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Language Contact in the German Colonies:
Papua New Guinea and beyond**

BRIDGING THE GAP: CHILDHOOD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND CREOLE GENESIS

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ABSTRACT

This article presents two cases of specific language ecologies that emerged in the South Pacific at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century: Palmerston English, spoken on a remote atoll in the Cook Islands, and Tayo, a school creole from the Catholic mission of Saint-Louis in New Caledonia. Both are still spoken and even expanding at present. Findings from these creoles with English and French lexifiers may be of interest to studies of German-based contact languages with similar initial ecologies. Based on the description of the environment where those two contact languages emerged, we would like to start a discussion about the parameters that influence the creation of new languages in specific contexts, such as these languages and Unserdeutsch.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article présente deux cas d'écologies linguistiques bien particulières dans le Pacifique Sud qui se sont développés à la fin du 19^{ème} et au début du 20^{ème} siècle : le Palmerston English qui est parlé sur un atoll isolé des Iles Cook et Tayo, un créole né dans l'environnement scolaire de la mission catholique de Saint-Louis en Nouvelle-Calédonie. Les deux langues existent toujours et se trouvent même en expansion de nos jours. Ces résultats des créoles à base lexicale anglaise et française pourraient bien comporter un certain intérêt pour l'étude des langues de contact à base lexicale allemande avec écologies linguistiques initiales similaires. Sur la base de la description de l'environnement d'émergence de chacune des deux langues de contact nous

aimerions engager une discussion sur les paramètres qui exercent de l'influence sur la création de nouvelles langues dans des contextes spécifiques, comme ces langues et Unserdeutsch.

KEYWORDS

Contact linguistics, creole genesis, children's language, management of multilingual spaces, Tayo language, Palmerston English, Unserdeutsch

1 INTRODUCTION

Until quite recently, researchers from a European or a North American background tended to consider linguistic and cultural diversity as an exception, whereas societies with monolingual structure and habitus were proclaimed as being the norm (Gogolin 1994). Current processes of intense globalization and migrational movements spark more scientific enthusiasm for the study of dynamic societies built upon multi-layer patterns of communicative acts. For instance, the concept of superdiversity developed by Vertovec 2007 and Blommaert & Rampton 2012 aims at a better understanding of those new types of fluid contexts from sociocultural, political and linguistic points of view.

However, this innovative approach is not so new for researchers working with linguistic and cultural diversity on other continents. Numerous and varying situations of language contact were described by the *Atlas of Languages of Intercultural Communication in the Pacific, Asia, and the Americas* edited by Wurm, Mühlhäusler & Tryon in 1996. Even earlier, in 1985, Lepage & Tabouret-Keller showed a plural and inclusive approach for all linguistic systems involved in a given context in their description of Central American and West Indian speech communities. Lincoln revealed a whole range of comprehension strategies used in the extremely multilingual Pacific region as early as 1979, as well as Walsh & Brandl in 1982 for Australia, particularly in numerous Aboriginal communities. Creolists such as Charpentier (1979; 2004) and Chaudenson (1992) added a vision of linguistic variation due to intensive contact between populations seen from a more francophone background, coining the term 'francoversals'. According

to the authors, these are tendencies of development already held by a language, which are more likely to be revealed in an environment of mobility and migration where the dynamics of population and communication weaken the distribution of the national standard norms of a language, in this case the approximation of standard French. From this, researchers from the Freiburg School of Anglophone Studies such as Mair and Kortmann have coined the term ‘angloversals’ (see Filppula et al. 2009). Future research could go still further: by comparing the newest findings on Unserdeutsch to other studies of varieties of the German language distributed in various sociogeographic settings on different continents, to examine the extent to which one can discuss the existence of a set of ‘germanoversals’.

The publication of *Disinventing and Reconstructing Languages* by Makoni & Pennycook in 2007 can be considered as the missing link between the North Atlantic research communities and those working in other geographical and cultural contexts. The contributions to this book stem from different cultural and geographic backgrounds. They show with great clarity that ‘language’ as a closed system is an abstraction in the representations of speakers, and that the way in which people communicate can be better described as a mosaic of elements coming from different origins. The wish to understand and to be understood is what binds humans together, not a common and fully shared language. We can also learn from this publication that the understanding and definition of what a language is depends heavily on the cultural background of the observer or researcher and is not a neutral fact. In order to fully understand the structure and genesis of a contact language, researchers from both sides are needed, from the European side (a well-represented group), but also from the other side, in this case the Pacific (with researchers stemming from the region or being at least highly familiar with its cultural and ethnolinguistic features).

Therefore, it is not astonishing that the most interesting publications of the new millennium were produced by intercontinental researcher tandems such as Otsuji & Pennycook (2010; 2015), Canagarajah & Wurr (2011) or García & Li Wei (2014) or from researchers with a personal experience of intercontinental mobility such as Pavlenko (2007), between Russia and the United States, and Kramsch (2002), a researcher with a European-American heritage. Kramsch was also one of the first persons to link intercultural considerations on a macro-level to language acquisition studies, which are

more strongly situated on a micro or individual level. With the *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (Hornberger 2008), we have an interdisciplinary monument in this field.

Surprisingly, and despite the described geographical convergence in the field of linguistic plurality, not all disciplinary fields have been able to experience such a conceptual convergence. Two central parts of multilingual studies, creolistics on the one hand and the research on language acquisition and language learning on the other, have not yet started a real dialogue up to now. From their point of view, some creolists claim the importance of their field for general linguistics. Tryon & Charpentier (2004: 484) declare that “[...] Pacific pidgins and creoles are of immense significance to specialists, as they make an important contribution to our understanding of language change and development”. Alain Kihm (2005: 390) indicates that they open new insights on the appearance of language itself: “[...] les langues créoles ouvrent une fenêtre sur l’émergence du langage lui-même [...]”¹, and Peter Mühlhäusler (1999) shows to which extent the findings of creole and pidgin studies could contribute to the creation of innovative spaces for language learning and acquisition, especially in institutional settings. In another publication (1997: 279) he emphasizes the necessity to establish a closer relationship: “[...] there remains a widespread feeling among educators and the Creole-speaking public that linguistic studies should contribute to educational questions.” However, he is aware of the limitation of such a demand: “Reasons why many Creolists are reluctant to get involved with educational matters include: [...] the realization that their findings may be in conflict with prevailing expectations and attitudes.” In publications on language management in multilingual contexts, creoles and other contact languages are not mentioned or have a very weak position in the general presentation (Creese & Martin 2003, 2008; García & Baker 2007; García 2009; García & Li Wei 2014; Hornberger 2008).

My paper is an attempt to offer a small contribution in filling this gap. By doing so, I hope to present findings that are beneficial to both sides. Earlier (Ehrhart 2014a), I have tried to give a first sketch of what this harmonization would look like. My position is one of research-action and of evidence-based policy advice. I find it particularly challenging to ask how recent findings in the field of language acquisition and (foreign) language learning can teach us

¹ ‘creole languages open a window into the emergence of language itself’ (author’s translation).

about the emergence of creole languages and about the influence of environmental factors such as the social matrix or the composition of the family. Moreover, the age of the speakers when the first contact between the communities was established is important, as well as the attitudes of the social environment and the equal or unequal distribution of resources and power in the contact between the representatives of the different groups.

The fact of bringing together language acquisition, L2 learning, and creole genesis research could be mutually beneficial for all of these disciplines, as well as with the as yet still relatively underdeveloped field of German-based pidgin and creole studies, a main focus of this special issue. In my discussion of examples from anglo- and francophone backgrounds below, I will therefore make reference to similarities with and differences from the *Unserdeutsch* linguistic environment in order to give some hints into how insights from the study of anglophone and francophone creoles might help direct us on to proceed further with German colonial language contact studies.

2 SOUTH PACIFIC PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE CONTACT

In the fieldwork I have been conducting in the South Pacific during my continuous stay in the region from 1988 to 1999 and later through regular field trips, mainly in Melanesia (New Caledonia and Vanuatu) and Polynesia (Cook Islands), I have been particularly interested in observing the effects of the first contacts between local groups and European colonizers: how they managed to understand each other, and how they found a common language. This might have been still rather easy for sporadic trade relationships, but much less so in cases where people shared a common roof and larger parts of their lives, such as for example in boarding schools and mission stations or when family links developed between partners of different backgrounds. Ehrhart & Mühlhäusler (2007) indicate the main domains of contact between different groups and the intensity of mutual influence. Spolsky (2009) enumerates the different domains of human life that are the meeting points for the speakers of different languages or linguistic varieties and evaluates their potential of transformation for the communicative situation. The recently developed linguistic branch of family language policy has not yet

paid much attention to the specific situations of rising creole communities and the dynamics of their contact situation. Communication within the wider family or in sociocultural communities (García & Bartlett 2007) and exchanges in everyday life taking place, for instance, in boarding schools shape linguistic habits in an intensive way, as they have a high frequency and are of high significance for the individual person. Péter Maitz and Craig Volker (forthcoming) show the importance of the social context in the development of Unserdeutsch in the environment of a boarding school. This setting has two specific characteristics: the exchanges are frequent as the groups of people live together and communicate intensively, and the pupils staying at the boarding school are young and might have other strategies of language appropriation than older learners.

My presentation and analysis of data intend to show other Pacific examples of contact between a European language and Austronesian languages, mainly English and its varieties and Polynesian languages for Palmerston English, and French with its varieties and Melanesian languages mainly from New Caledonia for Tayo. Although Unserdeutsch stems from German and languages spoken in Papua New Guinea, a combination different from the ones quoted above, we would like to discuss and examine which sociolinguistic features can be considered as universals in language and culture contact and which ones are influenced by very specific situations in a given place.

The *Atlas of Languages of Intercultural Communication in the Pacific, Asia, and the Americas* edited by Wurm, Mühlhäusler & Tryon (1996) gives a very complete picture of language contact in the Pacific region. Here we will limit ourselves to the analysis of situations where young children were in contact with different languages, either in families with partners of mixed origin (Ehrhart 2015b) or in institutional settings such as mission stations and boarding schools, in order to compare them to the development of Unserdeutsch.

2.1 Palmerston English

Palmerston English is the language spoken by the descendants of William Marsters who settled on Palmerston, an uninhabited atoll of the Cook Islands in 1861, in the company of his three Polynesian wives stemming from the

Northern Group of the Cook Islands. Although he was in command of Polynesian languages (he even worked on a regular basis as a translator at the court of justice in Samoa), he did not allow any other language than English to be spoken on the island. This rule seemed to be respected at least in his presence and with his offspring. However, for the women of the first generation, English was a foreign language taught just by one male mother tongue speaker (a situation comparable to the descendants of the bounty mutineers living on Pitcairn and Norfolk islands, described by Peter Mühlhäusler 1998; 2002), so the immersion was surely not a complete one. For this reason, the emerging competencies in the target language English must have been floating and in their totality qualified by a significant distance from the standard variety and its norm, at least for the first generation. The demographic factor plays an important role for the next period, as the speakers of this fluctuating new contact variety were a majority on the island, the mothers who taught their children how to talk. Under these circumstances, “a learner-based variety of English become the mother tongue of a whole island community”, as Peter Trudgill (personal communication, 2005) described my presentation of data. The Palmerston Islanders identify very much with what they conceive as the British model of life. Places on the Island are named after members of the British Royal family who visited the island (e.g., Prince Philip Beach), pictures of the young Queen decorate the walls of their homes, and for the Constitution Celebrations of the Cook Islands in the 1990s, we observed that the Palmerston Islanders did not wear grass skirts like all the other island groups, but instead a uniform inspired by the palace guard of Buckingham Palace. When asked about their specific choice of garment, they answered, “We consider ourselves as direct cousins of the Queen.”

Even nowadays, the female inhabitants of Palmerston Atoll try to talk in a way that approximates ‘British English’. They are surrounded by a Pacific Ocean in which other varieties prevail. In New Zealand for instance, the orientation to the British norm is disappearing with the older generations, in Australia it is no longer audible, and the Cook Islands have developed an English variety influenced by the Māori language, in both phonology and syntax. Women on Palmerston therefore lack female role models for the speech that they want to make sound like ‘British English’. During my stay

on the island in the 1990s, they told me that they listen to BBC radio in order to be in contact with female voices they can then imitate.

What is important in the emergence of Palmerston English is the fact that English spoken as a foreign language and probably with limited fluency and competency became the mother tongue of the next generation as well as the following ones until now, over the years becoming more and more a model to follow. Today, Palmerston English is no longer an unstable learner's variety. It is the language of a community, with rules that must be respected according to the circumstances of language use, the person to whom one is talking, and the contents of the conversation. Observers of Palmerston history tend to say that the children have created the language, as they were the first ones to use it as their mother tongue. It would be more accurate to say that they took elements from William Marster's English who used it as his first language and other elements from the speech of their mothers, who used English as a learner variety and quite probably in a state of an unstable interlanguage together with some Polynesian cultural and semantic elements. It then evolved over time and with the generations, with a strong (at least symbolic) influence of British English. Nowadays, it can be considered as a language of its own. Today Palmerston English is different from Standard English (in both its British and Pacific varieties) to a point that mutual comprehension is not easily achieved. Our observations show that understanding is fostered by common subjects of interest and attitudes of convergence. In cases when the interlocutor is considered to be part of the Palmerston community (even without a good command of their way of talking), speech varieties distant from Palmerston English are accepted and more efforts are made to understand and to build a common ground than for other people. A dictionary of Palmerston English is presently underway. This initiative, taken by some of its speakers and the University of Rarotonga (with Rahel Hendery and my contributions as advisors), shows the growing significance of the language.

This description of the emergence of Palmerston English shows parallels to Unserdeutsch, that had its beginnings in the Bismarck Archipelago in Papua New Guinea among children at the Vunapope Mission in what is now East New Britain Province shortly before and after World War I. (cf. Maitz 2016) There are also parallels in linguistic attitudes in that Unserdeutsch

speakers strongly identify with what they perceive to be German culture, just as Palmerston Islanders do with Britain and British English.

Nonetheless, we know from cognitive sciences that children need adult input and dynamic and reliable social structures in order to access language and speech. They cannot create a language from scratch, even if there might be some universals for acquisition nestled in the human brain. In Palmerston, the children of William Marsters and his wives had an enlarged Polynesian-style family with strict linguistic restrictions and a prohibitive family language policy. Under these specific circumstances, a new contact language with a status comparable to a creole arose. However, the social structures of the speech community on Palmerston Island were quite different from those described for the development of *Unserdeutsch*, a boarding school where the children had no or few contacts with their parents. Nevertheless, we might consider that the organization of an extended family in a Polynesian environment with a great number of children living together under the same roof and with relatively little extensive contact with their parents (the elder ones often educating the younger ones) has some common points with the organization of a boarding school.

2.2 Tayo

My second field of research based in New Caledonia, with the Saint-Louis tribe situated close to the capital Nouméa in the southern part of the great island, is closer to the Rabaul environment. It is located in Melanesia and its unfolding in a religious boarding school might give some general hints on how communication could have functioned in this type of human group, while at the same time forming a language contact situation involving children learning an L2 variety as an L1.

Tayo is a creole language spoken by around 2000 inhabitants of the Melanesian Saint-Louis tribe and their closest neighbours (for the history and the linguistic ecology of the settlement see Ehrhart (1993b) and (2012)). It developed from a lingua franca or a related contact variety spoken in the boarding schools of the Catholic mission in the southern part of the country (Saint-Louis and La Conception). There were diverse sources of linguistic development and innovation contributing to the formation of this language. These included French persons such as the priests, brothers and sisters of the

mission, persons from the whole of the New Caledonia mainland and the Loyalty Islands, and persons from the islands then called the New Hebrides (present-day Vanuatu), as well as those from other French overseas possessions such as La Réunion (Speedy 2007), northern Africa, Vietnam and India. As we ask ourselves how the young people communicated in their educative environment by combining elements of language acquisition and L2 learning and to what extent these influenced the emergence of a creole language, we need to have a closer look at their lives in the social ecology of the time.

In our New Caledonian example, the pupils communicated between themselves, with their teachers and educators and, to a limited extent, with the outside world. The young people were educated in different institutions. The boys attended the seminary: in the spirit of a religious ‘reduction’, intelligent and promising young men were gathered from all parts of the country with the aim of becoming priests at the end of their educational journey. They brought at least a dozen different Melanesian languages with them, which were not all mutually intelligible. They did not have a command of French, at least at the beginning of their stay. The young women were educated by the Catholic sisters, and according to the oral tradition of the tribe, they were quite often the offspring of relationships between European settlers and local women (to some point comparable to the so-called *mixed-race* group in Papua New Guinea). According to our informants from the first generations of the tribe, these girls were accepted by the otherwise rather separated ethnic communities on the fathers’ or the mothers’ side, and we have descriptions of them participating regularly in both European tea parties and Melanesian ceremonial gatherings. These were exceptional occasions, but everyday life must have been a major challenge. Because of this, the convent with sisters from France and during later periods also from Melanesia offered them a third space capable of combining elements of both origins. This partial openness towards the two cultures of origin is quite different from the development of Unserdeutsch in PNG, where there was a strict racial segregation, and from Palmerston, where there was a stronger (but not complete) geographic separation from any other Pacific Island societies.

We do not have sufficient information about what happened to the boys of mixed origin. Did they also attend the seminary or were they sent to other

places? During the two decades of my research, this question was never raised, and I became only aware of this gap in my information when I read articles about Unserdeutsch. This topic will be addressed during my next field trip. In my enquiries about language proficiency, I realized that the very first male pupils of the missionary school were excellent French speakers and they even had an acceptable knowledge of Latin for church purposes, one good enough to perform theatre plays in this language. My informants tell me that in the beginning, there was an impressive number of teachers and missionaries for the small group of young men, but later, this ratio changed and only a handful of native French speakers served as models and teacher-trainers for a rapidly growing number of young men. The proficiency in French then progressively declined and the knowledge of Latin disappeared, although mass continued to be celebrated in Latin until the second half of the twentieth century. There are still a few words such as *pater* to designate the biological father in traditional Tayo that still indicate that in the past there were contacts with this language. Maitz (2016) uses the expression of *double target*. This might have also been the case in Saint-Louis, where the growing group of young men found elements linked to their expression of identity both in the use of French and in the practice of the newly emerging contact language. One other reason for the growing distance to the metropolitan French norm besides the decreasing exposure to the language could be a change in the way young men were recruited. In this group, there might have been boys chosen for other reasons than a future as a priest in a religious institution, for instance because of their “mixed-race” origin. I use the term as a quote from texts on Unserdeutsch, but it does not fit at all into the Saint-Louis context, where a diversity of origins seemed to have played a role mainly by distinguishing people from different Melanesian tribes. Little importance was placed on origins from outside New Caledonia, and they seem not to have constituted a hindrance for integration. This is an attitude one can still experience when being in contact with people from Saint-Louis tribe. Despite the political tensions existing in the country and especially in Saint-Louis, the acceptance for people of other origins is high as soon as they accept to be part of the tribal community.

One important point, which is mentioned also in the texts on Unserdeutsch, is the freedom or the restriction of movement. In the oral tradition we do not have records on the forced nature of the movement of the

young people. Some informants told us that mobility was a vital part of Melanesian tradition, so that even before the arrival of the European missionaries, young men might have moved to other places on the island in order to become familiar with other ways of living and to widen their social networks.

As for the girls, from the early years of the Mission, they were rather fluent in French. Often this language was even the only one they had actual active command of, as their contacts to the Melanesian part of society were not frequent enough to develop an active use of Melanesian languages. However, they often did show passive knowledge and competence in some of the most frequently spoken Melanesian languages in and around the mission. This was the situation at the beginning of the mission, when the new ‘artificial’ tribe came into life, and, according to my informants, the contact varieties used were not yet Tayo, but rather a much less stable contact variety between French and Austronesian languages.

Oral tradition tells us that most of the young men and young women finally decided on other perspectives for their lives than a religious orientation. An important number of them formed couples and established themselves close to the mission church, in the end with the benediction of the priests. On the tribal side, this movement was illustrated through the story of a chief’s daughter who gave birth to a child in the upper Thy valley on the hills above the Catholic mission. These first families founded by personal choice were the central pillars of the foundation of the Saint-Louis tribe. This is different from what is described for the speakers of Unserdeutsch, who were frequently forced into marriage, according to witnesses quoted in the literature (Maitz 2016 and in prep.)

Still, according to Saint-Louis oral tradition (for example in our main informant speaking about the generation of his grandparents who raised him in the 1920s), wives tried to transmit their good command of French to their husbands (with limited success) and to their children and grandchildren (more successfully). It seems that the male family members of the first generation spoke little French or only a pidgin variety of it. For them, this was sufficient for their contacts with the outside world. They had a quite developed knowledge of different Melanesian languages (mainly of the Northern group, some also from the east coast of the mainland), and spoke and understood an impressive number of them. This seems also to have been

the case for the female part of the population, as some female informants born in the late nineteenth century or in the early twentieth century told me in 1988 that they still could speak or understand more than a dozen local languages and this did not seem to be exceptional. This reminds us of the strategy of dual-lingualism (Lincoln 1979), also called receptive bilingualism in other cultural spheres: people using one language actively that they know very well and being able to understand and react to languages from other speech communities without any problem. Especially in Saint-Louis which was considered as an “artificial tribe” by the other Melanesian communities in New Caledonia, the command of a Melanesian language might have worked as an indicator of Pacific identity. This was still the case in the 1980s when I was living in New Caledonia: in the national census organized for the whole of France which asked for the languages spoken, numerous people in Saint-Louis indicated they were speakers of a Melanesian language, whereas in reality, this bi- or multilingualism was often more symbolic than real.

Let us go back to the first couples that laid the foundations of Saint-Louis tribe. As we have said, their linguistic competences were not equally distributed: a stronger presence of French on the women’s side and more Melanesian languages on the men’s side. Therefore, within the young families, not all the languages present were shared by both partners, at least not at the beginning of their life together, and not in a perfect and balanced distribution. Over the years, our informants describe a process of mutual accommodation between the members of the new tribe. The birth of the children of the first generation must have played a central role in this rapprochement. For them a mixed language with frequent code-switching between European and Melanesian elements, their mothers’ and fathers’ shared way of speaking, might have constituted a communicative norm which they then extended by using it themselves. The mission school was created in 1861, the foundation of the new tribe must have taken place mainly in the 1870s and 1880s, and according to our informants, the Melanesian languages started to weaken or even to cease to be used in the 1920s. Children born around 1925 were the first ones to use the former mixed variety with French and Melanesian elements as their first language, and often the only language of which they had an active command. In this way, the former contact variety with a high degree of internal variation became a more stable language with the newborn members of the tribe. The speakers from former

generations still used it as a lingua franca, and thus intergenerational communication could be maintained. For an outside observer coming to Saint-Louis during this period, it might have seemed as though they were listening to people speaking the same language or linguistic variety. However, while sharing the same grammatical items, or at least most of them, children and their parents or grandparents did not really use the same language for the same functions. For the older ones, either French, regional French, or its varieties as a learner language were present on the one hand together with several Melanesian languages of the south and east coast of the mainland as well as some language from the Loyalties, on the other hand. When they were mixing elements from both origins, they did this in a fluctuant way with no clearly defined rules and with the clear idea that they were using an unstable variety. In contrast, for the youngest speakers, the emergent 'Tayo' was their main language and often their only one. Of course, one cannot speak about 'mother tongue' in this context as their mothers did not use the system with the same functions nor did they consider these forms to be part of a consolidated unity. Nonetheless, starting from the generation of first speakers of the Tayo language, a norm of use developed so that one could distinguish between utterances that fell into this norm and others that did not. This process has continued to the extent that in my observations from the last decades of the twentieth century, I could not distinguish important variations in the speech used by men or by women.

3 CONCLUSIONS

While trying to explain how people from different backgrounds communicated intensively up to the point of forming new contact languages based on the dialogue between two or more linguistic systems, the classical description of language learning in the institutional setting of the classroom is not helpful, nor is the traditional description of the family with a monolingual habitus that still prevails in the literature. Scientific definitions coming from the Asian-Pacific region fit better to the context we are describing for Saint-Louis and Vunapope. When referring the language situation of India, Canagarajah & Wurr (2011: 2) state:

What enables people to communicate is not a shared grammar, but communicative practices and strategies that are used to negotiate their language differences. Furthermore, these strategies are not a form of knowledge or cognitive competence, but a form of resourcefulness that speakers employ in the unpredictable communicative situations they encounter.

This definition also applies to the situations described in this article: the will to overcome language barriers together with the wish to create a new communicative system with linguistic elements brought in by all the participants of a new community are the driving forces for communication in those special surroundings of newly founded communities of uprooted South Pacific people with a high degree of mobility and interrupted transmission. Both the founders of the Palmerston community as well as the members of missions in New Caledonia or Papua New Guinea, Europeans and Pacific islanders alike (with different degrees of access to empowerment, however, according to their origins), faced the challenge of creating new ways of living in the absence of any possibility to draw upon the traditions of their ancestors. Models from anglophone and francophone creoles such as Palmerston English and Tayo, rather than traditional descriptions of monolingual L1 family situations or academic L2 acquisition in classrooms, can therefore undoubtedly be applicable to the analyses of German colonial contact languages arising in communities with equally high levels of linguistic and cultural diversity.

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