

Book Reviews

Valdman Albert, *Haitian Creole: Structure, variation, status, origin*. Sheffield: Equinox, 2015, xviii + 477 pp. 978 1 84553 387 8 (hardback), 978 1 84553 388 5 (paperback)
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With *Haitian Creole*, Albert Valdman breaks new ground in yet another outstanding publication. His many single-authored and multiple-authored books and dictionaries form one of the more influential forces in Haitian Creole and Louisiana Creole linguistics. His *Haitian Creole-English Bilingual Dictionary* (Valdman et al., 2007) – to cite but one of the many dictionary projects he has directed – is an indispensable reference work in Haitian Creole studies. That dictionary, and now this rich analytical study of Haitian Creole, are great contributions to linguistics and Haitian Creole studies. Both works vastly raise the profile among linguists of this important Caribbean language. The latest addition is also a wonderful resource for graduate and undergraduate students in Haitian studies, provided they have completed at least a handful of courses in linguistics. I used this book on two occasions in an undergraduate introduction to Haitian Creole linguistics and found that, while advanced students grasp the discussions, it is not well suited for inexperienced undergraduates. Courses with large numbers of beginners in the field of linguistics could, however, be assigned shorter passages, a possibility the book makes fully available thanks to its meticulous organization (12 chapters preceded by an introduction).

Each of the chapters deals with a different sub-discipline of linguistics: phonology (chapter 2), variation in word forms (chapter 3), spelling (chapter 4), structure (chapter 5) and origin (chapter 6) of the lexicon, basic sentence structure (chapter 7), the verbal system (chapter 8), the structure of noun phrases (chapter 9), complex sentences (chapter 10), variation in Haitian Creole (chapter 11), language planning and language choice in education (chapter 12), and genesis and development of Haitian Creole (chapter 13).

The strengths displayed by this encyclopedic body of knowledge are numerous. Each chapter is carefully researched, providing a wealth of references for further study. Key findings across the field of Haitian Creole linguistics and creolistics at large are nicely synthesized. Native speaker examples are provided for every notion and argument, offering a valuable starting point for student researchers. The book also presents a *national* – rather than the typically exclusively Port-au-Princian – perspective on the language. Some of the findings resulting from fieldwork undertaken on northern varieties of Haitian Creole, for which the author and his research team from Indiana University received National Science Foundation funding, are presented in chapter 11, which offers many insights into geographical, phonological, and sociolinguistic variation and change, including a fine-grained analysis of four Capois Creole variants (3SG, POSS, WITH, TO GO), based on responses from speakers of urban and rural varieties. Peppered throughout the chapter, and the entire book, are lively examples of spontaneous speech that were collected in Haiti, meticulously transcribed, and translated. The research questions, methodology, and results of this chapter are one-of-a-kind in Creole studies.

The book's weaker passages are found primarily in the final two chapters. Chapter 12 on language planning and language choice in education introduces the reader to the linguistic situation in Haiti, where one language, Haitian Creole, is spoken by the entire population but has low standing, while another language, Haitian French, is spoken by no more than 10 per cent of the population but has high standing, dominating schools and the formal sector. Although Valdman provides the usual minute-level of detail,

his final analysis is sketchy. The author delivers fatal blows to the idea that Haitian French could be used successfully in the Haitian school system but then waffles, on the same page, when he suggests the possibility of ‘a pedagogical approach that stresses the similarities rather than the differences between HC and French, thereby facilitating the acquisition of the latter language’ (386). Valdman appears to grasp at straws given the evidence of obstacles, dysfunction, fraud, failure to implement even modest reform, ineffectiveness and inertia, including the fact that most teachers fail to master Haitian French. Considering a French-dominant or a bilingual model for schools in Haiti, especially given the shocking failures of the more than two centuries old French-dominant system, is therefore not credible. Furthermore, little effort is invested in the chapter into plotting out what would be required for the Haitian State to shift toward a Haitian Creole-centered school system.

Chapter 13, on the genesis and development of Haitian Creole, neatly summarizes a number of theories about Haitian Creole genesis, exploring several major schools of thought. The Creole Prototype, the Bioprogram Hypothesis, Relexification and Substrate theories are thoughtfully presented, but ultimately critiqued as viewing creole genesis as somehow “exceptional” and assuming unattested second language acquisition scenarios. The author asserts his preference for the Superstrate hypothesis, according to which the ‘usual processes of unguided second-language acquisition operated, and where it is the speakers of the target language who first provided the primary linguistic input’ (403). However, a few weaknesses show up in the section dealing with congruence. While the author notes that the slaves who acquired Creole French were speakers of African Kwa languages such as Fongbe or Ewe, which have post-nominal determiners, he fails to provide even a single example from those important languages for the reader’s consideration. Valdman does provide an abundance of data from French and French-based creoles for the idea that “foreign learners” adopted the locative adverb *là* as a salient marking for definiteness and deixis (417–418). However, the consideration of examples from Fongbe would have added perspective and depth to an excessively “superstratophile” orientation; for example, Fongbe strings like *vi lɔ* (child DET, ‘the child’) or *n̄n̄ lɔ* (man DET, ‘the man’) are not only reminiscent of the syntax of Haitian Creole, but also, thanks to their liquid onsets, of its phonology (Brand, 2000: 36, 40). Similarly, in terms of the possessives, while the vernacular French construction *Noun + à + PossPro* (416) may have provided a model for the *Noun + a/an + PossPro* system found in the Cape Haitian variety, the absence of *à/an/a* in Standard Haitian Creole, plus the systematic nature of the *Noun + PossPro* structure in Fongbe, represents another example of a potential case of convergence or substrate influence that the author ignores, resulting in a diminished analysis.

Those caveats aside, there is no work that competes with the scope and thoroughness of Valdman’s book. The author has built his academic career on the publication of eye-popping cornerstone reference works, and this tome is no exception. It is a vast edifice of learning that scholars and students can draw from, it greatly advances Haitian Creole linguistics, and it once again shows the unmatched leadership of Albert Valdman in Haitian Creole studies.

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Guijarro-Fuentes Pedro, Schmitz Katrin and Müller Natascha (eds), *The Acquisition of French in Multilingual Contexts*. (Second Language Acquisition, 94.) Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2016, xv + 268 pp. 978 1 78309 452 3 (hardcover), 978 1 78309 454 7 (eBook) doi:[10.1017/S0959269516000260](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0959269516000260)

This volume contains eight studies devoted to the acquisition of French, as well as a concluding chapter summarizing the findings and looking ahead. It is a rich volume, bringing together research on several aspects of both adults' and children's French, whether acquired as L1, L2 or 2L1. This rather vast approach, along with the generative perspective adopted throughout, makes the book a valuable addition to previously published volumes on the acquisition of French, which focus on French as a foreign or second language and mainly adopt other theoretical frameworks (e.g. Dewaele, 2005; Véronique, 2009; Lindqvist and Bardel, 2014). Unlike many other studies on French (but far from all, see references above), this one has as one of its main aims to investigate the acquisition of French in contexts where languages other than English are present.

The first chapter, *Finite verb placement in French language change and in bilingual German-French acquisition*, by Anika Schmeisser and Veronika Jansen, discusses language acquisition and language change. The authors investigate finite verb placement in historical French (which, in contrast to modern French, shows V2-characteristics) and in the acquisition of German (a V2-language). They see similarities between the two processes, as it seems that language contact between a V2-language and a non-V2-language, whether from a historical or an acquisitional perspective, can lead to an increasing use of XSV rather than V2 in the V2-language.

Staying with the German-French language constellation in the next chapter, *Wh-fronting and Wh-in-situ in the acquisition of French: really variants?*, Jasmin Geveler and Natascha Müller investigate the acquisition of questions by German-French bilingual children. Their longitudinal study, covering a period of approximately four years, shows that German seems to influence French resulting in an overuse of *wh*-fronting structures in French, where other possibilities are available but more rarely used in the data. It also shows that this structure appears early on in the acquisition process.

The third chapter, *On the processing of subject clefts in English-French interlanguage: parsing to learn and the subject relativizer qui*, is written by Laurent Dekydtspotter and Kelly Farmer. As the title indicates, in this chapter English is one of the languages involved, although the focus is on the L2 French. The main question