# KRIOL — AN AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGE RESOURCE

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## INTRODUCTION

The Australian Aboriginal creole known now as Kriol, and widely spoken in the north of Australia, was for many years overlooked by experts and administrators. This was due in part to sociolinguistic rules governing its use, and varying abilities in standard English use by Kriol speakers, although many early mission workers and other whites in contact situations learnt it from Aborigines and used it in interacting with them.

Present evidence is that the language is derived from a contact jargon developed for interaction between Aborigines of the Port Jackson (Sydney) area and the white convicts and settlers, that it reached its current form at least 80 years ago, and that it is now a stable language unlikely to die out or change rapidly. Its phonology, grammar and lexis marry superficial features of English with many features of the underlying Aboriginal languages, and it therefore has a right to be regarded as an Aboriginal language, and is so regarded by its mother-tongue speakers.

As a modern Aboriginal language it has flexibility for use in traditional and modern Aboriginal cultural areas, and recent research suggests its use in bilingual programs in schools helps school children towards both better English *and* better separation of English and Kriol than when English only in used in school.

## KRIOL

In 1976, John Sandefur and I wrote:

> Most of the Aborigines resident at settlements at Ngukurr
> (Roper River) and Bamyili[1] (near Katherine) speak a contact
> vernacular which they refer to as 'Pidgin English'

or, I might add, 'Roper Pidgin', Roper Kriol, or Kriol.

> The language has become creolised, being the first language
> for the younger people, and the usual language of communi-
> cation for the older people.  Similar Creoles appear to be
> spoken in a wide area in cattle station areas of the Northern
> Territory...  Aborigines at Ngukurr and Bamyili who are fluent
> in English clearly differentiate the Creole and English, and

> rarely mix them.  Those who are less fluent in English
> speak a mixture of English and Creole to non-Aborigines,
> the proportion varying with their familiarity with English.
> This situation accounts for the non-recognition of the
> Creole as a language entity by many government and school
> staff for many years.  (Sharpe and Sandefur 1976:63)

I had also encountered speakers of a pidgin, which seemed identical to Roper Kriol, in central Australia, central and north Queensland, and in 1977, in a publication directed mainly towards school teachers, we wrote:

> A speaking and hearing knowledge of Roper Creole can be
> quite an asset for whites even in these places.  (Sharpe
> and Sandefur 1977:52)

Three, and often four, generations of Aborigines in the Roper area now speak or have spoken Kriol as their first language, and Sandefur now maintains, on the basis of research and surveys carried out by him and Joy Sandefur, and by him and Aboriginals from Roper River, that Kriol is spoken now as first language by some 7,000 people, and is in regular use by a total of about 20,000 people across the northern part of Australia, from Western Australia to Queensland. In addition, although it had escaped the notice of officials, there were many whites who found it essential for use in interaction with Aborigines, if there was to be any real communication.

I began study of Kriol as a sideline in my research on a traditional Aboriginal language of the Roper area, and later John Sandefur focused his study on Kriol itself.  We both happened to be based at Ngukurr, and therefore described the creole spoken there, but members of the Aboriginal community from much farther afield seemed to regard the language as having its centre there, in referring to it as Ropa pijin.  In the 1960s, the Northern Territory Welfare Branch, responsible for education of Aborigines, considered that the English of Roper Aborigines was better on the whole than that of those from other areas, and even before this time a number of Aboriginal people from that area became known in white circles.  Two brothers in one family were a health worker and a magistrate, and their father was a lay preacher in the Church of England. Perhaps the prominence at that time of such people gave a certain prestige to this area and its language within the Aboriginal community (the father was also a djunggayi in the Aboriginal community, one of the leaders), but in any case the evidence seems now to show that the pidgin or creole spoken in many other places was very similar to the Roper variety.


## ORIGINS AND HISTORY

From early on in records since the British penal settlement at Port Jackson (Sydney) in 1788, there are references to a pidgin language used for communication between the native inhabitants and the newcomers.  Baker (1966:312) quotes a source as early as 1796 which refers to 'a barbarous mixture of English with the Port Jackson dialect' used as the sole means of communication between blacks and whites.  Examples quoted by Baker from this source clearly show the shift in phonology of English words due to the phonological system of the Aboriginal language, though in Baker there is no reference to grammatical features.

In the 1830s, 1840s, and later sources to the turn of the century, there are word lists which include a number of terms which are still known and used in

Kriol.  Many, such as boomerang, woomera, corroboree, kangaroo, myall, etc.,
passed into general English usage.  Bogi *swim, bath* (possibly of English
origin), gabarra *head,* and gula *anger,* from early lists, are still current in
Kriol.

Various opinions and theories have been advanced on the origins of the first
pidgin (or pidgins) used in Australia.  There are references to a pidgin, a
language mixture, in Collins 1796 (mentioned by Baker 1966), Threlkeld 1834,
Meston 1896 and Favenc 1904, according to Baker (1966), as well as more recent
comments by researchers and compilers from the 1930s on.  Because of lack of
settled terminology, as well as understandable lack of linguistic sophistication
of many of these writers, it is hard at this distance to ascertain whether what
they spoke of were jargon, pidgin or creole situations, or mixtures of these.
My main informant on the Alawa language of the Northern Territory, Barnabas
Roberts (c. 1894-1974) claimed that the Roper Pidgin was brought from Queensland
by stockmen.  Some trace its origins to the Beach-la-mar pidgin of the Pacific,
brought to Queensland canefields by indentured Islander labour.  Because
Islanders' attitudes towards Aborigines precluded much contact between the
races, there was probably little direct interaction, but white overseers and
stockmen could well have acted as intermediaries, that is, if there *is* an
organic connection between the two pidgins.  One may have developed from the
other, both developed from common elements, or a common process could have been
in action.  However, there is more obvious connection between Tok Pisin in New
Guinea with Bamaga Creole (Cape York) and the Beach-la-mar Pidgin, than there
is with Kriol.

Pidgins develop into creoles in areas where, for one or another reason, the
pidgin becomes the preferred common language for a community, and this certainly
was the case at Ngukurr (Roper River Settlement) from the early years of this
century.  Workers from the Church Missionary Society set up a mission there in
1908, a refuge both from massacre and sport killing by whites, and from inter-
tribal wars (information from Barnabas Roberts).  People from about a dozen
different language groups came in to the mission in such proportions that no
*one* language predominated.  English was the language of the mission staff,
though there are early references to the use of pidgin by some of them
(Sandefur 1980a:3).

From this time also, we have the classic books by Mrs Aeneas Gunn of Elsey
Station on the upper Roper River, including *The little black princess* (1905)
and *We of the Never Never* (1908).  Although Mrs Gunn had only one year at the
station, she had a sympathetic — if by today's standards a little paternalistic
— interest in the Aborigines, and her books are full of examples of pidgin
conversations and remarks.  In the 1960s, I went through the first of these
books and transcribed these examples, using the current Kriol orthography.
There were very few words and word usages which would not fit easily into
modern Kriol.  I remember one word she gave which I had not encountered at
Ngukurr; I later found it in everyday use at Djembere,[2] the Aboriginal community
settlement two miles from the present Elsey Station.  Sandefur (1980b:6) has a
list of about a dozen words and phrases not in use in Kriol today from this
same source.  Some of these could well be errors Jeannie Gunn herself made in
transcribing or remembering the forms.

About 30 years ago, Gospel Recordings produced some records of Bible stories in
Kriol, which Sandefur has checked, and in them there are few expressions not in
common use today, and those few would be known to older speakers (Sandefur
1980b:6).  From both my experience and John Sandefur's, I would guess that Kriol

has changed to about the same extent as Australian English has in the same time. For example, in the last 20 years (actually in the early 1960s between 1961 and 1965) we have exchanged the word radio for the older wireless, and many have commented that the use of hopefully as a clause introducer has become common only in the last few years.  It is probably accurate to say that in Kriol, we have a language which has maintained stability in basic grammar, and which has sustained only the same vocabulary shift as any other modern language in use over at least 80 years.

Both Sandefur and I have done our major research on this language at or near Ngukurr, which would lead us to regard this form of the creole as the central form.  However, in brief contacts with older people on Aboriginal reserves in north and central Queensland in the late 1960s and in central Australia up to this year, I have encountered speakers of 'pidgin' in a form which seemed indistinguishable from the Roper form.  I also encountered one Kriol word (and with time to pursue the matter may have found many more) in use in the English of English-speaking Aboriginals in central Queensland in 1967.  But certainly in the recent past if not still now, the language was referred to in the Top End (of the Northern Territory) as 'Roper Pidgin'.  At Ngukurr, factors such as the variety of traditional languages, the establishment of the mission in 1908, the Overland Telegraph station in the area, the dormitory system of child education in the 1930s, and some insulation from too much white civilisation, all provided good ground for a new language to develop and flourish.  And it has flourished and spread.  When he arrived in the 1960s, the last white Anglican clergyman at Ngukurr was asked by the Aboriginal Church Council to learn Kriol and preach in it.  His successor, an Aboriginal from Groote Eylandt, is probably now thought to be a native speaker of Kriol, but during my visits there in the 1960s he was still learning it, and his Kriol was heavily influenced by English, which was his second language after his own Aboriginal language from Groote Eylandt (Anindilyawgwa).  The spread of, and growing pride in, Kriol as a language seems to be in line with the worldwide trend towards pride in and resurgence of local languages and dialects.


## SOCIAL CONTEXTS OF KRIOL USE

It has been a custom for Aborigines of the Roper area to use their best 'English' when speaking to white officials and strangers, though for familiar people, even those who do not speak Kriol, there is some relaxation of this general rule.  Thus for many years prior to the late 1960s, government officials were under the impression that various standards of English were spoken by Aboriginal people in the Roper area.  I was told by a Darwin official that a certain Aboriginal women spoke good English.  He was surprised to hear that her everyday speech was in 'Pidgin English', as it was called at the time.  She switched to good English in the presence of whites and for ritual purposes (such as public prayer in a Christian service), but used Kriol for everyday interaction and for general public announcements at a church meeting.  My main Alawa teacher, who was fluent in Alawa, Kriol, English, and at least two other Aboriginal languages, also used standard English when speaking to whites.  Such was his confidence in his English that he told me one day he had argued a point of English grammar with Dr Arthur Capell, during his work on the Alawa and other languages in the area.  As I adjusted my 'English' in interacting with my Alawa teacher, to incorporate Kriol elements, so he gradually moved from standard English towards Kriol.  Kriol, as I gained ability in it, proved a far better tool for learning about an Aboriginal language than was English.

At about this time (in 1967), I called on some young people from Roper River living at Bagot Reserve in Darwin, and in speaking to them I used as much Kriol as I could, only inserting English when I did not know how to say what I wanted in Kriol.  Their response was 'Where did you learn our language?'.  When the pressure to conform to standard English for the sake of white interlocutors is removed, then the forms of non-traditional language speech used by all Roper people, old and young, educated (in the white sense) or not, are much more closely alined with each other, although there is some phonological shift and some changes in lexis with younger or more 'educated' speakers, or when discussing certain topics.

Two factors contribute to the speaking of the best English a speaker can muster when speaking to whites: firstly, politeness and consideration for the white hearer, and secondly, a sense of shame about Kriol, or about Aboriginal language in general.  (I found this same attitude of shame and unwillingness to admit to use of *traditional* Aboriginal language among Aranda-speaking children in Alice Springs.)  Some speakers of Kriol berated their language to whites, or claimed not to speak it.  But attitudes have been slowly changing, due perhaps to a combination of factors: respectful interest in Kriol by whites; contact of Aboriginal leaders with the resurgence of pride of minority groups in their languages and cultures occurring throughout the world; and possibly also the influx of migrants speaking other languages.  This last certainly is a factor in the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales, though it has less direct impact in a remote, mainly Aboriginal area of Australia.  In any case, Kriol speakers became more assertive about their language.  In 1974 I wrote (1974a:21):

> it is clear ... that Aboriginal pride in the Creole as their
> language has been increasing over the years, and that
> Aborigines are less ashamed of using the creole to whites
> (clear to me over the gap of 6-7 years since my last visit)
> — and city Aborigines will now use Creole when speaking to
> whites who know it ...

There is also a feeling, as elsewhere in Australia with the Aboriginal dialects of English proper, that Kriol is the appropriate language to be used with other Aborigines, unless these are viewed as being too 'flash' and citified to really be regarded as in-group.

Within Kriol itself, as in many other languages, there is a range of styles.  Within this language these are manifest by a shift of phonology towards the traditional Aboriginal language phonology or towards English phonology, by the choice of lexical items which come from traditional languages or are more heavily influenced by traditional phonology, as opposed to those which are more English, and by the choice of more Aboriginal or more English-type grammar.  For example:

Phonology:  binijimab  binijimap  finishimap
            *use up, finish*

Lexis:      ngugu  wada/warra wota
            *water*

            garim  got  with
            *with, having*

Grammar:    bla gejim  so yu kin gejim
            *to catch*

Among other factors influencing style shift would be the familiarity of the interlocutor with Kriol.  A Kriol speaker with little knowledge of English, as much as one who does know English well, is likely to alter their rhythm, and insert more 'English-like' constructions when talking to whites, even when not deliberately aiming to do so.  Adjustment of language between speaker and hearer is a common phenomenon in any social interaction, among people of any ethnocultural group

## KRIOL PHONOLOGY

Traditional Aboriginal languages distinguish a larger number of points of articulation than do Indo-European languages, but have only one series of stops, which are often described as devoiced.  In some languages these more closely resemble the English voiceless series: in others the English voiced series. Stops tend to be voiced word medially between vowels or following nasals, and can be voiceless and aspirated when emphasised word initially or (in languages where they occur there) word finally.  In the Roper area they tend towards being voiced.  Syllable patterns are usually CV or CVC; some Roper languages allow CVCC syllables, and some allow initial V and VC(C) syllables if the V is /a/ or /e/.  A three vowel system (/i/, /a/, /u/) is most common in Aboriginal languages, but some Roper area languages have four or five vowels.  Table 1 shows the phonemes of the underlying pidgin of the Roper area, as reflected in older Kriol words, using the practical orthography.  There is no contrast between alveolar and retroflexed consonants word intially, and the alveopalatal lateral is rare.  Words in Kriol which came from the original pidgin stock conform closely to the typical Aboriginal phonological patterns though some of them are often modified in speech today.  The first word-initial consonant cluster to appear was /bl/.  The initial consonant of most English borrowings with initial CC(C) was dropped or a vowel inserted.  A final vowel was often added to an English word ending in a consonant.  Thus:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| dumaji | (from too much) *because* (usually used at the end of the reason clause) | |
| namu/nomo | *not, no* | |
| giyaman/geman | (from gammon) *pretend, tell lie* | |
| burrum | *from* | |
| jineg | *snake* | |

| Table 1: Phonemes of underlying pidgin | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | bilabial | alveolar | retroflexed | alveopalatal | velar |
| stops | b | d | rd | j | g |
| nasals | m | n | rn | ny | ng (ŋ) |
| laterals | | l | rl | ly | |
| rhotics & semivowels | w | rr | r | y | |
| vowels | i | u | | | |
| | a | | | | |

But as the language expanded to become a home language, and did so in contact
with English, English sounds began to be incorporated, beginning at Roper with
the fourth vowel /e/ which was present in some local languages, until today
almost the full range of English consonants, vowels and vowel glides can be
heard at times.  Kriol speakers refer to the more traditional phonology as
'heavy', and the more English phonology as 'light', and most if not all speakers
(except the very old and isolated from much white English contact) vary their
phonology and lexis over a range of heaviness and lightness according to those
they are interacting with and to the chance of the moment, speed of speech, etc.
Table 2 shows the range of phoneme symbols used in Kriol at present, and Figure
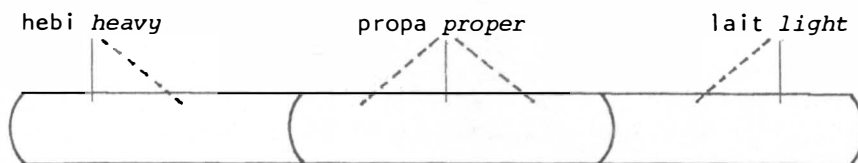1 illustrates graphically the range of shift available in Kriol.

hebi *heavy*          propa *proper*          lait *light*

Figure 1

| Table 2: Phoneme symbols used in Kriol | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | bilab | lab-dent & inter-dental | alv | retr | alvpal | velar | glottal |
| stops, voiced | b |  | d | rd | j | g |  |
| stops, voiceless | p |  | t | rt | tj | k |  |
| fricatives |  | f   th | s |  |  |  | h |
| nasals | m |  | n | rn | ny | ng(ŋ) |  |
| laterals |  |  | l | rl | ly |  |  |
| rhotics & semivowels | w |  | rr | r | y |  |  |
| vowels | i |  | u |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | e    e:[3]   o |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | a |  |  |  |  |  |

The symbol ŋ is permissible in writing, but as it is rare on typewriters and
not available for printing, the spelling ng is at times used ambiguously for
the velar nasal, homorganic velar nasal-stop sequence, and alveolar nasal-
velar stop sequence, although ŋgg is often written for the homorganic nasal-
stop sequence.

Somewhere in the middle of the range illustrated in Figure 1 is an area referred to by speakers as propa Kriol/pijin. Propa Kriol covers a range of styles, but usually voiced and voiceless consonants are distinguished, as are fricatives, and about six vowels /i/, /e/, /a/, /o/, /u/ and the central neutral vowel symbolised e:. The voiced sibilants /z/ and /ʒ/, and distinctions between voiced and voiceless interdental fricatives less commonly occur. (I am skating over a lot of detail here, but this outline covers the more important points. Readers interested in more detail should consult Sandefur 1979.)

Because of the range in phonology, deciding on an orthography was more complicated for Kriol than for traditional languages (with the occasional notorious exception, such as Aranda). However, over a period of years, Aboriginal speakers of the language, working together with linguists and teachers, decided to use an orthography which allowed for almost the full range of English sounds, although it would be a bit underdifferentiated for this, and which did not standardise the spelling of individual words, so that words could be spelt as they were said on a particular occasion. Thus 'fish' could be rendered fish, bish, or bij, etc. There is some standardisation in incorporated forms, such as -taim *time* (in dinataim, japataim, deitaim, etc.) but such standardisation is not rigid. This also allows for the representation of different styles and registers within the Kriol continuum, and has proved satisfactory to literate speakers, those learning to read, and learners of the language. Young Aboriginal speakers of the language who are starting school often do not command the full range of light Kriol sounds, any more than many speakers of standard English (many English-speaking children do not command all standard English sounds at the same age). Heavier forms therefore tend to be used in initial literacy teaching of Kriol literacy in schools, making the association of sound and symbol easier to grasp.

While Kriol is spoken at a different rate and rhythm to English and initially can be hard for English speakers to tune in to, it requires a minimum of explanation of the sounds of the letters for readers of English to work through and sound out Kriol stories, and then understand much of them, or to begin to tune in to the meaning of Kriol spoken to them. There has recently been a school in Esperanto in Armidale (where I live), Esperantists claiming the language as easy to learn and regular in rules, and being unattached to any particular nation, politically neutral. For Australian English speakers, Kriol would be easier to learn than Esperanto, and within Australia would be common language to many more people than Esperanto. Kaberry (1937:92) refers to it as the 'Esperanto of the north'. It is far less localised than any other Aboriginal language, and within Aboriginal 'nations' is far more neutral than any other Australian language apart from English (which could be argued to be 'neutral against' the Aborigines). A number of Kriol speakers regard their language as being 'like a national Aboriginal language' (Sandefur 1980a:5b). I would suggest that for Eastern Australian and English-speaking Aborigines, it would be easier to learn than for standard English-speaking whites in principle, in that the rhythm and even some of the vocabulary would be less foreign than for standard English speakers. It is not difficult for English speakers either. I have exposed children at the local high school to Kriol, both spoken and written, and after the initial shock they understood quite a lot of it. Kriol can also provide, for those who do not speak a traditional Aboriginal language, an easy first step towards learning one, in that the Aboriginal-type structures and phonology are expressed in English-based roots. Kriol is very close in structure to the traditional languages of the Roper area (and elsewhere), so

that a literal translation from Kriol into one of them gives a fairly idiomatic translation, a feature which does not apply for translations to and from English and a traditional Aboriginal language.  Later I will return to the subject of Kriol in education.

## KRIOL GRAMMAR

As a very general rule, Kriol grammar is derived from that of English by a process of pidginisation and simplification, and word order is similar. Subject precedes verb, which precedes object, like English (and other pidgins), and unlike traditional Roper area languages.  There is no case inflection of nouns, nor subject-object affixation of verbs, so that word order has to carry this case load.  Noun and verb phrases have similar ordering rules to English: in the former this applies both to the order of any demonstratives/articles, numerals, adjectives, nouns and modifying phrases; in the latter this applies in that the negative precedes auxiliaries, which precede the main verb, which may be suffixed for continuous aspect.  The ergative-nominative distinction of many Aboriginal languages is lost, though as noted above subject and object are indicated by word order; other case suffixes in the Aboriginal languages are replaced by prepositions in Kriol.  But to one who knows one of the traditional Aboriginal languages, there are very few distinctions and categories which do not reflect distinctions and categories native to traditional languages, and the syntax reflects the traditional syntax.  To illustrate this, I will choose a few examples from the grammar and syntax.

### Pronouns

These, while derived from English in form, reflect the usage and distinctions of the traditional languages.  Forms differ a little in different areas, and such forms as wi, awa, dei, dem, and the unmarked yu for plural are more recent introductions than the other forms given.  Table 3 lists the forms.

| Table 3: Kriol pronouns | | |
|---|---|---|
| | singular | dual | plural |
| 1st & 2nd | yunmi | | yunmalabat/minalabat/wi |
| 1st (excl) | ai/mi | mindubala | mela(bat)/mibala |
| 2nd | yu | yundubala | yumob/yuwalabat/yubala |
| 3rd | im | dubala | alabat/dei/dem |

The form ai is only used in subject position; mi sometimes occurs as subject also.  As possessives, mai and main may also occur, both preceding the possessed item, or following it after the preposition bla(nga).  Dei is used for subject, dem for object and as a demonstrative/pluraliser (cf. them things in English, used by local teenagers, despite the fact that many of them would never hear it from parents and teachers).  Of all the possessive forms (including those unmarked for possession), only main can stand alone.

Tharran bla yu.
*That's yours.*

Yunmalabat dadi la tap.
*Our father in heaven.*

Neil bla fish bin ardim main fut/mai fut/mi fut.
*The fish's spine hurt my foot.*

Tharran bla yu, dijan main.
*That's yours, this is mine.*

Most Aboriginal languages lack any gender distinctions in the third person singular pronoun, though one of the Roper area languages does have a masculine/feminine distinction, with pronouns and other inflections to indicate it.

## Lack of copula

In common with most, if not all, Aboriginal languages, Kriol rarely uses a copula equivalent to 'to be' in equational clauses, except as necessary to indicate past (bin) or future (andi(bi)) tense.

Tharran munanga (im) burrum Dawin.
*That white person is from Darwin.*

When a copula is used, it follows typical Aboriginal usage in distinguishing items which 'sit', from those which 'stand' and yet others which 'lie down'. Hence:

Sambala pipul jidan jeya.
*Some people are there.*

Blandibala wadi jandap jeya.
*There are plenty of trees there.*

Waya leidan jeya.
*Some wire is there.*

Trees typically stand, people and animals typically sit down, and spears (not in use!), snakes, etc., typically lie down.

## Transitive and intransitive verbs

Many transitive verbs are marked by the suffix -im (varying to -am, -um in phonological accord with a preceding vowel), though in casual speech this suffix is often abbreviated to -i ∿-a. The ditransitive verb gibit *give,* and now occasionally some other transitive verbs (Sandefur quotes duit for the older form duwum *do*) end in -it rather than -im. Both gibit and duit have a typically inanimate direct object (as well as the animate dative object of gibit, which can be expressed by a naked pronoun, or la(nga) plus pronoun/noun phrase). If -it is ever introduced as a suffix to other transitive verbs, I would hazard a guess it will only be used where the (direct) object is inanimate.

Some transitive verbs (marked) can drop the -im suffix and be used intransitively/passively, e.g.:

Imin opinim dowa.
*He opened the door.*

Dowa bin opin.
*The door opened/was opened.*

Some transitive verbs are not marked for transitivity by the -im suffix, but no intransitive verb has the -im suffix.

## Tense, mood and aspect of verbs

In common with traditional languages of the area, Kriol has three tenses, a continuous versus non-continuous aspect distinction, and ways of indicating reflexive action, habitual past action, attempted action, ability to do an action, and possible action.  To anybody with reasonably trained linguistic sensitivity to English, most of the forms used to indicate these various tenses, moods, etc., are fairly easily deduced.  However, there are some interesting forms.  The continuous suffix is most commonly of the form -bat, though -ing alternating with -in in rapid speech also occurs.  The form -bat and its origin might be a mystery to those not familiar with colloquial spoken Australian English, particularly of the northern part of Australia.  A sentence may often be concluded with but:

I was just going but.
It wasn't bad but.  etc.

It can imply an unstated reason in English, at least in my own occasional use. Regular users of this clause final but should be asked (I have never yet done it) how they perceive its force.  It seems to diminish the action, or leave unstated some remarks that the speaker thinks is not necessary to spell out in full.  (It is interesting here to note also that dumaji *because* in Kriol can occur clause finally.)  The continuous suffix -bat is added to the full verb, but -ing/-in, if it occurs, *replaces* any transitive -im suffix.

Past tense is neatly and regularly indicated in Kriol by the auxiliary bin, which can contract with im (3rd singular pronoun) to imin, and (in my experience) with neba to nebin.  Reflexive action is similarly neatly handled with one reflexive pronoun mijelb/mijel (from myself), and reciprocal action by gija (from together).

Olabat bin kilimbat mijelb.
*They were all hitting themselves.*

Olabat bin kilimbat gija.
*They were all hitting each other.*

Unlike traditional Aboriginal languages, Kriol does have a passive which is occasionally used, mainly, it would seem, with verbs and situations where the undergoer of the action is more highly ranked than the agent.  This is in line with colloquial English use, and with the first occurrences of the passive in children's language.

Olabat bin git shat.
*They were/got shot.*

Ai bin andi git kild jeya.
*I nearly got killed there.*

More in line with Aboriginal language forms is the use of some unmarked intransitive verbs in a passive sense, contrasting with the same verbs in marked transitive form for the active sense.

Imin opin.
*It opened/was opened.*

Sambodi bin opinim im.
*Somebody opened it.*

Olabat binij.
*They are finished.*

Imin binijim olabat.
*He/she finished them.*

or by the indefinite use of the 3rd person plural pronoun as subject.

Olabat kolum yalbun.
*They call it yalbun (lilyseed).  It's called yalbun.*

Also in line with the Aboriginal language forms is the use of the continuous aspect to indicate action on a plurality of objects.

Imin kilim walabi.
*He killed a wallaby.*

Imin kilimbat walabi.
*He killed some wallabies.*

## Prepositions

Kriol has but four prepositions which function soley as prepositions, though there are certain other words which can function as prepositions, adverbs and conjunctions.  The four parallel case suffixes in traditional languages, and as in traditional languages, they can be made more explicit by the addition of other words.  The four are:

la(nga)   *to, at, in, into, on* (parallels the locative suffix with the same range of meanings in Aboriginal languages)

bla(nga)  possessive, *for the purpose of, for, for the benefit of* (parallels the purposive suffix in Aboriginal languages)

burrum    *from, out of* (and *in* when referring to a language) (parallels the elative suffix in a number of languages)

garrim    *with, having,* and instrumental sense (parallels the instrumental case suffix in Aboriginal languages)

These can be expanded and explicated, e.g.:

| | |
|---|---|
| wansaid la | *beside* |
| an tap la/la tap la | *on top of* |
| najasaid la | *on the other side of, across* |
| bihain la | *behind* |
| nomo garrim | *without* |

## Lagajat

A useful Kriol verb which parallels traditional language usage is lagajat *do/ say the same*.  Imin lagajat is a common clause tacked on after reported speech, even when this speech is preceded by Imin tok/sek/dalim mi, etc.  This is most exactly parallel to Aboriginal language usage in reporting speech, though it is not unknown in 'less educated' English speech.

## Clause length and patterning

Also very much in line with traditional Aboriginal languages, at least of the Roper area, is the use of short clauses, with tacked on phrases to explicate items the speaker thinks the hearer may need spelt out.  This is also not unlike features of informal speech, though the exposure most of us get to formal grammar and written English in schools may blind us to this feature. Pawley and Syder (1979a and b) have analysed spoken English, in which a number of rules contrast with those we have come to believe exist through our focus on the written forms.  Although linguists claim to be shaking free from the primary analysis of written forms, they are still strongly influenced by them.  Pawley and Syder produce evidence that the fluent speaker in English encodes his/her thoughts mostly in clause units, and suggest that the traditional grammatical sentence only exists as a unit in the written form.  When a fluent stretch of speech between pauses contains more than one clause, the speaker is using 'lexicalised clause stems' which he/she adapts to encode his/her thoughts.  For example, *he doesn't know what he's talking about* includes a lexicalised clause stem of

> NP(1) do-TENSE not know what NP(1) be-TENSE talking about

As Pawley and Syder found in transcribing spoken English, so I found in transcribing spoken Alawa (one of the Roper languages), clauses and paragraphs were easy to define in tape-recorder speech.  Where to make 'sentence breaks' was almost impossible to decide, and such breaks could often be made at a variety of points quite arbitrarily.  Pawley and Syder claimed this as a linguistic universal.

In Kriol, as in Alawa, the breath group may be a clause, or a phrase in apposition to a clause.  The clause often contains a minimal subject or object (a pronoun or a brief noun phrase), which can be expanded in an appended phrase. Alternatively, the subject (or object, or another case) may be stated in detail, then after a short pause a clause containing a brief reference back may occur.

> Imin kaman, thet olmen burrum Elsi.
> *He came, that old man from Elsey.*

> Wanbala olgamen, imin dalim mi,
> *The old woman, she told me, ...*

This type of construction is also comparatively common in working class and casual speech in English.  Working class culture is far more an oral based culture than is middle class culture, and this is reflected in language styles as in other matters (Kochman 1974).

## INTONATION

Intonation patterns are, to my knowledge, identical to those of the Aboriginal languages of the area.  These patterns include all those common to Australian English, and in particular they occur somewhat in the proportions occurring in English spoken in the more northerly parts of Australia: Brisbane, Alice Springs, and further north.  In this form of English, it is common for statements to end in a rising pitch.  Research by Horvath and associates in Sydney (personal communication) recently showed that this pattern was increasing in frequency in English usage there, most commonly among younger people, women and migrants. The only difference in the Kriol and Aboriginal version of this statement

intonation is the frequent occurrence of a glottal stop at the end of the clause or phrase in Kriol or traditional Aboriginal language.  Paragraphs most commonly end with the falling intonation.  I recall, during the 1960s, discussing this rising statement pattern with the American linguist Eunice Pike.  To her, such intonation on a statement was virtually unknown, and therefore had to have some specific meaning.  It had never occurred to me, as a speaker of Australian English, that the rising intonation would have any 'meaning'.  The likelihood of the pattern being learnt in Australia from Aboriginal languages is small; New Zealanders share it, and I suspect it occurs in England.

But there is one intonation pattern used in Kriol and traditional languages of the area which is unknown in English.  This is the form named by Sandefur as the progressive.  A verb is repeated, or a vowel is lengthened, and the voice pitch is raised.  Most commonly such a clause/breath group ends in the internationally more normal falling statement pitch pattern.

Ai bin weit weit weit weit weit weit weit najing.
*I waited and waited but nothing came.*

Wi bin ra ----- an raitap la Elsi.
*We were driving all the way to Elsey.*

## Tag questions

One other intonation pattern which contrasts with the common English use of northern Australia, and agrees with the more standard English pattern, is that for the tag question or agreement seeking question.  (The agreement seeking question tag usually ends with falling intonation in the 'standard' form also, but the question tag does not.)  Spreading south in Australia, and also occurring in New Zealand, is the use of eh with falling intonation, as a tag question.  This is also extremely common in Aboriginal English and working class English in Australia, though it is by no means limited to these groups.

You saw/seen him, eh.

It was good/unreal, eh.

In Kriol, the particle ngi (widespread as a tag in Aboriginal languages) or intit can be used for tag questions and agreement seeking questions, but usually with rising intonation.

Yu bin luk la im, ngi?
*You saw him, didn't you?*

Im gudwan intit.
*It's good , isn't it?*

These particles do not change with person, number or negation.

## USE OF KRIOL IN EDUCATION

Kriol can be said to have been used in informal education from early on in the contact area, in that many white staff at Ngukurr learnt the language from the Aborigines and used it in numerous work situations.  However, until fairly recently, children were discouraged from speaking Kriol in school at Ngukurr; in fact punishments were often inflicted on children who used languages other than English in school, even as late as 1972 (Sandefur 1980a:5).

In 1975, when bilingual programs were being introduced in the Northern Territory, a bilingual program at Bamyili School got underway.  One has since started at Ngukurr also.  John Sandefur was heavily involved in these in the early stages, as were some Northern Territory Education staff.  Writers' workshops were organised; the School of Australian Linguistics at Batchelor (not far from Darwin) took a large part in these.  A Kriol literature and initial literacy materials were gradually developed.

In the 1960s Ted Millikan of the Northern Territory Welfare Branch (personal communication) claimed that Ngukurr children at the post-primary Kormilda College in Darwin spoke better English than children from other Aboriginal communities.  At that time it was news to him that there was a distinct creole language, but after consideration he wondered whether the fact that it was English-based would have contributed to the superior performance of Ngukurr children in English.  It seems plausible, given the methods and attitudes of the time, that Kriol was a help — or at least less handicap — than a traditional language.  However, a few years later, and prior to the introduction of bilingual education, such superiority was not evident in later Kormilda intakes.  As numbers going to Kormilda from different communities are small, it could well have been pure chance — a brighter than average group, or a little more familiarity with western ways.  As far as I know, there has been no controlled study to substantiate any hypotheses here.

When a bilingual program in Kriol was begun at Bamyili, not all teachers saw this as good.  Many Northern Territory teachers were not specially trained in areas to do with either Aboriginal education, bilingual education, or teaching English as a second language or dialect, either in the Kriol-speaking areas, or in other language areas.  There is still a hard core of teachers opposed to any bilingual education — 'teach them English', they say — and those involved in bilingual programs in any of the languages used often feel their work is constantly being undermined.  One of them, from the Professional Services Branch of the Education Department in Darwin, said to me this year 'I don't know that we are getting any better results than  before, but at least we understand a lot better what is going on'.  However, those directly involved with the bilingual program at Bamyili are very enthusiastic, as are bilingual education staff elsewhere in other schools and language groups.

In the first school term in 1979, Edward Murtagh did a research project to compare the bilingual Kriol and English instruction at Bamyili with all-English instruction at another school in the Bamyili area.  The school chosen for comparison was that at Beswick, some 20km east of Bamyili in the same Beswick Reserve.  Murtagh tested two null hypotheses:

(a)  That a bilingual program which uses English and Creole as languages of instruction does not facilitate the learning of Standard English.

(b)  That a bilingual program which uses English and Creole as languages of instruction does not facilitate the learning of Creole.

He also tested a secondary hypothesis:

(c)  That learners' attitudes towards speakers of Standard English affect their learning of Standard English.

Murtagh used a series of pictures on a familiar topic (making a didjeridu) to elicit language, a series of passages in both Kriol and English to test listening comprehension, and a matched guise type test in which three adults

were recorded giving the same passages in Kriol and Standard Australian English to measure learners' attitudes to the two languages.  Children in grades 1-3 were tested, 29 at each school, chosen from those who attended regularly and had stable home environments.  Both sexes were almost equally represented.  The attitude test was only administered to the grade 3 students.

Murtagh states (1979:98, 99):

> The results of this study indicate very definite trends towards the superiority of bilingual schooling over monolingual schooling for Creole-speaking students with regard to oral language proficiency in both the mother tongue, Creole, and the second language, English.  There are indications, too, of the linguistic interdependence notion proposed by Cummins from the discovery that students schooled bilingually show progressively greater success at separating the two languages than their counterparts schooled monolingually.  This increased ability to separate the two languages (English and Creole), which bilingually schooled students have shown and which appears to be explainable only in terms of the two languages being taught as separate entities in the classroom, constitutes a powerful argument for the introduction of bilingual education to other schools where similar conditions obtain.

> If we accept the 'Creole hypothesis' of Vernacular Black English in the United States, then the results of this study can be interpreted as being supportive of the use of Vernacular Black English as the initial language of instruction for American students whose mother tongue is Black English.

> In the broader context of Bilingual Education particularly in Australia but also in other countries throughout the world, this study supplies some further evidence that initial learning in the vernacular in formal schooling facilitates learning of and through the standard language.

## KRIOL — AN AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGE RESOURCE

This brings me back to my title, Kriol, an Australian language resource. I have endeavoured to show in this paper that Kriol is an important resource for the following practical reasons:

1.   It is the most widely spoken language in Australia recognised by Aborigines as one of their languages, with all the positive attitudes which this entails.

2.   It provides a very good link between the languages of the white invaders and the traditional languages of Australia, and in many places is their successor, perpetuating Aboriginal modes of perceiving and classifying the world, and also incorporating structures which allow easier handling of the introduced concepts of Western society.

3.    Its use in education appears to help those whose first language it is towards better comprehension and facility in Standard English, and a better separation of the two languages.

In the light of these points, it is foolish and tragic when such a creole is regarded as worthless and a hindrance by non-speakers, especially when they are in positions of influence in administration or education.

## NOTES

[1]Bamyili is now known as Barunga.

[2]Djembere is now known as Djilkmingan.

[3]The use of the digraph e: has now been discontinued.  The neutral vowel it symbolised is not used by all and is only found in words of English derivation with the long neutral vowel of English, e.g. in 'church'.  The symbol e is now used for this vowel.

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