

## Review of: *Pawòl Lakay: Haitian-Creole Language and Culture for Beginner and Intermediate Learners*, by Frenand Léger.

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This newly published textbook is designed as a comprehensive resource for the teaching and learning of Haitian Creole, or Kreyòl. Its goal is twofold, first it is a “textbook for beginning and intermediate learners at the college/university levels”; and, second, it is a “self study guide for any English speaking person who is seriously interested in Kreyòl and Haitian studies” (Léger, 2012, p. ix).

Each chapter of the book is organized according to the communicative action-oriented approach to foreign language teaching and learning. Chapter sections include vocabulary, structure/grammar, phonetics/spelling, skill-building exercises, dialogue/oral practice, reading and writing. The book covers the essentials of grammar that must be introduced and mastered at the beginning and intermediate levels. Very beneficial to students and teachers alike are the linguistic tips and special grammar nuances that are emphasized throughout the book and that usually pose difficulty such as prepositions, the parts of speech, partatives and false cognates. There are great examples and exercises which are demonstrated in the chapters and reinforced with the audio recordings on 3 CD-ROMs which accompany the book.

*Pawòl Lakay* is based on the principle that “Kreyòl is a distinct language in its own right, with its own pronunciation, spelling system, grammar, structure and pragmatics” (Léger, 2012, p. vii). The textbook goes a long way in re-establishing Kreyòl as a distinct language as it is often described either as a minor regional language, as a dialect of French, or even “broken” French.

While most textbooks provide abundant opportunity for students to speak and write about themselves, this book goes a step further with the inclusion of cultural and socio-historical dossiers to round out each chapter. The pictures, proverbs, cultural history and socio-cultural analysis offer students an opportunity to explore the Haitian culture without always having to relate elements of that culture to their own and without transforming differences into sameness. Ever present is the fact that Kreyòl as a language appeared in the context of colonization when different people from Europe and African slaves came into contact with each other in what is now modern day Haiti. I found these sections to be sophisticated and effective in prompting serious discussion of complicated issues while embedding language learning in its

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socio-cultural context.

One potential drawback is that the explanations of grammar may be too difficult for a true beginner. For example, in an explanation of the parts of speech the author says that the text “provides students with the opportunity to reinforce their knowledge of the lexical, phonological, pragmatic and grammatical features of English while learning Kreyòl” (Leger, 2012, p. xi). It is precisely the task of this type of textbook to make grammar linguistically appropriate for a first year, especially first semester, classroom. I am sure that successive editions will address

this potential difficulty. All in all this unique volume has many strong points and will be a welcome addition to introductory and intermediate Kreyòl language study which has been in need of an updated textbook.

The volume is softbound and includes many attractive illustrations and photographs. The book includes a transcription of the audio CDs and an extensive glossary. The author, Frenand Léger, taught Haitian Creole at the college level in Haiti, the United States and at The College of The Bahamas for more than seven years.

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## REFERENCES

Léger, F. (2011). *Pawòl Lakay: Haitian-Creole language and culture for beginner and intermediate learners*. Educa Vision. ISBN: 978-1584326878