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Chapter 2

Linguistic Encounter and Responses in the South Pacific

Darrell Tryon

Introduction

In terms of encounters, what characterises the Pacific is the multiplicity and variety of its indigenous languages, perhaps the highest language density in the world. Prior to European contact, the vehicles of communication between communities which did not share the same mother tongue were many and varied, ranging from sign language, a tradition of multilingualism in Oceanic languages, foreigner talk, or simplified language registers, including pidgin varieties of indigenous languages. Pacific Islanders of different language backgrounds came together for purposes of forming alliances or for trade and exchange, or later, in the context of settlement or colonisation.

When the first encounters took place between Europeans and Oceanic populations, as far back as the sixteenth century, it was during voyages of discovery, quickly followed by trade and commerce, evangelisation and ultimately colonisation. After initial encounters, some of the indigenous Pacific Islander groups interacted with their visitors on their home ground, as with suppliers of sandalwood, beche-de-mer and salt pork, while many others had their encounters with Europeans in a maritime environment, far from home, as crewmen on ships around the Pacific or as plantation labourers overseas. These encounters between speakers of different languages resulted in the development of a number of Pacific pidgins and creoles whose lexicon is principally derived from English, as well as simplified registers of indigenous languages.

Language Distribution in the Pacific

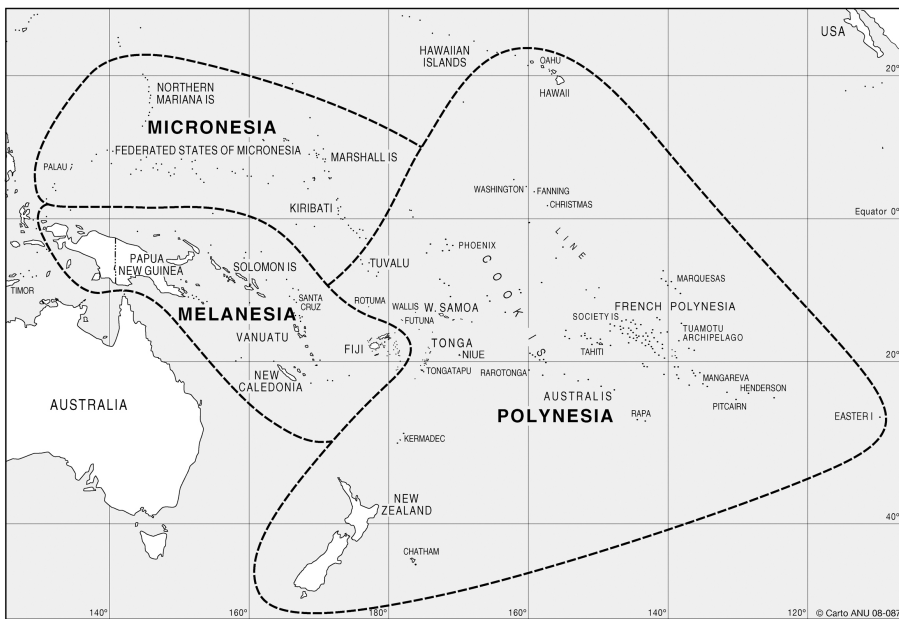
A necessary first step in explaining these developments is a brief overview of the distribution and groupings of the indigenous languages of the Pacific region.

There are approximately 6,000 distinct languages spoken in the world today, of which nearly 25 percent, or 1,500, are spoken in the Pacific Islands region (here defined as the great island of New Guinea and all the islands of Oceania to the east, as far as Easter Island). For purposes of this discussion, Australia and its indigenous languages are excluded. All that needs be said about them here

is that they constitute a group of genetically related languages, but are unrelated to the languages of New Guinea and Greater Oceania.

In the island Pacific there are two major language groups. The first group is known as Papuan, a group of some 750 languages which extends right along the central mountain chain of the great island of New Guinea. To the west, Papuan languages are also found on the Indonesian islands of Alor, Pantar and Halmahera, and in newly independent East Timor. To the east, Papuan languages are also found in the Bismarck Archipelago, in New Britain, New Ireland and Bougainville. There are also Papuan languages spoken in the Solomon Islands. It has now been demonstrated that roughly 450 of the Papuan languages are genetically related (Pawley 1998), members of the Trans New Guinea Family of languages, first identified by Wurm, McElhanon and Voorhoeve in the 1970s. While it remains to be proved that the remaining 300 Papuan languages are genetically related to each other and to the languages of the Trans New Guinea Family, linguists are optimistic that all of the Papuan languages will ultimately be shown to be genetically related. The Papuan languages are considered to be quite ancient, as archaeological evidence indicates that mainland New Guinea has been settled for approximately 50,000 years, while dates of more than 30,000 have been demonstrated for New Ireland, and more than 20,000 for Bougainville and parts of the Solomon Islands (Spriggs 1997).

Figure 2.1. Australia and the Pacific, showing conventional contemporary divisions of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia.



Map courtesy ANU Cartographic Services, RSPAS, ANU, Canberra.

The Austronesian languages, on the other hand, are believed to be much younger, having had their origins in Taiwan and/or the south coast of mainland China about 6,000 years ago. The Austronesian languages, more than 1,000, extend from Taiwan (where they are spoken by the indigenous population), through the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, pockets of mainland Southeast Asia, Madagascar and then eastward around the coasts of the great island of New Guinea, down through the Melanesian chain as far as Fiji, then further eastward to include all of the indigenous languages of Polynesia and Micronesia (see figure 2.1). The Austronesian languages are all genetically related, roughly half of them belonging to a single Oceanic subgroup, which includes all of the Austronesian languages east of Geelvinck Bay, about 130 degrees east longitude. The Austronesian-speaking peoples migrated from Southeast Asia to the New Britain/New Ireland area about 4,000 years ago, before moving rapidly southeast about 3,500 years ago to people first, the islands of the Melanesian chain, and then the islands further east and north, Polynesia and Micronesia (Spriggs 1997).

What characterises the Oceanic region is the number and diversity of indigenous languages. A summary table will suffice for present purposes, as follows:

Table 2.1. Oceanic indigenous languages.

Country	Austronesian	Papuan	Total
PNG	220	540	760
Solomons	56	7 ¹	63
Vanuatu	110	0	110
N. Caledonia	28	0	28
Fiji	2	0	2
Polynesia	35	0	35
Micronesia	15	0	15

The major subgroups of the Oceanic subgroup of Austronesian are discussed in Tryon (1995) and Ross (1995). They are not relevant to this discussion except to note that nearly half of the Polynesian languages are spoken *outside* Polynesia, in Melanesia and Micronesia, where they are known as Polynesian Outlier languages. These languages are considered to have been present in their current locations for approximately 800 years.

The language diversity which marks the Oceanic region is considered to be the result not only of long-term isolation, due to geographical factors, and inter-group hostility, but also because of the considerable language contact between Papuan and Austronesian languages, between Papuan languages themselves, and also between Polynesian Outlier and stay-at-home Austronesian languages in Island Melanesia (Lynch 1981; Pawley 1981).

The Vectors of Pacific Encounters with Outsiders

Trade and commerce in its various guises was the first and perhaps the major catalyst which brought Pacific Islanders and outsiders together. The port of Sydney was of singular importance in this regard, as the whaling and sealing industry in the Pacific began there as early as 1794. Between 1788, the date of the founding of the Colony of New South Wales, and 1840 there was extremely busy maritime traffic criss-crossing the Pacific (summarised in figure 2.2). Ships came to Sydney from London, via the Cape of Good Hope, bringing colonists, administrators and convicts. On the return journey they sailed north to Canton and Manila, via Fiji or Pohnpei (Ponape), to pick up cargoes of tea and silk. It was obviously unprofitable to sail empty from Sydney to Canton, so the British sought a lucrative cargo to sell to the Chinese. This took the form of sandalwood, beche-de-mer and mother-of-pearl, collected in the Pacific Islands and often brought back to Sydney for loading into larger ships for the voyage to China.

So it was that sandalwood was collected in large quantities in Fiji from the turn of the nineteenth century. As stands were exhausted there by 1811, the traders went as far as the Marquesas as early as 1817 in a rush to obtain this most lucrative commodity. The sandalwood trade was to become a major industry in Melanesia too, after the discovery of large stands on Erromango (Vanuatu) in 1826, its heyday being from approximately 1840–60, both in Vanuatu and New Caledonia (Shineberg 1967). Labourers came from Micronesia and Polynesia to cut and stack the wood ready for shipment, mixing and communicating with Island Melanesians. Apart from whaling and sealing, and the beche-de-mer trade mentioned above, another long distance trade connected Tahiti and Sydney: between 1804 and 1830 more than 3,000,000 pounds of salted pork were imported to Australia from curing plants in today's French Polynesia.

One of the major ports of call in the Pacific was Pohnpei in the Caroline Islands of Micronesia, a convenient lay-over stop between Sydney and Canton, and a very popular lay-over choice with the Pacific whaling fleet (Hezel 1979). Pohnpei was a real melting pot, with a large cosmopolitan population by 1840, consisting of maritime crewmen of many races and Pacific Islanders from all corners of Oceania (Tryon and Charpentier 2004). Communication was carried out mainly in a developing Pacific Pidgin English or South Seas English. There were many other commercial centres in the South Pacific, such as Kosrae, Nauru, Suva and Honolulu, for example.

Of course the greatest movement of Pacific Islanders from their home islands occurred from 1863 until 1906, the so-called “blackbirding” period. This was occasioned first by the American Civil War, which created a severe cotton shortage in Europe. Melanesian recruits, first from southern Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides) and the Loyalty Islands, went to work on the plantations in Queensland, Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia. Once the Civil War was over, planters turned to sugarcane and plantations expanded rapidly, as far as remote North Queensland. Melanesian labourers were recruited for a contract period of three years, beginning in southern Vanuatu and slowly moving north to the Solomon Islands by 1870 and the Bismarck Archipelago of today’s Papua New Guinea by 1880. During the forty years of the recruiting period, some 100,000 Melanesians were displaced from their home islands, many for the duration of several contracts (Moore 1985; Shineberg 1999).

As we have seen above, Island Melanesia is characterised by a multiplicity of local distinct vernacular languages, with over one hundred spoken in Vanuatu alone. The recruiters were well aware of this and used to communicate with their charges in what was to become Pacific Pidgin English. They also had a policy of deliberately separating groups of same-language speakers and putting them with speakers of languages from other islands, on the well-known “divide and rule” principle. This had the effect of creating very favourable conditions for the growth and development of Pacific Pidgin, to such an extent that by the mid-1880s a generalised form of Pidgin was spoken across much of the Pacific.

Other vectors which resulted in contact between Pacific Islanders of different language backgrounds were indigenous voyages of exploration, settlement or even conquest. For archaeologists have told us, and linguistic evidence has demonstrated, that there were many deliberate voyages and quite a number of drift voyages around and across the Pacific, the most striking being the surprisingly high number of Polynesian languages spoken in Melanesia and Micronesia, often close to and interacting with existing populations.

Another major vector was the evangelisation of the Pacific, beginning with the arrival of the London Missionary Society clergy in Tahiti in 1797. The Christian message spread rapidly westward, reaching Island Melanesia in 1839. In addition to the European missionaries, Polynesian pastors or “teachers” played an important role in the islands of Melanesia.

Finally, and perhaps of greatest impact, was the colonisation process, whereby European powers, following the Christian missionaries, gradually annexed and colonised the islands of the Pacific, introducing major world languages, such as English, French, German and Spanish.

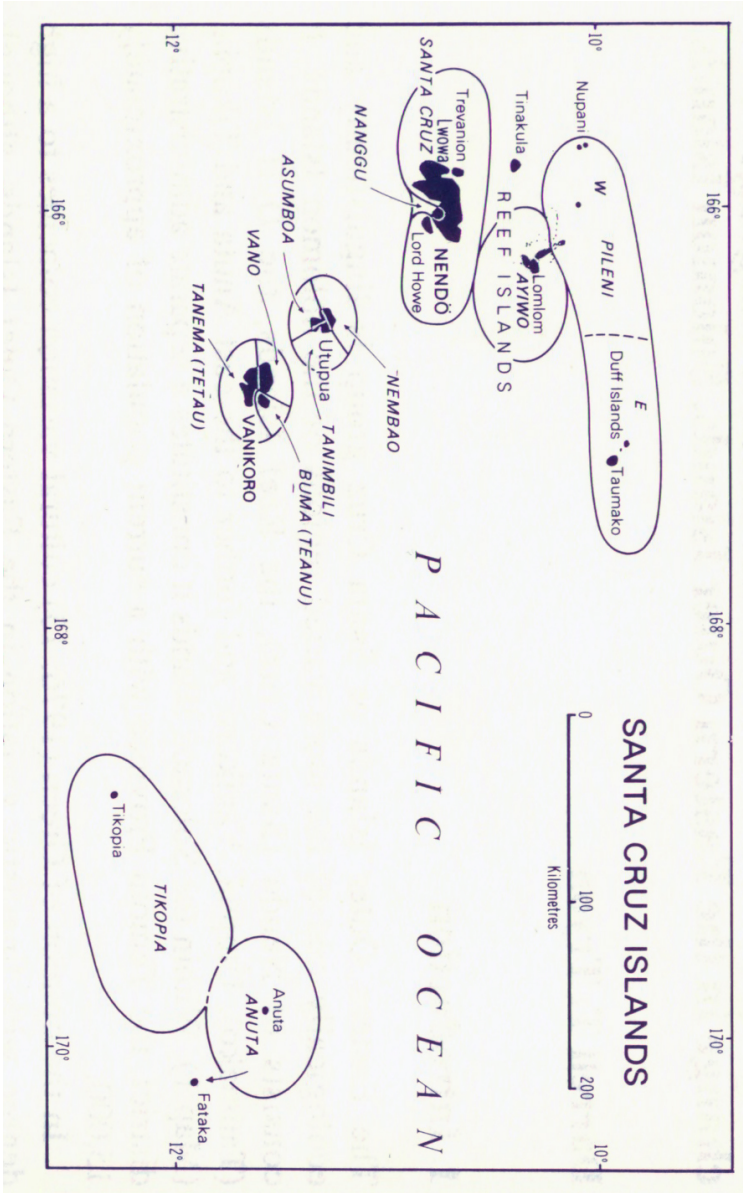
Pre-Contact Encounters and Linguistic Responses

Prior to the arrival of the European explorers in the Pacific, and independently of this, even in the colonial period, Pacific Islanders speaking different languages were in frequent contact, often in the context of trade and exchange but also in the process of colonisation and settlement or re-settlement. The major contact here was between Austronesian speakers and already long-established populations of Papuan speakers, whose arrival predated that of the Austronesians by many millennia. Indeed, it is to this very contact that the great linguistic diversity, even within Austronesian languages, is attributed in Melanesia today.

Some of the languages have interacted to such an extent that it is sometimes difficult to determine whether one is dealing with an Austronesian or a Papuan language. Such is the case with Maisin, in the Northern Province of Papua New Guinea, for example, or indeed with Äiwoo (Reefs) and Nendö (Santa Cruz) in the Te Motu Province of the Solomon Islands.² Another well-known example is Hiri Motu, the pidgin variety of Motu, an Austronesian language spoken around Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. This language evolved as a result of trading voyages between the Port Moresby area and the Gulf of Papua, where Austronesian pottery was exchanged for sago and other food products. Pidgin languages, of which there are some 140 in the world, are born of necessity to communicate, usually in a trading context. Even among Austronesian languages, trade languages were born, such as that used in the famous *kula* ring in the Papuan Tip area of Papua New Guinea.

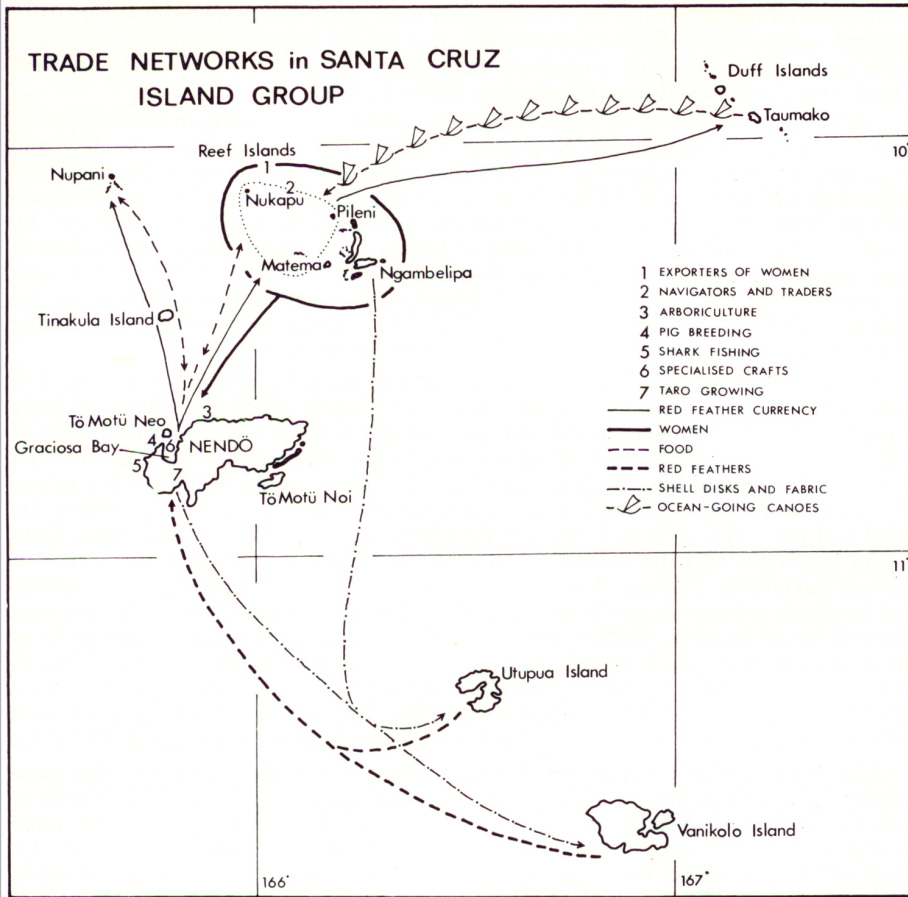
The most striking linguistic changes are a direct result of contact between Melanesian and Polynesian language communities. There are some sixteen Polynesian Outlier languages, Polynesian languages located in Melanesia (with a few in Micronesia) as a result of back migrations some 500–800 years ago (see figure 2.3). These Polynesian languages, a readily identifiable subgroup of Oceanic Austronesian, have interacted with many Melanesian languages, resulting in significant morpho-syntactic and lexical changes to both the Melanesian and Polynesian languages. One example is the Mele-Ifira language of Vanuatu, a Polynesian Outlier language contiguous to a Melanesian language, South Efatese. As a result of prolonged contact and evident bilingualism, among other features, the Polynesian language has partially adopted the Melanesian inalienable possession system. Thus, instead of the expected *To-ku tama* “my father,” we have *Tama-ku* “my father.”

Figure 2.3. "Languages of the Eastern Outer Islands."



Source: Darrell T. Tryon, "Language contact and contact-induced language change in the Eastern Outer Islands, Solomon Islands", in Tom Dutton and Darrell T. Tryon eds., *Language Contact and Change in the Austronesian World*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994, 612. Reproduced with permission of Mouton de Gruyter.

Figure 2.4. "Trade networks in the Santa Cruz Island Group."



Source: R.C. Green & M.M. Cresswell eds., *Southeast Solomon Islands Cultural History*. Wellington, New Zealand: The Royal Society of New Zealand, 1976, 16. Reproduced with permission of The Royal Society of New Zealand.

Even more striking is the result of language contact between Melanesian, Polynesian and so-called Papuan languages in the Santa Cruz archipelago of the Solomon Islands (Tryon 1994) (see figure 2.4). There are eleven languages spoken in the Santa Cruz group (Tryon and Hackman 1983). They are:

Table 2.2. Eleven languages of the Santa Cruz Group.

1	Nendö (Santa Cruz)	spoken on the island of Nendö, Tö Motu Neo, and Tö Motu Noi	3,000 speakers
2	Nanggu	spoken in southern Nendö	200 speakers
3	Äiwoo (Reefs)	spoken on the Main Reef Islands	4,000 speakers
4	Pileni	spoken on the islands of Pileni, Nupani, Nukapu, and Matema, in the Main Reef Islands; also in the Duff Islands (Taumako)	1,000 speakers
5	Tikopian-Anutan	spoken on Tikopia and Anuta; two distinct dialects	2,000 speakers
6	Nembao (Amba)	spoken in Ahme and Mbaio villages, Utupua	150 speakers
7	Asumboa	spoken in a single village of the same name, Utupua	50 speakers
8	Tanimbili	spoken in eastern Utupua	50 speakers
9	Buma (Teanu) ³	spoken in Teanu village, Vanikoro	200 speakers
10	Vano (Vana)	spoken in Vano village, Vanikoro	5 speakers
11	Tanema (Tanima)	spoken in Tanema village, Vanikoro	3 speakers

Of the eleven languages of the Santa Cruz archipelago, three have been classified as Papuan (non-Austronesian) and eight as Austronesian, of which two are Polynesian Outlier languages. The “Papuan” languages are Äiwoo (Reefs), Nendö (Santa Cruz), Nanggu. The Austronesian languages are: Nembao, Asumboa, Tanimbili, Buma, Vano, Tanema, Pileni and Tikopian-Anutan. The two last named, Pileni and Tikopian-Anutan, are Polynesian Outlier languages.

In this clearly defined geographical area, none of the languages became pre-eminent or took on the role of regional trade language. Rather, each group spoke its own language with its trading partner or partners. Prolonged contact resulted in some striking linguistic change.

For example, the “Papuan” languages Nendö and Äiwoo adopted the four possessive noun classes (body parts/kinship terms, edibles, drinkables, general possession) which characterise Austronesian languages outside Papua New Guinea in Island Melanesia. (The Austronesian languages of Papua New Guinea did not develop the edible/drinkable noun class distinction). Thus:

Table 2.3. Example possessive noun classes for “Papuan” languages Nendö and Äiwoo.

<i>mü-nga</i>	“my arm”
<i>mü-mü</i>	“your arm”
<i>apla-sa-nga</i>	“my stone”
<i>mü-nga lue</i>	“my water”
<i>na-nga mbia</i>	“my breadfruit”

However, the verb morphology is typically Papuan, the verb stem being followed by a complicated set of suffixes indicating actor, tense, negation and a sometimes bewildering array of other information.

Äiwoo, the “Papuan” language of the Reef Islands, provides an even more striking case of contact-induced language change, for in that language, apart from the adoption of an Austronesian possessive system, there has been a unique development in terms of the verb phrase. For intransitive verbs take subject prefixes, a basic Austronesian feature in Island Melanesia, while transitive verbs have their subject markers suffixed to the verb stem, following the Papuan model.

Examples:

dyi-ki-engi “we cry”

dyi-ku-numbo “we die”

dyi-ki-ebu “we fall down”

(In the above examples, the *realis*/factual aspect is indicated by the verbal prefix *-k-*). Contrast the intransitive examples above with the following transitive clauses:

nyenaa ki-bwaki-dyi

stick fact-break we pl.inc.

“We broke the stick”

nyiiiva ki-gidamii-dyi

stone fact-move-we pl.inc.

“We moved the stone”

Apart from the Austronesian/Papuan symbiosis noted for these languages, a sample of Polynesian borrowings into the non-Polynesian languages of the Santa Cruz group includes the following:

Table 2.4. Sample of Polynesian borrowings into the non-Polynesian languages of the Santa Cruz Group.

1.	“rain”	Äiwoo, Santa Cruz <i>tewa</i> < Pileni, Tikopia, Anuta <i>ua</i>
2.	“shark”	Vano <i>tepakio</i> , < Pileni <i>pakeo</i>
3.	“betelnut”	Santa Cruz <i>kalva</i> < Tikopia <i>haua</i> , Anuta <i>kaura</i>
4.	“eel”	Santa Cruz <i>tuna</i> < Pileni, Tikopia <i>tuna</i>
5.	“dog”	Äiwoo, Santa Cruz, Nembao, Asumboa, Tanimbili, Buma, Vano, Tanema <i>kuli</i> , Pileni <i>kuli</i> , Tikopia, Anuta <i>kuri</i>
6.	“flying fox”	Äiwoo <i>tepaka</i> < Pileni, Tikopia, Anuta <i>peka</i>
7.	“louse”	Santa Cruz <i>tökutu</i> < Pileni, Tikopia <i>kutu</i>
8.	“turtle”	Äiwoo <i>toponu</i> < Anuta <i>ponu</i>
9.	“breadfruit”	Nanggu <i>toklu</i> < Pileni <i>kulu</i>
10.	“chief”	Buma <i>teliki</i> , Vano <i>lamuka teliki</i> , Tanema <i>talinggi</i> < Pileni <i>aliki</i> , Tikopia, Anuta <i>ariki</i>

At the same time, the Polynesian Outlier languages, especially Pileni, in close geographical proximity to Äiwoo and Santa Cruz, borrow from the non-Polynesian languages, for example:

Pileni nōla < Äiwoo nula, Santa Cruz nōla “branch”

Where the Polynesian article *te* often marks lexical borrowings into Äiwoo and Santa Cruz and the Austronesian languages of Utupua and Vanikoro, the Oceanic article *na* signals loans into the Outlier languages.

While the loans just listed from and into the Polynesian languages are relatively recent, the irregularity of sound correspondences (see Tryon 1994, 638–44) points to considerable lexical borrowing right around the Santa Cruz group over a long period. This is not at all surprising when one considers the trade voyages (see figure 2.4), which are well documented throughout the archipelago. Indeed, there is even evidence of Tongan borrowings in Anutan, via East Uvean (Biggs 1980).

The overall picture in the Santa Cruz archipelago of the Solomon Islands is one of constant and intensive contact and interaction. While this has produced a largely predictable result in terms of borrowings, its extent and nature in Äiwoo and Nendö is quite remarkable, so extensive in fact that the status of these languages as Austronesian or Papuan has never been completely determined.

Post-Contact Encounters and Linguistic Responses

European and other foreign contacts with the Pacific Islands provided the conditions for the development of a number of lingua francas, languages of intercultural communication. As mentioned above, even in pre-contact days, in Fiji there developed a “foreigner talk,” a simplified register of Fijian used when trading and interacting with their Tongan neighbours to the east (Geraghty 1983).

During the plantation era, again in Fiji, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, there developed a Pidgin Fijian, used for communication with Melanesian plantation workers recruited mainly from Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Kiribati. For Pidgin English was not much used in Fiji. At the same time, the arrival of Indian indentured labour in Fiji around 1880 gave rise to the development of a simplified Hindi, known as Fiji Hindi, used for communication between Fijians and the Fiji-Indian population.

In New Caledonia, as a result of the displacement of Kanak populations from the north of the island and the relocation of some of these people, speaking different mother tongues, in a single community in the St. Louis/La Conception area in the late nineteenth century, a pidgin French, known as Tayo, has developed and is still in daily use.

One of the most important vectors for Pacific Islander–European contact, especially in the last two decades of the eighteenth century and the whole of the nineteenth century, was the huge influx of foreigners into the Pacific (see figure 2.2 for a diagrammatic representation of Pacific voyaging between 1788 and 1840). This involved whalers, sealers, beche-de-mer traders, sandalwood traders and labour recruiters, to say nothing of Christian evangelists.

However, by far the greatest bringing-together of Pacific Islanders from all over Melanesia took place between 1863 and approximately 1906, commonly referred to as the “plantation” or the “blackbirding” period. As discussed above, during this period more than 100,000 Pacific Islanders worked overseas, mainly in Queensland and Fiji (see table 2.5). The Papua New Guineans were not deployed to the same destinations as the other recruits. Nearly all of them worked first on plantations in German New Guinea, on New Britain and New Ireland, and were then engaged in German Samoa from about 1885. Other Papua New Guineans, mainly from the islands around the Papuan tip, outside the German sphere of influence, worked in Queensland, but only for two years: 1884–85.

One of the results of this mixing of Melanesians of diverse mother-tongue backgrounds was the development of what became known as Melanesian Pidgin English, itself a development of the earlier South Seas English and Sandalwood English (see Tryon and Charpentier 2004). By the turn of the nineteenth century there was a generalised Pacific Pidgin spoken in Queensland and in the islands of Melanesia, promoted by returned recruits. It was in the twentieth century, with the establishment of plantations in the new colonies of British and German New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides (Vanuatu), that the generalised Pidgin English developed into the three pidgins spoken in these states today, Tok Pisin, Solomon Pijin and Bislama.

A pidgin language—and there are more than a hundred of them in the world today—is a language that has developed as a result of contact between two groups speaking different mother tongues. This contact occurs in a restricted environment, usually for purposes of trade or commerce, or on ships or in plantation situations where speakers of many languages live and work together. A pidgin language is not the first language of either group, but is born of necessity (Tryon 2001, 198).

Pidgin languages are characterised by a simplified grammar and sound system, and a reduced vocabulary. In most cases, especially in colonial and postcolonial situations, almost all of the vocabulary is drawn from the language of the colonisers. On the other hand, the grammar is commonly based on the language or languages of the colonised people.

Table 2.5. Queensland plantation labour 1863–1906.

Year	Loyalties	Vanuatu	Solomons	PNG	Kiribati	Other
1863	–	67	–			
1864	–	134	–			
1865	–	148	–			
1866	36	141	–			
1867	329	874	–			34
1868	280	625	–			33
1869	–	313	–			
1870	27	607	–			9
1871	292	978	82			
1872	44	416	–			
1873	7	987	–			
1874	47	1332	124			
1875	5	1931	728			17
1876	–	1575	74			39
1877	–	1986	–			
1878	–	1218	240			5
1879	–	1821	354			7
1880	–	1934	61			
1881	–	1976	641			26
1882	–	2699	440			
1883	–	2877	1127	1269		
1884	–	1010	714	1540		
1885	–	1379	533			4
1886	–	1148	444			3
1887	–	1431	553			4
1888	–	1125	1143			23
1889	–	1412	620			
1890	–	1294	1165			
1891	–	534	516			
1892	–	229	235			
1893	–	714	416			
1894	–	806	945			
1895	–	519	577			
1896	–	359	423			
1897	–	201	733			
1898	–	455	721			
1899	–	674	848			
1900	–	859	884			
1901	–	530	1151			
1902	–	264	875			
1903	–	374	663			
1904	–	19	59			
1905	–	–	–			
1906	–	–	–			
Total	1067	39975	18217	2809	191	204

Source: Darrell T. Tryon and Jean-Michel Charpentier, *Pacific Pidgins and Creoles: Origins, Growth and Development*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004, 177–8. Reproduced with permission of Mouton de Gruyter.

Apart from Melanesian Pidgin English, there are a number of other pidgin languages spoken in various parts of the Pacific, the reasons for their existence being outlined above. So, for example, there is Parau Tinito, a simplified Tahitian, spoken in French Polynesia between Tahitians and Chinese storekeepers. There is also what has been described as a “cant,” the English variety spoken on Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands, heavily influenced by Tahitian, dating back to the mutiny on the *Bounty* in 1789. And in the second half of the nineteenth century there was for a time a variety of Pidgin French spoken in New Caledonia. There were more, such as Palmerston English and a Nauruan Chinese-English Pidgin. However, by far the most important linguistic development from these Pacific-European encounters in the nineteenth century, numerically at least, was the development of Melanesian Pidgin English in its various guises.

One of the other results of European encounters with Pacific populations was due to the activities of Christian missionaries, dating to the arrival of the first representatives of the London Missionary Society in Tahiti in 1797. The missionaries soon learned the languages of eastern Polynesia and reduced them to writing in a relatively short time. In their Bible translations they introduced many loan words from European languages, especially the classical languages, Greek and Latin. These loans, first introduced into Polynesian languages, soon found their way into some of the languages of Melanesia in translations of the Scriptures. Thus one has, for example, such oddities as *peritomon* “circumcise” in Drehu (Loyalty Islands), New Caledonia. Other Polynesian words, such as Samoan *lotu* and *tapu*, were almost universally adopted in Island Melanesia.

Another consequence of mission activity was the establishment of “mission languages,” whereby the Christian missions selected a single regional language as the language of the church, so extending its range and role. Examples of this are the Anglican Church’s choice of Mota, the language of the island of the same name in the Banks Islands, Vanuatu, as the church language for all of the south-east Solomons and north-eastern Vanuatu. There are many other cases, such as the liturgical use of Motu and Yabem in Papua New Guinea, Ghari and Roviana in the Solomons and Wailu in New Caledonia.

The most obvious linguistic outcome of the European colonisation of the Pacific has been the introduction of the major world languages: English, the European language most widely used by far; French (in French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, and partially in Vanuatu); Spanish in Easter Island, and for a short period in Micronesia at the end of the nineteenth century; German (in German New Guinea, Micronesia and German Samoa), until 1914; and Japanese in Micronesia until World War II. These languages all became national or official languages and the languages of education. Even though nearly all Pacific territories today are independent states, they have all maintained their former coloniser’s language as their international language, often along with the local

vernacular, especially in the case of Polynesia and Micronesia. In linguistically diverse Melanesia, local languages have too small a coverage to become national or even regional languages, except as church languages as discussed above. It should perhaps also be observed that English was more prominent than French in what became French Polynesia, especially in the pre-1880 period, resulting in a considerable number of English loan words in Tahitian. We have, for example, *tavana* "governor" and *puta* "book," Tahitian replacing English [k] with [t], and [b] with [p].

Naturally, even the English and French spoken in the Pacific is affected by the local vernaculars, with numerous borrowings from, for example, New Zealand Maori into New Zealand English, and Tahitian into French Polynesian French. This is an inevitable consequence of the original encounters between coloniser and colonised populations. Even New Caledonian French has numerous loan words reflecting earlier settlements from Reunion and from Indonesia. Such cases can be repeated throughout the Pacific.

Globalisation and the Modern World

The Pacific is now well and truly involved in daily encounters with countries, people and states all around the world. There are linguistic consequences of such encounters, often in the shape of threats to the very existence of many small languages, especially as the Pacific becomes increasingly urbanised. In Melanesia, for example, Melanesian Pidgin English varieties are having a considerable impact on local vernaculars, at both the lexical and grammatical levels.

The modern phenomenon of Polynesian and Micronesian diaspora, where there are often more speakers of a given language living outside the homeland than at home, is resulting not only in language change in the new country of residence but also serious language endangerment. Thus, there is now a Samoan dictionary produced for Samoans living in New Zealand, as the Samoan language in New Zealand undergoes different influences than the variety spoken at home in Samoa. Niuean is almost an endangered language, as there are fewer than 2,000 Niueans living on Niue, with roughly 16,000 in New Zealand, many of whom are young Niueans incapable of speaking anything but English.

This melding of Pacific people in the metropolitan areas of Pacific Rim countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Hawai'i and California is not without linguistic consequences for metropolitan languages too, as regional varieties of English (and to a lesser extent French) emerge both in these countries and at home, as globalisation increasingly impacts through electronic media.

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Notes

¹ The status of some of these languages is controversial. See further discussion below.

² The status of Äiwoo and Nendö as Papuan languages has been under challenge for some time (Lincoln 1978; Wurm 1978; more recently Ross and Næss 2007).

³ While Vanikoro has a population of more than 800 (SIG Census 2000), the majority are immigrants, from Tikopia and other islands. Fluent Buma (Teanu) speakers are in fact many fewer than the 200 speakers listed here.

