	15
Mota-other mix	4	13	3	6	7	9
Never write	1	3	1	2	2	2
Total	30		52		82	

seems to have been comparatively easy to develop an acceptable orthography for the Sikaiana language. One older person told me that he had learned to write in Sikaiana before the arrival of the missionaries: a Hawaiian immigrant had written Sikaiana syllables in the sand along the beach using Hawaiian orthography.[19]

Much of the population has emigrated away from Sikaiana, and there is constant letter writing between people living away and people on the atoll. These letters are often written in the Sikaiana language, which most people can read and write. Not infrequently, however, people write to each other in English. In several cases, people whom I had never heard speaking English wrote letters to other Sikaiana in English. I found the English in these letters sometimes to be awkward, but usually it was understandable.

Table 3 shows the results of a question from the interview about language use in letter writing. Some people claim that they write in English or in the Sikaiana language (or, in a few cases, in Mota), depending on their correspondents: they write in Sikaiana for people with less formal education and in English for correspondents with education. Pijin is not popular for writing, probably because there is no standardized orthography or tradition of using it. Many people who write letters in English, however, also use some Pijin expressions and syntax.[20]

Attitudes toward Language Use

Most older Sikaiana people lament the perceived condition of the Sikaiana language: the loss of vocabulary, the use of English borrowings, and younger people's incorrect usages. These laments about language use are generally framed in terms of how Sikaiana is also losing its traditional cultural prac-

tices. At the same time, there is a common notion that English possesses many advantages over the Sikaiana language. Skills in English are associated with formal education, employment, economic advancement, access to new technology, material goods, and ultimately one's standard of living. Many people associate English with success and sophistication.

Sometimes people told me that English was a better language than Sikaiana for expressing things. Often it was asserted that one Sikaiana word meant many different things. This polysemy was taken as a sign that the Sikaiana language lacked the specificity found in English. My response that the reverse was also true--some Sikaiana words are more specific than their English gloss--usually met an indifferent reception. It is also assumed that Christian religious concepts, which are very important on Sikaiana, are clear in English but not as they have been glossed into the Sikaiana language.

The Sikaiana sometimes have a self-deprecatory sense of humor in comparing their cultural traditions with Western traditions, and this extends to their language. While I was working to define patterns in Sikaiana grammar, several different informants told me that there is something wrong with the Sikaiana language that makes it impossible to describe its grammatical rules.

Most people view the Sikaiana language as an important part of their traditional heritage, but they also want to have the opportunities and knowledge that they associate with English. Many believe that the Sikaiana language will change and become simplified over the next few generations. For the most part they do not like this situation but see little they can do about it.

Although English is viewed as a prestigious language, Pijin is not. People complain that Pijin is too limited, that it interferes with learning English, and that it is difficult to use as a written language. People encourage the use of Sikaiana and English; I have never heard anyone encouraged to use Pijin. However, Pijin is much more accessible to speakers than English and offers the opportunity to incorporate and use the large English lexicon.

Attitudes toward language use also provide Pijin with an ironic advantage that encourages its use: people are not criticized for how they use Pijin. Sikaiana is a small-scale community where criticism and gossip are important regulators of behavior. The people are self-deprecatory, but they are also sensitive to criticism from others. In their language use, people are criticized for improper usages in both Sikaiana and English but not in Pijin. Older people are often critical of how younger people use the Sikaiana language. There is also criticism of some older people who left Sikaiana when young and assertions that they never mastered the language properly. Younger people often say that they lack ability in speaking Sikaiana.[21]

There is also some reluctance to use English, often because of a similar lack of confidence. Moreover, people who use English with other Sikaiana

in informal settings can be ridiculed for being pretentious (see Dorian 1981:103 for similar examples among Gaelic speakers).

But I never heard anyone criticized for the way they spoke Pijin. Older people may criticize younger people for speaking Pijin instead of Sikaiana, but they do not criticize the manner in which it is spoken. Pijin is a language that seems to be taken for granted. It is assumed that young people will learn it and use it to its fullest potential for expressing themselves. By contrast, both Sikaiana and English are considered to be more difficult to master, and there is a notion that some people will not learn to speak these languages properly. Very rarely did anyone talk about lacking confidence in Pijin.

Discussion: Historical and Cultural Factors in Language Use

A variety of factors shape language use on Sikaiana, including certain historical factors affecting the introduction and use of different languages, local attitudes and ideologies about languages, and specific circumstances surrounding the learning and use of languages.

The decision by Anglican missionaries to use Mota and later English as their language of instruction resulted in the development of English as Sikaiana's main literary and religious language. While some Sikaiana worshipers are willing to use Pijin in their silent prayers because it incorporates English terms, many consider Pijin too colloquial for religious services. Pijin, moreover, is an ineffective language for literary communication because there was never any systematic effort to establish a standardized orthography. In Papua New Guinea, Lutherans and Catholics used Tok Pisin as their language of instruction, providing it with an orthography and much more viability as a written language (see Romaine 1992:47-51). Generally, Papua New Guinea governmental policies have been more supportive of Tok Pisin than those in the Solomon Islands toward Solomon Islands Pijin (see Keesing 1991; Jourdan 1991b; Romaine 1992:339).

In examining language use in multilingual communities, it is also important to examine the attitudes or ideologies that develop about different languages and how these affect language use (for a review, see Woolard and Schieffelin 1994).[22] Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo show how the use of the vernacular in religious services among Kwara'ae members of the Church of Melanesia reflects their greater commitment to a traditional identity compared with the Kwara'ae members of the South Seas Evangelical Church, who use English and Pijin in their services and are more oriented to change and modernization (1991).

In some communities the vernacular is stigmatized and a dominant

regional language can be part of a new and valued identity. In a detailed study of language use in Gapun, a small Papua New Guinea community, Kulick found that speakers associate Tok Pisin with access to valued Western goods and success, and Tok Pisin is replacing the vernacular as the main language (1992a, 1992b). For the people of Gapun, Tok Pisin is the language of intelligence and sophistication, and the local vernacular is devalued.

Among the Sikaiana, there is more ambivalence about culture change and there is a more complicated pattern of language use. The social change associated with Western contact is both desired and feared. The loss of traditional practices is decried but the Sikaiana actively participate in the institutions that replace and undermine traditional practices. They are enthusiastic to participate in and manage institutions such as the church, schools, and courts. They value education and the employment opportunities that it offers. Earlier generations enthusiastically converted to Christianity and sought employment for wages. Today many people follow world events with interest on radios, and those living in Honiara watch videos and some communicate with fax machines. At the same time they try to maintain their traditional culture and practices. They hold events that maintain the distinctness of their community, including wedding exchanges, song and dance festivities, and a variety of fundraising activities. Many Sikaiana people also lament what they perceive to be the loss of a former harmony. They say that without the need to earn money and the influence of foreign practices, people in previous times were less contentious and happier.[23] This ambivalence about culture change is reflected in a complicated linguistic situation in which no language is clearly dominant across all settings and contexts.

Finally, on Sikaiana there is differential exposure to languages, and as a result people differ in their competencies in the various languages. Lack of confidence and criticism about usage can become perpetuating factors that limit the use of some languages. For the Sikaiana people, this situation ironically enhances the use of Pijin at the expense of the two more prestigious languages, English and the vernacular.[24]

Conclusion: The Tilt toward Pijin

There are many publications about how dominating cultural systems, especially those derived from Western societies, are affecting local life in Oceania. But there are relatively few discussions about how dominant languages, especially colonial languages and pidgins, are affecting local language use. Speakers of other languages in the Solomon Islands have told me that language use in their home communities is affected by factors associated with modernization and change. I believe that this issue deserves much

more attention than it currently receives. Further study will provide insight into processes shaping both linguistic change and sociocultural change (see Kulick 1992b).

On Sikaiana, there is a pastiche of language use that reflects both the general conditions in the Solomon Islands and particular elements in Sikaiana life. Mota and English were used as languages of instruction by missionaries. Pijin has not been promoted as a written language, whereas Sikaiana has a developed tradition of being used as a written language. There are high rates of emigration away from the atoll to Honiara, where Pijin is the lingua franca. English is the official language of instruction in Solomon Islands schools, but Pijin is the main language learned in primary schools. These factors result in a diversity of language use, where, for example, Pijin and Sikaiana are the main languages for informal conversations; English and Sikaiana are preferred for writing; Pijin and English are preferred for prayer; and Sikaiana remains preferred for expression in certain indigenous contexts, such as guitar song composition.[25]

There is, however, a definite shift to using Pijin, which reflects both general and local processes in culture change and language use. Pijin offers its Sikaiana speakers several advantages. It is a language that can be used for communication with other Solomon Islanders and is used in most of the regional and national institutions that pervade Sikaiana life. Moreover, Pijin can now also be used for successful communication with most other Sikaiana people. Sikaiana people are directly exposed to very few people who are fluent in English, whereas Pijin is much more accessible in their daily lives, As used by the Sikaiana people, Pijin allows for the incorporation of a large body of English words without the problems of mastering English syntax. Pijin is the language of schoolyards and youth, important for communication in peer groups. Finally, it is a language that younger people can feel they have mastered. Belonging to no one and to everyone, Pijin has no experts who criticize how it is used. Pijin is the language of those who do not want to be considered clumsy for their imperfect use of the language of their elders and ancestors, or pretentious in their awkward use of the remote language of the elite and of foreigners.

NOTES

1. The research for this article was conducted from October 1980 until July 1983 and from March 1987 to September 1987. I also spent a few weeks with Sikaiana migrants living in and near Honiara in 1993. Although language use was examined in 1980-1983, language change was not a specific research topic during that period of research as it was in 1987. I am a fluent, but not flawless, speaker of both Sikaiana and Pijin. I cannot speak Mota. American English is my first language.

2. For relevant discussions of Pijin in Melanesia, see Jourdan 1991a, Sankoff 1980, Keesing 1988, and Romaine 1992.

3. In a study that compared the material culture and language of the Polynesian outliers, Bayard wrote about Sikaiana: "primary settlement came from Ellice; secondary settlement took place from LUA [Luaniua], PIL-TAU [Pileni-Taumako] and/or other central atolls. Fairly extensive Micronesian contact has taken place, as well as contact with the Southern Solomon Islands, PIL-TAU [Pileni-Taumako] and perhaps RE [Rennell]" (1976:53).

The Sikaiana claim that they have trouble speaking Luaniua, but they learn it rapidly when they stay among Luaniua people. Irwin Howard told me that he could converse with Sikaiana people based on his knowledge of Takuu in Papua New Guinea (pers. com., 1980), and his lexicon of Takuu looks very similar to Sikaiana.

In a comparative review of Polynesian languages, Pawley has classified Sikaiana as part of a Samoic-Outlier grouping of the Western Polynesian languages. He suggests that the languages of Tuvalu and the Northern Polynesian Outliers may form a separate subgroup within the Samoic-Outlier group. Within this subgroup, Takuu, Luaniua, and Sikaiana show strong affinities as one subgroup, as opposed to Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro, which form a separate subgroup (Pawley 1966, 1967:260). Howard has argued for a separate Ellice-Central-Northern Outlier ("Ellicean") subgrouping based on lexical items that are distinctively shared among these languages (1982).

4. In the late nineteenth century, there was extensive labor recruitment, or "blackbirding," of Solomon Islanders to work in Queensland. The center of the blackbirding was nearby on Malaita, but there does not seem to have been any extensive recruiting on Sikaiana (see Price and Baker 1976).

5. The Melanesian Mission later became the Church of Melanesia.

6. For examples of the use of lingua francas by missionaries in New Guinea see Sankoff 1980:120-122.

7. For some younger speakers, mostly those residing in Honiara, Solomon Islands Pijin is their first and primary language. This may constitute a creolization of Pijin, but the distinction between "pidgin" and "creole" is more complicated than many writers have assumed (see Jourdan 1991a).

8. These findings are based on self-reported responses made during a census of the population on Sikaiana in July 1987.

9. Niko Besnier claims that older people's assertions about the linguistic incompetence of younger speakers often underestimate the younger speakers' competency (pers. com., 1987). Indeed, when they are asked to give specific examples of language change, the very same, and minor, examples of improper usage are often cited. For example, people frequently point to younger people's use of *koukou* for *kaukau* 'to bathe' as evidence of the sorry state of the Sikaiana language.

Certain grammatical features have been leveled by younger people. Like many Oceanic languages, Sikaiana has a common verbal suffix, *-Cia.* This suffix has been variously described as a "transitive," "passive," or "ergative" marker in various Polynesian lan-

guages (see Clark 1973; Pawley 1973). -C represents a consonant that varies depending on the word, and on Sikaiana *-Cia* yields the forms *-hia (laka, lakahia), -kia (somo, somokia), -lia (honu, honulia), -mia (anu, anumia), -nia (poo, poonia), -ina (talatala, talatalaina), -sia (tani, tanisia), -tia (aloha, alohatia), -ia (pakupaku, pakuia),* and *-a (haele, haelea).* Younger speakers have leveled most of these forms and tend to use *-lia* to replace most of the above suffixes *(lakalia, anulia, alohalia).*

Some young people substitute the "source" marker, *i,* for the "agent" marker, *e.*

Among all speakers, but especially among younger speakers, there is a loss of Sikaiana vocabulary, especially in areas of technology and ritual that are no longer practiced. Younger speakers, moreover, often substitute Pijin and English borrowings where, in my opinion, there are adequate Sikaiana equivalents.

Some of these changes are examples of the type of leveling found in many languages and can be attributed to the internal dynamics of the Sikaiana language rather than to improper use by younger people.

10. Parts of the interview were derived from Dorian's interviews (1981). I conducted the interviews myself. The sample was not determined by random statistical methods: on certain days I set out and interviewed whomever I happened to encounter. Those interviewed included twelve women and eighteen men on Sikaiana, and twenty-two women and thirty men in Honiara. Women are generally more conservative speakers than men, although the responses of both sexes exhibit similar patterns of mixing languages and shifting language use in different contexts. There were twenty-seven people born before 1940, twenty-three people born between 1940 and 1960, and thirty-two people born after 1960. I admit that these are crude measures of language use and that it cannot be inferred that there is an absolute correspondence between self-reports about language use and actual language use. But these results correspond with my observations, and I feel confident that they convey both the complexity and the shifting patterns in Sikaiana language use.

11. I am not claiming that Sikaiana people are processing two different codes simultaneously. Rather, the large number of people who claim to think in more than one language reflects the fact that they feel quite familiar with several languages.

12. I did not do any extensive, systematic analysis of code-switching. I did notice that there is switching between the languages to add emphasis. For example, a mother whose commands in the Sikaiana language are ignored by her children will repeat the command in Pijin to add emphasis; at a meeting a person will repeat a statement in the other language to add emphasis or make sure it is understood (see Kulick 1992a:78-80; Sankoff 1980:34-45).

13. Once the disaster committee called a meeting of the Sikaiana people residing in Honiara. The chairman of the committee, a younger male raised in Honiara, began speaking in Pijin. When elders insisted that he speak in the Sikaiana language, he began stumbling, claiming inability, and another member of the committee took over the presentation. The speech of this latter man included many English borrowings that, in my opinion, could have been explained just as well in Sikaiana. During the meeting, many questions were asked in Pijin. A committee member replied in Pijin to a question asked in Sikaiana. It is possible that my presence as an anthropologist known to be interested in language change motivated the people at the meeting to demand that the Sikaiana language be used. In the

case of the Vania sports association, Pijin may have been used because the association's secretary, although the offspring of Sikaiana-speaking parents, was raised on Luaniua (an atoll several hundred miles from Sikaiana) and claimed he had difficulty speaking in Sikaiana (he spoke in Luaniua with his mother).

14. I have a cassette of this litigant speaking fluent Sikaiana, recorded in 1967 by Peter Sharples as part of his linguistic fieldwork on Sikaiana. The litigant, however, had been married to a non-Sikaiana wife, and it is possible that he did not use Sikaiana extensively for many years.

15. The use of English in prayer may also provide religious activities with an aura of mystical power. In traditional Sikaiana society, ritual activities often used a specialized vocabulary not fully understood by many people.

16. A missionary translation of Bible passages into Sikaiana confused the language's agent and object markers, thereby, in one notable mistake, describing the crucifixion of the Romans (see Capell 1935-1937, 45:16).

17. See Monberg's discussion about songs from Bellona for similar uses of metaphor (1974).

18. In 1993 I found that Pijin was starting to be used in a few instances as a written language in Honiara. There was some use of Pijin in advertising and public health signs, and there was a public exhibit in Honiara with captions in Pijin that explained the environmental problems associated with logging.

19. Vowel length and geminate consonants are not marked in the orthography used by the Sikaiana, although they are aware of these distinctions in speech. The Sikaiana people speak of both sound contrasts as "heavy" versus "light" or "slow" versus "rapid." Phonemic distinctions in vowel length usually correspond with stress patterns. Thus, *taku* 'my' with stress on the *a* is contrasted with *takuu* 'axe' with stress on the *u*. Geminate consonant clusters often occur in reduplicated syllables in which the initial unstressed vowel is deleted *(vavale –› vvale).* Some Sikaiana people did not like it, however, when I wrote the language in a manner that reflected these length distinctions. There are no standardized conventions for representing certain morphological features. For example, affixes, such as the causative prefix *haka-*, can be written as separate words or combined with other terms to form one compound.

20. For a discussion of literacy in another small Polynesian society, see Besnier 1991. Besnier shows that Nukulaelae (Tuvalu) writing, which is focused on personal letters and church sermons, should be understood as an indigenous expressive medium.

21. Whether or not these assertions about improper usage by younger speakers are accurate, they have consequences in terms of younger people's reluctance to use the Sikaiana language. As W. I. Thomas stated in his famous theorem, "If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas 1928:572).

22. Elsewhere I have described how encountering foreign cultures made the Sikaiana people much more self-conscious about their own culture (Donner 1993). In a similar

manner, using different languages makes them more self-conscious about language use, and people can develop attitudes about the advantages and disadvantages of certain languages. Moreover, just as culture can become a political issue, for example, in the various uses of tradition or *kastom* to achieve present-day political and social goals (see Keesing and Tonkinson 1982; Jolly and Thomas 1992; Lindstrom and White 1993), so, too, can language use have political and ideological implications.

23. I discuss the incorporation of foreign activities and maintenance of indigenous activities at greater length in other articles (Donner 1992, 1993, 1994).

24. It seems likely that this could be an important factor in the manner in which some languages "tip" rapidly toward a loss of speakers (see Dorian 1981, 1989).

25. It is difficult to predict the future of language use on Sikaiana. Mota will be lost as a language among the Sikaiana when the current generation of elderly speakers die. The Sikaiana language will probably be used at least for several more generations. Pijin is gaining at the expense of other languages at present, but it is possible that Pijin itself may in several generations be replaced by or converge with English.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anonymous
1848 Untitled article. *Nautical Magazine* 17:575.

Anderson, Benedict
1991 *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition. London: Verso.

Bayard, Donn
1976 *The Cultural Relationships of the Polynesian Outliers.* New Zealand: Otago University Studies in Anthropology, volume 9.

Besnier, Niko
1991 Literacy and the Notion of Person on Nukulaelae Atoll. *American Anthropologist* 93:570-587.

Capell Arthur
1935-1937 The Sikaiana Language: A Preliminary Grammar and a Vocabulary. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 44:163-172; 45:9-16, 67-73, 142-153; 46:24-31.

Clark, Ross
1973 Transitivity and Case in Eastern Oceanic Languages. *Oceanic Linguistics* 12:559-605.

Donner, William W.
1987 "Don't Shoot the Guitar Player": Tradition, Assimilation and Change in Sikaiana Song Composition. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 96:201-221.
1992 "It's the Same Old Song but with a Different Meaning": Community and Ethnicity in Sikaiana Expressive Culture. Special issue, *The Arts and Politics,* edited by Karen Nero, *Pacific Studies* 15 (4): 67-82.

1993 *Kastom* and Modernisation on Sikaiana. Special issue, *Custom Today,* edited by Lamont Lindstrom and Geoffrey White, *Anthropological Forum* 6 (4): 541-556.
1994 Alcohol, Community and Modernity: The Social Organization of Toddy Drinking in a Polynesian Society. *Ethnology* 33 (3): 245-260.

Dorian, Nancy
1981 *Language Death: The Life Cycle of a Scottish Gaelic Dialect.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

———, editor
1989 *Investigating Obsolescence: Studies in Language Contraction and Death.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ferguson, Charles A.
1959 Diglossia. *Word* 15:325-340.

Haugen, E.
1953 *The Norwegian Language in America.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Howard, Irwin
1982 Proto-Ellicean. In *Studies in Pacific Languages and Cultures,* edited by Jim Hollyman and Andrew Pawley, 101-118. Auckland: Linguistic Society of New Zealand.

Jolly, Margaret, and Nicholas Thomas, editors
1992 *The Politics of Tradition in the South Pacific.* Special issue, *Oceania* 62 (4).

Jourdan, C.
1991a Pidgins and Creoles: The Blurring of Categories. *Annual Reviews in Anthropology* 20:187-209.
1991b Solomons Pijin: An Unrecognized National Language. In *Language Planning and Education in Australia and the South Pacific,* edited by Richard Baldauf Jr. and Allan Luke, 166-181. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Keesing, Roger
1988 *Melanesian Pidgin and the Oceanic Substrate.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.
1991 Solomons Pijin: Colonial Ideologies. In *Language Planning and Education in Australia and the South Pacific,* edited by Richard Baldauf Jr. and Allan Luke, 149-165. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Keesing, Roger, and Robert Tonkinson, editors
1982 *Reinventing Traditional Culture: The Politics of* Kastom *in Island Melanesia.* Special issue, *Mankind* 13 (4).

Kulick, Don
1992a *Language Shift and Cultural Reproduction: Socialization, Self and Syncretism in a Papua New Guinea Village.* Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language, number 14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1992b Language Shift as Cultural Reproduction. In *Culture Change, Language Change: Case Studies from Melanesia,* edited by Tom Dutton, 7-26. Pacific Linguistics Series C-120. Canberra: Australian National University.

Lindstrom, Lamont, and Geoffrey White, editors
1993 *Custom Today.* Special issue, *Anthropological Forum* 6 (4).

Monberg, T.
1974 Poetry as Coded Message: The *Kananga* of Bellona Island. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 83:427-442.

Pawley, Andrew
1966 Polynesian Languages: A Sub-grouping Based on Shared Innovations in Morphology. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 75:39-64.
1967 The Relationships of Polynesian Outlier Languages. *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 76:259-296.
1973 Some Problems in Proto-Oceanic Grammar. *Oceanic Linguistics* 12:103-188.

Price, Charles A., and Elizabeth Baker
1976 Origins of Pacific Island Labourers in Queensland, 1863-1904: A Research Note. *Journal of Pacific History* 11:106-121.

Romaine, Suzanne
1992 *Language, Education, and Development: Urban and Rural Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea.* Oxford: At the Clarendon Press.

Sankoff, Gillian
1980 *The Social Life of Language.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Schertzer, Karl
1861 *Narrative of the Circumvention . . . by the Austrian Frigate "Novara."* London: Saunders Otley & Company.

Thomas, W. I., and Dorothy Thomas
1928 *The Child in America: Behavior Problems and Programs.* New York: Knopf.

Tryon, D. T., and B. D. Hackman
1983 *Solomon Islands Languages: An Internal Classification.* Pacific Linguistics Series C-72. Canberra: Australian National University.

Weinreich, V.
1962 *Languages in Contact.* 2d edition. Mouton: The Hague.

Watson-Gegeo, Karen Ann, and David Welchman Gegeo
1991 The Impact of Church Affiliation on Language Use in Kwara'ae (Solomon Islands). *Language in Society* 20:533-555.

Webster, John
1863 *The Last Cruise of "Wanderer."* Sydney: F. Cunningham.

Woolard, Katherine, and Bambi Schieffelin
1994 Language Ideology. *Annual Reviews in Anthropology* 23:55-82.

Wurm, Stephen A.
1991 Language Death and Disappearance: Causes and Circumstances. *Diogenes* 153:1-18.