9h30 accueil

10h00 Christoph Neuenschwander - “I Understand Pidgin”: Negotiating Ownership in the Commodification of Hawai‘i Creole

12h00 déjeuner sur place

14h00 Kees Versteegh - Stating facts in basic communication: Assertions in early pidgins

Se munir d’une pièce d’identité pour obtenir un badge d’accès à l’entrée.

Christoph Neuenschwander (Univ. Bern)

“I Understand Pidgin”: Negotiating Ownership in the Commodification of Hawai‘i Creole

Hawai‘i Creole (locally known as ‘Pidgin’) has come a long way, from being called an „abomination in the sight of the Lord“ (Honolulu Star-Bulletin 1962), to what Christina Higgins’ (2015: 145, 146) observes to be a “prestige shift” that has turned the creole into “a language that embodies Local-style pride.” This development is evidenced in the fact that Hawai‘i Creole is increasingly used in political propaganda to express local interests and in the marketplace to advertise local products or local business (cf. Higgins 2015, Hiramoto 2011). In other words, it is commodified (cf. Heller 2003).

While previous research has primarily been concerned with the commodification of HC in selling other products, in this paper I argue that much can be learned about the role of the creole by taking this investigation one step further and turning our attention to HC as a product. Higgins (2015: 149) distinguishes between “commodification purposes in the tourism industry” and those that target “Local consumers”, but many commercial items that have HC as the primary selling point – such as Pidgin stickers, t-shirts with Pidgin prints or the famous Pidgin to da Max dictionary – address both a local and non-local audience. These items accommodate both the local community’s claim to HC as an identity marker that sets islanders apart, and tourists’ desire for an authentic yet intelligible experience of the Hawaiian ‘other’.

The present paper explores not only how this is accomplished, but also links these Pidgin products in a historiographical approach (Blommaert 1999) to metalinguistic discourse, as well as discusses implications for the current status and role of HC in Hawai‘i.

References


The particle fi is used in Classical Arabic as a local preposition, 'in'; it has the same meaning in the contemporary Arabic dialects, but in addition it is used in some dialects as an existential verb, 'there is, there are'. In Arabic-based first stage pidgins, such as Gulf Pidgin Arabic and Pidgin Madame, fi seems to have acquired a number of additional functions. It does not only denote nominal predication, location and possession, but is also used in combination with a verbal form. In the literature, various proposals have been made to explain the function of fi in this combination, which is usually interpreted as having an aspectual meaning. The present paper adopts the model of the Basic Variety (Klein and Perdue 1997) as a framework for the analysis of these early pidgins. A comparison is made between the use of fi in Arabic-based first-stage pidgins and that of the copular/existential verb in the Basic Variety of different languages. On the basis of this comparison it is suggested that the general function of fi is to serve as a linking particle between topic and focus, marking the sentence as being assertive rather than modal.