

The VITAL update from Dannii

December 2011



Hello once again!

October was a busy month, being my first VITAL module, so these months between modules inevitably feel slower. But time has felt extra slow for me, because I've been adjusting to what they call "PNG time"!

To prepare for spending a month out in a village by myself over the Christmas-New Year period, I spent two weeks in Wedau with Stephen Emerton. Stephen is one of VITAL's permanent mentors, and he looks after Wedau and Topura, two closely related dialects. I went with him to get used to working in places with limited technology, as well as to observe the Wedau translation team check the translations they produced in October.

I think many westerners use the phrase PNG time negatively, to refer to situations like someone turning up several hours late without seeming the slightest bit apologetic. I've realised now that people here are just very patient. Either the heat will make an afternoon nap essential or excessive rain will keep you from working at all, so lower productivity and unavoidable delays are just part of life here. Everything gets done when it gets done. I think we could sometimes learn a little from the PNG way of life!

That doesn't mean that PNG time won't be frustrating, and we had our share of that. Unfortunately the Wedau team only started translation checking a few days before we left, so I only got the chance to observe a little of that. But my stay in Wedau was still a valuable one, and I think two weeks was a good

length of time to adjust to living without tap water, charging my laptop from a solar panel, and storing food without refrigeration.

I traveled back home to Australia for the first two weeks of December, because two of my good friends were getting married. The wedding was fantastic and I'm very glad I was able to make it. I also caught up with many other friends and had an early family Christmas.

While I was home I also took the opportunity to visit my old university library. When I first came to PNG I didn't know exactly what work I would be doing; now I do know, but don't have the resources I had before. Visiting the library allowed me to top-up my linguistic knowledge for the rest of my time here.



Jono and Deb with my girlfriend Melinda and I

Once I returned I had a few days in town, before heading out to Takwatakwai, a Kakabai village I stayed in for four weeks. The Kakabai translation team wanted some help, and I took the chance to plan February's Language Discovery sessions too, using them as my guinea pigs. But more on that next time!

-Dannii



A view over Wedau. At the far right is Dogura Cathedral, the original home of the PNG Anglican church.