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THE CREOLE LANGUAGE DEBATE AND THE USE OF CREOLES IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS *

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INTRODUCTION

The English-based creoles, which are spoken by a very large number of Aboriginal Australians, are so named because it is obvious that a large proportion of their lexicon is derived from English.¹ This fact alone, however, does not indicate that they are merely regional varieties of English. They are distinct languages. Together with other world creoles, they are at the frontier of linguistic research and the subject of considerable controversy. One critical forum of debate centres on the validity of creoles as languages of education. It is the intention of the authors that this paper should achieve two things. Firstly, it is intended to contribute constructively to that debate. Secondly, it is intended to provide an overview of the present use of some creole languages in Australian schools.²

CREOLE LANGUAGES

Pidgin and creole languages, until relatively recently, have been defined and, consequently, dismissed as 'marginal languages' (O'Donnell and Todd, 1980:43) for many centuries in the Western world not even modern European languages were considered deserving of grammatical study. Only the classical languages with no inflection, such as English, were said to be 'grammarless' (Muhlhausler, 1979:41)

The rise of European nationalism, however, gave languages such as German, French and English the prestige to be worthy languages for study and fit vehicles for education. With the great colonial

expansion and the accompanying linguistic imperialism, many new languages were encountered and the accusation of inadequacy now fell upon these so-called 'primitive' languages of illiterate cultures. Linguistic research eventually showed the accusation of inadequacy to be false.

When unbiased observers began to look at the so-called 'primitive' languages, however, they often met with intricacies of grammatical organisation that were not found in the languages familiar to them. Thus, the notion that there were developed and underdeveloped languages began to make way, in the late 19th century, to the now generally accepted view that all human languages are of comparable grammatical complexity and that the many surface dissimilarities found in the languages of the world are all manifestations of a deeper universal 'human language capacity' (Muhlhausler, 1979:41).

One of the more recent consequences of this realisation is the general acceptance of Australian Aboriginal languages and their adoption, in many parts of Australia, in bilingual education programs. This widening acceptance of the merit and validity of all languages in the world is, however, only relatively recently being extended to creole languages.³ Nevertheless, as the quality and quantity of scholarly linguistic studies of pidgins and creoles steadily increased over the

last twenty or thirty years, linguists have begun to realise that the nature and origin of these languages are basic to the very understanding of what languages are.

...they have assumed a more central position in linguistics. They are being used, for example, to check theories concerning language change because their very existence challenges two related and widely held views: that the radical restructuring of languages is rare, and that change in language tends to be slow, gradual, also most imperceptible (O'Donnell and Todd, 1980:43).

The terms *pidgin* and *creole* have hence become technical linguistic terms. Not only does this have the inevitable result of a conflict between technical and everyday use of the terms, but it also raises definitional controversies among linguists themselves. Human language is, of course, highly complex and pidgin's and creoles are among its most complex manifestations. Although, as Todd (1974:1) points out, the idea that concise definitions of pidgins and creoles can be devised may be a myth, there is a kind of general consensus as to the general meanings of the terms.

A *pidgin* is a contact language, used among people who have no other language in common. It is not the native language of those who use it. In the early stages of language contact, communication is often solely restricted to such interactions as trading where a detailed exchange of ideas is not required. Under these circumstances, a small vocabulary, drawn almost exclusively from the language of the dominant group, suffices. The syntactic structure of pidgin is 'simplified' in the sense that it is less complex and less flexible than the structures of any of the languages involved in the contact. It is not, however, merely a jargon - that is, a pidgin has and obeys its own rules.

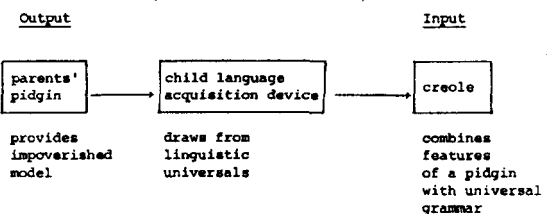
A *creole* is a pidgin which has undergone expansion to become the mother tongue of the

members of a speech community - that is, the pidgin has undergone *creolization*. Its vocabulary has become vastly expanded and its syntax more flexible so that it is able to express the whole range of human experience.

Creolization occurs as a consequence of a particular set of social circumstances which in modern times have often, although not always, been associated with those social and cultural changes which resulted from European colonial expansion. One of the more frequent occurrences was that people of differing linguistic backgrounds were forced together. Muhlhausler describes one such set of circumstances:

If parents of different linguistic backgrounds use a pidgin to communicate at home, their children will grow up speaking this pidgin as their first language...Far from being an imitation of their parents' pidgin, a first generation creole can be structurally quite different. I have observed first generation creole when spoken by the children among themselves. When communicating with their parents these children switched to the former's less developed pidgin variety (Muhlhausler, 1979:43).

In terms of a child language acquisition device, the process of creole acquisition can be illustrated as follows (Muhlhausler, 1979):



The pidginization and creolization of languages are not and never have been rare or abnormal occurrences. It is, for example, highly likely that some very significant world languages have creole origins. There are strong indications of a creole origin for the English language (Bailey and Maroldt, 1977:21-53; Domingue, 1977:98-100) and it has even been suggested

that the whole Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family, which includes English, German and Dutch, started out as a pidginized version of Indo-European (Aitchison, 1981:206). Many of the syntactical 'simplifications' for which creole languages have been denigrated, such as loss of inflection, are in fact true of English when it is compared to the languages from which it has been derived.

There are according to Hancock, (1971:509-523) over 80 creole-language areas in the world with many millions of first-language creole speakers including well over six million in and around the Caribbean region alone (DeCamp, 1971:7). A number of creoles are spoken in the Pacific region, such as Bislama in the New Hebrides and Tok Pisin in New Guinea. There are several creoles in Australia, particularly in the northern part of the continent including Cape York Creole and *Kriol*, the creole spoken in a wide area extending from Western Queensland, across the Barkly Tablelands, throughout much of the top half of the Northern Territory and into the Kimberleys of Western Australia (Sandefur, J. and J. L. 1980:31-37; Sandefur *et al.*, 1982:35-40). Creoles are significant languages in hundreds of Aboriginal communities. In most of these communities creoles are spoken as a mother tongue by two generations; in some by four or more generations. If it is true that education should be a significant factor in the lives of children in these communities - a proposition which subscribers to this Journal could hardly deny - then decisions which administrators, educators and even politicians make regarding the use of creoles as the medium of education in schools are decisions which drastically affect, for good or for ill, the lives of these children and the future of their communities. Such decisions, therefore, cannot be taken lightly and indeed, should only be made with full understanding of the nature of creole languages in general and of Australian creoles in particular as well as a clear perception of the nature of bilingualism and bilingual education.

This paper will therefore provide a brief case-study, firstly by outlining the origin of one Australian creole (*Kriol*) and then by detailing its use in schools against the background of some theoretical studies of creoles in education in other parts of the world.

THE ORIGIN OF KRIOL

The first European settlements in the Northern Territory were the British military garrisons on Melville Island (1824-1829), at Raffles Bay (1827-1829) and at Port Essington (1839-1848). Aggression prevented any possibility of language contact on Melville Island, but on the mainland friendly verbal communication was achieved at Raffles Bay, largely through the joint efforts of the British commandant, Collet Barker, and the Aboriginal leader, Marioc. An English pidgin began to emerge which was then developed more fully ten years later at nearby Port Essington. A pidgin also emerged at the South Australian settlement on the Adelaide River from 1864 to 1866. Both this pidgin and the earlier Port Essington pidgin survived to influence the formation of a more enduring and wide-spread pidgin when permanent white settlement was finally achieved in Darwin in 1870.

Over the next twenty or thirty years, there was an influx of non-Aboriginal people into the Northern Territory. Some English-speakers came to establish the cattle industry and many more came as miners in the gold rushes but they were far outnumbered by the Chinese. The linguistic interactions between the Chinese, using Chinese Pidgin English, the English-speaking Europeans and the many Aboriginal groups were highly complex and cannot be detailed here.⁴

The direct consequence, however, of their interaction was the emergence of pidginized forms of English in a large number of localities throughout the top end of the Northern Territory. By the beginning of the 20th century, these pidgins had coalesced into one widely-understood

contact language, the sort of language immortalised in Jeannie Gunn's *We of the Never Never* (1908). It is important to stress that at this point the *widely understood English pidgin was still a pidgin*. It was still a contact language, still used for restricted purposes only, still no-one's first language - that is it had not yet creolized.

Not all pidgins became creoles. Some, such as the English pidgins which arose in Vietnam during the war, die out when the conditions for which they were invented disappear. Some pidgins, like the long-lived and widespread Chinese Pidgin English, expand to fulfil a number of purposes but essentially remain pidgins. Those pidgins, however, which are to become the first language of stable communities, undergo creolization to become fully-fledged creole languages.

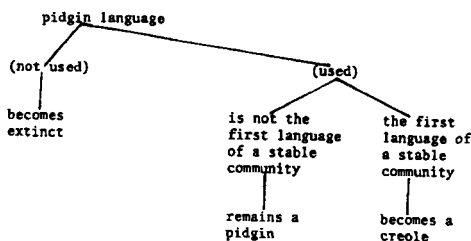


Diagram adapted from Woodford, 1983, p.7.

The first place in the Northern Territory where pressure was placed on a pidgin to expand to fulfil the function of the primary language of an Aboriginal community was the Roper River Mission (Ngukurr) where creolization began to occur shortly after 1908.

There had been some European presence in the Roper River region since the period of the Overland Telegraph construction in the early 1870's. Shortly thereafter, cattle stations were established in the region and a small township emerged at the Roper Bar, the shallow crossing used by European drovers, miners, settlers, cattle thieves and anyone else who had to cross the Roper River travelling north or south.

There were violent years and a great deal of aggression was directed at Aboriginal people in

the region. As one of the early missionaries, R.D. Joynt, wrote in 1918, hundreds had been "shot down like game". The massacre of Aboriginal people in a 'war of extermination' was widespread and continuous throughout the whole of the pastoral frontier. The battle, however, at least for a while, was not entirely one-sided. The Aboriginal people of the Roper River region, in particular, had gained themselves a reputation for fierce and concerted resistance to the European invasion of their lands (Willshire, 1896:7; Waters, 1913:101-4). The abandonment of most of the cattle stations in the region in the 1890's was attributed to their efforts.

In 1903, however, any hypothetical chance that there may have been for the preservation of their cultural integrity was drastically ended. Between 1899 and 1903, the London-based Eastern and African Cold Storage Company acquired massive tracts of unleased or abandoned land with the intention of carving out a pastoral empire from the Roper River north into Arnhem Land. They then purchased all the major stocked and viable cattle stations along the western Roper River and began moving cattle eastward (Bauer, 1964: 157).

The Eastern and African Cold Storage Company had no intention of allowing Aboriginal resistance to hinder their huge project. They determined therefore to exterminate them. The company employed gangs of 10 to 14 men to hunt out all inhabitants of the region and shoot them on sight. (Bauer, 1964). With the police and other authorities turning a blind eye, the hunting gangs of the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company staged an unprecedented, systematic campaign of extermination against the Roper River People. They almost succeeded. As Hart (1970:50) recorded, there were still people living in the 1960's who could vividly recall the atrocities. We have stressed the massacre of Aboriginal people because there were extreme social and linguistic consequences. Riding out of Elsey and Hodgson Downs stations, the hunting gangs, if following the south bank of the river, would have ranged through Alawa and Mara country. If

following the north bank they would have passed through Ngalakan and Wandarang country before turning north into Ngandi country. So it was that those were the groups whose numbers were most drastically and tragically depleted. They became a hunted and dispossessed people with nowhere to go.

Challenged by the plight of Aboriginal people in the region, the Anglican Church determined to establish a mission and coincidentally chose a site on the Roper River. The mission was commenced in 1908 (Cole, n.d.). It was perceived as a haven of refuge by the scattered people of the region. Within a few months the peaceful intentions of the missionaries became widely understood and by 1909 some 200 Aboriginal people gathered there (Sandefur, 1979:3). They were the remnants of the Mara, Wandarang, Alawa, Ngalakan and Ngandi people together with the southernmost members of the Rembarrnga and Nunggubuyu. As Barnabas Roberts, an Alawa man who came to the Mission as a young boy with it first commenced, once said: "If the missionaries hadn't come, my tribe would have been all shot down."⁵

The Mara, Wandarang, Alawa, Ngalakan, Ngandi, Remarrngu and Nunggubuyu people spoke separate and distinct languages. As is typical of Aboriginal people of the region, the *adults* of these groups were multilingual. They had not lived permanently in such close proximity before but in their traditional lives had met for ceremonial and other purposes each year. Over the course of a life-time, these people became fluent speakers of each others' languages. The *children*, however, were not multilingual. There were between 50 and 70 children attending school at the mission. They were now forced into contact with other children whose languages they had not yet had time to learn. Whereas their parents could communicate with other adults by speaking Alawa or Mara or Wandarang or whatever, the children could not. What they had in common was the English pidgin used between

Aboriginal and European people and the English they were hearing in school. With this limited input, it was this younger generation who, in the course of their lifetime, created the creole, manipulating the lexical resources available to them and drawing on the linguistic universals to create a language which catered for all their communicative needs. That language has now been named *Kriol*.

The complex language usage of the early years of the community would probably have been as follows. The Aboriginal adults would have spoken to each other in one of the several Aboriginal languages they understood. The Europeans would have spoken to each other in English. The Aboriginal and European adults would have spoken to each other in the English pidgin. The Aboriginal children would have spoken to each other in Kriol. The Europeans would have spoken to the Aboriginal children sometimes in pidgin English and sometimes in English.⁶ The Aboriginal children would have spoken to their parents in their Aboriginal home language or in pidgin English.

In this sort of context, it is necessary to distinguish between *mother-tongue* and *first-language*. A child's mother-tongue may have been Alawa - that is, Alawa was the language spoken between mother and child. That same child, however, when joining the play group of his or her peers, would have learnt to use Kriol. Under such circumstances, Alawa remained the mother-tongue, the language of early childhood, while the language of most complex communications was Kriol. Thus, Kriol became the new generation adults' first and primary language.

In the generation which followed, these first-language Kriol speakers would have spoken to *their* children in Kriol so that in the next generations, mother-tongue and primary language were the same - Kriol.

A similar creolization process occurred several times in different communities in North Australia.

The Roper River area has been detailed because it was almost certainly the first place where creolization occurred. The process, however, was not dissimilar in other communities. Throughout all the region in which Kriol is now spoken, the input into the creolization process was not substantially different from that at Ngukurr.

In the Northern Territory a second very important and much more recent site of creolization has been the Bamyili area. Although some Aboriginal people worked in the cattle industry and some in the nearby tin mines at Maranboy, the English pidgin did not undergo creolization until the second world war. In this era, huge military camps were set up in the region and large numbers of Aboriginal adults were attracted to their fringes. Whereas the Aboriginal adults from language groups such as Djauan, Maiali, Ngalkbun, Rembarrnga and Mara could communicate with each other, the children could not and creolization of the English pidgin of the war camps occurred very rapidly. A new factor at Bamyili was that some of the Aboriginal people already spoke the Ngukurr creole as a second language, some even as a first language.

Over the years which followed, movement of Aboriginal people along traditional lines together with movement in the cattle and other industries, led to a standardization of these creoles which were not dissimilar to start with. This is not to say that there is no variation. Ngukurr, Bamyili and the Kimberleys, for example, have clearly recognisable regional dialects but they are sufficiently mutually comprehensible to all to be unarguably Kriol.

In the years before serious attention was given to creoles in general and Kriol in particular, such languages were usually dismissed as marginal, inadequate and improper. Referring to pidgins and creoles in Australia, Turner (1966:202) called them "a collection of disjointed elements of corrupt English and native words"; Strehlow (1966:80) called them "English perverted and

mangled...ridiculous gibberish...childish babbling"; Baker (1966 :316) referred to Kriol as "lingual bastardization". Now, however that Kriol has been objectively studied and described it is seen to be a creole in the tradition of all the great world creoles. Although children may have had a vital role in its beginnings, it is now the language of adults, a fully-fledged language, the vehicle of communication of a large and increasing number of Australians.⁷ It is incumbent upon educational decision makers to accept the consequences of its validity.

CREOLES IN EDUCATION

As already noted, there are around eighty known creole language areas in the world. In most of these creole language situations education policy has seldom been chosen by explicit and rational processes. Instead, communities have tended to drift into policy positions under the force of historical and emotional commitments. This has been the case not only with officially English-speaking countries where creoles are spoken, but also with those where French and Dutch were the colonising languages. In Haiti, where at least ninety per cent of the population is monolingual in a French creole, it is only very recently that any serious official consideration has been given to the possible use of this creole in the public school system (Craig, 1977:246). Similarly, the government in the Seychelles has only recently "recognised that creole has to play an important role in education" (de Rieux 1980: 268). None of this is, of course, surprising given the recency of objective study of creole languages. The Australian Commonwealth Department of Education (NT Division) was amongst the first to recognise the importance of a creole language when it accepted in the early 1970s the legitimacy of using Kriol in bilingual education.

Craig (1977:246-247) has pointed out that the perception by educational administrators of the possibility of alternative education policies depends on the acceptance of the fact that creole

speaking communities tend to be bilingual in the creole and the national language or aspire to be so. That is to say, it depends on realising that giving creole a place in the formal education system is not tantamount to accepting a 'bad' form of the national language.

Widespread acceptance of the fact that creole is a language distinct from the national language has had to await the development of an understanding of the true nature of creole languages. In creole-speaking areas where English and French are the official languages, that understanding has tended to develop relatively late, whereas in the Dutch West Indian territories favourable attitudes towards creoles developed earlier. More recently the growing awareness of the bilingual status of creole-speaking communities has come from the French-speaking world, largely as a result of general studies of bilingual education in a variety of contexts. In Australia awareness of the creole situation has only developed during the last decade, building upon studies during the 1960s of Aboriginal English.

It is now feasible for the education policy alternatives in creole language situations to be viewed through a typology of models of bilingual education based on language use and language function, as set out by Craig (1977). (It should be noted that Craig's terminology is not synonymous with that of the NT Department of Education and the two should not be confused.) Craig sets out six creole bilingual models:

1. MONOLINGUALISM IN SCHOOL IN THE DOMINANT LANGUAGE

In this alternative the home language (i.e. creole) of the child is completely ignored (or at its worst, attempts to eradicate the child's language are actively made). This is the alternative that school systems have traditionally tended to adopt, not because of a carefully thought out educational

philosophy but because of an attitude of low valuation of the creole language. In such situations the creole is rarely accorded the status of being a discrete language. Instead, creole speech is regarded as synonymous with backwardness and lack of intelligence. This model is contrary to our present day understanding of cognitive development and the education process.

2. TRANSITIONAL BILINGUALISM

In which the home language of the child is used in school only to the extent necessary to allow the child to adjust to school and learn enough of the school language to permit it to become the medium of education. In schools in which teachers are themselves bilingual in creole and the dominant language, it is virtually impossible to prevent an intended monolingual dominant language program from informally becoming one of transitional bilingualism at least on the infant level. The crucial difference between this model and the previous one is that this model recognises the linguistic autonomy of the child's home background. This recognition does not oblige the education system to develop any aspect of the child's personality, including language, strictly in relation to that home background, but at least it acknowledges that the child belongs to a language-culture that is different from the one aimed at by the education system. This model is a step in a positive direction in that it does not depreciate the child's home background, but it does not go so far as to build upon that background.

3. MONOLITERATE BILINGUALISM

In which both languages are developed for aural-oral skills, but literacy is aimed at only in the one language that happens to be socially dominant in the community. This model represents not merely

tolerance of creole as does the second model, but a positive commitment on the part of the education system to provide a school curriculum, although only an oral one, in creole with a content that is relevant to the cultural background of creole. Within this model the problem of a possibly harmful break between the child's home background and his early experience of the wider world through school does not occur. This model is considered by some (Craig, 1977; Todd 1974) to be the best compromise alternative as it ensures some continued development in school of the home language-culture but avoids the problems and economic costs involved in developing a standardized body of literature.

4. PARTIAL BILINGUALISM

In which aural-oral fluency and literacy are developed in the home language only in relation to certain types of subject-matter that have to do with the immediate society and culture, while aural-oral fluency and literacy in the school language are developed for a wider range of purposes. In this model the creole assumes a position of near equality with the other language, in so far as it would be both an oral and a written language. The usage domains of creole, however, remain tied to the immediate society and culture. Domain or function separation is generally desirable in that it prevents redundancy which would otherwise contribute to language death. It would appear, then, that a 'maintenance model' of partial bilingualism would be the best model. ('Partial' is used here in the sense of domain separation rather than full parity of domains and should not be confused with partial bilingualism in the sense of only partially learning a second language.)

5. FULL BILINGUALISM

In which the education aim is for the child to develop all skills in both languages in all domains. In the sense that Craig uses the term, full bilingualism means complete parity of functions for the creole and other language including status as an international language. In a more restricted sense, complete parity of functions is limited to a national territorial area without international status. While it is desirable for all skills to be developed in both languages, it was pointed out above that it is not necessarily desirable for the domains or functions of both languages to be identical. This model, therefore, would not be as desirable as the previous model.

6. MONOLINGUALISM IN THE HOME LANGUAGE

Is which the aim of the school is to develop literacy only in the home language of the child. According to Craig the conscious implementation of this model is possible under two sets of circumstances. The first is that the vast majority of the country's population is monolingual in the home language of the country. The second is that the government is in the position to politically overcome the obstacles of making a break away from the past which is codified in the other and historically dominant language. In the Australian context the implementation of this model would generally be undesirable.

KRIOL IN EDUCATION IN NORTH AUSTRALIA

As in other creole language situations, until recently the education policy in North Australia regarding the use of Kriol was that of monolingualism in English. Kriol was officially ignored, in practice often actively discouraged.

with the hopes that it would disappear. This policy was not unique to Kriol but was applied to traditional Aboriginal languages as well. Unlike the traditional Aboriginal languages, however, Kriol was not recognised as being a discrete language but was seen to be a highly stigmatised form of speech deficiency. Officially this policy of English-only is no longer in effect. In practice, however, most schools that cater for Kriol-speaking children continue operating with an English-only program that does not give formal recognition to the children's own language. Some schools even continue to impose a ban of the use of Kriol by the children while at school.

Many schools in Kriol-speaking communities could be classified in Craig's terms as operating with defacto transitional bilingual programs. These are the schools that utilise a Van Leer type program. Such schools recognise the children's speech as being different from Standard Australian English (SAE), though not necessarily a language discrete from English, and take that into account. They do not, however, actively develop the Aboriginal child's personality in relation to his Kriol language-culture home background. It should be noted that these schools are operating purely defacto bilingual programs. True bilingual education is the use of two languages *in a well organised program*. Defacto programs are not well organised and properly staffed and tend to be 'implemented' through force of circumstances such as the presence of Kriol-speaking teachers in the classroom or the need to communicate somehow with younger children who control virtually no English.

A recommendation by O'Grady and Hale (1974) helped bring about official approval for two monoliterate bilingual programs. Their recommendation was that "the English-based creole be used in early education in communities where children speak it as their first language."

Due in part to that recommendation, the NT Department of Education gave official approval

for the oral use of Kriol in the Ngukurr and Bamyili schools beginning in 1975. The Bamyili school has since implemented a Kriol bilingual program. The Ngukurr school, however, has not yet established its 'school language policy'. The Bamyili school, therefore, is the only school out of the approximately one hundred Kriol-speaking communities in North Australia (not all of which have schools) that has an officially recognised Kriol bilingual program in operation.

The Ngukurr school has a defacto monoliterate Kriol bilingual program in operation by virtue of the fact that virtually all classroom teaching is done by Aboriginal teachers in Kriol (Harris, 1982:51-52). This is related to the situation in most outstation schools. Sims (1981:39) notes that

although not officially bilingual, a realistic assessment of outstation education accepts that the medium of instruction in many schools must be the local Aboriginal language.

This is primarily due to the fact that the outstation teacher is usually an Aboriginal person. Craig (1977:251) has pointed out that in such situations the teachers tend to remain unaware of the extent to which they themselves resort to the creole language, and it is only to covert observers that their creole discourse tendencies are fully revealed.

In 1977 the Bamyili school embarked on the 'full implementation' of a partial bilingual program in which initial literacy is taught in Kriol. In the terminology of the NT Department of Education, this is a Model I bilingual program. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the Bamyili program on the oral speech development of the children was made by Murtagh:

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...students schooled bilingually show progressively greater success at separating the two languages than their counterparts schooled monolingually. this increasing 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 classroom, constitutes a powerful argument for the introduction of bilingual education to other schools where similar conditions obtain (Murtagh, 1979:98).

The Kriol literacy program has not been in operation long enough to provide an evaluation of its effectiveness in literacy as against the effectiveness of initial literacy in English but the positive results in oral speech development suggest that the Kriol literacy program will also prove to be the more effective.

There are no full bilingual programs, in terms of Craig's definition, in operation using Kriol. As was mentioned above, however, this is not undesirable as maintenance is more important than 'fullness' of a language. That is to say, it is more important for Kriol to be used in well-organised programs for significant educational functions at *all* levels of the school than for Kriol to parallel the use of English in every domain. In the broadest sense of Craig's term, there never will be any full Kriol bilingual programs, for a minority language such as Kriol is never likely to gain status as an international language. Even in the more restricted sense, it is also unlikely for minority language such as Kriol to gain status as a national language, though it would be feasible for it to gain status as a semi-national Aboriginal language. In practical terms, however, that also is unlikely.

It is not likely either that there will ever be any monolingual school programs using Kriol. It is certain that any such programs would never

receive official recognition if they did exist. The only feasible situation in which a monolingual Kriol school program could come into being would be an outstation community that had a viable adult Kriol literacy program and set up its own totally independent school which rejected any literacy in English. Such a situation is theoretically feasible, but very unlikely.

The only school at present with a recognised Kriol bilingual program, as mentioned above, is the school at Bamyili. Some teachers, at schools in a number of other communities have, however dabbled in Kriol literacy, mostly with the children in the upper grades. The NT Department of Education says that its "concern is to identify and prepare other schools serving the same language group that already have a bilingual program and to which bilingual education could be extended..." (McGill 1980:46). According to S.Harris,(1982 :45) the Department to date has only fully recognised three Kriol-speaking communities in the NT (i.e. Bamyili, Ngukurr and Beswick Station). There is need for the Department to recognise other communities in which Kriol is known to be the primary language of the children. The extension of a program to other schools is dependent on two factors (McGill 1980:46). Firstly, programs will be extended from a central school only when a well developed coherent literature program has been trailed. Secondly, such extensions will occur only at the request of the Aboriginal community and with the approval of the Secretary of Education.

In the case of Kriol, the central school is at Bamyili where virtually all curriculum and literature development has been taking place. The NT Department of Education is currently undertaking an evaluation of the Bamyili program. Tests of English and Maths are being undertaken, data collected from the school and community, and a 'profile' compiled for each child in the program. If the program passes the Department's appraisal, the school will become an 'accredited bilingual school'. This moves the bilingual program, in effect, from an experimental

In other states, that is, in Queensland and Western Australia, there is growing interest in the use of Kriol in those communities where it is a significant language. Several schools during the last four or five years have been giving consideration to implementing formal monoliterate bilingual or partial bilingual programs. Most of these schools, however, have decided against establishing such a Kriol bilingual program for a variety of reasons. One school in Queensland decided that a Kriol bilingual program would not be fully applicable to the school largely because there is insufficient data presently available to positively identify the children's speech as being Kriol. It appears that their speech variety is closer to English than is Kriol.

In the Kimberleys, teachers in a number of communities have expressed interest in Kriol bilingual programs for their schools. The Yiyili school, for example, is not strictly a bilingual school but the community has requested an adult literacy program in Kriol. The WA Department of Education, however, does not encourage bilingual programs and most regional officers are not in favour of them. In general it is the younger teachers who have had Aboriginal studies in their teacher training that are in favour of such programs. As a result no state schools have given formal consideration to Kriol bilingual programs and it appears at this stage that State schools have very little potential for receiving official permission to implement any form of Kriol bilingual program.

Among Catholic and independent community schools, however, the situation is more positive towards the potential for implementing Kriol bilingual programs. One independent community school has given consideration to a Kriol program but has decided not to follow through. The main reason for this decision is that the community preferred that traditional language be used. The school is therefore at present heavily involved in a traditional language revival program and a Kriol program is felt to be inappropriate, at least at present. Another independent community

school has recently begun considering the implications of using Kriol in their program.

One Catholic community school in the Kimberleys is currently considering implementing a Kriol bilingual program in which initial literacy would be taught in Kriol. This school currently has a traditional language revival program that includes literacy in the language. If a decision is made to implement a Kriol program, the school would continue its traditional language program as well. The school would then, in fact, be running a trilingual/triliterate program, or what is locally being referred to as a '3-way school', using Kriol, traditional language and English. One of the main factors involved in delaying a decision to implement a Kriol program is that a complete Kriol curriculum and reading scheme is not yet available.

THE FUTURE OF CREOLES IN EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

The potential that the use of creoles in bilingual education programs offers has yet to be realised by education administrators in those parts of Australia such as the Northern Territory, North Queensland and North Western Australia, where creoles are widely used. Most of the recognition that creoles have received has come from the grass-roots level in the face of opposition from the top levels.

Many creole speakers themselves have also been opposed to the use of creoles in school. This is not surprising, however, for what de Rieux (1980) says about creole in the Seychelles is applicable to Kriol:

The dominant group, speaking the dominant language, had managed to persuade the creole-speakers that their 'speech' was so inferior in status as to be a 'non-language'....In pre-independence situations linguistic imperialism was so strong that generations have been

brainwashed into thinking that creoles were not only useless, but a handicap to economic development and social mobility (de Rieux, 1980:268-9).

Given these attitudes and the kinds of derogatory comments made about creoles in the literature, it is not surprising that education decision makers should also have been affected by such 'linguistic imperialism'. Even when creoles are accepted as legitimate languages, a question which is often posed is how long will a particular creole survive? It is suspected, or perhaps even hoped, that a creole is actually on its way to becoming a regional dialect of English and that this would therefore render the use of that creole, as a medium of education, inadvisable. An argument which can readily be advanced is that even if this were to happen, it will not occur overnight and that there are hundreds of creole-speaking children whose primary language is not English and whose educational needs must be considered *now*.

This argument, however, becomes irrelevant in the light of the fact that there is an increasing amount of evidence that creoles do not readily die out and that there is not necessarily a relationship between the prestige of a language and its survival. This is not to say that creoles do not change. It would be highly inconsistent to argue such stability in a field of linguistics which is at the leading edge of studies of language change. Creoles certainly change and it is likely that Australian creoles will change and that these changes may well be in the direction of the dominant national language - in this case, English. On the other hand, many crucial features of creoles are surprisingly persistent. This is in no small measure a consequence of the relationship between language and identity.

Many social groups employ distinct language varieties which are in turn highly significant dimensions of their social identities (Taylor *et al.*, 1973:185-192; Giles *et al.*, 1977; Bourhis *et al.*, 1979:158-185). Indeed, for many groups, the

language spoken by the group is a symbol, even a major embodiment of their ethnicity, of their cultural distinctiveness (Fishman, 1971 and 1977). For this reason, regional, ethnic and social class varieties, such as Canadian French in Canada and Appalachian English in the United States, tend to persist and to survive strong pressures to succumb in favour of standard languages (Ryan, 1979:145-157). Eades, (1981:13) for example shows that the style of speech used by Aboriginal people of Southeast Queensland is an important group identity symbol. It is not, Eades says, that their sense of identity depends upon the language, but that the words mark or symbolise their identity. While their identity persists, it is sociolinguistically logical to presume that the markers of that identity will also persist. In the creole-speaking areas of North Australia, there is a strengthening of Aboriginal identity rather than a weakening of it. Particular creoles are being perceived as one of the markers of it. Particular creoles are being perceived as one of the markers of that identity and this points not to their decline but to their survival.

There is therefore a growing number of creole-speakers who are freeing themselves from the negative attitudes towards their languages that the white Australian linguistic imperialism impressed upon them. During the last ten years there have been hundreds of creole speakers who have moved from publicly denying their languages to publicly standing up for them. In the last few years a most significant and growing group of such creole speakers has been teachers and teacher trainees. In the Northern Territory, for example, a number of them, together with Sandefur and others, have been involved in the planning and production of a series of 40 half-hour video programs, entitled *Kriol Kantri*, which promote a healthy attitude towards Kriol and Kriol speakers.

Creole speaking people such as these are becoming acutely aware of the importance of their children's mother-tongue in education. As more and more creole speakers become trained

as teachers, their influence on education policy and programs for their communities will increase. The future of creoles in education will increasingly rest with them and the creole-speaking communities they seek to serve.

NOTES

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1. There are varieties of Aboriginal English in parts of Australia which are dialects of English in the sense that they are generally mutually comprehensible with English.
2. The information is intended to be correct up to the end of 1983.
3. A short outline of the history of the study of pidgins and creoles and of attitudes to them is given in DeCamp, D., "The study of pidgin and creole languages", in D. Hymes, (Ed): *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages*, Cambridge University Press, 1971. pp 13-39.

4. The development of these early pidgins and the linguistic interactions which influenced their formation are being researched by Harris and will be the subject of a later paper.

5. Personal communication to John Sandefur.

6. Personal comments by missionaries to both Sandefur and Harris indicate that although English was used formally in the school, it was not possible to communicate only in English and in order that the children might understand, English pidgin was also used.

7. A description of Kriol is inappropriated in an article of this brevity. Interested readers should consult Sandefur, (1979), or for a briefer introduction, Sandefur, J., " A New Aboriginal Language", *The Aboriginal Child at School*, 9:1, 1981:52-60. A good readable discussion of creoles in general is the small book by Todd, (1974) . A good short chapter is Chapter 3 of O'Donnell and Todd (1980).

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