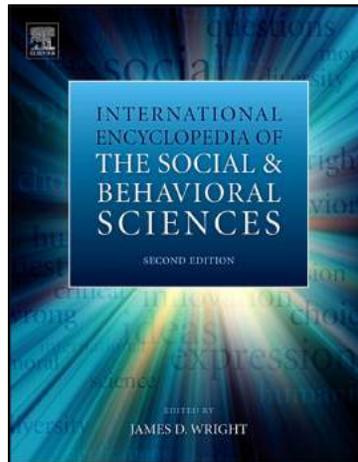


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Pidgin and Creole Languages

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Abstract

The study of creoles and pidgins has been marked by controversy about how they emerged, whether they can be identified by their structural features, and how they stand genetically in relation to their lexifiers. There have also been disagreements about what contact-induced varieties count as creoles, whether expanded pidgins should be lumped together with them, otherwise what distinguishes both kinds of vernaculars from each other, and how other contact-induced language varieties can be distinguished from all the above. Another important question is what they contribute to the understanding of language from the phylogenetic, typological, and sociolinguistic perspectives.

Introduction

The neutral word order *Creole and Pidgin* is used deliberately in the title of this article, because the traditional position that creoles evolved from erstwhile pidgins has been questioned, on the grounds that it is not supported by the history of colonization, which produced both kinds of language varieties (Chaudenson, 1992, 2001, 2003; Mufwene, 2001, 2005, 2008). Much earlier, Alleyne (1971) had disputed the 'baby talk' hypothesis, according to which creoles (and pidgins) had evolved from simplified varieties of European languages in the contact settings that produced them; fossils of inflections still evident particularly in Haitian Creole and even in such others as Saramaccan and Sranan (e.g., *broko* 'break', *dede* 'died, dead') speak otherwise. Below, I will also connect these issues to the role of interpreters in the earlier stages of the contacts between Europeans and non-Europeans in both trade and settlement colonies. The reader will thus be served an account more grounded in the history of colonization than traditional a-historical ones such as Bakker (2009).

The label 'language varieties,' rather than 'languages,' is also used to draw attention to the fact that in many places where these varieties coexist with their lexifiers, their speakers do not think they speak a separate language, only a different variety (Mühlhäusler, 1985; Mufwene, 1988). Lexifier – the language from which a creole has evolved, having selected most of its vocabulary from it and, according to this article, even a great deal of its grammar, often with some modification. It has not been proven that creoles and pidgins may not be considered as new nonstandard dialects of the relevant European languages (see below), on a par with others that emerged in populations that are predominantly of European descent, worse yet, that they are not genetically related to their lexifiers, *pace* Thomason and Kaufman (1988) and Thomason (2001). Mufwene (2001, 2005, 2008) and DeGraff (2003, 2005) expose social biases in the ways linguists and other scholars have singled out creoles and pidgins as outcomes of abnormal or less natural evolutions.

The term *lexifier* is used in this article, as in much of the creolistics literature, as a label of convenience for the language (variety) from which a creole or pidgin has evolved and has typically inherited most or the overwhelming part of its vocabulary. The claim that a creole has typically inherited its grammar from sources other than its lexifier (Holm, 1988;

Thomason and Kaufman, 1988; Thomason, 2001) is not backed by the diachronic evidence. Although a creole or a pidgin, often (mis)identified with the basilect, has a grammar very different from the standard variety of its lexifier (called *acrolect*), it has often been shown that much of its grammar can be traced, at least partly, to some of the nonstandard varieties to which its 'creators' were exposed. This is in fact one of the strongest contributions of Sylvain (1936), ironically invoked by some creolists as a forerunner of the relexification hypothesis (see below).

Although creoles and, to some extent, expanded pidgins (see below) have received a great deal of attention since the 1990s from a typological perspective (see in particular McWhorter, 1998, 2001; and the response by DeGraff, 2001), linguists have traditionally investigated them from the point of view of their 'genesis.' Space limitations make it difficult to focus equally on both research dimensions; this article focuses more on determining what kinds of language varieties they are historically, what peculiarities appear to distinguish them from other natural languages, and what they actually teach us about the role of contact in language evolution and about the architecture of language.

As much as the term *creole* has been extrapolated to various contact language varieties, including those with a non-European lexifier (cf Kouwenberg and Singler, 2009), this article is restricted to those lexified by a European language in those colonies where a European language prevailed as the vernacular to which all nonindigenous populations shifted sooner or later. The reasons for this position are articulated below.

What Are Creoles and Pidgins?

Strictly speaking, creoles and pidgins are new language varieties that developed out of contacts between colonial nonstandard varieties of a European language and several non-European languages around the Atlantic and in the Indian and Pacific Oceans during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. *Pidgins* typically emerged in trade colonies that developed around trade forts, such as on the coast of West Africa, and on whaling ships, as in the South Pacific. They have reduced structures and restricted functions (typically trade and whaling activities); and initially they served as

nonnative lingua francas to users who maintained their native vernaculars in their intraethnic interactions. Some pidgins have expanded into regular vernaculars, especially in urban settings, and are called 'expanded pidgins.' Examples include Bislama and Tok Pisin (in Melanesia) and Nigerian and Cameroon Pidgin Englishes. Structurally, these are as complex as 'creoles' (Féral, 1989; Jourdan, 1991, 2009), though their evolutionary trajectories are different (see below).

Creoles emerged in settlement colonies whose primary industry consisted typically of sugar cane or rice cultivation, for which non-European slaves or contract laborers were employed who constituted the overwhelming majority of the plantation populations. Examples include Haitian, Mauritian, and Seychellois (lexified by French); Jamaican, Guyanese, and Hawaiian Creole, as well as Gullah in the United States (all lexified by English); and Saramaccan and Sranan in Surinam (lexified by English, with the former heavily influenced by Portuguese and the latter by Dutch). Creoles have also been singled out in Australia, although there are no history Creole populations there. (Interestingly, as explained below, the initial Creole populations in the relevant colonies spoke not creoles but koiné varieties or closer approximations of these. (Koinéization, traditionally ill-defined as 'dialect-leveling,' is the compromise variety that emerges by competition and selection from the contact of dialects of the same language.) Nonetheless, Creole people are mentioned because the term for the colonial vernaculars is a historical derivative of that for people.) Vernaculars such as Cape Verdian Crioulo (lexified by Portuguese) and Papiamentu in the Netherlands Antilles (apparently Portuguese-based but influenced by Spanish) suggest that the plantation industry is not as significant a factor as population growth (including rate of population replacement) and population structure (having to do with early segregation) in the identification of a colonial vernacular as a creole. These considerations help explain why Brazil, which engaged in sugar cane cultivation a century earlier than the Caribbean colonies but had a different population structure, did not produce varieties identified as creoles. To be sure, it is also disputable whether these vernaculars can be singled out as a typological class (pace McWhorter, 1998, 2001), let alone a genetic one (see below).

Note that although Melanesian expanded pidgins are associated with sugar cane plantations, they need not be considered as creoles. As pointed out by Keesing (1988), they apparently originated in trade and whaling settings and were adopted as lingua francas on the plantations, in what Chaudenson (1979ff) considers as 'endogenous colonies,' before they evolved into urban vernaculars and expanded their functions and structures. Given that the complexity of their grammars makes them comparable to creoles (see also Siegel, 2008), they raise the question of whether only one evolutionary trajectory need produce this kind of restructuring away from the lexifier.

According to Chaudenson (1992ff), creoles have evolved by basilectalization (structural divergence away from the lexifier, leading to the emergence of a basilect in a creole continuum), from closer approximations of their lexifiers spoken by the earliest slaves. As a matter of fact, linguists

have typically considered as creoles the basilectal varieties, which evolved later in history and are structurally the most divergent from the acrolects. These should not be confused with the protovariety identified as *lexifier*, which was typically nonstandard, possibly a colonial *koiné* of the relevant European language that prevailed. Thus one may argue that, evolutionarily, creoles stand to expanded pidgins in a way that a half-empty bottle stands to a half-full bottle: different histories but similar outcomes. Jourdan (2009) provides interesting evidence of very recent complexification of Bislama grammar from less complex structures and using materials from the English lexifier under the influence of substrate languages.

It has been assumed since the nineteenth century that creoles evolved from pidgin ancestors by the acquisition of native speakers and the concurrent expansion of the pidgins' structures to meet more communicative functions. However, history shows that creoles actually emerged in settings where contacts between Europeans and native speakers of the lexifiers could not have been as sporadic as in the trade settings that produced pidgins, certainly not during the homestead phase when the non-European component of the settlement population was the minority and the populations were racially integrated though not necessarily equal socially (Chaudenson, 1992ff; Mufwene, 1997). Geographically, creoles and pidgins developed in separate places, in which fluent speakers of the local vernaculars (who need not have been Europeans in settlement colonies) and the learners had differing interaction patterns, sporadic in trade colonies but regular and apparently also intimate in the settlement colonies (Mufwene, 2005, 2008). Moreover, the term 'pidgin' was first used in print in 1807 (Baker and Mühlhäusler, 1990), much later than the term 'creole,' which was coined in Latin America for locally born people of nonindigenous stock in the late sixteenth century and used in reference to a 'corrupted' variety of Portuguese spoken in Senegal in the late seventeenth century (La Courbe's *Premier voyage* 1688: 192, cited by Arveiller, 1963). Its later, exclusionary extension to other colonial nonstandard varieties spoken primarily by descendants of non-Europeans may have been initiated by locally born European colonists, who were proud to be identified as Creole (given some rights they could invoke to administer the colonies), claimed to have maintained the European language intact, but dissociated themselves from the non-European Creoles (Stewart, 2007).

The etymology of the term 'pidgin' points indeed to 'Pidgin English,' apparently a distortion of 'business English' (though it is probably also due to partial congruence with Cantonese *bei chin* 'give money' or 'pay'; Comrie et al., 1996, p. 146), in Canton, an important trade colony where no colonial plantation industry developed and no variety has been identified as creole.

More doubt on the traditional position that creoles evolved from pidgins is cast by the role that interpreters are shown to have played, in historical accounts, in the early contacts between Europeans and non-Europeans (Bolton, 2000, 2002; Fayer, 2003; Mufwene, 2005, 2014). This is best documented about China, where the interpreters (also identified as 'linguists'), from the indigenous ruling class,

were also required power brokers in trade (Van Dyke, 2005). The evidence also comes from the history of the colonization of Hawaii (Beechert, 1985), where interpreters from the monarchy are reported to have played a role in the spread of English, and that of Africa, where interpreters facilitated its colonization (Fortbath, 1977; Reader, 1997; Lawrance et al., 2006). There is also similar evidence about the colonization of the Americas, where interpreters were used in trade with Native Americans (Karttunen, 1994; Curtin, 1984; Gray and Fiering, 2000; Metcalf, 2005).

There are thus plenty of reasons to question the traditional, a-historical view that derives creoles from pidgins, still espoused by Siegel (2008), Bakker (2009), and a number of other creolists. Although the Pacific illustrates the pidgin-to-expanded pidgin evolutionary trajectory, this is not the evolutionary trajectory of creoles around the Atlantic and in the Indian Ocean, or even in Hawaii. One must always remember that, barring some questionable characterizations of some South-to-East Asian vernaculars as creoles, there is a neat ecological complementary division between creoles and pidgins: the creoles that have informed our theorizing typically emerged in plantation settlement colonies, whereas pidgins emerged in trade colonies or on whaling ships (Keesing, 1988). In Hawaii, Creole emerged in the city but Pidgin on the plantations (Roberts, 1998), which precludes extrapolating hastily from Hawaii to the Caribbean or vice versa, *pace* Bickerton (1981, 1984).

History also suggests that even pidgins may have evolved by gradual basilectalization, not at all abruptly, as the number of people using the trade language increased and most of the new users hardly had enough exposure to the varieties spoken by the earlier interpreters. Expanded pidgins of course arose by recomplexification, under the ecological pressure of the increased and more diversified communicative needs of those who would use pidgins as vernaculars. The often-invoked jargon or prepidgin stage has not been documented. Siegel (2008) associates it with isolated individuals who do not form a community where the new language works as an auxiliary lingua franca. The claim, which confuses interlanguages with the emergence of a new language variety, is also at odds with the role played historically by interpreters in the earlier stages of trade between Europeans and non-Europeans. We will learn more about the emergence of pidgins in doing more research about the conditions under which the interpreters were formed, undoubtedly by immersion, as suggested by the history of the discovery of the rest of the world by Europeans.

Last but not least, it is also noteworthy that no French pidgin emerged on the African coast that can be related to French creoles of the Caribbean and Indian Ocean; and English pidgin in coastal Nigeria (which spread into Cameroon after the Germans lost the colony) may be a late eighteenth to nineteenth century phenomenon (Mufwene 2014). As reported by Huber (1999) and confirmed by Ostler (2005), Portuguese had then functioned as the convenient lingua franca along the trade route all the way to the Far East (and the language of diplomacy in the same world) until after the Dutch, French, and English maritime powers confiscated some of the Portuguese colonies. The slave trade on the African coast appears to have been conducted in Portuguese, spoken by the *grumetes*

and the children of the Portuguese 'factors' or *lançados*, who acted both as brokers/intermediaries and as interpreters (Berlin, 1998). Nigerian Pidgin may thus have arisen for reasons that had nothing to do with the slave trade. Tay Boy, the only French pidgin that emerged in colonial French Indo-China, may be a phenomenon similar to the *le français tirailleur* in West Africa (especially Senegal), thus recent (in the twentieth century), long after French creoles had emerged, and was short-lived. The present *Abidjannais*, the French lingua franca spoken by poorly educated Ivoiriens in the southern part of Côte d'Ivoire, is also a recent twentieth century phenomenon.

The terms 'creole' and 'pidgin' have also been extended to some other varieties that developed during the same period out of contacts among primarily non-European languages. Examples of the latter denotational extension include Delaware Pidgin, Chinook Jargon, and Mobilian in North America; Sango, (Kikongo-)Kituba, and Lingala in Central Africa, Kinubi in Southern Sudan and in Uganda; and Hiri Motu in Papua New Guinea (Holm, 1989; Smith, 1995). In the original, lay people's naming practice, the term 'jargon' may have been an alternate to 'pidgin,' though, like the term *patois* in French colonies, it had a much longer, precolonial tradition of being used for a language considered 'barbarous' or just 'unintelligible' to speakers of a language considered 'superior.'

However, for reasons that remain elusive, Hall (1966) and Mühlhäusler (1986) stipulate that pidgins are more stable and jargons are an earlier stage in the 'life-cycle' that putatively progresses from Jargon, to Pidgin, to Creole, to post-Creole by progressive structural expansion, stabilization, and closer approximations of the lexifier. As noted above, history provides no particular information that supports this position, though every second-language learner goes through an interlanguage stage as they develop their competence in the target language, which naturally need not be expected to match that of native speakers nor to be fluent. Although the interlanguage may be unintelligible to native speakers, learning a second language imperfectly (a phenomenon that varies in degrees and varies from one speaker to another) is not tantamount to being stuck in an interlanguage, *pace* Plag (2009), as pointed in Mufwene (2010).

The extension of the term 'creole' is more problematic largely because of its original association with nonindigenous people born in the American settlement colonies and later applications to plants, animals, and customs considered particularly typical of the same colonies (Valkhoff, 1966). It is thus that it was extended to some of the language varieties, while European Creoles did not want this characterization to apply to their colonial dialects (Chaudenson, 1992, 2001; Mufwene, 1997). This has in fact raised issues about whether or not Afrikaans as spoken by the Afrikaners is a creole. Hesseling (1897) saw it in a different light, as not a creole (in contrast with Negerhollands, produced by African slaves in the Virgin Islands), than Valkhoff, who called it a creole.

There are also varieties spoken by descendants of non-Europeans in pockets of small endogenous Portuguese settlement colonies from South Asia (e.g., Korlai in India) to Southeast and East Asia (e.g., Papia Kristang in Malaysia and Mekanese in Macau) that are called creoles. They are

not associated with the plantation industry, not even remotely (like Cape Verdean Crioulo), and do not match the epistemic prototypical stereotype of creoles developed from those of the Atlantic Indian Oceans, but they share with the latter the fact of being a nonstandard vernacular of European origin spoken by a non-European population. Less controversial is perhaps the case of varieties that developed in Northeastern Australia, which are products of largely endogenous plantation settlement colonization (as in Queensland), although this is only a partial characterization of Australia as a settlement colony.

In the absence of any conclusive evidence that defines creoles structurally, *pace* McWhorter (1998), it is not evident that the term *creole* can be extended to just any language that is claimed to have started as a pidgin and has been 'nativized' (see below). Thus, it should not be extended to expanded pidgins such as Melanesian pidgins and Nigerian and Cameroon Pidgin Englishes, as noted above. An important lesson from all this confusion is that population movement and language contact appear to have played a catalyst role in normal language change and language speciation, even in varieties not considered as creoles or pidgins (Trudgill, 1983, 2004; Mufwene, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008; DeGraff, 2003, 2005, 2009).

The Putative 'Creole Life-Cycle' in Historical Perspective

The myth of this evolutionary trajectory was partly formulated first by Schuchardt (1914), when he also claimed that 'Black English,' now identified as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) or Ebonics, had gone through all the evolutionary stages: pidgin > creole > post-creole. One of the clearest statements of the position is to be found in Bloomfield (1933, p. 474): "when the jargon [which seems to have meant 'pidgin' to him] has become the only language of the subject group, it is a *creolized language*." Hall (1962, 1966) espoused this position, associating the vernacular function of creoles with nativization. Since then, creoles have been defined inaccurately as 'nativized pidgins,' i.e., pidgins that have acquired native speakers and have therefore expanded both their structures and functions (owing to their usage as a vernacular) and have stabilized. In fact, Hall (1966) alternates nativization with indigenization as becoming indigenous to the territory. He also introduced the pidgin-creole 'life-cycle' to which DeCamp (1971) added a 'post-creole' stage, whereby a creole could shed off its 'creole features' (misnomer for features associated with, or typically attested in, creoles lexified by European languages (none of them is exclusive to creoles)), precisely what Schuchardt (1914) thought had happened to AAVE.

The first creolist to have disputed the above evolutionary scenario is Alleyne (1971). As noted above, he argues that fossilized inflectional morphology in Haitian Creole (HC) and the like suggests that the European colonists did not communicate with the Africans in foreigner or baby talk (see below). Supporting this position, Chaudenson (1979ff) argues that plantation communities were preceded by

homesteads on which mesolectal approximations of European lexifiers, rather than pidgins, were spoken by earlier slaves. This scenario is supported by the economic history of the relevant territories, as plantations typically took a long time to develop and land-owning families often took generations before accumulating enough capital to shift from a small farm to a large plantation and to gradually buy more and more slaves to work on it. Also, like some economic historians, Berlin (1998) observes that, in North American colonies, Black Creoles spoke the lexifier fluently. It also appears from ads on runaway slaves in English North American colonies that bad or poor English is typically associated with slaves imported as adults from Africa who had arrived recently. In addition, diachronic evidence of creoles suggests that the basilects developed during the peak growth of plantations (in the eighteenth century for most colonies!), when infant mortality was high, life expectancy was short, the plantation populations increased primarily by massive importation of slave laborers, and the proportion of fluent speakers of the earlier colonial varieties kept decreasing (Baker and Corne, 1986; Chaudenson, 1992ff; Mufwene, 2001).

The life-cycle model claims that as a creole continues to coexist with its lexifier, the latter exerts pressure on it to shed some of its 'creole features.' Thus, as claimed by Schuchardt (1914), AAVE would have evolved structurally closer to North American White English than Saramaccan putatively because of increased interactions of African Americans with White Americans since the abolition of slavery. Schuchardt did not factor in the influence that Portuguese exerted on the emergence of Saramaccan's structure, the fact that the substrate populations did not consist of identical proportions of speakers of the same African languages, nor the fact that the demographic disproportions where AAVE emerged, on the cotton and tobacco plantations, were in favor of the European populations, and racial segregation within the relevant North American populations started in the late nineteenth century, as opposed to the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century on the Surinamese plantations.

Jespersen (1921) and Bloomfield (1933) anticipated DeCamp (1971), Bickerton (1973), and Rickford (1987) in invoking 'decreolization' ('loss of "creole" features') – what should more accurately be called 'debasilectalization' (loss of basilectal features; alternative to and more accurate term than *decreolization*) – to account for speech continua in creole communities. Alleyne's (1980) position that social speech continua (consisting of a basilect, a mesolect, and an acrolect) and geographical continua (owing to the fact that creoles' structures have never been identical from Surinam to the United States) is consistent with the history of colonization. (The terms were coined by William Stewart (1965) with the following meanings: *basilect* 'the variety whose structures differ the most from the local standard variety of the lexifier', *acrolect* 'the local standard variety' (often misidentified as the lexifier, which was nonstandard instead), *mesolect* 'the broad range of intermediate varieties between the former two.' There arises of course the logical question of whether such continua should be considered unique to creole-speaking territories.) The population

structures were not identical from one colony to another and not every individual learned the target colonial language from identical speakers or was equally apt at second-language learning. Even within the same colony, such as Jamaica, the situation varied according to whether one lived on a small farm (where there was no segregation), on a large plantation (which was segregated), or in the city (which was not rigidly segregated, [Dunn, 1972](#)). Around the Atlantic and in the Indian Ocean, no creole emerged in the city; it was brought there after the abolition of slavery, when many former slaves refused to continue working on the plantations, were evicted from their cabins, and migrated to poor or working class neighborhoods in the emergent cities.

Just the opposite development occurred in Hawaii, where creole evolved in the city (where the Asian populations were more mixed) rather than on the plantations (where the Asian contract laborers were ethnically segregated, lived among themselves, received instructions for work from the overseer, who was their interpreter, and hardly felt the pressure to shift to English as their vernacular). (Unlike the descendants of Africans around the Atlantic and in the Indian Ocean, Asians in Hawaii have not lost their traditional ethnic identities as Chinese (Cantonese, Hokkien, etc.), Japanese, Korean, Filipino, etc. This ecological difference says a lot about the conditions of vernacular usage, which fostered the emergence of creoles.) In the United States, Gullah, which is structurally closer to North American English varieties than Jamaican Creole, emerged on the rice fields, which were demographically smaller than large sugar cane plantations of the Caribbean colonies. On the other hand, AAVE is structurally similar to American White Southern English, with which it shares ancestry on the cotton and tobacco plantations. Bajan (Barbadian Creole) is less divergent from the Caribbean English acrolect than Jamaican Patwa, simply because the island is smaller, had more indentured servants, and the African demographic majority over the European population was not as high as in Jamaica.

[DeCamp \(1971\)](#) did not factor in the above historical facts when he characterized language variation in Jamaica as a 'post-creole continuum.' As a matter of fact he adduced no diachronic evidence in his invocation of 'decreolization' to account for the continuum. He just documented the variation from the basilect to the acrolect so adequately that he could posit an informative 'implicational scale' in the way the variants can be used. However, this need not be correlated with how the language had evolved ultimately from its lexifier.

On the other hand, there is no particular reason why the structures of a creole should be expected to be monolithic. If a variety is characterized as creole just because of the particular sociohistorical ecology of its development (see below), rather than because of its structural peculiarities, it cannot stop being a creole even after some of the features have changed. Besides, basilectal and mesolectal features continue to coexist in these communities, suggesting that Creole has not died yet. [Lalla and D'Costa \(1990\)](#) present copious data against debasilectalization in Caribbean English creoles (CEC), just as [Mufwene \(1994\)](#) adduces linguistic and nonlinguistic arguments against the same process in Gullah. Although [Rickford and Handler \(1994\)](#) show that Barbados may have had a basilect comparable

to that Jamaican Creole in the late eighteenth century, no evidence of such debasilectalization (different from the change without loss of the basilect documented by [Rickford, 1987](#) regarding Guyanese Creole) has been documented about any other place. How the basilect may be claimed to have been lost in Barbados but not elsewhere in the Caribbean calls for an explanation. [Winford \(1997\)](#) offers an account of why Creole emerged not only later but not identically in Trinidad and Guyana. Only the latter has a basilect comparable to that of the Jamaica.

Are Creoles Separate Languages from Their Lexifiers?

Another contentious issue about creoles is the common stipulation by linguists that creoles are separate languages from their lexifiers and related excolonial varieties spoken by descendants of Europeans. Thus, the nonstandard French varieties spoken in Quebec and Louisiana, as well as on the Caribbean islands of St. Barths and St. Thomas, are considered dialects of French rather than creoles. Likewise New World nonstandard varieties of Spanish and Portuguese are not considered creoles (with the exception of Palenquero, spoken by a population of primarily African descent!), despite structural similarities that they exhibit with creoles of the same lexifiers, such as São Tomense, Principense (both spoken in the Bight of Biafra), Cape Verdiano Crioulo for Portuguese.

Interestingly, contact-based varieties spoken by descendants of Europeans or populations in which people of European descent are the majority are not considered as creoles. AAVE is not because, as noted above, it shares its origins with American (White) Southern English. Gullah, spoken by a majority-Black population has been stipulated to be a creole (its speakers think Creole is spoken only in Louisiana, which as has also produced 'creole cuisine'!), but Amish English is not, although it is nonstandard and spoken by descendants of people that are primarily of non-English, German-speaking Swiss descent. Ignoring [Hjelmslev's \(1938\)](#) and [Posner's \(1985\)](#) position that creoles are new dialects of European languages, creolists have adopted uncritically this socially based naming tradition in former European settlement colonies, identifying as creoles those varieties of European languages that have been appropriated as vernaculars by non-European majorities.

There is yet no yardstick for measuring structural divergence from the lexifier, nor was the latter the same in every contact setting. Contact of dialects and/or languages was indeed a factor in all colonial settings, especially in places such as the United States and Australia, where descendants of the English constitute a small proportion of the people of European descent. Granted that the varieties spoken by these colonial populations are not as divergent as those labeled creoles in the same nations, what are the particular factors within or other than contact that justify the distinction in ways different from those that account for variation among creoles? Could the fact that majority Europeans of non-English descent shifted to English after its formative phases

in the colonies explain why the influence of the new speakers has remained limited (Mufwene, 2009a)?

Do Creoles Form a Typological or Genetic Class of Their Own?

It has also been claimed that creoles have more or less the same structural design (Bickerton, 1981, 1984; Markey, 1982). This position is as disputable as the counterclaim that they are more similar in the sociohistorical ecologies of their developments (Mufwene, 1986a) or even the more recent claim that there are creole prototypes from which others deviate in various ways (Thomason, 1997; McWhorter, 1998). (According to John H. McWhorter, a creole that exhibits the most “creole features,” especially one that also has no tones and no derivational or inflectional affixes. This is different from the notion of “epistemic prototype” used in this article for the creoles (of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean, all lexified by Western European languages) that linguists first investigated and have informed the scholarship on creoles and pidgins. The very fact of resorting to a handful of prototypes for the general creole structural category suggests that the vast majority of them do not share the putative set of defining features, hence that the features cannot be used to single them out as a unique type of language. (Typological classifications are typically of the classical-category kind, with no exceptions, rather than of the prototype-category type, relying on family resemblance with a tiny core of best exemplars!) It is tantamount to saying that some ergative or SOV languages belong less in the lot than others after claiming that they all fit in the same category. As underscored by Meyerhoff (2009), many of the same features and combinations thereof are attested in languages that are not considered as creoles.

On the other hand, variation in the structural features of creoles (lexified by the same language) is correlated with variation in the linguistic and sociohistorical ecologies of their developments (Mufwene, 1997, 2001). The notion of ‘ecology’ includes, among other things, the nature of the lexifier, structural features of the substrate languages, changes in the ethnolinguistic makeups of the populations that came in contact, the kinds of interactions between speakers of the lexifier and those of other languages, and rates and modes of population growth.

It has also been claimed that creoles are structurally simpler than other languages. In the lead of this claim are McWhorter (1998, 2001), which have generated numerous responses in support or against the position. Leading the latter are DeGraff (2001, 2005, 2009), which also raise the question of how variably complexity is conceived of in the first place. This raises also the question of whether it is even possible to address the question fruitfully without presupposing a bias toward what the architecture of language is expected to be like (Meyerhoff, 2009; Mufwene, 2009b). Generally lacking from claims of the reduction of complexity in creoles are considerations of the interpretation principles that underlie the putatively simpler structures or the interactions between rules and between modules. It is also noteworthy that creoles lexified by European languages lack

tones (one of the criteria stipulated by McWhorter, 1998), because their lexifiers are nontonal. It is not obvious that they lack derivations, as made obvious by DeGraff (2001). Regarding inflections, they seem to have followed the tendency observable in the evolution of the same European languages, as is made obvious in Chaudenson (2001, 2003).

To date the best-known creoles have been lexified by English, French, Portuguese, and Dutch. Those of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean are, along with Hawaiian Creole, those that have informed most theorizing on the development of creoles, which I identify as the epistemic prototypes. The reader should remember that the colonization of Hawaii started after the abolition of the slave trade and the population structure on Hawaiian plantations was unlike that instituted around the Atlantic and in the Indian Ocean, where pressure to operate in the European colonial language was experienced since the homestead phase of colonization. Whoever wishes to generalize over the formation of creoles should beware of extrapolating too hastily from one part of the world to the other (Mufwene, 2005, 2008).

While the terms ‘creole’ and ‘creolization’ have been applied often uncritically to various contact-induced language varieties, several distinctions, which are not clearly articulated have also been proposed, for instance, between pidgin, creole, koiné, semicreole, intertwined varieties, foreign workers’ varieties of European languages (e.g., Gastarbeiter Deutsch), and, we may add, indigenized varieties of European languages (e.g., Nigerian and Singaporean Englishes). The denotations and importance of these terms deserve reexamining (Holm, 1988, 2004; Arends et al., 1995; Mufwene, 1997, 2005; Bakker, 2009).

Confusing expanded pidgins such as Tok Pisin with creoles (Thomason, 2001; cf Siegel, 2008) depends conceptually on whether one subscribes to the position that creoles are nativized pidgins. Discussions that lump them together are informative in showing the extent to which different evolutionary trajectories can nonetheless produce similar structural outcomes. On the other hand, the question arises of whether vernacularization (not to be confused with urbanization, *pace* Bakker, 2009), rather than nativization, is not a more critical factor driving the structural expansion of pidgins into expanded pidgins and keeping creoles from simplifying their morphosyntax to the same extent as pidgins.

Equally problematic is the unrestrained extension of the term ‘creole’ to a number of ‘contact languages’ associated indeed with (European) colonization but have not been lexified by European languages or associated with Creole people, based on the disputable assumption that they started as pidgins and have been nativized. Examples include Kikongo-Kituba, Lingala, Sango, and Kinubi in Africa, as well as Sri Lanka Malay, Bazaar Malay, and Ambonese Malay in Asia.

Creole ‘Genesis’

The central question here is: how did creoles emerge? The following hypotheses are the major ones competing

today: the substrate, the superstrate, and the universalist hypotheses.

Substratist positions are historically related to the 'baby talk hypothesis,' which can be traced back to late nineteenth-century French creolists: [Bertrand-Bocandé \(1849\)](#), [Baissac \(1880\)](#), [Adam \(1883\)](#), and [Vinson \(1882\)](#). According to them, the languages previously spoken by the Africans enslaved on New World and Indian Ocean plantations were the primary reason why the European lexifiers, which they appropriated, were restructured into creoles. These early creolists assumed African languages to be 'primitive,' 'instinctive,' in 'natural' state, and simpler than the 'cultivated' European languages with which they came in contact. Creoles' systems were considered to be reflections of those of non-European languages, which allegedly reflected the mental inferiority of those who produced and spoke them. The African slaves were thus considered as incapable of learning the putatively more evolved structures of the European languages. The 'baby-talk' connection is that, in order to be understood, the Europeans supposedly had to speak to the Africans like to babies. More or less the same idea is to be found in the 'foreigner talk' hypothesis, according to which Europeans reproduced the non-Europeans' inaccurate approximations of their languages.

The revival of the substrate hypothesis (without its racist component) has been attributed to [Sylvain \(1936\)](#). Although she recognizes significant influence from French dialects, she concluded her book, surprisingly, with the statement that Haitian Creole is Ewe spoken with a French vocabulary. Over two decades later, [Turner \(1949\)](#), disputing American dialectologists' claim that there was virtually no trace of African languages in 'Black English,' highlighted some morphosyntactic similarities between 'the Gullah dialect' and some West-African (especially Kwa) languages. He then concluded that "Gullah is indebted to African sources" (p. 254), which stimulated more research on African substrate influence on African-American English (e.g., [Dillard, 1972](#)) and on CECs (e.g., [Alleyne, 1980](#)).

[Mufwene \(1990, 2010\)](#) identifies three main schools of the substrate hypothesis today. The first, led by [Alleyne \(1980, 1996\)](#) and [Holm \(1988\)](#), is closer to Turner's approach and is marked by what is also its main weakness: invocation of influence from diverse African languages without explaining what kinds of selection principles account for this seemingly random invocation of sources. This criticism is not *ipso facto* an invalidation of substrate influence. It is both a call for a more principled account, one that articulates the particular ecological factors that appear to have favored various individual influences (thus legitimating what was dubbed the 'Cafeteria Principle'), and a reminder that the nature of such influence must be reassessed.

The second school, identified by its practitioners as the relexification hypothesis (RH), is fully articulated by [Lefebvre \(1998\)](#), who argues that HC consists largely of French lexical entries spoken with the grammar of languages of the Ewe-Fon (or Fongbe) group. Extended to other creoles, the position, has been repeated in some of the contributions to [Lefebvre et al. \(2006\)](#), though some

others (see especially [Aboh, 2006](#); [Siegel, 2006](#)) dispute it, and almost all of those to [Lefebvre \(2011\)](#) are more cautious. Objections to this phylogenetic hypothesis include the following: (1) RH's 'comparative' approach has not taken into account several features that HC (also) shares with nonstandard French; (2) RH downplays features that HC shares also with several other African languages, which were represented in Haiti during the critical stages of its development, thus it is not obvious why the exclusive focus on the Ewe-Fon languages; (3) studies of naturalistic second language acquisition provide no evidence in support of RH, even if the emergence of creoles could at all be associated exclusively with adult L2-learners ([Chaudenson, 2001, 2003](#)); and (4) RH does not account for those cases where HC has selected structural options, which are not consistent with those of Ewe-Fon. Moreover, relexificationists assume, disputably, that languages of the Ewe-Fon group are structurally identical in all respects and that no competition of influence was involved among them. (The competition here refers to unequal ranking by speakers of variants that serve more or less the same function in a system (in a particular ecology or setting of interactions). Selection is the process that resolves the competition, in favoring a particular variant.) The most elaborate critique of RH is [DeGraff \(2002\)](#), which is complemented by various refined analyses of hybridized structures in Haitian by [Aboh \(2006, 2009, 2015, among many others\)](#). For contrary evidence from other creole-like languages (in the sense of this article), see especially [Siegel \(2006\)](#).

The least disputed version of the substrate hypothesis is [Keesing's \(1988\)](#), which shows that substrate languages may impose their structural features almost intact on the new, contact-induced varieties if they are typologically homogeneous, with most of them sharing the relevant features. Thus Melanesian pidgins are like (most of) their substrates in having DUAL/PLURAL and INCLUSIVE/EXCLUSIVE distinctions and in having a transitive marker on the verb. [Sankoff and Brown \(1976\)](#) had shown similar influence with the bracketing of relative clauses with *ia*, as does [Sankoff \(1993\)](#) with the focus marker in Melanesian pidgins and [Jourdan \(2009\)](#) with prepositional-verb markers in Solomon Island Pidgin. Keesing argued that even the subject-object-verb order of Melanesian pidgins' sentences reflects the order of the argument affixes in the verb complex, which is often used elliptically, although the dominant order of free arguments is verb-subject-object in the relevant substrate languages.

This evolution is facilitated by what [Singler \(1988\)](#) calls 'homogeneity of the substrate' (argued for earlier in [Mufwene, 1986b](#)), if it is not downright its consequence. However, the pidgins have not inherited all the peculiarities of Melanesian languages. For instance, they do not have their VSO major constituent order, nor do they have much of a numeral classifying system in the combination of *pela* with quantifiers. For an extensive discussion of substrate influence in Atlantic and Indian Ocean creoles, see [Muysken and Smith \(1986\)](#) and [Mufwene \(1993\)](#). For similar discussions about creoles and the like in the Pacific, see [Lefebvre et al. \(2006\)](#) and [Lefebvre \(2011\)](#).

Competing with the above genetic views has been the dialectologist, or superstrate, hypothesis, according to which the primary, if not the exclusive, sources of creoles' structural features are nonstandard varieties of their lexifiers. Regarding African American English, Krapp (1924) and Kurath (1928), for example, claimed that this variety was an archaic retention of the nonstandard speech of low-class European colonists with whom the African slaves had been in contact. According to these dialectologists, African substrate influence was limited to some isolated lexical items such as *goober* 'peanut', *gumbo*, and *okra*. Although substrate influence need not be dismissed offhand (see below), the position is worth considering critically, especially if one factors in the presence of nonnative speakers of English among the European indentured servants with whom the slaves interacted regularly, especially during the early stages of colonization. This is even more significant in the case of Surinam, where the Dutch colonists adopted English as the language of communication with their slaves.

It would take until McDavid (1950) and McDavid and McDavid (1951) before dialectologists made allowance for some African grammatical contributions to AAE. Otherwise, D'Eloia (1973) and Schneider (1989) invoke several dialectal English models to rebut Dillard's (1972) thesis that AAVE developed from an erstwhile West-African Pidgin English (WAPE) brought over by slaves. Had they known then the language of the slave trade was probably Portuguese, they could have pointed out that WAPE varieties probably emerged later than AAE in the first place. The scant evidence presented by Dillard dates from the early eighteenth century and is closer to nonstandard English than to Pidgin English. Hancock's (1986) 'Guinea Coast Creole English,' spoken primarily in the mixed households of English factors and indigenous women need not have been as widespread as he claims and certainly not a pidgin, since the interactions in these settings were not sporadic.

Since the late 1980s, Shana Poplack and her associates have shown that AAVE shares many features with white nonstandard vernaculars in North America and England, thus it has not developed from an erstwhile creole (Poplack and Tagliamonte, 2001; Poplack, 2000). Because some of the same features are also attested in creoles (Rickford, 1998), we come back to the question of whether many, if not most, features of creoles did not originate in their lexifiers in the first place. The other question is also whether African substrate influence on AAVE must of necessity have come through creoles. History suggests that Gullah and AAVE evolved in geographic complementary distribution and apparently concurrently. During the eighteenth century, when the plantation economy was the most prosperous in English North America, only 15% of the slaves were imported from the Caribbean (Rawley, 1991). The oldest CECs would be just emerging then.

Regarding French creoles, the dialectologist position was first defended by Faine (1937), according to whom HC was essentially Norman French. This position was espoused later by Hall (1958), who argues that "the 'basic' relationship of Creole is with seventeenth-century French, with heavy carry-overs or survivals of African linguistic structure (on a more superficial structural level) from the previous language(s) of

the earliest speakers of Negro Pidgin French [which can be situated nowhere in colonial history!]; its 'lexical' relationship is with nineteenth- and twentieth-century French" (1958, p. 372). Chaudenson (1989ff) is more accommodating to substrate influence as a factor that accounts for the more extensive structural divergence of creoles from their lexifiers compared to their noncreole colonial kin.

Chaudenson's allowance for substrate influence is fleshed out especially by Come (1999), who articulates the most explicitly how feature selection can be driven by congruence, even if only partial, between the languages in contact. Although, unlike Pacific pidgins, the Atlantic and Indian Ocean French creoles did not typically emerge in settings that satisfied Singler's (1988) 'homogeneity of the substrate' condition, partial structural congruence between their substrates and nonstandard French favored the selection of the particular features they have, for instance, in the domain of time reference. Aboh (2006ff) has carried this approach farther with detail analyses that show how structural traits can be hybridized in ways similar to biological gene recombination, more specifically with serial verb constructions and number delimitation. One must then determine whether such substrate influence, which does not boil down to mere introduction of features from substrate languages (identified by Allsopp, 1977 as 'apports'), was facilitated by the numerical proportion of speakers of the relevant languages and/or by the time of the insertion of these in the linguistic feature pool. See Singler (1996, 2009) for such considerations regarding HC.

The 'universalist hypotheses,' which stood as strong contenders to substrate hypotheses in the 1980s and 1990s, have forerunners in the nineteenth century. For instance, Adolfo Coelho (1880–1886) partly anticipated Bickerton's (1981ff) 'language bioprogram hypothesis' in stating that creoles "owe their origin to the operation of psychological or physiological laws that are everywhere the same, and not to the influence of the former languages of the people among whom these dialects are found." Bickerton pushed things further in claiming that children, not adults, made creoles by fixing the parameters of these new language varieties to their unmarked, or default, settings as specified in Universal Grammar. To account for cross-creole structural differences, Bickerton (1984, p. 176–177) invokes a 'pidginization index' (PI) that includes the following factors: the proportion of the native to nonnative speakers during the initial stages of colonization, the duration of the early stage, the rate of increase of the slave population after that initial stage, the kind of social contacts between the native speakers of the lexifier and the learners, and whether or not the contact between the two groups continued after the formation of the new language variety. These factors, which one may recognize in Mufwene's ecological (1996ff) approach, were simply not anchored in the actual history of the colonization of the different creole-speaking territories.

Some nagging questions with Bickerton's position include the following: Do structures really support the claim that they were produced primarily by children (cf DeGraff, 1999a; Roberts, 1998)? Is his intuitively sound PI consistent with his creolization as abrupt pidgin-nativization

hypothesis (Mufwene, 1999)? Is the abrupt 'creolization' cum basilectalization hypothesis consistent with the social histories of the territories where classic creoles developed? How can we explain similarities between abrupt creoles and expanded pidgins when the stabilization and structural expansion of the latter is not necessarily associated with restructuring by children (Meyerhoff, 2009), *pace* some claims to be found in references such as Holm (1988) and Thomason (2001)? Is there convincing evidence for assuming that adult speech is less controlled by Universal Grammar than child language is? If so, how can we then account for similarities between abrupt 'creolization' and naturalistic second-language acquisition?

Not all creolists who have invoked universalist explanations have made children critical to the emergence of creoles. For instance, Sankoff (1979) and Mühlhäusler (1981) make allowance for Universal Grammar to operate in adults, too.

Few creolists nowadays subscribe to one exclusive genetic account, as evidenced by the contributions to Mufwene (1993) and implicitly those to Lefebvre (2011). The 'complementary hypothesis' (Baker and Corne 1986; Corne (1999), DeGraff (2009), Hancock 1986; and Mufwene 1986b, 2001) seems to be an adequate alternative, provided we can articulate the ecological conditions under which the competing influences (between the substrate and lexifier languages and within each group) may converge or prevail upon each other. This position was well anticipated by Schuchardt (1909, 1914) in his accounts of the genesis of the Mediterranean Lingua Franca and of Saramaccan. More and more research is now underway uncovering the sociohistorical conditions under which different creoles have developed, for instance, Arends (1989ff), Baker (1982ff), Chaudenson (1979ff), Corne (1999), Mufwene (2001ff), and Arends (1995). Aboh's (2006ff) hypothesis of hybridization of features even within properties of lexical items is an improvement not only over Corne's (1999) congruence model but also on Mufwene's (2001ff) ecology-specific restructuring.

In connection with the above discussion, note that the traditional claim that creoles emerged within one generation, thus abruptly, from a pidgin ancestor, has increasingly been questioned by, e.g., Chaudenson (1979ff), Arends (1986ff), Singler (1996ff), and Mufwene (1996ff). Baker (1995) provides part of the evidence in the context of pidgins, pointing out that their features did not all emerge at the same time. The strongest evidence lies in the fact that the oldest documentary evidence shows more similarity to European nonstandard varieties than the later or present-day materials. The evolutionary scenario is also consistent with the gradual way in which plantation colonies evolved, having started from homestead settings settled by small integrated groups in which the slaves were in the minority. Shortage of money also made it difficult to import more slaves and the colonial populations then grew more by birth than by importation (Mufwene, 2001ff).

Still, the future of research on the development of creoles has problems to overcome. To date, knowledge of the nonstandard lexifiers spoken by the European colonists remains limited, though more research is now underway and much of the scholarship on the dialectology of the European lexifiers is becoming handy. There are few

comprehensive and integrated descriptions of creoles' structures, especially from a diachronic perspective, which makes it difficult to determine globally how the competing influences interacted among themselves and how the features selected from diverse sources became integrated into new systems. Few structural facts have been correlated with the conclusions suggested by the sociohistorical backgrounds of individual creoles, especially in studies that make strong claims for the typological singularity of creoles. Other issues remain up in the air, for instance, regarding the markedness model that is the most adequate to account for the selection of features into creoles' systems. Can there really be an ecology-independent, universal scale of markedness that can account for the selection of particular features into the structures of particular creoles or pidgins? For developmental issues on PCs, the following edited collections are highly recommended: Hymes (1971), Valdman (1977), Hill (1979), Muysken and Smith (1986), Mufwene (1993), Arends et al. (1995), DeGraff (1999b), Lefebvre et al. (2006), Ansaldo et al. (2007), Kouwenberg and Singler (2009), Lefebvre (2011), and several edited volumes of the Creole Language Library (Benjamins). One should of course also check *Amsterdam Creole Studies*, the *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, and *Etudes Créoles*. Several issues of *Pacific Linguistics* and *Te Reo* also include publications on Melanesian pidgins.

Creolistics and General Linguistics

There is much more literature on the emergence, sociology, and morphosyntax of PCs than on their phonologies, semantics, and pragmatics. Faracas and Klein (2009) are exceptional in devoting almost half the volume to phonetics/phonology. More unusual is Bhatt and Plag (2007), devoted entirely to prosodic features of creoles and other 'contact languages.' The volume of publications is also now increasing on ethnographic and other social aspects of creoles and pidgins, with a special section devoted to such topics in Kouwenberg and Singler (2009).

With the exception of time reference (e.g., Singler, 1990; Michaelis, 1993; Schlupp, 1997) and noun phrase structure and nominal number (for references, see Tagliamonte and Poplack, 1993; Baptista and Gueron, 2007), studies in semantics and pragmatics are in the minority. On the other hand, the development of quantitative sociolinguistics owes a great deal to research on AAE since the mid-1960s (see, e.g., Labov, 1972; Rickford, 1999) and on CECs (e.g., Rickford, 1987). Numerous publications in *American Speech*, *Language in Society*, and *Language Variation and Change* reflect this. There are also several monographs on creolistics today that provide an overview of the scholarship on creoles and pidgins today. They include Romaine (1988), Holm (1988), Manessy (1994), Arends et al. (1995), Mühlhäusler (1986), Sebba (1997), Corne (1999), Chaudenson (2001, 2003), and Siegel (2008). They vary in geographical areas of focus, adequacy, and kinds of lexifiers.

Studies of the morphosyntax of creoles have yet to inform general linguistics beyond the subject matters of time reference, serial verb constructions, and grammaticization. For

instance, studies of lectal continua (e.g., Escure, 1997) have had this potential, but little has been done by creolists to show how their findings may apply to other languages. The nonmonolithic nature of 'mesolectal structures' as the intermediate sociological zone where acrolectal and basilectal features naturally mix into one system allowing more variation should have informed general linguistics against the fallacy of monolithic grammatical systems (Mufwene, 1992). (This is a different position from Labov's (1998) 'coexistent systems' hypothesis, which suggests that each of the systems may still be monolithic.) More work could have been done to eradicate the misconception that continua are typical of creole-speaking communities only; these phenomena can be observed in any population where the standard/nonstandard distinction applies and colloquial speech is accepted as normal. Based on observations such as Rickford (1990) that mesolectal speech is the norm in creole-speaking communities, more work could have been done about whether the notions *BASILECT* and *ACROLECT* are not in fact elusive constructs of convenience that are associated with analyses intended to amplify structural differences between creoles and the European languages they have evolved and diverged from.

Likewise, the debate on 'creole genesis' could have informed genetic/historical linguistics on the relevance of varying external-ecology conditions to the actuation question, to language change and speciation, and even to language vitality (Mufwene, 2001, 2005, 2008). (The actuation question is that of identifying the ecological motivation of change, i.e., the particular factors outside language that triggered a particular change at a particular point in time, owing to particular interactional dynamics.)

Note also that a concomitant of the emergence of creoles around the Atlantic and in the Indian Oceans was the loss of heritage languages among the (descendants of) the enslaved Africans. The fact that language loss as a concomitant of language shift was experienced only later by European colonists who had different heritage languages than the dominant one may very well account for why the divergence of other colonial offspring of the same European languages was not as extensive among descendants of most Europeans. It appears that they were acculturated relatively late and did not participate as early as the slaves and European indentured servants in shaping the new colonial vernaculars (Mufwene, 2009a). Their gradual assimilation to the population that had been speaking the dominant European language as a heritage vernacular is another important factor that filtered out much of the adstrate element that had once justified speaking of, for instance, German and Italian Englishes in the United States.

Although lack of consensus among creolists may be invoked as a general reason for this failure to influence general linguistics, alarming indifference from theoretical linguists, especially those engaged in theories of typology and universals, is a more important reason. Granted, the recent publication of the 'Atlas of Pidgins and Creoles' (Michaelis et al., 2013) can make some difference; the question remains of whether the typological values assigned to characteristics of some creoles are inspired from within (which would be more promising) or from without (which is no more than intellectual colonization).

Consensus cannot be expected of creolistics any more than it can of other subfields of linguistics or any other scientific discipline. Nonetheless, in the broader context of language contact (including second-language acquisition), studies of especially the emergence of creoles have been inspiring. For instance, Thomason and Kaufman (1988) is widely cited in studies of indigenized Englishes. Schumann (1978) and Andersen (1983) were an important step in consolidating common interests between second-language acquisition and the emergence of creoles. The journal *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* has sometimes featured lead articles on creoles and SLA. Lefebvre et al. (2006) is indicative of the kind of mutual stimulation that can obtain between creolistics and the scholarship on SLA (Mufwene, 2010). More cross-fertilization might be expected between studies of creole genesis and those of (child) language development (DeGraff, 1999b), as among diverse subfields of linguistics.

No less significant is the contribution that creolists have made to the scholarship on grammaticization, owing largely to the reception that the leading practitioner, Bernd Heine, himself one of the first students of language contact in Africa, has extended to such research. The first milestones are to be found in Bruyn (1995) and Baker and Syya (1996).

There is also hope in the recent growing number of publications addressing the question of whether creoles are simpler than other natural languages, including Dahl (2004), Gil (2007), Faraclas and Klein (2009), DeGraff (2001, 2009), Aboh and Smith (2009), McWhorter (2001, 2012), and Mufwene (2009b, 2013). Creole studies are definitely moving away from the periphery of the linguistics profession. They have also claimed center stage in research on the phylogenetic emergence of language (Bickerton, 1990, 1995, 2010; Botha, 2006; Mufwene, 2008, 2010; Hurford, 2012), competing with the scholarship on gestures (McNeill, 2012) and sign language. Perhaps the time has finally come when creoles can influence the way linguists and other scholars study language more conspicuously.

See also: Dialectology; Language Contact; Sociolinguistics.

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