Language is the road that religion must travel. The communication of specific messages and images from the pulpit to the pew is one of the primary roles of religion. Other important functions of religion include the mediation of God's message to parishioners or the training of parishioners to communicate with God themselves, depending on the denomination (Crystal 1965:117). A common language is key for any of these functions to work. If this is a correct assumption, then it can be said the word is one of the most powerful assets of religion. The Bible connects the 'Word of God' and Christ's name in both the Book of Revelation 19:13 and John 1:1. By speaking 'the word' in Genesis, God created land, water, and all that is in them (Crystal 1965:130). When a missionary delivered 'the word' to a community of indigenous peoples, he hoped for a Christian rebirth to take place. Early missions were confronted over and over again with their own problems of defining this concept of 'the word'. Just as they saw in Genesis how the power of God was "manifested in his act of utterance", so they saw themselves

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1 I would like to acknowledge a number of people who contributed to the completion of this project. My thesis advisor, Prof. Fernald, and external reader, Prof. McInerney. Bob Kieft and Judson Redmond for showing me road to correct grammar and style (Bob is God). Dean Kannerstein for allowing me to use the Athletic Dept. copy machine for free that over break when Safety and Security was being mean (I will complete my PE requirement for you!). Trudi Swain and the ILL staff for helping me when the Tripod rainbow wasn’t enuf. All my friends for dealing with my depression over the semester: Julian, Rebecca, Kara... and for better or worse: Lauren and Emily. And lastly my mother, Novella Nelson for her ideas, support and humor.
when defining their own communicative powers in each particular mission center (Crystal 1965:130).

A number of different religious groups spread out from Europe into areas such as Africa, Indonesia, India and Asia looking for people unaffiliated with Christianity. Missionaries were left in pairs, sometimes alone, in a foreign land without any knowledge of the people, culture or the language but with the goal of establishing a mission and gathering new parishioners. No matter the denomination of the missionary, the first step was to communicate with the indigenous folk for language was the first step in the conversion process. There were no global nor intra-denominational mission policies that guided these first religious imperialists. Each mission took an approach to bridge the communicatory gap that worked best for them. Though diverse religious beliefs made for diverse choices and policies for the language of communication, and also later on issues of translation, education, and growing literacy, many of the solutions proved to have similar results: poor. Early Christian missionary intrusion set the stage for a number of negative linguistic and cultural ramifications for indigenous peoples. I have chosen to focus on the practices and consequences of various denominations operating under the name of Christianity in the Pacific. However, examples from other missionary experiences and geographical areas are included in order to support the claim that the effect of missionary language policies were opposite and at times adverse to their goals of enhancing the communication between missionaries and indigenous peoples. Furthermore, missionary intrusion set off a chain reaction resulting in a shift of the oral cultures towards literacy.

**First Steps**

When a missionary goes out into the field to establish a mission and proselytize, learning the local vernacular must be their first endeavor. For early missionaries, this seemingly simple task was severely problematic. Many missions were entering areas where the language diversity was extremely high. Wurm (1979:9) points to the New Guinea area as one of the most linguistically complex places in the world, with over 1000
indigenous languages. The population of Melanesia has a little less than 2 million people, yet contains approximately 25% of the world's total languages (Muhlhausler 1996:32). In these areas, knowing one language could either help you communicate with an entire center of trade and commerce, or just 300 people (Whiteman 1983:102). One Anglican missionary writes about his frustration below.

Here I have been for a fortnight working away, as I supposed, at the language of New Caledonia, by aid of a little translation of portions of Scripture made by a native teacher, sent by the London Mission from Rarotonga, and just when I have begun to see my way, and to be able to communicate with little with an Isle of Pines boy, whom I found here, I learn that this is only a dialect used in the southern extremity of the island, and not understood in the parts which I wished to attack first. (Whiteman 1983:102)

The problem was not always that the missionaries could not to learn the native vernaculars, but that learning multiple language would slow the conversion process. In the time it took one missionary to learn one language, valuable time and money were lost by focusing on a language whose actual number of speakers at that point were unknown. Missions needed to proselytize as many people as possible as quickly as possible for the strength of their mission and religious community. Churches were unwilling to invest time or money to print literature in several languages for the benefit of the locals. Neither could they afford to increase the number of actual missionaries in the field (Whiteman 1983:102). Individual missions were left on their own to resolve the matter.

Questions concerning the local vernacular were problematized when filtered through the various conceptions that missionaries had of Christianity. A mission's language policy was always an extension of the denomination's interpretation of the Bible. One concern was whether the indigenous vernaculars were suitable for the communication of God's word. One Biblical passage in particular was important for many in shaping guidelines concerning this issue. John 1:1 states that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". For many missionaries, this was an absolute: the Word equaled God. The only essential languages were the original language of the Bible, Koine Greek, and their own Christian language (Smalley 1991:87, Schiffman 1998:60).
On the opposite end of the spectrum were the ‘heathen’ languages spoken by the indigenous peoples.

While the languages of Micronesia and other heathen nations of tribes are destitute of words and phrases to convey correct ideas of God and moral subjects generally, yet those same languages abound with words and terms respecting disgusting subjects and forbidden thoughts. Their vocabularies are wonderfully prolific in unchaste and impure words and terms. (Muhlhausler 1996:140-141)

The words and concepts in the Bible were thought to be unalterable (Schiffman 1998:60). In 1860, it was decided in an Anglican bishops’ meeting that English would be used to convert the indigenous peoples of Melanesia. This was because of the number of local vernaculars they faced were felt to be overwhelming and English was viewed as a “language common to all” (Whiteman 1983:102). ‘All’ was constructed to encompass those who spoke it: the Christian missionaries. No Melanesians spoke English, but that did not matter to the missionaries. As Schiffman (1998:60) sees it, an extension of fundamentalist missionary thinking concerning the Word of God was that the “only languages for which there are translations of the bible are worth knowing”. Following this line of thought, missionaries saw themselves as validating and supporting indigenous languages by putting native speakers in touch with ‘texts in ‘Christian’ languages by making them ‘worth knowing’.

**Developing Creoles and Missionary Lingua Franca**

After sustained missionary contact, questions about local vernaculars were replaced with questions about the new developing pidgins and creoles (Muhlhausler 1996:140). Pidgins and creole did not evolve only from the contact between missionaries and indigenous people, many were established before hand because of commercial trading between locals with sailors (Muhlhausler 1996:158). These new language could be called a lingua franca because of their role as a common language of trade and commerce for people of different speech communities (McElhanon 1979:280). Pidgins and creoles were not popular among missionaries. On a basic level, they were constantly changing and growing
from generation to generation which made it hard for missionaries to master them.

Missions did not want to invest money and time learning and printing in languages that were so variable (Muhlhausler 1996:160). Pidgins and creoles were also looked down upon by Missionaries because they were seen as contaminated versions of their own Christian languages. A German missionary reports in a church newsletter:

Un fortunately we could not communicate with the people in their language. But the conversation was not halted for that reason. It was conducted in the much abused Pidgin English. It may be regretted that this foreign language serves as a lingua franca in a German colony. But considering the conditions of the Archipelago this corrupted English is a necessary evil to which the individual must willy nilly adapt. It is spread over all islands of our South Seas Colony such that one can get by everywhere with kanaka English and communicate with totally foreign natives. (Muhlhausler 1996:158)

The purity of Christian languages was a real concern for some missionaries. The concept that language can be ‘corrupted’ is tied to the idea of language purity. The missionary belief that languages could be ‘corrupted’ was a judgment, one that placed them in the position to judge the content of a language (Schiffman 1998:62). The source of this feeling of authority originated from the missionaries’ Bibles. In fact, the Biblical terms from the missionaries’ own languages were sometimes incorporated into the local vernacular in order to purify the languages they considered impure and ‘heathen’. The translation of terms below vary in origin, reflecting the autonomy each mission had to make these decisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian terms</th>
<th>Chosen translations of various Catholic missions...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘church’</td>
<td>kirke (German)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘holy’</td>
<td>holi (English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘acolyte’</td>
<td>ministran (German)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘to forgive’</td>
<td>pogivim (English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘ascension’</td>
<td>goap bilong Jesus (Phrase formation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Muhlhausler 1996:162)

As exhibited in the chart, Missionaries not only appropriated terms from their own language but also from Latin (the language of the Catholic church) and terms they deemed appropriate from the local vernacular. After a time, missionary efforts to alter previously
existing languages was cut short by the advent of the missionary lingua franca (Muhlhausler 1996:146). Missionary lingua francas were languages chosen by particular missions as a religious currency, as opposed to lingua francas that operated purely for trade and industry. However, sometimes because a commercial lingua franca was widely understood, the missionary lingua franca would choose the same language out of convenience. Other missions choose the local dialect, creole or their own European language. However, it could be complicated and costly to teach an entire new language to the indigenous locals. Missionary lingua franca were also chosen by “historical accident” due to previous commercial activity in an area or a personnel assignment inside a mission (McElhanon 1979:281). In any case, each mission would spread its own lingua franca by education and conversion for the purpose of creating a new community and giving a “feeling of unity to participants” (McElhanon 1979:280?). Missionary lingua franca also served to keep costs down because religious propaganda was no longer needed in a variety of different languages and dialects (McElhanon 1979:280). Missions were very protective of their indigenous communities and saw their lingua franca as a kind of barrier against any encroachment by competing denominations or religions. When German missions in West and East Africa felt threatened by Islamic missionaries in the area, it was thought that “...the religious future of West and East Africa must be decided in a generation. Whatever has not been taken under Christian care in this time-span will surely fall to Islam” (Wright 1971:124). “Christian care” could well be a code word German, the denoted lingua franca of Christian missions in that area. Missionary lingua franca are known to spread in situations of competing missions; the prize of proselytasion belonging to the group that reaches an area first (McElhanon 1979:281).

**Bringing the Bible to the People**

Missionaries who worked to convert indigenous peoples could not do so only by spoken testimony. They were guided by their Bibles and prayer books, and they wished pass these texts on to the indigenous peoples whom they were catechizing. The goals of
missions necessarily included not only the choice of a lingua franca, but the semantic, phonological, morphological and syntactic crystallization of that lingua franca into an alphabet and grammar so that missionaries could work on translating their Books for the ‘benefit’ of the indigenous peoples. However, “churches that engage in missionary activities face particular problems concerning following what they judge to be the word, when dealing with translations of religious texts,” (Altehenger-Smith 1990:47).

Missionaries saw these creoles and indigenous languages as “wanting in words and terms required for translation,” (Muhlhausler 1996:141) and worked at importing words from their own language or finding that they felt were appropriate terms in the local vernacular or lingua franca. Translators could spend years searching for words with the seemingly ‘correct’ connotations an the indigenous language, as one missionary did in the Southeast Congo when looking to translating the term ‘holy spirit’ (Kaplan 1995:13). The Bible is filled with many metaphors and analogies in the parables, and a successful translation meant more than just translating words and terms verbatim from the Bible. Kaplan (1995:14) gives an example of how a missionary in Tanzania “compared God’s sacrifice of his son to the local custom of giving cattle to redeem kinsmen who had been pawned for debts” an example of the work missionaries put in locating the right association in the indigenous culture. “We know the Wamegi give cows for the redemption of men, but God gave His Son,” (Kaplan 1995: 14). Where should new words originate from? What script should be used (Altehenger-Smith 1990:55)? Dictionaries and grammar books suddenly become necessary to support the translation efforts (Altehenger-Smith 1990:56). There was great emphasis on finding and using the correct language because the Bible was considered the Word of God (Altehenger-Smith 1990:47).

**Issues of Biblical Translation**

The language of the Bible can be seen as either sacred or natural, absolute or relative or, traditional or non-traditional. These opposite concepts played a part in the choices missionaries made when translating their own Bibles into another language
(Smalley 1991:87). The original language of the New Testament was Koine Greek, the everyday local vernacular of the 1st Century. People who regarded the language of the Bible as sacred thought that Koine Greek was "the language of the Holy Ghost", and considered it supernatural. Those who thought Biblical language was natural, regard Koine Greek as the language of ordinary people (Smalley 1991:87). When these opposites are played out in the context of missionary lingua franca translations of the Bible, people who believe in the sacredness of language are interested in retaining more 'archaic' terms and keeping out contemporary phrasing. Context is very important for those who believe that biblical language is relative as opposed to absolute. Relativists want each word in a translation to be translated depending on the context that it is in. Absolutist regard language as fixed. An absolutist view of language translation might regard the scriptures as "infallible" (Smalley 1991:91) and directly translate a word or term from an authorized text without consideration of if "it is being used in a secondary of figurative way" within the new translation (Smalley 1991:89). Concerning traditional and non-traditional interpretations of the Bible can boarder the relativist/absolutist debate, however, the emphasis is on the communicative assumptions of the Biblical words. The traditionalists see a close tie established between language and culture and prefer to import Greek or Latin words into a new translations instead of employing comparable words from the local indigenous language or lingua franca. This is because they believe that any comparable "religious terms [from indigenous vernaculars] will reinforce the traditional religion and distort the message of the Bible" Non-traditionalists call on the employment of local terms and words in new translations in order to give a "richer meaning to the Christian message" (Smalley 1991:91). Among all the different possibilities, no matter where one falls, "compatibility with the language of the Bible (discovered, by the way, through the skillful use of the techniques of 'autonomous reason') is one necessary condition for permissible Christian talk about God" (Ferre 1961:93). In this way, the function of the Bible becomes
“to license the use of certain linguistic formulae and to ban the use of others,” (Ferre 1961:93).

The Magic of Literacy

Because of the supernatural powers that were attached to words by Protestant missionaries, the move to bring literacy to indigenous peoples was supported. Early missionaries came from a culture where the ability to write was not a uniformly distributed privilege. The privilege was specifically taught to certain people: monks, scribes, priests and elders, because it was seen as “sacred and powerful” (Crystal 1965:118). People familiar with writing were thought to have a direct relationship with Jesus. In Revelation 19:13 it says: “And his name is called the Word of God”. Christ is equal in name and in meaning to the Word (Crystal 1965:129). Therefore, Protestant missionaries interpreted this to mean that the ability to read the Holy Text gave one a connection with the Son of God. This was a important connection that the missionaries wanted to establish their parishioners. In order for this connection to be made, the ability to be read and write needed to be taught in mission schools. The effect of literacy on the indigenous peoples will be discussed in-depth late in the thesis, however at this stage it is important to note that literacy, in the opinion of Whiteman (1983:189) was “part and parcel of the conversion process”.

Mission Education

Missionary efforts to translate the Bible and prayer books could not thrive without an education system to teach peoples to read them. The goals of missionary schools were three-fold. The first purpose was to teach the community to read the missionary lingua franca and assorted Christian publications. Schools would also allow the missionaries to access youth who would not come to services, and educate them in order to become the next generation of Church officials. The final goal was to link “Christian ethics and European achievements” (Eggert 1982:202). Religion, education and culture would go hand in hand in order to foster an environment where a change in religion would eventually
support a change in lifestyle and a promotion of Western values and achievements. A missionary gives an accounts of a conversation with an indigenous person below.

"You white men are like us," he said to me. "You have only two eyes, two hands, two feet. How are you different? Because you can read books. That is why you can buy axes, knives, clothing, ships and motor-cars. You buy a passage in a steamer and visit places of which we have only heard, where people live in stone houses one on top of the other. You so not have to work hard; you pay us little money and we work for you, carrying heavy boxes on our backs. All this we know comes from books. If we understood books we could do this. If we could read your books we would have money and possessions. (Whiteman 1983:189)

Indigenous communities would often request the establishment of schools without knowledge that missionaries would equate their wish for a school with an acceptance of Christianity (Whiteman 1983:189-190). Missions made their own decisions concerning education based on their denomination. Some taught the lingua franca, some the their own European language, while others the local (Altehenger-Smith 1990:50). Whatever choice was made, the language taught would become the only access the people had to Christianity, and therefore education and social advancement (Altehenger-Smith 1990:49-50).

**Anticipated Consequences**

What, if any, expectations did missionaries have concerning the actions that they took to overcome language barriers? Very much in line with the concept of linguistic determinism, or a Whorfian approach, language was thought to influence thinking and possess the power to determine an individual’s thought processes (Schiffman 1998:57). The use of a European language as a missionary lingua franca is understood by Muhlhausler as an attempt to link the “processes of civilization and Christianization” with national languages (Muhlhausler 1996:165). Missions hoped that the missionary lingua franca would not only influence an indigenous persons’ mode of thought, but also promote subscription to the civilizations that missionaries originated. Language was also an viewed as an important reminder of nationality and loyalty. Learning a new language was
considered a step to forming new allegiances with new religions and acquiring respect for new civilizations.

**Contradictory Results**

Mission policies that were supposed to enhance communication between missionaries and indigenous communities, were actually only successful at the expense of many indigenous languages and cultures. One of the most noticeable consequences of missionary presence was the consolidation of dialects and languages in the areas surrounding missions. An example of this was the selection of Wemo in 1892 as the Lutheran mission lingua franca on the New Guinea Mainland over five other area dialects. Wemo quickly supplanted all other dialects of the language, Kate, to become the only dialect spoken. Also, "lexically related neighbor languages of Kate [became] either structurally or lexically more similar to it or [were] replaced by it" (Muhlhausler 1996:147).

Another function of missionary lingua franca was to actually create boundaries in society between the indigenous cultures and Westerners instead of breaking communicative boundaries. The Dutch created not just a missionary lingua franca, but another complete language for the Dutch religious and colonial elite to use for their own communication: Riau Malay (Muhlhausler 1996:177). Riau Malay was used to support the system of indirect rule established by the Dutch colonial administrators. This is an extreme example of the concept of elite closure, as outlined by Carol Meyers-Scotton (1990:25):

"Elite closure" is a strategy by which those persons in power maintain their powers and privileges via language choices. They prevent change. This is accomplished in two general ways: (a) through linguistic divergence from the masses in terms of the linguistic varieties known to the elite, and (b) through support of official language policies as well as unofficial usage allocations which designate a linguistic variety known largely only by the elite as necessary for participation in situations which yield power.

In a society where elite closure is maintained, people in different communities of that society are able to identify each other by language or distinct dialect (Meyers-Scotton..."
Also, government documents, magazine articles and political speeches can be shielded from the people by elite church and state officials by employing a language only known to them. One socio-linguistic universal associated with elite closure is that the language or dialect of the elite is “more positively evaluated than...others” (Meyers-Scotton 1990:27). This points to the emergence of a hierarchy of language with the establishment of lingua francas. The languages established by the propagators of Western ideals become the languages associated with positively viewed Western ideals such as social mobility, school, religion, and “such attributes as education and even competence and intelligence” (Meyers-Scotton 1990:27).

**More Communicative Boundaries**

The implementation of a missionary lingua franca through education in an indigenous community begins a shift from a horizontal to a vertical communicative orientation, suggesting a hierarchy of language in society. Heine is of the opinion that “the horizontal medium [takes] the form of regional dialects whereas the standard norm of that language functions as the vertical medium. In many societies however, the two types of media are represented by languages which differ both in genetic affiliation and socio-cultural status” (Heine 1990:177). Speakers of language within the horizontal media learn their languages at home, without “external pressure from political or other bodies”. The language allows the speaker to “communicate with everybody, to ‘be like everybody else’” (Heine 1990:177). The horizontal media supports “egalitarian attitudes” and tends to be “free from normative evaluations”. Finally, languages in this media tend to fall into a continuum, and cannot be easily distinguished from each other under labels of dialects and vernaculars (Heine 1990:178). On the other hand, the vertical medium reflects opposite values and characteristics. Most importantly, “the spread of vertical media depends on a ridged language policy which either prescribes their use, that is, in education or

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2 Indirect rule is a type of colonial rule traditionally found in Africa “which governed through indigenous chiefs and local institutions... Indirect rule was most favoured where limited revenue restricted the expensive employment of European officials in direct administration” (Perinbam 1994:302)
administration, or else provides incentives for acquiring and employing them...” (Heine 1990:177). Heine also mentions that because of implied “distinctions in role expectations, status, ‘prestige,’ and/or socioeconomic stereotypes” within languages of the vertical media, it “may signal authority or even superiority” (Heine 1990:177). The development of a communicative ‘norm’ occurs, the idea of a ‘correct’ flourishes. This is a major component of language standardization and is reflected in the fact that “a standard language is codified to ensure uniformity in grammar, spelling, pronunciation, etc.” (Cameron 1995:38). The act of codification serves to establish a standard language and “[elaborate] the hierarchy of levels within [a] language” (11:196). The standard (a.k.a. written) language gains prestige in society, diminishes the use of dialect variations and subsequently three language levels are developed: the written language, the formal spoken language, and the informal spoken language. Heine believes that these language levels are mapped onto stereotypes of competence and intelligence about its speakers. For instance, it was thought by missionaries that indigenous languages were “ill-suited to be used in writing and/or serve the needs of a modern nation state” (Heine 1990:179).

**Undermining Language, Undermining Culture**

The effects of Mission policies were not a secret to the missionaries themselves.

One missionary writes in 1918 that Mota (the lingua franca in Melanesia) caused

a deprecation in the estimate of the value of the other languages... [and it] tended to put all the other languages into the background and had a prejudicial effect on the study of them (Whiteman 1983:161).

Linguist Peter Muhlhausler (1996:196) describes this as “the destruction of the habitat of languages traditionally spoken and the imposition of a linguistic monoculture”. These ideas are an extension of Haugen’s (1972) metaphor of the ecology of language. Language ecology is “defined as the study of interactions between any given language and its environments... The true environment of a language is the society that uses it as one of its codes” (Haugen 1972:324). Muhlhausler’s conclusion of the imposition of a linguistic monoculture is a situation where only one language, or one code, is imposed on a culture
and it alone becomes the only acceptable mode of communication. In practice, this code was decided upon by western missionaries. Schools, the access to resources and the economy through trade (for instance) all became dependent on knowledge of the accepted code. All other modes of communication were thought to work adversely to the spread of Christianity because they were seen by missionaries are promoting indigenous religions, aiding the spread of other foreign religious doctrine adverse to their own, or incapable of communicating the message of a Christian God. These codes were dangerous and because of that Muhlhausler (1996:152) sees that

the large-scale destruction of ‘undesirable’ cultural artefacts is accompanied by the removal of the linguistic means of discussing them [by missionaries] and it is the very removal of pre- and non-Christian practices and artefacts that deprives the vernaculars of their traditional anchoring

The missionary effort to dislodge the traditional culture is the effort to destroy the habitat of languages. Not only did missionaries directly cause the indigenous peoples to learn a new language or force them to favor an already existing one, but they also tampered with the longevity of many dialects and languages by diminishing interest in them and creating a group of “Westernized people to perpetuate these practices after the normal end of colonialism” (Muhlhausler 1996:196). It became necessary for the indigenous peoples to learn the missionary language, so other languages and dialects suffered from disuse, eventually dying out. Essentially, the variety of codes indigenous peoples needed decreased, and the code they communicated in because westernized. The missionary lingua franca can, in fact, restructure society enough to form a “new common identity” for its speakers that overtime is given a new name (Smalley 1991:197). Further, “speakers of these [now] mutually intelligible dialects all read the scriptures in their common language... and also [come] to perceive themselves as speaking different forms of [the standard language], a perceptual realignment which made their dialect hierarchy more elaborate” (Smalley 1991:197).

Literate Contact
Another way to consider the implications of missionary contact with indigenous languages and cultures is to think about the transition from orality to literacy. Western missionaries originated from cultures which equate the beginning of history with the ability of humans to write down information. It has been easy for Western traditions to misrepresent and misperceive people who neither depend on writing nor write. Jack Goody sees the stereotypes of indigenous people that have been propagated in the Western tradition explained by exploring the differences between oral and literate cultures. Walter Ong elaborates Goody's belief that

shifts hitherto labeled as shifts from magic to science, or from the so-called 'pre-logical' to the more and more 'rational' state of consciousness, or from Levi-Strauss's 'savage' mind to more domesticated thought, can be more economically and cogently explained as shifts from orality to various stages of literacy (Ong 1988:29).

By exploring the oral - literate spectrum through the lens of early missionary contact, I do not want to polarize the conversation by implying that all indigenous people had a strictly oral culture and conversely all western peoples were literate. However, a number of changes occurred in these primarily oral communities that can be interpreted by exploring the effects of shifting an oral tradition to a literate one. Obviously, because not all indigenous societies were at the same level of literacy, different traditions would be affected in different ways, however all were affected. In order to explore the multitude of issues and changes that occurred, it is important first to examine what ideas and concepts are encompassed within an oral tradition. Having defined the oral tradition, a fuller understanding of the shift from orality to literacy can be reached.

Oral Traditions

[A] primary oral society is one untouched by writing or print, where communication, storage and retrieval of knowledge are exclusively oral operations. In such a society, the storyteller is a central figure, for verbal storage of cultural information tends in large part to take the form of narrative... he is scholar, jurist, and custodian or the traditions of his society (Sweeney 1987:73).
The process in oral cultures for remembering is one where memory is converted to narrative, where memory becomes a piece of literature. The storyteller is in charge of creating, cataloguing and reciting the literature of his culture entirely, with the privilege of only using his mind. Because of this, oral cultures developed what goes by a number of names: from “formulaic thought patterns” (Ong 1988:24) to “mnemonic patterns” (Ong 1988:34) or “poetised speech” (Sweeney 1987:83). Whatever the title, people from oral traditions have a specialized and special method for the organization of large pieces of information. Formulas such as “rhythmic, balanced patterns ...[and] standard thematic settings”, repetition and parallelisms are employed (Ong 1988:34, Sweeney 1987:83). Epithets with expected qualifiers such as ‘the beautiful princess’ or ‘the brave soldier’ are examples of this. The adjectives are concrete and descriptive, they add setting that creates a fuller picture of the narrative for the hearer. They also reflect a communal knowledge and expected response to the noun (Ong 1977:19). Ong recognizes that “formulas are communally fixed ways of organizing simultaneously object and response-to-object” (Ong 1977:19), and therefore can be easily understood, repeated, taught and communally practiced (Ong 1988:9). These community formulas require stability and are not conducive to change because the information needs to be known to everyone. Reforming collectively known formulas inhibits the formation of a community. Oral traditions are generally thought to be homeostatic: retaining memories that are pertinent to their current world and ‘shed’ information that is not (Ong 1988:46). A reflection of this organization system is the natural communal aspects of memory in an oral culture and the appreciated status of the storyteller. The information is familiar to both the storyteller and the audience.

Epithets are not merely descriptive, but also approbatory or deprecatory; they cue in the audience’s evaluatory response, as “brave”, [“beautiful”], in the examples given. Such formulas hold together the noetic world in units which discourage and even defy analysis. Breaking up such units, into an objective component [soldier, princess] and an evocative component eliciting a subjective response [brave, beautiful] would be too traumatic... [Bravery] goes with [soldiers] forever....Moreover, since formulas are of their nature expected... they require no adjustment of knower to known but bind the two in familiar bond, unbreakable bonds (Ong 1977:19-20).
All history and knowledge in oral societies are transmitted by this method. There is a “succession of concrete situations” as people meet face-to-face and communicate information necessary in the lives (Goody and Watt: 1968:29). Memory again is social in its nature: an individual retains in his memory only what is of “critical importance in his experiences of the main social relationships” (Goody and Watt: 1968:30). This social method of memory, and therefore literature, is reflected in Brunei and Southeast Asia before the 17th Century when literature was performed as a public act or by “singing it or having it sung” (Gunn 1997:59,35).

**Literacy and Standardization**

Literate societies require a level of language standardization not found in oral societies. Literate traditions do not depend entirely on the human mind for the memories of the community. Quite simply, writing allowed persons to keep a continuous record of events on texts independent of the community. In oral societies, what is known and who knows are intertwined and therefore subjective. Ong states that “writing separates the knower from the known and thus sets up conditions for ‘objectivity’ in the sense of personal disengagement or distancing” (Ong 1988:46). Literacy functions to break the homeostasis of oral communities by demanding more and faster discovery, new items to capture to text. Oral communities are organized to keep only what is of “critical importance”, literate communities are encouraging to experimentation because there are infinite ways to document them (Goody and Watt: 1968:30). The demand for more communication that comes with literacy itself pushes for increasing standardization of the language (Alisjahbana 1971:104). For reason that I will elaborate on further in the thesis, literacy brings about a written norm that decreases the “flexibility which a language possessed via its oral variants... and with it certain mechanisms which allow a fluidity of adoption to societal changes” (Altehenger-Smith 1990:55). Moving an oral tradition towards literacy is essentially a push towards the standardization of the oral language.

**Standardization as a Benefit to Mission Goals**
Because the conversion process went hand in hand with a move for literacy, which in turn increased the need for education, mission schools were an important force in the move to standardize the language or lingua franca of the community (Alisjahbana 1976:111). As missionaries advanced and the number of mission schools grew, it became necessary to establish the same language of instruction for people within a particular mission school system. Also, the consequence of having missionaries attempt to reformulate the identity of indigenous communities through language change resulted in the increased the need for a language that everyone could read, write and speak (Muhlhausler 1996:214). The act of standardizing the language had a number of effects, an important one being that it smoothened “the social relations for the integration of society” (Alisjahbana 1976:102). Having a standard language was helpful to missionaries who wanted to speak to as many people as possible about the word of God. Having the potential converts already speak the same language of the missionaries aids in a quicker conversion process. Another effect of standardization is that it keeps “misunderstanding between members of that society [at a] minimum” (Alisjahbana 1976:102).

The standardization a language can result in a number of beneficial outcomes for missionaries. The first step to standardize a language previously only used for oral communication is to decide what graphs to use for the alphabet. The graphization “establishes the basis for the spelling system” that in turn allows for both grammar standardization and further “lexiographic work” (Altehenger-Smith 1990:55). Altehenger-Smith (1990:55) notes that the local popular religion was taken into consideration when deciding what script was appropriate. If the local Missionaries used the Roman alphabet as their own grapholect, then the local lingua franca might take on roman graphs for its own alphabet. The involvement of missionaries in these aspects of corpus planning was beneficial to their mission goals. First, grammar itself is a mechanism that “reduces, limits or establishes the number of possible choices which are evaluated as correct or incorrect”
The manipulation of this mechanism by missionaries or any colonial entity, had the effect of limiting indigenous persons’ accessibility to older documents, traditions and assorted written information by alteration of graphs and forms to the point where old texts were impossible to decipher (Altehenger-Smith 1990:56, Muhlhausler 1996:220). Competing faiths were known to manipulate their graphs so much that potential converts would be unable to interpret another missions’ propaganda (Muhlhausler 1996:22). Another aspect of standardization is the assembling of dictionaries: this includes decision making concerning pronunciation, meaning, and what are the common words (Altehenger-Smith 1990:56). The power to define and regulate what eventually was viewed as the standard— the norm— in society is powerful. The dictionary is a phenomenon of only the literate society, because it allows the storage and reference of a variety of meanings over time (Goody and Watt 1968:29).

More Reconstruction

Oral communities experienced both linguistic and cultural reconstruction because of the push by missionaries toward literacy and language standardization. One immediate consequence was a decrease in the language diversity of the society because, as discussed in the former paragraph, literacy and language diversity do not directly correlated (Muhlhausler 1996:234). Literacy also abbreviated role of the storyteller from oral traditions. Writing encouraged discovery and new knowledge because literacy broke the need to keep memories in a cultural equilibrium. The wisdom of the storyteller could only be updated in correspondence (in relation, at the same rate) as the community that he belonged to, while texts can be updated as quickly as one can pick up a pen. Soon, “writing and, later, print took over more and more of the vital functions once held by the storyteller as keeper, retriever, and transmitter of knowledge, the storyteller’s ‘domain or enclave over ‘contrived speech’ became increasingly marginal in society” (Gunn 1997:36).

Literacy was also constructed for restrictive purposes and to aid in forms of indirect rule. Muhlhausler saw how “literacy was provided for... specific privileged dialects of
local languages only if it greatly contributed to the creation of communicative inequalities and decreasing heterogeneity” (Muhlhausler 1996:213). This manipulation in coordination with “the hierarchy of levels within a language” (Smalley 1991:196) that standardizing brings about shows how literacy was an important and powerful tool. Both restricted literacy and a developed hierarchy of language control not only who gets to access particular kinds of information, but also mediates which speech communities are allowed to communicate. For instance, Islamic missionaries established their own system of indirect rule by using restricted literacy that used “bahasa melayu, written in the Jawi script [to mediate] the language of the Qur’an to a wider circle of [illiterate] believers” (Gunn 1997:45). In Fiji, much of the older traditions of the indigenous people were not put into writing because the standard language was reserved to transcribe all new religious and political ideas and views, thereby “creating and reinforcing the new world view” of western cultural values (Muhlhausler 1996:229). A pattern emerged in a number of communities experiencing an oral to literate shift that “restrictive practices tend to arise wherever people have an interest in maintaining a monopoly of the sources of their power” (Goody 1968:12). In the previous oral tradition, knowledge was in a horizontal, not vertical, orientation: open and shared with everyone in the community and “free from normative evaluations” (Heine 1990:177). In the new literate world, authority was given to people who were able to access these new channels of power, people who conformed to the new normative standards.

A shift to literacy was seen by Westerners to move indigenous peoples away from their own ‘illogical’ to more abstract and complex thought processes.

Writing establishes a different kind of relationship between the word and its referent, a relationship that is more general and more abstract, and less closely connected with the particularities of person, place, and time, then obtains in oral communication (Goody and Watt 1968:44)

For instance, Alisjahbana (1971:1107) has documented a change in the Malay language that illustrates this claim. Before the arrival of missionaries and literacy, numerals would be
paired with coefficients denoting specific noun classes. These noun classes were inanimate objects, elongated inanimate objects and living things. Therefore it was appropriate to express 'two buah cups', 'two batang rods' or 'five ekor fishes', respectively. After the arrival of a literate culture, the noun class coefficients fell into disuse. People began to write 'two cups' instead of 'two buah cups'. Alishahbaba views the abandonment of coefficients as representative of the loss of a "more concrete style of thought". Description, context and the communal aspects inherent in formulas such as epithets and noun classes are exchanged for the individual to traumatically abstract meaning from alone. However, it is this ability for abstraction that literate cultures often see as proof of logical thought. In this way, the push to literacy was seen as helping indigenous peoples advance logically and social toward western ideals and concepts.

**Conclusion**

Throughout the research of my thesis I have been intrigued with the connections drawn between language and culture. Many of the authors that I reference use this exact connection to bolster their argument, yet each does so for a different agenda. For example, Peter Muhlhausler sees language as a series of codes that are embedded into a language. Removing these codes and, what he calls, "cultural artifacts" lead to the disruption of a community. On the other end of the spectrum, missionaries employed language to build a cultural bridge between the indigenous folk and their own European civilizations. They thought by placing specific codes from their language that the spirit of their Christian God would visit the indigenous people. Also, they thought that the retention of indigenous codes could help support the indigenous societies. Words could have the same meaning in a variety of languages, but in order to understand the missionary position, it seems that one must consider that a particular word brings more than just meaning. For instance, words bring history and connotation as well, but only for those who are a part of the culture that the word originated from. Do words only have meaning only through interact with other aspects of language, or other systems? In terms of missionary goals, it is possible that a
consideration of this more structuralist approach might have worked better for their goals. Their translations are much clearer and understandable when they allow each word to interact with other words, another culture and another history. The Tanzanian missionary’s translation of a Biblical parable is a good example of this.

Are codes the languages themselves or might codes be what arises from the interaction words and any other system? Can