

ON SOME SYNTACTICO-SEMANTIC CONSEQUENCES OF
HOMOPHONY IN NORTH-WEST AUSTRALIAN
PIDGIN/CREOLE ENGLISH

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The recent publication of the first two volumes of John and Joy Sandefur's projected trilogy on Ngukurr-Bamyili Creole (Sandefur 1979 and Sandefur and Sandefur 1979a) is an event of great importance for Australian linguistics and for pidgin/creole studies in general. Every linguist who has done fieldwork on Aboriginal languages in the Northern Territory and/or northern Western Australia knows that Aborigines there command various forms of non-standard English, including — especially among younger people — a full-blown English-based creole. Yet until recently, the very existence of Australian creoles was — outside of Northern Australia — a well-kept secret. The volume of publication on them is still tiny in comparison to the now-sizable body of works on 'traditional' Aboriginal languages. But with the publication of these two volumes, we now have for the first time a detailed account of the segmental phonology, lexicon, and aspects of the grammar of one of those creoles (with other grammatical aspects, including complex sentences; to be treated in the third volume).

As with most of the existing literature on Australian pidgins/creoles the Sandefurs' aims are practical and descriptive, not theoretical (Sandefur 1979:v). My purpose here is to supplement their account with some observations based on my own field experience with the same creole¹, and on analysis of published texts², and to draw out some of their implications for post-structuralist linguistic theory.

Although Sandefur's grammar describes what is basically a hypostasised creole mesolect, he is fully aware of the idealisation involved, and rightly points out that there is a continuum of phonological systems ranging from basilectal, strongly Aboriginal-influenced ones, to an acrolectal system which is more like the English one. Thus, in Pre-Kriol (which would have been identical to the modern basilect in all these respects), "voiced and voiceless contrasts were neutralised, consonant clusters were avoided, the numerous vowels were reduced to five, and fricatives and affricates became stops" (Sandefur 1979:29); but as that pidgin creolised "voiced and voiceless contrasts began to re-occur (sic), consonant clusters were no longer avoided, the five-vowel system expanded to include more contrasts, and fricatives and affricates began to be differentiated" (Sandefur 1979:29).

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Consider the effect of some of the kinds of neutralisation described above³. Word-initial /b/ for example, subsumed English /p/, /b/, /f/, /v/, and /sp/, and word-initial /d/ subsumed English /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, and /st/. Since the vast bulk of the Pre-Kriol lexicon was derived from English, mergers such as these could, in principle, have resulted in massive homophony. Pre-Kriol (and modern basilectal Kriol) *bid*, for example, could correspond to English *pit*, *bit*, *fit*, *spit*, *Pete*, *beat*, *feet*, *bead*, *feed*, *speed*, or *bid*, and *djed* to English *sad*, *shad*, *Chad*, *said*, *zed*, *shed*, *stead*, *that*, *sat*, *shat*, *chat*, *set*, *shade*, *jade*, *staid*, *sate*, or *state*.

These examples are purely hypothetical: the degree of homophony which they imply would occur only if the basilect differed from standard English in phonology alone. In addition, there are of course lexical and grammatical differences, one of whose effects is to preclude *some* possible homophonies. For example, since transitivity came to be marked in Kriol by a suffix *-im* ~ *-um* ~ *-it* ~ *-t* and past tense by an auxiliary bin rather than by ablaut (see Sandefur 1979, Chapter 5), none of the English transitive and/or past tense forms cited in the last paragraph actually occurs in any form of Kriol.

As textual examples of the way *-im* vs. *-∅* can distinguish otherwise homophonous transitive and intransitive verbs, consider the following:

- (1) Ai kan libum igin la⁴ yu.
I can't leave you again.
 (Jungawanga 1980:10)
- (2) }min lib langu jea olagija.
He lived there for good.
 (Jungawanga 1980:4)

Another grammatical feature of Kriol which precludes some possible homophonies is the use of the adjectival suffixes *-bala* ~ *-wan*. Thus, to return to the hypothetical examples given above, *sad* would not normally be among the English words subsumed by /*djed*/, since the (basilectal) Kriol form is usually *jedbala*.

In addition to these grammatical features, the lexical differences between English and Kriol serve to preclude some possible homophonies. Thus concepts such as those expressed by English *chat*, *staid*, *jade*, and *sate* are not normally lexicalised in Kriol, but instead are formulated periphrastically (cf. also p. 181 below).

It appears likely that *some* lexico-grammatical developments within Kriol came about as 'therapeutic' responses to specific functional pressures of the kind discussed by Gilliéron (1918, 1921). Sandefur explains the *-it* allomorph of the transitive suffix in such a way:

This form always occurs on the verb for 'give'. It probably developed as an irregular form in order to distinguish the verb for 'give' from the verb for 'keep' both of which would have been pronounced identically otherwise (Sandefur 1979:116).

Although *some* such Gilliéronian pressures are probably relevant here, the potential homophony cited by Sandefur (between 'give' and 'keep') does not by itself provide sufficient motivation for the 'irregular form' in question. For that particular homophony is largely precluded by certain lexical differences between English and Kriol. Although Sandefur and Sandefur (1979a) lists a verb *gibum keep*, I could find no instances of it in the ca. 500 pages of Kriol text I examined. Another form *kibum* was found to occur, but only three times. All three instances occur on a single page, produced by a single speaker. By contrast

I found at least 24 instances of *gibit* – after that I stopped counting – in at least eleven different texts, produced by several different speakers. *Gibit* is in fact the main way of rendering the sense of English *give*, while the senses of *keep* are conveyed almost entirely by such near-equivalents as *olim* (< *hold*) and *lugabdum* (< *look after*). Reflexes of English *keep* are common only in its non-transitive functions (e.g. *kipgon* (< *keep going*), *kip kwait* (< *keep quiet*)).

These lexical realignments are, I suggest, the main factor precluding the potential homophony between *keep* and *give*. Since *kibum* (~ *gibum*?) is at best a marginal element within the Kriol lexicon, the *-it* form of the transitive suffix could not have developed *mainly* to distinguish *gibit* from *gibum*. Other factors were undoubtedly at least as important, and probably more so. One is the fact that, while almost all verbs with the *-um* ~ *-im* suffix are monotransitive, *gibit* is ditransitive, or perhaps 'ambitransitive'. It occurs with a somewhat wider variety of case frames than English *give*. It differs from *give* in that it can occur without an NP referring to the thing given:

- (3) *Buji yu nomo gibit mi, wel yunmi gona fait blanga jadlot daga.*
If you don't give (any to) me, you and I will have to fight
about that food.

(Jentian 1977a:12)

- (4) ... *wen jad olgamen bin kukum blanga im daga, im nomo bin*
gibit jad najalot.
... when the woman cooked her food, she didn't give (any to)
the others.

(Jentian 1977a:37)

When used in this case frame, *gibit* closely parallels verbs found in many northern Australian languages which are usually glossed by linguists as *give* (see, e.g., Coate and Oates 1970:43, Sharpe 1972:107). A better gloss would perhaps be *begift*, as these verbs occur with the given NP as the subject and the recipient NP as direct object.

But *gibit* also occurs with case frames which parallel those of English *give*, e.g.:

- (5) *Jad big reinbol bin gibit tubala loda fis, en tetul.*
That big rainbow serpent gave the two a lot of fish and turtle.

(Jentian 1977b:12)

- (6) *Ai gibit yu samjing rili gudwan.*
I'll give you something really good.

(Jentian 1977a:34)

In constructions of this type, *gibit* is frequently followed by *im*, e.g.

- (7) *Jad jabo bin askim langa jad keinggurru blanga gibit im*
sambala daga.
The native cat asked the kangaroo to give him some food.

(Jentian 1977a:11)

- (8) *Burrum jea jad yangboi bin go gadim jad olmen langa im kemp, en*
dei bin gibit in daga.
Then that boy went with the man to his camp, and they gave him
food.

(Jentian 1977b:39)

There is some tendency for this *im* to occur 'redundantly' in clauses which also contain an overt 'recipient' NP. Thus in Fitzroy Crossing I have heard such sentences as the following:

- (9) Gibit im Naitin.
Give it to Nathen.

The following may be an example of the same kind:

- (10) Jadan majawan im gada teigmat ola daga brom im throt en den
im gibit im lilwan.
*The mother has to take out all the food from her throat and
then she gives it to the/her little one.*

(Andrews 1977:11)

This 'redundant' use of -im in these ditransitive clauses is suggestively similar to its original use in Pre-Kriol monotransitive clauses, where it was soon reinterpreted as a marker of transitivity alone, without object person/number specification. I would not be surprised if Kriol eventually develops (or has already developed) constructions such as the following:

- (11) Gibit im mibala.
Give (it) to us!
- (12) Ai bin gibit im yubala daga.
I gave you (pl.) food.

Were such constructions to evolve, it would mean that -it + im had been reinterpreted as a (person-and-number-less) marker of ditransitivity, just as im (< *him, them*) has been reinterpreted as a mark of transitivity.

Whether or not this development takes place – or is taking place – it remains as a fact about present-day Kriol that gibit is often followed by im. I suggest that one possible reason for the occurrence of -it instead of -im on gibit is to prevent sequences of -im im, which would otherwise be quite frequent because of the di- or ambitransitivity of this verb. As evidence, consider the following. Fitzroy Crossing Kriol shows some fluctuation between -im and -it as the transitive marker on gib- *give* (cf. Sandefur and Sandefur 1979b). Overall, the former allomorph is more frequent than the latter. But just when this verb is followed by im, the latter allomorph (as per ex.9) is much more likely to occur.

The Sandefurs' dictionary (1979a) includes at least one other pair of verb forms for which the above might also hold: jagim and jagadim. Both are glossed *throw* (and are derived historically from chuck⁵), but the latter form might actually function as a ditransitive verb in at least some clauses, where it might take the same case frame as gibit im, discussed above. No textual examples of jagadim are to hand, so the matter must await further investigation.

But the -it ~ -t allomorph of the transitive suffix also occurs on several transitive verbs which are indisputably monotransitive rather than di- or ambitransitive. Two (unanalysed) examples from the Sandefurs' dictionary are dagat *to eat* (< tucker it) and jingit⁶. The latter is glossed in the dictionary as *think*. But it might better be glossed – at least in some clauses – as *think it to be a*, e.g.

- (13) Ai bin jinggit dibul dibul.
I thought it was a devil.

It is especially in verbs such as these latter two that homophony avoidance bears looking into as a possible kind of functional pressure favouring the -t ~ -it over the -im one.

Another example of a lexical development in which Gilliéronian functional pressures may have played a part, is the following. The English word *angry* has no direct reflex in Kriol, but has been replaced by words such as wail (< *wild*) and gola ~ golajambap *get angry*. (The latter forms are more common in the

Northern Territory than in Western Australia.) This lexical adjustment is probably related to the fact that *anggri* would have been homophonous with the word for hungry. Consider passage (14) vs (15).

- (14) Imin rili git wail jat weil. Orait imin go lugaran langa oktapus. Wen imin faindem im imin askim im. Jat weil bin sei, wanem ai wana idim blanga meigim mijalp fetwan.
Wal jat oktapus bin sei buji yu bromis nomo idim mi wal ai gin talim yu. (Brumel 1979:7)

That whale got really angry. He went and looked around for the octopus. When he found him he asked him "what can I eat to make myself fat?"

The octopus said if you promise not to eat me, I'll tell you.

- (15) Imin prabli angri dumaji bla im mami en dadi bin jas libum im en tubala bin go hanting bla bus daga. (Forbes 1978:2)

He was really hungry because his mother and father just left him and went hunting for bush tucker.

If the Kriol word *anggri* *hungry* had a homophone meaning *angry*, and that word occurred instead of *wail* in (14), both that word and the *angri* (= *anggri*) of (15) could easily be taken to mean either *hungry* or *angry* in these two textual environments. Since the passages in question are, thematically, entirely typical of Aboriginal discourse, the pressure for homophone avoidance would have been considerable.

In the process of creolisation and decreolisation, there is a tight functional interrelationship between the development of new phonemic contrasts and the introduction of new lexical items. Many interesting examples may be found in the Sandefurs' dictionary (1979a), which is especially useful in this regard because it is basically a composite of lexical forms which occur at various stages along the pidgin-creole continuum. For example, the dictionary lists both the basilectal forms *bingga* *finger*, *hand*, *judum* *shoot*, *donkenggurru* *stone kangaroo* and their mesolectal or acrolectal equivalents *finga*, *shudum*, and *stone keinggurru*.

What is interesting to note here is that many concepts which in basilectal Kriol are only expressed periphrastically, are lexicalised in just those forms of mesolectal Kriol in which there is a phonemic contrast which removes an otherwise problematical potential homophony. For example, the Sandefurs' dictionary includes a mesolectal transitive verb form *fidim* *to feed*, but no basilectal variant *bidim*. In the basilect this notion would ordinarily be expressed by the phrase *gibit daga*, i.e. *give food*. Now one kind of functional pressure dis-favouring the use of *bidim* for *feed* in the basilect may result from the fact that *bidim* is the basilectal word for *beat* (in the sense of 'surpass') and – in at least some lects – is also the word for *to spear* (for *r* = *d* see Sandefur 1979:37). Consider the following example, where *beat*, *feed*, and *spear* would all have been possible:

- (16) Tubala beligan bin bitim (= *bidim*) tubala en tubala bin gobek longwei la tubala kantri longlongwei la bus.

(Forbes 1978:5)

The two pelicans beat (i.e. fooled) the two (emus) and those two went back to their country, a long way off in the bush.

It is also relevant to note that *bidim* (< English *beat*) does not occur in the sense of *to hit*, which in Kriol is *idim* or *gilim*. The otherwise possible homophony in Kriol between *spear* and *beat* may have been a constraining factor.

Note that in all the cases of 'therapeutic' developments discussed above, it is not just *any* potential homophony which creates the functional pressure, but only potential homophony between lexical items which: 1) can occur in identical syntactic environments and 2) have meanings such that either would be semantically or pragmatically appropriate in many of the same contexts. (More will be said below about the nature of such 'appropriateness').

In the discussion so far, I have tried to suggest some of the ways in which pidgin/creole lexico-grammatical systems become adjusted in order to maintain intelligibility under the threat posed by potentially confusing homophony. From the fact that English-derived morphemes do continue to be used intelligibly, it should not be inferred that the *semantic* structures of standard English survive unaltered in Kriol. Indeed, one of the most frequent and interesting kinds of semantic shift that English-derived lexicon has undergone during pidginisation/creolisation has been the conflation of etymologically distinct homophones. Though this phenomenon has not been extensively treated within pidgin/creole studies (but see Mühlhäusler 1979:217-219 and Mühlhäusler 1980:33-35, where it is suggested that "hardly any word or construction in a pidgin or creole can be traced back to a single origin") it has been amply documented within traditional historical linguistics. (For some examples, see Bloomfield 1933:436ff.) A frequently cited example is the partial conflation of old English *ēar spike or head of corn* with *ēare ear*. The loss of unstressed vowels in English made the two words homophonous. Because the 'ear' in 'ear of corn' can readily be understood as an extension of the body-part sense, the two words may now be seen as not merely homonyms, but as semantically related in some way. To cite a more complicated Australian English example, the first two syllables of the introduced Italian word *capuccino* have been reinterpreted by some speakers as *cuppa* (i.e. *cup of*). Unlike in the 'ear' example, there is good *formal* evidence for this conflation: one sometimes hears a related plural form [k^hʌpseʧ^hʌ^əno]!

If conflations such as this can occur as a result of the gradual processes of sound change and foreign-word-assimilation within non-pidgin/creole languages, how much *more* frequently must they occur as a result of the sudden, radical phonological restructuring and lexicon transfer that takes place under pidginisation?

Consider the following examples from my own field experience with Kriol:

I. *jigi* (bala) = English *sticky* + *cheeky*

This word is very frequently used in the sense of 'cheeky', where it is much more widely applicable than is its English etymon. It describes, for instance, poisonous snakes, strong alcoholic beverages, and spicy foods. By at least some speakers in the Kimberley region, it has been used to describe heated spinifex resin, which is used as a glue in traditional technology. Since many such 'sticky' things are also 'cheeky' or disagreeable (e.g., chewing gum underfoot), it is not surprising that these two senses of *jigi* should have come to be interrelated.

II. *gadimap*

This word means *to carry, to cart*. It is impossible to say whether it derives historically from *carry him up* or from *cart him up*, since the two would have been pronounced identically in Pre-Kriol and had meanings close enough to have merged completely in Kriol.

III. *deijim* = *taste* + *test*

In some varieties of Kriol, these two are distinguished as *teistim* vs *testim*.

But in the basilect the two are homophonous and semantically related if not identical. This identification within Kriol is probably encouraged by the fact that most north-western Australian Aboriginal languages have a single lexeme for 'taste', 'test', or 'try out'.

The following three examples were all heard in the area of Fitzroy Crossing, W.A., where the basilectal Kriol tends toward a three (as opposed to five) vowel phonology. In full-fledged five vowel lects, these pairs are probably not all homophonous.

IV. *lau* = *allowed* + *law*

This is an example where there is *syntactic* evidence for the existence of a new 'conflated' lexeme: the basilect shows constructions such as:

- (17) *Im numu gadim lau bla judimbat raibul.*
He is not allowed to shoot a rifle.
 or more literally:
He has no law for shooting a rifle.

V. *jinig(ap)* = *to snake* + *to sneak*

The main evidence for a conflation here is the fact that even more 'advanced' Kriol speakers who make an /i/ - /e/ distinction elsewhere, often say *jinek(ap)*, *sinek(ap)*, or *snek(ap)* for *sneak*.

VI. *jigrid* = *secret* + *sacred*

Nearly everything sacred in Aboriginal society is also secret (in that only certain of its members are 'officially' permitted to hear about it). It is therefore not surprising that these homophones should have come to be understood as semantically related⁷.

VII. *flat*

This word, as used by older Aborigines in the Katherine area, is a blend of English 'flood' and 'flat'. It means something like 'area around a creek or river which is subject to inundation during the wet season'. Thus, it refers to an area which is relatively flat and apt to flood. The word does not necessarily refer to the inundation itself, since the area subject to flooding remains a 'flat' even during the dry season.

VIII. *rut*

This word sometimes seems to incorporate the sense of both 'rude' and 'root' (Australian colloquialism for 'to copulate').

IX. *dip*

This word is used in the sense of English 'deep' and 'steep'. Thus, not only the river at Katherine Gorge, but also the walk down the gorge face to the river is described as *dip*.

The above are just a few of the many cases in which homophony under pidginisation in north-western Australia has led to partial or complete semantic conflation. Such cases must be frequent wherever pidginisation has occurred. Although seldom adduced in any theoretical context (but see references cited in Mühlhäusler 1980:33), such confluations are of great theoretical interest, for at least three reasons.

First, they show that languages tend toward a state which we can describe by the slogan "one signifier - one signified"⁸. This is something which Saussure noticed long ago:

Take the countless instances where alteration of the signifier occasions a conceptual change and where it is obvious that the sum of the ideas distinguished corresponds in principle to the sum of distinctive signs. When two words are confused through phonetic alteration (e.g. French *décrépit* from *decrepitus* and *décrépi* from *crispus*), the ideas that they express will also tend to become confused if only they have something in common. Or a word may have different forms (cf. *chaise chair* and *chaire desk*). Any nascent difference will tend invariably to become significant ...

Saussure 1959:121

The second thing which is of interest about these semantic confluences is that they can provide valuable clues as to the structure of the meaning systems in which they occur. I have noted above that semantic conflation presupposes not only similar syntactic distribution, but also "meanings such that either would be semantically or pragmatically appropriate in many of the same contexts". This begged the interesting question: what makes two meanings similarly appropriate in the same contexts?⁹ No doubt, some of the factors relevant here are culture specific. For instance, in a culture such as most western ones, where sacred things are generally *public* rather than *secret*, *secret* + *sacred* is not a likely conflation. On the other hand the partial conflation whereby *sun* gets identified with *son* in Shakespearian word play¹⁰ would not be a likely one within Australian Aboriginal society (in Kriol) for in Aboriginal cosmology, mythology, and grammar (in most of the languages with gender distinctions), the sun is treated as female (and the moon as male). Might it also be the case that there are some universal constraints against or tendencies toward certain semantic confluences? If so, study of them could tell us much about the nature of meaning systems in general. The question remains an open, empirical one, deserving of careful comparative study.¹¹ Pidgins and creoles provide an especially fertile field for this study, for two reasons:

- 1) because they show a far greater amount of homonymy than do non-pidgin/creole languages, and
- 2) because a small number of languages (French, Spanish, English) have pidginised — probably independently¹² — in many different settings, providing a unique opportunity to observe potentially different mergers involving what were historically the same morphemes.

A third way in which the conflation phenomenon bears on important theoretical issues is in the area of *langue vs parole*. Note that in the examples discussed above I used phrases such as "some speakers" and "often say". The fact is that most such confluences are not uniformly made, even in one particular location and at one particular level on the creole continuum. Formal evidence for or against a merger is often difficult to find, but it is available in at least some cases, such as examples IV and V above. In both of those cases, the evidence indicates a good deal of variability: even some very basilectal forms of Kriol as spoken at Fitzroy Crossing, include a distinction between an adjective *lau* as in (19), and a noun as in (20).

(19) *Im numu lau.*
It's not allowed.

(20) *Im numu jabi lau bla gardiya.*
He doesn't know whiteman's law.

With respect to example V, a distinction is *sometimes* made between jinik(ap) ~ sinik(ap) ~ snik(ap), *sneak*; and jinek ~ sinek ~ snek, *snake*. These differences suggest that various speakers at various times have made differing semantic 'analysis' of the same potentially mergeable morphological material. These differences present obvious problems for anyone who would attempt to describe the lexico-grammatical structure even of some hypostasised cross-section of the Fitzroy Crossing creole continuum. Is there a Saussurian *langue* to be found anywhere on such a continuum? Especially in recent years, there has been widespread agreement on the severe inadequacy of inherited synchronic-structuralist models for understanding what goes on in pidgin/creole speech communities (e.g. Bickerton 1975). Moreover, it has been claimed (in these works) that the variability found in such speech communities does not differ in *kind* from that which is found in any speech community, and hence that the development of adequate models for comprehending the former will improve our understanding of language in general.

This claim would seem to be given added support by the conflation phenomena discussed above. For it is not only within pidgin/creole speech communities that homophone conflations present problems for Saussurian *langue*. To return to the standard English example, the degree to which ear₁ conflates with ear₂ is quite variable within the metropolitan speech community (for discussion see Lyons 1977:55). And with respect to the capuccino example, it is only rarely that I have heard [k^hʌpsʌč^hino] (as opposed to [k^hʌpʌč^hinoz]) used as the plural form.

Clearly the idiosyncratic reanalyses which give rise to such variability in pidgin/creole speech communities do not differ in kind from what happens in non-pidgin/creole ones. The main difference is that the great increase in homophony under pidginisation creates a correspondingly greater *potential* for such variability.

I do not propose to take up the 'variationist' cudgel here, nor to expound a novel replacement for Saussure's concept of *langue*. I *do* hope I have succeeded in demonstrating yet another way in which evidence from pidgin/creole languages is relevant to the debate.

NOTES

1. Most of that experience has been with the creole spoken around Derby and Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia. But the Sandefurs' recent report on fieldwork done in and around Fitzroy Crossing (Sandefur and Sandefur 1979b) confirms what we have long suspected — that the so-called Roper Creole described in Sandefur's grammar is basically the same creole that is spoken in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. My own recent fieldwork the Katherine-Bamyili area (done for the Northern Land Council) confirms this from the other end of the regional dialect continuum. Given this essential unity, I will hereafter treat the creole spoken over this entire region as a single language, which, following Sandefur and Sandefur 1981, I will refer to as Kriol. When referring to the earlier English-based pidgin from which Kriol presumably has developed (which must have been fairly similar to the most 'basilectal' forms of present-day Kriol, as discussed below), I will use the term Pre-Kriol.

2. These texts (cited below) were all produced by native speakers of Kriol. They are available from Bamyili Press, P.M.B. 25, Katherine, N.T., 5780, Australia. Copies of all these texts may be found in the AIAS library.
3. See Laycock 1970:xiv-xvi for a different, somewhat less drastic set of neutralisations within Tok Pisin.
4. The direct object of a transitive verb is not normally marked by the preposition *la ~ langa*. I am unable to account for its presence here. Peter Mühlhäusler (personal communication) notes that "the development of special syntactic devices for signalling animate objects is a very common feature of human language, as can be seen for instance, in the grammar of Afrikaans and Spanish".
5. Peter Mühlhäusler has suggested that the etymon of *jagadim* may be *chuck out*. While I cannot rule that out, it should be noted that English 'postverbs' usually come *after* the *-im* suffix in Kriol, unlike in Tok Pisin. Compare Kriol *bagarimap* with Tok Pisin *bagarupim* *ruin, spoil*; cf. also Kriol *teikimat* *take out, remove* (as clothes).
6. Here, and at several points in the text and dictionary citations below, Kriol *ng* has been spelled *ng*. In the same sources, it is sometimes also spelled *ngg*. In forms adduced from my own data, the latter spelling will always be used. The difference is purely orthographic, not phonemic.
7. Francesca Merlan tells me that when she and an elderly Jawoñ woman once heard a radio announcer say that some 'sacred' music was about to be played, the woman warned her to switch off the radio, as the two of them (as women) obviously were not meant to hear!
8. Haiman 1980 provides some other kinds of interesting evidence for this tendency, which he calls "isomorphism".
9. Note that Saussure in the quote above has also acknowledged that conflation can take place only if the two signifieds "have something in common". Further on in the same paragraph (Saussure 1959:121), he adds that "any difference perceived by the mind seeks to find expression through a distinct signifier, and two ideas that are no longer distinct in the mind tend to merge into the same signifier". But his theory would seem to leave no room for the question of what makes two ideas similar, or distinct, apart from their valorisation within a set of mutually-opposing (and thereby mutually defining) linguistic signs. Indeed, insofar as they imply the existence of such extra-linguistic similarities and differences, the passages quoted above seem to contradict his claim that "thought – apart from its expression in words – is only a shapeless and indistinct mass" (Saussure 1959:111).
10. Perhaps the most well-known Shakespearian example comes in the first two lines of *Richard III*:

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York

Other examples occur in *Love's labour's lost*, Act IV, Scene III, line 336, *Romeo and Juliet* Act III, Scene 5, line 126-127; *King John*, Act II, Scene 1, lines 498-500; and *Henry IV, Part Two*, Act 3 Scene 2, line 130-135.

An extended example from Milton comprises verse VII of "On the morning of Christ's nativity".

And though the shady gloom
 Had given day her room,
 The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
 And hid his head for shame,
 As his inferior flame,
 The new enlightened world no more should need;
 He saw a greater sun appear
 Than his bright throne, or burning axle-tree could bear

I wish to thank Ian Donaldson for help in locating these examples.

11. Not yet having undertaken such a study, all I can offer is an interesting comparative tidbit from my brief experience on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation during 1973: older Chinook speakers, whose English was influenced by three-vowel Chinook phonology, made the same semantic conflation between sneak and snake as do speakers of Kriol in north-western Australia.
12. Monogenesis vs polygenesis is, of course, a hotly debated issue within pidgin/creole studies (see DeCamp 1971:18-25, and references cited therein). But the question is of little relevance here, since even advocates of monogenesis would have to concede that the semantic structures of various 'historically related' pidgins/creoles can differ greatly. Consider, for example, the entirely Melanesian use of *susa* (< Eng. sister) to mean *sibling of the opposite sex* (Mihalic 1971:186) and *brata* to mean *sibling of the same sex* (Mihalic 1971:75).

Even if these words do derive historically from some 'Proto-Pidgin' etyma, their semantics in Neo-Melanesian is hardly predictable therefrom.

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