

English in Vanuatu

TERRY CROWLEY*

ABSTRACT: The position of English in Vanuatu is unique in the Pacific because it shares official status with French, and at the same time has a particular constitutionally declared role with respect to the English-derived pidgin known as Bislama. Prior to independence in Vanuatu, education was offered in schools that operated through the medium of both languages, and the numbers of enrolments were approximately equal in both systems throughout the condominium. Since independence in 1980 however, enrolments in English-medium schools have increased dramatically at the expense of French-medium enrolments. This was mainly because the French-medium system has provided very few opportunities for people to gain employment or further study, while English-educated students have gone on to gain university degrees overseas and have returned to the country to occupy senior government positions. Bislama also has a much higher status in Vanuatu than is the case with other varieties of Melanesian Pidgin, because it has become a compromise language between the two colonial languages, which have operated to divide ni-Vanuatu.

INTRODUCTION

Vanuatu is quite different linguistically from its Micronesian and Polynesian neighbours in the Pacific in that the English-derived pidgin Bislama is spoken alongside English, as well as its own 105 vernacular languages (by a population of only a little over 125,000).¹ Vanuatu is therefore more similar to its Melanesian neighbours Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, where sister dialects of Melanesian Pidgin are spoken alongside English. Vanuatu is different from its Melanesian neighbours, however, in that French is also an official language, along with English. Furthermore, Vanuatu is the only country in which a Pacific language—in this case Bislama—actually has a higher status constitutionally than one of the former colonial languages. The constitution of Vanuatu, with respect to language, says:

Article 3(1): *The national language of the Republic is Bislama. The official languages are Bislama, English and French. The principal languages of education are English and French.*

ENGLISH IN VANUATU—A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The first Europeans in Vanuatu were the unsuccessful Spanish colonists on the optimistically named island of Espiritu Santo led by de Quiros in 1606; the next Europeans did not arrive until the French expedition led by Louis-Antoine de Bougainville in 1768. It was not until 1774 that an English-speaker set foot in Vanuatu, with the arrival of Captain James Cook. On the whole, however, contacts between Vanuatu and the English-speaking world came much later than further east. These islands were considered treacherous for visitors because they were malarial, and also because their inhabitants were hostile towards outsiders. European attention only turned to Vanuatu after the 1840s when sandalwood stands elsewhere in the Pacific had been depleted, and new sources were needed in order to keep up supplies to the lucrative markets in China. At the same time, there was a trade being conducted in dried *bêche-de-mer*, which was also being exported to China.

*Pacific Languages Unit, University of the South Pacific, P.O. Box 12, Vila, Vanuatu.

However, these early contacts with Europeans cannot be said to have introduced the English language into Vanuatu. In the early 1800s, an English-derived nautical jargon was spoken by multilingual ship's crews all around the Pacific, and also by some Polynesian and Micronesian Islanders on shore who had contacts with these sailors. This form of speech found its way into Vanuatu with the development of the sandalwood and *bêche-de-mer* trades in the 1840s, where it became known as 'Beach-la-Mar,' after one of the main products that its speakers were involved in producing. At about the same time, the first contacts between ni-Vanuatu² and English-speaking missionaries were also beginning, though they made little attempt to teach the Melanesian people English, as they saw it as their responsibility to operate through the local languages.

Between 1866 and 1906, many thousands of ni-Vanuatu went to work on the sugar plantations of Queensland. In the earlier part of this 'blackbirding' era,³ there was considerable dishonesty and brutality on the part of Europeans in obtaining workers to go to Queensland, but, within a short time, ni-Vanuatu began volunteering to work, in order to earn enough money to be able to come back home with useful and desirable material possessions. Many stayed for longer than the initial 3 year contract period, and, although quite a number opted to stay on in Australia at the end of the blackbirding era, most eventually returned, or were returned, to Vanuatu (though many thousands of the descendants of these labourers now remain in Queensland, as Australian citizens of Melanesian descent).

Although ni-Vanuatu working on the sugar plantations in Queensland lived for considerable lengths of time in an English-speaking country, the amount of contact that most had with English was minimal. In nineteenth-century Queensland, racial stereotypes were particularly strong, and ni-Vanuatu labourers had little social contact at all with Europeans, thereby restricting their access to the English language. Instead of ni-Vanuatu in Queensland learning English, the earlier 'Beach-la-Mar' developed further and stabilised on these plantations. What has come to be known as Queensland Plantation English became the primary means of communication between ni-Vanuatu and other Melanesians of different language groups.⁴ It is clear, however, that a small number of Melanesians working in Queensland did acquire a good knowledge of English. Court records into abuses of the labour trade in 1882, for instance, reveal that some labourers were able to produce a variety of English that more closely approximated to the standard than was the case with other islanders who were effectively communicating with the court in an early form of Bislama (Sankoff, 1980; Crowley, 1987).

Meanwhile, tensions between French- and English-speaking settlers in Vanuatu itself led to the establishment of a unique—and far from successful—experiment in government. The British and the French proclaimed the 'New Hebrides Condominium des Nouvelles-Hébrides' in 1906, in which British subjects were subject to British law, French subjects to French law, and ni-Vanuatu remained stateless. Despite the fact that Vanuatu had two 'governments,' the two European languages continued to have little impact on the vast majority of the local people until well into the second half of the twentieth century. Formal schooling was restricted in scope, and left in the hands of the mission organisations, while the two governments engaged in such important matters as negotiating exact parity in height above sea level of the Union Jack and the French tricolour at their respective residencies in Vila. The mission educational programmes were rudimentary, as reflected in the words of one elderly ni-Vanuatu who described his education as:

Baebol, Baebol, singsing nomo (Lynch, 1979: 9).
Just Bible, more Bible, and hymns.

These educational programmes were conducted mostly through the vernacular, a practice which appears to have had the unfortunate effect in Vanuatu today of prejudicing the population at large against any proposal to make more effective use of the country's vernaculars in the education system as representing a drop in standards.

The mission organisations, however, did teach some English and French. Kalpokas (1980: 229) reports that the Presbyterian Mission established the Teachers Training Institute on Tangoa in South Santo towards the end of the nineteenth century and trained catechists through the medium of English, and the Anglican Church (which was then known as the Church of Melanesia) also established an English-medium institution at Vureas Bay in the north. French-medium education in Vanuatu began in much the same way in Vanuatu, under the auspices of the Catholic church, at Montmartre near Vila, Wala-Rano (just off the coast of Malakula), Melsisi on Pentecost and Lolopuepue on Ambae (Kalpokas, 1980: 237). During the 1940s and 1950s, both Catholic and Protestant organisations established a number of primary schools in Vanuatu, but secondary education in both languages was still only available overseas.

The British government established the English-medium Kawenu Teachers College in 1962, in order to train ni-Vanuatu teachers for English-medium primary schools. (This college is now a bilingual teacher training college known in English as Vanuatu Institute of Education and in French as Institut Pédagogique de Vanuatu.) In 1966, the British Secondary School (now known as Malapoa College) was opened in Vila, providing ni-Vanuatu for the first time with a complete English-medium secondary education. By 1972, the British government had taken control of the administration and financing of all Presbyterian Church schools (Kalpokas, 1980: 237).

Perhaps seeing a threat to the continued loyalty of ni-Vanuatu, the French government at the time also began to take an interest in French-medium education, and embarked upon an ambitious programme of building schools. The education that they offered was completely subsidised, so that parents paid no fees, in contrast to British schools which charged fees. New schools were not established so much according to the areas that needed schools, but according to which areas already had English-medium schools, in order to draw away students from the English-medium 'opposition.' Rather than the two educational systems complementing each other, there emerged an atmosphere of heated competition between them. The result of these developments was that, by the time of independence, about 90% of all ni-Vanuatu children of school entry age were going into Class I (Kalmele Matai, private communication) and the numbers of children going to English- and French-medium schools was approximately equal (National Planning Office, 1982: 230-231).

ENGLISH AND FRENCH

Language and the role of different languages within the country became a major political issue in the run-up to independence in the late 1970s. The largest street demonstrations that Vanuatu has ever seen were by French-educated people and their supporters protesting at threats that they perceived to French-medium education from the predominantly English-educated Vanuaaku Pati government that was in power in Vanuatu before independence. The British and the French had for decades been playing ni-Vanuatu off against each other, and had successfully divided people into opposing 'anglophone' and 'francophone' sides.

In the words of the first Minister of Education in independent Vanuatu, this political posturing:

... has affected the historic, political, social and economic progress of this country and has provided the main basis of division between the Melanesians, by creating them either 'Anglophone' or 'Francophone'. (These terms are mostly used by those whose aim has been to divide and rule and to disrupt our unity and progress towards independence.) (Kalpokas, 1980: 240-241).

Unfortunately, there is now a common myth outside Vanuatu that the country used to be divided up into discrete 'Anglophone' and 'Francophone' areas. This was never so, and it is not so today. It is common today to find both French- and English-medium schools in very close proximity to each other, not infrequently even within the same village, and some families even have some of their children going to English-medium schools and others going to French-medium schools. Table 1 shows the number of English- and French-medium primary schools operating in 1987 according to the 11 local government areas, indicating that no region is entirely 'anglophone' or 'francophone.'

Table 1. English- and French-medium primary schools in 1987*

	English-medium	French-medium
Banks/Torres	11	3
Santo/Malo	25	11
Ambae/Maewo	16	7
Pentecost	13	9
Malakula	27	13
Ambrym	15	13
Paama	4	1
Epi	6	1
Tongoa/Shepherds	9	4
Efate	21	11
Tafea	25	25

*Figures supplied by Kalmele Matai, Ministry of Education.

Figure 1 shows the island of Tanna with the geographical distribution of British government and French government primary schools just before independence in 1979, clearly demonstrating that one cannot seriously claim that either language has its own 'territory' on the island.

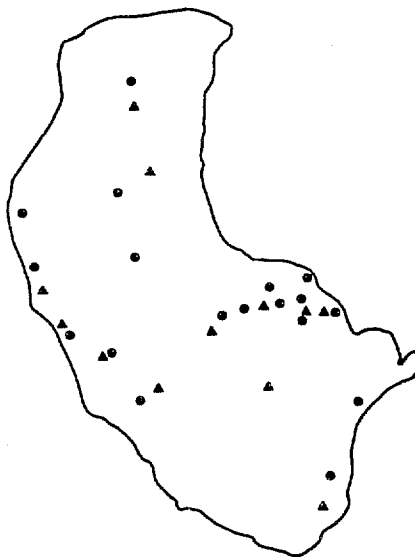


Figure 1. Distribution of English- and French-medium primary schools on Tanna (1979): (▲) English-medium school, (●) French-medium school.

In order to promote economic development and build national unity after independence, the Vanuatu government drew up a 5-year development plan. Under the heading of "Problems and Issues" with regard to education in this development plan, the opening statement reads:

The Government decided, on Independence, that there must be a unified system of education to replace the two parallel systems (National Planning Office, 1982: 223).

This policy meant that the government intended to have a single national curriculum to replace the completely different curricula of the two condominium governments, which would be taught equally through the medium of the two languages in different sets of schools spread all around the country. This process of curriculum unification at the primary level has now been achieved.

In the meantime, however, there have been very significant shifts in the enrolment figures for English- and French-medium schools. There has been a gradual, but consistent shift in primary enrolments, as shown in the figures in Table 2, with the figures in the column on the right showing the total percentage of primary students in Vanuatu enrolled in English-medium schools. French-medium enrolments have dropped by 24.3%, while English-medium enrolments have increased by 37.5%. The original 18:12 ratio of schools on Tanna in favour of French-medium schools is now an exact 21:21 ratio, on an island that, even now, is often regarded as a 'francophone' stronghold. On these trends, English-medium enrolments will double those of French-medium schools before the end of the present decade, and English-medium enrolments should reach close to 100% within just over 15 years.

Table 2. English- and French-medium primary school enrolments since independence

	French-medium	English-medium	Proportion in English-medium (%)
1980 ⁵	12,266	11,303	47.9
1982	10,674	11,024	50.8
1983	10,496	11,748	52.8
1984 ⁶	10,678	12,671	54.3
1987 ⁷	9282	15,543	62.6

The same trends are also evident in secondary-school enrolments. In 1980, there were 1036 enrolments in French-medium secondary schools, and 1026 enrolments in English-medium secondary schools (National Planning Office, 1984: 228-229), representing an almost exact 50-50 sharing of students between schools of both mediums. The 1988 junior secondary intake however will involve 661 English-medium students and 345 French-medium students (*Vanuatu Weekly/Hebdomadaire*, No. 166, 5 December 1987: 9). Thus, 66% of new secondary students will be attending English-medium schools, while only 34% will be attending French-medium schools.

Given the stated policy of the existing Vanuatu government in favour of the maintenance of official bilingualism, and the clear balance between French and English that is expressed in the Vanuatu constitution, we could ask: Why is English taking over from French in education in Vanuatu? These defections in the education system have been entirely voluntary, as there has never been any overt attempt at persuasion or force. Ni-Vanuatu parents are *choosing* to desert French-medium schools, in favour of English-medium schools. The reasons are a combination of political and economic ones.

Prior to independence, with the two colonial governments constantly battling with each other for the support of ni-Vanuatu, parents were uncertain as to which system would eventually become dominant. As previously stated, some parents were sending some of their children to English-medium schools and some to French-medium schools. In the words of one ni-Vanuatu parent to the present writer before independence, this was because:

Yumi no save yet se wanem saed bae i win.
We don't know yet which side is going to win out.

After independence, however, it became obvious which 'side' had won. French political influence in Vanuatu waned rapidly as actual French government dishonesty during the attempted insurrections on Santo and Tanna was rewarded with the declaration of the French Resident Commissioner at the time of independence as *persona non grata*. The French government since independence has attempted to pressure the Vanuatu government into muting some of its criticisms of French colonial policy by with-holding aid funds, and two French ambassadors to Vanuatu have had their accreditation withdrawn. At the same time, the British government has maintained a much more discrete diplomatic presence, quietly administering aid funds, and avoiding diplomatic controversy.

During the election campaign for the 1987 general election in Vanuatu, the opposition Union des Partis Modérés (Union of Moderate Parties) made the future of the French language one of its campaign themes, declaring in an election rally:

Pour sauver la francophonie, votez UMP.
To save the French language, vote UMP.

However, the drift away from French-medium schools has not primarily been the result of political considerations. Whether the government in power in Vila happens to be a predominantly English-educated Vanuaaku Pati government, or a predominantly French-educated Union of Moderate Parties is quite irrelevant. Parents in Vanuatu are obviously asking themselves about job opportunities and opportunities for further education after a child's basic education today.

In terms of success in higher education, it is clear that, in the South Pacific, English is the way to go. The English-medium education systems of the South Pacific have always made attempts to adapt to the situation of the countries themselves in terms of curriculum content and the teaching style. The result has been that there have been considerable numbers of Pacific Islanders who have gone on to complete tertiary programmes through the medium of English. The French education system under the condominium governments in Vanuatu did not demonstrate the same kind of flexibility that developed in the British education system, however. The curriculum that was followed in pre-independence Vanuatu was the same one that was followed in metropolitan France.

French education policy in the Pacific seemed, for a long time, to involve a conscious effort to avoid offering tertiary education to the people of the region. The reasons for this were in part undoubtedly economic, given the small total population of French-speaking territories. At the same time, however, one suspects the colonial French of fearing the consequences of allowing colonised peoples to gain access to the disturbing ideas that are often associated with universities. Confidential French government documents discovered in a garage after the French departure from Vanuatu in 1980, for instance, referred to the University of the South Pacific as being staffed by 'communists.' This attitude reflected the colonial fear of anti-colonial discussion that was emanating from the university.

The results of these colonial disparities in the education system have been marked in terms of ni-Vanuatu achievement in tertiary education. The following figures in Table 3

Table 3. English- and French-medium tertiary enrolments overseas in 1983*

	English-medium	French-medium
Degree/diploma and university entrance	120	1
Apprenticeships	52	11
Nursing and paramedical	5	0
Commercial	4	2
Other technical	0	4
Total	181	18

*National Planning and Statistics Office (1984: 189).

show the number of students undertaking tertiary studies in English- and French-medium programmes overseas 3 years after independence. The figures indicate a 10:1 bias in favour of English-educated students over French-educated students.

I also referred earlier to the availability of jobs that require fluent English in Vanuatu, as against fluent French. There are some positions which are advertised in French, and which require a fluency in spoken or written French.⁸ However, Australian, New Zealand and British based companies are playing a more dominant role in the Vanuatu economy than before, and there are now more companies advertising for English-speaking staff than for French-speaking staff.

There are also more jobs available with private companies which require English-speaking staff than French-speaking staff with lower levels of training, such as in hotels and restaurants, or as counter staff in stores etc. The deciding factor for an employer in choosing staff is therefore likely to be whether the employee can cope with non-Vanuatu customers, given that staff will automatically speak to other ni-Vanuatu in Bislama. The number of French nationals in Vanuatu has declined significantly in Vila since independence, to the point where they are no longer economically a major force. Non-ni-Vanuatu money-spenders these days are likely to be Australian tourists, who expect to be spoken to in English. Therefore, a knowledge of English will give someone an edge over someone whose only international language is French, even at the middle level of the employment market.

With regard to the civil service, although the products of both English- and French-medium schools are all *eligible* to apply for senior positions, the French-medium education system in the past has produced so few ni-Vanuatu at the upper end of the education scale that people well enough qualified to take up senior administrative positions in the civil service are for the most part products of the English-medium education system. There are small numbers of French-educated ni-Vanuatu in senior government positions, but such people report that it is *necessary* for them to have some familiarity with at least written English in order for them to function adequately in their positions (Jacques Sese, private communication), whereas it is not the case that English-educated civil servants need to have a knowledge of French.

At the same time, however, one could point to a certain amount of *laissez-faire* on the part of the Vanuatu government since independence with regard to the trends that we have been referring to, in that the government has more 'tolerated' official bilingualism than actively 'promoted' it. Before independence, anything written which had official status was painstakingly put out bilingually, following the kind of model that we see for official notices in a country like Canada. Public signs have, over the past 7 years, come more and

more to be in English only, or in English and Bislama. Far more government departments and instrumentalities are today referred to only by their English acronyms than by their French acronyms.⁹ A significant amount of interdepartmental government correspondence is issued in English only without translations being made into French.

One interesting question that is worth considering at this point is the extent to which a distinct Vanuatu 'dialect' of English has emerged among English-educated ni-Vanuatu. In Papua New Guinea, a recognisable Papua New Guinea set of idiomatic expressions, and even some phonological and grammatical norms, have emerged in English as the language has come to express a distinct Papua New Guinean identity among the educated elite [see Romaine (this issue)]. In Vanuatu, however, English is so rarely used in its spoken form even among even the best educated people that it is not possible to recognise any features that one would want to recognise as a Vanuatu dialect of English.

One related observation that is frequently made is that the French of French-educated ni-Vanuatu very closely approximates to the standard of spoken metropolitan French, while ni-Vanuatu who speak English are more likely to carry some kind of accent, and to speak with less fluency. The most commonly suspected explanation for this is to claim interference from Bislama in the case of English, but this has never been proved.¹⁰ The French education system much more strongly values linguistic uniformity than is the case in the English-speaking world, and, as a result, dialect differentiation among the best educated speakers of French in France is almost non-existent. The British education system, however, was more adapted to the local situation, and, in any case, the English language itself is much less standardised than French, resulting in a much greater tolerance of non-standard features in the English of ni-Vanuatu. The French-medium education system in its overseas territories also specifically aimed at producing *évolués* who would speak, act and think like metropolitan French people. This system was successful to the extent that the French-educated ni-Vanuatu today will speak to each other in French in informal situations much more readily than English-educated ni-Vanuatu speak to each other in English.

ENGLISH AND BISLAMA

English and Bislama both have fairly clearly defined functions at the national level, with Bislama predominating in verbal communication, and English (along with French) being predominantly used for written functions. Of interest, however, is the fact that the nature of this relationship between English and Bislama in Vanuatu has been changing during the course of the past decade or so, and that it is continuing to change. The range of functions for which Bislama is used in Vanuatu has come to be significantly different from the uses that are made of Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea (Romaine, this issue) and Pijin in Solomon Islands (Watson-Gegeo, 1987; Jourdan, this issue).

Basically, the situation in Papua New Guinea with respect to the status of English and Tok Pisin is that it is English which is seen as being the language of political unity at the national level. This is because, to some, Tok Pisin is seen as divisive and viewed as a purely New Guinean (as against Papuan) regional language. In many official public contexts at the national level, therefore, the language used amongst Papua New Guineans, both in speech and in writing, is likely to be English rather than Tok Pisin. At the national level in Vanuatu, on the other hand, it is English (along with French) which are seen as being the divisive languages. Thus, in Vanuatu, Bislama is used in a great many official contexts

which would automatically dictate the use of English in Papua New Guinea, such as the opening of parliament, public welcoming speeches, openings of meetings or workshops, etc.

In fact, Bislama is even sometimes used in Vanuatu when no Melanesian is involved in the communication situation at all. The present writer has never observed this elsewhere in Melanesia, except perhaps when Europeans are indulging in some kind of private linguistic game among themselves. In Vanuatu, one can hear conversations conducted in Bislama between Chinese (who predominantly educate their children in English) and Vietnamese (whose children mostly go to French-medium schools). I have myself been addressed in Bislama by Vietnamese, as well as by ethnic French—even in such formal situations as dealing with financial transactions over a bank counter—once the fractured nature of my own French became obvious.¹¹ Bislama in Vanuatu has therefore come to be seen more as a tool of national unity than is the case with Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea.

To close this article, we should also bring Pijin in Solomon Islands into the discussion. Pijin rather than English, is clearly the language that a great many Solomon Islanders use to communicate with each other verbally in all sorts of informal contexts when outside their own language group [see Jourdan (this issue)]. At the same time, it is almost impossible to find any public written use of Pijin in Honiara, while notices such as the following are very frequently found in public in Vila:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| <i>No Sakem Doti long Ples ia.</i> | No littering. |
| <i>I No Pablik Rod.</i> | No public road. |
| <i>No Kareem Basket i Kam Insaed long Stoa.</i> | No Baskets Allowed in Store. |
| <i>I Gat Kava blong Salem.</i> | Kava for sale. |
| <i>No Gat Kaon.</i> | No Credit. |

These attitudes have had considerable effect on the way Bislama and Solomons Pijin are used verbally on public and national occasions. A single example will be given to illustrate this point: at the opening in October 1987 of a Vanuatu vs Solomon Islands netball competition in Vila, speeches of welcome by ni-Vanuatu officials (which were broadcast nationwide by radio) were given in Bislama. Solomon Islands speakers, however, chose to address the gathering in English, even though their Pijin would have been perfectly intelligible to the ni-Vanuatu audience.

CONCLUSION

With the rise in the importance of English in Vanuatu in recent years, French has suffered a corresponding decrease in status. At the same time, however, quite the opposite has occurred with respect to Bislama, as English and French have come to be seen as languages in competition with each other, and languages which divide ni-Vanuatu. The only language that was able to unite ni-Vanuatu nationally at the time of independence was Bislama. Consequently, Bislama today is significantly more widely used in Vanuatu in official situations than is the case with Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea and Pijin in Solomon Islands. In these other Melanesian countries, it is English alone which fulfils many of the functions which are also shared by Bislama in Vanuatu.

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NOTES

1. Bislama is currently coming to be spoken as a mother tongue by a growing number of urban children. The figure quoted as the result of a survey conducted by Charpentier (private communication) was 8% of the total population in 1980.
2. The constitution of Vanuatu states that the people of Vanuatu are known as 'ni-Vanuatu.' The prefix 'ni-' derives from a preposition meaning 'of' in a number of Vanuatu languages.
3. The term 'blackbirding' is used in Pacific history to refer to the traffic in indentured labourers between Melanesia and plantations outside these islands. There is a strong connotation in the term of immorality and corruption on the part of the European blackbirders.
4. At around the same time, Beach-la-Mar was probably also stabilising and spreading on the cotton and coconut plantations that were being established in Vanuatu itself (though this is an aspect of the history of Bislama that is little documented).
5. *First National Development Plan 1982-1986*, Tables 18.3 and 18.4 (pp. 230-231).
6. The figures for 1982-1984 come from *The Mid-term Review of Vanuatu's First National Development Plan*, Table 15.1 (p. 187).
7. Figure supplied by Kalmele Matai, Ministry of Education.
8. Typically with French- or Nouméa-based private companies such as Ballande, Socometra, UNELCO, Hébrida, Banque Indosuez Vanuatu and so on.
9. We therefore talk about the 'VMF' (Vanuatu Mobile Force) and never the 'GMV' (Garde Mobile de Vanuatu). In fact, even the Union des Partis Modérés calls itself the 'UMP' (Union of Moderate Parties) and never the 'UPM.'
10. In fact, I strongly believe this claim to be false. From my own experience, Papua New Guineans coming from Tok Pisin speaking areas and Hiri Motu speaking areas do not seem to have appreciably different commands of English.
11. Siegel (private communication) also reports that the Canadian volunteer organisation CUSO has used Bislama to conduct its annual staff meeting in Santo in which only Canadians were present, as the group included French-speaking Québécois and English-speaking Canadians from other provinces, and neither group felt fully confident speaking the other's language. Accounts of the condominium government in the past are also replete with British 'district agents' and French 'délégués' addressing each other in Bislama, rather than both giving in to the other by conducting the discussion in either English or in French. Apparently another favourite, if ridiculous, solution was for both to compromise, with the British district agent speaking to the French délégué, and for the French délégué then to address his cross-channel counterpart in English.

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