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The goal of this welcome new book by John Lynch, *Pacific Languages*, is to introduce readers to Oceanic, Papuan, and Australian languages spoken today by the indigenous people of the islands of the Pacific and Australia. The book is divided into three parts: geography and history, structure, and social and cultural context. Some basic pieces of knowledge about these languages that are scattered across resources are here located in one place. The book is written to be accessible to the nonlinguist, and successfully so. This means it can be used as a text in undergraduate courses on language and on Pacific societies, and I expect to use it for that purpose.

Part I on “Geography and History” is a very readable introduction to how many languages there are in the area, where they are, how they are and are not related to each other, and how evidence from languages combines with other kinds of information to provide accounts of the early colonization of the islands of the Pacific. In this section we see just how different the major groupings of Oceanic, Papuan, and Australian languages are from each other as groupings. Oceanic languages comprise the main subset of Austronesian languages spoken in the Pacific. These languages are thought to be descended from a single parent language and to be related to other Austronesian languages spoken in island Southeast Asia and the Southeast Asia mainland. Papuan languages, on the other hand, refer to non-Austronesian languages spoken primarily in interior New Guinea. They are not all descended from a

common parent and comprise at least sixty different language families. Finally, Australian languages are all thought to be related to each other, that is, to share a common ancestor, but such relations to languages outside Australia cannot be determined using comparative linguistic methods.

In part 2, language is displayed in all its marvelous, amazing diversity. Lynch concentrates in this section on grammatical features of languages that are widespread in each area, but not necessarily so common in other parts of the world, and that have been of theoretical interest to linguists over the past few decades. Thus, linguistic features one may have heard of, such as “ergativity” and “switch reference,” that don’t occur in English but do occur in Pacific languages are explained and illustrated. The resources in appendices at the end of the book also make it very easy for the reader to do further library research on topics or languages of interest.

The aspects of language structure for each given subarea—Oceanic, Papuan, and Australian—are presented in a sequence from smaller to larger units of structure. Thus, we start with sounds, build to units of meaning that combine into words, then move into phrase structures that combine words. This sequential ordering of aspects of language structure is a common pedagogical strategy in introducing linguistic analysis to the novice. But it does mean that the reader will not come away with a strong sense of “the sentence” (or its spoken equivalent) or of variety in language-specific sentence level processes in Pacific languages.

Part 3, on the social and cultural context, deals with two broad topics. The first topic is how languages come in contact with one another and what the consequences of such contact are for the linguistic structures of the languages involved in the contact. In chapter 9, “Language in Contact,” Lynch considers types of contact among speakers of different local languages and how aspects of the structure of one language can come to be taken up by another language. This is very useful material, and it provides a kind of analysis we need much more of in efforts to consider the very long-term cultural, material, and biological consequences of contacts among Pacific peoples heretofore treated as relatively isolated entities.

In chapter 10, “Pidgins, Creoles, and Koinés,” Lynch focuses on the “mixed” languages that have emerged in the Pacific as a consequence of contact between indigenous Pacific people and European colonizers, particularly in Melanesia. Although he surveys a range of such varieties, Lynch focuses on what he refers to as Melanesian Pidgin, which he sees as encompassing Tok Pisin, spoken in Papua New Guinea; Pijin, spoken in the Solomon Islands; and Bislama, spoken in Vanuatu. I am accustomed to the idea that these varieties all have in common an English lexicon or vocabulary with Austronesian language grammatical properties. They also share properties

by virtue of being languages of wider communication (LWC) and therefore second languages for many, although first languages for some. But Lynch really talks about the three varieties as one language rather than separate languages, in spite of their having emerged through geographically and historically separated processes, without fully explaining why, a provocative move.

Chapter 11, "Language, Society, and Culture in the Pacific," develops the second topic in this section, that of the way in which the lexicons or vocabularies of Pacific languages reveal some of the kinds of ideas that are culturally elaborated in Pacific societies. Although this material is very interesting, I object to a treatment of language and culture that limits discussion to vocabularies. Such an approach leaves out the entire tradition of looking at language ethnographically, which means looking at language use.

I refer here to the linguistic anthropological tradition developed initially by Franz Boas in the United States and given impetus by Dell Hymes's theoretical development of the ethnography of communication in the nineteen-sixties. Linguistic anthropologists are interested theoretically in the characterization of the organization of language meaning above the level of the sentence, or in discourse structure and the role of language in the organization of face-to-face interaction. They are also interested in how specific linguistic forms play a role in the constitution of social and cultural realities, including culturally specific realities. For example, considerable work has been done in the Pacific on what are referred to as affect markers, elements of meaning that convey emotional state, and on the role these markers play in Pacific people's construction of culturally specific selves. Actually a remarkably coherent body of work in this tradition has been produced by linguistic anthropologists working in the Pacific. In fact, those who work in the Pacific have probably made *the* most substantial contribution to the tradition of ethnographic studies of language made by people working in a specific cultural area. Some important examples of such work include the edited volume by Karen Watson-Gegeo and Geoff White on *Disentangling* (1990), ethnographic studies of the Kaluli in New Guinea by Bambi Schieffelin, *The Give and Take of Everyday Life* (1990), and Steve Feld, *Sound and Sentiment* (1982), and the linguistic ethnographic study of village-level politics in Samoa by Sandro Duranti, *From Grammar to Politics* (1994).

Research in this ethnographic tradition has coherence in part because linguistic anthropologists bring a shared theoretical and methodological tradition with them to the Pacific. But there is also coherence because of some very general cultural and social organizational similarities these communities have and because people in these communities have responded to re-

searchers in some similar ways. Work in this tradition is typically village-based, or oriented toward residential communities almost exclusively lived in by indigenous people, rather than about urban or national communities or processes that are a consequence of colonialism. In all this the work would be viewed as somewhat conservative by current standards. This body of work also focuses on the tape-recording, transcription, and translation of multiple instances of socially occurring bounded speech events or genres of discourse that are viewed as evidence of the role of language in constituting local cultural realities.

What does any of this have to do with the people, primarily in Melanesia and Polynesia, who have been the focus of the work? It means that village-level social organization is robust enough that the village can be a focus. It means that the people were friendly enough to outsiders that the researchers have been welcomed into their local communities, trusted, and given access to people's local daily lives with tape recorders. Finally, it means that the people live or lived in communities with a shared local public sphere, because it is in the public spheres, rather than in the private, that one encounters speech activities that are organized into bounded events and discourse genres. These qualities of social life simply do not exist in all parts of the world.

Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that those working in this ethnographic tradition in the Pacific are commonly disposed toward conceptualizing the role of language in social life as collaborative, as used by co-interactants to jointly and mutually construct social realities together—rather than in the more prevalent linguistic tradition of viewing language and speech as resources of an individual. The prevalence of such a conceptualization is due not just to its import in linguistic anthropology, but also to its consistency with culturally local Melanesian and Polynesian ways of talking about human activity. Again, such a conceptualization is not universal among the world's cultures.

My point, then, is that this linguistic anthropological tradition of Pacific research on language is an areal tradition, although perhaps not in the typical senses in which scholars talk about areal traditions. In its richness and strength, such research on language use should not go unrepresented in a volume such as Lynch's that provides a general introduction to work on languages in the Pacific region.

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