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Creole Languages in a World-Wide Perspective

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Class 1, 23 August 2010

Outline of the eight classes

Class 1. Monday, 23 August

- Introduction
- Creole languages and other contact languages
- Seychelles Creole spontaneous spoken text
- Attempts at explaining the linguistic make-up of creoles
- Overview of the current theories of creolization
- Sociohistorical contexts of creole formation

Class 2. Tuesday, 24 August

- Comparative creole studies

- Introduction to *APiCS*
- Introduction to the *APiCS* questionnaire
- First *APiCS* maps

Class 3. Wednesday, 25 August

- Comparison between *APiCS* and *WALS*
- Short introduction to *WALS*
- Ditransitive verb constructions

Class 4. Thursday, 26 August

- Comparison between *APiCS* and *WALS* features (continued)
- Inclusive/Exclusive Distinction in Independent Personal Pronouns
- Alignment of case marking in nouns and pronouns
- Position of Interrogative Phrases in Content Questions
- Noun Phrase Conjunction and Comitative

Class 5. Monday, 30 August

- Experiencer constructions
- PATH constructions

Class 6. Tuesday, 31 August

- Unmarked verbs
- Serial verb constructions
- Adnominal possessive constructions
- Reflexives
- Associative plurals

Class 7. Thursday, 2 September

- Complexity in creole languages
- A partial replication of Parkvall 2008

Class 8. Friday, 3 September

- Substrate influence in creoles, pidgins, L2

- Sampling for genealogical control within contact languages
- Contributing pair types

1. Which languages are we looking at: Some labels of contact languages

- (i) creole
- (ii) semi-creole
- (iii) pidgin
- (iv) pidgincreole
- (v) mixed language

- Here are very short, compact definitions of the five categories:

(i) **creole**: a creole is a language which has evolved in a sociohistorical setting of multilingual interethnic plantation societies (and similar socioeconomic situations). These languages are used as native languages as they relate to **complex social interactions**.

Despite the problems of definition we have pointed to so far, there is still justification for treating creoles as a separate and identifiable class of languages. The grounds for doing so are primarily sociohistorical in nature, as Thomason (1997c), Mufwene (2000), and others have argued. From this perspective, creoles are simply contact languages that emerged primarily in plantation settings in various European colonies throughout the world. Such settings shared a number of sociopolitical and demographic characteristics, including the use of large numbers of slaves who were transplanted from their homelands and placed under the control of a small minority of Europeans. (...) differences in social settings of each colony led to diversification in the outcomes of the contact between Europeans and the oppressed groups. (Winford 2003: 308)

(ii) **semi-creole**: varieties which show structural similarities to known creoles, but whose historical settings indicate processes of a beginning creolization without being ever fully creolized (cf. "partially restructured languages"; Holm 2004).

(iii) **pidgin**: pidgins are non-native languages used in "interethnic contacts, ranging from trade to religious activities and diplomacy" (Bakker 2008: 136). They are not the main or default language of an ethnic, social or political group. Pidgins have structural norms and must be learned as such.

(iv) **pidgincreole**: "pidgincreoles constitute a class in between pidgins and creoles. A pidgincreole is a restructured language which is the primary language of a speech community, or which has become the native language for only some of its speakers " (Bakker 2008: 139). Often it is difficult to draw the line between pidgin and pidgincreole and pidgincreole and creole.

(v) **mixed languages**: Mixed languages normally evolve in situations of thorough bilingualism. They have "numerically (roughly) equal and identifiable components from two other languages" (Bakker 2008: 108f.) and these languages are clearly identifiable.

- sociohistorical and sociolinguistic aspects
- **nativization** is not the crucial criterion for creoles (as it was the case till

very shortly), but the **complexity of social contexts** in which the language is used

- creoles, pidgins, pidgincreoles etc. are diverse
- diversification of contact languages is due to different kinds of social contacts and encounter of typologically different languages
- contact languages are world-wide distributed
- we will be looking at different contact languages, and I am quite agnostic about the label that these languages should/may have. I am interested in a systematic linguistic description and comparison of these languages.
- I draw a lot of the data which I will present from the ongoing collaborative project "Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures" (*APiCS*).
- In *APiCS*, we broadly classify the 75 contact languages in line with the 5 categories "creole", "semi-creole", "pidgin", "pidgincreole", and "mixed language".
- We are very much aware of the fact that for some languages the classification will be controversial.

75 *APiCS* contact languages

2. Two main claims within creole studies will be at the center of this course

- (i) creole languages are to a large extent uniform, all exhibit a range of "typical" creole features (Bickerton 1981ff.; McWhorter 1998ff.)

- (ii) creole languages show the "world's simplest grammars" (McWhorter 1998ff.)

- both claims will be ultimately disconfirmed

3. Seychelles Creole text

(in: Bollée & Rosalie 1994: 112-114)

3.1 Short sociohistorical profile of Seychelles Creole

- the Seychelles were colonized from Mauritius, Reunion, and France (1770), French colony till 1814, thereafter British. French settlers and slaves brought some varieties of Mauritian Creole along with them, so Seychelles Creole can be conceived of as a continuation of Mauritian Creole;
- The islands got slaves mainly from East Africa and Madagascar. After the abolition of slavery in 1835, the British navy captured French ships continuing in the slave trade and set the slaves 'free' in the Seychelles. This led to a considerable influx of East Africans (Bantu speaking) in the 19th century;

- independence in 1976; official languages English, Seychelles Creole, French
- Seychelles Creole was introduced into primary school as a means for alphabetization (under socialist government); language of parliament, in court, in the radio, on TV, in church, in the newspaper (e.g. Seychelles Nation online), etc.
- today, Seychelles Creole as a formal language seems to be under heavy pressure: But even in the family context where creole was the *only* language, more and more parents try to communicate with their children in a second language variety of English modelled on their creole grammar.

3.2 Spontaneous conversation

- text from Bollée & Rosalie (1994: 112) between a young interviewer (Marcel Rosalie=R) and an inhabitant of Silhouette (small island North-West of the main island Mahé), René Jupiter (69 years old)=J; date of recording: 6 May 1981

Situational context: J reports on the traditional way to prepare and to use lime.

J: *Si ler ou pe vir vir ou laso,*
 if when 2SG PROG turn POSS lime

ou trou koray i ankor parey, i nwan, be
 2SG see coral 3SG still same 3SG black but
i pa i pankor kwi, fodre ou koray i blan
 3SG NEG 3SG not.yet cook it.is.necessary POSS coral 3SG white

Ler ou vin vir li la tou sa bann k' anler
 when 2SG come turn 3SG PART all DEM PLUR REL up

ki nwanr ki' n ganny lafimen ki pa' n brile la,
 REL black REL PRF get smoke REL NEG .PRF burn PART

ou tir li sa. Ou grat li byen
 2SG pull 3SG DEM 2SG rub 3SG good

ou annan en rato, ou grat li ou tir li tou
2SG have a rake 2SG rub 3SG 2SG pull 3SG all

ou zet li ater, ou zet li ater,
2SG throw 3SG on.the.ground 2SG throw 3SG on.the.ground

toultour ler ou' n zet li ater prezan ou
always when 2SG PRF throw 3SG on.the.ground then 2SG

anmas li ou met li en kote laba pour ou travay
gather 3SG 2SG put 3SG a PART there for 2SG work

sa ki' n blan la, la prezan ou k'mans
DEM REL PRF white PART PART now 2SG start

travay sa ki' n blan la ou aroz li,
work DEM REL PRF white PART 2SG water 3SG

ziska ler i fini, ou anvoy li laba

till when 3SG finish 2SG put 3SG there

R.: *Be ou dir mwan ler ou vin vir li la*
but 2SG say 1SG when 2SG come turn 3SG PART

ler ou fini vire, ou realim dife ankor lo li?
when 2SG finish turn 2SG light fire again on 3SG

J.: *Non non! Ou' n fini vire ou' n touf li.*
no no 2SG PRF finish turn 2SG PRF cover 3SG

R.: *Touf li anba fey?*
cover 3SG under leaf

J.: *Anba fey ver, si ou mete i sek i so li,*
under leaf green if 2SG put 3SG dry 3SG hot 3SG

ou pou alim dife i pou bril sa sa fey la.
2SG FUT light fire 3SG FUT burn DEM DEM leaf PART

Be ler ou met sa ki ver, sa ki ver la
 but when 2SG put DEM REL green DEM REL green PART

*i transpire*¹.
 3SG transpire.

J.: 'Quand vous retournez votre chaux, si vous voyez que le corail est encore pareil, quand il est noir, ben, il n'est pas encore cuit. Il faut que votre corail soit blanc. Quand vous venez les retourner, tous ceux qui sont en haut, qui sont noirs, qui ont été enveloppés de fumée, qui n'ont pas brûlé, vous les retirez. Vous les grattes bien. Vous avez un râteau, vous les grattez, vous les retirez tous, vous les jetez à terre, tout autour [du four], quand vous les avez jetés à terre, alors vous les ramassez, vous les mettez de côté. Pour travailler ceux qui sont blancs, vous les arrosez, jusqu'à ce que vous ayez fini, vous les mettez là-bas.

1

DEM = demonstrative pronoun PROG = progressive marker
 FUT = future marker REL = relative marker
 PART = particle (clause initial or final) SG = singular
 POSS = possessive pronoun
 PRF = perfect marker

R.: Ben, dites-moi, quand vous les avez retournés, quand vous avez fini de les retourner, vous allumez le feu encore une fois sur ces coraux?

J.: Non non! Vous avez fini de les retourner, vous les avez étouffés.

R.: Etouffés sous les feuilles?

J.: Sous les feuilles vertes; si vous mettez des feuilles sèches, ils [les coraux] sont chauds, vous allumez un feu, il brûlera ces feuilles. Mais si vous mettez des feuilles vertes, les feuilles vertes transpirent.

(French translation Bollée & Rosalie 1994: 113)

3.3 Some grammatical features of Seychelles Creole

(a) phonology: fricative /j/ > /z/ e.g. French *jetter* > SeyCr *zete*

(b) pronouns

	subject	object	possessive	
SG				French
1	<i>mon</i>	<i>mwa n</i>	<i>mon</i>	< <i>moi</i>
2	<i>ou</i>	<i>ou</i>	<i>ou</i>	< <i>(v)ous</i>
3	<i>i</i>	<i>li</i>	<i>son</i>	< <i>il, lui, son</i>
PL				
1	<i>nou</i>	<i>nou</i>	<i>nou</i>	< <i>nous</i>
2	<i>zot</i>	<i>zot</i>	<i>zot</i>	< <i>(vou)s autres</i>
3	<i>zot</i>	<i>zot</i>	<i>zot</i>	< <i>(le)s autres</i>

(c) no copula

(1) *i nwanr*

3SG black 'it is black' (line 2)

(d) Tense-mood-aspect (TMA) particles

- source for comparison: relevant dialectal French varieties of the 17th and 18th centuries, NOT the Standard French verbal system of the post-17th century standardization;
- 17th century French was full of verbal periphrases

PROG	(a)pe	<	French <i>être après de</i> = <i>être en train de</i> 'at doing'
PST	ti	<	<i>était, été</i>
FUT	pou	<	<i>être pour faire qqc.</i> 'will do sth.'
	a	<	<i>(v)a faire qqc.</i> 'go to do sth.'
PRF	(fi)n	<	<i>finir de faire qqc.</i> 'have done sth.'
	nek	<	<i>ne faire que</i> 'only doing'

PRF + adjective (referring to a property): stresses the result and the process that brought about the change of state

(2) (...) *sa ki' n blan la*
 DEM REL PRF white PART (line 11)
 'those which have become white, e.g. which are white'

(3) *i pou bril sa sa fey la*
3SGFUT burn DEM DEM leaf PART (line 11)
'it (the fire) will burn these leaves'

- Seychelles Creole looks quite French: the vocabulary can be traced back to French (about 95%), at first glance the syntax – at least in this little passage – does not look particularly unusual.

4. Central questions in creole studies

4.1 Where do specific features of creole languages come from?

- (i) the superstrate (lexifier)
- (ii) the substrate (languages of the slaves)
- (iii) universals of
 - first language acquisition
 - second language acquisition (SLA)
 - internal change

(iv) combination of the sources under (i)-(iii)

4.2 There have been many different answers, e.g.

(i) superstratist position ("superstrate" refers to the European base language):

Chaudenson (1992), Mufwene (2000 ff.)

no pidgin phase, the dialectal varieties of the different superstrates have been restructured, but much of its grammar has been essentially retained with minor influences from substrates via second language effects

DeGraff (1999):

"creolization reduces to language contact plus language acquisition (L2A and L1A) of the same sort that are found in the evolution of non-Creole languages, there are no *sui generis* creolization processes."

(ii) substratist position ("substrates" relate to the native languages of the slaves):

Lefebvre (1998): Relexification Theory

no pidgin phase; ideally, the whole grammar is shaped on the model of the substrate(s), lexical entries have been replaced by phonological strings from the superstrates

Siegel (2004): 'language transfer'

particular psycholinguistic process in learning or using a second language (L2), speakers use linguistic features of their first language (L1) to

- provide a basis for constructing the grammar of L2
- compensate for insufficient linguistic resources when communicating in L2.

[language transfer] occurs not as the result of trying to acquire the lexifier as a second-language but as a consequence of having to use the pidgin or pre-pidgin as a second language more frequently and in wider contacts. (Siegel 2004:355)

'cafeteria principle':

different features from different substrates can get integrated into one and the same creole (pace Bickerton)

(iii) universalist position:

Bickerton (1981ff.): "Language Bioprogram Hypothesis" (LHB)
striking similarities between creoles are due to underlying language bioprogram which unfolds during untutored first language acquisition in children who creolized a previous pidgin

McWhorter (1998ff.): creoles have the simplest grammars within the world's languages:

- (a) little or no inflectional morphology,
- (b) no lexical or morphosyntactic tone,
- (c) no non-transparent derivational morphology;

during pidgin phase all 'ornamental' marking has been lost, creoles are too young to have been able to develop complex features of older languages

(iv) compromise approach: Migge (1998), Winford (1997)
against a mono-causal explanation for the formation of creole grammars, 'interference through shift' (superstrate strings are

interpreted on the model of substrate languages), retention of superstrate structures, subsequent gradual language-internal change

4.3 Problems in assigning special linguistic features to specific languages and/or linguistic processes

(i) Before we are able to say that a particular linguistic feature in a creole is due to substrate influence we have to have an idea of the *world-wide distribution* of this very feature. Even if we cannot trace it back to the superstrate, that does not necessarily mean that it is a feature that must be traced back to potential substrate(s): it could just be an instance of a very frequent phenomenon in the world's languages or of a very frequent process of language change;

possible tools to use:

World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS, ed. by Haspelmath, Martin et al. (2005), OUP) which shows the geographical distribution of 142 structural features (e.g. word order, relative clauses, articles, pronouns) in an average of 400 languages world-wide.

Bybee, Joan & Perkins, R. & Pagliuca, W. (1994), *The evolution of grammar: Tense, aspect, and modality in the languages of the world*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

(ii) Before we can claim that particular features in creoles are due to Universal Grammar or to the Language Bioprogram, we should again carefully check these features against the world-wide situation and the relevant substrate languages (cf. Ditransitive constructions, class 3).

- e.g. Bickerton claims that there are ten minimal grammatical functions that must be discharged in a natural language (Bickerton 1988: 278)

- "(a) articles
- (b) tense/aspect/modality forms
- (c) question words
- (d) a pluralizer
- (e) pronouns for all persons and numbers
- (f) forms to mark oblique cases
- (g) a general locative preposition
- (h) an irrealis complementizer
- (i) a relativizing particle
- (j) reflexives and reciprocals"

---> counterevidence

- to (a) There are many natural languages around the world that do NOT have an article (cf. Dryer 2005 in: *WALS*, map 37)
- to (d) There are quite a few languages that do NOT mark nominal plurality (cf. Haspelmath 2005 in: *WALS*, map 34)

5. Sociohistorical contexts of creole formation

(cf. Winford 2003: 310f., Arends 1995b: 15ff.)

5.1 Different types of creoles

According to their history and their social settings, three or four types of creoles have been distinguished (cf. Bickerton 1988):

- (i) plantation creoles
- (ii) fort creoles
- (iii) maroon creoles
- (iv) creolized versions of pidgins: e.g. in New Guinea (Tok Pisin)

(i) plantation creoles

- in the Atlantic area plantations worked by large numbers of slaves and European indentured laborers:

Caribbean (e.g. Jamaica, Haiti, Guyana, Surinam),

West Africa (e.g. islands of Annobon and São Tomé off the West African coast),

southern part of North America (Gullah)

- in the Pacific (Queensland (Australia), Hawaii) and Indian Ocean (Mauritius, Seychelles, Réunion) there were indentured laborers from India, China, Japan, the Philippines, and the South-West Pacific

(ii) fort creoles

- fort, the fortified posts along e.g. the West African and Indian coast from which the Europeans deployed their commercial activities;
- in the forts there must have been some kind of medium of communication among Africans/Indians from different linguistic backgrounds and among Africans/Indians and Europeans;
- important role of European men living in mixed households with African/Indian women → some kinds of contact language which was expanded by the children of these mixed couples

(iii) maroon creoles

- some slaves escaped from the plantations and subsequently formed their

own communities ('maroons') in the interior in relative isolation from the rest of the colony, e.g.

Jamaica, Surinam (Saramaccan, Eastern Maroon Creoles (Ndjuka, Aluku, Paramaccan)),
Columbia (Palenquero),
São Tomé (Angolar)

(iv) expanded pidgins ("pidgincreoles" in Bakker's terms)

- pidgins that serve all communicative needs (like a creole), e.g. Tok Pisin which has been used for generations as lingua franca in parts of New Guinea (complex genesis through short term plantation work and remigration of indentured laborers).

- **endogenous vs. exogenous creoles** (Chaudenson 1979)

(i) endogenous creoles: areas where the native languages of the creolizing population were spoken (e.g. some African creoles like Kituba, Guinea Bissau Creole)

(ii) **exogenous creoles**: creoles that involved the massive relocation of the creolizing population (e.g. creoles in the New World and the Indian Ocean)

- distinction is important regarding the potential role of the substrates: creoles that arose in an area where its substrate speakers continued speaking their native language(s) show more substrate influence (endogenous creoles) than in the others (exogeneous creoles).

5.2 Social variables

5.2.1 demographics of each colony: relative numbers of Europeans, Africans, locally-born children and other groups present in each colony over time

5.2.2 nature of contact among different groups and codes of social interaction

5.2.3 types of community settings within which the groups mixed and

interacted

- a crucial figure: about 10 million Africans were captured and deported to the Americas; many of them died either in the African forts or during the journey to the New World; of those who did arrive, many died after relatively a short period (e.g. life expectancy in 18th-century Surinam was between five and ten years (Arends 1995b: 17f.)

5.2.1 Focus on demographics

- Bickerton (1981): creoles evolve in settings where the dominant group made up no more than 20% of the population; as Bickerton sees the first generation(s) of locally-born children as the creators of the creole, he 'needs' enough children for his scenario to be plausible:

Demographic data on some colonies, such as Jamaica and Surinam (Singler 1986), seem to show that this condition was not fulfilled there during this period. (Arends 1995b:21)

- low rates of natural increase and high rate of (especially infant) mortality produced an ever increasing importation of new slaves

This resulted in not only a small number of locally born children but also a continuing importation of new slaves. Suriname represents perhaps the extreme case of this scenario. Contrasting with it were colonies like those in Barbados and the Southern United States, where natural increase was more common. (Winford 2003: 311f.)

- From Bickerton's point of view one would expect that the Suriname creoles would NOT constitute cases of 'radical' creoles (i.e. most divergent from their lexifiers), because the locally-born children who are supposed to be the agents of creolization were lacking, whereas in Barbados the evolving creole, Bajan, would be most radical:
- but the linguistic data show the exact opposite: Saramaccan is considered to be a radical creole whereas Bajan can be classified as an 'intermediate'

creole (Winford 2003:214ff.), i.e. a contact variety that is much closer to dialectal varieties of English. (Cf. Singler 1992 who argued that the more locally-born children there were – especially in the earlier period of settlement – the *closer* the creole would be to its superstrate, pace Bickerton)

- Philip Baker (1982) developed a hypothesis concerning the factors which determine if and when a substantially homogenous Creole language will crystallize ('jell'). A key feature of this hypothesis is the relative timing of three social and demographic events:

Event 1: when the number of slaves, who included several different ethnic groups speaking unrelated languages, surpassed the number of members of the 'ruling class';

Event 2: when the number of locally-born slaves surpassed the total number of members of the ruling class (both foreign- and locally-born);

Event 3: when the regular supply of slave immigrants came to an end.

Once the number of locally-born slaves exceeded that of all the ruling class (foreign- and locally-born) – that is, from Event 2 onwards – then the tendency for those controlling the Creole end of the continuum to become increasingly numerically dominant and for their form of speech to jell as a language distinct from that of the ruling class was very strong – *provided slave immigrants continued to arrive in large numbers.*" (Baker & Corne 1986:167f.)

5.2.2 Type of economic activity: crop selection (Singler 1993)

- In the earlier periods of settlement we find small **homestead economies** (e.g. tobacco) where the ratio of Europeans to Africans was nearly 1:1, therefore there was much closer interaction between the two groups; so the slaves got much more input of the (also diverse) European dialectal varieties and would communicate in second language varieties approximating the superstrate ones.
- The longer such settings survived, the more likely they were to produce

creole varieties closer to the settler dialects (cf. Reunion, Barbados)

The second language varieties of the superstrate which emerged in that period prevailed, even when slave importation increased dramatically in later years. By then, they had already become community vernaculars. (Winford 2003:312)

compare Mufwene's notion of '**Founder Principle**' (Mufwene 2001): the language(s) of a colony's founder population, both European and non-European, may have had a disproportionately strong influence on the creole language(s) of that colony.

- On the contrary, early introduction of large-scale **plantation economies** (e.g. sugar) favored the emergence of more radical creoles → increasing slave population, less opportunity to acquire closer approximations to superstrates (Chaudenson 1992:93ff.): e.g. Mauritian Creole diverges significantly from French, this is in sharp contrast to Réunionnais which is much closer to French

- homestead vs. plantation society determines the degree of access to the European language
- important role of **motivation** (Smith 2006): slaves did not want to acquire the European language; it was an act of identity to construct a distinct means of communication, i.e. the creole language (BUT: we know from earlier periods of creolization that slaves *and* white settlers (and white indentured laborers) spoke creole).

5.2.3 Types of community settings

- different European powers exercised different degrees of control (Spain stricter than France and England) → slaves in Spanish colonies were taught Spanish
- different slave codes
 - participation of slaves in church activities
 - rate of manumission (Spanish colonies rapid and continuous, freed

slaves had more contact with Europeans)

– mating practices: e.g. in Réunion European males often had non-European spouses (vs. Mauritius strict separation of Europeans/non-Europeans)

- privilege and status among different categories of slaves
 - field slaves: least contact with Europeans
 - skilled slaves: more freedom of movement
 - domestic slaves: much more contact with Europeans
 - black overseers: most contact with Europeans, important social role intermediate between masters and slaves (Arends 2001)

Summary: "(..) (E)ach mix of ecological factors constituted a recipe for different linguistic consequences of contact." (Winford 2003:313)

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