

Review of Philippe Maurer (2009). *Principense (Lung'ie). Grammar, Texts, and Vocabulary of the Afro-Portuguese Creole of the Island of Príncipe, Gulf of Guinea.* London: Battlebridge Publications. Viii + 280 pp.

Alain Kihm (CNRS, Université Paris-Diderot)

One of the greatest favours to the creolist community is to provide us with descriptions as complete and detailed as possible of the languages we devote our (professional) lives to. Intuition, creativity and theorizing are indispensable ingredients of science, no discussion about that, but they function vacuously in the absence of *dénombrements [...] entiers* and *revues [...] générales* (Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode*) of the relevant data.

PM's book undoubtedly fulfils this service, not only for whoever is directly interested in the language of Príncipe – which would bring it few readers, I'm afraid – but also for all creolists and, beyond them, for all scholars whose work has anything to do with natural language, given the growing significance of pidgin and creole languages for investigations, within a linguistic, anthropological or cognitive framework, of the structure, function, emergence, and evolution of this apparently uniquely human property.

Principense, a Portuguese-related creole locally known as *Lung'ie* (henceforth LI) 'Language of the Island' (*língua da ilha*), is spoken on the Island of Príncipe, part of the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe, in the Gulf of Guinea, by "about twenty to thirty people over sixty and a few younger ones who have a reasonable *active* command of the language, and on São Tomé and in Portugal there are some more" (p. 3, PM's emphasis). It is therefore a seriously endangered language, which might well disappear in the next generation or two despite recent, although timid efforts to rescue it. In everyday life, nearly all 6000 inhabitants use Portuguese and/or Cape-Verdean Creole, brought in the beginning of the 20th century by numerous indentured labourers recruited in Cape Verde, following a sleeping sickness epidemic that almost depopulated the island and contributed much to LI's demise. Such a bleak future adds urgency to the inherent interest of PM's study.

The only previous extended description of LI was Günther's (1973) grammar, a valuable piece of work, unfortunately suffering from the handicap of being written in German. In addition, as shown by PM, Günther's analyses contain various shortcomings and errors.

Following a historical and sociolinguistic introduction, the book comprises three descriptive chapters, on phonology (pp. 7-27), morphosyntax (29-171), and so-called "miscellaneous features" (173-177). Then come ten texts, seven traditional tales and three songs; two glossaries, LI-English and English-LI; and two appendices. Appendix I consists in the same short story told in the three creole languages of São Tomé and Príncipe, namely Lungwa Santome (aka Forro or Santomense), Lunga Ngola (Angolar), and LI, with an English translation and a multilingual word-list. Appendix II is a reproduction of Ribeiro's (1888) manuscript grammar of LI, not only the first known description of the language, but also the source of Schuchardt's 1889 article. Although short (25 pages), Ribeiro's work is detailed enough that it constitutes an adequate background for diachronic comparisons.

The chapter on phonology is especially valuable for its in-depth, instrumental treatment of LI tonology. Contrary to previous studies (Günther 1973; Ferraz & Traill 1981), PM argues, successfully I believe, that LI shows only two tones, high and low, and apparent contour tones (or level tones on surface long vowels) are tone sequences on successive vowels made adjacent by loss of an intervening consonant. Tone patterns according to syllable count and syntactic environments are then carefully detailed and demonstrated with sonograms. A particularly significant result of this study is that LI high tones in words of Portuguese origin do not necessarily correspond with Portuguese stress: cf. LI *kobo* /ko^Hbo^H/ 'snake' < P *cobra* /kóbra/ vs. LI *pôkô* /pô^Hlô^L/ 'pig' < P *porco* /pórku/ (p. 19). The process was more complex

than the simple mapping of a stress pattern onto an HL tone pattern, as it was sensitive to the presence of a liquid consonant in the word's segmental make-up, plus other unclear factors.

Moreover, LI tonal patterns also depend on lexical category. Whereas nouns always include high tones, verbs are all low (L, LL, or LLL), except for a few disyllabic verbs which show a HH pattern (at least lexically, as the pattern may be modified according to syntactic position). Notice that such a prosodic contrast of nouns and verbs is not peculiar to LI, it also occurs in Guinea-Bissau and the Barlavento variety of Cape Verdean, where verbs are stressed on their final vowels (e.g. *kasá* 'to marry' < P *casar*) whereas nouns ending in a vowel are stressed on the penult (e.g. *kása* 'house' < P *casa*) (Kihm 1994; d'Andrade & Kihm 199x). An important difference, however, is that the Guinea-Bissau and Barlavento stress patterns are easily accountable from their counterparts in the lexifier, clearly not the case for the LI verbal low pattern, as well as many noun patterns, as we saw.

Stress, manifested as loudness, also plays a part in LI prosody, at least in words of Portuguese origin. Unlike high tone, its position seems always to be the same as in the etymon.

PM does not speculate on the origin of the LI tonal system – rightly, I believe, because there is after all very little to speculate on. Surmising that the development of this system took place during the creolization process, away from (pidgin) Portuguese and with probably a not insignificant influence from substrate-adstrate tonal languages amounts to stating the obvious and brings no real information.

Chapter 3 on morphosyntax successively examines the noun phrase, the verb phrase, simple sentences, complex sentences, sentence final particles, and the presentational morpheme *ya*. The format may be characterized as “informal generative grammar”. That is to say, it uses the analytical vocabulary made familiar by fifty years of generative grammar (transformational or not) – noun and verb phrases, movement, traces, etc. – without entering into useless (for the author's purpose) technicalities and formalisms.

The analysis of LI's complex system of TMA marking is thorough. I wish to point out, in particular, the way PM brings to light the intriguing threefold division of LI verbs into dynamic verbs and two kinds of stative verbs which he noncommittally calls type A and B. The difference lies in the behaviour of type A and B with the TMA marker *ka* which imparts habitual meaning to dynamic verbs (e.g. *Ê ka kanta* 'S/he sings'). With type-B statives, *ka* can mean habitual as well, or it can also mean simple present; with type-A statives, only the habitual meaning is possible, as with dynamic verbs, although no marker at all is more common, unlike dynamic verbs, for which no marker standardly means past perfective.

PM honestly concedes he has “not been able to explain, on semantic grounds, what makes the difference between type-A and type-B statives” (p. 73). Indeed, his table on p. 72 shows that *goxta di* 'to like' is type A, whereas *gogo*, also meaning 'to like' is type B; *kêê* 'to believe' is A, *kuda* 'to think' is B, and so forth. Seeing which, I confess being as much at a loss as he is.

Perhaps I should point out, however, that examples (393) and (394) on p. 71 illustrating the contrast between the two possible meanings of type B do not make the difference between habitual and simple present come out very clearly:

- (393) *Dya ki ê keka Ie ê ka ta na kaxi sê.*
Day REL 3SG HAB.come island 3SG HAB stay LOC house DEM
When he comes to Príncipe, he would stay in this house. (type-B stative, habitual)
- (394) *Mene ka ta na kaxi gaani ixila.*
Mene IPFV stay LOC house big DEM
Mene lives in that big house. (type-B stative, simple present)

I fail to perceive the aspectual difference, unless *ka ta* in (393) has an iterative rather than habitual meaning, thus implying separate intervals instead of one continuous event, which the same predicate implies in (394). Iterativity, it seems, is what PM's translation of *ka ta* as "would stay" in (393) conveys, perhaps inadvertently – although "will stay" or simply "stays" would be more idiomatic, I feel. (And if interpretation depends on the verb's class, shouldn't *ka* be given the same gloss in both examples?)

Could it then be the root of the A/B distinction, namely that B tolerates iterative readings whereas A does not. Is 'to think' more episodic than 'to believe'? I leave it as an open question. According to PM, the same distinction exists in Angolar (Maurer 1995). I am not aware of it having been observed in other Portuguese-related creoles or beyond.

PM also devotes much space to nominal predicates and the uses of the copula, serial verb constructions (numerous and functionally varied in LI), and negation – a complex matter in LI with its two markers, preverbal *na* and VP-final *fa*, which never co-occur, the former being limited to purposive and desiderative embedded clauses.

Sentence types are clearly distinguished in LI and in PM's presentation. Declarative sentences are SVO and would be unmarked with respect to the other types were it not for the existence in LI of a cross-linguistically infrequent item (although I may be wrong on that count), namely a "validator" *na* (not to be confused with negative *na*, although both might proceed from P *nãõ* 'not'), positioned to the left of the verb complex and "used to reinforce the assertion of the truth value of a proposition in affirmative sentences" (p. 67), which therefore never occurs in negative or partially interrogative (WH-question) sentences. There is thus a contrast between *Ê sa kume bana* 'She is eating bananas' and *Ê na sa kume bana* 'She really is eating bananas'. "According to some speakers" (p. 68), *na* is equivalent to sentence-final *ô*, which Holm & Patrick (2007) judged widespread enough to include it in their list of creole features. (It is actually limited to Atlantic Creoles.) This cannot be entirely true, however, since *ô* also terminates negative sentences.

One must commend PM for including imperative and exclamative sentences along with other sentence types, as they are important, but too often neglected types. Coordination and subordination, i.e. the various sorts of embedded clauses, are carefully explored as well. In all of this, PM relies on his informants' grammaticality judgments and informs us not only about what can actually be said, but also about what is unacceptable, something descriptive monographs do not always do.

The "miscellaneous features" of Chapter 4 include interjections, reduplication, and ideophones, of which there is a rich array in LI. All major categories can reduplicate with an intensifying or distributive effect. This is commonplace. What is less so is the fact that the habitual and progressive TMA markers also reduplicate with intensifying effect: e.g. *Ubudu sê ka ka kyê* /stone DEM HAB HAB fall/ (p. 174) meaning 'This stone keeps falling down'.

PM comes close to giving his readers everything they wished to know (and were not afraid to ask) about one of the so far least well known creole languages. Thanks to him, it will now count among the best known ones, although I am sure there is still a lot to find out about this language – if it survives long enough, which we can only hope. Praise must also be addressed to Battlebridge Publications, which are doing a great job for the advancement of creole studies. Let's hope they too will enjoy a long life.

References

- d'Andrade, Ernesto & Alain Kihm (1999). Stress in three creoles. In E. d'Andrade, D. Pereira & M.A. Mota (org.), *Crioulos de Base Portuguesa*, 97-109. Lisboa: Associação Portuguesa de Linguística.

- Ferraz, Luis Ivens & Anthony Traill (1981). The interpretation of tone in Principense Creole, *Studies in African Linguistics* 22(2): 205-215.
- Günther, Wilfried (1973). *Das portugiesische Kreolisch der Ilha do Príncipe*. Marburg: Marburger Studien zur Afrika- und Asienkunde.
- Holm, John & Peter Patrick (eds) (2007). *Comparative Creole Syntax. Parallel Outlines of 18 Creole Grammars*. London: Battlebridge Publications.
- Kihm, Alain (1994). *Kriyol Syntax. The Portuguese-based Creole Language of Guinea-Bissau*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Maurer, Philippe (1995). *L'angolar. Un créole afro-portugais parlé à São Tomé*. Hamburg : Buske Verlag.
- Schuchardt, Hugo (1889). Beiträge zur Kenntnis des kreolischen Romanisch V : Zum Negerportugiesischen der Ilha do Príncipe, *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 13: 461-475.