THE NUMBER OF PIDGIN ENGLISHES IN THE PACIFIC

Peter Mühlhäusler

1. INTRODUCTION

The question of what constitutes *a language*, as against a dialect, argot or patois, has received considerable attention in the past. A lucid discussion of this in relation to the Melanesian area is that by Wurm and Laycock (1969), whilst a detailed study of the theoretical issues is found in Harris (1980) and Romaine (ed. 1982). It is almost a truism that problems which have become blurred in fully developed 'old' languages, are identified much more neatly in the younger pidgins and creoles, and the question of language identification is no exception. How we identify pidgins and the criteria used for distinguishing one pidgin from another are the particular questions I would like to address myself to today.

It appears that, in the past, many writers have failed to acknowledge that there was a problem here. Instead, they have followed the well-known formula of naming pidgins after their location (1) and their principal 'lexifier language' (2), as in:

	1	Pidgin	2
e.g.	Chinese	Pidgin	English
	Nigerian	Pidgin	English
	Westafrican	Pidgin	Portuguese
	New Caledonian	Pidgin	French

This practice of naming pidgins has been of considerable use in the initial phase of identifying and locating pidgin languages. However, it has a number of serious drawbacks including:

(i) Speakers of these languages are becoming increasingly aware of the negative connotations of the term 'pidgin' and new names have been introduced for a number of them. Such names are either user-based, such as Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin) or Broken (for Torres Straits Pidgin English), or else invented by linguists as with Neomelanesian, Neosolomonic (Robert A. Hall's creations) and Cameroonian instead of Cameroons Pidgin English (see Todd 1979).

(ii) More seriously, pidgins can 'fly', i.e. a pidgin found in one location today may have been transported there only very recently from somewhere else. Thus, Fernando Póo Pidgin English was spoken by mainland West Africans originating from Nigeria and the Cameroons, New Guinea Pidgin English (Tok Pisin) was imported from Western Samoa (see Mühlhäusler 1978) and many of the Queensland Aboriginal Pidgin varieties probably started in

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New South Wales (see Dutton 1983). In the light of the high geographical mobility of these languages it thus appears inadvisable to associate them too closely with a single well-defined location.

(iii) It is further known that, in the course of their history, pidgins can change their lexical affiliation, a process referred to as relexification. Thus, present day Hiri Motu may be partially relexified Papuan Pidgin English, (cf. Dutton and Mühlhäusler 1979) and New Caledonian Pidgin French may have resulted from relexification of an earlier Pidgin English (cf. Hollyman 1976). It should be obvious that ongoing relexification poses special problems of language identity over time.

It is true that the problems raised above have been realised, at least implicitly, by a number of observers and we thus find a few notational devices which alleviate the problems. One of them is the use of non-localised (or only very generally localised) labels such as Beach-la-Mar (the lingua franca spoken 'between the meridians 140 and 180 and between the Equator and the Tropic of Capricorn' according to Reinecke 1937:727) or West African Pidgin English. Another relaxation is the interpretation of 'Chinese' in Chinese Pidgin English as indicating 'speakers of Chinese origin' rather than 'spoken along the China coast'.

Still, problems remain and continue to slow down the discussion of the complex linguistic and sociolinguistic dimensions of pidgin languages. I intend to show, with examples from the Pacific, that having a name for an entity is not a sufficient condition for the reality, meaningfulness or usefulness of what is supposed to be referred to. Pidginists have to acknowledge that a label such as Solomon Island Pidgin English may be as misleading and detrimental to theoretical studies as the use of terms such as 'phoneme', 'tagmeme' or 'exocentric construction' in theoretical linguistics. Put differently, many of the available names are rough-and-ready classification devices, but neither descriptions nor explanations.

2. COUNTING PIDGINS IN THE PACIFIC

Even a superficial look at the vast literature on Pidgin English in the Pacific will soon reveal a general lack of agreement both as to whether Pidgin English is spoken in a certain area or not and whether such a pidgin is the same as or different from other known pidgins.

Since in the past studies of pidgins were at best the by-product of other linguistic studies and at worst anecdotal travellers' tales, disagreement as to the existence of a pidgin in a certain area is understandable. An interesting case is that of Papuan Pidgin English (cf. Mühlhäusler 1978). One of the early magistrates in Papua, Monckton (1920) categorically states that (p.viii):

> I have abstained from putting into the mouths of natives the ridiculous jargon or 'pidgin English' in which they are popularly supposed to converse. The old style of New Guinea officer spoke Motuan to his men, and I have, where required, merely given a free translation from that language into English. In recent books about New Guinea, written by men of whom I never heard whilst there, I have noticed sentences in pidgin English, supposed to have been spoken by natives, which I would defy any European or native in New Guinea, in my time, either to make sense of or interpret.

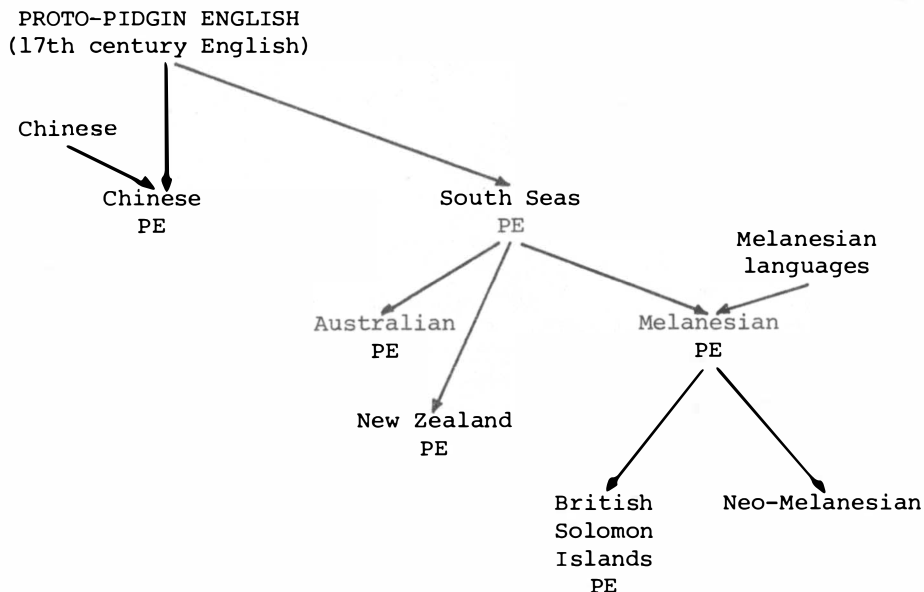
This view is also echoed in the following statement by an expert on the Papuan linguistic scene (Capell 1969:109):

> In Papua, as against the Territory of New Guinea ... Pidgin had never been introduced. By early Government policy from the days of the first government of British New Guinea right up to very recent times, one native language had been chosen as a means of general intercommunication.

I have demonstrated, however, that Pidgin English was widely used in many parts of Papua until fairly recently (Mühlhäusler 1978), and I had no trouble in finding informants who could still speak it. However, these informants claimed to be speaking English not Pidgin. The term 'pidgin' has only recently become known to Pacific islanders and asking older inhabitants whether they speak pidgin is unlikely to make sense to them.

Similarly, Siegel (1982) was able to document that, in contrast to a widespread opinion that Pidgin English was never spoken in Fiji, it was used by a number of groups and more vigorously towards the end of the period of labour trade than at its beginnings. Judging from my own reading of Pacific history, there are very few islands indeed where Pidgin English was not spoken at some point in their contact history. Unfortunately, documentation is still very incomplete. But even for those cases where a reasonable amount of evidence is available, opinions as to the nature of the pidgins involved differ a great deal, as can be seen from a brief survey of what has been said about this matter:

Most earlier sources (e.g. Friederici 1911 or Churchill 1911) speak of only one South Seas Pidgin English, referred to by such names as Sandalwood English, Trepang English or Beach-la-Mar. This view is continued in Reinecke (1937:751): 'with due regard for all these differences, Beach-la-Mar may be regarded as one language' and it is only in more recent work that different languages are distinguished. The family tree given by Hall (1961), for instance, recognises the following varieties:



Melanesian Pidgin English (Schuchardt's 1981 Melaneso-Englisches) in this tree roughly corresponds to the former Beach-la-Mar. The reason for the separate development of British Solomon Islands Pidgin is given as follows:

> The B.S.I. variety of Pidgin is closely related linguistically to that used in the Australian-mandated Territory of New Guinea, but there are significant differences in its use and official status.

and

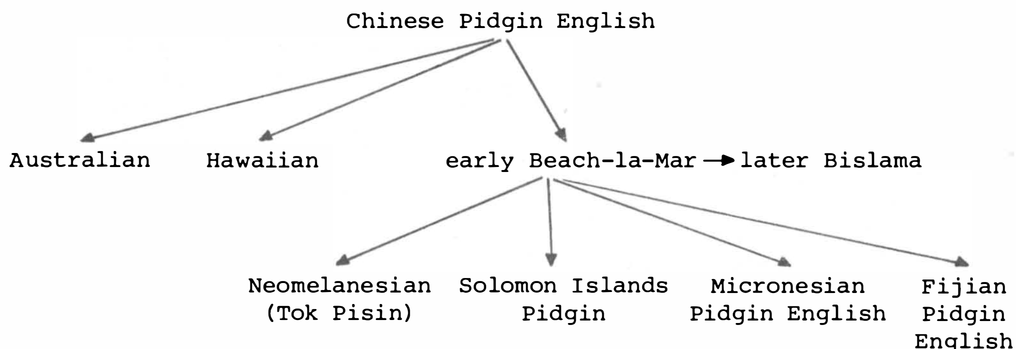
> B.S.I. Pidgin is, in its grammatical structure, very close to Neo-Melanesian ... In vocabulary, however, B.S.I. Pidgin is distinctly archaic and closer to English than is Neo-Melanesian (Hall 1955:68-69).

Hall's arguments are not accepted universally and other classifications are given by subsequent authors. Thus, Voegelin and Voegelin (1964:57) state:

> Neo-Melanesian, or Pidgin English, is spoken in the Australian Territory of New Guinea (including the Bismarck Archipelago), in the Solomon Islands and adjacent islands.

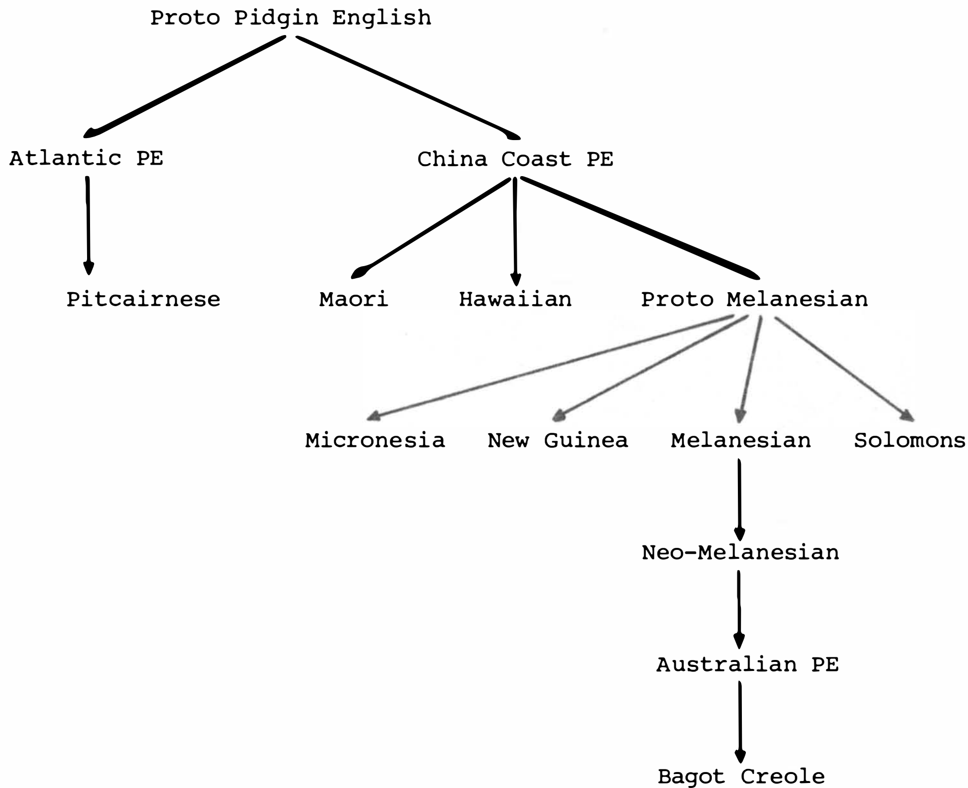
The only other variety mentioned by them is nineteenth century Beach-la-Mar.

Two more comprehensive accounts appeared in 1971. The first one, that of Wurm (1971), lists a reasonably large number of pidgins, which could be arranged in the following type of family tree:



A number of comments need to be made on Wurm's classification. Its principal virtue lies in the fact that it is based on first-hand observation and that it contains a number of valuable observations, such as that Beach-la-Mar is still known in Fiji (p.1008, a fact borne out in a recent paper by Siegel). Wurm is also correct is stressing that Australian Pidgin English varieties cannot be regarded as direct descendants from Beach-la-Mar (p.1013). There are two problematic areas in his account, however, the first being that he underrates the differences between 19th century Beach-la-Mar and present-day Bislama (p.1008), and the second that he may have given Chinese Pidgin English too important a role in the formation of Pacific Pidgin English varieties.

Hancock's often quoted 1971 and 1977 classifications suffer from more severe shortcomings. Thus, one would construct the following family tree from Hancock's remarks:



There are some further complications which have not incorporated the above putative family tree. Hancock states that 'a Neo-Melanesian-like substratum seems to be discernible' (p.509) in Hawaiian Pidgin English and his distinction between Melanesian and New Guinea Pidgin English is not clear. Hancock observes (p.523) on these varieties:

> 72: New Guinea or Papuan Pidgin English
> creolized in some areas, intelligible with 74 and 75 (Neo-Melanesian and Neosolomonic)
>
> 74: Melanesian Pidgin English, also known as Neo-Melanesian, Sandalwood English, Beche-de-Mer, Beach-la-Mar, etc; (including speakers of Papuan Pidgin English with which it is usually classified)

Nor is this confusion resolved on the accompanying map, as the locations for the two alleged pidgins are given as the New Guinea mainland (New Guinea or Papuan variety) and the Bismarck Archipelago (Neo-Melanesian = Tok Pisin) respectively.

That Australian Pidgin English is not a direct development from Neo-Melanesian, as claimed by Hancock, should be evident from the fact that the former antedates the latter. The problems of the 1971 classification are not resolved in Hancock's 1977 proposals. The decision to group all geographic and temporal varieties of Melanesian Pidgin English together (entry 115 on p.378) seems particularly difficult to justify:

> 115. Melanesian Pidgin English, also known as Neo-Melanesian, Sandalwood English, Beche-de-Mer, Beach-la-mar, etc., originally an offshoot of China Coast Pidgin English. In Papua-New Guinea, a creolized variety having semi-official status is termed Bisnis-English, Nuginian, Nuigini-tok, Tok Pisin, etc. All Pidgin English varieties throughout the southwestern Pacific are closely related and have well in excess of a million speakers: R.A. Hall, Jr., *Melanesian Pidgin English: Grammar, Texts, Vocabulary* (Baltimore, 1944); D.C. Laycock, 'Pidgin English in New Guinea', in W.S. Ramson, ed., *English Transported* (Canberra, 1970), pp.137-60. Pidgin English is also used in the New Hebrides, where it is known as Bichlamar or Bislama, and in the Solomon Islands: P. Laveau, *Apprenons le bichlamar* (Port-Vila, 1973).

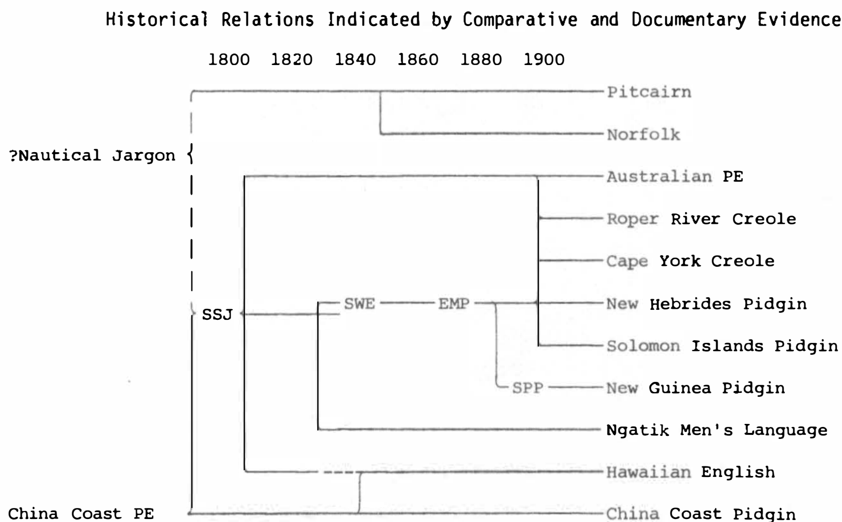
In contrast, a number of very closely related Australian varieties of Pidgin English receive separate entries, the distinction between entry 107 and 108 being puzzling:

> 107. A creolized English is spoken on the Bagot Aboriginal Reserve near Darwin, northern Australia. A similar dialect has been described from Arnhem Land by M. Sharpe, 'Notes on the Creole-pidgin of Roper River', paper presented at the Conference of the Linguistic Society of Australia, May 1973.
>
> 108. Northern Territory Pidgin is the variety of English used by Aborigines throughout north-central Australia: B. Jernudd, 'Social change and Aboriginal speech variation in Australia', *Journal of the Linguistic Society of Australia* 1.
>
> 109. Neo-Nyungar or Aboriginal English is an English-Nyungar contact language used as the everyday speech of Aborigines in southwestern Australia. A more anglicized version of this is used in communication with white Australians and is called Wetjala, while an intentionally disguised variety called Yeraka is used as a play-language by women: W. Douglas, *The Aboriginal Languages of the South-West of Australia* (Canberra, 1968).
>
> 110. Australian Pidgin English is a direct offshoot of a Neo-Melanesian: R.A. Hall, Jr., 'Notes on Australian Pidgin English', *Language* 19:283-87 (1943).
>
> 111. A creolized English, sometimes called Jargon English and having similarities with New Guinea Pidgin, is spoken in the islands between Cape York and the Papuan coast opposite: T.E. Dutton, 'Informal English in the Torres Straits', in W.S. Ramson, ed., *English Transported* (Canberra, 1970), pp.137-60.

Equally puzzling is Hancock's decision to provide two separate entries for the historically and structurally closely linked Norfolk Island and Pitcairn Island Creoles.

The main excuse for the shortcomings of the classifications discussed so far is the absence of reliable data on many varieties and the lack of any consistent criteria for separating or grouping different pidgins. These problems are partly overcome in two more recent accounts of Pidgin English in the Pacific. Both Clark (1980) and Wurm (et al. 1981) take into account fieldwork and

archival work carried out on a number of lesser known Pacific pidgins and creoles, including Samoan Plantation Pidgin, New Caledonian Pidgin, Queensland Kanaka English, Ngatik Men's Language and Papuan Pidgin English. The principal virtue of Clark is his awareness of changes over time in the relationships between different pidgins (and derived creoles). His family tree (1980:48) clearly shows that what was one language at one point may be two or more at a later point:



SSJ = South Seas Jargon (Polynesia and Micronesia)
SWE = Sandalwood English (New Caledonia, Loyalty Islands, New Hebrides)
EMP = Early Melanesian Pidgin (New Hebrides, Solomon Islands, Queensland, Fiji)
SPP = Samoan Plantation Pidgin
(For the sake of simplicity, the positions of vernacular languages have not been shown)

It would seem that Clark's account demonstrates the limits of what a family tree model may reveal about the relationships between the various Pacific pidgins. Although it results from a careful assessment of many sources and observation of comparative methodology, it still suffers from a number of shortcomings, including:

(1) a continuous development is assumed, where in reality there may have been many historical breaks, caused by non-optimal patterns of transmission

(2) geographical location is relied upon even in those cases where there have been considerable population movements between pidgin-speaking areas

(3) as in all family trees the role of convergence and mergers of pidgins is ignored

(4) shared substratal influence is not depicted.

These points will be raised again later.

A last attempt at 'counting' and mapping Pidgin English in the Pacific is made in a map (designed by Wurm et al) in the recent *Language atlas of the Pacific* (1981). The authors of this map have paid considerable attention to overcoming

the limitations of a purely geographically based classification. In particular, they have:

(1) distinguished typographically between flourishing, dying and dead varieties

(2) mapped areas of (putative) origin as well as areas where the languages were later spoken

(3) given a brief annotated discussion of each of the varieties mapped.

It is this latter point which I would like to discuss in a bit more detail. The most important aspect of their classification is the distinction between the *linguistically ill-defined* Pacific Pidgin English, whose spread and appearance in many different parts of the Pacific (Loyalties, Tahiti, Samoa etc) is documented, and *linguistically distinct* varieties such as Tok Pisin, Papuan Pidgin English, Bislama and Solomon Pidgin English. Whilst such a distinction would seem to be a sound basis for counting and classifying pidgin in the Pacific, a number of problems remain unsolved, including:

(1) The fact, mentioned in the text, that 'a number of regional dialect forms persisted in the New Hebrides' until fairly recently. This may be indicative either of the lack of stabilisation of the language or the fact that indigenes from different parts of the archipelago traditionally went to work on different plantations.

(2) It is not clear whether Micronesian Pidgin is a separate unitary phenomenon. Apart from its origin in general Pacific Pidgin it was also influenced by Melanesian Pidgin imported by labourers from German New Guinea and the employment of Micronesians in the Samoan plantations in the 1860s and early 1870s.

Nonetheless, the compilers of the map have made significant progress in sorting out the complex picture of Australian pidgin languages, by stressing the basic unity of the northern Australian creole varieties, the complexities of the preceding pidgin situation, and the presence of a number of imported pidgins such as Queensland Kanaka English and Chinese Pidgin English. All in all, this account is a very considerable step forward and it is hoped that its findings will soon become more widely known among pidgin and creole scholars.

To conclude, when one looks back on the many attempts to classify and list Pacific pidgins, a rather desolate picture emerges. The contradictory and haphazard nature of all but the most recent accounts renders them almost useless as a basis for historical or comparative work. Furthermore, an extremely complex network of relationships is hidden by misleadingly simplistic descriptive accounts. This is particularly so in the case of Pidgin English in Australia, as will now be shown.

3. THE SPECIAL CASE OF PIDGIN ENGLISH IN AUSTRALIA

Because of the very complexity of the Australian Pidgin situation (cf. Mühlhäusler 1979) it can be expected that a satisfactory classification here will bring us considerably closer to a solution of the more general problems of pidgin classification. Whilst the study of the Australian scene has begun in earnest only very recently, a number of points of interest have emerged. First, we must distinguish five types of pidgin in this area:

(i) local developments (e.g. the Aboriginal Pidgin English that developed at Port Macquarie)

(ii) imported pidgins (e.g. Chinese Pidgin English in the second half of the nineteenth century or Japanese Pidgin English around Broome)

(iii) mergers between local and imported pidgins (e.g. Aboriginal and Kanaka Pidgin in some parts of Queensland)

(iv) mergers of imported pidgins (e.g. Polynesian, Chinese and Melanesian Pidgin English in the Torres Straits)

(v) mergers of local pidgins (e.g. merger between Port Macquarie type Pidgin English and incipient Moreton Bay Pidgin English in Queensland, reported by Dutton (1983)).

The Australian situation further illustrates the important principle that, in the same geographical location, different varieties of Pidgin English may have been spoken either at the same (e.g. Chinese and Melanesian Pidgin English in coastal Queensland) or at different points in time (an example of the latter category being the replacement of a more Polynesian- by a Melanesian-type pidgin in the Torres Straits). Again, the importance of catastrophic events disrupting the continuity of pidgin transmission emerges. Examples include:

(i) the discontinuation of the Pacific labour trade and the resulting functional weakening of Queensland Kanaka English

(ii) the large-scale eradication of Tasmanian and New South Wales aborigines leading to the disappearance of Pidgin English in these areas

(iii) the resettlement of aboriginal and islander groups leading to the establishment of non-traditional communication communities with special linguistic pressures.

Among additional forces influencing the pidgin and creole situation in Australia the following deserve to be mentioned:

(i) the institutionalisation of a number of varieties for official purposes and, more recently, primary education

(ii) the presence of representatives of all major types, i.e. jargons, stabilised pidgins, expanded pidgins and creoles, at times simultaneously and within the same geographical area. This means that structural influence occurs not only between unrelated varieties but also within different stages of the same variety

(iii) the influence of the lexifier language English is manifested differentially at different times in different areas, e.g. minimally in the early period of Torres Straits pidgin and maximally in the varieties of the same language used by urban mainland Torres Straits groups.

Most of these factors mentioned here were not considered in any depth by the majority of previous investigators and considerable confusion exists. The following widespread assumptions stand in particular need of correction:

(1) It is not justified, as has been the case in Hancock's classifications, to distinguish a number of separate creoles in northern mainland Australia. As pointed out by Sandefur (1979:13):

> the findings of our survey indicate that the so-called 'pidgin English of the Kimberleys' is the same creole language as that spoken in the Roper River and Bambili areas of the Northern Territory; i.e. Kriol.

(2) Torres Straits pidgin (broken), however, has become a separate creole in recent years. As pointed out by Reinecke (et al 1975:584);

> Torres Straits English is intermediate linguistically, as well as geographically, between New Guinea Pidgin and Aboriginal Australian Pidgin English.

It appears to be the only variety that has been strongly influenced by Melanesian Pidgin English and Dixon's more general statement (1980:73) may stand in need of revision:

> The Australian Creoles are believed to have derived in part from Beach-la-Mar, a Melanesian pidgin that was spoken by Kanaka labourers brought from the South Sea Islands to work on Queensland sugar plantations in the late nineteenth century.

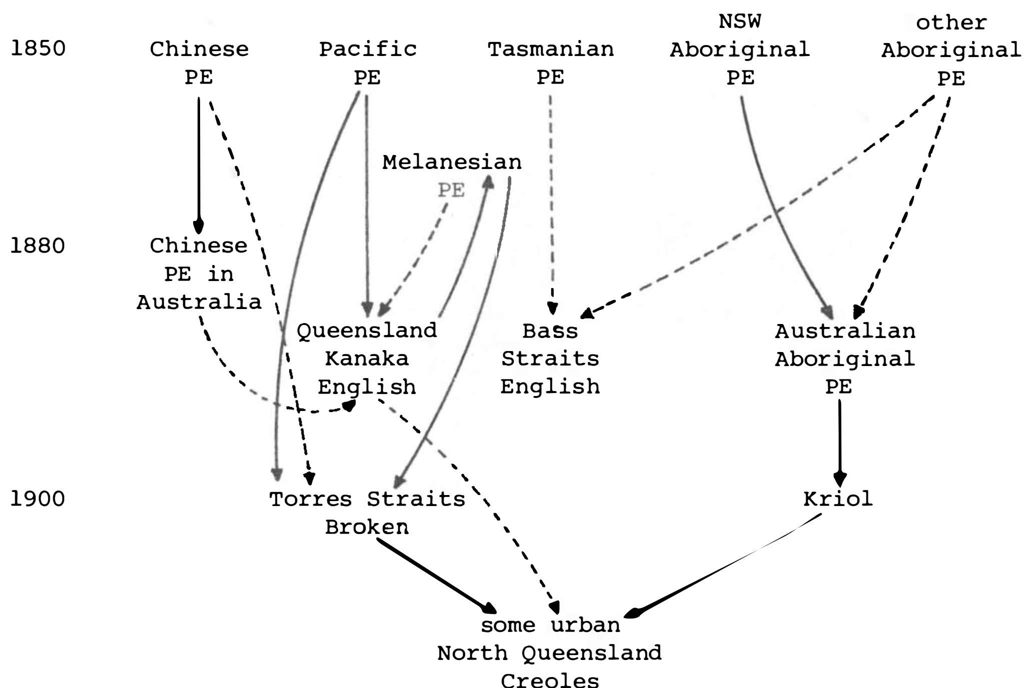
(3) The label Australian Pidgin English is potentially misleading. Hall's assessment of this 'language' appears to be based on an artificial overall-pattern grammar and not observations on actual spoken varieties:

> Even from the brief survey above, it is evident that, on the basis of both grammatical structure and vocabulary, Australian Pidgin is sufficiently different from Melanesian Pidgin to be classed as a separate pidgin language, not merely a subdivision of Melanesian Pidgin or of a more inclusive 'Beach-la-Mar' (as done by Churchill, Reinecke and others). (R.A. Hall 1943:267)

Instead, we appear to be dealing with a number of separate local developments which have become a more uniform phenomenon only in the more recent past; as a result of increased mobility, common political aspirations and, in some cases, standardisation. Note also that this label is used to refer to jargons, pidgins and creoles alike.

Whereas some of the just discussed complexities are reflected in the *Language atlas of the Pacific area,* map 24, the authors have opted for a synchronic view and therefore ignore the diverse historical character of what they refer to as 'Australian Pidgin'. Knowing that any attempt to suggest a more definite classification of Australian Pidgins and Creoles is likely to run into difficulties, I would nevertheless suggest the following tentative family 'network' (rather than tree):

English-based pidgins and creoles in Australia



strong influence ——→
weak influence -----→

(Note: Western Australian varieties such as Neo-Nyungar and influence of standard English not indicated)

4. DISCONTINUITY

4.1 General remarks

One of the most fundamental questions of historical linguistics is:

> In what sense is it possible for a language to undergo changes of the kind familiar from the historical grammars, and yet remain the same language? (Harris 1977:17)

Historical linguists working with 'normal' languages have chosen to either ignore the problem or to propose a number of ad hoc solutions, including the appeal to continuity of speech communities, intelligibility and geographic boundedness. More recently, linguists working on the description of linguistic continua have been able to show that historical continuity involves the addition of low level rules to a grammar and that the development from internal resources can be pictured as a continuum composed of implicationally patterned rules.

Occasional mention is made of discontinuities between grammars, but most of these discontinuities are seen to be the result of minor discrepancies between the grammars of successive generations rather than sudden breaks in a linguistic tradition. That the problem of identity from stage to stage is of a very different dimension when it comes to the description of pidgins and creoles has been stated by a number of observers, particularly concisely by Hoenigswald (1971:476):

> More than in the case of natural languages one expects to run into problems of identity from stage to stage. It is difficult enough to be quite sure, both in theory and in practice, when a given ordinary language is a descendant (under change) rather than a collateral relative of a given older language. It has been said that to discover a line of descent is to discriminate what has gotten handed down from mother to infant over the generations from what has passed through other channels. If this is true, the pidgins, with their special mechanism of exclusively secondary transmittal (?) should indeed be troublesome to place on a family tree. And if it is further the case that pidgins are typically born and then again dropped from use in shortlived bursts of activity, the whole linear notion of 'gradual' change is not even a superficially useful approximation to the truth, as it is for normal, primary languages. Still, the altering complexion of a pidgin-using *area* (say, the Caribbean) over the generations and centuries is surely an important and fit subject for diachronic study.

Discontinuity, in the case of the Pacific Pidgins, is manifested in a number of ways including:

(i) rapid changes in population composition and population movements

(ii) rapid structural change as a result of different functional requirements

(iii) changing patterns of language transmission

(iv) language replacement as a result of planning or other outside interference.

Let us consider a few case studies and their effects on our general argument.

4.2 Queensland Kanaka English

A closer scrutiny of historical sources of this language has led investigators such as Dutton and myself (Dutton and Mühlhäusler 1983) to suspect that we are dealing with three at least partly distinct varieties here, the first and earliest one being influenced by heavily anglicised Pacific Pidgin as spoken by the Loyalty Islanders, the second stage by New Hebridean Bichelamar and the third and last one by Solomon Islands Pidgin, though this is a rather idealised picture. The implications for comparative studies of Pacific Pidgins have been discussed in detail by Dutton (1980:107-109). Because of the importance of Dutton's remarks I would like to include the following lengthy quotation:

> This result is that when some fifty or so structural features were compared in CE, Papuan Pidgin English (PPE), Solomons Islands Pidgin (SIP), New Hebridean Pidgin (or Bichelamar) (NHP) and New Guinea Pidgin (or Tok Pisin or Neo-Melanesian Pidgin (NGP) the results suggest that CE is more like PPE, then SIP, then NHP and NGP approximately equal last. This is a surprising result given earlier speculations about the relationships between these languages and what we know of the labour trade, and one therefore that invites a little further comment.

Having accounted for the close similarities between Canefields English (CE = Kanaka English) and Papuan Pidgin English by drawing attention to the fact that many of the PPE sources do in fact reflect Torres Straits English (cf. Mühlhäusler 1978), Dutton continues (pp.108-109):

> The CE-SIP connection is, however, very surprising in view of the history of the labour trade and the dating of TL's and PS's speech that has been suggested above. Thus right up to the early 1890s there were always more New Hebrideans in Queensland than there were Solomon Islanders. The trade began by importing Loyalty Islanders and Hew Hebrideans and it was not till the mid-1870s that Solomon Islanders were being brought in in any numbers — see Chart. By this time the trade had been in operation for ten years which should have been long enough, as already noted, for a CE pidgin to have developed and stabilised as it was in constant use by white overseers and 'old chums' and imparted to 'new chums' as they arrived progressively every year. Not only that but it should have been long enough for it to have developed a distinctly New Hebridean 'flavour' which should have been transmitted to one and all who came later. Why then is CE more like SIP than NHP? Obviously one (CE) or the other (NHP) or both must have changed. At the moment there is no way of telling which of these (and perhaps other) possibilities is nearest the 'truth' or if there is some other explanation. However, given that in the latter part of the trade Solomon Islanders (generally called 'Marattas', a corrupted form of 'Malaita', the island homeland of the largest number of Solomon Islanders that came to Queensland) increasingly outnumbered New Hebrideans — see Chart — it is possible that CE changed from a New Hebridean-flavoured one to a Solomon Island-flavoured one in Queensland during that time.

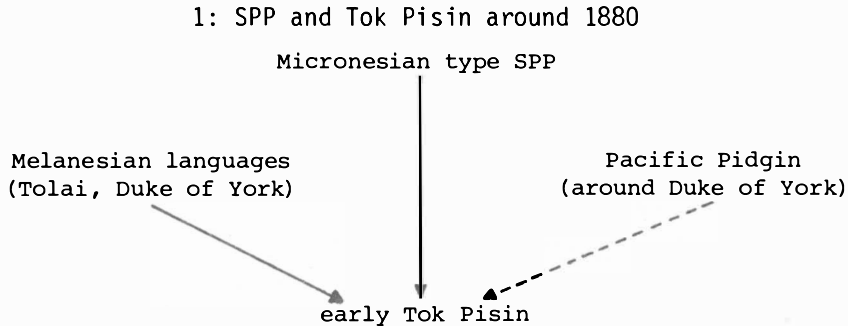
4.3 Samoan Plantation Pidgin (SPP)

The pattern of recruiting sketched for the Queensland plantations by Dutton is very similar for those in Samoa. In the initial years, the majority of recruits were drawn from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands and thus a variety of Micronesian Pidgin English prevailed on the plantations. From the mid-1870s first New Hebrideans and Solomon Islanders (both for a comparatively short period) and then Bismarck Archipelago Islanders were employed, a fact which is reflected

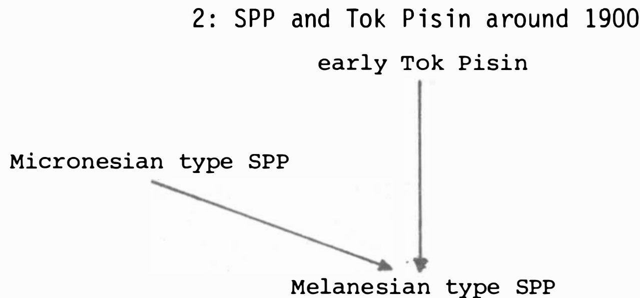
in the change of SPP to a language which is identical with Tok Pisin spoken in the New Guinea Islands at the same time.

Thus, we have the interesting case of two pidgins (SPP and Tok Pisin) whose role as donor and receiver language changes over a short period of time, as can be seen from the following schemes:

1: SPP and Tok Pisin around 1880



2: SPP and Tok Pisin around 1900



In fact, around 1900 there was only one speech community for SPP and Tok Pisin whose internal coherence was reinforced by intensive labour trade, mission and administrative contacts between German New Guinea and German Samoa. After 1914 contact between the two territories ceased and, lacking the numbers and functional status of Tok Pisin in New Guinea, SPP experienced both structural and functional fossilisation.

4.4 Tok Pisin

A comprehensive survey of the socio-historical context in which Tok Pisin developed is given by Mühlhäusler (1979). Some more recent evidence on its Samoan origin is provided by Mosel and Mühlhäusler (1982).

The earliest accounts of Pidgin English in the area of present-day Papua New Guinea date from the 1860s and 1870s when whalers and traders (most of them based in Samoa) entered into brief contacts with the indigenes of New Ireland, New Britain and the Duke-of-York Archipelago. The language samples I have obtained suggest a great deal of variation in this Jargon English, i.e. it constituted individual attempts of a small number of islanders to communicate

with their visitors rather than a socially institutionalised pidgin language. The use of these unstable varieties was dependant on the presence of Europeans. Considering the rapid turnover of personnel and the short average life of the trading posts, the life-span of each of these jargons must have been rather limited — a possible exception being the Duke of York Archipelago, where there may have been a more gradual transition to a stable pidgin. In any case, most of the earlier jargons had probably disappeared when Germany proclaimed New Guinea a colony and thus laid the foundations for more permanent culture contact.

Large-scale contacts between Europeans and New Guineans began around 1880 when increasing numbers of islanders were recruited for the German plantations of Samoa. By 1890 about 1000 had been returned from Samoa, bringing with them a better knowledge of European ways and, above all, a stable pidgin, Samoan Plantation Pidgin English, learnt during their indenture. There is indeed a very rapid increase in the number of Pidgin English speakers soon after inception of labour trade with Samoa. The German trader Hernsheim is reported to have noticed dramatic changes, as pointed out by Schuchardt:

> In New Britain, where, according to his information, no native understood any European language some seven years ago, now everyone, particularly the children, speak the English in question, sometimes quite fluently. He has often heard natives make use of this idiom among themselves when they are talking about Whites or their possessions. (reported in Schuchardt 1883, translation 1979)

A firm pattern of language transmission soon became established. Young men between the ages of sixteen and twenty went to a plantation, mainly to Samoa before 1900 and increasingly to plantations in other parts of German New Guinea thereafter. On their return they brought with them a good knowledge of Tok Pisin (as the stabilised plantation language deserves to be called), the rudiments of which they taught to the next generation of young men. The social functions of the language were equally well defined. It was used primarily as a means of vertical communication between Europeans and Papua New Guineans, and secondarily to talk about European social and economic innovations, particularly those relating to the plantation economy. Hence the name Tok Vaitiman, which was used to refer to Tok Pisin until the mid-1920s.

The fact that English was withdrawn as a language between 1884 and 1914 had two principal consequences. It greatly sped up the process of stabilisation of Tok Pisin as a system separate from English and it led to incipient relexification with German words. By 1920 up to about 25 per cent of the 1000 word lexical inventory was of German origin (cf. Mühlhäusler 1979b:199-207). Both trends were reversed with the departure of the Germans and their replacement by Australian settlers and administrators. As a result, in these areas where contact with Europeans was most pronounced, Tok Pisin became increasingly anglicised and unstable, as can be seen from many contemporary complaints, for instance the following one in the *Rabaul Times* of 8 November 1935):

> Unfortunately, ever since the Australian occupation of New Guinea, the correct pidgin English has been steadily undergoing a process of mutilation and corruption, until at this present stage — after over twenty years of barbarous treatment — pidgin-English has become almost unrecognizable and in many instances is unintelligible to the native.

The writer of this editorial characterises the language further as:

> ... an interchange of bastardized expressions; a sort of silly chop-suey English, bereft of procedure and devoid of limitations; only half understood by the native and at times misinterpreted with dire results to the native who, in all good faith, executes what he has understood to be an order, but finds to his discomfort that the "master" or the "Missus" had an entirely different object in mind. These misunderstood instructions are, at times, interpreted as disobedience by the person delivering the order and unjust punishment is meted out to the "boy", whose knowledge of mutilated English has not been sufficient to understand the instruction.

At the same time, in the more isolated rural areas, Tok Pisin became firmly established as an indigenous lingua franca, experiencing considerable structural and functional expansion. It was used as the medium of intercommunication by speakers of many hundred different vernaculars, which, among other things, meant that the role of Tok Pisin's original substratum languages, the closely related languages of the Blanche Bay-Duke of York and New Ireland area, became increasingly unimportant. The learning age dropped from 18+ to 12 and younger, though the plantations continued to function as the 'high schools' for linguistic proficiency in Tok Pisin. As regards its social functions, it had developed into a means of expressing all aspects of the newly emerged contact culture, which is characterised by Mead (1931:144) as follows:

> In the mandated Territory of New Guinea a strange, widely flung culture is growing up, a new culture bred of the contact of the white man and the native, a culture that is breaking down barriers of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years old. Where before each small Melanesian community lived unto itself alone, acknowledging kinship possibly with a half-dozen other villages but political relationships with no group outside its narrow boundaries, a camaraderie is developing which extends up the Sepik far beyond Marienburg into the very heart of the New Guinea mainland, down into the old German Solomons, along the precipitous coasts of New Britain, into the Admiralties. It is a strange culture; almost all those affected by it are males between the ages of twelve and thirty; their homes are scattered far and wide, so that it is necessary to "go, go-go-go, two fellows Sunday (two weeks)" to reach the places from which they came, but they speak a common language, pidgin English, or "talk boy", and their canons are homogeneous and simple. This is the culture of the work boy, the boy who has made, or is about to make, "paper" with the white man, as plantation hand, member of a boat's crew, house boy, child's nurse, wharf laborer or laborer in the gold fields.

Note that Tok Pisin is now referred to as Tok Boi, 'the language of the indigene in European employment'.

The events of the Second World War brought an end to this situation. The breakdown of the Australian administration, the missions and the plantation economy, accompanied by large-scale population displacement, led to an almost

total disruption of the traditional forms of language transmission. As a result, a whole generation of Papua New Guineans grew up with little or no knowledge of Tok Pisin. Mead (1956:371) remarks:

> These young men in their early twenties represent a particularly difficult problem because the war cut them off from both the continuing teaching they would have received from the Mission and from the ordinary sort of long-term work for the European in which their elders had been schooled. They were just reaching adolescence when the Japanese occupation started, and very few were old enough to do much work for the Americans. Their knowledge of Neo-Melanesian is inferior to that of the older men and they do not have the same sense of free communication with Europeans which their elders learned as work boys.

The resumption of Australian control in 1945 did not mean a return to old patterns. Instead, an ambitious program for the economic and educational progress of the country was pursued. Next to an increasing urbanisation and social and geographic mobility these policies meant formal instruction in the English language for a large number of the population, even in the remote areas. The result was the development, at least partly independent of the earlier tradition of Tok Pisin, of a new anglicised variety of the language, a kind of post-pidgin continuum. Its main result is the crystallisation of a separate sociolect, Urban Pidgin, which is only partially intelligible to speakers of the traditional rural Tok Pisin.

The influence of Australian English culture and language receded somewhat in the years immediately prior to independence (1970 to 1976). During this period, Tok Pisin was adopted as the language of nationalism and its independence from English was stressed, a fact reflected in the increasing use of the name Tok Pisin.

Most recently, yet another significant change has occurred. Instead of becoming a strongly centralised nation, independent Papua New Guinea is characterised by strong regionalism, reflected in powerful regional governments. In some areas, Tok Pisin is being superseded by local lingue franche and Laycock (1980) predicts social and linguistic compartmentalisation of the language, including its structural decline in some areas.

This very sketchy survey of the external conditions underlying the structural development of Tok Pisin makes it clear that, during a timespan of little more than 100 years, we find:

(i) a number of significant breaks in the composition of the speech community, including the decline in the importance of European speakers, the severing of the links with Samoa, the decline of the plantations and compartmentalisation into regional and social varieties

(ii) several changes in the substratum and superstratum languages, including the change from English to German and English again, the decline of Tolai and a fact which I have not discussed in the paper, the growing importance of speakers of non-Melanesian languages, in particular Highlanders

(iii) a number of changes in the social functions, mainly a development from a master-servant language to an indigenous lingua franca to either regional lingua franca or creole.

All these external factors have left traces in the linguistic development of Tok Pisin. It is possible to identify at least three and possibly five qualitatively different and mutually only partially or hardly intelligible varieties. That this has not gone unnoticed by the users of this language can be seen from the following translation of an account given to me by Mr Joseph K. of Lorengau:

> I want to talk about what Tok Pisin is like. As regards Tok Pisin, it looks as if, in our present-day generation, one can distinguish three types of language. The first variety is that which was used when the Germans came; they used it when the place was still uncivilised. None of us would be a good friend to the white people. Well, this language of the past has been abandoned. It was not a very good language. Some people used to speak it, but today we find it very hard to learn, many things don't sound correct. As regards my generation today, we came after them, our language is a bit clearer. Pidgin was not like a real language. All sorts of bits of language came from the various areas of New Guinea. Thus, a real language developed, the one we speak today. Now, the development of the language spoken by my generation has come to an end and now today there is a new language again. Now, they speak it today because boys have attended high school and they are well educated. They are used to Pidgin and they are used to putting quite a few little bits of English into it. Some bits of difficult language don't fit into Pidgin. Well, they bring some bits of language from English, they abbreviate it, they lengthen it. But, in the time of the ancestors this didn't happen, it was very different; we are not able to understand their language.

4.5 Pidgin English in Hawaii

Whereas Carr (1972:xiv) appears to suggest a continuous development from the early seaport jargons (hapa haole) spoken around 1800 to present day pidgin and and creole varieties of Da Kine, she has to admit (p.xiv): 'Unfortunately we are without records of the many intermediate stages in this change'.

A very different account is given by Bickerton (1979:8ff):

> ... over the last few years I've been privileged to be in one of the few places in the world where a pidgin language still survives — Hawaii. It survives there for the very simple reason that the Hawaiian pidgin does not date from the first European contact. The first European contact was strictly between English speakers and Hawaiian speakers and produced a language known as *hapa haole* which is quite distinct from the subsequent pidgin. And I can tell you in one sentence how it's distinct from the subsequent pidgin. You take any piece of *hapa haole,* and you can reconstitute it into English by adding the missing morphemes. It's like a kind of game, you know, like a puzzle — reconstitute the *hapa haole* by adding the missing morphemes. But you take a piece of plantation pidgin dating from the post-*hapa haole*

> period and then put morphemes in there to reconstitute it into English, and there's *no way* you can do it. It's all back to front; no way by simply adding a few grammatical morphemes to it can you make anything that looks even remotely like English. So we have the advantage then that the real pidgin only began, it didn't *even* begin, in 1876. Up until 1876 in Hawaii there were only English and Hawaiian. After the passage of the Sugar Act of 1876 which enabled people to get good prices for their sugar in the U.S., when the sugar industry boomed, then people had to get labor fast. They brought in a rapid succession of Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, Fillipino and large numbers of other smaller groups. But in the first instance, when a pidgin was formed, since the previous plantations founded prior to 1876 had been staffed by Hawaiians and since the language of work, the language of control in these plantations had been Hawaiian, the first pidgin in Hawaii was Pidgin Hawaiian. It even had a name: it is called *olelo hapiai* which means literally 'language of the wet taro' because the first kind of funny Hawaiian that was spoken in Hawaii was spoken by Chinese who were growers of wetland taro. So, this language flourished, unknown to linguistic science entirely, between 1876 and about 1896; and gradually, gradually as Hawaiian began to die and as English became more powerful, Pidgin English took over. So Pidgin English really only dates from the turn of the century.

I do not know to what extent one is justified in speaking of a unitary plantation variety of Pidgin English in Hawaii. The historical evidence would seem to suggest the simultaneous existence of a number of different ethnic and geographic varieties, though this could only be verified if more linguistic details became known.

4.6 Fijian Pidgin English

Our last example, Fijian Pidgin English, again clearly illustrates the difficulties involved in counting Pidgin Englishes in the Pacific. My discussion is based principally on Siegel's valuable 1982 analysis. Contrary to earlier claims that Pidgin English was never spoken in Fiji, Siegel established its presence for a considerable time-span. Thus, Fijians used some form of English in the very early contacts around the middle of the nineteenth century (Siegel 1982:10):

> There is some evidence that South Seas Jargon was used to some extent in Fiji by those involved in sailing. In the above examples, all the speakers had been abroad in ships sailing around the Pacific.

However, since this jargon English was used and learned by Fijians outside their native islands, it would be a misnomer to refer to it as Fijian Jargon English. Instead, it is simply South Seas Jargon English (SJJ) spoken by a few Fijians.

A very similar situation holds for the early labour trade. Siegel (p.27) points out that some recruiting for Fiji was carried out in Pidgin English and that this language may even have been used on a number of plantations. It is probable

that Melanesian Pidgin (MP) was used for communication between labourers of different language groups on some plantations while Fijian was used for the same purpose on others. There is little evidence of MP being spoken by Fijians except those of mixed race or those who worked or travelled on ships. There is no evidence of any stabilised 'Fijian Plantation Pidgin'.

Again, it is principally a language spoken outside the country or by visiting (short-term resident) outsiders. Finally, in the last years of labour trade, a stable Pidgin English was brought to Fiji, but again it was used in such a way that Fijian influence could not assert itself. Siegel (1982:32) remarks:

> The increase in the number of 'old hands', especially from Queensland, increased the amount of Melanesian Pidgin spoken in Fiji so that even some Fijians became familiar with it. However, there is still no evidence for a stabilised Fiji variety of pidgin English.

Siegel's article clearly illustrates the general principle that geographical classification is a very inadequate means of identifying pidgin languages.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Having criticised earlier attempts at counting and classifying pidgin Englishes in the Pacific and having considered a number of case studies, I would now like to return to the original problem of identifying and counting pidgins and pull together the argument explicit and implicit in the discussion so far. Generally speaking, the problems of determining what constitutes a (separate) language and what determines identity of a language over time are even more prominent with pidgins than in ordinary language identification and classification. The traditional structural and social criteria for setting apart separate languages are virtually useless for solving most problems of the Pacific pidgin situation. To be precise:

(i) Lexicostatistical criteria (cognate counts) can be at best a very rough guideline since there is a common lexifier language, English. Consequently, even historically unrelated pidgins may be classified as the same language, and most varieties would count as dialects of English (see Wurm and Laycock 1961).

(ii) Structure statistical methods, such as employed by Dutton (1980) and Clark (1980), are problematic, since the source of numerous pidgin structures is universal grammar. The presence of a relativiser we *who, which, that* in Tok Pisin, Bislama, West African Pidgin English and Torres Straits Creole, for instance, appears to be the result of independent developments rather than shared history or borrowing from the same source. Still, there is some limited potential in structural comparison.

(iii) Intelligibility is a very difficult criterion to apply to pidgins, since they are makeshift interlingual means of communication in the first place. Even within a relatively stable pidgin-using group, there may be considerably more misunderstanding than in a group of speakers sharing a first language. In many instances intelligibility is affected by accent rather than lexical or structural properties of the pidgin involved. At best, this criterion will allow investigators to group together more or less readily intelligible varieties.

(iv) The intention to speak the same language, again, is not a reliable measure since in numerous cases pidgin speakers intend to speak English and are unaware of the separate linguistic status of their pidgin. The scarcity of names for different pidgin varieties is a further indication of the fact that, in many cases, there is no clearly defined target language.

(v) Political status has become a consideration only in the very recent past. However, political support for a language such as Bislama is no guarantee that we are dealing with a single rather than two or three separate pidgins.

The problems of isolating and classifying pidgins has not been greatly alleviated by supplementing the above conventional measures of language status with special criteria for pidgins. Thus:

(vi) Location has turned out to be an unreliable basis for pidgin identification since the same language may be spoken in a number of different areas. Thus, before 1900 Pidgin English spoken in Samoa and the Bismarck Archipelago was the same language from a structural, lexical and sociolinguistic view, and the Pidgin English of the Kiwai Islanders of Papua (cf. Landtman 1918) was the same language as Torres Straits pidgin.[1] On the other hand, pidgin English spoken in the same location may be a historically unrelated or only weakly related language, an example being early Pacific Pidgin and later Tok Pisin in the Duke-of-York New Britain area. Location is a particularly dangerous concept as regards the formative years of Pacific pidgins, since they developed against a background of large-scale population movements and in a context of fluid and changing political boundaries. It is only in the context of the new nation states such as Papua New Guinea or Vanuatu (New Hebrides) that political, geographic and linguistic boundaries begin to coincide more closely. A further danger with the use of location for identification and classification purposes is that the location has been either too general (as in the case of Australian Pidgin English or New Guinea Pidgin English[2] or too narrowly-based (as with Bagot Creole, or Norfolk Island Creole).

(vii) The problem of identity over time deserves special attention with pidgins. The name given to a variety at point A in time should not be transferred uncritically to a variety spoken in the same location at a later time. The name Beach-la-Mar and present day Vanuatu Bislama have frequently been confused. Clark (1980:4) rightly points out that:

> There seems to be no justification for treating the name as if it referred to a distinct language apart from the general pidgin history of the region.

(viii) It follows from (vii) that the question 'How many pidgins?' can be asked meaningfully only for well-defined points in time. There have been considerable changes in the number of pidgins spoken in the entire Pacific area as well as in individual locations over the last 150 years,[3] involving both convergent and divergent developments.

(ix) It is of the utmost importance to distinguish unstable, individual solutions to cross-linguistic communication in the Pacific (Jargon English) from stable social solutions with recognisable linguistic norms (pidgins proper). The number of the former must have been very large indeed,

approaching the number of individuals availing themselves of a reduced form of English in communication across language boundaries. However, they were of low structural stability and their functional life depended on the continuation of a number of forms of contact. In the absence of any firm patterns of transmission, there is little continuity of linguistic tradition other than a number of lexical stereotypes and universally motivated structural properties.[4] The development of stable pidgins, on the other hand, occurs only in very special situational contexts, such as plantations, in highly multilingual areas where a plantation pidgin is introduced as a lingua franca, and in stable stratified 'colonial-type' societies such as Northern Australia. A further requirement for stability is the relative absence of English as a model language. These conditions were met in relatively few areas.

(x) Not only should one distinguish between jargons and pidgins, but in addition, the fact that pidgins can change in structural complexity over time should be recognised: stable pidgins can become expanded pidgins or creoles. Whereas the transition from an expanded pidgin to a creole (as in the case of Tok Pisin) is a gradual phenomenon and thus allows us to classify both first and second language varieties as the same language, creolisation of less developed pidgins (as in the case of Australian Aboriginal Pidgin and Kriol) poses a problem in that the absence of a gradient transition from one variety to the next suggests that we are better served with the recognition of two separate languages.[5]

(xi) The notions of structural and lexical differences have to be treated with great care: structural differences can reflect different stages in the linguistic development from lesser to greater complexity, differential influence of the prestige lexifier language (e.g. in the case of Rural and anglicised Urban Tok Pisin), influence from other languages (in particular areal features) or a different historical provenance.

Having raised these points, I would like to conclude with some of the lessons that can be learnt from this exercise. While other linguists have come to some of these conclusions, I am not aware that a comprehensive assessment of the type given here has appeared elsewhere. The implications for the study of pidgin English in the Pacific and for comparative pidgin/creole studies in general are:

(xii) Pidgin Englishes identified for random localities and at random points in time are an unsound basis for comparative work. The only sound basis for comparison is longitudinal evidence of a pidgin developing within well-defined speech communities.

(xiii) Linguistic differences and similarities are not a good basis for establishing genetic relationships. As pointed out by Dutton (1980:109-110):

> Finally, a word of warning to those who may be tempted to equate high degrees of similarity with closeness of genetic relationship. It may of course be so but here, where we are dealing with a set of languages all based on English the task of distinguishing between similarity due to genetic relationship (as indicated by shared innovations, etc.) and similarity due to common borrowing and/or convergence or drift, is particularly difficult, and may in fact be impossible. The case is in fact a particularly challenging one for the historical linguist.

(xiv) In undertaking developmental analysis, or in writing common core grammars, care must be taken not to fix historically unrelated languages.[6]

(xv) Whereas there is no single way of establishing whether one is dealing with one or more pidgin languages, it is essential that the same criteria of identification should be used for comparative, classificatory or mapping purposes. The suitability of the criteria in the following list will depend on the purposes of the investigation:
(a) Is the language spoken in a well-defined area?
(b) Is there a single identifiable speech community?
(c) Are there socially and geographically conditioned varieties in the same area and what is their linguistic status? What is their folk-classificatory status?
(d) Are there considerable differences in complexity within the same area/language community?
(e) Is there a linguistic continuum between more and less complex varieties?
(f) Are there institutionalised patterns of transmission?
(g) Are there indigenous and scientific names for the pidgin under investigation?
(h) What are the lexical differences? How long have they been in existence?
(j) What are the structural differences? What is the most plausible explanation for them?

Not having applied a consistent set of criteria to the pidgins I have been dealing with I am not going to stick out my neck and put a number to the Pidgin Englishes of the Pacific. However, I wish I had thought about these matters earlier, for it might have prevented me from identifying, as separate varieties, languages such as Papuan Pidgin English (Mühlhäusler 1978b). The answer to the question of pidgin English identification is not likely to be forthcoming for some time, as a great deal of data analysis still needs to be carried out. However, it is hoped that it will provide, one day, very significant insights into the nature of language relationships in the Pacific and language relationships in general. The question 'what is *language*?' may in fact turn out to make little sense until we have settled what a language is.

NOTES

[1]Research into the history of Torres Straits Pidgin has been severely hampered by the investigators' failure to realise that the masses of recorded samples of Kiwai Pidgin constituted valuable historical material for Torres Straits Pidgin.

[2]The confusion of Tok Pisin with Papuan Pidgin English (historically very weakly related and structurally and lexically quite different) has led authors such as Bauer (1974) to construct quite unreal 'overall pattern' grammatical descriptions incorporating both pidgins.

[3]This is the time-depth for Pidgin English in this area. I leave aside the question of age of older varieties which may have been imported from elsewhere.

[4]However, such universal properties were often replaced by other strategies such as carry over of first language patterns by jargon-using individuals.

[5]It is well known that any form of creolisation involves a certain amount of language creation from scratch and hence affects historical continuity.

[6]An example of such an attempt is that by Sankoff (1977), where the development of clitisation is extrapolated from data from Queensland Kanana English, Beach-la-Mar and Tok Pisin.

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