

Possessive Constructions in two varieties of Australian Kriol

Dany Adone & Christina Ringel

The concept of possession and its reflex in language is one of the challenging areas in Linguistics. In the literature possession is viewed either as a bio-cultural or a social concept (Seiler 1983). If the latter is assumed, possession is expected to be cross-culturally variable with culture influencing some of its subdomains.

In this paper we will investigate possessive constructions in Kriol spoken in Roper River (NT) and the Kununurra (WA) area and argue that possessive constructions in Kriol reflect concepts available in Aboriginal languages and culture. The focus is on predicative possession sentences of the following types:

LOC, WITH-, TOPIC and HAVE-possessives (Stassen 2009).

Following an overview of these possessive constructions we will describe briefly the sociolinguistic situation of the two varieties of Kriol. In the second part we will present data that reflects the Aboriginal understanding of nature and environment.

We show that Kriol has no existential verb (such as ‘to be’ in English). Instead, Kriol follows the pattern found in Aboriginal languages. Parallel to these types of constructions, Kriol, like other Creole languages, has zero-encoding for copula sentences. In addition, in narratives we note the use of *bla/blanga* to express possession. Constructions with *gadim/garrim* or *abum* are used to express ‘to have’ but they do not behave the same way. These findings taken together give us some insights into the processes at work in a situation of language contact.

Bio

Dany Adone is Professor and Chair of Applied English Linguistics at the University of Cologne. Her research focus lies in the fields of Indigenous Languages of Australia (spoken and signed) and Language Contact. Her most recent publications are *A Grammar Sketch of Yolŋu Sign Language* (2014, with E.L. Maypilama, Munich: Lincom Europe) and *The Sociolinguistics of Alternate Sign Languages of Arnhem Land* (2015, with E.L. Maypilama, Learning Communities: International Journal of Learning in Social Contexts, Vol 16)

Christina Ringel is writing her PhD about the linguistic expression of possession in the Australian language Miriwoong. In 2013 she was the Special Intern at Mirima Dawang Woorlab-gerring Language and Culture Centre. She returned to MDWg in 2014 and 2015 to do fieldwork with the Miriwoong. Christina obtained her Master’s degree in Linguistics at the University of Düsseldorf, where her research focused on languages in northern Brazil and German Sign Language. Christina was involved with the language archive at the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi in Belem/Brazil and the maintenance of the Awetí language corpus (assisting Dr. Sebastian Drude).