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Series A Volume 10

KRIOL OF NORTH AUSTRALIA
A LANGUAGE COMING OF AGE

John Sandefur

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499'.15
This book is written
in memory of
Barnabas, Mordecai, Isaac and Douglas,
four great men
who had great patience
with an inquisitive munanga,
and it is
dedicated to
Holt Thompson and Dorothy Meehan,
the first two Anglo-Australians to recognize
the significance of Kriol
to such a degree that
they stood against the tide of opposition
and helped to establish
the Bamyili School Kriol bilingual education program.
Foreword

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Because of the preliminary nature of most of the material, these volumes are circulated on a limited basis. It is hoped that their contents will prove of interest primarily to those concerned with Aboriginal and Islander studies, and that comment on their contents will be forthcoming from readers.

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argument gets entangled, meandering along in irrelevant and often contradictory commonplace impressions.

The author of the book under review tackles a very promising topic with blatantly inadequate methods; there is still room, and indeed need, for a thorough, comprehensive and reliable study of one of the most distinctive (sets of) registers contributing to the characterize branches of world English, IndE.


The book under review is the author's M.A. thesis (supervised by Susan Kaldor). Sandefur gives a short and somewhat dated survey of terms and methods used in creolistics (1-16) before concentrating on Kriol, a topic on which probably nobody in the world is as knowledgeable as he is. He provides a clear comparison with related dialects and their hypothetical interrelationships, accepting Harris' recent claim that the genesis of Kriol was largely independent of that of Queensland varieties (17-43). Of particular relevance is Sandefur's insightful discussion of variation within Kriol, whose quality differs in accordance with such factors as L1/L2 status, speakers' age, the modernization of society and social attitudes (49-64). This discussion leads on to chapter 3 (67-90), to the question of Kriol's identity as an aboriginal language as expressed by its use for central cultural concerns such as the kinship system and the classification of food and animals; he very lucidly shows the changing value judgements which have made Aboriginals identify with Kriol in the past few years. Sandefur backs up these general statements by providing a very detailed case history of the Krio-speaking community at Ngukurr (91-126) in which the early history, the mission and government activities and present-day local administration are discussed with regard to the status of Kriol. It is found that the Aboriginalization process stresses the Kriol vs. English dichotomy, and that modernization does not necessarily lead to the erosion of Kriol by English.
The "instrumentalization" of Kriol (127-49) has, however, not advanced far enough in the domains of law and adult education; language-planning issues, with due concern for the multilingual situation, will have to be faced if the language is to become functionally viable. There are very full notes (154-81), and four appendixes comprising a glossary, a resource guide to Kriol, non-aboriginal involvement in the language and newspaper items regarding Kriol (182-218) — much of which could, indeed, have been integrated into the main text — and an amazingly long bibliography (219-42).

The gist of the argument is more easily accessible in the author's article in *EWW* 4 (1983), 43-68 — although the documentation is of course much fuller in the book. It is a pity that Sandefur chose not to incorporate more recent findings and data but left the book more or less in its 1984 form: whereas the development of the general theory of creolistics is easy to follow up in other publications, recent information on the Kriol speech community and their language would have been very useful. (M.G.)

***


The volume under review is an exemplarily detailed and thorough study of the history of linguistic forms and uses in a typical plantation (-owner) society. It is of especial interest for linguists concerned with the development of English-related pidgins in that it lays before us the major case history in which it was not a pidgin related to the English of the masters, but two pidginized forms based on non-European languages (indigenous Pidgin Fijian and Pidgin Hindustani) that carried the day. Siegel carefully documents and interprets not only their histories, but also the scanty attestations of Melanesian and Queensland Pidgin as spoken between 1880 and 1930 mainly by indentured labourers from New Guinea, the Solomons, New Hebrides and Queensland; since there was no lingua-franca function for these languages in a Fijian context, the overseers and the plantation workers all using forms of Fijian and Indian languages, competence in Eng-
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