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# **Parallel meanings, divergent forms in the north Vanuatu Sprachbund**

*Diffusion or genetic inheritance?*

# Areal studies and language families

## ■ Linguistic areas

- “A linguistic area is generally taken to be a geographically delimited area including languages **from two or more language families**, sharing significant traits.” [Dixon 2001]
- “The central feature of a linguistic area is the existence of structural similarities shared among languages of a geographical area, where usually **some of the languages are genetically unrelated or at least are not all close relatives.**” [Campbell 2006]

- ▶ Most areal studies involve **distinct language families**:

Balkans, Mesoamerica, Ethiopia, SE Asia, India, Siberia...

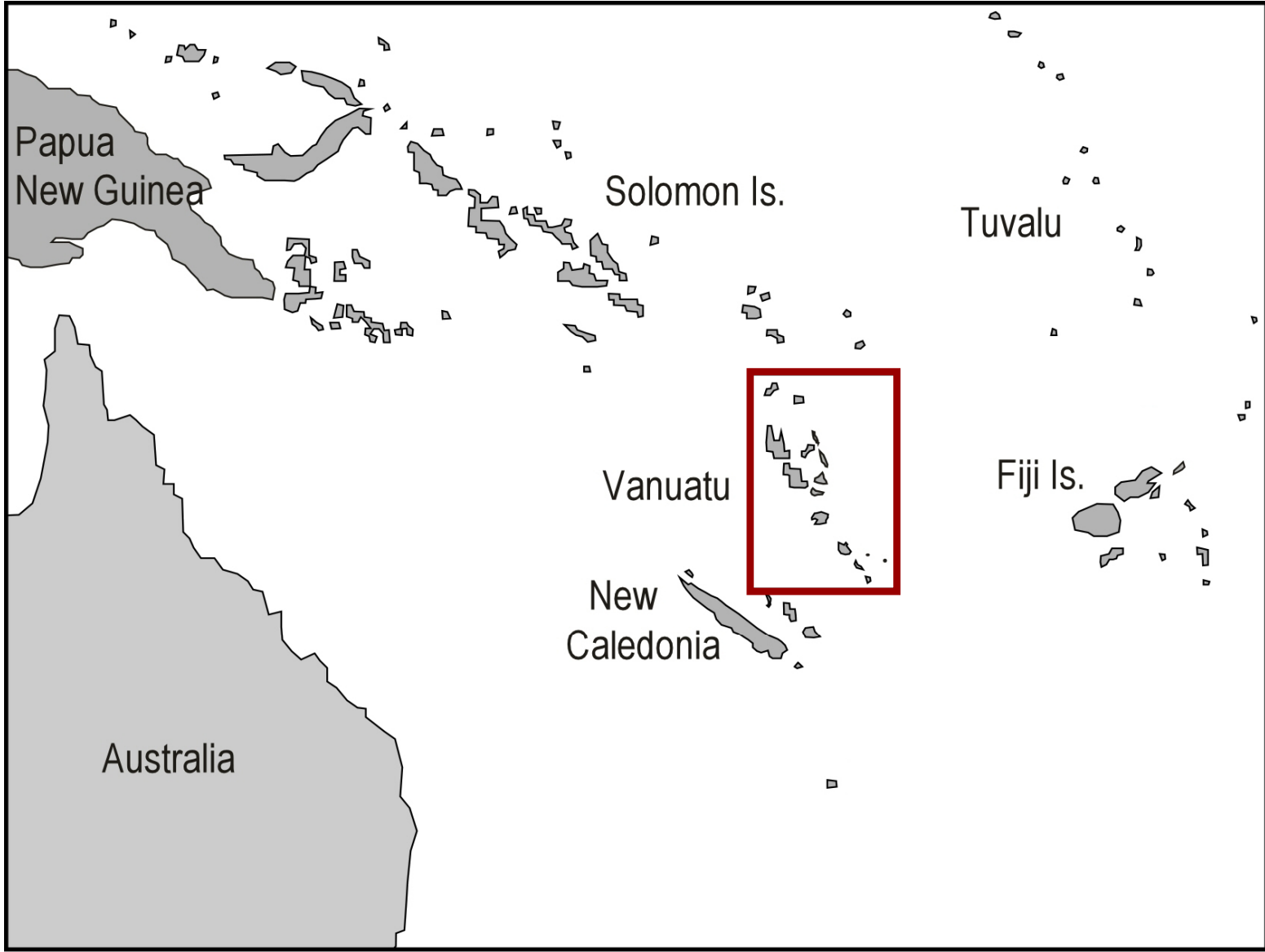
- ▶ Another type:

Contact situations involving languages which are **genetically closely related.**

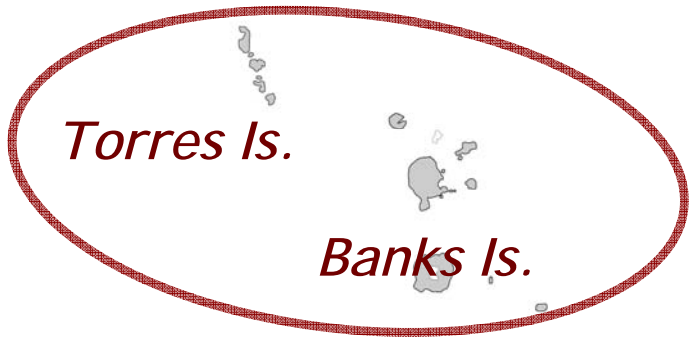
e.g. Heeringa *et al.* 2000 for **Germanic** lgs; Chappell 2001 for **Sinitic** lgs...

- **Structural similarities** < *common ancestor* or *diffusion*?

- ▶ This case study: the **17 languages of north Vanuatu.**



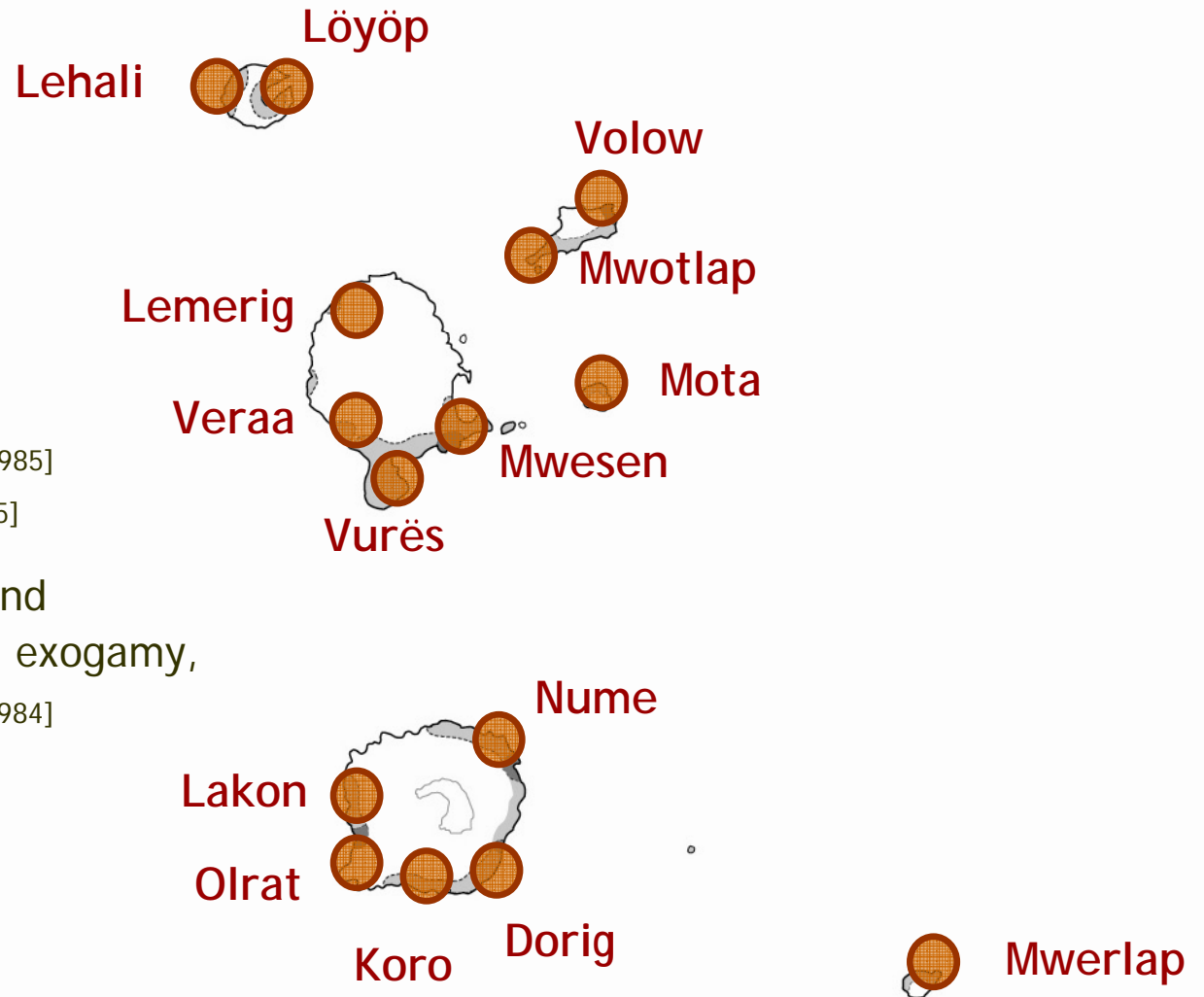
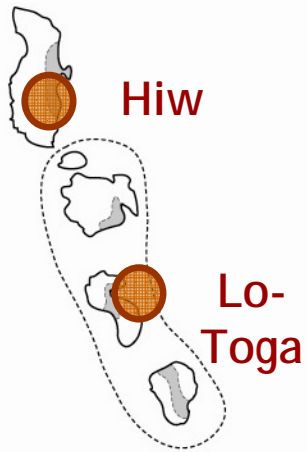
# v a n u a t u



0 100 km

# V a n u a t u

# The 17 languages of north Vanuatu



- ▶ **Close genetic relationship**

*Austronesian* > *Oceanic*

> *North-Central Vanuatu* [Clark 1985]

> ***North Vanuatu*** [François 2005]

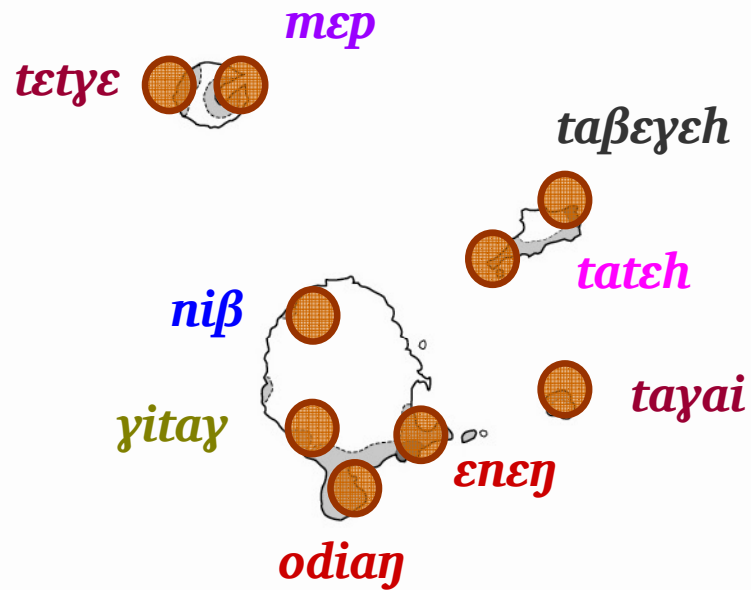
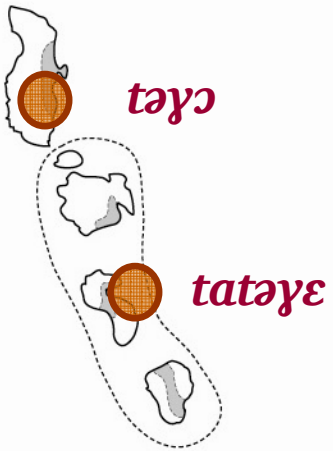
- ▶ Sustained **language contact** and **plurilingualism** through trade, exogamy, shared cultural events... [Vienne 1984]

- ▶ Little mutual intelligibility

- ▶ Modern vehicular language: **Bislama** (Eng-lexifier pidgin)

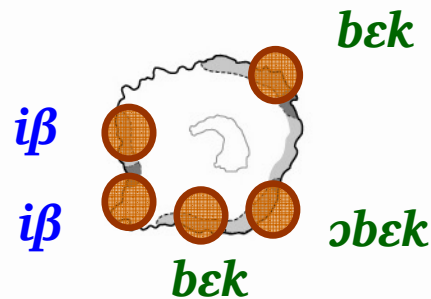
**Parallel meanings  
divergent forms  
in the north Vanuatu  
Sprachbund**

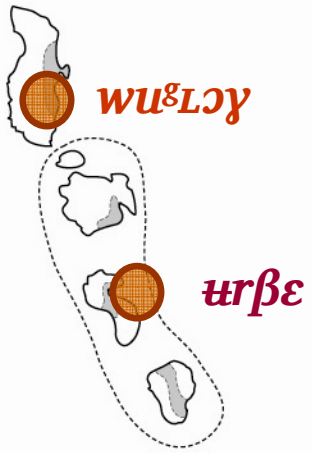
# Negative existential



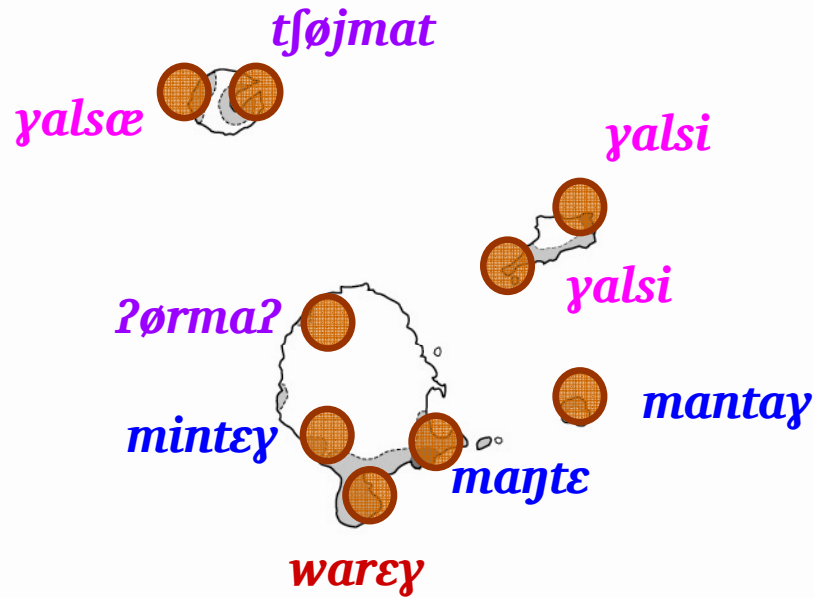
## *Negative existential*

- "not be there, be absent"
- "have not; lack"
- (sentential) "no"
- "it's alright"
- "(try) to no avail"



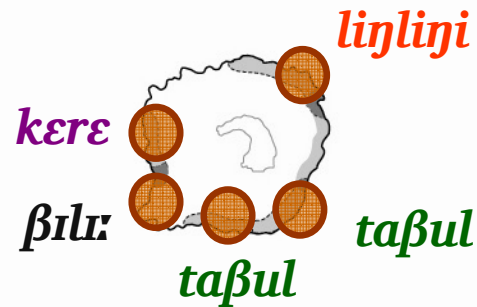


## Adverb "properly"



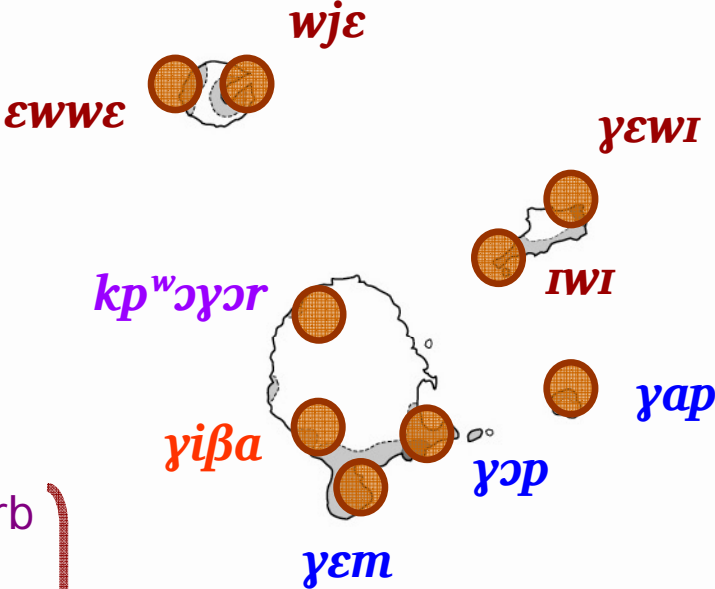
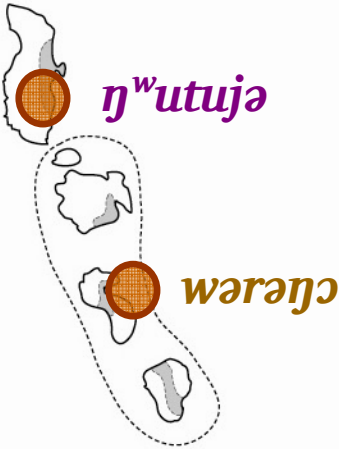
### Adverb 'properly'

- "(do s.th.) properly, correctly"
- "(eat, drink+) completely"
- "(speak) sincerely"
- "nicely (fat+)..."



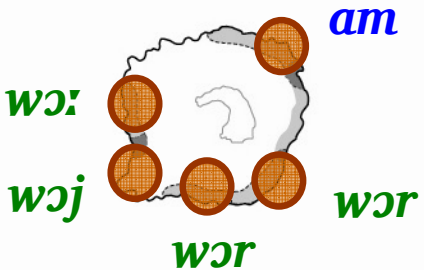


# Qualitative restrictive adverb



## Qualitative restrictive adverb

- 'just, only'
- restrictive with adjectives pragmatically oriented negatively
- used with small numbers
- used with recent past
- 'just (fine)'



“just tell the truth”

spea<sub>V</sub> well<sub>ADV</sub> only<sub>ADV</sub>

 *yatit wu<sup>g</sup>Lɔy η<sup>w</sup>utuɟə*

 *βəsə ɱβε wəɾəŋɔ*

*βap tʃəjmat wje*

*ββap ɣalsæ ɛwwe*

*βap ɣalsi ɣewɪ*

*tɛk ʔəɾmaʔ kp<sup>w</sup>ɔyɔɾ*

*hələ ɣalsi ɪwɪ*

*tɪk mintɛy ɣiβa*

*ɣato mantay ɣap*

*βitɾɔw maŋtɛ ɣɔp*

*kp<sup>w</sup>akp<sup>w</sup> warey ɣem*

*manɛs liŋliŋi am*

*luw kɛɾɛ wɔ:*

*βit βɪɪɾ wɔj*

*βɣat taβul wɔɾ*

*βit taβul wɔɾ*

  
*luw menmen ɣəm*

### Structural isomorphism

- on the **paradigmatic** axis (semantic structure of lexicon)
- on the **syntagmatic** axis (syntax)

“One grammar, 17 lexicons”

[cf. Friedman 1997]

... or **18** counting Bislama!

BISL **tok gut nomo**

< \**talk good no-more*

# The case of Bislama

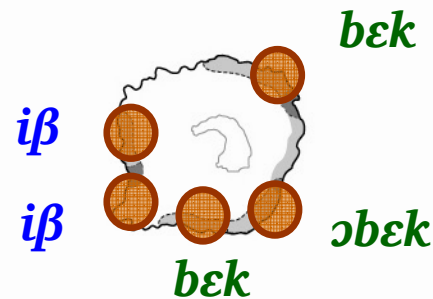
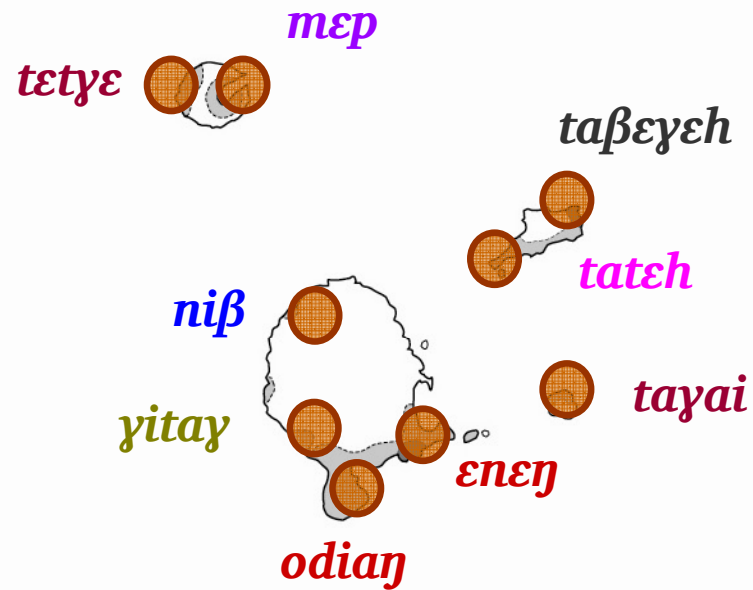
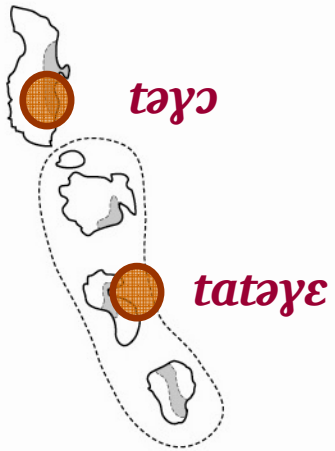
## ■ Bislama

- ▶ English-based **Pidgin** with various Oceanic languages as its substratum (XIX<sup>th</sup> century) [Tryon & Charpentier 2004]
- ▶ **Bislama** is the Vanuatu variety of Pacific English pidgins. (The variety here discussed is the one spoken in North Vanuatu)

## ■ Relexification

- ▶ About Haitian Creole, Lefebvre (1998: 9) defines **relexification** as *“a process of vocabulary substitution in which **the only information adopted from the target language in the lexical entry is the phonological information**”*
- ▶ **Pre-existing functional moulds** (lexemes, constructions...) were re-lexified with “phonological” (formal) material from the lexifier language.
- ▶ Bislama = **Oceanic structures** x **English forms**  
[Camden 1979, Keesing 1991]

# Negative existential



## *Negative existential*

- "not be there, be absent"
- "have not; lack"
- (sentential) "no"
- "it's alright"
- "(try) to no avail"

BISL **nogat**  
< Engl. \**no-got*

# The model of areal convergence

- ▶ Another case where languages with different forms come to share parallel structures:

## ■ Metatypy

- ▶ Ross (2001) compared **Papuan** *Waskia* and neighbouring **Oceanic** *Takia*.
- ▶ As a result of contact, *Takia* has kept its forms unchanged but has entirely remodelled its structures following the Papuan model.
- ▶ Sustained contact between lgs A and B results typically in A undergoing “**metatypy**” under the influence of B:
  - *“the reorganization of the language's semantic patterns and ‘ways of saying things’*
  - *the restructuring of its syntax.”*
- ▶ In both cases (relexification & metatypy), contact phenomena are defined by their ability to **disrupt genetic inheritance**.

# The model of areal convergence

## ■ Is areal convergence the right model?

- ▶ Oceanic vs (Pidgin) English (*relexification*)

	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>
<i>Forms</i>	<b>different</b>	<b>different</b>
<i>Structures</i>	<b>different</b>	<b>same</b>

- ▶ Papuan vs Oceanic (*metatypy*)

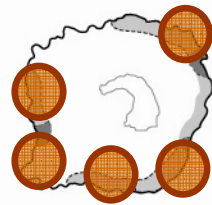
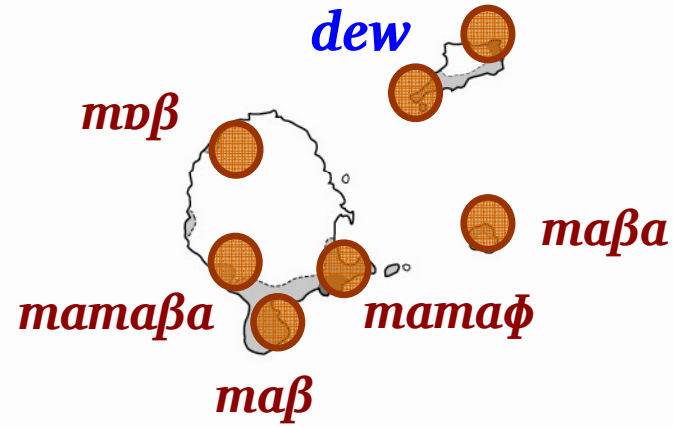
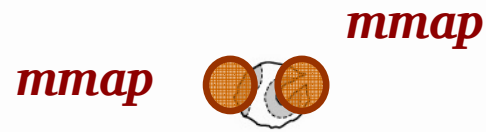
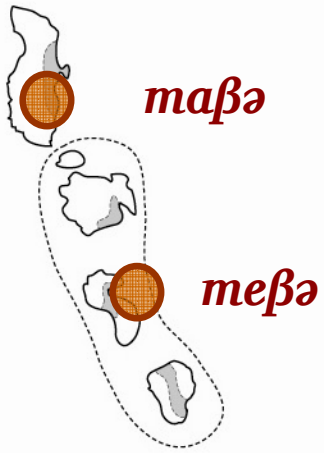
	<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>
<i>Forms</i>	<b>different</b>	<b>different</b>
<i>Structures</i>	<b>different</b>	<b>same</b>

- ▶ Oceanic vs Oceanic (North Vanuatu)

- *forms* have changed
- *structures* have *either* been retained *or* changed and reconverged

	Protolanguage	History	Present
<i>Forms</i>	<b>same</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>different</b>
<i>Structures</i>	<b>same</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>same</b>

A polysemous term:  
"heavy"

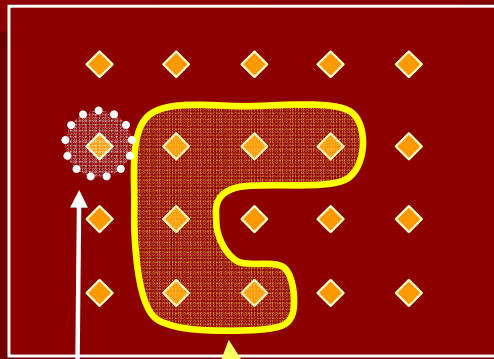


Proto-form \***mamaβa**

adjective "*heavy*"

- "heavy"
- "weighty, important"
- "solemn, respectful"
- "taboo"
- "elaborate"...

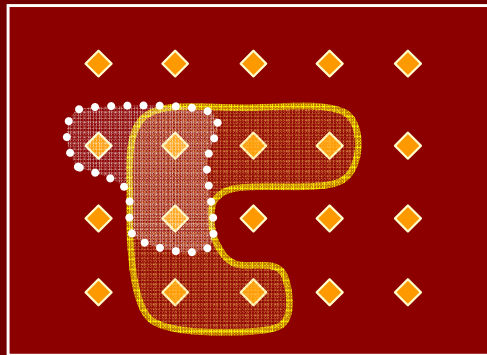
### Protolanguage



\*dew  
(?)

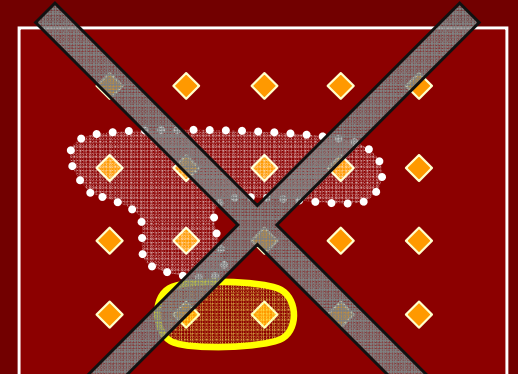
\*mamaβa  
'heavy, solemn...'

### Pre Mwotlap



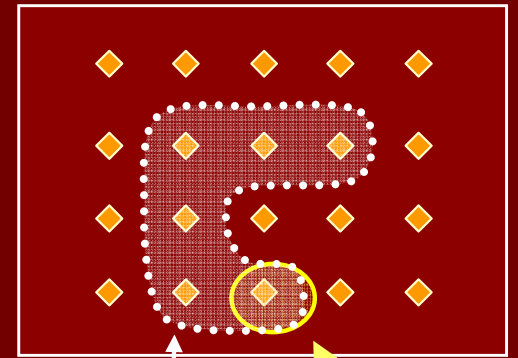
semantic shift  
+  
lexical competition  
between 2 forms  
(*partial synonymy*)

### Modern Mwotlap



*semantic restructuring?*

### Modern Mwotlap



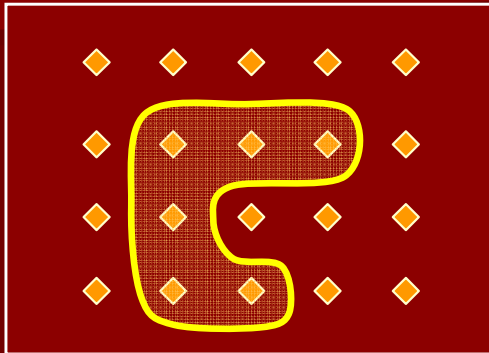
\*dew  
'heavy, solemn...'

\*mamaβa  
'tabod'<sup>6</sup>

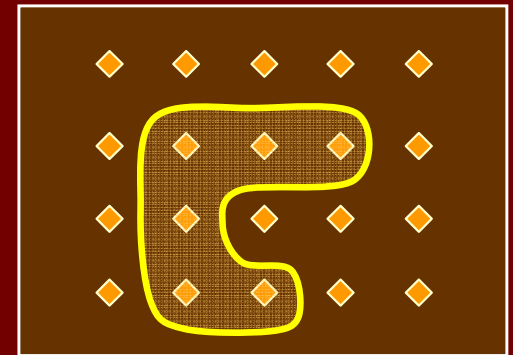


# Language-internal relexification

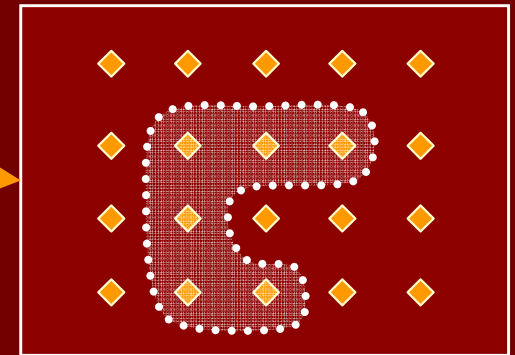
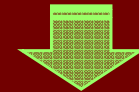
Protolanguage



Neighbouring languages



Areal pressure



- The meaning of the new word has been “forced” into the **pre-existing mould**.
- Because languages change one at a time, *generally*, the semantic structure that is thus being retained is **indirectly inherited** from earlier stages / from the common protolanguage.
- Change of form, retention of meaning.
- **Hybrid** Micro-perspective: *contact phenomenon*  
Macro-perspective: *genetic retention*

Tikopia *tafito*

Noun "tree stump"

Teanu *utele*

*tət*

*təsi*

Tahitian *tumu*

*ntʃətʃi*

*ntit*

*ntit*

*nʔuβu*

*nutoti*

Proto Oceanic \***puqun**

Proto North-Vanuatu \***X** ?

*ʔuβu*

*kp<sup>w</sup>etey*

*kp<sup>w</sup>ityi*

*kp<sup>w</sup>ityi*

INHERITED POLYSEMY

Noun "tree stump"

- "stump, base of tree"
- unit in counting plants
- "beginning (*song, month+*)"
- "origin (*family, custom+*)"
- "cause, reason (*event+*)"

*kp<sup>w</sup>ityi*

*kp<sup>w</sup>iti*

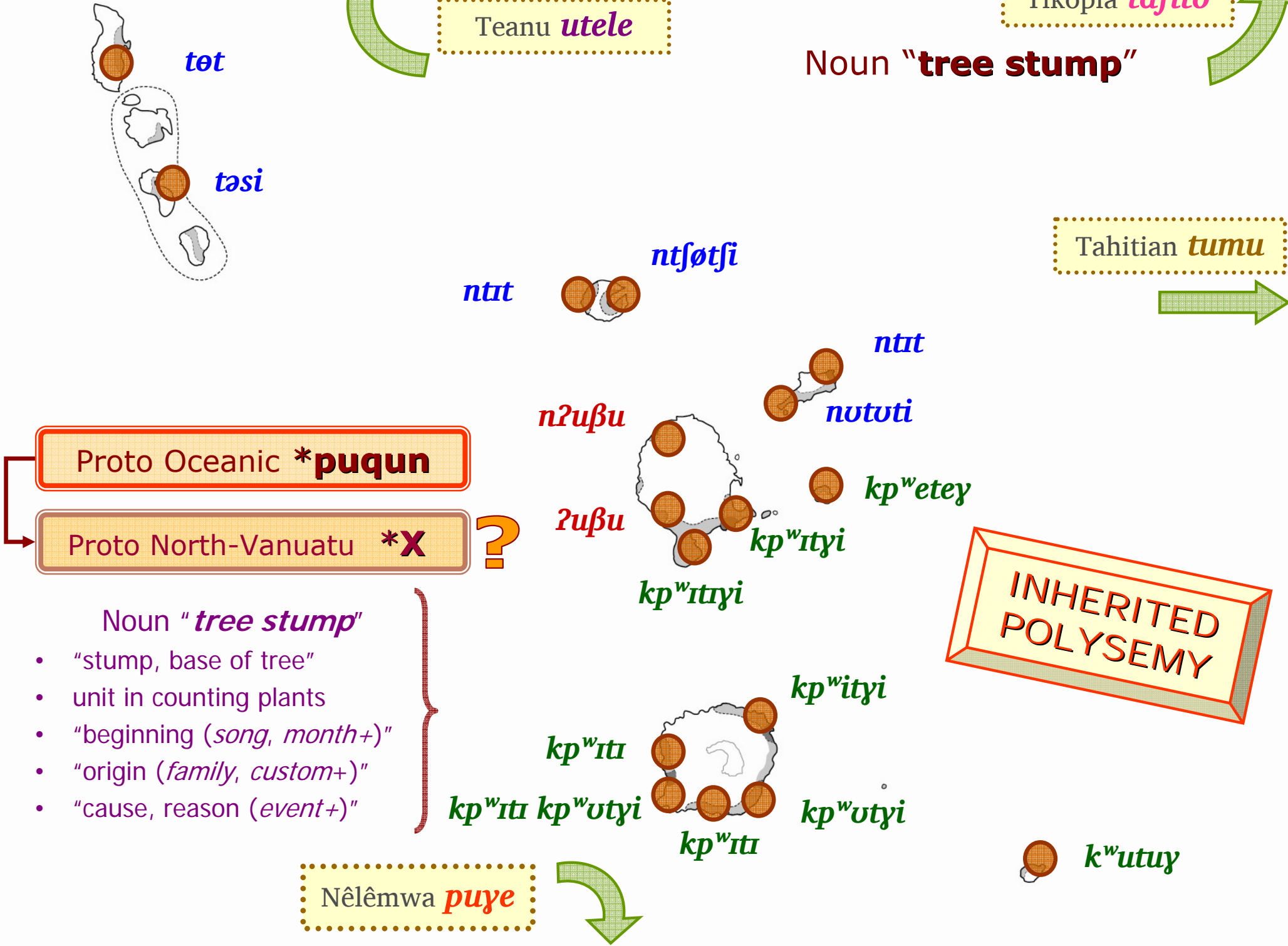
*kp<sup>w</sup>iti kp<sup>w</sup>utyi*

*kp<sup>w</sup>utyi*

*kp<sup>w</sup>iti*

Nêlêmwa *puye*

*k<sup>w</sup>utuy*



# Conclusion

## ■ The paradox of language contact

- ▶ Language contact is generally observed insofar as it *disrupts genetic inheritance*.
- ▶ But contact can sometimes act as a **conservative force**: it tends to **preserve original functional patterns** even when **original forms** have long been forgotten.
- ▶ This **resistance to change** induced by language contact can be of great help to the historical linguist.

**Tankyu tumas !**

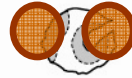


*jəjwja ti kəmi*

*lowia luwo e kəmi*

*βap ɣɪwɪ kimi*

*βap ɣæwɛ kimi*

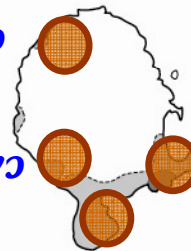


*βɪwɪ kimi gb<sup>w</sup>ɛ nyɛlwɔ*



*βɪwɪ kimi a nilwɔ*

*βarean ɣɛ lɔwɔ*



*βarian ɣa luwɔ*

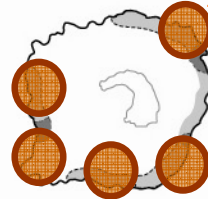
*βarean we poa*

*βarean ɣa lɔwɔ*

*βarean ɣø lüwɔ*

*βarean βellaβ*

*βarean ɣa rɪɣ*



*βarean sasa mun kimi*

*βarean βilwɔ*

*βarean βluwɔ*



*tɛmtɛm nulap*

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