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Maritime Polynesian Pidgin before Pidgin English

This talk presents some historical-sociolinguistic findings of my recent book *Language Contact in the Early Colonial Pacific* (2014), and addresses some related methodological-theoretical issues. Specifically, it

- -argues for an areal, grammatically distinct Polynesian-based pidgin in the eastern Pacific from early European colonial contacts through the mid-nineteenth century, as illustrated by select representative samples from the Societies, the Marquesas, New Zealand, and the Hawaiian Islands
- -suggests not only a reduced morphology for this so-called Maritime Polynesian Pidgin (MPP), but also a word order of SVO in agreement with Pidgin Hawaiian and at variance with VSO in Central Eastern Polynesian languages
- -recognizes as MPP's primary sociohistorical contexts British and French explorations in the eastern Pacific, including the trade for local resources (food, water, etc.), the maritime fur trade, to a lesser extent also the sandalwood and pearl trade, plus whaling and sealing, as well as the service of Tahitian, Marquesan, Māori, and Hawaiian sailors on European and American ships
- -maintains that, while MPP still reflected traditional social and political realities of the eastern Pacific well into the first half of the nineteenth century, it also paved the way for Pidgin English by opening up the recognized linguistic and social infrastructure to new resources and new realities – with the linguistic changes reflecting concurrent sociopolitical developments in the Pacific
- requires a Silversteinian model of pidginization by which speakers with very different underlying deep structures – VSO and SVO – can merge with each other in language contact, at least at a surface level
- -demonstrates the feasibility of philology for the systematic restoration (*reconstitution*) of early attestations by triangulation with contemporaneous or modern comparative linguistic data, as developed in historical linguistics and extended to the study of non-European languages, including pidgins and creoles.

Key words: Maritime Polynesian Pidgin (Pidgin Hawaiian, Pidgin Māori or *Pākehā Māori*, Pidgin Marquesan, Pidgin Tahitian or *Parau Tinitō*) preceding Pidgin English; SVO; various forms of trade, whaling and sealing, service of Polynesian sailors on European and American ships; Silversteinian model of pidginization; philology