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The most commonly studied pidgins and creoles owe their prominence not to any special linguistic status among contact languages, but rather to their links with European history. This point is made by Sarah G. Thomason in her introduction (1-7) to this excellent collection of twelve case studies of a wide variety of lesser-known contact languages, the vast majority of which have no European component, or at least have a non-European lexifier. The volume succeeds admirably in its purpose of providing a much-needed balance to the study of contact languages. Thomason also makes an important theoretical and empirical point in distinguishing three rather than the usual two types of contact languages. In addition to studies of three pidgins, two creoles, and two studies involving both pidginization and creolization, this volume gives us five studies of what Thomason calls bilingual mixtures, i.e. genuinely mixed languages created by bilinguals.

Recognizing that the point is controversial but arguing that her usage is consistent with that of all the contributors to the volume, Thomason defines a contact language as one that comprises linguistic material that cannot be traced back to a single source, but she must immediately make the qualification that languages such as English, which have an enormous percentage of borrowed vocabulary (well over 50%), are not to be considered as contact languages because their basic vocabulary (her term) and grammar are clearly Germanic. She must then admit to the fact that there is no clearly accepted definition of what constitutes basic vocabulary other than the notion that such words are found in all languages and are less likely to be borrowed. She argues, however, that the concept is, nonetheless, of considerable methodological importance in historical linguistics. While I can cite examples of replacement of archetypal basic vocabulary in the Balkans, e.g. Greek
Numerals in Romani and Aegean Macedonian dialects or Turkish kinship terms in Macedonian Muslim dialects and in Albanian, even here the sociolinguistic situation that led to these replacements can be described as an exception proving the rule. Using Turkish kinship terms was a declaration of loyalty to Islam (and, thereby, prior to 1912, to the Turkish state/empire), while the use of Greek numerals would have arisen in the market place, where they were most important.

Arguing that only three types of contact language exist and that all other candidates (koines, semi-creoles) are best treated as parts of a continuum, Thomason points out that while creoles and pidgins come into existence as lingua francas, mixed languages serve as ethnic-group boundary markers. She also notes that the existence of pidgins which have arisen from bilingual contact situations belies earlier claims that such languages only arise in multilingual settings. Moreover, the existence of pidgins resulting from native speakers' use of foreigner talk demonstrates that speaker attitude is crucial in determining the results of language contact.

Thomason's collection demonstrates conclusively the diversity of pidgins and creoles. As Mufwene (1996) has cogently argued, there is nothing inherent in these languages' structures that justifies their identification as such; rather, social and historical factors constitute their defining features. The languages described in this book prove that pidgins and creoles do not have similar and simple structures. They often have complex grammatical features (variable word order, noun classes, labial-velar stops, etc.), and their structures differ from one another significantly. Among the many valuable features of this collection is that it gathers together in one volume a diverse quantity of data, some of which are based on doctoral dissertations, while other data come from research projects of senior scholars who have worked on a variety of languages and issues over the course of decades. All of the articles are first rate. This collection demonstrates Thomason's conclusion: 'Only with the accumulation of many solid case studies can our data base become substantial enough to support robust generalizations about the nature and development of all types of contact languages' (7). The book also has three useful indices (languages [about 300 languages and families], pp. 489-94; names of persons in the text, pp. 495-501; and subjects, pp. 503-506) as well as seven maps.

Owing to the significance and diversity of the articles in this collection, I have chosen to treat each one separately.

'Hiri Motu', by Tom Dutton (9-42). Although for ideological reasons the name of this language was changed from Police Motu to Hiri Motu upon the independence of Papua New Guinea in 1975, Dutton demonstrates that the language is not the form of Motu used on the traditional hiri 'trading voyages' during which the Motu came in contact with unrelated peoples. Rather, it developed from a simplified form of Motu used by the Motu themselves with those who came to visit or trade with them, i.e. a kind of foreigner talk. In adducing his arguments, Dutton demonstrates the importance of social factors in the development of contact languages.

'Pidgin Delaware', by Ives Goddard (43-98). Goddard also demonstrates the importance of social factors in pidginization. In addition to arguing that Pidgin Delaware arose from a bilingual (Dutch-Delaware) rather than multilingual contact situation, he also argues that there is no evidence to support the hypothesis that Pidgin Delaware originated among various Native American groups prior to European contact. He considers Pidgin Delaware to be a contact language in which Europeans participated without providing a substantial European component. It is worth noting, however, that Buccini and Dahlstrom (1998) argue for some significant European syntactic contributions.

'Ndunya-Trio Pidgin', by George L. Huttar and Frank J. Velantio (99-124). This trade language, which arose in South America between Trio Indians and blacks who escaped slavery on the plantations of Surinam, is given a detailed linguistic description with some social history. The data are original and supplement and correct earlier work. It would appear that Ndunya contributed more to phonology (which is limited to those features found in both sources) and Trio to syntax (including a predominant SOV order). Vocabulary is from both sources, with a tendency of Ndunya to predominate. Unique features of this
language are its syntax and the fact that one of its sources (Ndyuka) is itself a creole.

‘Arabic-Based Pidgins and Creoles’, by Jonathan Owens (125-72). Kenyan Nubi, the subject of the author’s doctoral dissertation, is given special emphasis in this survey. Of particular interest here is the distinction the author makes between Arabic dialects, on the one hand, and Arabic-based creoles and pidgins on the other, his point being that the pidgins and creoles are not dialects but separate languages. Issues such as genetic assignability and expressions of social class are crucial. Questions of mutual intelligibility, structural differences, and native-speaker perception are also important. He compares the situation with that of West Atlantic creoles described by Hancock (1986), where the formation of a stable pidgin/creole coincided with the formation of a social class located between the indigenous population and the dominant class. The issue of the role formation of a different social class in the formation of a distinct language is also important for other African contact languages (see below). Of particular interest to linguists in search of universal grammar is the question that Juba Arabic and East African Nubi form passives by a stress shift, a fact of which Keenan (1985) was unaware when he claimed that no language forms passive by such means alone.

‘Kituba’, by Salikoko Mufwene (173-208). Using Kituba data, Mufwene takes issue with the widely held view that creolization is the nativization of a pidgin. He argues that it is not through child acquisition (nativization) but rather through expansion and normalization among adults (vernacularization) that creoles come into being. He argues that creoles have no structural features that are due to children and distinguishes them from pidgins. He is particularly concerned with the issue of how creoles select their features from the available material of the various languages from which they arise and the role of the lexifier in this process. Mufwene supports Samarin’s hypothesis that Kituba started with European colonization, but the Europeans only supplied the setting. Their West African escorts and labor attempted to use a local, indigenous trade language (Kimanyanga), which they distorted and which their interlocutors likewise distorted in an attempt at accommodation. In note 20, Mufwene also makes the important point that, like the distinction between dialect and language, the distinction between koine and pidgin is based on social and political criteria and not on linguistic, i.e. grammatical/structural, ones.

‘Sango’, by Helma Pasch (209-70). Arguing that Sango is a creolized pidgin, viz. the result of imperfect acquisition of Yakoma by second language speakers, Pasch notes that none of the innovations in Sango are due to putative universal development tendencies in creole languages. Either one or more of the contributor languages can be identified as the source, or language–internal rules and grammaticalization can account for the relevant phenomena.

‘Prior Pidginization and Creolization in Swahili’, by Derek Nurse (271-94). By comparing processes—both linguistic and socially—normally associated with pidginization and creolization with the situation in Swahili, insofar as it can be reconstructed, Nurse argues that a few early features might have resulted from contact with Cushitic, that Swahili-based pidgins may have emerged in contact with other Bantu speakers up to the end of the first millennium CE, that early structures of Swahili are not due to contact with Arabic, and that even in later periods Arabic influence has been lexical or derived via the lexicon. He makes apt comparisons with English, and I might also note that the relationship of Arabic to Swahili is highly reminiscent of that of Turkish to the Balkan languages both linguistically and socially.

‘Michif: A Mixed Language Based on Cree and French’, by Peter Bakker and Robert A. Papan (295-364). This extensive and detailed article (42 pp. of structural description out of 70 pp., albeit with some descriptive repetitions that could have been edited out) documents the phenomenon of a genuine mixed language. The authors argue convincingly that this type of language arose as an identity marker among fluent bilinguals of mixed European-Native American ancestry. It is a combination of a French nominal system with a Cree verbal system, although the base is essentially Cree.

‘Media Lengua’, by Pieter Muysken (365-426). Another
genuinely mixed language, Media Lengua combines Spanish lexicon with Quechua morphology, apparently as a result of migrant labor practices and urban/rural contact among Indians who could not identify completely with either urban Spanish or rural Quechua culture. Media Lengua arose as a means of articulating a cultural identity that does not fit into the traditional Quechua=Indian/Spanish=white dichotomy. It is thus quite different from a traditional pidgin.

‘Callahuaya’, by Pieter Muyaken (427-48). This secret language is used in curing rituals by the older generation of a group of healers in NW Bolivia. It is a form of Quechua that uses much vocabulary from a dead language, Puquina, and other languages. It probably arose in the process of shift from Puquina to Quechua. The paper is a preliminary report on available information.

‘Mednyi Aleut’, by Sarah G. Thomason (449-68). A two language mixture comprising Aleut structure plus Russian finite verb inflection and pronominal markers, Mednyi Aleut resulted from extensive code-switching among bilinguals that evolved into the language of the community of Aleuts and Russians settled on the previously uninhabited Commander Islands in the nineteenth century. This article provides an excellent example of the fact that morphology can be borrowed. Moreover, the borrowing is not a result of pidginization but of purposeful bilingual mixing for identity-forming purposes. Although Thomason rejects Golovko’s (1994:119) assertion that humor played a role in the evolution of the language, my own experience among code-switching bilinguals is such that this concept should not be summarily rejected. Precisely this type of grafting of grammatical morphemes onto the structure of another language occurs as a feature of linguistic play. Such play, if repeated often enough and widely enough, could easily develop into habit and cease to be play, i.e. become grammaticalized.

‘Ma’a (Mbugu)’, by Sarah G. Thomason (469-87). Thomason argues that Ma’a—a language whose grammar is almost entirely Bantu but whose basic vocabulary is of Cushitic origin—is linguistically a separate language but sociolinguistically a register of Mbugu (476). Since, Ma’a speakers regard it as ‘their’ form of Mbugu, Thomason’s formulation raises tricky questions of the linguist’s relation to the definition of language. (I am thinking here of the Macedonian question, which is sometimes discussed in terms that are a looking-glass reflection of Thomason’s formulation.) Comparing Ma’a with Anglo-Romani, Thomason argues her point on the basis of Ma’a’s non-intelligibility with Mbugu, the Bantu language in which all Ma’a speakers are raised bilingually. She argues that it would be a separate language if it were the only language of a speech community and that it is not classifiable as genetically Bantu. Thomason makes a convincing case that the complexities of sociolinguistic processes provide serious challenges to historical taxonomy. When speakers shift grammar and non-basic lexicon while keeping basic lexicon for cryptolectal and identity marking purposes, however, one could still argue that the taxonomic issue is one of shift. So, for example, Yiddish is regarded as a Germanic language despite the significant non-Germanic vocabulary, including doublets of basic vocabulary that can render it impossible for German speakers to understand (cf. Aleykhem 1925). In a sense, Thomason is making the argument that both grammar and basic vocabulary (by her own admission a notional rather than rigorously grounded concept) must be from the same source in order for traditional genetic taxonomy to apply. These are important problems worthy of continued study and debate.

The most important general contribution of this diverse and data-oriented collection of studies is the challenge it presents to theoretical assumptions and inadequately supported theoretical generalizations. We have here good solid evidence that calls into question the idea that creoles are nativized rather than vernacularized pidgins and that pidginization and/or creolization somehow involve processes that are linguistic universals rather than properties of the languages that contribute to their formation—or, put another way, that creoles and pidgins are characterized by structural features not found in other languages. The collection also provides a concrete contradiction to a proposed grammatical universal (the claim that no language forms passives by a stress shift) and demonstrations of the existence of
genuinely mixed languages that challenge the notion of bifurcational genetic classification (speciation) in language. These works also highlight the importance of social and historical factors in linguistic development and differentiation. A particularly noteworthy contribution of this collection to identity studies is the manner in which it illustrates the distinction between the unifying role of a lingua franca and the differentiating role of a mixed language, which in fact serves as an ethnic boundary marker. I recommend this book highly not only to all linguists, but to anthropologists, historians, and anyone interested in what happens when two languages and their speakers come in contact with one another.

REFERENCES


MUFWE, SALIKOKO. 1996. Language ecology and creole genesis. Paper