

Derivational morphology and structural complexity in nineteenth century Melanesian Pidgin¹

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The publication of Mühlhäusler's *Growth and Structure of the Lexicon of New Guinea Pidgin* in 1979 represents a major landmark in the study of the development of Tok Pisin. One of Mühlhäusler's main contributions was in pointing out that it is essential to extract all possible linguistic information from primary sources referring to the developmental years of the language as a way of verifying when certain features first appeared, spread, or in some cases, disappeared.

Despite the title, Mühlhäusler's work was much more than just a historical study of the lexicon of Tok Pisin. The author points out that the lexicon is also the repository of much grammatical information. The study of the development of the lexicon of Tok Pisin is, therefore, at the same time also a study, in part, of the grammatical development of the language.

Essentially, Mühlhäusler's (1979:316-18) position was that in its formative years, Tok Pisin passed through three stages with regard to its lexical development:

- (i) the jargon stage: in which the lexicon was a highly restricted list of lexical bases with opportunity for expansion only through borrowing from the superstrate, i.e. English. At this stage, there were no means of deriving new vocabulary from within the internal resources of the jargon.
- (ii) the stabilisation stage: in which the lexicon expanded slightly, with borrowing also from German and Tolai as a way of adding to the vocabulary. Circumlocution was widely used as an ad hoc means of

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expressing new concepts, and conventions for the language-internal derivation of new items were used, but only on a small scale.

(iii) the expansion stage: in which the rate of borrowing was reduced, and the use of the language's own resources became the dominant means of lexical expansion. New means of deriving new vocabulary were opened up for exploitation, and previously existing programs for morphological derivation became much more productive.

Mühlhäusler (1979:56-97) assigns the jargon stage of the language to the period prior to 1860, though in Mühlhäusler (1980:38-39), he extends this to as late as 1880. The stabilisation stage followed this period, and lasted until around the time of the First World War. It was during the period 1884-1914 that Tok Pisin began to develop in new directions from other varieties of Melanesian Pidgin as contact with English was significantly reduced with the imposition of German colonial control in New Guinea. Thus, by the end of the First World War, when Australia took control there was a fully stabilised pidgin, which then entered its expansion stage.

In subsequent publications, Mühlhäusler (1980, 1985) has taken the discussion from the lexical and morphological to the syntactic, and describes the periods for which he is able to adduce the inception and spread of certain higher level grammatical patterns. The scenario that emerges is one in which many of the features that are present in modern Tok Pisin appear to be relatively recent developments, belonging in the expansion phase dating from the 1920s. Thus, he assigns to this period the spread of the predicate marker *i* and the verbal transitive suffix *-im*, as well as the establishment of a system of complementisers (Mühlhäusler 1985:110-18).

One of the major difficulties that we face in attempting to reconstruct the linguistic history of Tok Pisin, as well as the other the varieties of Melanesian Pidgin, is that we are very much at the mercy of our sources. In Crowley (1989a, 1990, 1991), I devote considerable attention to the question of the reliability of documentary sources, as it is essential to be able to distinguish reliable from unreliable sources. My basic conclusions are that we can rely on most older documentary sources as long as they are consistent with other sources from the same period, or with what we know about earlier or later developments in the same or closely related varieties of Melanesian Pidgin.

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The real difficulty, of course, comes in trying to decide if the absence of a given feature in the documentary record should be interpreted as meaning that that feature was absent in the language itself at the time. We could argue that it is relatively easy for a single lexical item to survive unrecorded in any variety of Melanesian Pidgin. For example, I noted that the obscure word *manu* 'cloth' in modern Bislama was missed for a whole century of observation between the 1880s and the 1980s (Crowley 1990:42). In the case of a grammatical construction, however, there is less likelihood of a construction being missed in the same way. Grammatical constructions are used in a variety of different contexts, and therefore stand a greater chance of being recorded.

It has only been very recently that the huge amount of historical work by Mühlhäusler on Tok Pisin has been supplemented by that of scholars with experience of other varieties of Melanesian Pidgin, i.e. Solomons Pijin and Vanuatu Bislama (Clark 1988, Keesing 1988, Crowley 1989b, 1990). We are therefore now in a position to add to the very valuable longitudinal work on Tok Pisin by parallel work on Pijin and Bislama.

With more detailed information about what lexical and grammatical features were present in each variety of Melanesian Pidgin at a particular period, we are now also in a much better position to apply something similar to the traditional method of comparative reconstruction. Thus, we can now suggest what features may, or may not, have been present in the formative years of Melanesian Pidgin, especially before Tok Pisin was effectively separated from Bislama and Solomons Pijin with the imposition of German colonial rule in New Guinea in 1884.

One of the recurring themes from these more recent works on Melanesian Pidgin has been the argument that the language may have been lexically and structurally more advanced in the period prior to the separation of Tok Pisin than appears when we consider the development of Tok Pisin in isolation from that of its sister dialects. Clark (1988) and Crowley (1989b, 1990:178-86) both argue, partly on different grounds, that the Melanesian Pidgin lexicon was probably considerably larger during the latter part of the nineteenth century than has been previously argued. Mühlhäusler (1979:221) suggests that by the beginning of the expansion phase in the history of Tok Pisin (i.e. around the time of the First World War), its lexicon probably contained between 750 and 1000 items. Both Clark (1988) and Crowley (1990:186), however, dispute this, and argue that more than 1000 items is a more plausible size for the

lexicon prior to the separation of Tok Pisin. This therefore shifts this stage of the lexical development of Melanesian Pidgin earlier by thirty or forty years.

Mühlhäusler (1979: 239, 245) lists a number of Tok Pisin words that he suggests, on the basis of documentary evidence, are introductions to the lexicon from English in the 1920s and 1930s. However, a case could be made on the basis of the distribution of the following items in Bislama and Solomons Pijin that a good number of these probably date back to at least the 1870s when speakers from all three areas were still in substantial contact. The following items in particular are probably of greater antiquity than Mühlhäusler indicates:

- helpim** 'help' Occurs as *halpem* in Bislama and *halivim* in Tok Pisin. The unexpected vowel of the initial syllable in both cases suggests common inheritance.
- met** 'friend' Not used in modern Bislama, but attested as a borrowing into Southeast Ambrym as *meet* (Parker 1970:16), and recorded in Bislama in the 1890s in Pionnier (1913:112) as "mète".
- kwin** 'queen' More likely to have been borrowed during Queen Victoria's reign than in the 1920s or 1930s. Alternatively, this may have been borrowed in the context of card-playing, and there is evidence that other card-playing terms were introduced in the nineteenth century.
- sem** 'shy, ashamed, embarrassed' Occurs in all three varieties of Melanesian Pidgin in the same form with identical and pervasively Melanesian semantics.
- bainat** 'bayonet' Occurs with this unexpected diphthong in both Tok Pisin *bainat* and Bislama *baenet*.
- kanis** 'canvas' Occurs as *kanis* in Tok Pisin and *kanwis* in Bislama. The vowel of the final syllable is unexpected and therefore suggestive of common inheritance.

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A number of words of English origin involving morphological reanalysis are also described by Mühlhäusler (1979:244-45) as 1920s and 1930s developments, but the wider use of these terms suggests that they are also probably older:

tambulo 'down, hold of ship'

Occurs in Bislama as *tamblo* and Solomons Pijin as *tabalo* with the meaning 'hold of ship' and in Tok Pisin as *tambulo* meaning 'down'.

resis 'race, competition'

Occurs in this shape with the same meanings in all three varieties of Melanesian Pidgin. Attested in Bislama as early as 1916 (Asterisk 1923:330).

anggisip 'handkerchief'

Similar form occurs in all three varieties in Melanesian Pidgin.

Mühlhäusler (1979:240) gives *burumbut* 'tread (on)' as a 1920s borrowing into the variety of Tok Pisin spoken in Manus from a local language. In fact, *purumbut* 'tread (on)' has an English origin ('put' + 'foot/boot') and occurs in both Bislama and Solomons Pijin.² Presumably, therefore, a word of this shape should also be reconstructed for Melanesian Pidgin in the 1870s. The current Tok Pisin form expressing this meaning, i.e. *krunggutim* 'tread on', along with formally related *krunggut* 'crooked', probably represent relatively recent convergences of the older forms *kruket* 'crooked' and *purumbut* 'tread (on)'. The same convergence apparently had not yet taken place in Manus by the 1920s when *burumbut* was recorded there.

In Crowley (1989b:97-98), I argue that not only was the lexicon of Bislama by the 1880s probably larger than has previously been accepted, but also that Melanesians were being lexically creative, in particular in the naming of flora and fauna. English-speakers were often unable to supply names for local plants and animals, and there is evidence that Melanesians

² Keesing (personal communication) also reports the recent back formation in Solomons Pijin of *purumleg* 'tread (on) in bare feet', contrasting with *purumbut* 'tread (on) with shoes'.

either incorporated words from their own languages when these were widely recognised, or coined new compounds on the basis of words that already existed in the language. Thus, for example, the java cedar (*Bischoffia javanica*) is now known alternatively in Bislama as *nakoka* or *redwud*. Clark (1988) lists a number of other compounds common to Bislama and Tok Pisin outside the semantic fields of flora and fauna which he argues probably also date from the same period, e.g. Tok Pisin *solmarasin* 'Epsom salts' and *waitlewa* 'lungs' and Bislama *solmeresin* and *waellewa* respectively for the same meanings.

In arguing that new words were being productively created in Melanesian Pidgin by the 1870s and 1880s, we are clearly bringing forward the period at which certain derivational processes developed. According to Mühlhäusler's (1979:283) scenario, the productive development of compounds such as those exemplified by words such as *solmarasin* and *waitlewa* did not begin in Tok Pisin until the 1920s. Once again, therefore, what is being suggested is that significant developments were taking place in Melanesian Pidgin about forty years earlier than was previously argued, this time in the area of grammar.

What I propose to do in the remainder of this paper is to compare the modern (and attested past) varieties of all three varieties of Melanesian Pidgin with a view to establishing what aspects of the derivational morphology we need to consider shifting back in time. I will work on the assumption that forms and constructions present in different varieties were present in the varieties of Melanesian Pidgin that were spoken prior to their separation, unless there are reasons for suspecting that they may have acquired the feature independently. Features common to Bislama and Solomons Pijin can therefore be presumed to have diffused via contact on the plantations of Queensland up to and including the 1880s and 1890s, after which time the two groups ceased to have any contact. We would need to assume that features common to all three varieties, on the other hand, would have been in fairly widespread use in Queensland and Samoa in the 1870s, and by 1884 at the very latest.

We can argue that parallel development is unlikely where Melanesian Pidgin words of English origin exhibit identical phonological, semantic or grammatical peculiarities that could not be derived from English. On phonological grounds, we can argue that because the word for 'many' in all three modern varieties is *planti*, we should assume that *planti* was current (not necessarily as the sole option, but certainly a frequent one) in

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Melanesian Pidgin in the 1870s, even though written sources for the most part give only "plenty". On semantic grounds, we can argue that the use of *nambawan* as an adjective meaning 'excellent' in all three varieties is evidence that this usage also goes back to the 1870s. Finally, the fact that all three varieties of Melanesian Pidgin express the meaning of 'ant' by the form *anis* is good grammatical evidence that Melanesians were already using a reanalysed form of this shape by the 1870s. It is simply too much to expect that each of the three different varieties could have independently fixed upon the plural rather than the singular form as the source for this item, and that they incorporated this form in exactly the same shape in each case.

On the other hand, although both Solomons Pijin and Vanuatu Bislama have a suffix of the form *-wan* that derives nouns from adjectives (e.g. *big* 'big' > *bigwan*), I would not want to argue that *-wan* was necessarily already established on the plantations of Queensland in the 1880s and 1890s (though it may have been), as the similarity in form and function of this suffix to English 'one' is close enough that it would be just as plausible to argue that this represents relatively recent independent borrowing from the superstrate. Similarly, the identity in the three dialects of words such as *radio* 'radio' and *video* 'video' should also not be taken to mean that these are words of pre-1880s antiquity as these are clearly recent independent borrowings.

Despite the contention that we can eliminate the possibility of substantial parallel development in the different varieties of Melanesian Pidgin, it is clear that *some* parallel development has taken place. Pieces of beef skewered on midribs of coconut leaves and barbecued with soy sauce have become all the rage at fundraising stalls and kava-bars in Vila in the last five or six years, and these have come to be referred to in Bislama alternately as *broset* (from French *brochette*) or by the compound *stikmit*. I remember when the University of Papua New Guinea Recreation Centre first included shishkebabs on the menu in the early 1980s, they came to be spontaneously referred to by students in Tok Pisin as *stikmit* (but not, obviously, *broset*). Here we have a clear case of parallel development, which can only be explained by saying that with the lexical and derivational resources available in the language, there was only a limited number of options, and speakers in the two different situations accidentally hit upon the same solution.

What I propose to do at this point is to systematically examine the morphological developments that Mühlhäusler (1979:238-88) attributes to the post-World War I expansion stage in Tok Pisin. A comparison of these items with the lexical information on Bislama and to a lesser extent, Solomons Pijin (along with Clark's (1988) suggested additional reconstructions) will enable us to suggest any necessary revisions to Mühlhäusler's proposed time-scale of morphological developments in Melanesian Pidgin.

One morphological process that we can fairly safely say is a late development is reduplication. Mühlhäusler (1979:283) notes that only a couple of examples of reduplication are indicated by the documentary record for Tok Pisin in the 1920s, but otherwise the evidence of reduplication is sparse until the last few decades. In Crowley (1990:307-8), I note that there a couple of examples of meaningful reduplication in Bislama attested from the 1910s and 1920s, but evidence does not again become plentiful until very close to the present. (The fact that reduplication takes quite different phonological shapes in Tok Pisin, Bislama and Solomons Pijin, and performs a significantly different range of functions in each (Crowley 1990:309-17) suggests that reduplication is indeed a relatively recent addition to the morphologies of the three varieties of Melanesian Pidgin.

There is one pattern of reduplication, however, which may constitute an exception to this generalisation. Mühlhäusler (1979:259) points to the existence of a small set of transitive-intransitive verb pairs in Tok Pisin in which the intransitive member is reduplicated, e.g. *singim* 'sing (tr.)' vs. *singsing* 'sing (intr.)'. He argues that this set of reduplicated verbs represents an earlier development, and became established in the 1920s. I agree that this particular pattern of reduplication is older, but in Crowley (1990:309) I point out that very similar sets of transitive-intransitive pairs are marked by reduplication in all three varieties of Melanesian Pidgin. Thus, I would argue that these sets of transitive-intransitive verbs probably represent later reflexes of an 1870s pattern and not simply a 1920s innovation in Tok Pisin.

Mühlhäusler (1980:39) also argues that the items *meksave* 'inform', *mekpas* 'fasten' and *meknois* 'shake' originated in Tok Pisin in the 1910s and 1920s.³ He argues that this construction was productive but that did

³ Mihalic (1971:133-34) records *mekpas* in modern Tok Pisin as a noun meaning 'bundle, sheaf, parcel'. *Meknois* is recorded as an intransitive verb,

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not catch on. I would argue that the prefixation of *mek-* was probably not a productive derivational process at the time, and as the three quoted examples are also attested outside New Guinea after 1884, I suggest that these forms probably derive from an earlier period. Although there is no cognate of *mekpas* in modern Bislama, Pionnier (1913:195) records it in the Bislama of the 1890s as "mèkfas" (i.e. *mekfas*) meaning 'tie'. *Meksave* occurs in modern Bislama as an intransitive verb meaning 'give hell, give a hard time'.⁴ Solomons Pijin shares this meaning of *meksave* with Bislama and does not reflect the transitive meaning. *Meknoes* 'make a noise' also occurs in both Bislama and Solomons Pijin as an intransitive verb.

Mühlhäusler (1980:79) comments that these forms with initial *mek-* developed in Tok Pisin in the 1910s and 1920s when contact with Tolai was intensive, and the initial *mek-* represents a direct calque on the Tolai causative prefix *va-*. However, I would argue that these constructions have an earlier, and rather different, source. In Crowley (1989a:404-6) I argue that in the 1870s and 1880s, many transitive verbs only sporadically took the transitive suffix that is now regularly marked by *-im*, while some almost always occurred without it. I would argue that these three verbs in fact involve lexically reanalysed reflexes of an earlier suffixless transitive verb *mek* which could be followed by an object. Other reflexes of the same kind of construction in Bislama include the following (some of which have cognates in other modern varieties of Melanesian Pidgin as well): *givan* (<*giv* 'give' + *an* 'hand') 'help', *sekan* (<*sek* 'shake' + *an* 'hand') 'shake hands', *wasfes* (<*was* 'wash' + *fes* 'face') 'wash one's face'.

One point worthy of particular note is that Keesing's (1988:125) claim that an 1872 attestation of a Melanesian saying *mek pepa* 'sign an agreement' should be disregarded and treated as a European observer's error for *mekem pepa* is probably unjustified. Given what I have just said, it is clear that 'make' is one of those verbs in Melanesian Pidgin that probably occurred both with and without the transitive suffix, and so the phrase *mek pepa* in 1872 is entirely plausible, especially given that in Bislama and Solomons Pijin we find a number of forms derived from *mek-* followed by a nominal:

meaning 'make a noise', in addition to 'shake'. *Meksave* is not listed in modern Tok Pisin by Mihalic (1971).

⁴ A possible attestation of this meaning in Bislama from 1913 is in Asterisk (1923:86).

Solomons Pijin	Bislama	
<i>mekfan</i>	<i>mekfani</i>	'joke'
<i>mekful</i>	<i>mekful</i>	'make (someone) look foolish'
	<i>mekhed</i>	'behave inconsiderately'
<i>mektrabol</i>	<i>mektrabol</i>	'cause problems'
	<i>mekwanem</i>	'do what?'
	<i>meknes</i>	'muck around'

The validity of early *mek pepa* is further supported by the fact that Mühlhäusler (1979:274) notes *mekpepa* 'sign labour contract' in early twentieth century Tok Pisin.

One of the most productive ways of deriving nouns in Melanesian Pidgin today is by compounds of the type [ADJECTIVE + NOUN]. Mühlhäusler (1979:268) notes that there is a handful of nouns of this type attested in Samoan Plantation Pidgin from before 1884, but that there is no evidence that the process was productive. Tok Pisin sources from between the turn of the century and the 1920s point to a handful of additional new forms based on this pattern, but Mühlhäusler (1979:279-81) argues that the pattern did not become genuinely productive until after the 1920s.

In Crowley (1989b), I mention a number of formal parallels between Bislama and Tok Pisin nouns of this type referring to certain species of fauna:

Tok Pisin	Bislama	
<i>retpela pis</i>	<i>redfis</i>	'red snapper'
<i>bikpela bel</i>	<i>bigbel</i>	'pufferfish'
<i>longpela maut</i>	<i>longmaot</i>	'garfish, barracouta'
<i>blupela pis</i>	<i>blufis</i>	'parrotfish'
<i>longpela nek</i>	<i>longnek</i>	'heron'

In that paper, I suggested that such parallels were too striking to be purely coincidental, and that the modern forms should be derived from productively compounded forms generated in the period prior to 1884. Clark (1988) goes further than this, and suggests a number of additional compounds that should be reconstructed in pre-1884 varieties of

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Melanesian Pidgin. Mühlhäusler's (1979:279-80, 1985:121) lists of supposedly 1920s innovations in Tok Pisin contains quite a number of forms that are directly paralleled in Bislama, and which I would suggest possibly also derive from the 1870s:

Tok Pisin	Bislama	
<i>biknem</i>	<i>bignem</i>	'generic term'
<i>smolnem</i>	<i>smolnem</i>	'specific term'
<i>bikples</i>	<i>biglan</i>	'mainland'
<i>hatwok</i>	<i>hadwok</i>	'toil'
<i>bikbus</i>	<i>bigbus</i>	'deep jungle'
<i>gutnem</i>	<i>gudnem</i>	'good reputation'
<i>smolpapa</i>	<i>smolpapa</i>	'uncle'
<i>waitmisis</i>	<i>waitmisis</i>	'European woman'

It is also worth pointing out that Pionnier (1913:112) points to the occurrence of *gudtaem* 'good weather' in Bislama in the 1890s. Mühlhäusler (1979:256) points to *bikman* 'important person, traditional chief' as a recent innovation in Tok Pisin, but the occurrence of *bigman* with the same meaning in both Bislama and Solomons Pijin suggests that this may also be much older. An examination of the lexical information in Mihalic (1971) for Tok Pisin and the vocabulary of modern Bislama reveals the following additional compounds of this type that are good candidates for being derived from pre-1884 morphologically complex items (including also items suggested by Clark 1988):

Tok Pisin	Bislama	
<i>bikmaos</i>	<i>bigmaot</i>	'yell'
<i>bikrot</i>	<i>bigrod</i>	'main road'
<i>biksan</i>	<i>bigsan</i>	'noonday sun'
<i>blakbokis</i>	<i>blakbokis</i>	'flying fox'
<i>draibasket</i>	<i>draebasket</i>	'Navy biscuit'
<i>hatwara</i>	<i>hotwota</i>	'tea, soup'
<i>senkelboi</i>	<i>singgelboe</i>	'unmarried man'
<i>waitsan</i>	<i>waetsan</i>	'(white) beach'
<i>waitskin</i>	<i>waetskin</i>	'albino'

<i>waitlewa</i>	<i>waitleva</i>	'lung'
<i>wanmak</i>	<i>wanmak</i>	'same'
<i>raunwara</i>	<i>raonwora</i>	'lake, pond, backwater'
<i>kolwara</i>	<i>kolwora</i>	'fresh water, drinking water'

Another word of this general structure is *sotwin* 'puff', which Mühlhäusler (1979:285) quotes as a 1930s Tok Pisin formation. *Sotwin* is also found in Bislama and Solomons Pijin, again suggesting a much earlier origin (as also suggested in Clark 1988). Mühlhäusler (1979:280) also quotes *bikwin* 'hurricane' as a late coinage. The word for hurricane in modern Bislama is *hariken*, and this has been attested from as early as the 1890s (Pionnier 1913:110). However, Wawn (1893[1974]:144), referring to events in Vanuatu in 1878, points to the use of *bigwin* to express this meaning. Thus, I would suggest that the derivational pattern [ADJECTIVE + NOUN] was already well established and productive in Melanesian Pidgin in the 1870s and 1880s.

On the basis of documentary evidence, we can confidently reconstruct a [NOUN + NOUN] construction in which the head is the first noun rather than the second noun in the very earliest stages of the development of Melanesian Pidgin. In Crowley (1990:198-200) I point to the frequent use of [*man* + LOCATION NOUN] constructions in sources from Vanuatu as far back as 1850, e.g. *man Aniwa* 'person from Aniwa'. These constructions have a continuous history in the sources from Vanuatu up to and including the present, though Mühlhäusler (1979:275) notes the demise of this construction in Tok Pisin after the 1920s. However, the general head-modifier construction has remained productive in all varieties of Melanesian Pidgin with head nouns other than *man*, and Tok Pisin *sitbet* and Bislama *sitbed* are good candidates for being derived from a construction of this type in the 1870s and 1880s.

Another pattern that we can reconstruct as belonging to the late 1870s and early 1880s, but which Mühlhäusler (1979) did not refer to, is the construction [*haf* + NOUN], meaning 'some of/piece of'. Pionnier (1913:116) records "*haf brède*" (i.e. *haf bred*) 'piece of bread' from Bislama in the 1890s, and modern Tok Pisin uses *hap* in the same way to express the same meaning, e.g. *hap graun* 'piece of land'.

However, this construction is also involved in a minor way as a word level derivative. The words *hapasde* 'day before yesterday' and *haptumora*

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'day after tomorrow' in Tok Pisin are derived from the adverbials *asde* 'yesterday' and *tumora* 'tomorrow'. Modern Bislama uses *bifo yestede* and *afta tumora* respectively to express the same meanings, while Solomons Pijin uses *nekis astede* and *nekis tumora*. However, the pattern followed in Tok Pisin can probably be reconstructed back to the 1870s and 1880s, as Pionnier (1913:111) gives "af tou moro(mora)" (i.e. *haftumora*) as the form used in Bislama in the 1890s.

Another derivational pattern in Tok Pisin that Mühlhäusler (1979:281-82) attributes to the post-1920s period are nouns derived on the [NOUN + NOUN] pattern in which it is the second noun rather than the first which is the head. Once again, in Crowley (1989b:98), I point to the existence of nouns of this type in both Tok Pisin and Bislama which I took to be reflexes of a productive pattern of nominal compounding in the 1870s and early 1880s:

Tok Pisin	Bislama	
<i>busrop</i>	<i>busrop</i>	'vine'
<i>nilpis</i>	<i>nilfis</i>	'pufferfish'

Other potentially reconstructible forms deduced by comparing the modern Bislama lexicon with information in Mihalic (1971) include the following:

Tok Pisin	Bislama	
<i>pislain</i>	<i>fislaen</i>	'fishing line'
<i>bakstua</i>	<i>baksto</i>	'warehouse'
<i>bosboi</i>	<i>bosboe</i> ⁵	'Melanesian overseer'
<i>busnaip</i>	<i>busnaef</i>	'bush knife' ⁶
<i>solmarasin</i>	<i>solmeresin</i>	'Epsom salts'

⁵ No longer used in Bislama, but attested in 1916 in Asterisk (1923:161).

⁶ It could be argued that this is simply a case of parallel borrowing from English. However, the *Macquarie Dictionary* does not include 'bush knife' as an English item, suggesting the perhaps it is instead English in Melanesia that has borrowed a Melanesian Pidgin compound.

Mühlhäusler (1979:286) argues that some [VINTR + NOUN] constructions, such as *sikman* 'patient' and *stilman* 'thief', began to spread in the 1930s. Both of these forms also exist in modern Bislama, and although parallel development cannot be ruled out, neither can we rule out the possibility that these are also reflexes of old compounds. Mühlhäusler (1979:286) also mentions *trabelman* 'troublesome person' and *lesman* 'lazy person' as being very recent, from the 1950s. Both also occur in Bislama, and again, they could represent parallel developments. The occurrence of *lesbaga* 'lazy-bones' in both Tok Pisin and Bislama suggests the pattern is not necessarily all that recent as *baga* does not commonly occur in either variety except in this construction.

Mühlhäusler (1985:77) asserts that pidgin languages can only be influenced by substrate features late in their development, as it is only then that they have acquired a structure to influence. In their earlier jargon phase, he argues that as there is no structure, there can be no influence from substrate patterns. If we accept this proposition (and I am not saying that I do), in arguing that Tok Pisin did not begin to stabilise until the 1880s and did not expand structurally until the 1920s, we exclude the possibility of substratum influence during the entire nineteenth century (and even into the early twentieth century). If it were to be accepted that varieties of Melanesian Pidgin had substantially more advanced grammars in the 1870s and 1880s than has been argued in the past, then, according to the assumption just presented, we would have to accept that the language has been open to substratum influences for forty or fifty years longer than Mühlhäusler argues.

I do not necessarily want to argue that substratum patterns are the source of the grammatical constructions that I have referred to in this paper. In Crowley (1990:200-351), however, there are a number of structural developments in the history of Bislama that I argue can be attributed to substratum influence, and Keesing (1988) makes similar claims, only more strongly, with regard to Melanesian Pidgin in general. Many of these developments are attributed to the nineteenth century, but if one accepts that substratum influence is possible only in a stable pidgin, and if one accepts that nineteenth century Melanesian Pidgin was not stable, then clearly such claims would be out of line. However, if we are prepared to allow the possibility that by the 1870s, Melanesian Pidgin was probably substantially more stabilised, and more expanded, than Mühlhäusler has argued, then we open up the possibility that the

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substratum may have had a greater role in the history of the language than Mühlhäusler has accepted.

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