Relatedness as a Feature of Grammatical Organization: Contact between Tok Pisin and the Languages of Melanesia

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MELANESIAN PIDGIN, 'PROXIMITY' AND SUBSTRATE LANGAUAGES

- Roger Keesing (1988) discusses how the semantics and grammar of the notion of 'proximity' in Melanesian languages could be seen to be mirrored in the semantics and grammars of Melanesian Pidgin (MP):

- "… [expressing 'proximity' in Melanesian Pidgin] and … relationships to patterns in the substrate languages … will be a worthwhile focus of further study. Suffice it to say that the logic of these uses is a fundamentally Oceanic [substrate] one, and that these…rest on metaphors of proximity in ways opaque or illogical to superstrate speakers" (117-9).

long vs. *bilong* IN MP

- Keesing 1988:118: cites Mülhäusler [1986: 160-161] when he says: ….to Oceanic [substrate] speakers, "belong" used as a possessive particle seems to be based on a metaphor of proximity….That is, the thing possessed is metaphorically…proximate to its possessor

- This makes "belong" a kind of special or marked case of the more general prepositional particle "long," for Oceanic speakers….old Solomons Pidgin speakers occasionally use "long" where "belong" would be expected….English speakers have brought the wrong intuitions to "belong" and have often used it infelicitously (or, ironically, have mocked Islanders for using it grammatically).

PICKING UP WHERE KEESING LEFT OFF

- Keesing supports this statement with extensive archival evidence to show that many of the features in question were present in Melanesian Pidgin from its earliest stages of development in the middle of the 19th century.

- In this presentation, we take up Keesing's challenge to investigate this particular aspect of the grammnars of the Tok Pisin (TP), Solomons Pidgin, and Bislama, dialects of Melanesian Pidgin (MP) to determine whether it can be traced to contact with MP substrate languages.

COMPARATIVE GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

- In order to examine the influence that semantic and grammatical features related to 'proximity' in Melanesian languages have had on the semantics and grammar of Melanesian Pidgin, we compare several grammatical subsystems of Melanesian Pidgin with those found in its substrate languages.

- To demonstrate that the occurrence of these phenomena in Melanesian Pidgin can be attributed at least in part to influence from the substrates, we use data from Nigerian Pidgin (NP) and its West African substrate languages as a third point of reference.

RESULTS

- Our results indicate:

- 1) that not only were Keesing's intuitions about the parallels between Melanesian Pidgin and its substrates in relation to the semantics and grammar of 'proximity' essentially correct, but also

- 2) that if 'proximity' is subsumed under a broader concept of 'relatedness' a wide range of apparently unrelated grammatical constructions that differentiate Melanesian Pidgin from other creole languages can be accounted for by contact with and influence from the cultures and languages of Melanesia.

MP SUBSTRATE SAMPLE

Austronesian languages:
- Morobe Province, PNG: Pt: Patep (Lauck, 1980); Ya: Yabem (Bradshaw, 1983)
- New Ireland Province, PNG: Ti: Tigak (Beaumont, 1979)
- E/W New Britain: To: Kuanua/Tolai (Mosel, 1980, 1984); Bo: Bola (Bosco, 1979)
- Bougainville (North Solomons): Ha: Halia (Allen & Allen, 1976)
- Solomon Islands: MA: Mono-Alu (Fagan, 1986); Kw: Kwaio (Keesing, 1985)
- Vanuatu : Ln: Lenakel (Lynch, 1978); Pa: Paamese (Crowley, 1982)
- Historical: AN: Proto-Austronesian (Pawley 1973); OC: Proto-Oceanic (Lynch 82)
- Typological: EO: Eastern Oceanic (Clark 1973, Keesing 1988); NA: New Guinea Austronesian (Bradshaw 1982; Capell 1971, 1976; Walsh 1978; Wurm 76)

Papuan languages:
- East and West Sepik Provinces, PNG: Ol: Olo (McGregor & McGregor 1982; Staley & Staley 1983, 1986); Bk: Boiken (Freudenburg 1970, 1979)
- Morobe Province, PNG: FH: Finisterre-Houn Group (McElhanon 1973)
- East and West New Britain Provinces, PNG: Ba: Baining (Parker & Parker 1977)
- Bougainville (North Solomons): Bu: Buin (Vaughan 1977)
- Typological studies: PP: Papuan languages (Foley 1986; Wurm 1975, 1982);
- NG: Papua New Guinean languages (Capell 1969; Murane 1978)

GENERAL ADPOSITION: TOK PISIN AND NIGERIAN PIDGIN

General preposition *long* in Tok Pisin (TP):

Mi	*stap*	*long*	*haus.*	*Mi*	*go*	*long*	*haus.*
I	COP	PREP	house	I		go	PREP	house

'I am at, on, in, etc, the house.' 'I went into, onto, toward, etc, the house.'

General preposition *for* in Nigerian Pidgin (NP) (tones omitted here and below):

A	*de*	*for*	*haws.*	*A*	*go*	*for*	*haws.*
I	COP	PREP	house	I		go	PREP	house

'I am at, on, in, etc, the house.' 'I went into, onto, toward, etc, the house.'

PROTOTYPICAL POSSESSIVE IN MELANESIAN PIDGIN

Possessive construction in Melanesian Pidgin (TP, SP & BL) with *bilong/blong*:

[N1 + *bilong* + N2]

[**Possessed** Nominal   **Possessive Marker**   **Possessor** Nominal]

[lek	*bilong*	*Lalo]*	&	*[lek*	*bilong*	*mi]*
leg	POSSESSIVE	Lalo	&	leg	POSSESSIVE	me
'Lalo's leg'				'my leg'		

[haus	*bilong*	*Lalo]*	&	*[haus*	*bilong*	*mi]*
house	POSSESSIVE	Lalo	&	house	POSSESSIVE	me
'Lalo's house'				'my house'		

POSSESSION IN SUBSTRATES

The principal features of the MP possessive construction are also found in many MP substrate languages.

- A *bilong*-like adpositional possessive marker occurs in the overwhelming majority of MP substrate sample languages (Ya, Ti, To, Bo, Ha, MA, Kw, Ln, EO, OI, Bk, FH, Ba, and Bu or 14 of 15 studies).
- possessed + possessor order is the unmarked order for possessive constructions in most MP substrate sample languages (including Pt, Ya, Ti, To, Bo, Ha, MA, Kw, Ln, Pa, EO, NA, OI, and Ba, or 14 of 17 studies):

Possessive construction with *bilong*-like linker in an MP substrate language:

MP:	*lip*	***bilong***	*diwai*
Kuanua:	*mapi*	*na*	*davai*
	leaf	POSS	tree
	'(the) tree's leaf'		

PROTOTYPICAL POSSESSIVE IN NIGERIAN PIDGIN

Possessive construction with possessive pronouns in Nigerain Pidgin:

[(N)	PN	N]
[(Possessor)	Possessive PN	Possessed]

Ade	*im*	*leg*	&	*im*	*leg*
Ade	his	leg	&	his	leg
'Ade's leg'					'his leg'

Ade	*im*	*haws*	&	*im*	*haws*
Ade	his	house	&	his	house
'Ade's house'					'his house'

INCREASING VALENCY OF VERBS IN TP AND NP

long and _bilong_ increase the valency of verbs in TP:

Mi	*mek-im*	*dispela*	*long*	*yu.*
I	do-TRANS	this	GENERAL PREP	you

'I did this to (or for) you.'

Mi	*mek-im*	*dispela*	*bilong*	*yu.*
I	do-TRANS	this	POSS	you

'I did this for you.' [+BENEFACTIVE]

ONLY for increases the valency of verbs in NP:

A	*du*	*diswon*	*for*	*yu.*
I	do	this	GENERAL PREP	you

'I did this to (or for) you.' (No other preposition possible here.)

long vs. *bilong* AS PURPOSE CLAUSE INTRODUCERS

long and *bilong* used to introduce purpose clauses in TP:

Em   kuk-im   long   yumi   kaikai.

(S)he   cook-TRANS GENERAL PREP   we   eat

'(S)he cooked (it) so that we could eat.'

bilong [+benefactive] reading:

Em   kuk-im   bilong   yumi   kaikai.

(S)he   cook-TRANS POSSESSIVE we   eat

'(S)he cooked (it) for us to eat.'

MONOFOCAL vs. ANTIFOCAL
PRONOUNS IN MP & SUBSTRATES

	SING	PLURAL INCLUSIVE	PLURAL	DUAL	TRIAL
1ST	*mi*	*yumi*	*mipela*	*mitupela*	*mitripela*
2ND	*yu*		*yupela*	*yutupela*	*yutripela*
3RD	*(h)em*		*ol(geta)*	*tupela*	*tripela*

NO FOCAL DISTINCTIONS IN NP & SUBSTRATES

	SING	PLURAL
1ST	*a*	*wi*
2ND	*yu*	*una*
3RD	*im*	*dem*

SUBJECT REFERENCING PRONOUN (SRP) *i* IS SENSITIVE TO FOCALITY IN MP

ANTIFOCAL PRONOUNS USE *i* AS SRP:

- *Em **i** stap.*
- *Ol **i** stap.*
- *[All pronouns ending in –**pela**] **i** stap.*

MONOFOCAL PRONOUNS (except those ending in –pela) TEND TO AVOID SRP *i*:

- *Mi stap.*
- *Yu stap.*
- *Yumi stap.*

[N+*bilong*+V] INTRINSIC PROPERTY CONSTRUCTION

[N + SRP + V]
V = General Comment about N

[N + *bilong* + V]
V = Inalienable/Intrinsic property of N1

Man	*i*	*pait.*
Man	SRP	fight

'The man fought.'

man	*bilong*	*pait*
man	POSS	fight

'a quarrelsome man'

Stone	*i*	*bruk*	*nating.*
Stone	SRP	break	without cause

'The stone broke easily.'

ston	*bilong*	*bruk*	*nating*
stone	POSS	break	without cause

'a crumbly stone'

Lip	*i*	*red*	*long*	*san.*
leaf	SRP	be red	PREP	sun

'The leaf turns red in the sun.'

lip	*bilong*	*red*	*long*	*san*
leaf	POSS	be red	PREP	sun

'(type of) leaf that turns red in the sun'

[± RELATEDNESS] AS A GRAMMATICAL FEATURE

[-RELATEDNESS]	[+RELATEDNESS]
[- possessive] general preposition *long*	[+ possessive] preposition *bilong*
[- benefactive] valency increaser *long*	[+ benefactive] valency increaser *bilong*
[- benefactive purpose] clause introducer *long*	[+ benefactive purpose] clause introducer *bilong*
[- inclusive] 1st plural pronoun *mipela*	[+ inclusive] 1st plural pronoun *yumi*
[- monofocal] subject pronouns SRP *i* commonly used	[+ monofocal] subject pronouns SRP *i* rarely used
[- intrinsic/ -inalienable] property [N+SRP+V]	[+ intrinsic/ + inalienable] property [N + *bilong* + V]

RELATEDNESS IN MELANESIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

- In contrast to NP, the NP substrate languages, and most of the rest of the world's languages, TP and TP substrate languages have considerable grammatical machinery for specifying the degree of relatedness ('proximity,' possession, benefactivity, inclusivity, immediacy, inalienability, etc.) in a given construction or sentence.

- This linguistic pattern reflects the preponderant role that the active cultivation of exchange relationships plays in the social and political economies of Melanesian cultures, both in traditional rural cultures (Bateson 1958) as well as in the contemporary 'creolized' cultures of Melanesian urban centers, marketplaces, churches, etc. (Belshaw 1957: 15-17).

NOT PIGS, NOT YAMS, BUT RELATIONSHIPS

- A tremendous number of verbal interactions in Melanesian societies center around establishing exchange relationships between individuals and tracking their progressive development (Codrington 1891:323-324; Rivers 1914, I:189-206; Blackwood 1935:451-452).

- It could be said therefore that wealth in Melanesian cultures is not measured by the amount of pigs or yams one possesses, but rather by the number and nature of human relationships that a given individual has established and cultivated by performing 'benefactive' acts for other people, which, once established constitute an inclusive, 'monofocal' sphere of individuals who are linked in an inalienable or intrinsic way. (Hogbin 1964:63-70 and Mander 1954:257).

brata, susa, wantok: RELATEDNESS & RECIPROCITY

- Individuals linked in such relationships commonly refer to one another as mother, father, brother, sister (regardless of whether any close blood relationship exists among them) or by using the [wan + N] compounding construction: *wantok* = [*wan + tok*] ['one' + 'language'] = 'people who share the same language, ethnicity, nationality, culture'; *wanwok* = [*wan + wok*] ['one' + 'work'] = 'workmates'; etc.

- The more of such relationships one has, the more respect and prestige one gains in society and the greater the number of reciprocal 'benefactive' acts one can expect to eventually benefit from in the future (Haddon 1935, IV:288 and Rivers 1914, I:149).

REPORTS OF THE DEATH OF SAPIR-WHORF ARE PREMATURE

- Despite recent attacks on the Sapir-Whorf hypo-thesis, there appears to be a dialectical interplay of mutual influence between Melanesian languages and cultures that serves to re-inforce and perpetuate the pivotal role played by the cultivation of relationships in Melanesian community life as well as the pivotal role of language in establishing, consolidating, and tracking those relationships.

- It is no surprise, then, that an overarching feature of relatedness plays a role in the grammatical organization of in MP and its substrate languages.