

REVIEWS

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DANIEL LONG & DENNIS R. PRESTON (eds.), *Handbook of perceptual dialectology*, vol. 2. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002. Pp. xxv + 412 pp. Hb \$209.

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This book is the second volume of the *Handbook of perceptual dialectology*. Expanding on the coverage of both regions and methodologies, its aim is to underline the importance of considering folk (i.e., non-linguists') conceptions and perceptions of and responses to dialect phenomena in general, and to language differences in particular. Perceptual dialectology, or even "folk dialectology," is nowadays understood – thanks to the work pioneered by Dennis Preston over the past two decades – as a multidisciplinary macro-linguistic and micro-sociolinguistic approach within the field of folk linguistics, an enterprise that, in general, gives added prominence to both linguistic structure and details of dialect production and perception differences and attitudes, complementing the more global approach of the social psychology of language. As we know, an important aspect of the complex social psychology of speech communities is the arbitrary and subjective intellectual and emotional response of the members of a society to the languages and varieties in their social environment: Different language varieties are often associated with deep-rooted emotional responses – in short, with social attitudes, such as thoughts, feelings, stereotypes, and prejudices about people, about social, ethnic and religious groups, and about political entities. These non-linguists' emotional responses and perceptions of dialects and dialect divisions may, paradoxically, not coincide with those proposed by linguists, since cultural, social, political, economic, or historical facts or other circumstances within the speech community may lead to the belief that there is a linguistic boundary or a sociolinguistic barrier where in reality there is none, or vice versa. Crucially important, then – as Preston's work has emphasized – is the comparison of scientific and folk characterizations of sociolectal and/or geolectal varieties and areas. Such an approach builds a more complete and accurate picture of the speaker's linguistic behavior, in the context of its complex social psychology, as well as of the regard for language use and variety within the community, in our sociolinguistically based search for an understanding of the dynamics of speech communities.

The vigorous development of the field is brilliantly illustrated in this book both theoretically and methodologically, with a number of recent and ongoing research projects in perceptual dialectology. As Ronald Butters points out in the Preface, this volume “reifies and expands upon the underlying principles of folk linguistics and at the same time extends the methodological applications into new regions, new languages, and the perceptions of their speakers” (p. xvi). Most chapters are excellent instances of what is referred to in the Introduction as the “overwhelming influence of essentially nonlinguistic facts on the perception of linguistic ones” (p. xx).

To this end, the editors provide us with case examples from languages as diverse as Korean, Japanese, French, English, Spanish, Italian, Turkish, Dutch, Norwegian, and German, as well as Mandingo and Mali varieties. They all deal with non-linguists’ views of areal linguistics and using those techniques developed and refined by Preston for the field in the 1980s: draw-a-map, degree of difference, “correct” and “pleasant,” dialect identification, and qualitative data (Preston 1999:xxxiv). These examples are presented in the form of language boundary perceptions, the aesthetics and prestige of dialects, attitudes toward language, dialect and accent varieties, gender differences, mental maps, dialect imitation, dialect distance, nativeness, and difference perceptions.

The book contains 20 chapters, together with the Preface by Butters, the editors’ Introduction, notes on contributors, and name and subject indexes. The chapters range from 8 to 32 pages, depending on the complexity of the linguistic phenomena presented.

“Miami Cuban perceptions of varieties of Spanish” (chap. 1) by Gabriela Alfaraz and “Regional differences in the perception of Korean dialects” (chap. 14) by Daniel Long & Young-Cheol Yim provide exemplary cases of the impact that nonlinguistic facts have on the perception of linguistic phenomena, particularly historical-political effects on the perception of dialect differences. Both works examine perceptions and attitudes toward varieties of Spanish and Korean, respectively, by eliciting evaluative data (correctness and pleasantness) through the application of a scaled questionnaire. The context for Cuban Spanish is practical political implications of the pre- and post-Castro Cuban societies, and that for Korean is the North and South Korean societies and their linguistic varieties.

In chap. 2, “Aesthetic evaluation of Dutch: Comparisons across dialects, accents and languages,” Renée van Bezooijen focuses on the distinction between inherent and contextually conditioned value judgments of language varieties. She studies their cognitive recognition and aesthetic evaluations by testing the validity of the hypotheses of inherent value (sound-driven), imposed norm (norm-driven), and social connotations (context-driven), together with other factors such as intelligibility, similarity, and familiarity. Her results and conclusions, which point to the most positive aesthetic evaluations for the standard language, underline the usual wrong relationship established between the standard/nonstandard

duality and the issues of correct versus incorrect, adequate versus inadequate, or aesthetic versus unaesthetic, respectively.

Cécile Canut's "Perceptions of languages in the Mandingo region of Mali: Where does one language begin and the other end?" (chap. 3) is a brilliant investigation of an age-old question. Canut states that "spatial delimitation of dialects cannot be an efficient parameter in the study of dynamic linguistics" and provides us with the most likely alternative: "The objective is no longer to describe abstract entities (language), so-called fixed and rooted systems situated one next to the other, but rather to show that communicative practice is composed of an ensemble of varying subsystems in contact and in the process of permanent transformation and evolution" (p. 39), perhaps something like the accumulative transition of colors in the continuum of a rainbow.

A number of chapters, in addition to Van Bezooijian's, show socially based differences (gender, class, age, education, etc.) in the evaluation and perception of regional dialects: chap. 2; "Gender differences in the perception of Turkish regional dialects" (chap. 4), by Mahide Demirci; "Mental maps: Linguistic-geographic concepts" (chap. 5), by Willy Diercks; "Attitudes of Montreal students towards varieties of French" (chap. 6), by Betsy Evans; "A perceptual dialectology of Anglophone Canada from the perspective of young Albertans and Ontarians" (chap. 15), by Meghan McKinnie & Jennifer Dailey-O'Cain; "California students' perceptions of, you know, regions and dialects?" (chap. 8), by Carmen Fought; "Where is the 'most beautiful' and the 'ugliest' Hungarian spoken?" (chap. 12), by Miklós Kontra; "Madrid perceptions of regional varieties in Spain" (chap. 16), by Juliana Moreno Fernández & Francisco Moreno Fernández; "Attitudes toward Midwestern American English" (chap. 17), by Nancy Niedzielski; and "A perceptual dialect study of French in Switzerland" (chap. 19), by Caroline L'Eplattenier-Saugy. Social interference in linguistic perception is revealed in the analyses of Turkish dialects, a small area of northern Germany, Montreal French, Albertan and Ontarian English in Canada, views of U.S. linguistic diversity, Hungarian dialects, Peninsular Spanish dialects, and French in Switzerland, respectively; they use respondents' hand-drawn maps and/or perceptions of correctness, pleasantness, and degree of difference. Similar assumptions, goals, and conclusions are found in Maria Teresa Romanello's "The perception of urban varieties: Preliminary studies from the south of Italy" (chap. 18), where the scene and object of evaluation are interestingly transferred from regions and dialect varieties to urban spaces and urban varieties in the south of Italy, studying the linguistic facts of the local community. The paper by the Moreno Fernández constitutes the first research on attitudes to regional varieties carried out about the Peninsular Spanish facts, where the language, dialect, and accent diversity, together with the perceptions and responses to them through the speakers' value judgments, are motivation enough for a monographic special issue.

In "An acoustic and perceptual analysis of imitation" (chap. 7), using the matched guise technique and advanced, sophisticated acoustic tools, Betsy Evans

deals with dialect perception from the perspective of adult imitative ability by comparing and analyzing the various subsystems of the informant's normal and imitative speech styles. Her revealing conclusions suggest that previous notions about adult abilities to acquire new varieties of the same language and bidialectalism should be reconsidered. The study specifically addresses the "control" dimension of perceptual dialectology, one of the modes of awareness proposed by Preston 1996 together with "availability," "accuracy," and "detail," in part an attempt to extend Trudgill's (1986) notion of "salience."

In "Perception of dialect distance: Standard and dialect in relation to new data on Dutch varieties" (chap. 9), Ton Goeman underlines the crucial role that perceptual-attitudinal factors play in changes in progress with his statistical modeling of some specific Dutch dialect features, stating that "the subjective evaluation of 'own' and 'foreign' is an important factor in language behavior besides other language internal and language external factors" (145).

Another set of chapters focuses on dialect recognition and/or identification of a speaker as a native member of a given speech micro- and macro-community through specific linguistic differences in dialect contact and mixture situations (e.g., Bergen in Norway, Milton Keynes, Hull and Reading in England, Noirmoutier Island in France, and Tokyo): "A dialect with 'great inner strength'?: The perception of nativeness in the Bergen speech community" (chap. 10), by Paul Kerswill; "Dialect recognition and speech community focusing in new and old towns in England: The effects of dialect leveling, demography and social networks" (chap. 11), by Paul Kerswill & Ann Williams; "Microcosmic perceptual dialectology and the consequences of extended linguistic awareness: A case study of Noirmoutier Island (France)," by Jean Léo Léonard; and "Influence of vowel devoicing on dialect judgements by Japanese speakers" (chap. 20), by Midori Yonezawa.

Most chapters contain richly detailed ethnographic and sociolinguistic approaches which are correlated with specific linguistic phenomena. They all underline the importance of complementing linguists' insights about "scientifically discovered aspects of language structure and use" (Preston 1996:72) with the systematic study of non-linguists' opinions, as suggested by Preston in his seminal earlier work. Understanding perceptions of languages, language varieties, and specific features of these varieties, as Schilling-Estes (2002:18) points out, "is important for both scientific and humanistic reasons: not only does such understanding provide insight into such central linguistic issues as the relationship between perception and production and the role of saliency in language variation and change, but it also allows for fuller understanding of how and why people's attitudes toward language varieties are often translated into attitudes toward, and discrimination against, speakers who use particular varieties." In addition, language attitudes also contribute to language maintenance or death.

The presence of some spelling mistakes and the occasional need for editing work in some chapters written by authors who are not native speakers of English

by no means tarnish the excellent quality of the volume compiled and edited by Long & Preston. They provide us with an excellent summary of current issues and trends in folk dialectology, accounted for very insightfully and critically, with substantial contributions from innovative and informative points of view. The book is as readable and enlightening as it is well documented and thought-provoking, in leading toward a “folk theory of language,” and it will be of great interest to a wide multidisciplinary range of readers – dialectologists, sociolinguists, ethnographers, applied linguists, and other social scientists. The editors must be credited fully for this second compilation, which completes a first-rate two-volume ensemble on perceptual dialectology.

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CHRIS BARKER & DARIUSZ GALASINSKI, *Cultural studies and discourse analysis: A dialogue on language and identity*. London: Sage, 2001. Pp. viii, 192. Pb.

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agency, bricolage, deconstructionism, demystification, demythologization, difference, discursively constructed subject positions, duality of structure, essentialism, anti-essentialism, hybridity, ideology, intertextuality

What do these terms from the discipline of cultural studies mean? Do they have any relevance to the study of language and identity? If these are questions you have found yourself pondering, then *Cultural studies and discourse analysis*

(*CSDA*) is a book you should read. This work is a productive collaboration between a cultural studies scholar (Barker) and a critical discourse analyst (Galasinski) who hope to “forge a useful interdisciplinary dialogue” (1). Although their book is written with the specific aim of showing cultural studies (CS) scholars how critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be used as an analytical tool in investigating identities, for sociolinguists it is also a good introduction to the way identity is theorized in CS. The identities analyzed in the data-based chapters are masculinity (chap. 4), ethnicity and nationality (chap. 5), and masculinity together with ethnicity (chap. 6).

Language is central to cultural studies as well as to linguistics, but for Barker and Galasinski it is not just a matter of pointing to the desirability of combining the two approaches in the study of identity. Rather, their main point is that “the CS project” is enriched through using CDA as a methodology. As they say on p. 1: “Though cultural studies has convincingly argued the philosophic case for the significance of language, it is rarely able to show how, in a small-scale technical sense, the discursive construction of cultural forms is actually achieved.” *CSDA* is a very welcome book because it does just that: In analyzing identities within a CS framework, it uses CDA methodology. Thus “CDA augments CS by showing us the technical linguistic building bricks of social construction” (3).

After the introductory chapter, chap. 2 outlines CS, and chap. 3 outlines discourse analysis (DA) and CDA. Many readers of this journal will find chap. 2 quite helpful. In this chapter, titled “Language, identity and cultural politics,” we learn that “identity has been the primary domain with which CS has been concerned during the 1990s” (28). The authors argue that “the plasticity of identity, manifested as the ability to talk about ourselves in a variety of ways, leads to a form of cultural politics centered on the re-description of persons and social situations” (28). It is this ability to talk about ourselves in various ways (this discursive practice) that forms the basis of CS investigations of identity. While some recent sociolinguistic work on identity also takes a similar approach, the CS approach foregrounds questions of power. Thus we can see why *CSDA* argues for the use of CDA in CS studies of identity.

Chap. 3, “Tools for discourse analysis,” begins with a good summary of the eight principles of DA generally that the authors believe to be the most important (63–64), and then the three assumptions that they see as central to CDA (64):

- “Analysis should avoid easy, dichotomous explanations of the phenomena studied.”
- The aim is “to uncover contradictions or dilemmas underpinning social life.”
- “Analysis is self-reflective.”

Among the various traditions within CDA, the authors focus on the approach associated with Halliday’s systemic-functional linguistics. This approach analyzes texts according to three functions of language: ideational, interpersonal,

and textual. But as their data are “largely non-interactive” interview data, the authors are most interested in the ideational aspects of text. A highlight of this chapter is the 12-page analysis of the credo of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Written with a subtle touch of cynicism, it illustrates such aspects of CDA as “the importance of passivization and nominalization in setting up the structure of action and agency in the text” (73). This analysis nicely exemplifies *CS-DA*’s point that no matter how “contentious or ideologically motivated” DA may be (85), interpretation “follows on from an empirically verifiable analysis of the text” (85).

The second half of the book comprises the authors’ analysis of spoken (interview) data. With their main research interest being in the identities of their interviewees, they aim to redress the imbalance that they find in the “general failure [of CS] to analyze the utterances of living speaking subjects” (21), and even its failure to “base analysis on some sort of ‘hard’ evidence” (24). The authors see that CDA can fill this gap as a tool for linguistic analysis of actual utterances that shares with CS “a specific concern with subordinated groups” (25).

Chap. 4 analyzes the “performance of masculinity as achieved through men’s talk about their fathers” (86). The theoretical starting point for this analysis is the social constructionist position that is central to CS, that “sexed and gendered identities are . . . largely a matter of how femininity and masculinity are spoken about, rather than manifestations of universal biological essences” (87). The data for this chapter come from two case studies drawn from a larger project in which interviews were carried out in a city near Sydney with 30- to 70-year-old academic and general university staff, as well as 16- to 25-year-old homeless and “at risk” men at a drop-in center. However, we are given no further contextualization for these interviews, such as number of participants or length of interviews, and it is not even clear if the interviewer was the researcher, or someone else.

Some readers of this journal may be disappointed in this chapter because it is not primarily focused on analysis of discourse. It is more aptly described as “discourse-sensitive ethnographic research into the cultural construction of masculinity” (86). Thus, there is more attention to the content of the interview data than to its linguistic form. Nevertheless, there is a very interesting section that analyzes the ideational level of one interviewee’s language; this man describes his father not in terms of action or agency, but through his own mental processes (e.g., he thinks his father appreciates him, he thought his father was amazing). Other features of language use that are part of the analysis in this chapter are hedges, mitigators, and pronoun shifts. The discussion highlights tensions and inconsistencies in the interviewees’ identity construction, in which control and distance are central metaphors of contemporary masculinity.

It is chap. 5 that will be of greatest interest to most sociolinguists concerned with analysis of identity, because of its clear presentation of the concept of ethnicity from a cultural studies perspective, as well as the convincing way in which

CDA analysis is used. Barker and Galasinski point out that their conceptualization of ethnicity differs from the traditional one (such as is found in much sociolinguistic writing on language and ethnic identity), which “has stressed the sharing of norms, values, beliefs, cultural symbols and practices” (122). Arguing against the essentialism inherent in such definitions, they see ethnicity as a “relational” concept, and “a process of boundary formation constructed and maintained under specific socio-historical conditions” (citing Barth 1969). A further important part of the CS approach is the understanding that “ethnicity is constructed through power relations between groups” (123).

The analysis in this chapter is drawn from seven interviews with elderly villagers living in southeastern Poland near the Ukrainian border. The interviewees were told that the purpose of the interviews was to learn something about “how life was spent in their youth,” and the interviewer thought that they would talk about pre-World War II times. However, mostly they told stories of 1945–46, when Ukrainian separatist troops carried out three major attacks on the district, in which the inhabitants suffered “the most appalling atrocities” (128).

The analysis of the way that these interviewees talk about their experiences during this time shows the relational, context-bound nature of their ethnic identity, focusing on pronominal usage and impersonal verb forms, which construct Poles in opposition to Ukrainians. Further, in their narratives about the conflict between Polish and Ukrainian residents of their district, the Polish interviewees construct the Ukrainians as agents in a material process. The Poles, on the other hand, are talked about not in terms of actions but in terms of the mental processes they “took up” in reaction. Thus, the grammatical choices construct the Poles as “passive participants who merely suffered at the hands of their opponents” (148). The analysis is exemplified in 18 interview extracts.

The final chapter, also based on analysis of interview data, starts with a discussion of multiple identities and the notion of hybridity, which “has proved useful in highlighting cultural mixing and the emergence of new forms of identity” (158). However, I have some problems with a major theme of this chapter: that (Australian) Aboriginality is coded as male for the two interviewees. An important part of the evidence for this interpretation comes from the two men’s use of the term written in the book as *black fellows*, as in an extract that begins “*Everyone just brings the black fellows down, ‘cause I’m Aboriginal’.*” But did the interviewee really say *black fellow* rather than *black fella*? In my nearly 30 years of talking with Aboriginal people in New South Wales (where these interviews took place) and Queensland, I have observed widespread use of the term *blackfellas*, but never *blackfellows*. While the transcription used in the book is primarily standard orthography, there is some representation of salient conversational contractions, like ‘*cause* (rather than *because*) in the same sentence. Although the lexical item *fella* undoubtedly is cognate with the general English term *fellow* (which usually has male reference), it is used by Aboriginal English speakers all over the country as a gender-neutral term, and is generally written as

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fella or *fulla*. Further, this form is productive in compounds and is widely used in such other expressions as *whitefellas*, *us fellas*, *you fellas*, *them fellas*.

Apart from this doubt over part of the analysis in chap. 6, I find this book to be convincing and well worth reading. I am not in a position to assess the overview of CS, but to the extent that I can assess the CDA overview, I believe it should prove helpful. The book is clearly written, with helpful layout and headings, although I still find chap. 2 somewhat hard going.

Finally, as for understanding terms such as *bricolage*, and *ideology* (as well as others listed at the beginning of this review), and understanding how they relate to the study of language and identity: You'll have to read *CSDA*.

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MARGARET DEUCHAR & SUZANNE QUAY, *Bilingual acquisition: Theoretical implications of a case study*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Pp. 176. Pb. \$18.95.

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Deuchar & Quay's *Bilingual acquisition* addresses theoretical issues both of language acquisition in general and of specifically bilingual acquisition through an examination of a case study involving one child's acquisition of English and Spanish in England. Regarding the first issue, the authors attempt to answer questions of phonological differentiation based on acoustic evidence, lexical differentiation in relation to the idea that children avoid lexical synonymy in early stages of language acquisition, and lexical categorization of two-word utterances and the emergence of language choices. Regarding the second issue, they are concerned with the question of whether children possess one or two language systems, and they explore the criteria involved in making such a distinction. Finally, they investigate the factors of the language situation that influence a child's language choice.

This book is composed of seven chapters, with numerous figures and tables. Chap. 1, the Introduction, argues for employing a case study approach, drawing on the works of Jennifer Platt and Esther Dromi, among others, and it sets up the

details of the case under analysis. The authors position themselves as methodologically opposed to the prescriptive approach taken by prior researchers such as Vihman & McLaughlin and Harding & Riley, who focus on parental methods strategically designed for bring up a bilingual child. Instead, Deuchar & Quay take a descriptive approach, preferring to examine their data and those of other studies objectively, without characterizing how parents can raise a child to be bilingual. Additionally, Deuchar & Quay prefer not to couch their data in terms of language dominance, owing to the inconsistencies of prior research in determining the defining characteristics of language dominance in bilingual children. Rather, they discuss their data purely in terms of production and environment.

Chap. 2 details the methodology for the case study as it relates to data collection and transcription style. Deuchar & Quay collected both diary data (collected by the mother from when the child was 6 months to 7 years old) and audio/video data (collected from when the child was 4 months to 3 years and 2 months old) within both English- and Spanish-language contexts. For purposes of this case study, the focus is on data collected when the subject (referred to as “M” throughout) was between the ages of 10 months and 2 years and 3 months. M’s linguistic environment is differentiated primarily by location. M’s mother is a native speaker of British English, and M’s father is a native Spanish speaker. The home is characterized as a primarily Spanish-speaking environment, while the child’s daycare center at the mother’s university is an English-speaking environment. M is addressed in both Spanish and English by her mother depending on their location, primarily in Spanish by her father, and only in English by her grandmother and the daycare facility caretakers.

Chap. 3 investigates acoustic evidence for M’s phonological differentiation between Spanish and English. The authors begin by comparing M’s acquisition of Spanish and English consonants and vowels with that of monolingual speakers of English and Spanish. However, they find that because of the similarity in the phonemic inventory of Spanish and English and the similarities in the patterns of acquisition of consonants and vowels between monolingual English and Spanish speakers, they cannot determine whether one or two phonological systems exist in M’s linguistic repertoire. They therefore move on to a discussion of voicing contrasts in M’s production of utterance-initial stops in an English-language context versus a Spanish-language context. Deuchar & Quay attempt to find a corresponding contrast between voice onset time (VOT) characteristic of utterance-initial stops in monolingual English and Spanish language production and in M’s production in English- and Spanish-language contexts. They do indeed find a progression leading up to an adult-like contrast in M’s acquisition of English utterance-initial stops. Additionally, although they do not find an adult-like contrast in M’s acquisition of Spanish utterance-initial stops, using Lisker & Abramson’s 1964 categories of voicing in relation to VOT (voicing lead, short voicing lag, and long voicing lag), they do find a contrast within the “short-lag” VOT range. The authors conclude that the acquisition of adult-like voicing con-

trasts in English shows up in M's linguistic repertoire first as a result of the greater lag differences found in the adult English input versus the Spanish input.

In chap. 4, Deuchar & Quay consider the question of the existence of one or two phonological systems during M's lexical development by examining her ability to produce translation equivalents – two words with the same meaning, one from each language. They begin by a review of arguments for and against the Principal of Contrast proposed by Clark. The Principal of Contrast predicts that children – whether acquiring one or two languages – will avoid synonymy in their lexical development and construct a single lexicon in which maximal semantic contrasts are maintained up to a lexicon of approximately 150 words. Furthermore, Clark argues that bilingual children reject cross-linguistic synonyms, and that translation equivalents are predicted to emerge when bilingual children realize they are dealing with two distinct systems. Deuchar & Quay, in fact, find evidence to the contrary. They find English-Spanish equivalency pairs in M's lexical inventory long before the anticipated age of 2 years, when children's awareness of the existence of two linguistic systems typically emerges – as early as 10 months, with a sharp increase in the acquisition of equivalency pairs at 1 year and 5 months. The authors, however, do not use these data to argue for the existence of one or two lexical systems in young bilingual children; rather, they shy away from positing an answer to this question directly and instead turn to a discussion of language differentiation in relation to facts of lexical development. Deuchar & Quay suggest that the appearance of translation equivalents, though necessary, is not sufficient in establishing lexical differentiation. Here lexical differentiation is not clearly distinguished from pragmatic differentiation, in which the use of lexical items from one language occurs in the appropriate language context. In fact, of interest to sociocultural linguists, Deuchar & Quay posit a high level of influence of language environment on the acquisition of equivalency pairs in bilingual children.

Discussion of the lexicon continues in Deuchar & Quay's examination of the syntactic categorization of M's two-word utterances (chap. 5). They examine both mixed and monolingual two-word utterances in English- and Spanish-language contexts to determine whether M possesses a single initial system. Through a close examination of M's lexical inventory, and therefore of her lexical choices in constructing two-word utterances, Deuchar & Quay find that M more often adheres to the appropriate language in context in producing two-word utterances when her lexical resources allow her to make a choice. The authors therefore conclude that mixed utterances are a result not of a single initial system, but of limited lexical resources. Furthermore, they propose that not all words may be assigned to lexical categories. In particular, function words, such as *more/más*, appear to operate semantically more like verbs. However, verbal morphology is neither expected nor found in these instances, making a choice of lexical category problematic. Deuchar & Quay refer to these lexical items as “acategorical.” Last, the authors examine morphological constructions

in an attempt to determine whether M possesses one or two syntactic systems. They discover that language-specific morphology does appear by 1 year and 11 months. They therefore conclude that at this point M possesses two syntactic systems.

Finally, in chap. 6, Deuchar & Quay consider the issue of language choice and how a case study of bilingual children might contribute to our understanding of the effects of language socialization and richness of linguistic environment on children's language acquisition. Prior sociolinguistic studies have shown that monolingual children often acquire the ability to accommodate to differing registers or varieties at approximately school age. However, Deuchar & Quay's data in this case study clearly show that, at an early age, M is making language choices based on her interlocutors and the location of the interaction. The evidence provided in relation to language choice as early as 1 year and 7 months furnishes us with information difficult to obtain in a monolingual context regarding the ability of young children to make context-appropriate language choices.

The authors also discuss the effect of communicative strategies on M's language choice. By communicative strategies, they refer to M's interlocutors' tendency to accept or reject wrong language choices. The authors briefly discuss methods by which M's parents dealt with an utterance of the wrong language in a particular language context. Several strategies surfaced in their study. Often the mother would provide the translation into the appropriate language for the context, while the father would occasionally act as though he did not understand the utterance in the wrong language choice, provide the utterance translation into the appropriate language choice with a rising intonation, or accept an inappropriate language choice and continue with the interaction. Perhaps most interesting is the authors' proposition that the child's interaction with her monolingual grandmother promoted a bilingual context more often than those with the parents, as a result of the grandmother's acceptance of both Spanish and English utterances in avoidance of communication breakdown. The discussion of communicative strategies in relation to the child's language choices will likely be the most interesting part of the study for sociocultural linguists, but this section of the book is a mere two pages in length. Further development of this portion of their study would not only have lent support to the brief proposition of the role of the environment on lexical differentiation in chap. 4 but would also have contributed to an overall better understanding the role of language socialization in the language acquisition of both bilingual and monolingual children.

Overall, this is an excellent book. Deuchar & Quay's data are interesting and well presented. Their approach to the data and analysis is both clear and convincing. They contribute to both a theory of language acquisition in general and to bilingual acquisition through evidence of phonological differentiation, lexical differentiation, early syntactic development, and language socialization. The book's only drawback is its brief exposition of the seemingly intriguing findings in relation to communicative strategies of the child's interlocutors and the sub-

sequent creation and reinforcement of the language context as it relates to the child's ability to make linguistic choices. Deuchar & Quay's ongoing discussion of the question of one versus two linguistic systems highlights confounding issues in taking an absolute dichotomous stance on this issue. They show that multiple levels of language acquisition must be examined if we are to gain a better understanding of bilingual acquisition. Deuchar & Quay propose a focus on language differentiation and an understanding of linguistic systems as emergent.

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SMITH, NEIL, *Language, bananas and bonobos: Linguistic problems, puzzles and polemics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002. Pp. viii, 150. Hb \$62.95, pb \$29.95.

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The title of Neil Smith's book (*Language, bananas and bonobos*) suggested to me a book focusing on the issue of nonhuman primate language, and the title attracted me to the book for this reason. While Smith deals with that issue in one chapter, the range of issues explored in this book is much wider than I expected, which made it a more interesting read for me. Smith suggests an audience of non-linguists, and I agree that the book would make an interesting excursion for an academically minded reader with only a passing knowledge of linguistics. I also think there are many linguists who would find the book a catalyst for debate and reexamination of linguistic theory and practice.

The book is divided into three sections: (I) "Problems," (II) "Puzzles," and (III) "Polemics." The volume collects revised magazine columns, and as such each chapter is quite short. Though a collection of essays risks lacking the coherence of a singular work, the essays for each chapter are well selected. The only problem in this respect is the overlap of material in chaps. 3 and 4.

I found the most attractive chapters to be those in the "Problems" section. The issues discussed here are those that the general public, students in linguistics, and many linguists will find most intriguing. These include discussions of a system of language for people without the faculties of sight, voice, or hearing, and the extraordinary abilities for the acquisition of linguistic systems among people with very low-level nonlinguistic skills ("savants"). In that discussion, the author challenges traditional notions of "intelligence" while supporting, according to Smith, the idea of a universal grammar. Other chapters in this section focus on interesting disassociations between hearing and perception, allowing the reader to consider why it is that one person can hear and perceive language

but not other environmental sounds, while another can hear sounds but can no longer perceive language in the form of sound. Synesthesia and autism are other phenomena introduced in this section. With such interesting topics, the reader may leave each short (4–6 pages) chapter wishing, as I did several times, for more.

Section II, “Puzzles,” presents information on a diverse selection of topics, including but not limited to the connectionist model of language, “politically correct” language, linguistic mechanisms for accomplishing humor, and relevance theory as a resource for the interpretation of imagery. These issues are discussed from Smith’s theoretical perspective, which is made clear up front. While only section III is titled “Polemics,” a polemical tone is present in other parts of the book, particularly chap. 12 in section II, in which Smith criticizes extreme claims made by some applied linguists that “the whole realm of theoretical linguistics should be replaced by the study of texts” (72). Yes, that is extreme, and such views can be criticized. But there are many linguists who would consider equally extreme Smith’s claim that “we need to distinguish knowledge of language (the initial domain of linguistic inquiry) from the use of that knowledge in particular areas” (9). The reader looking for bridge-building between “formalist” and “functionalist” approaches to the study of language will not find it here.

Section III, “Polemics,” is made up of chapters that seek to persuade the reader that linguistic inquiry is best accomplished from the perspective that language is a modular system, independent of general cognitive capability. This section presents interesting evidence for the idea of modularity as well as criticisms of applied, cognitive, and connectionist perspectives on language.

The opening chapter of section III, “Bonobos,” criticizes strong claims made by researchers of ape language (Savage-Rumbaugh, Shanker & Taylor 1998) that we may need to rethink linguistic theory based on evidence of language competence displayed by one bonobo named Kanzi. Smith is right to criticize the methodological opaqueness of the reporting of Kanzi’s grammatical competence, but he attempts to discount interesting findings by criticizing the researchers’ perspective on language, calling their adoption of a Wittgensteinian perspective “deeply troubling” (85). Unfortunately, Smith leaves out of the discussion what I find to be the most fascinating aspect of the story of Kanzi – the fact that Kanzi was not originally the subject of the research. Kanzi started picking up language after observing teaching sessions between human researchers and his mother. Although not explicitly taught, Kanzi ended up more proficient than his mother, the subject of the explicit instruction. Kanzi’s acquisition occurred, the researchers speculate, because of the modified environment in which Kanzi grew up. The living environment for the researchers and bonobos ensured that much of the everyday, mundane interaction that humans negotiate among themselves was, in this case, negotiated with the bonobos at the research site. The unique relationship between humans and bonobos (as an infant, Kanzi was

carried many places by the human researchers) also allowed Kanzi free use of his hands, which in turn allowed him more opportunities for gestural communication. Smith is right that there is evidence for a modular system for human language (presented in earlier chapters), but he seems critical of the ape language research in large part because the data collected on ape language do not fit existing human-specific theories of language. I do not see the need to suggest that, if we look at the communication of a bonobo and reconsider dominant linguistic theory, there might be “dire implications” (84) for the field of linguistics.

Other chapters in section III include discussions of a critical period for language development and the potential conflict between Chomskyan linguistics and the theory of natural selection. The section also includes a review of Pinker’s *Words and rules* which describes that popular book as offering a balanced view of linguistic inquiry (the lexicon does play a role in grammar), and a final chapter which is a light-hearted suggestion that linguists’ names seem to share the phonological feature of velarity (Smith calls on all the forces of phonological theory to make this humorous stretch).

Some linguists reading the book may find themselves slightly miffed by the lack of acknowledgment that linguistics existed before Chomsky, but that shouldn’t deter any potential reader. This slender compilation of articles addresses some of the more interesting linguistic territory – from a particular theoretical perspective. No doubt the book will persuade the non-linguist of the fascinating realm where the discipline makes its home.

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WEXLER, PAUL. *Two-tiered relexification in Yiddish: Jews, Sorbs, Khazars, and the Kiev-Polessian dialect*. Trends in Linguistics Studies and Monographs 136. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002. 713 pp.

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The thesis advocated by Wexler in this book challenges traditional views of the makeup and genesis of Yiddish and Modern Hebrew. Traditional views assumed that “Yiddish was either a ‘deformation’ or a ‘creative Jewish outgrowth’ of High German, with attrition of Germanisms and acquisition of Slavicisms resulting

from prolonged contact with the Slavic languages, while all historical attestations of Hebrew were regarded blindly as instantiations of Classical Semitic Hebrew” (3). Wexler’s counter-proposal is twofold: On the one hand, Yiddish is Upper Sorbian relexified (in the 12th century) on the basis of High German phonetic strings, and Kiev-Polessian relexified on the basis of Yiddish and German (15th century); in this view, Yiddish is typologically a Slavic language with a German lexicon. On the other hand, Modern Hebrew is Yiddish relexified on the basis of Classical Hebrew phonetic strings; in this view, Modern Hebrew is typologically Slavic, like Yiddish, with a Classical Hebrew lexicon; hence, it is not genetically related to Old Semitic Hebrew. The aim of the book is to document this twofold proposal.

The methodology designed to document the hypothesis consists in a comparison of the languages involved. For example, the properties of Yiddish suffixes of German origin match those of Slavic suffixes rather than those of German; Yiddish lacks overt affixes that the Slavic languages lack, while German requires overt affixes in the same contexts; likewise, the properties of the two diminutive affixes of Yiddish pattern with the Slavic languages rather than with German. A long list of constructions where Yiddish pairs with Slavic languages rather than with German is provided (18) and detailed data are presented in chap. 4.

The book contains an introduction and five chapters, an impressive bibliography of some 80 pages, and name, example, and subject indexes. It is organized in the following way. Chap. 1 starts with a full statement of the relexification hypothesis as it applies in the case of Yiddish; it then provides a definition of the process of relexification, a discussion of 17 tests designed to detect cases of relexification, a discussion of the social motivation for creating a language through this process, and some thoughts on why some people (scholars or not) might not be sympathetic to the idea that relexification may play a role in language genesis. This chapter also contains an overview of the features that support the relexification hypothesis in the case of Yiddish, some historical facts about the populations involved, and a history of the research underlying the proposals advocated in the book. Chap. 2 summarizes the various traditional approaches to the study of Yiddish and other Jewish languages (e.g., Weinreich, Mises, Katz). Wexler’s conclusion is that these approaches cannot account for the complexity of the facts. Chap. 3 is basically an introduction to the relexification account of Yiddish and Modern Hebrew, with further discussion of the traditional views. It contains a detailed description of the source and composition of the Yiddish lexicon, such as cases of conflation, synonymy, and loan words, and it provides guidelines for constructing an etymological dictionary of a relexified lexicon.

Chap. 4, the most important of the book in terms of length, provides data documenting the two-tiered relexification hypothesis for Yiddish: from Upper Sorbian to German, and from Kiev-Polessian to Yiddish and German. The chapter begins with a summary of the findings. These include the following. The

lexico-semantic structure of Yiddish is Slavic, and only the vocabulary is German. The number of German variants is determined by the Slavic substratum. When an Upper Sorbian word overlaps semantically only partially with a German root, the latter is used in Yiddish following the pattern of Upper Sorbian. The chapter contains five additional sections discussing the status of subsets of morphemes of the languages involved. The last chapter of the book, chap. 5, is dedicated to the discussion of topics for future research. Holes in the diachronic data are identified, both linguistic – resulting from the unavailability of data on relevant languages at relevant periods – and historical, resulting from a lack of studies on population movements for given periods. Holes in the comparative analysis of the languages involved are pointed out. As for the two-tiered relexification hypothesis involving two Slavic substratal languages, Upper Sorbian and Kiev-Polessian, in the formation of Yiddish, it is pointed out that the differential impact of these two grammars on Yiddish requires further study. Finally, the author calls for a comparison of the various cases of relexification in the languages of the world.

Wexler's book has the great merit of looking at a number of well-described facts in a way that departs significantly from the traditional ways of looking at them. Time will tell whether his relexification analysis will be shared by other scholars who work on the genesis of Yiddish and Modern Hebrew. For those who work on creole languages, this analysis comes as no surprise. Wexler's book also contains a number of quite interesting observations on the process of relexification, observations that immediately lead to new topics for research. For example, Wexler points out that in the makeup of Modern Hebrew, relexifiers ignored the lexifier language elements that are phonetically similar to those in their own language (section 3.3). This observation leads him to the conclusion that relexification is a prerequisite for conflation. This conclusion is in direct contrast to Kihm's (1989) and other authors' thesis (discussed by Wexler on p. 139) according to which conflation triggers relexification. The fact that there are opposite views calls for an explanation. Are the differences between them attributable to the differential situations in which the process of relexification takes place – that is, are they due to external factors, or to something else? Another observation by Wexler is that, in relexification, it is the morphologically least complex or unmarked German material that is selected by relexifiers. Denis 2004 has independently observed the same phenomenon in Haitian, a French-based creole. Why should this be so, given the fact that relexifiers do not always have much access to the lexifier language? The book contains several observations of this type that are worth looking at in light of other sets of data. Finally, owing to the methodology required to test the hypothesis of the book, a wealth of data drawn from the relevant languages involved are being compared in a way that they would never have been were it not for the hypothesis underlying the research. Moreover, through this comparison, systematic and principled similarities and differences reveal themselves.

There is one major drawback: The book is hard to read. Its structure as well as the mode of data presentation could have been improved so as to make the book more reader-friendly. A list of the languages involved as well as a short discussion of how they relate to one another would have been extremely useful for readers who are neither Slavicists nor Semiticists. The use of the expression “two-tiered relexification” is not always clear. Sometimes it appears to refer to relexification as taking place from two substratal grammars; sometimes it appears to refer to two successive relexifications from the same grammar but taking place at different times. This is a problem because both types have been attested. For example, Haitian Creole is the product of the relexification of several West African languages (see e.g. Lefebvre 1998; not just one, as is erroneously reported by Wexler on p. 11), having been relexified on the basis of French. The same is true of Papiamentu, a creole spoken in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, except that in this case, the West African languages have been relexified on the basis of Portuguese; the creole so formed has later been relexified again on the basis of Spanish (see, e.g., McWhorter 1995, Voorhoever 1964). Wexler writes: “[M]any Caribbean creoles underwent two-tiered relexification first from African to Portuguese and then from Afro-Portuguese creole to a different European superstratum language” (552). Contrary to Wexler’s claim, not “many” Caribbean creoles underwent two successive relexifications; to my knowledge, Papiamentu is the only such case reported in the literature.

In spite of these problems, the book is an important one for the reasons given above, and for the fact that it reports on another case of language genesis where relexification appears to have played a major role. In conclusion, a natural question that one can address to the author and that would link his work to the work of others on the topic is the following: If Yiddish is in fact the product of the relexification of several West African languages, Upper Sorbian and Kiev-Polesian, it should manifest some of the differences observed between these two grammars; assuming that this is the case, how are these differences hypothesized to be reconciled in Yiddish? Can a case be made for dialect leveling applying on the output of relexification on the basis of Yiddish, as it has been shown to apply in the case of other language contact varieties where relexification has played a major role (see Lefebvre 1998, Siegel 1997)?

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EITHNE B. CARLIN & JACQUES ARENDS (eds.), *Atlas of the languages of Suriname*. Leiden: KILTV Press, 2002. Pp. 346. Hb € 37.50.

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This is a very beautiful and useful book. It gives a lot of information which leads to a better knowledge of a linguistic area of major interest to typologists, sociolinguists, ethnolinguists, creolists, and all kind of theoreticians, but nevertheless largely underestimated in this respect. At the same time, the authors manage to avoid excessively technical references and terminology, so that beyond the linguistic point of view, the layman as well as the specialist should be able to understand what a country like Suriname, with its complex history and population, can bring to a better understanding of human societies in general.

Suriname is one of the “three Guianas,” which are very atypical countries in their South and Latin American environment. They remained outside of the Spanish-Portuguese colonial division, for the benefit of three northern European countries (Britain, France, and, later, the Netherlands in the case of Suriname). A relatively late colonization came across territories whose greatest part is made up of the Amazonian rain forest; this hinterland is hard to penetrate and to exploit, so the bulk of economic activity is confined to the coastal strip, leaving space for native Amazonian groups and fugitive slaves. Interbreeding and creolization occurred in a very different way from what happened in the rest of South America, and the formation of *maroon* (escaped slave) communities was far more important than elsewhere. The majority of post-slavery foreign workers came from Asia (northern India, southern China, and Java). The complexity of inter-ethnic contacts always triggered social and linguistic dynamics, with a permanent restructuring of identities, and a permanent dialectic of integration and antagonism.

History and geography are thus essential to our comprehension of the sociolinguistic and even linguistic situation: why there are people speaking these languages in this place, and why these languages are as they are. This is obvious for creole languages, but also for immigrant languages – Dutch as well as Javanese or Sarnami Hindi – and even for native Amerindian languages. No wonder chapters or subchapters devoted to history account for nearly one-third of the book,

which is adorned with quite a few maps (for the location of languages), but also with many well-chosen illustrations such as old maps, old pictures, and photographs of persons, books, and manuscripts.

Part I is devoted to the Amerindian peoples and languages. In chap. 1, “The native population: Migration and identities,” Eithne Carlin & Karin Boven present the various native peoples, and the various forms of their encounters with Europeans (warriors, planters, tradesmen, missionaries, explorers) since about 1600. The authors show that, tragic as it may be, this history is not only a history of subjugation and decimation, where entire tribes were lost, but also of movement and restructuring in order to survive.

In chap. 2, “Patterns of language, patterns of thought,” Eithne Carlin gives an overview of the most salient features of the Cariban languages of Suriname, or at least of three of them (Trio, Kari’na, and Wayana), the other three (Akuriyo, Tunayana, and Sik’iyana) being little documented and nearly extinct. Their linguistic closeness allows a common presentation of their phonology, their morphology, and some original categories such as classification, evidentiality, and person marking in relation to the active/stative parameter. Three short text excerpts are given as an illustration.

Chap. 3, “The Arawak language,” is a grammatical sketch by Marie-France Patte, with special emphasis on possession, gender, and verb valency. It ends in a short text excerpt of Mawayana, a language of the same family which has only four remaining speakers.

Part II presents the creole languages. In chap. 4, “The history of the Surinamese creoles I: A sociohistorical survey,” Jacques Arends distinguishes several phases in the birth and development of these languages, pointing out a few historical features which make the Sranan Tongo and Maroon languages so special among English creoles. The British occupation was short (1651–1667); the British settlers came from Barbados and almost immediately established a true plantation society (while elsewhere the initial stage, known as “settlement society,” lasted longer). After the Dutch takeover, Dutch speakers did not form a majority (there were remaining Englishmen, French Huguenots and Portuguese-speaking Jews), and many of them resided only temporarily in Suriname; and owing to a terrible death rate, by the end of the 18th century up to three-quarters of the slaves in Suriname had been born in Africa. Moreover, marooning (escape) was massive. These conditions yielded atypical creole languages, which are nevertheless the best historically documented ones, as seen in chap. 6. The chapter ends in an overview of the modern-day situation, with two major events: the beginning of compulsory education in 1876, with an anti-Sranan campaign, which in its turn led to a cultural defense in the middle of the 20th century; and a new literacy campaign which began after independence and was stopped by civil war in 1986.

Chap. 5, “The history of the Surinamese creoles II: Origin and differentiation,” is written by Norval Smith, who was in 1987 the author of a very impor-

tant thesis on the same subject. Smith takes advantage of some new works, such as Van den Berg's archival research on court records (which contain Sranan fragments as early as 1707), to discuss with strong arguments the question of the birth of Sranan and also of Saramaccan. Smith warns us honestly that the formation of Surinamese creoles is still a controversial matter, but nonspecialists can at least realize that in the general area of creole studies, this unsettled debate rests on an older and more extended corpus, brings in more solid arguments, and offers deeper insights than most others do. One very interesting point is Smith's reminder that, besides the six present-day linguistic forms of creole (Western Maroon creoles with a strong Portuguese influence – Saramaccan and Matawai – ; and Eastern Maroon creoles with a more “purely” English vocabulary – Ndyuka, Aluku, Paramaka, and Kwinti), the first Maroons, around 1660 (the *Karboegers* or *Muraato*, these names being close to Portuguese *Caboclo* and *Mulato*) intermarried with Kali'na and adopted their language (in the same way as black slaves did on a broader scale in Saint Vincent, yielding the Garifuna or Black Carib people of Central America); and that the last Maroons, around 1820 (the *Brosu*), were Sranan speakers.

Chap. 6, “The structure of the Surinamese creoles,” by Adrienne Bruyn, adopts a more strictly linguistic point of view to present the phonology, lexicon, and grammar of what finally appear to be three languages (Sranan, and two Maroon languages with their variants, see above). The typical creole features are present (tendency to an isolating grammar with no inflection, and restructuring of grammatical categories such as tense-aspect-mood and determination). But the use of word compounding and agentive nominalization are a hint that at least a certain degree of morphology exists. And some African features (such as ideophones or labiovelar stops) seem more present than in most French or other English creoles; moreover, some other features, such as a strictly CV syllabic structure or a two-tone system, have been re-created. Two plates give interesting data about *P-language*, a cryptic code similar to English Pig Latin or French *Javanais*, and *Wakaman tongo*, a much-used slang.

In chap. 7, “Young languages, old texts,” Jacques Arends, to whom we owe an edition of *Early Suriname Creole texts* (1995), gives an extensive account of the existing writings in or about Surinamese creole languages. This begins as far back as 1688 (a few words in the novel *Oronooko*) and continues in various documents such as court records and slave letters, and in quite a few works of more linguistic scope like conversation books, grammars, and dictionaries. Special mention is made of the Moravian Brethren, who were both eager evangelists and good linguists, and of Creole grammarians (Helstone 1903) and lexicographers (Focke 1855). The overwhelming part of this literature is in or about Sranan, but Saramaccan is also present, in contrast to Ndyuka and Eastern Maroon, on which there is almost no publication. Strangely enough, Arends fails to mention the syllabic script “revealed” about 1900 in a dream to Afaka, a Ndyuka, and used afterwards by a small group of *bukuman*.

Part III, “The Eurasian languages,” examines languages born outside Suriname and brought into the country by different kinds of immigration. In chap. 8, “Surinamese Dutch,” Christa de Kleine gives both a historical and linguistic account of the official language, which, like all other and more widely spoken European languages transplanted in America, developed original and specific linguistic features.

In chap. 9, “Kejia: A Chinese language in Suriname,” Paul Brendan Tjon Sie Fat describes the historical and linguistic situation of Kejia, also known as Hakka, a language spoken in the area of the Pearl River Delta in southern China, and the native language of most Chinese immigrants in Suriname and French Guiana.

Chap. 10, “Sarnami as an immigrant koiné,” by Theo Damsteegt, is particularly interesting in that it gives a clear picture of the linguistic situation among Hindustanis in Suriname (and the Netherlands), who are mostly descendants of post-slavery indentured laborers from northern India. Speaking dialects of Hindi such as Bhojpuri, Magahi, and Avadhi, they developed a koiné called Sarnami, which owing to an active cultural movement emerged as a literary language. A half-page plate reminds us of the temporary (but unfortunately undated) existence of a small community speaking Telugu (a Dravidian language of southern India).

In chap. 11, “Javanese speech styles in Suriname,” Claire Wolfowitz, after a short historical sketch, focuses on a specific point of the language: how Javanese immigrants, in a new sociological context, restructured the traditional honorific system.

A prologue by André Kramp advocates a “project of sustainable language policy,” while an epilogue by Jacques Arends and Eithne Carlin assesses the mutual sociolinguistic relation and possible fate of languages in Suriname, with special attention to Dutch as an official language, Sranan as a strong lingua franca, and an increasing presence of English.

Since a review is also supposed to pinpoint flaws and drawbacks, the reader may regret that the book gives so few details about precisely the “lesser” languages, such as four of the eight Amerindian languages, and also Kwinti, the less-documented Maroon creole which is usually classified together with Eastern creoles (“with a slightly greater distance,” as Smith puts it on p. 149), but sometimes with Saramaccan (see Price & Price 2003). Even a rough estimate of the number of speakers is lacking for most languages. And speaking of figures, since Ndyuka, Aluku, Paramaka (and Kwinti?) on the one hand, and Saramaka and Matawai on the other, are clearly variants of the same languages, then there are only three creole languages (with Sranan), not seven, and fifteen languages, not nineteen, in Suriname.

A united terminology might have been useful for Amerindian languages. It is clear that Carlin’s “postpositions” in Cariban languages and Patte’s “relators” in Arawak refer to the same grammatical notion. One may also wonder why Eithne Carlin summons up Whorf’s SAE (Standard Average European), a notion which

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lacks any content (see, for instance, the difference in the structure of verbal categories between European languages, and the use of the same historical forms between very closely related languages such as French, Portuguese, and Spanish, and even between European and American Spanish – a constant feature being that in none of them you would find a simple Present-Past-Future structure). For Cariban comparatism, it could have been useful to add to the bibliography Gildea's (1998) study, and to mention Sergio Meira's (2000) dissertation on Trio.

But in such an inclusive overview, the biggest gap again is the absence of any mention of the Afaka script. More than a mere shortcoming, it is a real mistake, leaving a flaw in this very interesting book which has not only a linguistic and sociolinguistic value, but also a cultural one, and which is a model for researchers in neighboring French Guiana.

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