

Kala Biñatuwā: A Community-Driven Alphabet for the Kala language

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Abstract

The language of Kala is spoken in six coastal villages along the Huon Gulf in Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. In 2006, due to concern about language shift in their communities, Kala community members developed the Kala Language Committee. The goals of this committee are to raise awareness about Kala language shift and to develop more Kala usage, specifically within Kala language elementary schools. In 2010, following a phonological analysis of Kala, which included all four dialects, Schreyer suggested potential symbols for the Kala orthography to the Kala Language Committee at a workshop. The alphabet, known as the Kala Biñatuwā, was then taught to all of the Kala Language Committee, our research assistants on this project, and all of the current Kala language teachers. In 2013, we returned to the Kala communities to continue assisting the Kala Language Committee in their goals, but also to ascertain how successful the alphabet had been since its inception. This paper provides a preliminary analysis of focus group discussions conducted with Kala readers and writers. It also seeks to address dialect standardization, community-based orthography development, orthography standardization and curriculum materials development from within the perspective of this local, multi-dialectal, Kala language revitalization project.

Résumé

La langue kala se parle dans six villages côtiers au bord du Golfe Huon dans la Province de Morobe en Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée. En 2006, préoccupés par le changement de langue dans leurs communautés, des membres de la communauté kala ont fondé le Comité de Langue Kala. Les objectifs de ce comité sont de faire la sensibilisation au sujet du changement de langue parmi les Kala et de susciter plus d'emploi de la langue kala, en particulier au sein des écoles élémentaires de langue kala. En 2010, suite à une analyse phonologique du kala, comprenant tous les quatre dialectes de la langue, Schreyer a suggéré des symboles potentiels pour l'orthographe kala dans le cadre d'un atelier. L'alphabet, connu comme le Kala Biñatuwā, était enseigné à tous les membres du Comité de Langue Kala, à nos assistants de recherche dans ce projet et à tous les enseignants actuels de langue kala. En 2013, nous sommes retournés dans les communautés kala pour continuer à appuyer le Comité de Langue Kala et ses objectifs, mais également pour déterminer à quel degré l'alphabet avait réussi depuis son lancement. Cet article donne une analyse préliminaire des discussions des groupes de réflexion menées avec des lecteurs et des écrivains kala. Il vise d'ailleurs à répondre aux questions en rapport avec la standardisation dialectale, le développement de l'orthographe par la communauté, la standardisation de l'orthographe et le développement des matériaux de curriculum à partir de la perspective de ce projet de revitalisation de langue local et multi-dialectal.

Introduction

The Kala language is spoken in six villages located along the shoreline of the Huon Gulf in Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. The Kala names of the villages ranging from north to south are: Manidala (also known as Kela), Lambu (also known as Laugui), Apoze (also known as Laukanu), Kamiali (also known as Lababia), Alēso (also known as Buso) and Kui. They are all located within a 120 km stretch of shoreline but contact between northern and southern villages is limited due to the lack of roads and high cost of water transport. Linguistically, each of the northern villages (Manidala, Lambu and Apoze) has its own distinct dialect of Kala while the three southern villages (Kamiali, Alēso and Kui) share a dialect. The combined population of these villages is approximately 2000 individuals (Wagner 2002), but in recent years Kala people have married outside of their communities and, consequently, language shift is occurring more rapidly as these families will often converse in Tok Pisin, the national lingua franca. As

well, English is the official language of education in Papua New Guinea, although there is also some national support of local indigenous language education programs.

In 2006, due to concern about language shift in their communities, Kala speaking community members developed the Kala Language Committee after a series of community meetings were organized by John Wagner. Wagner had completed his PhD research on resource management practices in two Kala communities and wanted to continue his collaborative research relationship with the communities on a project they deemed important – language. Wagner had also realized during the course of his doctoral research, “how fundamental the [Kala language] was to the transmission of entirely basic, never mind more esoteric, levels of ecological knowledge and related skills” (2008: 4). The goals of the Kala Language Committee are to raise awareness about Kala language shift and to develop more Kala usage in their communities, specifically within Kala language elementary schools, but also to document ecological knowledge, which often is more easily described in the Kala language since the language of Tok Pisin lacks specificity.

History of the Project

Following the creation of the Kala Language Committee, Wagner looked for further ways to support the goals of the committee, including acquiring funding and other colleagues who could assist him and the committee (such as Schreyer). He was successful, and in June of 2010, we, as well as our undergraduate research assistant, Chara DeVolder, traveled to the Kala villages with the intention of helping to develop a Kala alphabet and curriculum materials that were based in local ecological knowledge. Following her phonological analysis of Kala from data collected in 2006 and 2010, Schreyer suggested potential symbols for the Kala orthography to the Kala Language Committee at a workshop in one of the villages. The alphabet, known as the Kala Biñatuwā, was then taught to all of the Kala Language Committee, our research assistants on this project, and all of the current Kala language teachers. During the workshop, community members from each village made curriculum materials in their own dialect of Kala and brought these items home with them to be used in schools and amongst their families. Over the next few years, we worked with the Kala Language Committee members to publish the first Kala dictionary, which recorded all of the Kala dialects rather than one standard version of Kala (DeVolder et al, 2013).

In May of 2013, we returned to the Kala speaking villages to continue this work. During the course of our recent visit, we conducted focus group discussions with Kala speakers who are currently using the Kala Biñatuwā in order to determine how successful it has been since its inception in 2010. The questions we asked focused on how happy community members were with the alphabet or if they wanted to change anything. We also asked people the extent to which they had been using the alphabet since 2010, including how many people who had not been at the original alphabet training workshop now knew the writing system. We were also curious as to how the alphabet might be working to bring the communities together despite the distance between the villages and the difficulties of travel due to the high expense of traveling via motorboat.

Within this paper, therefore, we provide more background knowledge on this project, as well as a preliminary analysis of the focus group data we collected with Kala readers and writers in May 2013. We also address the questions of dialect standardization, community-based orthography development, orthography standardization and curriculum material development and sharing from within the perspective of this local, multi-dialectal, Kala language revitalization project.

Kala Language Committee

As mentioned above, the Kala Language Committee was formed in 2006 to address Kala speakers' concerns regarding issues of language shift within their communities. The committee is comprised of three representatives from each of the six Kala villages (usually two men and one woman). Chairperson Nero Keposing from Kamiali village and vice-chairperson Nasingom Alinga from Lambu village head the committee. Each village also has at minimum two community researchers (one male and one female, who were previously known as research assistants), who assist with project related activities such as editing the dictionaries and recording Kala stories.

In order to help Wagner achieve funding and support for their goals, the Kala Language Committee wrote a support letter in October 2008. Within this letter the committee wrote the following, "Our long-term goal is to strengthen the use of the Kala Language in our communities so that Kala can be sustained for our future generations" (Kala Language Committee, 2008). In fact, their more explicit goals include their desires to: "a) create a written form of the Kala language; b) provide training for elementary teachers; c) create curriculum materials for use in elementary school programs" (Kala Language Committee, 2008). The first of these aims was achieved when the Kala Language Committee decided on a standardized form of Kala writing in June 2010 (as described below), and the others are currently in progress as a result of this project.

Collaborations in 2010

In May and June of 2010, our first priority was to hold a meeting with all of the members of the Kala Language Committee in order to discuss the goals of the research project, the time-line, and the budget of the research funds we had received for the project. Following our first meeting, we traveled to all six Kala speaking villages so that Chara and Christine could conduct more language elicitation interviews and we could acquire a more solid understanding of both the phonological and morphological structures of the language. John's goals at this time were to document ecological knowledge in the Kala language so that community members could develop curriculum materials based on this knowledge.

Following Schreyer's phonological analysis of the Kala language, which included eliciting words, sentences and stories in Kala from two speakers in each village, as well as an extensive review of the data, followed by return visits to each village, she developed a set of suggestions that she proposed to the members of the Kala Language Committee about which symbols they might like to use to represent the sounds of their language. As this project is one that has from the outset included all of the Kala speaking villages, and, consequently, all four of the Kala dialects, it was important to everyone that the letters chosen would be able to represent all dialects accurately so that community members could share materials between themselves. At the

same time, the shared orthography allows community members to learn more about each other's dialects.

During the final workshop in June of 2010, when the Kala Language Committee decided on the symbols they would use in their alphabet, Schreyer began the meeting by commenting on general principles of linguistics in regards to the development of new orthographies such as ease of use, readability, and the concept of one sound to one symbol (Budd and Raymon, 2007; Cahill, 2004; Hinton, 2000; Terrill and Dunn, 2003). As English is the national language of education in Papua New Guinea, the Kala Language Committee wanted their alphabet to be something that children could easily learn that would be similar to English. One of the biggest challenges during the workshop on the alphabet was deciding on the symbols for the nasal vowels, as well as the velar nasal sound due to the influence of Jabêm, a related language, which many people know due to its history as a language of the Lutheran church and of education (for more details on how Jabêm influenced Kala orthography development, see Schreyer, in Press). At the completion of the workshop, the Kala Language Committee had decided on twenty-four main letters to represent the sounds of their language, as well as ways to write the four diphthongs that occur in the language. They also decided to use the punctuation system of English since this would make it easier for children as they progressed through the education system.



Figure 1: Complete set of Kala language materials from June 2010 workshop in Kamiali village

Following the alphabet decision in 2010, the Kala Language Committee, as well as the community researchers and Kala language teachers participated in a five day workshop where Schreyer provided training in the use of the alphabet, including basic linguistics information and writing practice. At the end of the workshop in June 2010, community members from each village left with at least three books written in their own dialect of Kala, as well as games and posters (see Figure 1).

At the final workshop in June of 2010 a list of potential future publications was discussed and ranked in order of preference. These included:

1. dictionary;
2. storybooks;
3. traditional mythological stories (known as labauya);
4. traditional historic stories (known as bituã);
5. local recent history and place names map;
6. stories about WWII (which was an important part of local history as the Japanese invaded Kala villages);
7. song books;
8. books about local animals; and
9. books about local plants and gardening practices.

In July and August of 2010, the local community researchers recorded more Kala stories of the types listed above and then transcribed the stories in the new orthography and sent them to Canada for us to record and type-out. These stories were sent back to the communities and we recently received the letters from each of the villages directing us on how they would like to proceed with these specific stories when we returned in May of 2013.



Figure 2: Community members reading the Kala Dictionary in Kui village, June 2013

Another product of the collaboration between the Kala Language committee, John Wagner, Christine Schreyer and Chara DeVolder was the publication of the first Kala language dictionary (2012). Chara DeVolder created this dictionary as part of her research project, but community members were also extensively involved in the editing of the book prior to its publication. Copies of the dictionaries were mailed back to each community, where community members are then able to see not only their own Kala dialect, but the other ones as well. In fact, during our recent visit in 2013, we saw numerous people reading not only the sections with their own words, but attempting to say words from the other dialects (see Figure 2). The dictionaries have become a great example of the collaborative, multi-dialectal nature of this project and they have inspired more ideas and collaborations, which will be discussed in the next section.

Current Collaborations

In May of 2013, John Wagner and Christine Schreyer traveled back to the Kala villages in order to continue our collaboration with Kala speakers and help them continue to achieve the goals that they had outlined in their letter from 2008. Our first priority was to hold a meeting with all of the Kala Language Committee members since communication between Canada and the Kala villages in Papua New Guinea continues to be a challenge for us due to poor cell phone reception in many of the villages and the lengthy wait between exchanging letters. We held our initial meeting for 2013 at the Kamiali Guest House since this is our homebase for our time in Papua New Guinea. Kamiali is also a Kala village located in the middle of the other villages and so is a convenient location for bringing all of the other representatives together. In this initial meeting we reviewed the current goals of the committee and developed ideas of how to accomplish those goals within the time we would be in Papua New Guinea, but also after our departure.

One of the main issues discussed at this time was the fact that although many of the Kala elementary schools had begun using the Kala alphabet and the resources that had been made since 2010, parents had not had the opportunity to formally have training in how to use the new alphabet. Also, due to the fact that there is little government funding for the Kala elementary schools there are limited supplies for making more school books in the Kala language. As you can see from the photo above, many of the books are hand-made due to the fact that none of the villages have a source of electricity and, therefore, computers are not used for printing materials.



Figure 3: Apoze Kala Committee members, James Gasu (front) and Luke Yawising (back), reading Kala storybooks, June 2013

Another request of the Kala Language Committee then was to make more books for the local Kala schools, but also to have more items for community members to read once they'd received training in the new alphabet. We had brought back printed copies of the books that each village had made in 2010 (three copies of each of the three books for each

village) and these were quite well-received since it is hard to make copies when making books by hand (see Figure 3).

Alphabet Workshops

In order to accommodate the requests and goals of the Kala Language committee from May 2013, we scheduled days to visit each of the villages in order to hold an alphabet training session in the morning and a book making session in the afternoon. Traveling from Kui (the village farthest south) to Manindala (the northernmost village) we spent one day in each village in order to accomplish this goal. Each village's workshop was slightly different partially due to the location where they were held (in the local church or outside in a common area), but also due to the number of attendees. The number of participants continued to grow each day and our final workshop had a total of sixty participants in the morning session. Also, as language shift is accelerating in some villages, this was also a factor in the success of each workshop. For example, in Manindala village where language shift is greater than in Kamiali, some participants struggled with finding Kala words since they had not grown up speaking the language.

Each of the workshops proceeded in the following way. First, there would be a prayer to open the day, which would be said in either Kala or Tok Pisin. Then either John or the Chair of the Kala Language committee would provide some background on the history of the project for those individuals who had not participated previously. Next, Christine would describe how the Kala Language Committee chose the symbols of the Kala Biɣatuwā in 2010. Often at this point Christine would point out the idiosyncrasies of the English writing system and explain how Kala's alphabet does not have these. Following this background to both the project and the alphabet, Christine would write each letter on the blackboard (and, surprisingly, we did end up having access to a blackboard in all of the villages) and then she would say the sound associated with that letter. She also had flashcards that she would walk around with in order to show people at the back both the shape of the letter and its sound.

Since the nasal vowels are one of the sounds unique to Kala (as opposed to English and Jabêm), Christine made sure to illustrate the difference between the two vowels (non-nasal and nasal) very clearly as well as how to write them. For example, Christine provided extra emphasis when describing the sounds [a] and [ã]. At the original workshop where the Kala Language Committee decided on the letters they also decided at this time that the tilde symbol on top of the nasal vowels would be called the "titi" since this is the word for "wave" in the Kala language in Kamiali village where we held the workshop and the tilde resembles waves in the ocean. As the Kala villages are coastal villages this seemed quite appropriate. In describing the names of these letters then, Christine would call them "letter-a" and "letter-a-titi". This progressed smoothly until we reached the fourth village where it was revealed that the word for "wave" in Apoze's dialect was in fact "taɲaoti". Therefore, Christine accordingly changed her naming of letters here, as well as in the other two northern villages, Lambu (where the word for wave is "gūsa") and Manindala (where the

word for wave is “gūgū”). The dialectal differences on this word led to a discussion of whether or not the name for the letter needed to be changed and we’ll discuss this in the section below on potential alphabet changes.

The last letter-sound combination Christine would review in each workshop was, of course, the letter <z>. However, this is also one of the differences between the four Kala dialects. Only two of the dialects, Apoze and Lambu, actually have a [z] sound.³¹ Due to the fact that speakers of Kala see this project as a means to learn more about each other’s dialects, it was important to show this letter to all of the participants in the workshops, even if they would never use it in their own writing, so that they would be able to read and understand how to pronounce writing from another Kala village. Finally, one letter that caused some confusion in the first workshop in Kui village was the letter <l>. As this was a point of discussion in regards to changing the alphabet, we will discuss this letter in the next section.

Following a review of all of the sounds in each workshop, Christine would then teach the participants how to sing the Kala alphabet song. Chara DeVolder and Christine Schreyer developed this song during the last workshop in Kamiali in 2010 and had taught it to all of the people participating at that time. Singing is quite a popular activity in Kala society (church hymns, as well as more traditional songs performed by dance groups) and so the Kala alphabet song was quite well-received at this time. The song uses the same tune as the English alphabet song, but because the Kala alphabet has fewer letters than English we had to adapt the tune a bit. We also wanted to focus on sound not the letter names since we were trying to help people learn which symbol associated with which sound. The participants in the workshops in 2013 also highly enjoyed this song and we would often sing it a number of times in a row, to signal a break for lunch, as well as to close the workshops.

After the singing of the alphabet song, Christine would lead participants in a variety of games and writing practice so that they could start to associate the letters with the correct Kala sound. This would continue for the rest of the morning and then we would break for lunch. Generally, we would have purchased food for lunch for everyone so that people could continue to talk about the work and remain involved rather than having to go off to their own houses to eat and then return in the afternoon. Once lunch was complete, we would extend our writing practice into book-making. In most villages, Christine asked participants to name local animals and then she wrote out questions in Tok Pisin about the animals as cues for sentences they could write in

³¹The letter <z> is sometimes pronounced [dʒ], [ʒ] or [z] depending on both the dialect and the speaker.

their storybooks. These included items such as: 1) what is my name?, 2) what do I eat?, 3) where do I live? etc. Participants would then work in a group to write a Kala story, complete with illustrations, about whatever animal they had chosen for their storybook. At the end of each workshop, a number of books written in the Kala alphabet were completed and the community members took their books home with them. In some villages, time permitting, we asked community members to read their books to the group. We also photographed all of the individuals who made books, as well as each page of each book, so that we will be able to have more copies of the books made in Canada. We hope to bring these copies back on our next visit, just as we brought books from 2010 back in 2013. Finally, the workshops would end with a few words from the Kala Language Committee members in each village, thanking participants for coming and also a closing prayer.

After each workshop, we would meet with all of the members of the Kala Language Committee in each village, including committee members, community researchers, and Kala teachers. This was to review their thoughts on how they workshop had proceeded, but also enabled us to conduct our focus group discussions about the use of the alphabet since 2010. One of the main issues that was addressed in the focus group discussions, as well as at initial and final meetings of the entire Kala Language Committee at our big meetings in Kamiali, was whether or not the Kala alphabet needed any changes. There were a few varied opinions on this topic, such as on the use of the letter <l> and we will discuss these opinions below.

Changing Kala Biqatuwā?

Within the academic field of orthography creation, there are quite a few articles that describe new writing system creation (Terrill and Dunn, 2003; Ottenheimer, 2001), but to my knowledge it is rare to find follow-up articles addressing how successful an orthography has been since its development. Ottenheimer’s article on the numerous Shinzwani writing systems is an example of an article that does illustrate the shifting views the speakers held over the orthography she developed over the course of her fieldwork career in the Comoro Islands (2001). However, Ottenheimer’s orthography was originally created for her and her husband to use in their own personal records during fieldwork in the 1960s and was not originally developed as part of a collaborative research project with community. She writes:

As there was no published dictionary of Shinzwani, we began compiling materials for one. We worked out the phonological system, established a consistent orthography, and began using it in our field notes, as well as for transcriptions of tape-recorded narratives and interviews (2001: 18).

Ottenheimer returned in the 1980s with a copy of the dictionary she and her husband had made and outlines the processes and different options she considered for the final version of the dictionary. She states:

In choosing an orthography for a published dictionary, I wanted to be sensitive to these wider linguistic, cultural,

and political issues. I wanted to balance my academic concern for linguistic correctness with a practical concern for readability (Ottenheimer, 2001: 20).

Ottenheimer's concerns were similar to the ones that we had. For instance, while the Kala Language Committee had chosen symbols for the sounds of their language in 2010, and we had published the first Kala dictionary with this alphabet, we still wanted people to have the opportunity to provide feedback on any pieces of the alphabet that they thought were confusing.

In particular, one sound/letter combination that we heard concerns about was the use of the letter <l> to indicate the alveolar flap. This was a source of confusion since in Kala, [l] and [ɾ] are allophones of the phoneme /l/. However, many people had been using the letter <r> to indicate the flap sound due to the influence of English and Tok Pisin. James Gasu, a committee member from Apoze village, had this to say about the [l] sound. He commented:

Long tok ples bilong mipela, [l] em i tru, nau [ɾ] em i samting bilong Whiteman...Sapos mipela bringim dispela <r> i kam insait nau putim insait tok ples mipela, mipela no mekim tok ples stret (focus group, Apoze, May 2013).

In our language, [l] is the true sound. [ɾ] is something that came from the influence of the Whiteman. If we were to bring <r> into our language [alphabet], we would not be speaking real Kala.

(Tok Pisin to English translation by C. Schreyer)

Since the [l] sound tends to be pronounced in more formal contexts and many speakers insist, as James does, that no [ɾ] sound exists in Kala, the original decision in 2010 did not include the use of the letter <r>. Individuals who were not present for this initial discussion then were left wondering why no <r> was included, since the alveolar flap sounded like an English <r> to them. Many discussions were held in 2013 about this topic, therefore, beginning at the initial meeting, and continuing through all of the community alphabet workshops, including whether or not an entirely new symbol would be necessary to illustrate this Kala sound. During the final workshop in 2013, the Kala Language Committee made their final decision on this topic, which was to keep the alphabet the same as was decided in 2010, using an <l> to represent both the allophones of [l] and [ɾ]. Discussions throughout May of 2013, focused on what the true Kala <l> sound was and the necessity of Kala language teachers to be well-trained in describing the linguistic manner and placement of this sound so that students do not confuse it with the English letters <l> and <r>.

Another final discussion was not about changing the letters of the Kala alphabet, but about whether or not there should be a change to the name of the nasalization diacritic due to the dialectical difference

(as noted above). In the end, the suggestion was made that everyone should understand what the other dialects use for this word, but that each community should continue to use their own word for "wave" (titi, taŋaoti, gūsa, and gūgū).

In sum, no changes were deemed necessary and the Kala Language Committee has agreed that this last meeting in 2013 was the last chance to alter the writing system since doing so in the future would confuse people, especially as more and more books are published. Currently many people commented in the focus groups on the ease of learning the alphabet. In fact, Mark Yakam, the Kala language teacher from Alēso, had this to say about how the ease of learning. He stated:

Dispela alphabet em olsem, olgeta man save. Nupela bilong em, em dispela vowels yeah? Dispela <ā>, na <ē>, na dispela <ɔ>, na <ō> na <ū>. Dispela ol pikinni mas lainim, na papa mama mas lainim tu. Em i no gat difference, difference em dispela [vowel] tasol (focus group, Alēso, May 2013).

This alphabet is the same, everybody understands it. The new parts are the vowels, right? The <ā> and <ē>, and this <ɔ> and <ō> and <ū>. These [letters] all of the children need to learn, and their parents too. It [the alphabet] doesn't have any differences, it's the vowels that are different that's all.

(Tok Pisin to English translation by C. Schreyer)

While Mark is focusing here on the ease with which people will be able to learn the Kala language system if they know how to read and write in English or Tok Pisin, the same could be true if reversed. Children who learn Kala in school will be able to easily shift to the English alphabet, since the symbols are both based on the Roman alphabet, which was one goal of the alphabet when it was originally created in 2010.

Lessons to be Learned

What then can other communities learn from the experiences of the Kala Language Committee? First, within our focus group questions, we asked the Kala Language Committee members in each village how much they had written since 2010 and if they had trained other members of the community in the use of the alphabet. In the majority of cases, very few people outside of the families of the Kala Language Committee had been given any explicit training on how to read and write in the Kala alphabet. The exceptions were children in the communities of Kui, Alēso and Kui. When we were in the communities in 2010 only two villages, Kui and Alēso, had Kala elementary school programs and Kamiali was in the process of developing theirs. Each of these three villages had teachers who had received the official government "tok ples" teacher training.³² However, in 2013, every village had either started new Kala elementary school programs or was currently planning to implement them. However, some of the villages did not currently have a schoolhouse and were meeting under the teachers' houses or in communal village

³² "Tok ples" is the Tok Pisin word for "local language, which literally means "the talk of the village".

areas. Also, while only three teachers remained as having the official training, many villages had volunteer teachers and plans were in places to develop more certified teachers, raising the prestige of the schools. For example, Lambu village had plans to send three of their six volunteer teachers out to the city of Lae for training in July 2013.

Village	Certified Teacher	Volunteer Teacher
Manindala	0	2
Lambu	0	6
Apoze	0	1
Kamiali	1	2
Alëso	1	1
Kui	2	0

Table 1: Kala villages, certified and volunteer teachers

The expansion of the Kala elementary programs meant that more children were learning the Kala alphabet and this was evident from the Kala writing on the classroom boards, which had both the Kala and English alphabets.

While it would have been ideal to have more people trained in the alphabet prior to our arrival in the Kala villages in 2013, the workshops we led in May 2013 allowed many more people to receive basic training and the communities are currently in the process of conducting more alphabet workshops for the rest of the summer of 2013. Other communities wishing to follow a similar path in developing a new orthography might want to invest resources into workshops that are held soon after the alphabet is completed. However, a benefit to a delay in training was that it provided the Kala Language Committee to decide if the alphabet was truly working before teaching it to many other speakers and this should also be a point to consider for other communities.

A second issue to consider is the way in which a standardized orthography can bring communities together (or not). In the case of the Kala language project, all of the villages decided to work together and develop a single orthography despite the fact that within the Kala language there are four distinct dialects. Unity amongst the Kala speakers was essential for this project to work and we often had to overcome the difficulties in travel between villages in order that all of the members of the Kala Language Committee could meet to discuss key issues.

Selep Miti from Alëso village commented on the importance of bringing all of the Kala villages together during the focus group discussion we held in his village. He commented:

...mipela ting olsem, bihainim culture nau, olsem tambuna bilong mipela, mipela wanbel [long] tok ples bikos mipela save lo traditional pasin bilong mipela, nau dispela pasin, mipela laik bungim. Mipela yet, mipela mas save long culture bilong mipela (focus group, Alëso, May 2013).

...we think that, following our culture of today, the same culture as our ancestors, we agree on having one tok ples because we still know our traditional customs and now, we would like to bring all of our knowledge together. We, all of us, must understand our own culture.

(Tok Pisin to English translation by J. Wagner)

As Selep notes, the Kala language project is not just about language it's also about further understanding of the cultural traditions behind the language and this to him is a benefit of the joint project.

Conclusions

The call for papers for this year's (2013) Foundation for Endangered Languages annual conference asked the following questions³³:

1. Where there are multiple dialects, should language support efforts be prioritized or focused on the more viable varieties of a particular endangered language or language group?
2. Should there be an effort to standardize across the dialects to establish one definitive version of a writing system?
3. What collaborative approaches ... can best aid communities with critically endangered languages or dialects (e.g. providing opportunities to individuals to learn a dialect even if it is not their own)?

While it is difficult to have a definitive answer to these questions since every community has its own unique challenges and local socio-political and historical differences, we provide here a summary of our own experiences working with the Kala Language Committee in order to answer these questions.

First, within the Kala speaking villages one dialect is not more visible than any others, but there are more speakers of the southern dialect due to the fact it is spoken in three villages (Kamiali, Alëso, and Kui). Past linguistic research on the Kala language focused on the villages of Apoze (Collier and Collier, 1975) and Kui (Johnson, 1994), but very limited linguistic data about the Kala language in general was available prior to our collaboration with all of the communities. The Kala Language Committee have also begun to name our project the "*Kala Walo Nua*" project. This phrase literally means the "Kala One Mouth" project, and it was developed to be put onto Kala Language Committee T-shirts in 2010. In Kala when people speak about a particular dialect or language, they refer to it as "the mouth of a particular place". For example, to describe the dialect of Apoze in Kala one would say *Walo Apoze*. The

³³ <http://www.ogmios.org/conferences/2013Call.htm>

phrase *Kala Walo Nua* then clearly illustrates that despite the fact that there are different dialects all of the Kala villages remain dedicated to keeping this project as something for all of the villages and for all Kala speakers. The comments from Selep above also indicate how Kala speakers are interested in maintaining this connection not only for linguistic reasons, but in order to share cultural traditions between the communities as well.

Second, amongst the Kala speakers there was a definitive decision that the orthography should be something that all Kala communities could use. Also, the phonological variation between Kala dialects is not divergent enough to warrant a completely different orthography for the various dialects. As mentioned above the one sound that is not found in all dialects is the sound [z]. However, as one of the goals of the Kala Language Committee was to be able to share materials and learn more about each other's dialects, it was important to provide training to individuals on how to read this symbol. Standardization here is in the alphabet not in the standardizing of the language into one way of speaking. Community members are in favour of more materials that show all of the dialects, but also want books written in their own dialect. Therefore, the unspoken motto amongst members of the Kala Language Committee has been "one writing system, four dialects", which is evident in the types of materials the project as whole has developed so far.

Third, as mentioned above, Kala Language Committee members are very much in favour of creating opportunities for Kala speakers to learn about each other's dialects. Language shift is occurring more rapidly in some villages than others and the production of materials in all of the dialects provides the opportunity for speakers of one dialect to discover words or phrases that they no longer use from reading books in the other dialects that have retained these forms. Luke Yawising, a community researcher from Apoze, had this to say about the benefits of having all of the dialects within the Kala dictionary. He said that if they were included,

"em bai isi moa. Mi ken toktok wantaim em [someone from another village], em bai toktok wantaim mi"

(focus group, Apoze, May 2013).

It is easier. I can talk to someone from another village and they can talk to me

(Tok Pisin to English translation by C. Schreyer).

Within our project we have also made sure to provide the same training and decision-making powers to all of the representatives from each village. For example, even though members of Kui village originally had questions about changing the Kala alphabet, the discussion was brought to the entire Kala Language Committee for a final agreement. Similarly in 2010, representatives from all of the villages met to agree on the alphabet and

were present during discussions on setting the goals for this project. This we think has been essential in assuring that all villages feel ownership over the project and invested in the outcomes of our collaboration. In conclusion, collaborative research projects that are multidialectal can and should be considered for any language documentation or revitalization project. Ideally the two should go hand-in-hand so that the documentation can be used to inform the language revitalization and serve the needs and interests of both the researchers and the community members, which is what we have strived to achieved within our work with the Kala Language Committee.

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