

Peter Mühlhäusler *Growth and structure of the lexicon of New Guinea Pidgin*. *Pacific Linguistics*, C-52, 1979. Canberra: The Australian National University. xx+498pp (incl 1 map). \$A16.00.

Reviewed by John Lynch
University of Papua New Guinea

When I first saw Mühlhäusler's PhD thesis, I sympathised with his examiners — not because of its quality, but because of the sheer weight they had to lug around. The publication of a "slightly revised version" (iii) of that thesis has the advantage of being physically more manageable; it is, nevertheless, a massive undertaking, and one which is well worth careful study.

The book is concerned largely with the development of the lexicon of Tok Pisin (or New Guinea Pidgin (NGP) to use Mühlhäusler's terminology). This development is examined in both its diachronic and synchronic dimensions: i.e. Mühlhäusler describes "the linguistic properties of the lexicon of NGP in relation to the five main stages of its life-cycle", while at the same time he pays considerable attention to "its social varieties, its regional varieties, and its stylistic levels, pointing out the relationship between these varieties" (vi).

The central chapters of the book (Chapters 4 and 5) are concerned with the structure and development of the NGP lexicon. These chapters are preceded by chapters on the methodology used and on the methodological problems of description, and by a discussion of the historical and social setting of the language. The core of the book is followed by a chapter of vocabulary planning for NGP, and by a collection of the various conclusions reached. A 32-page list of references provides useful bibliographical data.

Mühlhäusler is at pains to point out in a number of places the importance, for any description of NGP grammar, of both an understanding of the history of the language and an awareness of its sociolectal complexity, thus:

Any linguistic description of NGP which insists on a strict separation of its synchronic and diachronic

aspects or which attempts to arrive at a common core grammar abstracted from variants of NGP found along the social and geographical axes, will fail to adequately describe significant parts of its grammar (451).

Further, our attention is also constantly drawn to the fact that the language has not stopped developing: "NGP is still undergoing a process of vigorous growth and change" (341), and

is still in a state of rapid structural expansion. Not only are new lexical items, accounted for by the various programs [of lexical derivation], being added all the time, but new regularities and subregularities are equally likely to emerge (418).

In this context, Mühlhäusler's attempts to find order in the ever-changing lexical structure of NGP are one of the features of the volume. And despite "the fact that an integrated sociolinguistic theory is not at hand" (vii), his continual efforts to relate his conclusions about NGP to creole theory in general provide a solid theoretical component which will be of considerable interest to linguists with only a marginal interest in NGP itself.

On the other hand, the volume can also be said to be heavily data-oriented. Masses of linguistic data are given to support and illustrate the points he makes, and, "with a few trivial exceptions, all examples quoted in the book were taken from [Mühlhäusler's] corpus" (iv). The early chapters particularly also contain valuable data of another kind: quotations from numerous early writers on various aspects of NGP.

This book is certainly not light bedside reading, although teachers of linguistics will find (and have found!) it useful to browse through the book in search of examples of particular lexical processes. It is a major contribution to our understanding of the development of Tok Pisin, and an important addition to the general field of pidgin and creole studies.