

## BOOK REVIEW

Viveka Velupillai (2015) *Pidgins, creoles & mixed languages. An introduction.* (*Creole Language Library* 48). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, xxvii + 599 pp.

Viveka Velupillai, honorary professor at the University of Giessen, and author of, among other publications, *An Introduction to Linguistic Typology* (Velupillai 2012), has produced a comprehensive volume on pidgins, creoles and mixed languages. It has appeared in the *Creole Language Library*, devoted to descriptive and theoretical studies on pidgin and creole languages, a dynamically developing area of studies.

Writing about the purpose of the book, Velupillai very modestly states that it “should be seen as a glimpse into the rich and multifaceted nature of contact linguistics and the study of pidgins, creoles and mixed languages, which will hopefully be intriguing enough to spur the reader into further investigation” (4). The (almost) 600 hundred pages which follow offer far more than a “glimpse”; this is a truly encyclopedic volume for both newcomers to the field and for specialists.

The book is divided into two parts: ‘General aspects’ (further divided into 8 chapters), and ‘Linguistic features’ (6 chapters), preceded by a general introduction, and followed by a short glossary, extensive list of references, and an index. The table of contents is very detailed and can be used as a reader-friendly navigating tool. The general introduction provides a brief note on the history of the field, explains the purpose and structure of the book, and the used conventions. It also introduces some basic general terminology (such as ‘mother tongue’, ‘bilingual’, ‘multilingual’, ‘superstrate’, ‘lexifier language’, *lingua franca*, etc.). Further terminology is carefully explained in every chapter, additionally there is a very useful glossary at the end of the book. Velupillai observes that whereas there exist many useful introductions to pidgins and creoles, most of them appeared before new tools for linguistic studies became available and before two groundbreaking recent atlases were published (both of immense importance for her own book): the *World Atlas of Language Structures*, Haspelmath et al. (2005), a typological database of covering almost 200 linguistic features, and *The Atlas and Survey Pidgin & Creole Languages*, Michaelis et al. (2013), a large-scale collection of information on 78 pidgins, creoles and mixed languages (including sociohistorical background and 130 linguistic features).

The first three chapters of Part I are devoted to pidgins, creoles, and mixed languages. Velupillai starts each of these chapters with appropriate non-technical definitions, and so a pidgin is “a language that emerges when groups of people are in close and repeated contact, and need to communicate with each other but have no language in common” (15), a creole is “a natural language spoken as a mother tongue by an entire community that arose due to situations of intense contact” (43), and mixed languages are “languages with split ancestry, that is, languages that have two (or a few) identifiable parent languages, and that typically emerged in situations of community bilingualism” (69). Furthermore, if a pidgin becomes the main means of interethnic communication and is used in numerous domains it is referred to as an extended pidgin, or pidgin-creole (20). These definitions are further extended (with interesting comments on the etymology of the terms), and followed by sections on different types of pidgins (such as trade and nautical, workforce, military, urban) and creoles (exogenous and endogenous), sections on assumed typical linguistic features, and the ‘snapshots’ of three chosen languages. The snapshot sections briefly introduce the individual language, provide a short linguistic sketch, short text and overview of sources of data (with appropriate websites, whenever available). To show the extensive range of the linguistic material discussed suffice it to mention the languages discussed. And so, for pidgins Velupillai presents Borgarmålet (an extinct trade jargon in northern Sweden), Français Tirailleur (an extinct French-lexified military pidgin), and Tok Pisin (an English-lexified extended pidgin); for creoles Negerhollands (an extinct Dutch-lexified plantation creole), Nengee (an English-lexified maroon creole in Suriname), and Diu Indo-Portuguese (a Portuguese-lexified fort creole in India), and finally for mixed languages Bilingual Navajo, Michif (the language of the Métis people), and Sri Lankan Malay.

The remaining chapters in Part I deal with sociohistorical contexts of pidgins and creoles, theories on the formation processes of pidgins and creoles, variation and change, with very interesting sections on such processes as de-pidginization (a process in which a pidgin assimilates to the lexifier through continued contact), decreolization (moving away from the original, basilectal, creole nature), repidginization (a situation in which a creole language becomes the lexifier of a new creole language), and recreolization (a phenomenon whereby a language becomes more basilectal). The last chapter of Part I discusses in some detail sociology of language (including language attitudes, language planning, selection and codification of norms, language policy, language recognition, language in education), and language and culture (oral literature, written literature, and mass media). Velupillai notes that “due to the long history of stigmatization of pidgin, creole and mixed languages, the majority of them remain unrecognized officially, irrespective of the proportion of the speech community or of the communicative importance of the language” (253). This is the situation of, for example, Jamaica, where the sole official language is English, despite the fact that Jamaican is the mother language of the majority population, similarly

in Mauritius, where English is the sole official language, whereas Mauritian Creole is the dominant language. Notable exceptions to this situation include Papua New Guinea (with three official languages: English, Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu), Vanuatu (with English, French, and Bislama), and the Netherlands Antilles (with Dutch and Papiamentu).

In the section on mass media Velupillai observes that “with the attitudes slowly changing towards pidgin and creole languages, gradually leading to the recognition that these are languages in their own right, more and more countries are using pidgin or creole of their society in media” (264). The snapshots section in this chapter give short sketches of three languages at varying stages of standardization, recognition and acceptance: Nagamese (an Assamese-lexified extended pidgincreole in South Asia), Papiamentu (an Iberian-lexified creole in the Caribbean), and Krio (an English-lexified creole in West Africa).

Chapters in Part II “empirically test whether the features commonly assumed to be typical for pidgins and creoles, outlined in (...) Part I, in fact are representative of these languages” (285). In the introduction to this part, Velupillai briefly discusses such issues as genetic affiliation, methodological aspects of comparing languages and the problem of bias, and also the usage and relevance of statistics. Her conclusion about the importance of statistics is worth quoting at length: “because statistics in a number of linguistic subdisciplines is (unfortunately) still not a self-evident component of data analysis, I have refrained from discussion in detail the values obtained for the respective features. However, because statistics are, in fact, of fundamental importance for anyone who wishes to analyze or use data, I have given the values for each feature in the respective tables (...) to make them available for those who wish to know them” (293).

Chapter 9 discusses phonology (including phoneme inventories, syllable structures and tone), and Chapter 10 morphology and morphological processes (with sections on synthesis and reduplication). Chapter 11 deals with the noun phrase (and issues such as nominal plurality, articles and definiteness), Chapter 11 with the verb phrase (and such categories as tense, aspect, mood) and predication (including types of predication), and Chapters 13 and 14 with simple and complex sentences, respectively. The discussion of syntax includes sections on word order, passive constructions, relative clauses, and serial verb constructions.

Whereas chapters 9-14 discuss phonological and grammatical features, chapter 15 focuses on pragmatics, which is an extremely important addition to the more traditional descriptions of creoles and pidgins. This chapter provides a useful overview of strategies for negation and polar questions, and politeness. The results discussed by Velupillai show that pidgins and creoles are as likely as non-pidgins and non-creoles to lack politeness distinctions in second person pronouns, whereas mixed languages may exhibit innovations with respect to politeness strategies in second person pronouns. It would be most interesting to see comparable discussion of other politeness strategies (including negative politeness) and different speech acts.

*Pidgins, Creoles and Mixed Languages* is a comprehensive textbook and sourcebook, excellent for courses in the field of Creole studies, linguistic anthropology (alongside, for example, Ahearn 2012), language contact (together with Matras 2009), or linguistic typology (together with Velupillai's own textbook, 2012). Additionally, the individual chapters have a unified format (overview, main topic, brief introduction to the three discussed languages, snapshots, summary, key points and exercises), which makes them self-contained units, appropriate for separate usage as supplementary material in different linguistics courses. Velupillai's hope that "this book will not only whet the appetite of the newcomer to the study of pidgin, creole, and mixed languages, but also serve the linguistic community in general as a guide to the current state of the field" (5) has been fully realized.

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