Introduction to special volume
Language contact, hybrids and new varieties: emergent possessive constructions

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Introduction[1]

The position of Australia has made it well-suited to work in the field of contact between languages. Firstly, in Australia itself, there is a relatively recent history of a European language (English) being imposed as a dominant language on a rich pre-existing language ecology. This has resulted in large-scale language extinction, ongoing language endangerment (see McConvell and Thieberger 2001 for a recent assessment of the situation), and the creation of contact languages (Harris 1986; Munro 2000). Secondly, there has also been an even more recent influx of non-English speaking migrants into Australian society, which has also had profound linguistic consequences (Romaine 1991; Clyne 2003). And thirdly, Australia is located geographically in a region of great linguistic diversity in which the impact of European contact and the development of modern nation states has had a great influence on patterns of language use. Much of the Austronesian world, including the Pacific, has experienced changes of this sort (Florey 2005a; Siegel 2000). New Guinea must be considered as part of this regional environment also. The languages of that island are not represented in the current collection, and many opportunities for research on language contact and language change there remain (but see for example Kulick 1992 and some of the papers in Miedema, Odé and Dam 1998).

The factors mentioned above have ensured that questions about language contact and language change are salient to Australian linguists (see Florey and McConvell 2005). The level of interest in such questions led to the International Working Symposium *Language contact, hybrids and new varieties: emergent possessive constructions*, held at Monash University in September 2004. The papers collected here were all originally presented at that symposium (with the exception of this introduction), and report research on a range of languages. Number 1 of this volume includes papers on languages from the Maluku region of Indonesia, and from the Pacific region (see Map 1 for geographical locations), while Number 2 contains papers about various languages spoken in Australia (see Map 1), as well as the Ewe language of Africa (see Map 2).

The papers take various approaches to the problems of language change in contact situations, which to some extent are related to the exact place of any given situation in a range of possible outcomes. This range, and the different approaches taken to the problems is discussed in Section 1 below. Section 2 introduces the concept of possession as a microcosm of

the processes and the results of language contact, discussing morphological, syntactic and semantic issues. Finally, Section 3 briefly introduces the papers themselves.

1. Approaches to language contact

Language contact situations, that is, interaction between speakers of different languages, can lead to a number of different outcomes including: stable bi- or multilingualism, diglossia, language endangerment as a result of shift away from one language and its possible consequent obsolescence, and the formation of pidgins or creoles. In a bi- or multilingual situation, speakers are in full command of the resources of more than one language and choose to use resources from one language or another, while diglossia displays a high degree of functional differentiation, where each of two languages is restricted to particular domains. Sociolinguistic approaches to multilingualism have examined the social factors which influence the choices which speakers make from their linguistic repertoires, factors such as the situation, the subject matter of the interaction, and the interlocutors (see for example Blom and Gumperz 1972)). More recently, linguistic choice has also been seen from a more psycholinguistic perspective, in which greater attention is paid to the structural factors which constrain the behaviour of speakers (Myers-Scotton 1993, 2002). Yet another approach, also more psycholinguistic in orientation, attempts to elucidate the behaviour of speakers in language contact situations by examining the characteristics of bilingual speech, and the differences between the language usage of bilinguals and monolinguals (Muysken 2000).

Language endangerment scenarios arise where any of a wide range of factors leads to breaks in the intergenerational transmission of language. In an environment where children are not fully exposed to their indigenous language, they are not fully socialized into that language and will tend to shift to the other language or languages present in the community. The process can be accelerated by attitudes of the older speakers, who may adopt a purist view of the indigenous language (Florey 2004). Finally, pidgins arise in situations where speakers of more than two languages have a need for communication which must be met rapidly. A pidgin, with no native speakers, may then develop into a creole. The place of mixed languages in this sort of model, and the processes which lead to such varieties, are still the subject of dispute (see for example the papers in Matras and Bakker 2003; also McConvell and Meakins 2005), and some scholars also consider restructured vernaculars to be a distinct outcome of language contact (Holm 2004).

Language endangerment and the situation in which a pidgin arises are inherently unstable situations, but it is almost impossible to make general predictions about the stability of language contact situations as so many different factors are implicated. However, it may be possible to make predictions about the direction and nature of change which can occur. One theory along these lines is that presented by Ross (1996, 2001) which argues for a specific order in which different linguistic phenomena can be expected to appear in one language which is being influenced by another.

2. Possessive constructions as a microcosm of language change

Although the expression of possession relations may only represent a small part of the grammar of any particular language, it is often a part which is richly nuanced. For example, the discussion in Heine (1997) shows that languages typically draw on a range of possible structures to express such relations, and that these different possibilities often encode delicate semantic distinctions. Additionally, as Heine (1997) shows, possessive structures often serve as a source for further grammaticalization. Possession is also a very salient relationship in many human activities and relationships and this small area of grammar therefore carries a high functional load. This observation holds true in all language use, including contact situations. Therefore we can expect that if change is occurring in a contact situation, possessive structures will be liable to change as well. And given that possession is a circumscribed area of grammar, it should be relatively easy to track changes in possessive structures and to test predictions about contact-induced language change. The original motivation for the symposium where these papers were first presented came from informal discussions in which researchers working on dissimilar languages noted similar phenomena emerging in the grammar of possession. A key topic discussed in the symposium was therefore whether changes observed in this area provide evidence for more general statements about processes of change as a result of language contact.

It should be noted, however, that in situations where change is happening rapidly (as is often the case in contact situations), there may well be high levels of variation occurring in all areas of language use, including possession (see Florey 2004). Such variation is not always adequately represented in a conventional descriptive paradigm, and several of the papers presented here acknowledge this problem and seek innovative solutions, such as using statistical data more extensively than is conventional in descriptive linguistics (see also Florey 2005b).

2.1 Morphology

In many languages, possessive constructions employ dedicated morphology. Examples of this include a specific case form (genitive) used to express possession, specialized possessive forms of pronouns, and agreement phenomena within possessive structures. Even where there is not specialized morphology used only in possessive structures, morphological phenomena may nevertheless be a feature of the possessive system. For instance, several examples of the use of case marking other than a dedicated genitive are seen in the papers about Australian languages in Number 2 (Hercus; Disbray and Simpson).

In several recent papers, McWhorter (1998, 2001) has argued that creoles display basic and essential properties of language. As creoles typically have little morphological complexity, this property is seen as a less essential feature of language from this perspective (see also Kusters 2003 on the relation between complexity and the nature of a speech community). This leads to the prediction that, in contact-induced change, the direction of change for morphology should be towards lesser complexity. The prediction gathers some support from the papers here, for example in the case of Souw Amana Teru from Maluku (Musgrave, Number 1) from Pidgin Fijian (Siegel, Number 1), and from Wumpurrarni English (Disbray and Simpson, Number 2) where agreement marking in NPs in the indigenous language has been reduced to single marking in the contact variety. But opposite tendencies are also seen in data presented here. For example in Allang (Ewing, Number 1) and Melanesian Pidgin (Siegel, Number 1), some degree of morphological elaboration has occurred in possessive morphology.

Two more specific tendencies in the morphological expression of possession can be discerned in the papers in this volume. Firstly, one stage in the process of change for possessive morphology is often a generalization of one form into new contexts. This may be, for example, a third person (usually singular) form (see Ewing, Number 1). Third person singular is often the unmarked term in person-number systems, but this observation does not equate in a straightforward way with the generalization just mentioned. Another possibility for generalization discussed in this volume is case-marking: such generalization is reported by Hercus and by Disbray and Simpson for Australian languages (both in Number 2). Secondly, morphological marking of alienable or inalienable possession is especially vulnerable to weakening or loss in processes of change (Florey, Ewing, Musgrave, Siegel in Number 1; Hercus, Meakins and O'Shannessy, Disbray and Simpson in Number 2). Using morphology to indicate some points in the domain of alienability is common (Nichols 1988 and papers in Chappell and McGregor 1996), but such morphology is easily lost, indeed McWhorter (2001) suggests that marking of inalienable possession is "absent in the natural languages that the pidgins were transformed into" (p126). Such loss does not necessarily imply the loss of the semantic distinction between alienable and inalienable possessive relationships. For example, in Souw Amana Teru, the morphological marking of alienable possession has been almost entirely lost now, but some speakers still mark inalienable possession morphologically and the semantic distinction still exists for them (Musgrave, Number 1), and Meakins and O'Shannessy present evidence that inalienable possession is being retained for body parts in the languages which they discuss (Gurindji Kriol, Light Warlpiri in Number 2).

2.2 Syntax

In the domain of syntax, a basic distinction can be drawn between the use of clausal structures to express possession, and the use of adnominal possession, that is, noun phrase structures (see extensive discussion in Heine 1997). Most of the papers here concentrate on adnominal possession, although Florey (Number 1) presents data on clausal structures in languages of Central Maluku, and Hercus (Number 2) discusses clausal patterns in some Australian languages. Adnominal possession is a restricted domain typologically with limited possibilities as far as word order is concerned (Rijkhoff 2002: 194-205). One possibility which enlarges the range of possibilities is the doubling of the possessor in

various ways; this is an area which is discussed by Rijkhoff and also by McConvell, Amuzu, and Disbray and Simpson (all in Number 2).

Another way in which the syntax of adnominal possession is made more complex is by the use of some type of linking element. These linkers can be adpositions, or pronouns, or invariable particles; the range is discussed by McConvell (Number 2) and the linker used in Ewe is important in Amuzu's analysis of English lexical items in possessive constructions in that language (Number 2). The paths of change which lead to such elements is an area where syntax may intersect with one of the observations made above about morphology. One case is discussed here where a possessive linker has arisen through generalization of a third person form (see Ewing's paper in Number 1).

The remarks in Section 2.1 on the predicted tendency to morphological simplification might be taken to have syntactic correlates. If morphology is doing less, we might expect that the syntax would have to do more; specifically that rigid analytic structures might tend to develop (Florey 2005b). Such a tendency is evident in a number of the languages discussed in this volume, with simple juxtaposition of two nominals as the logical endpoint of such a development (Ewing, Musgrave, Siegel in Number 1). However, two cases are discussed here (Souw Amana Teru, Musgrave, Number 1; Wumpurrarni English, Disbray and Simpson, Number 2) where the expected rigidity appears to be weakening, with both possessor–possessed order and the reverse being possible. Several of the indigenous Australian languages which are present in contact situations discussed in this volume exemplify a well-known cross-linguistic generalization, that inalienable possession is often expressed by simple juxtaposition (Heine 1997:172). Such structures occur in Arabana, Gurindji and Warumungu (discussed by, respectively, Hercus, Meakins and O'Shannessy, and Disbray and Simpson, all in Number 2).

2.3 Semantics

The semantic consequences of structural changes in the grammar of possession are not a prominent theme in the research presented here. The literature contains insightful discussions of the way in which languages map different possessive meanings to different structures (see for example Heine 1997; Chappell and McGregor 1989; and papers in Chappell and McGregor 1996). In at least some cases, the semantic distinctions involved are subtle, and we might speculate that such distinctions are hard to track in situations where languages change rapidly. Perhaps the most obvious semantic distinction commonly encoded in possessive grammar is that between alienable and inalienable possession. As discussed in Section 2.1, this distinction does seem to be vulnerable in language change, at least morphologically. Several papers here (Florey and Musgrave, both in Number 1; Hercus, Meakins and O'Shannessy, Disbray and Simpson, all in Number 2; and see also Florey 2005b) note changes in this area of grammar; changes which can involve the reassignment of some semantic domain from one category of possession to the other, or can ultimately lead to the loss of the distinction altogether. As Ewing's paper (Number1) shows, it is also possible for the morphological material to be retained and used for other functions even though the semantic distinction is lost.

During the symposium, McConvell led a lively discussion of the questions about the relation of language and culture raised by this type of development. Speculation about the implications of the grammar of alienability for that relation go back at least to Lee (1950) and have been continued more recently by Harré and Mühlhaüsler (1990) among others. If such speculations have a foundation, we might expect that, where languages lose the distinction between alienable and inalienable possession, this should be accompanied by some major shift in the cultural viewpoint of the speaker population. It is not clear which would be expected to come first—the different conceptualization of the self and body, or the change in the linguistic system. This question is not addressed in any of the papers here, and, in general, the problem of the relation of language change to the semantics of possession is an area which needs much more research.

3. The papers

Number 1 contains a general paper, which examines how various theoretical issues in contact linguistics can be, or should be, applied to the study of possessive constructions. This paper is followed by a group of three papers dealing with possessive structures in the languages of Central Maluku, a region where bilingualism and multilingualism have been

present for several centuries at least, but where language shift and language endangerment are now moving rapidly. There follow two papers on possession in languages of the Pacific, dealing with established contact varieties and a local variety of French; in each case some aspects can be analyzed as showing substrate influence.

Muysken's paper examines three different types of contact situations: language shift, language maintenance and the creation of new varieties. Analyzing data from a number of languages in each situation, he concludes that there is a correlation between the types of change which occur and the type of contact situation. This correlation is argued to be a result of the varying treatment of functional and lexical elements in the different contact scenarios.

Florey's paper gives an overview of the linguistic ecology of the Central Maluku region of Eastern Indonesia, and provides historical and typological overviews of possession structures in languages of that region. This paper therefore provides background information against which the papers by **Ewing** and **Musgrave** can be read. These papers give synchronic pictures of possessive structures in two Central Maluku languages of Ambon Island: Allang in Ewing's paper, and Souw Amana Teru in Musgrave's. Both authors also discuss the possible historical development which has led to the current grammar of possession in these languages and the range of variation which is now evident as language shift affects their speech communities.

Siegel's paper contrasts the morphology of possession in two Pacific contact varieties: Fijian Pidgin and Melanesian Pidgin. In the first case, morphology has been simplified, and substrate influence is seen only in constituent ordering. In the second case, there has been some expansion of morphological marking in possessive structures; again a substrate influence, but as functional transfer. This expansion does not, however, extend to retention of the alienable–inalienable distinction found in Central Eastern Oceanic languages, and this is attributed to the lack of an available structure as the endpoint of transfer.

Love's paper looks at possessive structures in the variety of French spoken in Tahiti. French and Tahitian are typologically distinct, but in this paper some influence of Tahitian word order is argued to account for possessive structures used in Tahitian French which are not part of standard French. However, the distinction between alienable and inalienable possession is not marked in Tahitian French, and the influence of the local language is therefore shown to be rather limited.

Number 2 contains a paper on the African language Ewe, which is now under some pressure from English. There follow three papers about different contact situations in Australia. The first of these looks at the impact of English on two traditional languages, while the other two papers deal with contact varieties. In one paper (Meakins and O'Shannessy), the varieties in question are 'second generation' contact varieties; that is, the languages being studied are mixed languages formed from an indigenous language and a creole already spoken in the area. The last paper is another general paper, which argues that the processes of interaction have not been given sufficient weight in theoretical models of language contact.

Amuzu's paper examines adnominal possession in the Ewe language of West Africa, concentrating on structures where the possessed noun is an English word. He argues that the surface configurations cannot be used to account for the distribution of morphemes which is observed, but that Myers-Scotton's (2002) notion of a Composite Matrix Language can account for the data.

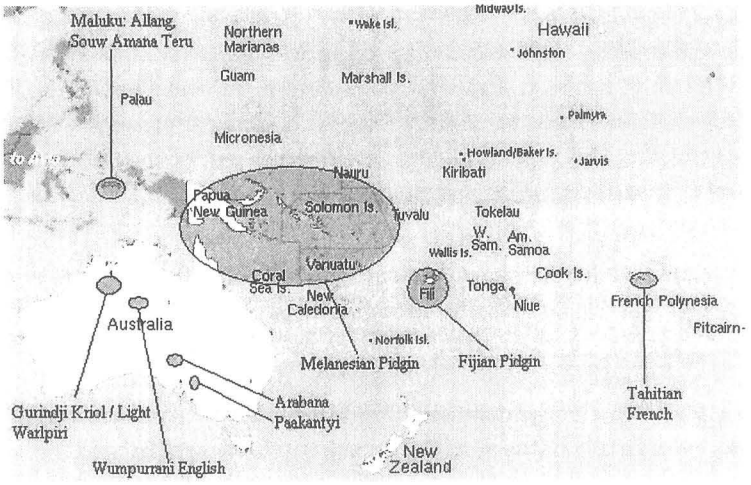
Hercus's paper discusses the grammar of alienability in two Pama-Nyungan languages of Australia, Arabana and Paakantyi. She argues that the distinction between alienable and inalienable possession is weakening in both languages, and that as a result, the two languages, which were originally quite different, have now converged structurally in this area of grammar. This convergence is argued to be the result of the influence of English.

Meakins and O'Shannessy's paper discusses possessive constructions in two mixed languages from Northern Australia, Gurindji Kriol and Light Warlpiri. The authors show that, in both of these languages, the traditional language has

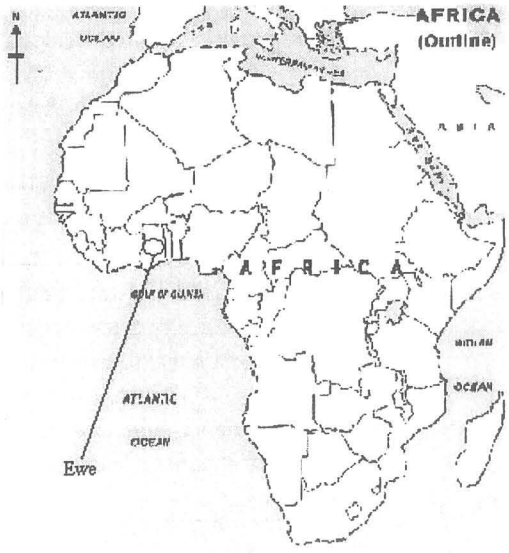
provided the structure for noun phrases. Despite this, the influence of Kriol, an English-based creole spoken across much of Northern Australia, can be seen in the wide range of variation in possessive constructions, and in the decline of a distinction between alienable and inalienable possession.

Simpson and Disbray's paper examines possession in Wumpurrarni English, a variety of Kriol spoken around Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory of Australia. In this paper, extensive variation in possessive structures is documented, and much of the variation is shown to correlate with the age of the speaker. Variation extends to the expression of both alienable and inalienable possession. In the case of alienable possession, morphology from a traditional language has been adopted into the contact variety, while for inalienable possession, the use of structures from the traditional language has a rather different profile in Wumpurrarni English.

McConvell's paper suggests that contact-induced change is not as simple a process as some approaches have assumed. In particular, he argues that situations of language contact typically involve more interaction between two or more languages than many previous accounts have allowed, and that better explanatory accounts may be possible when this interaction is included in the analysis.



Map 1 - Location of languages in the Australia-Pacific region analyzed in this volume



Map 2: Location of Ewe language

Notes

1. My thanks to Margaret Florey and Michael Ewing for very helpful comments on previous drafts of this work.

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