

Name: Miriam Meyerhoff

Title: **Shedding light on substrate transfer: Comparing linguistic constraints in Vanuatu.**

Affiliation: University of Edinburgh

Address: LEL, 14 Buccleuch Place

Edinburgh EH8 9LN

SCOTLAND

Email: Miriam.Meyerhoff@ed.ac.uk

Fax: +44 131 650-3962

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Shedding light on substrate transfer: Comparing linguistic constraints in Vanuatu.

Miriam Meyerhoff
University of Edinburgh

The source of several variables in Bislama, an English-lexified Pacific creole, remain the subject of some dispute. A major problem for creolists is that variable features of a creole's grammar may have several possible sources. How do we evaluate or weight the contribution of substrate languages, the lexifier, and discourse universals to the resulting creole?

Multivariate analysis can help. I compare the strength of different linguistic constraints on several variable aspects of Bislama grammar, asking whether the constraint rankings pattern like or differently from the constraints on *the same variables* in a substrate language of the speakers in my corpus. If the same linguistic factors play the same kind of role in constraining variation in both substrate and creole, this strengthens the claim for transfer. If the same constraints are significant, but pattern differently, this supports "transformation under transfer" (Meyerhoff 2003). If different constraints operate in the two languages, this weakens the case for substrate transfer considerably.

I focus particularly on the claim that *animacy* of a referent plays a significant role in determining:

- a. presence/absence of pronominal subject in a clause,
- b. the form of 3p agreement, and
- c. the presence/absence of pronominal objects (Crowley 1990, 2002).

Other research has claimed discourse salience (not a substrate feature) and/or direct possession relations (substrate feature) are more relevant (Meyerhoff 2000, 2003). Clauses of spontaneous conversational Bislama recorded on Malo island in the 1990s *and* a corpus of 10 Tamambo (the Malo vernacular, Jauncey 1997) narratives or process texts are analysed for the same factors. The results show that animacy is a significant constraint on the subject pronominal variable, but it is not strong for the other two variables.

As a result of the investigation, there is an empirical gain and a theoretical gain. First, claims for transfer of substrate features into Bislama are motivated in a more transparent way than they have been before. Second, we see clearly the potential that multivariate analysis offers for resolving outstanding questions and debates relating to language contact and the role of substrate transfer. This is especially true for the Pacific creoles where we continue to be able to gather, and analyse, substrate corpora.

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