

Tomasz Kamusella. (2014) *The Upper Silesian Creole. Kreol górnośląski. Das oberschlesische Kreol. Le créole haute-silésien. Wyrchnoślōnski kreol*. Zabrze: Narodowa Oficyna Śląska / Ślōnsko Nacyjowo Ôficyno. 204 pp., USD 25.00.

Reviewed by **Thomas Stolz** (University of Bremen/Germany)

The title of this booklet is telling not only because it appears in five different languages (English, Polish, German, French, and Silesian) on the front cover but also because it is suggestive of a topic which, as it turns out, is addressed only marginally. As a matter of fact, this is a collection of a handful of papers by Tomasz Kamusella and translations thereof in languages other than the original English or Polish.

There is a general preface that provides the background information for understanding the author's motivation for publishing the collected papers in the first place (pp. 12–27). The centerpiece is entitled 'The Upper Silesian Creole' (pp. 29–154). It is subdivided into five sections which are representative of two different original contributions. The contents of the English paper 'Language: Talking or trading blows in the Upper Silesian Basin?' (pp. 31–52) are virtually identical to those of the French version 'Échange de paroles ou de coups en Haute-Silésie: la langue comme «lieu» de contacts et de luttes interculturels' [= 'Exchange of words or blows in Upper Silesia: language as location of intercultural contacts and struggles'] (pp. 107–130). As to the contents, these two versions overlap considerably with the German paper 'Sprache und Nationalismus in Oberschlesien im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert' [= 'Language and nationalism in Upper Silesia in the 19th and 20th centuries'] (pp. 79–106). Moreover, there are two versions of the paper that address the topic promised by the booklet's title. The contents of the Polish paper 'Kreol górnośląski' [= 'the Upper Silesian Creole'] (pp. 53–78) are identical to those of the Silesian version 'Wyrchnoślōnski kreol' [= 'The Upper Silesian Creole'] (pp. 131–154). At the same time, parts of the latter two papers correspond largely to portions of the above three sections.

These texts are followed by a section entitled 'Addendum: Nationalism' (pp. 155–198) which comprises two subsections, the first of which is dedicated to 'Nationalism as a global-wide framework ideology: a proposal of corpus-based discourse analysis' (pp. 157–186) whereas the last paper of the collection treats 'Philologists: scholars or politicians?' (pp. 187–198). Several of the papers are republications of earlier versions that appeared during the last sixteen years. The bibliographical references are given separately on pages 199–200.

In the volume under review, Tomasz Kamusella's main interest is clearly of a cultural-political nature. The contributions assembled thus cannot be expected to offer more than the odd reference to properly linguistic phenomena. The one most relevant to the study of pidgin and creole languages is the author's hypothesis that, over the centuries, the availability of several *lingua francas* precluded the genesis of a pidgin or creole in the multilingual Upper Silesia. However, with the migratory movements at the height of industrialization in the late 19th century, Upper Silesia developed into a linguistic melting pot that gave rise to a continuum of (mixed/contact) varieties that occupied the space between the two standard varieties of German and Polish. Early on, a pidgin arose when the first waves of country-folk moved to the urban centers of Upper Silesia. On this basis, several creole varieties emerged when the composition of the groups of immigrants became more and more diverse linguistically. The author argues that the term *Wasserpolnisch* lit. 'water Polish' –which used to refer to discernibly Germanized Silesian varieties of Polish– designates the umbrella-category under which all of the supposed German-Polish creoles can be subsumed. At the turn of the 20th century, the standard varieties triggered a process of decreolization.

The sole piece of tangible evidence of the putative creole continuum is repeated in all five of the papers in the main body of the text. It consists of a list of fifteen sentences that serve the purpose of illustrating the differences of six varieties on the continuum between standard German and standard Polish. There is no linguistically valuable annotation of the examples. One *can* see, however, that in the varieties 2–5, German and Polish lexical and structural elements coexist. In some cases, the phenomenon appears to be spontaneous code switching. In other instances, borrowing might be the more appropriate term for the observed phenomena. Contact-induced phenomena affect inter alia the word order, the overuse of reflexives, pro-drop on the German side of the continuum, and the use of the demonstratives as definite article on the Polish side. German and Polish inflections alike do not seem to fall victim to the contact situation. None of the varieties of the continuum can be said to be morphologically impoverished. In each case, we are dealing with morphologically rich varieties. The empirical basis is much too small to allow for any generalizations. In evaluating the author's conclusions, one wonders whether he has had access to a far larger but to date unpublished corpus of primary data.

It is doubtful that what Tomasz Kamusella describes fulfills the criteria of a creole continuum. It is likelier that this is a continuum of perhaps instable learner varieties of German or Polish. The data should also be tested against the mixed-languages model or checked for the characteristics of massive borrowing. The author does not deem it necessary to situate his own approach within the framework of language-contact studies or pidgin and creole studies. His references

to publications from these fields are practically non-existent, and when present hardly up-to-date.

It should thus not surprise that students of pidgins and creole languages as well as linguists interested in language-contact phenomena more generally will find little in this slim book that would offer trustworthy information or a grammatical sketch of any Upper Silesian Creole. What Kamusella achieves at best is suggesting that it might be worthwhile to pursue a more serious inquiry into the language contact situation at the former German-Polish border in Silesia, as *Wasserpölnisch* and its related varieties may indeed be of interest to the serious creolist.

Reviewer's address

Thomas Stolz
Universität Bremen
FB 10: Linguistik
PF 330 440
D-28334 Bremen / Germany
Stolz@uni-bremen.de