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Series B Volume 3

**AN AUSTRALIAN CREOLE IN THE
NORTHERN TERRITORY: A DESCRIPTION
OF NGUKURR-BAMYILI DIALECTS (PART 1)**

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PREFACE

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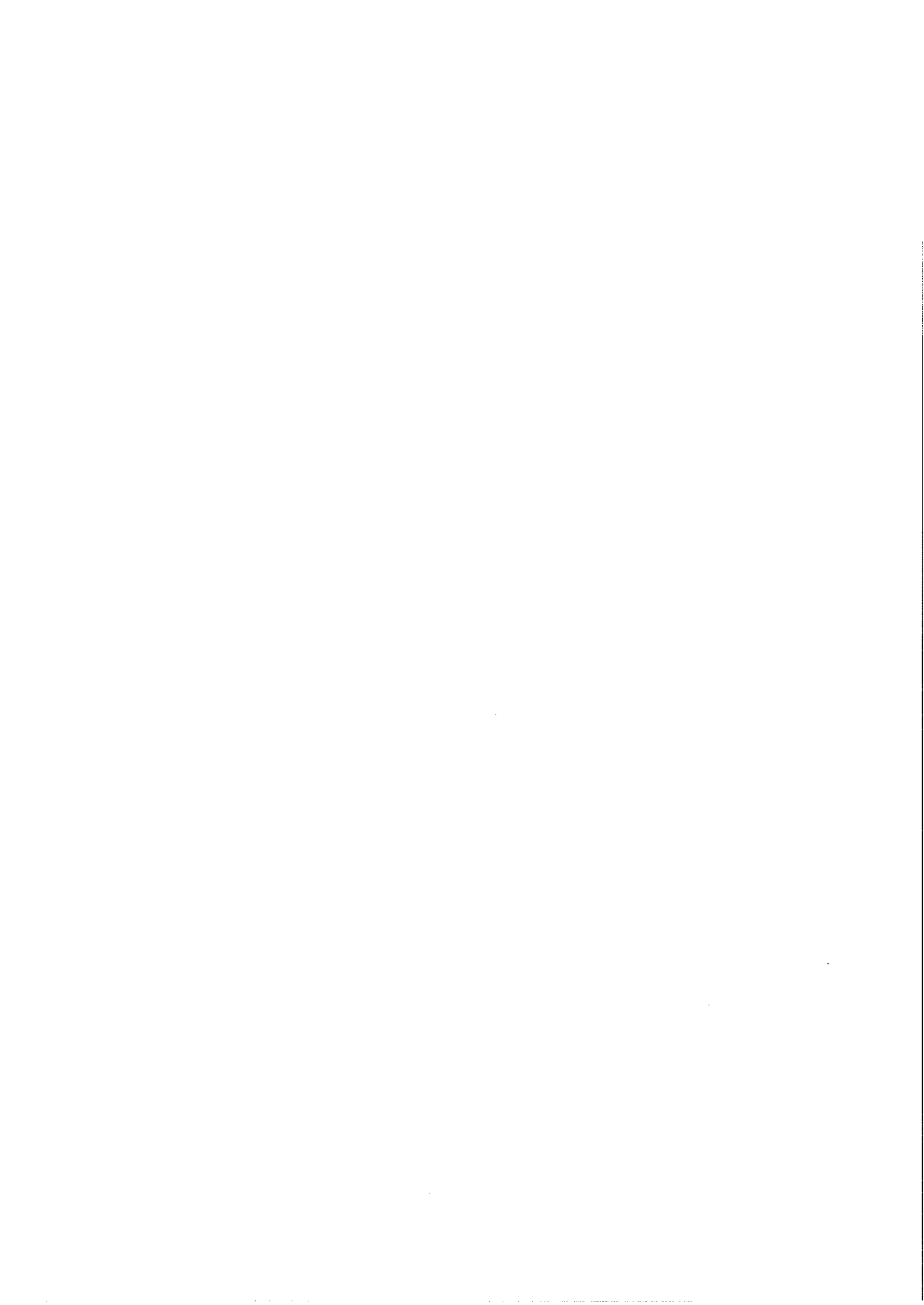
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INTRODUCTION TO
SERIES B VOLUME 3

The purpose of this paper is to make available for the layman a description of the creole language spoken in the Roper River area of the Northern Territory. It is written particularly with Europeans working in the area in mind. It has not been written as a technical paper for linguists, but it is hoped that linguists will find it useful in providing information on the language.

It should be noted that this volume (Part 1) does not contain a complete description of Creole. Intonation and rhythm, word formation, adverbs, conjunctions, questions and commands, complex sentences, and discourse structure are not discussed. It is planned that these sections will be described in a second volume (Part 2) in the future. (In addition, a basic dictionary is being published separately as *Work Papers of SIL-AAB*, Series B, Volume 4.) The sections contained in Part 1 are comprehensively, but not exhaustively, covered.

At several places in this paper the reader is referred to a discussion of a particular item at another location. When the reference is stated as being 'elsewhere', it means that the item will be discussed in Part 2. If the discussion is within Part 1, the chapter or section reference is given.

Examples occur frequently throughout the chapters dealing with Creole grammar. These examples are written in the Creole practical orthography as discussed in Chapter 3. In some situations an example of an unacceptable or ungrammatical construction is given. These examples are marked by a preceding asterisk (*).

This paper is based on some 27 months of fieldwork under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics since March 1973. Of this time approximately 60% has been spent at Ngukurr, 30% at Bamyili, and the remaining 10% elsewhere.

Without the help of many people this paper would not have been possible. I would like to thank the many Creole speakers who have shared their language with me, especially those who patiently worked with me in formal situations: Barnabas Roberts, Mordecai Skewthorpe, Andrew Joshua, Isaac Joshua, Charlie Johnson, Wallace Dennis, David Jentian, and Danny Jentian. Thanks are due to the late Lothar Jagst,

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CHAPTER 2

THE SOUND SYSTEM OF CREOLE

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The sound system of Creole is derived from a complex combination of the sound systems of the Aboriginal languages (hereafter AL) of the Creole area and English. When English initially came into contact with AL, it was so strongly influenced by AL that English words were pronounced by Aboriginal speakers in terms of the sound systems of their own AL. As a result, for example, voiced and voiceless contrasts were neutralized, consonant clusters were avoided, the numerous vowels were reduced to five, and fricatives and affricates became stops.

However, as Creole (at that time a pidgin in its formative stage) remained in contact with English, it in turn was influenced by English. As a result, voiced and voiceless contrasts began to reoccur, consonant clusters were no longer necessarily avoided, the five vowel system was expanded to include more contrasts, and fricatives and affricates began to be differentiated.

This influence of English upon Creole, unlike that of AL upon English in the formative stage of Creole, did not occur *in toto*. Changes in the Creole sound system in the direction of English occurred in such a way as not to replace the former system but to supplement and expand it. This has resulted in a sound system that can be described as a *continuum* of sounds with an Aboriginal type sound sub-system at one end and an English type sound sub-system at the other.

In order to understand this complex Creole sound system, one first needs to know the *contrastive sounds* of both English and AL of the Creole area. These are given comprehensive but not exhaustive coverage with charts outlining the main contrasts rather than every shade of difference.

After the contrastive sounds of the languages are given, the influence or *interference pattern* of AL upon English in the formative stage of Creole is discussed. Sound changes that took place as words were initially derived from English are described and exemplified.

Next, the influence or *levelling pattern* of English on Creole after the formative stage is discussed. The resultant sequence of sound changes that goes to make up the Creole continuum is described and exemplified.

Finally, the *continuum* itself is discussed in terms of technical terminology and speaker performance in relation to the continuum.

2.1 CONTRASTIVE SOUNDS¹

In the following consonant charts, the horizontal axis gives the part of the mouth involved in making the sounds:

Bilabial - made with both lips.

Labio-dental - made with the top teeth and bottom lip.

Interdental - made with the tongue tip between the teeth.

Alveolar - made with the tongue tip on the alveolar ridge.

Alveo-palatal - made with the tongue tip on the alveo-palatal ridge.

Lamino-palatal - made with the tongue blade on or near the alveo-palatal ridge.

Retroflexed - made with the tongue tip turned back.

Velar - made with the tongue back on or near the velum.

The vertical axis explains what happens to the flow of air:

Stop - the flow of air is stopped.

Affricate - the air is first stopped and then allowed to escape with friction.

Fricative - the air escapes through the mouth and causes friction.

Nasal - the air flows through the nose.

Lateral - the air flows over the sides of the tongue.

Rhotic - the flow of air is slightly impeded by curving the tip of the tongue back.

Semi-consonant - the flow of air is not impeded and comes through the mouth.

Where two sounds are shown together, the difference is usually voiced versus voiceless or aspirated versus unaspirated.

In the vowel charts, the horizontal axis shows the part of the mouth where the sounds are made. The vertical axis indicates whether the tongue is in a high, mid, or low position. Where two sounds are shown together, the difference may be tense versus lax or a slight difference in the height of the tongue.

2.1.1 Contrastive Sounds of English

2.1.1.1 English Consonants

Chart of English consonants is on following page.

The English consonant contrasts are exemplified in the following examples:

Chart 2.1. English Consonants

	Bi-labial	Labio-dental	Inter-dental	Alveolar	Alveo-palatal	Retro-flexed	Velar
Stop	p, b			t, d			k, g
Affricate					tʃ, dʒ		
Fricative		f, v	θ, ð	s, z	ʃ, ʒ		h
Nasal	m			n	ŋ		ŋg
Lateral				l	lj		
Semi-consonant	w				y	r	

<u>Sound</u>	<u>Word Initially</u>	<u>Word Medially</u>	<u>Word Finally</u>
p	pale	copper	cap
b	bale	cobber	cab
t	tale	plotting	cat
d	dale	plodding	cad
k	Kate	locker	lock
g	gate	logger	log
tʃ	chill	Richard	catch
dʒ	Jill	rigid	cadge
f	file	unfailing	life
v	vile	unvailing	alive
θ	thistle	ether	cloth
ð	this	either	clothe
s	sink	basin	hiss
z	zinc	raisin	his
ʃ	shin	meshing	hush

<u>Sound</u>	<u>Word Initially</u>	<u>Word Medially</u>	<u>Word Finally</u>
l	late	millet	rail
lj	--	million	--
w	wail	away	--
r	rail	array	--
y	yale	--	--
ʒ	--	measure	--
h	hill	unhappy	--
m	male	simmer	ram
n	nail	cannon	ran
nj	new	canyon	--
ng	--	singer	rang

2.1.1.2 English Vowels and Vowel Glides and Diphthongs

Chart 2.2. English Vowels

	Front	Central	Back	
High	i, ɪ		u	æ ^l ʌ ^l ʌ ^u
Mid	ɛ	ə	o	o ^u
Low	æ	ʌ, a	ɔ	ɔ ^l i ^u u ^u e ^u

The English vowel contrasts are exemplified in the following examples:

<u>Sound</u>	<u>Word Initially</u>	<u>Word Medially</u>	<u>Word Finally</u>
i	eat	peat	bee
ɪ	it	pit	--
ɛ	etch	pet	--

<u>Sound</u>	<u>Word Initially</u>	<u>Word Medially</u>	<u>Word Finally</u>
æ	at	pat	--
e	early	pert	defer
ʌ	utter	putt	rubber
a	art	part	--
u	--	put	--
o	ought	port	mentor
ɔ	odd	pot	--
æ ^ɪ	ate	bait	bay
ʌ ^ɪ	ice	bite	buy
ʌ ^u	out	bout	bough
o ^u	oat	boat	beau
ɔ ^ɪ	oil	boil	boy
i _u	use	beaut	bew
ə _u	ooze	boot	boo

2.1.1.3 English Syllable Patterns

V	a
VC	at
VCC	ant
VCCC	ants
CV	bee
CCV	pry
CCCV	spre
CVC	tap
CCVC	trap
CCCVC	strap
CVCC	sand
CVCCC	sands
CCVCC	stand
CCVCCC	stands

CCCVCC	strand
CCCVCCC	strands
CVCCCC	tempts
CCVCCCC	glimpsed

2.1.2 Contrastive Sounds of Aboriginal Languages

2.1.2.1 Aboriginal Language Consonants

Chart 2.3. AL Consonants

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Lamino- palatal	Retro- flexed	Velar
Stop	b	d	dj	ḍ	g
Nasal	m	n	nj	ṅ	ng
Lateral		l	lj	ḷ	
Rhotic		ɻ		r	
Semi- consonant	w		y		

The stops of AL in the Creole area are 'devoiced'; that is, voicing is not a contrastive feature as it is in English. Stops tend to be voiced in most positions in words, but in certain positions they are voiceless. The alveolar rhotic is a flap or trill.

Some of AL have additional sounds not listed in the above chart. Nunggubuyu and Dalabon have interdental consonants /d, l, n/ and /ḍ, ṅ/ respectively. Mara and Alawa have prenasalised stops /mb, nd, njḍj, ṅḍ, ngg/. Rembarnga and Dalabon have a glottal stop /ʔ/. All of these sounds, however, occur only rarely in Creole.

Some of these sounds are exemplified in the following Creole words:

/nj/ and /ɻ/	/njaɻ/	'good, excellent'
/ng/	/ngaridi/	'power'
/l/	/gilgil/	'blunt, toothless'

/d/	/mandayang/	'(moiety name)'
/mb/	/walmbal/	'gossip'

2.1.2.2 Aboriginal Language Vowels

Chart 2.4. AL Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e		o
Low		a	

Mara and Wandarang have only three vowels /i, a, u/. Alawa has four vowels /i, e, a, u/. Nunggubuyu has five vowels /i, a, u/, a lengthened /a:/ and a rare /æ/. Rembarnga and Dalabon both have six vowels, the sixth vowel being a mid and high central vowel /ə/ and /ɛ/ respectively. Neither of them, however, are as definite as the other five vowels.

In addition to the vowel phonemes, Rembarnga has vowel diphthongs which pattern in the language as vowel plus semivowel. Dalabon has vowel clusters /ai, au, ei, oi, ui/, though their occurrences are not numerous. Djingili, to the southern extremity of the Creole area, has vowel clusters /ai, au, ia, ua, ui/ that pattern as two syllables.

2.1.2.3 Aboriginal Language Syllable Patterns

The syllable patterns of AL are not nearly as varied and numerous as those of English.

The patterns that occur in all AL of the Creole area and that occur the most frequently are CV and CVC.

Also occurring in most all AL, though only rarely in some, is CVCC. In many AL, however, the second from last consonant in the CVCC pattern is restricted to a lateral or rhotic consonant.

Some AL, Alawa, Mara, and Nunggubuyu among them, also have the syllable pattern V or VC. These, however, only occur infrequently and are restricted to the position at the beginning of the word.

2.2 INTERFERENCE PATTERN

As mentioned earlier, in the formative stage of Creole, when Aborigines were confronted with English words, they heard and reproduced them in terms of the sound systems of their own AL. Their own AL, in effect, interfered with their perception and production of English. Sounds that were common to both English and their AL remained constant and were reproduced the same as in the English word. Sounds that occurred in English but not in AL were perceived and reproduced as the nearest 'equivalent' in those languages.

Since, for example, /m/ and /n/ were common to both English and AL, the English word 'money' /mani/ was reproduced as /mani/. But /f/, which occurred in English but not in AL, was reproduced as the nearest equivalent, which was /b/; thus 'frog' /frog/ was reproduced as /brog/.

The relationship between the sound systems of English and AL with respect to the reproduction of English words is described below.

2.2.1 Interference Pattern of Consonants

The stops /b, d, g/, nasals /m, n, ng/, lateral /l/, and semi-consonants /r, w, y/ were common to both English and AL. They, therefore, remained constant.

		(English)	(remained)	(Creole)
/b/	'baby'	/beibi/	=	/beibi/
/d/	'daddy'	/dadi/	=	/dadi/
/g/	'good'	/gud/	=	/gud/
/m/	'me'	/mi/	=	/mi/
/n/	'no'	/no/	=	/no/
/nj/	'onion'	/anjan/	=	/anjan/
/ng/	'song'	/song/	=	/song/
/l/	'like'	/laik/	=	/laik/
/lj/	'million'	/miljan/	=	<u>/miljan/</u>
/r/	'run'	/ran/	=	/ran/
/w/	'where'	/weya/	=	/weya/
/y/	'you'	/yu/	=	/yu/

When, however, the semi-consonant /r/ or the alveolar stop /d/ occurred in a word between two vowels, it was changed to a flapped rhotic /r̥/.

(became)

/r/	} /r̥/	'spirit'	/spirit/	→	/sp̥irit/
/d/		'go down'	/godan/	→	/goṛan/

Fricatives and affricates did not occur in AL but were reproduced as stops. The labio-dental fricatives /f, v/ became a bilabial stop /b/. The interdental, alveolar, and alveo-palatal fricatives /θ, ð, s, z, š, ž/ became a lamio-palatal stop /dj/ as did also the alveo-palatal affricates /tš, dž/. The velar fricative /h/ was simply deleted. Simultaneously with these changes the contrast between voiced and voiceless was lost or neutralized.

/f/	} /b/	'family'	/femli/	→	/bemli/
/v/		'very'	/veri/	→	/beri/
/p/		'people'	/pipul/	→	/bibul/
/θ/	} /dj/	'thing'	/θing/	→	/djing/
/ð/		'there'	/ðeya/	→	/djeya/
/s/		'song'	/song/	→	/djong/
/z/		'zoo'	/zu/	→	/dju/
/š/		'shop'	/šap/	→	/djap/
/ž/		'measure'	/meža/	→	/medja/
/tš/		'church'	/tšetš/	→	/djedj/
/dž/		'job'	/džab/	→	/djab/
/h/ + /φ/		'here'	/hiya/	→	/iya/
/t/ → /d/		'time'	/taim/	→	/daim/
/k/ → /g/	'cook'	/kuk/	→	/gug/	

2.2.2 Interference Pattern of Vowels

The interference pattern of vowels is much more complicated than that of consonants. Not only did English make more distinctions than did AL, but the vowel systems of AL themselves were not as similar to each other as were their consonant systems.

Generally, the vowels of English were 'collapsed' into a five vowel system, especially in the Bamyili area where AL tended towards a five vowel system.

1. No distinction was made between English high front vowels /i, i/.

'beat'	/bit/	=	/bit/
'bit'	/bit/	→	/bit/

2. Likewise, the low central vowels /ʌ, a/ were not distinguished from each other.

'part'	/pat/	→	/bat/
'but'	/bʌt/	→	/bat/

3. The low front /æ/ was not perceived and reproduced as a distinctive vowel, but was in some cases reproduced as a mid front /e/ and in other cases as a low central /a/.

'bad'	/bæd/	→	/bed/
'that'	/dæt/	→	/dat/

4. Likewise, the low back /ɔ/ was not a distinctive vowel but was reproduced in different situations as either a mid back /o/ or a low central /a/.

'lot'	/lot/	→	/lot/
'all'	/ɔl/	→	/al/

5. The mid central /ə/ was usually reproduced either as a mid front /e/ or as a low central /a/ with the following consonant changed to a retroflexed consonant (VÇ).

/ə/ → V:	'girl'	/gəl/	→	/gel/
	'shirt'	/ʃet/	→	/ʃet/
/ə/ → VÇ:	'burn'	/ben/	→	/baŋ/
	'bird'	/bed/	→	/baḍ/

In the Ngukurr area AL tended towards three vowel systems. The influence of a three vowel system can be seen. The low back /ɔ/ tended to become a low central /a/ while the mid back /o/ tended to go to a high back /u/. Even today Ngukurr people are noted among Creole speakers, for saying /gu/ 'go' instead of /go/ (high back instead of mid back), /alabat/ 'they' instead of /ɔlabat/ (low

central instead of low back), and also /namu/ '(negative)' instead of /nomo/. The English low and mid front vowels /æ, ε/ tended to become a low central /a/.

'that'	/dædan/	→	/dadan/
'tell'	/tɛlim/	→	<u>/talim/</u>

Most English vowel glides throughout the Creole area became simply a vowel.

/ə ^u /	'book'	/be ^u k/	→	/buk/
/æ ^l /	'bait'	/bæ ^l t/	→	/bet/
/ʌ ^u /	'out'	/ʌ ^u t/	→	/at/
/ʌ ^l /	'bite'	/bʌ ^l t/	→	/bat/
/o ^u /	'boat'	/bo ^u t/	→	/bot/

Two vowel glides /i^u/ and /o^l/, however, tended to occur as a diphthong.

/i ^u /	'you'	/i ^u /	→	/yu/
/o ^l /	'boy'	/bo ^l /	→	/boi/

2.2.3 Interference Pattern of Syllables

Just as consonants and vowels were affected by differences between English and AL, so also were syllables.

The basic change was the avoidance of consonant clusters within the syllable. This was generally done in two ways: by deletion of a consonant or by insertion of a vowel between the consonants.

In clusters involving two consonants at the beginning of a syllable, the first consonant was deleted if the second consonant was a stop.

'stone'	/ston/	→	/ton/
'spear'	/spiya/	→	/piya/

If the second consonant was a nasal, lateral, or semi-consonant, a vowel was inserted between the two consonants.

'snake'	/sneik/	→	/sineik/
'sleep'	/slip/	→	/silip/

When two consonants occurred at the end of a syllable, the final consonant was deleted.

'axe' /eks/ → /ek/ .
'friend' /frend/ → /fren/

In clusters involving three consonants at the beginning of a syllable, the first consonant was deleted and a vowel inserted between the remaining two consonants.

'straight' /stret/ → /tařet/

2.2.4 Simultaneous Operation of Interference Patterns

It should be noted that the individual interference changes did not occur in isolation. The examples given above were restricted to illustrate only one particular sound change at a time. In reality, all interference changes took place simultaneously, not sequentially, in any given word. Grammatical and semantic patterns were also simultaneously in operation with the sound changes.

The complexity of the situation may better be seen in the following examples.

The English word 'from' /frɒm/ became /buřum/, its meaning and grammatical function remaining the same. The logic of this change can be seen in the following steps.

1. The labio-dental fricative /f/ did not occur in AL and was reproduced as the nearest 'equivalent' /b/.

/frɒm/ → /brɒm/

2. Consonant clusters were avoided by inserting a vowel between the two consonants.

/brɒm/ → /buɒm/

3. The semi-consonant /r/, when it occurred between two vowels, became an alveolar rhotic /ř/.

/buɒm/ → /buřm/

4. The vowel in the unstressed (second) syllable changed to conform to that in the stressed (first) syllable.

/buřm/ → /buřum/

An example that shows grammatical and semantic changes in operation would be the English word 'scratching' /skrætʃɪŋ/ becoming the Creole word /gaʀadʒɪbat/ meaning primarily 'digging'. This change can be seen as follows.

1. The English progressive suffix '-ing' was deleted.

/skrætʃɪŋ/ → /skrætʃ/

2. Consonant clusters were avoided, in this case by dropping the initial consonant and inserting a vowel between the remaining two consonants.

/skrætʃ/ → /karætʃ/

3. The semi-consonant /r/, when it occurred between two vowels, became an alveolar rhotic /r̥/.

/karætʃ/ → /kaʀætʃ/

4. The voiceless stop /k/ did not occur but became the devoiced stop /g̥/.

/kaʀætʃ/ → /gaʀætʃ/

5. The low front vowel /æ/ did not occur but became the low central /a/.

/gaʀætʃ/ → /gaʀatʃ/

6. The affricate /tʃ/ did not occur but became a lamino-palatal stop /dʒ/.

/gaʀatʃ/ → /gaʀadʒ/

7. Being a transitive verb, the transitive marker /-im/ was suffixed to the verb root.

/gaʀadʒ/ → /gaʀadʒim/

8. Because it was used in the continuative aspect (see Section 5.2.3), the verb was marked by the suffix /-bat/.

/gaʀadʒim/ → /gaʀadʒɪbat/

9. The primary meaning of the word shifted from 'scratch' to 'dig'.

2.3 LEVELLING PATTERN

As Creole remained in contact with English, it was continually being influenced by English. Aborigines began to perceive and reproduce sounds that occurred in English but not in AL. AL sounds that had replaced the English sounds in the formative stage of Creole began to return to or level toward the original English sounds.

Not all sounds were affected by this levelling influence from English. Only specific sounds in given words initially derived from English show significant levelling.

Sounds in words derived from AL, with few exceptions, remain constant. Stops, however, in words derived from AL, especially those occurring at the beginning of words, often fluctuate between voiced and voiceless. This is not so much a levelling influence from English as it is a normal feature of the sound systems of AL themselves.

Sounds in words derived from English that did not undergo any change in the interference pattern remain constant in the levelling pattern also. For example, as shown earlier, /m/ and /n/ in /mani/ 'money', being common to both AL and English, remained constant in the interference pattern, and they continue to remain constant in the levelling pattern also: /mani/ remains /mani/.

Sounds that did undergo change in the interference patterns are affected by the levelling influence in that they return to the sound they were derived from in the original English word. For example, the /b/ in /brog/ 'frog' returns or is levelled to /f/ as in the original English word: /brog/ levels to /frog/.

The changes caused by levelling, unlike those caused by interference, do not occur *in toto* for all words. Rather, with some sounds, these changes tend to be gradual, forming a series of gradations of change. For example, in the word 'there', which went from /ðeya/ to /djeya/ in the interference pattern, the /dj/ returns or levels to /ð/ not directly but by way of /d/. In other words, while the interference pattern was

/ðeya/ → /djeya/;

the levelling pattern is

/djeya/ → /deya/ → /ðeya/.

The levelling pattern is described below.

2.3.1 Levelling Pattern of Consonants

The most complicated of the consonant changes involves the lamino-palatal stop /dj/. In the interference pattern this stop replaced eight English consonants that did not occur in AL (see Section 2.2.1). In levelling the /dj/ stop returns to those particular consonants. In most cases the levelling is not direct but gradual.

1. /θ/: /dj/ → /d/ → /t/ → /θ/

/dʒɪŋ/ → /dɪŋ/ → /tɪŋ/ → /θɪŋ/ 'thing'

When /θ/ occurs in the final position of a word, its change is as follows:

/dj/ → /s/ → /θ/

/mawudj/ → /mawus/ → /mawuθ/ 'mouth'

2. /ə/: /dj/ → /d/ → /ə/

/dʒeja/ → /deja/ → /əjeja/ 'there'

3. /s/: /dj/ → /s/

/dʒabi/ → /sabi/ 'know, understand'

4. /z/: /dj/ → /s/ → /z/

/dʒu/ → /su/ → /zu/ 'zoo'

5. /š/: /dj/ → /s/ → /š/

/dʒap/ → /sap/ → /šap/ 'shop'

6. /ž/: /dj/ → /s/ → /š/ → /ž/

/medja/ → /mesa/ → /meša/ → /meža/ 'measure'

7. /tš/: /dj/ → /tš/

/dʒedj/ → /tšetš/ 'church'

8. /dž/: /dj/ → /dž/

/dʒab/ → /džab/ 'job'

Other consonant levelling changes involve the bilabial stop /b/ returning to the labio-dental fricatives /f, v/, the devoiced stops /b, d, g/ differentiating voicing and returning to the voiceless stops /p, t, k/, the flapped rhotic /ɾ/ returning to a non-flapped /r/ and stop /d/, and the deleted velar /h/ reappearing.

/b/	→	/p/	→	/f/	
/bemli/	→	/pemli/	→	/femli/	'family'
/b/	→	/v/			
/beri/	→	/veri/		'very'	
/b/	→	/p/			
/bibul/	→	/pipul/		'people'	
/d/	→	/t/			
/daim/	→	/taim/		'time'	
/g/	→	/k/			
/gug/	→	/kuk/		'cook'	
/ɾ/	→	/r/			
/spiɾit/	→	/spirit/		'spirit'	
/ɾ/	→	/d/			
/goɾan/	→	/godan/		'descend'	
/φ/	→	/h/			
/iya/	→	/hiya/		'here'	

2.3.2 Levelling Pattern of Vowels

Virtually all vowel levelling, unlike that of consonants, involves only one change. The English vowels that were collapsed into one Creole vowel through interference reoccur directly in levelling.

/i/	→	/ɪ/			
/bit/	→	/bɪt/		'bit'	

/e/	→	/æ/	
/bed/	→	/bæd/	'bad'
/a/	→	/æ/	
/dat/	→	/dæt/	'that'
/a/	→	/ʌ/	
/bat/	→	/bʌt/	'but'
/o/	→	/ɔ/	
/lot/	→	/lɔt/	'lot'
v	→	/ə/	
/gel/	→	/gəl/	'girl'
vç	→	/ə/	
/baɹd/	→	/bəd/	'bird'

The English vowel glides lost through interference also reoccur directly in levelling.

/e/	→	/æ ^l /	
/bet/	→	/bæ ^l t/	'bait'
/a/	→	/ʌ ^u /	
/at/	→	/ʌ ^u t/	'out'
/a/	→	/ʌ ^l /	
/bat/	→	/bʌ ^l t/	'bite'
/o/	→	/o ^u /	
/bot/	→	/bo ^u t/	'boat'
/u/	→	/ə ^u /	
/buk/	→	/bə ^u k/	'book'

2.3.3 Levelling Pattern of Syllables

In syllables involving clusters of two consonants that were avoided in the formative stage of Creole, the interference pattern is simply reversed.

With clusters that were avoided by deleting one of the consonants, the consonant reappears.

CVC → CCVC

/ton/ → /ston/ 'stone'

VC → VCC

/ek/ → /eks/ 'axe'

With clusters that were avoided by insertion of a vowel, the vowel is deleted in levelling.

CVCVC → CCVC

/silip/ → /slip/ 'sleep'

With clusters involving three consonants, the levelling is gradual.

CVCVC → CCVC → CCCVC

/taret/ → /tret/ → /stret/ 'straight'

2.3.4 Sequential Operation of Levelling Patterns

Individual levelling changes differ from interference changes in that they may occur in isolation and generally operate sequentially rather than simultaneously. In other words, with a given word, the English form of the word was changed by interference directly into its Creole form through a number of simultaneously changes. Levelling, however, returns the word towards the original English form not directly but gradually through a number of sequential changes.

The examples given above were selected and restricted to illustrate individual levelling patterns operating in isolation. That is, only one pattern was exemplified at a time. In reality, a given word usually has several levelling patterns operating on it. For example, the Creole word for 'snake' goes through four sequential changes involving four different levelling patterns.

/djineg/ → /djinek/ → /sinek/ → /sinæ^lk/ → /snæ^lk/
 /g/ → /k/ /dj/ → /s/ /e/ → /æ^l/ CVC → CC

In some cases changes from two or more levelling patterns may operate simultaneously on a given word. For example, the Creole word for 'policeman' goes through two sequential changes involving three different levelling patterns.

/balidjiman/ → /blidjiman/ → /plisman/
 CVC → CC /b/ → /p/
 /dj/ → /s/

The operation of levelling changes sometime in sequence and sometime simultaneously is not ad hoc. These operations are dependent upon what is referred to as the implicational relationship between the various levelling patterns. That is, the operation of a given levelling pattern may implicate or imply the operation of another pattern. More specifically, when a given levelling change takes place, it may imply that another specific levelling change has taken place, has not yet taken place, or simultaneously takes place.

For example, in our examples above with 'snake', the form */dʒnæ^lk/ never occurs. This is because the CVC → CC pattern does not operate unless the /dj/ → /s/ pattern has previously operated. Their implicational relationship is such that the operation of the CVC → CC pattern implies that the /dj/ → /s/ pattern has already operated.

The complexity of implicational relationships will not be gone into detail here. Rather, only a broad generalization is made, listing changes in the implicational sequential order in which they tend to operate.

1. /dj/ → /d/
2. /dʒ/ → /s/
3. /d/ → /t/
- /b/ → /p/
- /g/ → /k/
4. diversification of vowels

- 5. /d/ → /a/
- /s/ → /s̥/
- 6. /p/ → /f/
- /b/ → /v/
- 7. /s/ → /z/
- 8. vowel glides
- 9. consonant clusters
- 10. /t/ → /θ/
- /φ/ → /h/
- 11. /s/ → /θ/
- 12. /s̥/ → /z̥/

2.4 CONTINUUM

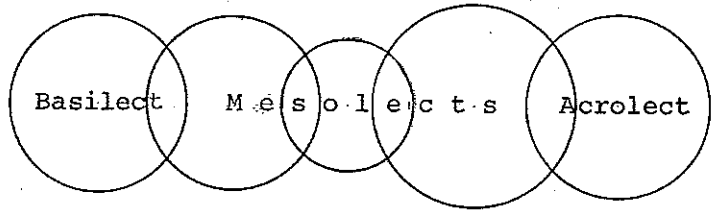
As stated earlier, the sound system of Creole is derived from a complex combination of the sounds of AL of the Creole area and of English. It is not simply the sum total of the sounds that occur in these languages. Rather, it is a system of gradations of levelling built upon the interference between the sound systems of AL and that of English.

This system can be described as a *continuum* of sounds that has an Aboriginal sound sub-system at the 'heavy' end and an English sound sub-system at the 'light' end. 'Heavy' and 'light' are terms used by Creole speakers themselves in describing Creole sounds.

Technically, the heavy end is the *basilect* (from Greek *basis* 'step, foot') and the light end is the *acrolect* (from Greek *akros* 'high point, top most'). The 'space' between the basilect and the acrolect is a series of *mesolects* (from Greek *mesos* 'middle, intermediate').

The continuum and its relationship to the Aboriginal languages and English could be diagrammed as follows:

A
L
b
o
r
g
u
a
n
i
c
a
l

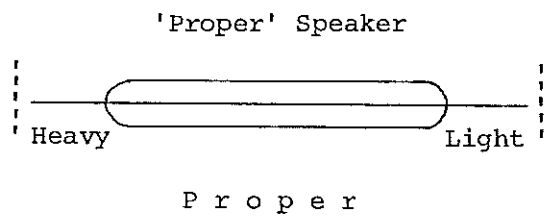


E
n
g
l
i
s
h

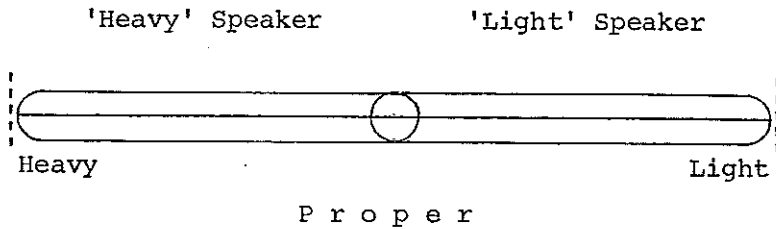
The basilect is that sub-system that came into existence during the formative stage of Creole through the interference patterns. Mesolects are the gradual sequential changes that occur through the levelling patterns. The acrolect is the end result of the complete operation of all levelling patterns. Note that the various 'lects' are not discrete units but a series of overlapping ones.

No one, however, speaks only a specific gradation or lect of the continuum. Rather, the speech of any given Creole speaker contains features from a multiple of gradations along the continuum. In other words, no one speaks at a given point on the continuum; rather, everyone speaks a *range* along the continuum.

The speech of most speakers, while it contains heavy and light features, tends to be centered between the two extremes of the continuum. They refer to their speech as being 'proper' Creole. Their speech range could be diagrammed as follows:



Some Creole speakers, however, are noted by other speakers as being 'heavy' or 'light' speakers. Their speech is characteristically loaded with heavy or light features respectively. Communication between heavy and light speakers is normally not grossly impaired by their differing speech ranges because their hearing ranges are broader than their speech ranges. Their speech ranges could be diagrammed as follows:



Heavy speakers tend to be Aborigines who have learned Creole as a second language, their first language or mother tongue being their traditional tribal language. Light speakers, likewise, tend to be Aborigines who have learned Creole as a second language; their first language being English.

Creole speakers have a great ability to vary their speech. While some of this variation may be ad hoc, most is conditioned or determined by features of the social situation in which it is used. This is something that most English speakers cannot appreciate because they come from fairly homogeneous speech communities.

In English the choice of 'informal' versus 'formal' styles of conversation is much the same sort of variation. For example, a thirsty workman² could call out to his mate on a hot day and say:

Ya got me water, Dave? She's bloody 'ot!

But a well-dressed stranger asking Dave for the same thing would use a more formal style:

Excuse me, could I trouble you for a glass of water, please? It's hot today.

The range of choices of speech variety for Creole speakers is far greater than English speakers are used to making.

The important conditioning rule for Europeans to understand is that Creole usually is not used with (especially unknown) Europeans and often not even in their presence. This rule applies more strongly with Europeans known to have a negative or degrading attitude toward Creole and Aborigines who speak it. English is the correct language to use in such a social situation.

When Creole speakers and Europeans are in a social situation together, the following usually occurs: Creole speakers who are fluent in English speak to Europeans in English. Most Creole speakers, however, are not fluent in English. When speaking with Europeans, they speak as much English as they can with light Creole

making up for the inadequacies of their English. The result is a mixture of Creole and English.

The Creole normally used among Creole speakers is largely (and in some cases totally) unintelligible to Europeans. While the gist of the conversation may be followed, many if not most details are lost while some are grossly misinterpreted by the European.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 2

¹Information on specific languages in this section is taken from the following sources:

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Dalabon: CAPELL, A. *Some Linguistic Types in Australia*. (Oceania Linguistic Monographs, No. 7.) University of Sydney, Sydney, 1962.

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Mara: SHARPE, Margaret C. *Mara and Wandarang*. MS., n.d.

Nunggubuyu: HUGHES, Earl J. & LEEDING, Velma J. The Phonemes of Nunggubuyu. In 'Papers on the Languages of Australian Aborigines'. (AAS 38.) AIAS, Canberra, 1971.

Rembarnga: MCKAY, Graham. *Rembarnga: A Language of Central Arnhem Land*. Ph.D. thesis, ANU, 1975.

Wandarang: SHARPE, Margaret C. *Mara and Wandarang*. MS., n.d.

²This example is taken in modified form from

CROWLEY, Terry & RIGSBY, Bruce. *Cape York Creole*. MS., n.d., p. 14.