



If I Could Turn My Tongue Like That: The Creole Language of Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana

Thomas Klingler

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If I Could Turn My Tongue Like That, by Thomas Klingler, is an in-depth study of the Creole language spoken in Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana, a community situated on the west bank of the Mississippi River above Baton Rouge that dates back to the early eighteenth century. The first comprehensive grammatical description of this particular variety of Louisiana Creole, Klingler's work is timely indeed, since most Creole speakers in the Pointe Coupee area are over sixty-five and the language is not being passed on to younger generations. It preserves and explains an important yet little understood part of America's cultural heritage that is rapidly disappearing.

The heart of the book is a detailed morphosyntactic description based on some 150 hours of interviews with Pointe Coupee Creole speakers. Each grammatical feature is amply illustrated with contextual examples, and Klingler's descriptive framework will facilitate comparative research. The author also provides historical and sociolinguistic background information on the region, examining economic, demographic, and social conditions that contributed to the formation and spread of Creole in Louisiana. Pointe Coupee Creole is unusual, and in some cases unique, because of such factors as the parish's early exposure to English, its rapid development of a plantation economy, and its relative insulation from Cajun French.

The volume concludes with transcriptions and English translations of Creole folk tales and of Klingler's conversations with Pointe Coupee's residents, a treasure trove of cultural and linguistic raw data. This kind of rarely printed material will be essential in preserving Creole in the future. Encylopedic in its approach and featuring a comprehensive bibliography, If I Could Turn My Tongue Like That is a rich resource for those interested in the development of Louisiana Creole and in Francophony.



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