25 Conclusions

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25.1 Introduction

In this book we have considered a number of aspects of pidgins and creoles, and competing theories accounting for their origin. Now we are in a position to better evaluate the different theories in terms of their explanatory potential, and this will be done in the first section of this chapter. We then presented a number of case studies of individual pidgins and creoles of the Atlantic area (in a broad sense), and lastly analyzed specific syntactic phenomena in a comparative perspective. We find quite a bit of variation, as well as uncanny resemblances between the different creoles. Furthermore, a number of the phenomena under discussion have turned out to be quite complex. Both the variation in the creoles and their complexity will be further illustrated in this chapter in a discussion of the copula, and creole phonology and morphology. We conclude with a number of issues for further research.

25.2 Scenarios for creole genesis

In the second part of this book (chapters 8 through 11) various theories, hypotheses and models were discussed that have been put forward to explain the origin and genesis of creole and - to a lesser extent - pidgin languages. In this section each of these theories will be briefly evaluated.

25.2.1 Theories focusing on the European input

*Foreigner Talk/Baby Talk*. While there are not many recent theories of creole genesis that explicitly refer to Foreigner Talk as an explanatory concept, the one that has done so most explicitly, Naro’s (1978) Reconnaissance Language Theory, has been severely criticized in recent years (Clancy Clements 1992; Goodman 1987; but see also Naro 1988, 1993). The role of Foreigner Talk itself is not questioned as a factor in creole genesis. Seuren & Wekker (1986) incorporated Naro’s Factorization Principle, which is an operationalization of the role of Foreigner Talk in creole genesis, into their Semantic Transparency Theory. Foreigner Talk as a general concept and the Factorization Principle still occupies an important place in at least some theories of creole genesis. In order to maintain this position, more attention should be paid to recent results from the study of Foreigner Talk as such.
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Imperfect Second Language Learning. Earlier ideas regarding possible parallels between creolization and pidginization on the one hand and natural second language acquisition on the other, as expressed in Andersen (1983) and Schumann (1978), have not been followed up by many creolists. Nonetheless, the role of second language learning in creole genesis has received a new impetus in the gradualist model of creolization. In a community where the rate of nativization of the creole speaking population is low, the process of creolization must be partly a matter of second language acquisition by adults. Up to now parallels between both processes have largely been hinted at rather than investigated in any detail. A notable exception, however, is the work by Wekker (1982, 1989). Further research along these lines will be required in the future.

Monogenesis. After a period of popularity in the 1960s and early 1970s, the Monogenesis-Relexification Theory, which claims that many or all creoles go back to a Portuguese Pidgin once spoken along the West African Coast (and perhaps ultimately to the Mediterranean Lingua Franca), does not seem to have any supporters anymore. A weaker version of it was proposed by Hancock (1986) under the name of Domestic Hypothesis. It claims that the English-lexifier Atlantic creoles go back to a Guinea Coast Creole English once spoken in mixed African-European households along the West African Coast, and it has been adopted by a number of creolists, such as Smith (1987) for the Surinam creoles. In order to develop this hypothesis in the future, not only linguistic but also historical evidence will have to be adduced concerning the actual links between the Atlantic English-lexifier creoles. Similarly, the relation between the French-lexifier pidgins and creoles is still an open issue. Hull (1979) assumes a source in Guinea Coast Pidgin French.

European Dialects. For some time theories referring to regional European varieties of the lexifier language were more or less in disrepute, especially when related to African-American language varieties (either for methodological or ideological reasons). In recent years there has been a renewed interest in this type of explanation (e.g. Lalla & D’Costa 1990). As far as the French-lexifier creoles are concerned, the European Dialect Hypothesis has been forcefully defended by Chaudenson (e.g. 1974, 1992) for Réunionais. Chaudenson’s earlier views have been severely criticized by Baker (1982), both on internal-linguistic and on external, especially demographic, grounds. Whatever the merits of this hypothesis, in order to survive it will have to rid itself of its methodological flaws (i.e. its use of the Cafeteria Principle).

25.2.2 Theories focusing on the non-European input

Substrate and relexification. Apart from the methodological problems involved in assessing
the role of substrate influence, at least some of the disagreement about that role has to do with theoretical conceptions about language structure, i.e. the question whether surface structures or more abstract structures are the point of departure for the analysis. At the moment two strands of substrate research can be distinguished: the more descriptive, surface-oriented approach of Alleyne, Boretzky and others, and the more theory-driven, abstract approach of Lefebvre, Lumsden and their associates. Both approaches could benefit more than they have done up to now from the results of historical investigations into the demographics of slave populations. This may serve to reduce the set of substrate languages to those that were actually spoken at the right moment, and at the right place.

25.2.3 Gradualist and developmental hypotheses

Gradual creolization. The principal weakness of the gradualist model is that up to now it has not been articulated with enough precision to allow falsification. On the other hand, it has given rise to a number of historical studies, both linguistic and extra-linguistic, that provide evidence against some of the other theories, especially the Bioprogram Hypothesis. Also, now that more and more earlier texts are being discovered it becomes feasible to include other creoles in research carried out in this framework. As indicated above, a serious effort should be made by proponents of this view to explore the parallels between creolization and second language acquisition. In order to approach the historical situation as closely as possible, an experimental design could be developed whereby the acquisition of e.g. English as a second language by speakers of West African languages is compared with the structural features of English-lexifier creoles.

Grammaticalization. While the concept of grammaticalization itself is not entirely new, it has only recently begun to be more widely used in linguistics in general. One of the first scholars to introduce it in the study of pidgins and creoles was Gillian Sankoff, who explained the origin of the Tok Pisin future marker be and the relative marker ia from this perspective (Sankoff & Laberge 1974; Sankoff & Brown 1978). More recently, grammaticalization was invoked by Plag (1993) in an attempt to explain the diachronic development of Sranan taki from a main verb into a complementizer. Although until now this approach has not been used often enough to allow of any definitive assessment, it seems that the concept of grammaticalization can be most fruitfully employed in the study of creoles, especially in diachronic investigations. This is so because in their earlier stages these languages abound with cases crying out for an explanation in terms of grammaticalization processes. The question is, of course, whether grammaticalization in creoles occurs in the same way, and at the same rate, as it does in non-creole languages. The application of the concept of grammaticalization to the development of creole languages could thus contribute
both to an elucidation of creolization processes, and to a further elaboration of the concept of grammaticalization itself.

25.2.4 Universalist approaches

**Bioprogram Theory.** Twenty years after its inception, Bickerton's Language Bioprogram Hypothesis still occupies an important place in creole studies. In these two decades two major innovations have been incorporated. First, the concept of parameter setting was adopted from GB theory in Bickerton (1984), where the bioprogram is defined as the set of unmarked parameter settings. Second, in Bickerton (1988) orthodox GB theory was replaced by Wexler & Borer's Lexical Learning Hypothesis, which considers that all languages have basically the same syntax, surface variations being lexically determined. In evaluating Bickerton's theory a striking paradox appears: while there is no question that Bickerton's views are still quite influential among creolists, they are not shared by many of them in their most complete version (although they seem more in favor among scholars from other disciplines, such as the cognitive sciences; cf. the peer commentary in Bickerton 1984). This indicates that Bickerton's influence is primarily an indirect one: rather than his views being adopted by other creolists, they have generated an enormous amount of activity, either aimed at accumulating evidence against his views, or at improving the methodological validity of the argumentation used. Since it leads to many new insights and much specific new research, the bioprogram hypothesis has proved a very successful theory.

**Generative Theory.** The fact that during the last two decades generative linguists have actively begun to include creole languages in their databases has had the effect of bringing linguistic theory into a discipline that was up to then largely descriptive. In addition to this, it has shown the relevance of creole studies for linguistic theory. On the other hand, the amount of theoretical sophistication coupled with the ever-continuing adjustments in the theory may cause communication problems between generative and non-generative creolists. In order to benefit optimally from each others' activities, the two parties will have to make sure that no knowledge gap prevents communication.

**Semantic Transparency.** Unfortunately, this hypothesis (like some of the others discussed earlier) has never been elaborated into a full-blown theory of creole genesis. Rather it has the status of a single explanatory principle among others. One particularly profitable way of exploring it further might be its incorporation in the comparative study of creolization and second language acquisition that was referred to above (cf. Wekker 1982, 1989). In addition, the availability of older creole texts now makes it possible to apply the concept of semantic transparency not only to present-day varieties but also to diachronic developments.
Common Social Context Theory. This approach has been used primarily by Gillian Sankoff (1980) with regard to the grammaticalization phenomena in Tok Pisin referred to above. In this, largely functionalist, framework these phenomena are analyzed as the result of a process whereby discourse markers change into structural syntactic elements. To the extent that discourse in different pidgins and creoles functions in a more or less similar context certain similarities may occur. Taking into account the fact that pidgins and creoles, perhaps more than any other type of language, are so intimately linked with the social context in which they have arisen, it is somewhat surprising that the functionalist approach has not gained a wider following. The fact that more and more information is being made available about the sociohistorical circumstances of pidginization and creolization may provide it with a new impetus in the future. Whether this will confirm the idea of a common social context for all or most pidgins and creoles is an open question.

25.2.5 Conclusion
During the last decade, several proposals have been made that try to reach some sort of compromise by incorporating several of the ideas expressed in the theories discussed above. The motive for devising a theoretical compromise is not so much the desire among creolists to reach a consensus, but rather the awareness that each of the above theories by themselves is incapable of explaining the phenomenon of creole genesis by itself. One of these 'compromise theories' is Mufwene's Complementary Hypothesis, which allows both for substrate and superstrate influence in creole genesis with Universal Grammar operating as a regulating mechanism determining the selection of particular substrate and superstrate features (Mufwene 1986a, 1990). Whatever the precise make-up of such a theory, it will always have to be more than simply the sum of any number of contributing hypotheses, since otherwise it will not be falsifiable. In other words, it will have to state as precisely as possible the division of labor among the several sub-theories as well as any interactions between them.

25.3 Unity and diversity
Something that every creolist has to come to grips with is the tension between the diversity between the structures of the different creoles around, and the fact that they present striking similarities. Both aspects are a challenge. Can we set up scenarios specific enough to come to grips with this apparent contradiction?

We will exemplify this issue with the copula. The original assumption in many studies was that creoles have a null copula. This was the background assumption in Labov’s (1990) [1971] work on copula deletion in the Black English Vernacular, and Ferguson’s (1971) pioneering study of simplified registers and foreigner talk. However, the actual patterns of
copula usage in creoles are much more complex. In Papiamento we have *ta in all contexts, locative, predicative, identificational:

(1)  a. Mi *ta na kas.
    'I am in the house.'
b. Mi *ta di Korsow.
    'I am from Curacao.'
c. Mi *ta Pedro.
    'I am Pedro.'

In Guyanais (Saint-Jacques Fauqenoy 1972) we find a null copula. The form *es in (2a) is not a copula but a question particle.

(2)  a. *Es *tô la?
    'Are you there?'
b. Wôm masô.
    'The man is a bricklayer.'

The impersonal subject is either *a or emphatic *sa. The latter is restricted in its use:

(3)  a. A / *sa bô.
    'It's good.'
b. A / ?*sa mó.
    'It's me.'

In Principense ( Günther 1973 ) the copula *sa is optional:

(4)  Ína (sa) mìgu mútu.
    'They are good friends.'

When *sa is present, the weak clitic form of the subject pronoun must be used:

(5)  a. Amí unú.
b. *Amí *sa unú.
c. N *sa unú.
d. *N unú.
    'I am naked.'
In Jamaican (Bailey 1966), a distinction is made between locative and non-locative use:

(6) a. Di tob de ina kichin.
    ‘The tub is in the kitchen.’

b. Disya buk a fi-Mieri
    ‘This book is Mary’s.’

With adjectives, there is no copula, a common pattern in the Caribbean creoles (see below):

(7) di kaafi kuol
    ‘The coffee is cold.’

25.4 The lexicon and multifunctionality

In all creoles we find that lexical items are multifunctional in that they can belong to several word classes at a time. Assuming there to be a base category for each item, we can assume a morphological process of conversion or zero-derivation (different theoretical claims are embodied in these terms, but this need not concern us here).

Voorhoeve (1981) has studied this problem in some detail for Sranan. He posits rules of conversion, on the basis of regular patterns of correspondence (see chapter 18). Thus the word *siki* can be the adjective ‘ill’, the noun ‘illness’, the transitive verb ‘make (someone) ill’ and the intransitive verb ‘be ill’.

A complex case of multifunctionality, where the category of the element involved appears to be determined by the syntactic context, involves adjectives/stative verbs in Sranan. These elements function as stative verbs when used predicatively and cannot have a preceding copula (*de* in Sranan):

(8) a. A liba bradi.
    ‘The river is wide.’

b. *A liba de bradi.

*bradi* is a verb here, and a copula is not allowed. Consider now a case where *bradi* is preceded by the adjectival modifier *so*:

(9) a. *A liba so bradi.

b. A liba de so bradi.
    ‘The river is so wide.’
Here the copula is suddenly obligatory. The same holds when bradi is questioned with the particle o ‘how’:

(10)  

a. *O bradi a liba?

b. O bradi a liba de?

‘How wide is the river?’

When bradi is modified, it behaves as an adjective. Similarly, it must be viewed as an adjective in attributive position:

(11)  

a bradi liba

‘the wide river’

25.5 Phrasal compounding

The primary means of lexical expansion in almost all, if not all, creoles is compounding, which tends to be highly productive. Compounding is used in all categories. Sranan has mafoneti [mouth night] ‘midnight’ and bobimofo [breast mouth] ‘nipple’, Haitian has bouch kabrit [mouth goat] ‘Cassandra’ (Hall 1953: 41). Where Papiamento has bula bay [fly go] ‘fly away’, a compound derived from a serial construction, Haitian has magne māje [touch eat] ‘just eat a little’ (Hall 1953: 42).

Very common in some creole languages is phrasal compounding. It involves (a) cases where one of the members of the compound is a phrase rather than a word, and (b) cases where the structure of the compound itself reflects a syntactic rather than a morphological pattern.

An example of the first type is Saramaccan agentive formation, historically derived from the 18th century form man, and now a suffix ma (see chapter 14), which is attached to verbs or verbal complexes:

(12)  

pai ma [bear man] ‘pregnant woman’

tja buka ma [carry mouth man] ‘messenger’
pai ku mujee ma [bear with woman man] ‘midwife’

Notice first of all that the meaning of ma is no longer exclusively masculine but rather ‘person that ...’, i.e. the form is somewhat grammaticalized. Second, the lefthand member can contain noun phrases (buka ‘mouth’), prepositional phrases (ku mujee ‘with woman’ above), and even clauses and serial constructions.
Similar perhaps are cases in Haitian where verbal complexes function as nouns (Hall 1953: 41):

(13) pase raj [pass rage] 'exotic dance'
    lanvi mouri [want die] 'imprudent person'
    pote mak [bear mark] 'he who is scarred'

An example of the second type is Papiamento, where most compounds include a linking morpheme di/i 'of') (Dijkhoff 1993):

(14) palu di garganta [stick of neck] 'neck bone'
    kabes di boto [head of boat] 'lift'
    barba di yònkuman [beard of young man] 'herb'

It can be shown that these forms, in spite of their syntactic appearance, behave as lexical islands for pluralization, adjectival modification, extraction, etc. (Dijkhoff 1987).

25.6 Phonology

What continues to be striking is that so little is published in pidgin/creole phonology. For morphology there is always the weak excuse that pidgins and creoles have little morphology, although the areas of compounding, reduplication, nominalization, and conversion tend to be quite complex, and result in interestingly different patterns among the languages involved. For phonology a comparison with 'non-creole linguistics', exemplified e.g. in a journal such as *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, is sobering, and we feel this is an unfortunate historical accident. The areas of tone, vowel epenthesis or epithesis, and syllable structure, to name but a few areas, all demand the same kind of scrutiny that serial verbs and the copula have been subjected to.

25.6.1 Segmental phonology

Few synchronic studies of pidgin or creole phonologies go beyond the stage of a simple phonemic description. Clearly a great deal of work remains to be done in this field. In a sense the Saussurean principle that synchronic work must precede diachronic work has been largely ignored in the creole field.

The diachronic work done in the creole field has largely been haphazard and methodologically poor. Researchers have been generally too keen to do large-scale comparisons across groups of creoles with a common lexifier language. Since it is not a priori obvious
that such comparisons are legitimate, i.e. that having a common lexifier language necessarily implies any direct historical (linguistic) connection, this is equivalent to putting the cart before the horse. By proceeding from small-scale comparisons first, it should be possible to find evidence of linguistic relationships, enabling us to sort creoles into groups. Smith (1987) provides ample evidence that the Surinam creoles form one such group; that this group includes the Jamaican Maroon Spirit Possession Language; and that the next closest relationships are with the West African creoles/pidgins of which Krio is the best-described representative.

Another type of historical research which has been carried out in a very unsound fashion is the important task of tracing African lexical items in European language-lexifier pidgins and creoles. The wildest etymologies have sometimes been proposed. Bickerton (1981) has criticized the use of the Cafeteria principle, by which he means the practice of going through randomly selected dictionaries of African languages in an attempt to trace possible African lexical items that might be present in some creole language, without any attempt to establish the historical relevance of a particular African language.

If the selection of dictionaries is made on an arbitrary basis, such as those that just happen to be in one’s library at a certain moment, it is not likely to lead to anything significant. If the exercise leads to the apparent conclusion that creole x has two words from African language a, one word from b, one word from c, two words from D, etc. we should at least ask ourselves the tricky question of how such a strange result could come about, since it is inherently unlikely that many languages could have equal influence on the development of a creole. Rather than enhancing the general level of intercomprehension, such a process would appear to inhibit it.

If the phonological relationships between the creole lexical item and its supposed African cognate are extremely complex, or even worse if no consistent sound-laws in the neogrammarian sense may be established, then we should once again ask ourselves if we are on the right track. The clear cases of established African etyma in creole lexicons demonstrate that, given the small time-intervals involved – usually not more than a few hundred years –, we should beware of any claims involving other than the most obvious relationships.

25.6.2 Prosodic systems
One area which promises to be rewarding when sufficient work is done is that of the tone and accent systems of creole languages. For some creoles no indication has been provided that they involve anything other than the types of system familiar from most Western European languages, that is, some kind of word-stress system, combined with an intonation system. In both cases the primary mechanism utilized has been claimed to be relative-pitch with amplitude and duration playing a subsidiary role. It must be pointed out however the
Beckman (1986) has claimed that a combination of amplitude and duration is the main indicator of English stress. Van der Hulst & Smith (1988) claim that stress is best not defined in terms of any physical property at all, although it must of course be ultimately realised in terms of some physical property, but that ‘stressed syllables are designated syllables in terms of prosodic constituent structure, which by themselves do not convey any tonal information’ (Van der Hulst & Smith 1988:xi).

For a number of Atlantic creoles it has been claimed that a third suprasegmental system is involved, which is not utilized in most West European languages, i.e. tone. This has been investigated to varying degrees for different creoles, but much work still remains to be done, both on the tone-systems or claimed tone-systems of the individual languages, and as regards the consequences for previous historical stages in the development of the various languages. The claims that have been made so far can be conveniently categorized into four groups.

(a) The Surinam Maroon languages Saramaccan and Ndjuka (and the other dialects associated with it) have been convincingly demonstrated to be true tone-languages.
(b) A number of languages in the Caribbean and West Africa have been claimed to exhibit tonal phenomena in their phonology. These include Jamaican (Alleyne 1980), Krio (Carter 1987), British Jamaican English (Sutcliffe 1992), Guyanese (Devonish 1989, Carter 1987), and Cameroonian Pidgin (Dwyer 1967). Carter claims that the Guyanese, Krio and Cameroonian Pidgin systems are related, despite her description of the first as pitch-accent, and the latter two as tonal. Smith & Adamson (in prep.) suggest that Sranan possesses a somewhat similar tonal behavior.
(c) Papiamento has been analysed as a tone language (Römer 1992).
(d) The Portuguese-lexifier creoles of the Gulf of Guinea have been claimed to be tone-languages (e.g. Principense by Günther 1973). Traill & Ferraz (1981) disagree, preferring to characterize Principense as possessing free pitch accent.

It is clear that what we find in these languages cannot be described in all cases as involving true lexical tone oppositions. Of course the distinctive use of tone in the languages of the world is not restricted to the marking of lexical distinctions. A second very important use of tone is to mark morphosyntactic distinctions, and this function is employed in a number of the above-mentioned languages. Furthermore even a cursory examination of a number of languages will reveal that it does not make sense to speak about an opposition between two types of language – stress-languages and tone-languages. Tone and stress are in fact two separate phonological dimensions – tone being basically a property of segments, and stress not – which may well occur combined in the same language in quite a variety of ways. The fact that stress may be primarily articulated by pitch may also confuse the issue.
25.7 Language change and language contact

Another area of future concern is the relation between creole studies and language contact studies. Apart from the attempt at a synthesis in Thomason & Kaufman's (1988) book, few recent studies have linked creoles and language contact explicitly. This is unfortunate, we feel, because much of the time creolists are drawing up scenarios about what happened in some fort, slave market or plantation as much as several hundred years ago. These scenarios are subject to two potentially fatal flaws: first, often the historical knowledge about who, when, where, and how is scanty, although the study of demographic and social history is continually providing us with new results. Second, assumptions are often made about second language learning, interference, relexification, etc. which are not based on what has come to be known about these processes. In the areas of acquisition, code-switching and mixing, borrowing, and bilingual processing tremendous progress has been made, which has not had sufficient effect on the scenarios around, it seems.

Again, this criticism is sometimes countered with the objection that contemporary research in these fields is irrelevant because the process of enslavement and subsequently the situation of slavery, were so extreme and so different from what is ordinary in contemporary societies that the uniformitarian principle does not apply. All the processes mentioned have been shown to be strongly determined by the social context in which they occur. Learning German in a classroom in a French 'lycée' is very different from learning it in the streets of Kreuzberg, the Turkish quarter in Berlin. The type of code-switching and lexical interference from a national language that we find in minority language radio broadcasts is again quite different from what we find when bilingual adolescents joke in conversations involving those same minority and national languages. Language contact research is at the stage, however, where variability and social embedding are usually taken into account, in terms of typologies of bilingual speech behavior. These typologies, in turn, could be the basis for more realistic pidgin and creole scenarios. The field would profit greatly from closer links with neighbouring subdisciplines.

The same holds for language change. For an essentially historical discipline, pidgin and creole studies has more often than not had a persona steeped in synchrony, not diachrony. Again, this ahistorical perspective is rather beside the point. The dynamic nature of pidgins and creoles is often ignored, whereby, say 20th century Papiamento is taken as representative for a putative early stage, and this without further comment. In addition, the recent methodological innovations and theoretical insights of historical linguistics have not had much impact yet in the creole field.