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Pacific Languages: An Introduction is an extremely valuable reference book that belongs in the library of every professional linguist. At the same time, it is accessible to students and educated laymen looking for linguistic and cultural information. The book introduces the reader to a quarter of the world's languages—those occupying the islands of the Pacific basin, New Guinea, and the continent of Australia—at a level of generality suitable for nonspecialists and students entering the field. Copious examples of phonological and grammatical systems are drawn from each of the three areas to display the diversity of languages, language types, and language families for which the Pacific is—or should be—famous. In addition, cultural information is provided in separate chapters, and another chapter is devoted to language contact: both (inferred) ancient contact among indigenous language groups and recent historical contacts resulting from European incursions.

The book is well laid-out, coherently organized, and extremely well proofed. The first chapter introduces a set of linguistic principles, and the rest is divided into three parts. Part 1, "Geography and History," has separate chapters devoted to each of the three geographic areas (Oceania, Australia, and New Guinea). Part 2, "Structure," opens with an introductory chapter on the sound systems of representative languages from each of the three geographic areas, followed by separate chapters devoted to the morphology and syntax of selected languages from each geographic area. Part 3, "The Social and Cultural Context," has separate chapters devoted to "Language in Contact," "Pidgins, Creoles, and Koines," and "Language, Society, and Culture in the Pacific Context." The book concludes with a six-page essay titled "Ideas about Pacific Language" dealing with historical and cultural factors that must be considered in relation to the issue of language death. Four appendices provide data sources, phonetic symbols used in the book, sample phoneme systems drawn from representative languages, and a useful glossary of technical terms.

Readership

The book can be used as a linguistics textbook or as a reference guide to Pacific-area languages. As a textbook it can introduce linguistic concepts to nonspecialists. For example, the first chapter is devoted entirely to general linguistics (including historical linguistics); and throughout the book, technical terms are highlighted when they first appear, to alert the reader that a definition is available in the glossary. As a reference guidebook it contains a

large sampling of analyses of (fragments of) the phonologies and grammars of specific languages, followed by carefully crafted generalizations relating to typology, areal features, or genetic affiliation. This reference tool will be welcomed by nonspecialists desiring to know about particular languages and cultures (for example, archaeologists, anthropologists, government bureaucrats, missionaries). It will also be welcomed by linguistic specialists who desire to become linguistic explorers. As a student of Austronesian languages of island Southeast Asia, I have found in this book a rich source of information about related Oceanic languages; and I was pleased to explore the linguistics of New Guinea and Australia in the bargain.

Scope of Pacific Languages

It is difficult to conceptualize the scope of the book in part because printed maps of the area are deceiving. To gain a proper picture it is necessary to obtain a round globe and tip it so the observer is facing the southern Pacific Ocean. The hemisphere that comes into view is the vast area covered in this book. It is called simply "the Pacific." Invisible are the Americas in the east and Asia in the west including Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia (and these are excluded from the book). Visible on the western horizon lie the eastern tips of Australia and New Guinea. Occupying the center and filling almost all of this half-world are the waters joining New Zealand in the south, Hawai'i in the north, and Easter Island in the east—the Polynesian triangle. This whole hemisphere is included in the book, but there is more as well, since all of New Guinea and Australia are included, as are Palau and Chamorro areas on the western fringes of the Pacific.

   This experiment exposes one of the difficulties of characterizing the scope of the book. The author is himself inconsistent. He defines "the Pacific" on p. 23 as including New Guinea; elsewhere in the book, however (e.g., pp. 268, 275), he contrasts New Guinean languages with "Pacific languages." When classifying Fijian he equivocates between the text (p. 30) and the list of languages (p. 28); in the text Fijian languages are labeled Melanesian but in the list they are independent and coordinate with Polynesian. The term "Melanesia" itself is problematic. As a purely geographical term it is perhaps unobjectionable and can refer to New Guinea and the surrounding archipelagoes (Solomons, New Caledonia, Vanuatu). Yet it remains linguistically disjointed, since most of New Guinea contains 955-plus Papuan languages of loose or uncertain affiliations, while the nearby archipelagoes contain 196 Austronesian languages in the Oceanic subgroup; moreover, the term "Papuan" is just as applicable to Indonesian-controlled West Irian as it is to independent Papua (formerly part of Australia). This disjointedness between

Austronesian-speaking Melanesia and Papuan-speaking Melanesia contrasts sharply with the geographic-linguistic congruence of the other major areas: Polynesia and Micronesia contain closely related languages (Austronesian, Oceanic subgroup), and Australia contains Australian languages, all assumed to be genetically related. To make sense of the linguistic geography, the non-specialist reader might be helped by a distinction between Austronesian-Melanesia and Papuan-Melanesia.

Not surprisingly, the issues of linguistic typology are disjointed along the same lines. While no one person can claim to be a "specialist" in all four major subareas covered (or five if my suggestion is followed), "Melanesia" again sticks out as *terra incognita linguistica.* Taken as a whole the book treats a quarter of all the world's languages. Yet the distribution of these roughly 1,400 languages is highly uneven; a whopping 83 percent (1,151 languages) are spoken in "Melanesia" (minus Fijian)—in contrast to a "mere" 200 languages of Australia, 16 languages of Micronesia, and 22 languages of Fiji and Polynesia. In comparison to New Guinea languages, much is known about the other areas. For example, as the author points out, all Australian languages appear to be related, although subgrouping remains problematic; therefore, work on one Australian language can be expected to throw light on the others. This is even more true in the case of Micronesian and Polynesian languages, whose major internal relationships are for all practical purposes perfectly well known, leaving linguists free to work on advanced comparative problems such as reconstructing suprasegmental structure and semantic vocabulary sets, establishing external relationships "up" the Proto-Austronesian tree, and accounting for problematic cases variously labeled "mixed" or "aberrant" Oceanic languages. In this field, linguistics has achieved a high degree of sophistication that is theoretically important (Blust 1997).

Descriptive Techniques

To maintain a suitable level of generality for the description of the linguistic and cultural diversity of this area in fewer than three hundred pages (plus notes, bibliography, and four appendices) is the author's singular challenge. The high degree of success achieved is the book's greatest strength, based on dozens of descriptions of individual languages supported by appropriate references to the best scholarship available, including a number of the author's own original contributions in the Oceanic field (e.g., his 1978 study of Lenakel). To describe Australian languages the author summarizes work from R. M. W. Dixon and others; for New Guinea languages he relies on the technique of contrasting them with typical Oceanic language structures. This approach seems successful, as is his treatment of studies by Bill Foley and

Bruce Biggs, and of language surveys by S. A. Wurm and Shiro Hattori. The author is highly effective in his use of quotations from the scholarly literature and above all in his maintenance of appropriate levels of both detail and generalization suitable for an introductory text.

Theoretical Issues

In this section I shall note some peculiarities of description that I found interesting from the point of view of linguistic theory.

Morpho-syntax

1. "Nominal Sentences." This term refers to an important phenomenon found throughout the Pacific whereby languages typically can license a sentence without a verb, as in (John tall/a policeman/in Chicago) = (John is tall/a policeman/in Chicago). Although somewhat misleading, the term "nominal sentence" is inspired by the semantic definition of a Noun as "a person, place, or thing" applied here to the predicate. Although there is the advantage of avoiding a negative designation such as "verbless sentence," the label is to some degree unmotivated since these predicates can be AP and PP as well as NP. This can be seen more clearly given a theory of syntactic features where N and P share the feature [+ Noun], and N and A share the feature [– Verb]; but there is no feature designation apart from [+ Verb, – Noun] (= non-verb) that designates all three and therefore would support "verbless predicate" as a coherent concept.

2. "Verb Complex" and Avoidance of the Terms "Verb Phrase" and "Active/Passive." These choices have important consequences for the descriptions of individual languages. Since at least Chomsky (1965) many linguists have assumed the validity of all three phenomena as part of "universal grammar," so it is interesting to consider why Lynch might have decided to employ only the one and dispense with the other two. Let me discuss the phenomena one by one.

   a. The term "verb complex" refers to the head V and its associated auxiliary particles or inflections (depending on the language) typically expressing obligatory or optional syntactic categories (again depending on the language). Thus, the "verb complex" is equivalent to the "verb phrase" in traditional grammars of English (e.g., John *might have been running* late). In contrast, Chomsky (1965) analyzed such examples into a Subject (John), AUX node (*might have been* + *-ing*), and a verb phrase (VP = run late)—and his

recent theories are merely refinements of this analysis. The interesting question, then, is: What are the consequences that follow from the approach adopted by Lynch? Theoretically they are obvious: Chomsky's VP disappears of necessity, and with it the possibility of a passive transformation (which resulted in a "passive" structure lacking a well-defined VP based on an "active" prototype possessing a well-defined VP). Personally, I must confess that I find Lynch's approach highly attractive when applied to languages I am relatively more familiar with, namely Austronesian languages, which are well known to present serious unsolved problems for linguistic theory with respect to the universality of "Subjects" and "VPs," among others. I am far less comfortable with the implicit assumption that the AUX + VP analysis is never correct and therefore is unsuitable across-the-board for Papuan and Australian languages. I can think of no reason to expect that an Austronesian-friendly analysis would automatically apply to non-Austronesian languages. (To make that leap one would have to assume that an Austronesian-friendly analysis is actually "correct" universally, for all languages.) Of course, Lynch should not be accused of believing any such thing, but at the same time I think he is stuck with having implied as much, if only for the convenience of having a single framework.

b. Grammatical Categories. Students of linguistic theory will find much in the book to support the existence of universal grammatical categories whose realizations differ morphologically from language to language. Categories typically found in the verb complex (either as affixes or particles) include: Person and Number (including subject- and object-agreement), Tense and Aspect, and Mood. Categories associated with the noun are Number and Gender (rarely Case, which is more often expressed with particles and prepositions). Number can be associated with elaborate quantification systems, sometimes interacting with Gender. Whether singly or in combination with Number categories, Gender can produce noun classifier systems of dizzying complexity in many Pacific languages.

c. Argument Structure. This is described in terms of the relationship between the verb and a single "special" noun (= subject if the sentence is intransitive). If the sentence is transitive the "special" noun is either the agent or the object, indicated as such by an element in the verb complex and by characteristic marking on the noun (most often distinctive absence of marking). Within this approach

two broad patterns of syntactic organization are distinguished, namely Accusative and Ergative, each with exemplars scattered all over the Pacific basin, Australia, and New Guinea.

Phonology

1. Students of phonological theory will be interested in Māori's three stress placement rules, which seem to depend upon prior application of syllabification rules (p. 81). This suprasegmental nugget is all too rare in the book; as the author notes (p. 88 and passim), many linguists fail to mention stress at all in their descriptions of Pacific languages. Fortunately this situation will likely change very soon, at least for the Oceanic subgroup of languages, since the author himself has recently published a reconstruction of Proto-Oceanic stress in the June 2000 issue of *Oceanic Linguistics.*
2. On pp. 77–78 there is an interesting case for (historical) umlaut by metathesis in Rotuman.
3. As for consonant systems, in the Oceanic group there are North Malakula languages with apico-labial consonants (p. 81); but the Papuan language Rotokas has a total of only six consonant phonemes (p. 88). As for vowels, the Oceanic language Xârâcùù has 34 vowel contrasts (p. 77), whereas a few central Australian languages have only two phonemic vowels (p. 91).

Future Editions

In this section I provide specific criticisms that, if accepted, would improve future editions of the book.

POc Phoneme System

Probably the most important scientific finding in Pacific linguistics is that all the languages of Polynesia, Micronesia, Fiji, and parts of Melanesia form a subgroup of Austronesian, and hence can be traced back to Taiwan and the south of China in a migration beginning roughly 3500 B.C. and ending around A.D. 1000 after virtually every habitable island of the Pacific had been colonized. The author duly emphasizes this finding and draws out many of its implications, but he fails to characterize the linguistic achievement by displaying the reconstructed POc phoneme system; he is satisfied (on pp. 46–54) with tree diagrams and migration route maps linking Oceanic languages

with the root ancestor language, Proto-Austronesian. While this omission makes for uniformity of treatment vis-à-vis Australia and New Guinea (where such information is simply lacking), it makes no sense here; but this is easily corrected. For future editions I recommend adding another page displaying the phonological innovations that define the Oceanic subgroup, a hypothesis of enormous theoretical importance, linking as it does a large number of languages spanning more than a hemisphere in area under a scientifically sound linguistic hypothesis. This fact should be brought home forcefully and contrasted with the state of the art vis-à-vis Australian and New Guinean languages.

Culture Loss

Several subsections are devoted to cultural issues, for example, Oceanic languages: 3.4 "Reconstructing Culture"; 9.1.3 "Conquest, Colonization, and Conversion"; and 11.6 "Shift, Survival, Death, Revival." These sections should be rewritten in light of a new synthesis that has become available through the writings of Jared Diamond (*The Third Chimpanzee* [1992] and *Guns, Germs, and Steel* [1997]—this last the recipient of a Pulitzer Prize). Diamond's works, which devote several key chapters to human settlement and cultural evolution in all the areas covered in the book under review, provide a sweeping and highly satisfying answer to the question, Why did Europeans end up with more technology and other goods ("cargo") than Pacific Islanders and many other peoples of the world?

This same question is also faced by the author of the book under review, which appeared at about the same time as Diamond's second book. From now on, I believe, Diamond's synthesis must be taken into account in future introductory linguistics texts, including future editions of *Pacific Languages*. For example, in section 3.4 Lynch correctly notes the loss of rice and millet as food crops unsuitable for cultivation in the Pacific basin, but he does not mention the puzzling (and more famous) cases of culture loss evidenced by the mysterious ruins of Ponape, by the giant stone statues of Easter Island, and by the extinction of many flora and fauna as the direct result of human settlement and activities before European contact. Equally important, the role played by European germs originating from domesticated animals (such as smallpox from cows)—which, when introduced during European voyages of exploration into areas that lacked partial immunity to these diseases, led to the decimation of populations and made them easy prey to conquest, colonization, and conversion—can no longer be ignored in future discussions of cultural change in the Pacific.

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