

## Book Reviews

***Language Contact in the Early Colonial Pacific: Maritime Polynesian Pidgin before Pidgin English.*** By Emanuel J. Drechsel. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. xviii + 333 pp. 3 Tables. 4 Maps. References. Index. \$99 cloth

### ‘ŌLELO HŌ‘ULU‘ULU / SUMMARY

Ua huli ‘ia kekahi ‘ōlelo pa‘i ‘ai Polonesia ma loko o nā palapala o nā kenekulia 18 a 19 i kākau ‘ia e nā kelamoku o ‘Eulopa a me ‘Amelika. ‘O kēia ka mo‘olelo i ho‘opuka ‘ia ma kā Emanuel J. Drechsel puke ‘o *Language Contact in the Early Colonial Pacific*.

We review Emanuel J. Drechsel’s book, *Language Contact in the Early Colonial Pacific*, which documents an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pidgin that emerged before Euro-American dominance in the Pacific and that reflects the dramatic changes in power from then to now.

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*I could never understand the Natives when talking to each other. . . . [But] in their intercourse with us, they commonly adopted our mistakes and method of pronunciation for the better dispatch of our business.*

—(Drechsel 2014:121–22)

Handsomely published by Cambridge University Press, Emanuel J. Drechsel’s (2014) *Language Contact in the Early Colonial Pacific* is an important book about Polynesian languages and history. The subtitle, *Maritime Polynesian Pidgin before Pidgin English*, provides a key to understanding its significance; I will explain some of these terms below as well as outline the book and discuss some of the reasons that I think it is worth writing about.

The received view of pidgins and creoles, such as Hawaiian Pidgin and Hawaiian Creole English (HCE), is that they originate in colonial situations where European languages dominate.<sup>1</sup> For example, on the sugar plantations of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Hawai‘i, American English represented the language of the plantation owners, the language of power. Over time, a “mixed-plate” pidgin of the Chinese,

Japanese, Portuguese, Filipino, and Hawaiian laborers emerged, which became progressively less distinct from English and more like an English dialect or accent. This illustrates a common pattern for creoles: their vocabularies tend to become more like the language of power.

But if we reverse time in our imaginations, we might ask, what was this English-based pidgin like before the plantations? The usual answer is that there was *nothing* then—before the plantations there was no pidgin in Hawai‘i; we have gone too far back in our imaginations. The usual answer is that before the plantations people spoke Hawaiian, the language of the kingdom, or in some situations they spoke minority languages, like English. But crucially, there was no mixing of Hawaiian and other languages.

But is this true? Maritime Polynesian Pidgin (MPP), an original term coined by Drechsel, argues otherwise. Building on research by a small group of academics (on which, more below), Drechsel’s claim is that there was already a pidgin in widespread use across the Pacific in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This provides a deeper lineage than the plantations for HCE and other Polynesian creoles spoken today. The language of power for MPP was not English or any other European language, rather it was the Polynesian languages that held sway in the day, such as Tahitian, Marquesan, Māori, and Hawaiian. Drechsel paints a picture of 1835 Honolulu, for example, where, “as the language of the land, Hawaiian would inadvertently have remained the target language, however successful various groups would have been at learning it” (Drechsel 2014:160).

Provided that language represents a proxy for power, one can cite MPP as an indicator of the greater power held by the speakers of Polynesian languages then, and, by the same token, the decline of MPP indicates a shift of power away from these speakers. This book, therefore, reminds us of an important and overlooked chapter in Polynesian history, when speakers of Polynesian languages were dominant across Polynesia, and I would recommend it to academics as well as to interested lay readers.

There is, however, an important limitation to this book that I would like to flag early on. Despite Drechsel’s impressive accomplishment in scouring source materials in English, French, Spanish, German, and Russian, there remains a poverty of non-European sources in the book, particularly Polynesian and Asian ones. This limitation presents an opportunity for anyone who can read Hawaiian, or other Polynesian or Asian languages. *No laila, ke kākau nei au i kēia ‘atikala no ‘oukou, i mea e ‘imi ai kekahi o ‘oukou i kēia ‘ike ko‘iko‘i.*

The study of pre-plantation Hawaiian pidgin goes back to the Hawaiian-language newspaper story of Kaluaiko‘olau, where we find a haole marshal speaking a strange kind of “Hawaiian.” In 1987, Derek Bickerton and William H. “Pila” Wilson identified the marshal’s language as a pidgin (*‘ōlelo pa‘i ‘ai*) or a contact language between Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian speakers (see Roberts 1995). This raised questions about how much other material could be found for such a pidgin and what other discoveries might be made. Drechsel’s book represents years of research into these questions.

In terms of structure, the book is divided into three parts, each consisting of three chapters. The first part is largely theoretical and probably of least interest to a non-specialist in pidgin and creole studies. Briefly, Drechsel tries to define a niche relative to previous work, emphasising a particular balance of methods (i.e., *ethnohistory* and *philology*)<sup>2</sup> needed to study language variation from handwritten sources and, of course, from

an era before modern audio recording equipment. Drechsel is inspiring in his ability to decipher some of these early records, which both predate any standardised spelling and often strongly reflect the idiolects of the source authors.

As a game, you might try to guess what the words “puarkee” and “mortarkee” mean. These appear in Herman Melville’s early novel *Typee* (which is how the eventual author of *Moby Dick* originally rose to fame). *Typee* is based on the author’s actual experiences living among the Taipi people on Nuku Hiva, and, spoiler alert, these words are Polynesian in origin: the words are *puaka* (*pua’a* in Hawaiian) ‘pig’ and *motaki* (*maika’i* in Hawaiian) ‘good’.

So how does one get from “puarkee” to *puaka*? It would appear that Melville reinterpreted the words to reflect his New England idiolect, adding *r*’s to both words and affecting other changes. Examples like these provide a flavour of the kind of *ethnohistoric* and *philological* ear that interpreting these materials requires, and Drechsel’s book can be read as a kind of manual for interpreting such words. However, I would not advise spending too much time in part 1 of the book before moving on.

I expect that the second (and longest) part of the book will be of most interest to readers of *Palapala*. It contains bits of historical texts that Drechsel argues to exemplify MPP. These data are, moreover, encountered in the context of stories, which add value to the reading. An example is the story of Moehanga, a Māori man who travelled to London. His European friend, John Savage, writes of the delight that Moehanga showed in everything he saw; for example, “The coach gave him great satisfaction. . . . I asked him how he liked our present situation: he replied, Piannah wurrie nuenuue yaieda—Very good house, it walks very fast” (Drechsel 2014:139).

As with other linguistic examples in the book, Drechsel unpacks this savoury morsel by (1) repeating the passage of interest (with the original gloss, if available), (2) providing a more standardised transcription (in bold), and (3) suggesting his own, more literal translation (Drechsel 2014:140; brackets in the original):<sup>3</sup>

“Piannah wurrie nuenuue yaieda” ‘Very good house, it walks very fast’.

**Pai ana fare, nuinui haere.**

[It is a] good house [in reference to the coach], [because it] very-much goes’.

When we translate Moehanga’s passage into Hawaiian, we see that it is not “properly grammatical”: *maika’i hale, nuinui hele*. However, as an instance of “broken” Polynesian, this makes it a good candidate for MPP. Furthermore, we know from context that it was used to communicate with a non-Māori speaker (John Savage), and this should increase our confidence in identifying it as MPP. I suspect that examples like these, of which there are many in part 2, will help the reader develop an eye for seeing MPP in other texts.

While it may be funny to think of a horse-drawn carriage as a “walking house,” it bears asking how else one might otherwise have expected Moehanga to describe it. As a bonus, these episodes often reveal something interesting about the participants’ (pre-) contact worldviews. Indeed, the stories in part 2 of the book span a period of time from the mid-1700s to the late 1800s, and range all over the Pacific and beyond, providing numerous historical and linguistic delights.

In another early encounter, we meet Tupaia,<sup>4</sup> an “ali’i and priest” of Ra’iātea who travelled with Captain Cook to Tahiti and New Zealand. As far as we currently know, Tupaia’s success in communicating with the Māori may have been the start of MPP, and MPP would have arisen not only as a bridge between Polynesians and foreigners (i.e., Europeans, Americans, or Asians), as the story of Tupaia demonstrates the use of pidgin to communicate between Polynesians. We see this need for a contact language between different Polynesians groups in the interactions of the young interpreter Mahine from Porapora (Bora-Bora). In Mahine’s case, he was ultimately able to communicate with Māoris, but only after a marked learning curve (see Drechsel 2014:117).

We find that some Pacific peoples spoke such different languages that there was very little mutual intelligibility, as in the curious case of Ahutoru, a Tahitian interpreter who travelled with Captain Louis-Antoine de Bougainville’s French fleet. Despite his best attempts, Ahutoru failed to communicate with Sāmoans and Vanuatuans. This should not be too surprising: the languages of Sāmoa and Vanuatu are more distant linguistic relatives of Tahitian, Māori, or Hawaiian. Drechsel usefully reminds us here that there were even “differences *within* Tahitian [and other Polynesian languages], namely between ‘common’ and ceremonial ways of speaking, to the point of missing intelligibility” (Drechsel 2014:112). Since flourishing languages tend to exhibit great variety, it is entirely conceivable that MPP provided a common method of communication for people who spoke different registers of *the same language*, perhaps even on the same island.

Moving on from these early encounters, we find that MPP had spread across the Pacific by about 1815 to 1818, the period in which German naturalist Adelbert von Chamisso recounted his meeting of a man known as Kadu. It seems Kadu, a Micronesian, was able to switch quickly into MPP on the occasion of meeting with Hawaiians. Kadu’s quick adoption of MPP led Chamisso to infer that Kadu had encountered the pidgin before, and that MPP had already spread from eastern Polynesia to Micronesia.

As late as the 1880s, we still find examples of MPP. When a major storm forced the haole captain of a ship headed for Maui to return to Lāna’i, the captain explained himself in Pidgin Hawaiian (Drechsel 2014:230; brackets in original; also see Roberts 1995:32):

“Lanai makai, Lahaina aole makai. Hele mau, mahope pilikia.”

**Lāna’i maika’i, Lahaina ‘a’ole maika’i. Hele ma ‘ō, ma hope pilikia.**

‘Lāna’i [is] good, Lahaina [is] not good. Go there, later trouble’.<sup>5</sup>

Examples like this vividly illustrate what it was like when Hawaiian was the dominant language of the Hawaiian Islands. Very soon, this Hawaiian-based pidgin would be superseded by the English-based pidgin (and subsequent creole) of the plantations. However, rather than start from scratch, one might expect the plantation workers to have started from this older form of intercultural communication (Bickerton and Wilson 1987). Should this conjecture hold true, the more we look at MPP, the more we will find echoes of MPP in the Hawaiian Creole English of today. We might ask, Is MPP being echoed in the Hawaiian Pidgin-like phrasing of “‘A’ole GMO” and “‘A’ole drugs”?<sup>6</sup>

One lesson to be drawn from part 2 of the book is that identifying MPP can be challenging. In some of the examples, MPP stands out from English (as in Savage's account of Moehanga and the horse-drawn coach). But it was not always clear to the Europeans that these were examples of a contact language, or pidgin, rather than of natural Polynesian languages. Indeed, this might have been a source of the misinformed impression that Polynesian languages are somehow inherently "simple." Of course, this unflattering impression could cut both ways, as Drechsel relates: "The less-than-successful attempts by Europeans at speaking Tahitian, despite its alleged simplicity and easy learnability, became the source of much amusement for and mockery by Society Islanders" (Drechsel 2014:114).

According to James Burney, first lieutenant on the *Discovery* (travelling under Captain Cook), "I could never understand the Natives when talking to each other" (Drechsel 2014:121), and "in their intercourse with us, they commonly adopted our mistakes and method of pronunciation for the better dispatch of our business" (Drechsel 2014:122). Here Burney is showing his awareness that the Tahitians were not speaking proper Tahitian, but rather a pidgin. Identifying cases of MPP often requires a command of both contact languages, as well as of their various registers or dialects. Even with the ability to speak English and Hawaiian, it can be challenging at first to decipher an example like "Eree te motoo mukée-mukée tooai nooee-te poa [Ali'i te motu make-make tū'ai nui ta pua'a]" (Drechsel 2014:145). However, details of the narratives can help, such as who is speaking and why.

Another benefit of these narratives is that we see Polynesians of the period in active roles and in a positive light. Consider the example of Tama, a Hawaiian who served on an American whaling ship. Tama sailed between Boston, South America, and China as part of the fur trade, before jumping ship at Tahuata (in the Marquesas), "attracted by the beauty of its women" (Drechsel 2014:134). He was, it seems, a popular addition to the islands on account of the excellent stories that he told and the impressive skill with which he threw stones and spears (*ibid.*). There is even something positive in the damning praise of Urey Lisiansky, commander of the Russian vessel *Neva*, who noted, "The Sandwich Islands [Hawaiian Islands] are inhabited by a race of men who are not deficient in talents. They are extremely attached to European customs. Some speak English tolerably well, and almost all attempt to pronounce a few words in the language, however indifferently they may succeed; as, for instance, *nypo* for a knife, *how lo, lo*, for how do you do? and *cabeca*, for a cabbage" (Drechsel 2014:136; brackets in the original). (One might wonder what the Hawaiians thought of him and of his pronunciation.)

Finally, although the vast majority of narratives in the book are about men, Drechsel notes that "it is not only Māori sailors, but also their wives and Māori women of European sailors who would have used the Māori pidgin on board of whalers" (Drechsel 2014:190). This is particularly significant because of the definition of pidgins and creoles; that is, pidgins become creoles when children grow up speaking them. In this context, it would have been interesting to find children speaking MPP, but as Drechsel does not cite any evidence of this, we do not know how widespread MPP was within each society. But this is only to say that we have no evidence yet of an early Maritime Polynesian *Creole* (i.e., an "MPC"). That discovery may yet be waiting for someone to make.

The third and final part of the book reflects, albeit briefly, on the examples of MPP presented in part 2, discussing MPP more generally in terms of its origins, expansion, longevity, geographic distribution, and uses. In this final part, Drechsel provides a linguistic sketch of MPP, noting that a key difference between MPP and HCE is that MPP drew on a “wider Polynesian lexical base common to Tahitian, Māori, Marquesan, and Hawaiian” (Drechsel 2014:239). He writes, “But of almost 320 entries in the accompanying vocabulary, the Pidgin [i.e., MPP] shares more than 147 phonologically identical or close equivalences in all four Eastern Polynesian source languages, and 36 more with at least three out of Tahitian, Māori, Marquesan, and Hawaiian” (ibid.). Fewer words were common to only one of these languages, showing that MPP emphasised the commonality among Polynesian languages.

As precious as these data are, 320 words is still a small sample for most statistical purposes. The corpus might nonetheless provide a useful resource for constructing a new dictionary of Hawaiian (either mono- or bilingual), where words are documented by their earliest attestation in the style of the Oxford English Dictionary. The editors of such a project would do well to look back at this book.

Drechsel also advances some more questionable and unnecessary linguistic conjectures. To take one example, he proposes that MPP follows a general SVO word order (i.e., subject-verb-object), possibly for theoretically motivated reasons. One source of this view may be Noam Chomsky’s so-called Minimalist Program, a theory about language acquisition which is usually taken to posit a single *underlying* SVO word order for all languages (see, e.g., Massam 2000).

An example of SVO in MPP can be found in the following question (Drechsel 2014:127; brackets in the original):

“Oe No Ho No ho haree Tenenony or Capitain?”

‘Will you stay at the house of Tenenony or the Captain?’

**‘Oe nohonoho hale tini noni o kapitan?’**

‘You live/reside [at the] house [of the] chief [who-is-]small or [the] captain?’.

In this example, which is part of a negotiation between British and Spanish captains about the fate of a Polynesian man called Matatore, the word ordering follows an SVO pattern (i.e., ‘Oe [subject] *nohonoho* [verb] *hale tini noni* [object]).

One interest in patterns like these is that they are common in European languages such as French and English (e.g., *Le chien* [subject] *à mordu* [verb] *le facteur* [object], and *The dog* [subject] *bit* [verb] *the postman* [object]). Polynesian languages like Hawaiian tend to be VSO (*Ua nahu* [verb] *ka ‘īlio* [subject] *i ka lawe leka* [object]). Chomsky’s view is that this observable Polynesian word order (VSO) is actually a European-like (SVO) word order in disguise.

In this context, Drechsel raises the loaded question of why we find so much SVO in MPP. Another explanation is that examples of SVO in MPP are simply artefacts in the source materials from European speakers who were imposing their preferred word orders (pidgins are not fixed languages, so European and Polynesian speakers may have preferred different word orders, even though both parties could understand each other). One way to test this would be to look for more examples of MPP from Polynesian or



Asian sources. Would we find more VSO, for example, in Hawaiian accounts?<sup>7</sup> Gathering more data, particularly from non-European sources, would be strongly advised before drawing broad conclusions about word order in MPP.

To conclude, *Language Contact in the Early Colonial Pacific* is an important book about Polynesian languages and history. I expect that lay readers and researchers alike will enjoy the stories in part 2, and those with overlapping fields of study, or who might be interested in becoming involved in this field of study, will find much of value. This book highlights the need for researchers who speak Polynesian languages, such as Hawaiian, who are in a position to make important academic contributions. I hope that some readers will try to answer the mysteries left open by this book, and perhaps even report on their discoveries about MPP here in the pages of *Palapala*. As Drechsel (2014:21) concludes, MPP offers “greater recognition to Polynesians for their historical role in early encounters with colonists than conventional, Eurocentric studies of Pacific pidgins and creoles.”<sup>8</sup>

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## NOTES

1. A note on pidgins and creoles: A pidgin is, by the linguistic definition, no one’s first language. Pidgins arise in contact situations when speakers do not share a common language; typically, these involve lots of hand gesturing and grammatical simplifications. Creoles, on the other hand, arise when children grow up in a pidgin-speaking environment. In a single generation, these children will flesh out a pidgin to include the kinds of complexities that linguists see in all natural languages. Creoles are thus fully functional human languages. For example, Hawaiian Creole English (HCE), which is locally known as “Pidgin” (note capital “P”), is not a pidgin in the linguistic sense of the word, but rather a creole (see Romaine 1988).

2. Ethnohistory is the study of cultures through historical records, and philology is the study of language through written historical documents. So Drechsel’s approach involves closer readings of written documents to learn about earlier Polynesian cultures and languages.

3. The *f* in Drechsel’s transcription corresponds to the *wh* in Māori orthography.

4. Perhaps *Tupa’ia* or *Tupai’a*.

5. Meaning ‘If we go to Lāna’i, there will be trouble’.

6. *Kū’ē i nā GMO* and *Mai ‘ai i ka lā’au ‘ino* in more standard Hawaiian, expressing the English slogans “No GMO” and “Say no to drugs.”

7. We also find counterexamples like “‘A’ole [verb] pua’a [object] ‘oe [subject]?” (Drechsel 2014:137) for ‘You have no pigs’ (ibid.), which is VOS and is familiar in Hawaiian from constructions like *Loa’a* (verb) *ka pua’a* (object) *ia’u* (subject).

8. The politically inclined will do well to remember that “in the eastern Pacific, English came to assume the role of a major interlingual medium only when Pacific Islanders lost control over most of their resources, land, and destiny. . . . The gradual replacement of MPP with European languages, reduced or non-reduced, has echoed the socio-political circumstances fairly closely” (Drechsel 2014:299).

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***Hawaiian Music and Musicians (Ka Mele Hawai'i A Me Ka Po'e Mele):***

***An Encyclopedic History***, Second Edition. Edited by Dr. George S. Kanahale, revised and updated by John Berger. Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 2012. xlix + 926 pp. Illustrated. Appendix. Addendum. Index. \$35.00 paper

## ‘ŌLELO HŌ‘ULU‘ULU / SUMMARY

Ua puka maila ke pa'i mua 'ana o *Hawaiian Music and Musicians* ma ka MH 1979. 'O ka hua ia o ka noi'i lō'ihī ma nā makahiki he nui na ke Kauka George S. Kanahale, ko The Hawaiian Music Foundation, a me nā kānaka 'ē a'e ho'i he lehulehu. Ma ia puke nō i noelo piha mua 'ia ai ka puolo Hawai'i, me ka mana'o, na ia puke nō e ho'olako mai i ka nele o ka 'ike pa'a e pili ana i ka puolo Hawai'i, kona mo'olelo, kona mohala 'ana a'e, nā mea ho'okani a pu'ukani kaulana, a me nā kānaka kākō'o pa'a ma hope ona. Ua kali lō'ihī 'ia ke pa'i hou 'ana o ua puke lā, a ua puka maila ka mana hou ma ka MH 2012. Na John Berger, he mea kākau 'atikala no nā hana ho'onanea like 'ole, he kū'auhau ho'i ma ka puolo Hawai'i, i ho'olako mai i ka nui o nā loli a me ka 'ike hou. Ma nei 'atikala loilo'i a'u, hō'ulu'ulu 'ia ke 'ano o ke pa'i mua 'ana o *Hawaiian Music and Musicians*, a hō'ulu'ulu 'ia nō ho'i 'elua mana'o paka ma muli o kekahi kuana'ike akeakamai. A laila, helu papa 'ia nā loli a me ka 'ike hou ma loko o ka puke hou, a wehewehe 'ia kekahi mau pilikia hou loa. Ma ka māhele hope loa ho'i, hāpai 'ia kekahi mau mana'o e ho'okā'oi 'ia ai ke kolu o ke pa'i 'ana i ho'olaha 'ē 'ia e Berger mā.

The first edition of *Hawaiian Music and Musicians* was published in 1979. It was the result of years of research by Dr. George S. Kanahale, the Hawaiian Music Foundation, and many other contributors. It represented the first comprehensive examination of Hawaiian music and was intended to address the paucity of reliable and accessible information about Hawaiian music, its history, evolution, and significant performers and contributors. The long-overdue second edition of this text was published in 2012, with music and entertainment journalist John Berger providing the majority of the revision and additions. This review provides an overview of the first edition and summarizes two academic critiques of the text. It then documents the revisions and additions to the