

THE CHANGING PIDGIN LANGUAGES OF THE PACIFIC

Pidgin languages are special reduced interlingual systems of communication created by the need to communicate between speakers of two or more different languages. They originate to fulfil certain communicative requirements, adapt to changes in these requirements, and disappear once they are no longer needed, for pidgin, by definition, are second languages, used by adults and not transmitted (except in the exceptional case of creolization) to a new generation of children. Pidgin languages are found in all parts of the world where trade, warfare, colonialism or tourism has brought members of different speech communities into contact. The lifespan of some is no greater than the length of a summer holiday, others, such as Chinese Pidgin English, remained in existence for more than a century. Whilst for a long time pidgins were put in the category of “marginal languages” and their study correspondingly marginalized, in the most recent past, pidgin studies has become a fast growing and very respectable subfield of modern linguistics. The love-hate relationship which linguists, and indeed educators, historians and others, have had with pidgin languages

centres around what I am inclined to regard as their single most important characteristic: their changeability. Pidgins, can be called the chameleons of the world's languages; they grow and contract with communicative requirements, they change their lexical composition to reflect the relative power of communicants, they change their speakers, and their geographical location and to their users look very similar to their own first languages.

The idea of a language that adapts itself to language external requirements and changes dramatically at short intervals is of course in direct conflict with what "modern linguistics" from Saussure onward has held about the nature of language and linguistic studies. Areas of conflict include the established views that:

- a) languages constitute self-contained systems
- b) languages are characterized by fixed invariable codes shared by speaker and hearer
- c) the best way to study a language is the synchronic approach, i.e. to look at the linguistic system at a single point in time, ignoring all aspects of change and variability.

Before the structuralist period, pidgins had proven to be troublesome because they violated the principle that languages were related in a family tree fashion and, in the more recent transformationalist past, pidgins were uneasy instances of rule-changing creativity by adults to a linguistics that regarded language as an instance of rule-governed creativity.

There is of course a different way of looking at pidgin, a path recommended more than 100 years ago by Max Mueller of Oxford University for the study of language in general, namely "to investigate the laws that determine their origin, govern their growth, necessitate their decay."

In this paper I shall attempt to apply such an approach to the pidgin languages of the Pacific Ocean, an area that is particularly rich in these languages, so rich that there is currently a major international research project, the Atlas of languages of Intercultural Communication in the Pacific area*, devoted to identifying and mapping them along with other non-pidgin lingue

* This project was initiated jointly by Professor Wurm and myself and is carried

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franche.¹ The findings presented in this paper are derived from my association with this project.

PIDGINS AND OTHER INTERCULTURAL LANGUAGES IN THE PACIFIC.

General remarks

The Pacific Area is one of great linguistic diversity, and nowhere is this diversity greater than in Melanesia (New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia and the New Hebrides) where about 1,500 languages are spoken by about 4,000,000 people. Linguistic diversity has never meant linguistic isolation, however. The practice of communication across linguistic boundaries was firmly established before the arrival of the Europeans to the Pacific, necessitated by out-group marriages, trade and migration. Theoretically, a solution to the problem of how to communicate with someone who does not share one's language can take a number of forms:

- a) silent barter
- b) communication through interpreters
- c) dual-, bi- or multilingualism
- d) the use of another "full" language known to both parties

and finally and most important for the purposes of this paper:

- e) the development of a pidgin language.

Historically, all of the above solutions have been documented for one or the other part of the Pacific. The choice as to what solution to adopt is determined by many outside (i.e. other than structural linguistic) considerations, *including, for example, among others:*

out by researchers at the University of Oxford and the Australian National University under the auspices of the International Union of Academics.

I am indebted to the University of Oxford and the British Academy for very generous financial assistance with this project.

¹ *Lingua franca* is the cover term for any language—pidginized or not – used in cross linguistic communication. As a rule, the use of a language as a *lingua franca* brings with it some degree of simplification or pidginization.

- a) the length and institutionalization of contacts
- b) the number of groups involved
- c) the degree of intimacy between the groups
- d) patterns of dominance
- e) size of the groups concerned
- f) purpose of communication

Thus, for infrequent exchange of a small range of commodities, silent barter is sufficient. For regular marriages across two speech communities bilingualism is a more viable solution as is communication through an interpreter for regular high-level institutionalized contacts.

The development of pidgin languages is favoured by the presence of a large number of different groups, by the wish to maintain relative non-intimacy and often, though not always, the dominant status of one of the groups in the contact situation. Regarding the structural-linguistic prerequisites to pidgin development, we find that this "solution" is favoured where the typological and genetic distance between the languages involved is great: speakers of German are unlikely to construct a pidgin Dutch, although speakers of West-African or Papuan languages have done so. Similarly, whilst we have Chinese Pidgin English, Melanesian Pidgin English and Japanese Pidgin English, no Danish Pidgin English or German Pidgin English has ever developed in an institutional setting. Pidgins, and this is another part of their definition, are more than individual learners' attempts at cross-cultural communication; they are social solutions embodying socially accepted norms of grammar and lexicon.

When tracking down the pidgin languages of the Pacific area it is useful to distinguish between a number of historical/developmental periods:

- a) the period before European contact (roughly up to 1800 but as late as 1960 in some remote parts of New Guinea)
- b) the precolonial-contact period lasting up to about 1880
- c) the colonial period (up to about 1975)
- d) the post colonial period

Each of these periods, as will be demonstrated shortly, is characterized by different modes of intergroup communication and, consequently, different types of linguistic solutions.

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The pre-colonial phase

For all practical intents and purposes, the precolonial phase is also a prehistorical phase, characterized by the almost total absence of written documentation about the numerous population movements and exchanges of information between settled populations. Linguistic reconstruction is hampered by two factors a) the limited time-depth that can be reconstructed with any confidence, 5,000 years maximally and b) more seriously, the absence of models of reconstruction of language diversification other than by virgin birth, i.e. by splitting up previously unified languages. Conspicuous by their absence are reliable methods for recovering language mixture, pidginization and creolization and deliberate human interference with linguistic structure. Thus, the findings of historical linguistics are in constant need of support from other disciplines such as prehistory, demography, and geography. Pidgin linguistics provides another check on reconstruction by drawing attention to likely instances of rapid language simplification and typological change resulting from pidginization and subsequent creolization. This is not the place to tackle the ambitious project of reconstructing the Pacific linguistic scene many thousands of years ago. Rather, I shall restrict myself to a simpler question: Under what conditions did “prehistorical” speakers in the Pacific develop pidgin languages in preference to other means of inter-group communication?

Past researchers have tended to feel that the use of pidgins was a very rare occurrence and for some areas, such as the Australian continent, it is still denied. Instead, intergroup communication was achieved by means of extensive multilingualism and some of the other means outlined above. Reinecke *et al.*'s comprehensive bibliography of pidgin languages (1975) lists as the only example Hiri Motu, a pidginized form of the Motu language spoken around Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea) whose origins are said to have been in an indigenous trade jargon used during the annual trade expeditions (*hiri*) to the Papuan Gulf.

More recent research suggests that such trade languages may have been much less exceptional, particularly in Melanesia. Thus, researchers at the Australian National University have documented, among others, the existence of two trade languages used by the Motu in their dealings with the Elema and the Koriki

(Dutton 1983), two pidgin trade varieties of the Papuan language Yimas, two trade pidgins derived from Austronesia Mekeo and others. Work by Foley (1985) suggests that in the Sepik area alone there may have been dozens of pidgins, each of them used between members of two villages only, villages with multiple trade partners thus employing several pidgins. To these languages spoken in the New Guinea area need to be added a pidginized Fijian spoken between Fijians and trade visitors from Tonga and several other trade pidgins. Most if not all of these precolonial pidgins seem to have developed as a consequence of uneven distribution of economic commodities and the resulting need for regular trade exchanges. Other characteristics are that these trade pidgins are typically spoken where contacts are intermittent and cyclical. Verbal communication with neighbouring communities was achieved by means of bilingualism, unstable simplification (foreigner talk registers) and silent barter.

Relations between trade partners were designed to preclude social intimacy. Knowledge of the pidgin language tended to be restricted to adult males, thus effectively isolating male visitors from the females in the places visited, and the vocabulary was limited to that required for trade and a small range of non-controversial topics. The dual function of conflict-avoidance and exchange of essential information was achieved very efficiently by these and many more as yet to be documented pidgin languages. Their use did not pose any threat to the values of linguistic and cultural diversity and the consequent lack of power structures among communities speaking different languages.

The arrival of outsiders from Europe on the Pacific scene in the 18th century heralded a major change in this picture.

The pre-colonial contact period

The period between about 1800 and 1880, though well within historical times, remains one for which insufficient information exists about the linguistic nature of the pidgin languages spoken, though significantly more is known about the socio-historical context in which they emerged. A fuller picture has been sketched

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by Clark (1983) to which the interested reader is referred.

The principal difference between the pre-contact period and the period of early European contacts include:

a) The ultimate aim of European penetration in economic exploitation and socio-political control. The principal function of the pidgins that developed during this period are thus social control rather than an egalitarian exchange of commodities and information.

b) The geographical extent of the communication network created by the invaders surpasses any previously known system.

c) The invaders regard themselves as superior in most if not all ways. In as much as language is seen as an instrument of learning, the need to learn is perceived to lie principally with the indigenes.

European and North American penetration of the Pacific occurred in a number of stages, each of them associated with a typical economic activity and each consecutive stage calling for more intense linguistic contacts than the preceding ones: The economic activities characteristic of these stages were:

a) whaling which peaked around 1830

b) the sandalwood trade which was dominant in the 1840s

c) the *beche-de-mer* trade (sea slug eaten as a delicacy) in the 1850s

d) labour trade and plantation industries from 1860s onwards (this latter being the most crucial for the development of pidgins).

Each of the first three activities brought into being small foci for the evolution of a pidgin version of the dominant language, in most instances English. The first examples of a crude and rather undeveloped Pacific Jargon² English are reported for the mixed crews of the whaling vessels that ploughed all parts of the Pacific and that regularly visited supply stations to replenish food and water. The sandalwood trade called for more prolonged stays on shore, whilst the trees were felled and prepared for shipping under expatriate supervision, and even longer contacts were necessary in

² By jargon (as against pidgin) we understand individual rather than social solutions to the problem of crosslinguistic communication. Jargons are symptomatic of non-institutionalized encounters and lack of accommodation between the partners in a verbal exchange. For details see Mühlhäusler (1986a)

the case of the *beche-de-mer* industry, as the preparation and drying of this delicacy took considerable time and skill.

The growing influence of the outsiders is neatly reflected in the lexical changes over this period. In the early years, a large number of words from indigenous languages are found, with varieties such as Hawaiian Hapa-haole being an almost even mix between insider and outsider lexicon. As the power of the outsiders increases, their lexicon becomes dominant. Towards the end of the period, the lexical composition of most Pacific jargons was 90% or more non-local, principally English. By this time an additional factor, enhancing the status of expatriate pidgins has emerged, namely the setting up of missions with schools where acrolectal or "standard" forms of the outside languages are taught.

As yet, the principal function of the pidgin is "vertical" communication between outsiders and residents. Only in exceptional cases, such as on a few islands of Micronesia, is the pidgin adopted as a general language of intercommunication. However, even in these cases, immigrant groups such as English speakers, sailors from other European nations, Chinese and Africans provide the principal *raison d'être* for the development of more stable pidgins. An example is that of Kusaie in the Carolines, where the first missionary, Benjamin Snow, preached in Anglo-Kusaian during the initial years of his mission.

The Labour trade, or blackbirding, introduced both quantitative and qualitative changes in relations between the races, and the resulting methods, of communication. Many thousands of young men were taken from their home islands to the plantations of Queensland, Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia (over 60,000 to Queensland alone over a period of about 40 years). The usual terms of indenture was three years, though re-employment was frequent as was death during employment. Whole islands were depopulated, traditional structures upset and traditional languages brought under threat. On the plantations, men from many different language backgrounds were thrown together and had to communicate about many aspects of life. As their first language was not known to most of their fellow workers and as access to the expatriate language was restricted, pidgin languages developed within a relatively short time. Linguistic data from the early days of the plantation economy onwards show pidgin languages that are

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considerably more stable, more powerful in their expressive potential and less influenced by their speakers' first language habits than their predecessors. The solution to the enormous communication problem is a social one and, in the absence of sufficiently influential individual language models, universal properties of language take over. The similarity found between the pidgins of, say, Queensland and Samoa, is largely due to language-independent principles of second language development and, to a much lesser extent, diffusion or shared substratum languages. Thus, the signalling of plurals in nouns in both varieties (as in other pidgins in the Pacific and elsewhere) appears to have begun by preposing the third person plural pronoun before the noun, a very late development, incidentally, as third person plural pronouns took many years to emerge in spite of their presence in English and many Pacific languages.

The principal function of the various plantation pidgins was horizontal communication between equals, i.e. workers who share the same economic and social plight. Communication vertically with whites was restricted by social taboos and the unwillingness of the privileged class to get involved with their workers. In fact, as the plantations grow bigger over the years, contact with the white model is reduced accordingly.³

It might be of use to remind ourselves at this point that the plantation pidgins, though following the pre-existing jargons chronologically, cannot be regarded as real linguistic continuations. The jargons were not transmitted to subsequent generations of speakers but rather made up *ad hoc* as and when needed. Whilst some lexical and grammatical stereotypes were employed over and over again (for instance words such as *kanaka* for "indigene," *bulmakau* for "cattle, beef" or *piccaninny* "child, little"), a wide scatter of constructions and words can be encountered even in the same area or period. Some of the workers recruited for the various plantations undoubtedly had had some exposure to this jargon, many other "raw recruits", however, did not know any expatriate language on arrival. The situation on the plantation was quite

³ Another factor to be mentioned here is that most workers spoke Pidgin English, whilst their white employers spoke French in New Caledonia and German in Samoa and New Guinea. The separate identity of the pidgin is particularly strong where the superordinate language is not lexically related to it.

different; the varieties which developed there within the first generation of workers were passed on to the next generation and subsequent ones, the plantation foremen and reemployed workers providing the linguistic focus for new arrivals. This focussing and *the relative stability of the plantation pidgins* is an indicator of the fact that the workers constituted a structural social group with common ambitions and a fixed place in the colonial hierarchy.

Continuity of transmission was not restricted to the plantations. Plantation pidgins were taken back home to the islands by returning labourers, where they were often eagerly learnt by young males keen on going for a spell of work, particularly in the later years of the labour trade when recruiting by force was uncommon.

The colonial period

The development of colonial control in many parts of the Pacific is closely linked to the setting up of plantations, the various overseas powers being keen to control their own recruiting areas in order to secure a steady supply of cheap labour. Thus, a consequence of Germany's occupation of north east New Guinea was that recruiting for Queensland ceased and that German plantation interests in Samoa obtained a regular supply of workers at a very competitive rate because of lack of competition. The linguistic consequences of colonial control are interesting:

- a) Most important, the mobility of workers was highly restricted, thus putting an effective end to the diffusion of linguistic innovations from one plantation area to another after about 1880.
- b) Labour trade was controlled and much more institutionalized. The imposition of government tax in the recruiting areas virtually forced indigenes to take part in the cash economy by working on white plantations for a number of years. Thus, the number of speakers of pidgin increased rapidly after 1880, particularly in the traditional blackbirding areas: New Guinea, The Solomons and The New Hebrides.
- c) New plantations were set up nearer the old recruiting areas in the Solomons, New Guinea and elsewhere. At the same time,

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reliance on Melanesian labour for the old plantations of Samoa, Fiji, and Queensland diminished rapidly after about 1910 with the employment of Chinese, East Indian and European workers.

Colonial control of the recruiting grounds also meant the imposition by governments and missions of relative peace in an area previously characterized by tribal warfare. In this new atmosphere of reduced danger, communication across tribal boundaries became both possible and desirable. As time went on, more and more islanders back home learnt pidgin languages and used them, not with outside colonizers, but amongst themselves. By about 1920 the principal languages of Tok Pisin of New Guinea, Bislama of the New Hebrides and Pijin of the Solomons had become nativized, being transmitted in the villages rather than on the plantations. This change in social function is reflected in a change in name; whereas pidgin English was known as *Tok Vaitman* in New Guinea before 1900, in the 1920s and 30s it was known as *Tok Boi* (the language of male indigenes). This new name also reflects another feature of pidgin languages at the time: they were spoken predominantly by males, females often being discouraged from using them. This aspect of pidgins still awaits analysis by those looking at sex specific differences in human communication systems.

Indigenization or nativization in many areas is not so much an accidental sliding away from expatriate norms but rather can take the form of a deliberate rejection of them. Thus whilst in the past, the grammar of the developing pidgins of the area was governed by unconscious adoption of universals and the (conscious or unconscious) imitation of the language spoken by the white masters, we now find a deliberate focussing on definitely non-European aspects of grammar and lexicon. Substratum influence, wrongly believed by many linguists to play an important role in the formation of pidgins, made itself felt only after many aspects of their grammar and lexicon had already become stabilized and functional.

It may be wise to illustrate this abstract claim with a longitudinal study (somewhat idealized I am afraid) of one area of grammar: pronouns and pronoun use.

During the jargon period, the inventory of pronouns appears to be restricted to three forms, standing for speaker, hearer and other.

Different individuals employ different forms, *I* and *me* being found alongside *my* as first person form in English jargons and *him* varying with *im* and *he*. Occasionally we find *we*, *she*, or *they*, though on the whole we do not.⁴ As the first stable varieties develop on the plantations, additional distinctions are made. In Samoa, for instance, three forms are documented in the first years, *mi—yu—em*, five in later years with *mi ol* “we” and *yu ol* “you (pl)” added and some texts from about 1915 onwards have *em ol* “they” when referring to living beings (but not objects or abstract ideas). Fijian Pidgin distinguishes six pronoun forms, a drastic reduction from the 150+ forms found in vernacular Fijian, and Tok Pisin, the successor of Samoan Pidgin English, again employs six distinctions. Absent for a long time is the distinction between inclusive (speaker and hearer) and exclusive (speaker and his group) first person plural. Its presence in both Fijian and the languages spoken by most workers on the plantations of Fiji was not sufficient reason for this distinction to crop up in Pidgin Fijian. It is only around 1920 that distinctions such as the just mentioned one along with that between dual and plural begin to become common in the nativized pidgins of New Guinea, the Solomons and the New Hebrides.

Before giving an explanation for this, let us look at one aspect of pronoun use. Many Pacific languages have two sets of pronominals, one full independent set and a second reduced set of resumptive pronouns which appears between subject and verb. In some varieties of the European model languages, similar phenomena can be found, for instance, in French *moi je viens* or English *The man he came*. In my longitudinal analysis of pronominal marking it emerges that the occasional resumptive pronoun cropped up in the Pacific jargons but, on the whole, it was absent. As the languages stabilized on the plantations, resumptive pronouns were again widely absent and favoured by Europeans more than indigenes. A gradual increase can be noticed, first after nouns from about 1900 onward, and then after pronouns (as in *em*

⁴ My remarks are based on longitudinal statistical analysis of pronoun use carried out as part of the above mentioned Atlas project.

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he come) after 1920.

What we are dealing with are two processes, one natural, the other one man-made and cultural. Regarding the former, the development of pronouns and pronominal marking in any developing system (e.g. child language acquisition, pidgin development) appears to proceed along a relatively inflexible implicational hierarchy. Thus, third person plural forms cannot emerge before second person plural, and third person singular forms, the data seem to suggest, not before an inclusive *we* referring to speaker and addressee. Diversification into distinctions such as that between dual and plural or the appearance of a separate exclusive first person plural are developmentally late phenomena. Of course, not all languages develop up to the theoretical endpoint of this hierarchy with its numerous additional distinctions (gender, case, proximity, tense, etc). The fact that pidgins such as Solomon Pijin acquired these distinctions as well as a thoroughly “solomonic” system for resumptive pronominal markers would seem to constitute a deliberate choice of its speakers, i.e. a focussing on the least European form of the language in order to mark the social distance from, and rejection of, this group.⁵

We are confronted with an interesting example of how social functions (in this case language as a focus of group cohesion and solidarity) can influence core aspects of grammar.⁶

The discussion of the colonial period so far has concentrated on the fate of pidgins derived from the colonial languages, principally English. However, the changed social and communicative climate brought about by governments and missions has also had a very significant impact on what are commonly known as “indigenous pidgins” or “indigenous *lingue franche*.” Generally speaking, the setting up of political boundaries and the availability of “superior”

⁵ This process is comparable to the development of Rastafarian varieties of Jamaican Creole which again involve maximum distance from acrolectal varieties of English, with a great deal of deliberate human agency involved.

⁶ That pronoun systems, which are widely regarded as part of the stable core of language, can change under social conditions is also illustrated in the recent history of many European languages, e.g. the development of power pronouns of the *tu-vous* type in French or German, the gradual replacement of *nous* by *on* in French and the neutralization of status/power distinctions in Standard English where *thou-ye* has been replaced by *you*.

European trade commodities meant an end to most traditional trade languages of pre-colonial days. The majority have disappeared with little or no trace, leaving the historical linguist with a sorry gap in his/her knowledge of Pacific languages in pre-historic times. Those languages that survived in name, such as Hiri Motu, on closer inspection turn out to be anything but direct continuations. Thus, painstaking research carried out by Dutton (forthcoming) has established that the pidgins spoken during the Hiri Trade voyages were quite different from the Hiri Motu or Police Motu employed by the colonial administration and police force in Papua. In fact, such is the structural and lexical dissimilarity that Police Motu must be regarded as a new start, possibly influenced by or even relexified from Papuan Pidgin English. Similar remarks could be made about Pidgin Fijian which, in its plantation form, would be difficult to label as a direct continuation of the trade jargon that had previously existed between Fijians and visiting Tongans. Such drastic changes and discontinuities are often concealed by a simplistic naming practice that labels any pidgin language with a Fijian lexicon "Pidgin Fijian."

The same also goes for a number of other "indigenous" lingue franche or pidgins that developed in the context of mission expansion. The missionaries that moved into Melanesia from the linguistically more homogeneous areas such as Samoa or Fiji were confronted with what they perceived as a major communication problem. Of course, for the Melanesians themselves, with institutionalized bilingualism and other forms of communication, no problem existed; it arose only when it came to finding a language by means of which the largest possible number of people could be converted. The two most common strategies adopted by the various missions operating in Melanesia was either to make use of an existing trade language or to standardize and simplify the vernacular spoken around the mission station and spread it over a wider area. The former strategy was used in the eastern parts of New Guinea and some islands to the east where two important trading languages were found, Suau and Dobu (details in Abel 1977 : 973 ff). In both instances, however, mission use of the language resulted in drastic structural and lexical changes, reflecting both the relative lack of linguistic sophistication of the European missionaries and their Samoan and Fijian helpers and the new func-

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tions (social control, expression of religious feelings and others) for which the language was used. At the same time, European missions were engaged in reversing the process of pidginization by bringing back the richer lexical and grammatical constructions of first language Suau and Dobu.

The second strategy was adopted in the well-known case of Kâte, where a single dialect, a Papuan language, became the mission *lingua franca* for more than 50 different languages. Extensive pidginization has occurred (cf. McElhanon 1979), particularly in areas distant from the original Kâte speaking areas, though some pidginization also reflects the missionaries interlanguage, i.e. learners' dialect.

Mission *lingue franche* began to spread around the turn of the century but began to decline after the Second World War as a result, not so much of education policies favouring standard English but of the realization among their users that they were an obstacle to social and economic advance beyond the very strict boundaries defined by the missions. Some changes appear to have occurred in post-colonial times. These will be discussed below.

Both from a social and a linguistic point of view the indigenous pidgins promoted or created by various missions should not be regarded as representative of pre-historical process of pidginization. Differences include the following:

- a) Mission *lingue franche* tend to be associated with asymmetrical power relations.
- b) Missionary *lingue franche* have encroached on the communicative functions of many established vernaculars. The traditional function of trade pidgins to maintain linguistic diversity without loss of communication is supplanted by a scenario where more powerful, simpler languages change or replace established ones. Thus, in the course of Kâte expansion, dialect distinctions within this language were levelled, and formerly independent neighbouring languages were reduced to the status of dialects subordinate to Kâte (see Mühlhäusler 1986b).
- c) Mission *lingue franche* are characterized by considerable deliberate planning, especially in the area of doctrinal terms and power semantics.

As regards their structural properties,

d) naturally-developed simplification resulting from pidginization is often supplemented by deliberate complications, archaisms and abnatural expatriate creations.

e) structures from the language of their European users and/or Latin and Greek grammars have found their way into many mission languages.

The socio-linguistic study of these languages has only just begun (e.g. in Wurm (ed) 1977). It is essential that their special character should be understood in order to avoid confusion with either traditional vernaculars⁷ or traditional pidgins and *lingue franche*.

It is difficult to sum up the linguistic and social impact of the colonial period on the pidgins of the Pacific. The following generalizations are rather less specific than one would like them to be:

1) It would seem that the overall aim of colonial language policy was a) to have efficient ways of social control through language and b) if at all possible, to make the metropolitan language the dominant one.

2) The achievement of both of these aims was possible mainly in the relatively monolingual areas of the Pacific such as Polynesia and Micronesia where pre-existing pidgins were gradually replaced by the metropolitan language. In the highly multilingual area of Melanesia, pidgin languages remained essential for communication across wider areas. Rather than continuing established patterns of verbal intercourse, the presence of expatriate governments and missions favoured the development of new pidgins and *lingue franche*, typically related in their lexicon to the dominant language (Pidgin French in New Caledonia and Pidgin English in New Guinea being examples) and suited to the maintenance of social inequality and exercise of social control. However, over the years, these pidgins were assumed as markers of identity by large

⁷ It is ironic that the best described languages of Melanesia are precisely those that have undergone drastic changes resulting from expatriate mission influence. This might well result in an ethnocentric and unrepresentative picture of the true character of the languages of this area.

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proportions of the local population, nativized structurally and used as vehicles for social and political emancipation.

The post-colonial period

The independence of many Pacific nations is closely linked to the impact of the Second World War on this area, which introduced considerable discontinuity in linguistic and other traditions, large scale population displacement, physical destruction and the realization among many islanders that their colonizers were neither invincible nor infallible. The damage wrought by the war was compensated for by a new deal given to many islanders, including better educational facilities, limited self-government and economic aid. A process of ever accelerating westernization was put into motion with the pidgin languages that remained in Melanesia playing a crucial if ambivalent role.

During the Second World War the pidgin languages of Melanesia (especially Solomon Pijin and Tok Pisin and, to a lesser extent Hiri Motu) were used by the media, on the radio and in leaflets dropped by Japanese and Allied aeroplanes, again to mobilize and control the indigenous population, though now the vertical communication was considerably more sophisticated than in the early days of colonialism. The use of pidgins on a large scale continued after the war. In New Guinea, several government sponsored newspapers were printed, educational courses such as those for medical orderlies started and radio programmes in Tok Pisin were broadcast. The political and social intentions were paired with linguistic ones; it was hoped that gradual anglicization of printed and spoken Tok Pisin could bring about a merger with the English superstrate. With the growing prestige of English and better access through the schools this plan seemed initially realistic and met with some success. Its eventual failure can be attributed to various factors, first the linguistic principle that the mixing of two linguistic systems (in this case English and Pidgin English) may result in a new third system that does not bear particular similarity to either of the contributing ones;⁸ secondly, the fact that languages

⁸ Mixture thus turns out to be more like chemical compounding than simple mechanical mixture.

have powerful social functions beyond their linguistic-referential ones was ignored.

The Pidgin Englishes of Melanesia continued to grow as markers of a separate Melanesian identity and consequently had to remain linguistically separate from the superstrate. A third factor, one which began very slowly in the government stations and towns of the area but which has become a major movement in recent years under the influence of urbanization is the creolization of the pidgin languages, i.e. the fact that they became adopted as primary languages and acquired as first languages by a growing number of speakers. Creolization is associated with the rapid increase in linguistic complexity of a pidgin, the new structures typically being added from universal sources rather than sub- or superstrate constructions. The new urban creoles were thus linguistically different from their predecessor pidgins (though because of their prestige they continue to influence them) and less like English than some of the anglicized pidgins that were promoted in the 1950s. These linguistic differences, resulting from the three factors just mentioned, together with the exodus of expatriates in the 1970s, re-established horizontal intergroup communication as the main function of Vanuatu Bislama, New Guinea Tok Pisin and Solomons Pijin.

In actual fact, the picture is slightly more complicated, as we are dealing with at least three parameters operating simultaneously. Underlying all three is the general principle of linguistic uniformitarianism, i.e. that linguistic and sociolinguistic developments that occurred years ago in areas which came early under the influence of a pidgin are today happening in the more remote areas of the islands' interior. To sum up:

1) Pidgin languages are now becoming languages of horizontal communication even in the very remote areas of Melanesia such as the Southern Highlands of New Guinea; they remain prestigious languages in most rural areas and are beginning to oust smaller traditional vernaculars in some areas at a fast rate.

2) In the towns such as Port Moresby, Honiara or Vila the Pidgin Englishes have become the principal and often the sole medium of communication for people at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The prestige language here is clearly acrolectal English

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and the ability to code-switch between Pidgin and English or least to produce an anglicized form of the former is essential for signalling social status. The rejection of English characteristic of parts of the colonial area has now given way to a ready acceptance, accelerated by the influx of new media such as film and video.

3) Next to language of national unity, characteristic of the days immediately before and after independence, there are significant trends toward regionalism and linguistic compartmentalization. Thus, "indigenous" pidgins and *lingue franche* that were threatened in the 1960s and 70s have experienced a considerable boost in recent years, particularly in Papua New Guinea. Some experts believe that in future the linguistic picture of this country will be characterized by English and regional vernaculars rather than Tok Pisin. In any case, the linguistic character of all the pidgins of the area is likely to increasingly approximate the local English that has emerged as the variety spoken by the leaders of the country.

In all this, both the status and the linguistic nature of the remaining pidgins of the area is rapidly changing. As the very life of pidgin languages is dependent on a number of unpredictable social factors, one can only guess at what is likely to happen in the future.

The survival changes of Melanesia would seem to be greatest if they continued to be adopted as a symbol of national and regional identity and if some of the remaining colonial connotations that are associated with them could be forgotten, as has happened with Australian Aboriginal speakers of Kriol, an English based creole. Here, members of the older generation regard the language as a white creation, whereas the younger generation have come to regard Kriol as their own aboriginal mode of expression. Given such positive connotations, even prolonged bilingualism with English is unlikely to affect the linguistic stability of the pidgin languages.

However, continued linguistic stability may well be threatened by two other factors, namely the adoption of some form of English as the means of national identity and the upsurge of regional *lingue franche* in the wake of diminishing control by the central government. Both factors singly, and more so if combined, would inevitably lead to the decreased use of the pidgins and their

eventual disappearance, a development foreseen, for instance, for Papua New Guinea by Laycock (1983).

Whatever may happen, the outcome is going to be drastically different from the linguistic situation in either pre-colonial or colonial days. The many small vernaculars of the Pacific area, and even some of the extensive ones such as Hawaiian and Maori, are in all likelihood fighting a losing battle against domination by world languages such as English and French. Whereas many of the small dialects and languages were eliminated through literacy, computer literacy has no place even for larger ones. As the computer begins to be used in education and communication in Melanesia, the usefulness of local pidgins will be reduced. The traditional egalitarian multilingualism of the pre-colonial area was a very stable phenomenon.

Bilingualism involving languages of very different status such as vernaculars and pidgins or pidgins and English is of a much more transitional kind. Thus, many rural vernaculars in Papua New Guinea are being replaced by Tok Pisin and Tok Pisin in turn is reduced in scope by English in some urban areas.

CONCLUSIONS

For students of traditional vernaculars, time for serious linguistic work in a traditional setting is regrettably running out; students of language mixing, language death and mother branches of sociolinguistics, however, will find this an exciting time, although this excitement is mixed with sadness over the loss of many non-European languages with their potential for teaching us alternative philosophies and alternative metaphors to live by. The study of the changes in the linguistic picture I have outlined in this paper also contains another message: language change is not the smooth continuous process found in idealized historical grammars. Rather, it is characterized by catastrophic breaks in continuity, sudden shifts, rapid sequences of stabilization and destabilization and unsuccessful development. The linguistic changes that accompany rapid technology and social changes are found to a greater degree in the Pacific, and particularly in Melanesia with its contact history of not much more than 100 years, than in any other

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part of the world. The study of language genesis, development pidginization, creolization and death in this area can lead to very significant insights into the nature of human languages. Change and adaptability rather than systematicity and rule-governedness may be their single most important characteristic.

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