

LIGN177: Multilingualism

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Structure of pidgins and creoles

Phonology (sounds)

- Vowel system simpler than English, French, Portuguese, but still average size
- General avoidance of fricatives ('th' f, z, etc..) and affricates ('ch') –
 - Jamaican Creole does not distinguish /p/ and /f/ dat < that
 - Tok Pisin homophones sip = sheep, jeep, ship
- Syllable structure is simpler
 - Tok Pisin giraun < ground
 - Jamaican taki < talk
 - Negerhollands fiis < vleis Dutch for 'meat'

Tone

- Some tone distinctions in creoles
- Correspond to stress or length in lexifier
- Lexical tone in Jamaican:
 - at 'hat' or 'hurt' bit 'bit' H level tone
 - at 'heart' bit 'beat'/'beet' H falling tone

Morphology

- Morphology refers to the structure of words - affixes and alternations in words that convey meaning differences
- Very little morphology in pidgins and creoles

Syntax

Sentence structure and order of words

- Subject – verb – object order
- Little subordination, some relative clauses in creoles (but not pidgins)
- Particles preceding verb for tense, mood, aspect, negation
- Serial verbs
 - a waka go a wosu (Sranan)
"he walked home" (=he walk go to house)

1. Zero copula (or lack of verb 'to be')

Occurs with predicate adjectives:

- Jamaican *De pikni sik* 'The child is sick'
- Tok Pisin *Pikinini sik*

Note: a common strategy in other languages:

- Turkish *deniz mavi* 'the sea is blue' (=sea blue)

2. Verb 'to be' distinctions:

Nigerian Pidgin:

- equative: *a bi man* I am a man
yu bi ma broda you are my brother
- locative: *a de Benin* I am in Benin City
- emphatic *na nyam we a chop* it is yam that I ate
na mi It's me

3. Same word for possession and existence

- Hawaiian Creole English
- *get wan wahine shi get wan data*
'there is a woman who has a daughter'

4. Negation before the verb

Kru Pidgin English

- *Hongri man no de set dan won ples*
- 'a hungry man doesn't sit down in one place'

5. Tense, mood aspect markers

- A. Bare verb – present or past

Miskito Creole English

- *die kom an him liiv dem all hiia an guo de.*
'he takes them and puts them on the right path'
- *wi liiv from der an kom doun hiir fo stodi*
'we left there and came down here so I could study'

5. Tense, mood aspect markers

- **anterior tense** (simple past for states, and past before past for actions)
- **irrealis mood** (future and conditional)
- **non-punctual aspect** (progressive & habitual)

	Haitian	Guyanese	Saramaccan	Hawaiian
anterior	te	tin	ti	bin
irrealis	ava	sa/go	o	go
non-punctual	ape	a	ta	stei

5. Tense, mood aspect markers

- Hawaiian Creole English
- *a bin go si Toni about go spansa da kidz, ae, da baesketbawl tim, da wan ai ste koch fo*

Examples of non-punctual aspect:

- Sranan *mi e kom* 'I'm coming'
- Krio *a de go wok* 'I'm going to work'
- Haitian *yo ape maze* 'they are eating'
- Mauritius *ki to ape fer* 'what are you doing?'
- Sao Tome *e ka nda* 'he is going'

5. Tense, mood aspect markers

- Tense-Mood-Aspect fixed order
- Sranan: *mi ben sa e go* 'I would have been going'
T M A
- Jamaican *mi en a go sing* 'I was going to be singing'

Creole continuum

- *Continuum* with the standard lexifier language - speakers have control over different levels
 - *Basilect* is the 'deepest' creole
 - *Acrolect* is closest to standard (in this case) English
 - *Mesolect* is in between
- | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| | Guyanese Creole English | |
| ■ MI BIN GII AM. | basilect | |
| ■ MI BIN GII II. | | |
| ■ MI DI GI HII. | | mesolect |
| ■ A DI GII II. | | |
| ■ A DID GI II. | | |
| ■ A DID GIV II. | | |
| ■ A GIV IM. | | |
| ■ A GIV HIM. | | |
| ■ A GEIV HIM. | | |
| ■ AI GEIV HIM. | acrolect | |

Defining creole prototype

- Former professor at Cornell, UC Berkeley
- Creolist, specialist in Saramaccan
- Currently political commentator and writer, Manhattan Institute



Substratist vs. superstratist

- Substratist: creoles emerged from pidgins via expansion and nativization
- Superstratist:
 - creoles are varieties of their lexifiers
 - creoles are no different than other languages with extensive contact (Romanian)
 - creole is not a type

Superstratist model of (Atlantic) creole development

- Whites dialect A → African slaves Gen 1
- ↓
- African slaves Gen 2
- ↓
- African slaves Gen 3

Successive generations speak an *approximation* of an *approximation* of second language variety

McWhorter: 3 traits that define creoles

1. Lack of inflectional morphology
 2. Little use of tone to lexically contrast single syllables or encode syntax
 3. Semantically regular derivational affixation
- Other languages may have one or two of these traits, but only creoles have **all three**

Inflectional morphology

- Creoles lack affixes to indicate tense, aspect, plurality
- Affixes often develop from separate words via a process of *grammaticalization*
Latin *cantare habemus* → Italian *cantaremo*
- Time depth is not sufficient to develop inflectional morphology

Tone

- Creoles make little use of functionally contrastive tone despite substrate tone languages and lack:
 - A) lexical tone contrasts between single syllable words
 - B) syntactic or grammatical distinctions made by tone

Lexical Tone

Lexical tone in **Buli (Gur, Ghana)**

- H sjúk 'path'
- L sjùk 'fish sp'
- M sjúk 'navel'

Grammatical tone

Kisi (Sierra Leone)

- HH sáá grab! imperative
- HL sàá grab hortative (expresses plea, desire, encouragement)
- LH sàá grab perfective
- LL sàà grab habitual

sàà sáá sàá
Saa grab.hab sheep 'Saa grabs the sheep'

Tone

- Tone in creoles is attested for words with more than one syllable:
Saramaccan: bigí < begin
 bígi < big
- Corresponds to stress in lexifier, and no stress differences with single syllable words

Rare uses of tone

- If tone is used in monosyllables or grammatically, it is part of creole development
 - Saramaccan
 - Kófi a wáka 'Kofi walks'
 - Kófi á wáka 'Kofi doesn't walk'
- á developed from < a ná
- See also Jamaican Creole distinctions based on lexifier vowel length

Derivational morphology

- Creoles have some derivational morphology, but it is semantically transparent
- Tok Pisin
 - gut 'good' gutpasin 'virtue'
 - isi 'slow' isipasin 'slowness'
- In other languages, time depth produces semantic quirkiness

Superstratist assumptions

1. Early plantation slaves spoke close approximation of the lexifier, not creole
2. Creoles are simply varieties of lexifier
3. Creoles are not distinguished from other languages with heavy contact
4. Creole is not a valid classification term
5. A language cannot be more or less creole than another

1. Early plantation slaves did not speak creoles

Text from 1671 Martiniquan French Creole shows signs of creole features

Sranan developed in 16 years of British rule in Suriname

Pacific creoles such as Pitcairn and Hawaiian developed in small communities with unrestricted access to English

2. Creoles are varieties of their lexifiers

- Does not recognize substrate role of West African languages
- Does not explain lack of convergence with centuries of exposure to lexifier (as in Fa D'Ambu Portuguese creole)
- Does not explain why creoles tend to use bare infinitive forms and lack of verb 'to be' – *but could this be transmitted L2 feature?*

3. Other contact languages

- Romanian (contact with Slavic), Maltese (contact with Italian, English) show some contact effects, but are complex languages with rich inflectional systems

4. More or less creole?

- Relies on a definition of a creole – which superstratists do not recognize
- Departures from 3 traits can be classified as *semi-creoles*, ex. Kituba contrastive tone and inflection

Should creoles be treated as 'exceptional'?

- Michel DeGraff (2001, 2005, etc..) presents multiple arguments against this view
- Argues against 'broken transmission', 'creoles as simple grammars' → are creoles really new if their parts are old?
- Haitian Creole has complex syntax, affixation inherited from French; Saramaccan has lexical tone and tone rules
- Muysken & Law point out that contributing languages (English, French, Twi, Yoruba) also had little inflectional morphology → accident of source languages?