Pidgin and Creole Language Genesis
Deconstructing the Status Quo.

Ciaran Foy
B.A. (Mod.) CSLL
Final Year Project, May 2007
Supervisor: Dr. David Singleton
Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and that it has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at any other university.

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Abstract

If one were to read a random textbook or academic paper offering an introduction to the field of pidgin and creole studies it is likely that in the vast majority of cases the definition proposed for each language would be the same across all such documents. Pidgin and creole languages are generally considered to be linked in a pidgin to creole ancestral relationship and it is interesting to note that the plausibility of this position or potential lack thereof is rarely if ever entertained. This pidgin–creole link is presented as a concrete fact in a way that closes the door on any innovative input relating to the genesis of these languages, specifically to those who encounter the discipline for the first time. This paper intends to ask a question which is becoming more and more prevalent in pidgin and creole studies: what if this pidgin to creole viewpoint is not as infallible as it seems? This paper intends to pit the pidgin–creole status quo against a new approach exemplified by the work of Chaudenson, Mufwene and others which essentially dismisses the idea of a creole language being definable in terms of it’s pidgin predecessor. In order to achieve this opposition, I begin by first presenting the ‘classical approach’ to the discipline before illustrating how one may gradually deconstruct this approach and present a theory which deals more with sociological considerations i.e. population demographics and social history than with structural linguistic processes such as the erosion of morphology or complexification of internal or external language forms. This new approach has important implications regarding how one classifies pidgins and creoles with regard to their parent languages. Are they seperate and unrelated or is there any reason not to consider them as dialects or varieties of the languages implicit in their development in the same way that Irish–English, for example, is accepted as such? The result of this study is not a dismissal of the classical approach but rather a suggestion that it’s dominant position at the forefront of the study of creoles and pidgins is undoubtedly open to further scrutiny.
Chapter 1

Introduction

The study of pidgin and creole languages has been undermined in the past by the widely held belief that these languages are of little merit to linguistic studies, being more notable for the features they lack rather than those they possess.

“The pidgin English spoken these days is about the most atrocious form of speech perhaps one could find in any corner of the globe. It is neither one thing nor the other. Consisting of a mixture of Samoan and Chinese here and there, with an occasional word of Malayan, it is a conglomeration truly worthy of the tower of Babel”. (Rabaul Times, 16 October 1925; quoted (McMahon, 1994, :253))

Pidgins and creoles were considered as broken and corrupted forms of language, the product of stunted cognitive and in some cases physical capacity on the part of those who spoke them. European languages were deemed far too sophisticated to be learnt by “primitive” natives. According to one writer commenting in 1849

“that people used to expressing themselves with a rather simple language cannot easily elevate their intelligence to the genius of a European language . . . it was necessary that the varied expressions acquired during so many centuries of civilisation dropped their perfection, to adapt to ideas being born and to barbarous forms of language of half-savage peoples” quoted (Aitchison, 2001, :221).

In terms of linguistic research, these languages tended to be ignored due to a misinterpretation of language as having only one acceptable and normalised form, as opposed to the uncultivated dialects of the masses (Holm, 1980, :2). This was born out of, as Holm tells us, the Roman tradition of rhetoric which promoted the cultivation, and refinement of Latin for public speaking and writing, a tradition which prevailed as the use of Latin in serious writing diminished, replaced by western European languages. It is only in the second half of the last century that the study of creoles and pidgins began to be taken seriously as an academic discipline, inspired by the acceptance of language as a barometer of the relationship that exists between the individual, language and society. In the 19th century August Schleicher posited his theory of language as an “organism” with periods of development, maturity and death, uninfluenced by and independent of the speaker. However, it is now widely accepted that language has a function not only in
establishing social relationships but also in conveying information about the speaker and their geographical and social background (Trudgill, 1974, :2). Hence creoles and pidgins have emerged as important instruments for studies of sociolinguistic variation and language change. According to Valdman (Valdman, 1978) creole and pidgin languages constitute a privileged field of research for certain domains of linguistic study given their variable nature in contrast to other “natural” languages and their resistance to static descriptive models. They compel attention to their social histories and to the embedding of languages in their social contexts and inject a “fractious energy” into sociolinguistic studies based on disagreement relating to theories and subtheories surrounding their characteristics (Rickford & McWhorter, 1996, :239). They provide an insight into the field of second language acquisition due to attempts to apply SLA-related phenomena to theories accounting for similarities between creoles based on varying European superstrate languages. Creoles and pidgins are therefore of significant interest and benefit to language studies possessing characteristics that bear on fundamental issues relating to all languages. According to Hancock (1977) and his extensive classification of pidgins and creoles, 127 such varieties have been in existence at one time or another (Wardhaugh, 1986, :61).

35 are English based varieties including those creoles of Jamaica and Hawaii which possess over one and a half million people whereas there are 15 French based varieties, among them Louisiana Creole, Haitian, Guyanais, the Lesser Antilles varieties, Seychellois, Mauritian and Réunionnais. Fourteen others are Portuguese based including Papiamentu and Saramaccan, seven are Spanish based e.g. Cocoliche, six are German based, three Italian based and the rest are based on a variety of other languages e.g Russenorsk (a now extinct Russian-Norwegian contact language) and Chinook Jargon (a virtually extinct contact language of the Pacific Northwest of the United States and Canada). (See figures A.1 and A.2 – Appendix).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Pidgin/Croele Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Jamaica, Bahamas, Hawaii, Gullah, Krio, Tok Pisin, Nigerian Pidgin English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Louisiana Creole, Haitian, Guyanais, Lesser Antilles Varieties, Seychellois, Mauritian, Réunionnais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugese</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Papiamentu, Saramaccan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Cocoliche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unserdeutsch (Rabaul Creole German spoken in Papua New Guinea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Talian, Cocoliche (sometimes described as an Italian-Spanish creole)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Russenorsk, Chinook Jargon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.1: Pidgin and Creole Languages
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Aim of this Paper

The immediate aim of this paper is to present a theory of pidgin and creole origins from what will henceforth be referred to as the “classical” point of view. In essence this will allow the construction of a theory of pidginization and creolization according to what is generally supported amongst creolists and operates as the basis for a great deal of those studies relating to the discipline. See (Hall, 1966), (Trudgill, 1974), (Valdman, 1978), (Holm, 1980), (Bickerton, 1981), (McMahon, 1994), (Lightfoot, 2006) etc. Therefore, the initial intention of this paper is to approach pidgins and creoles, their characteristics and the circumstances of their origins, according to this “classical” viewpoint. However, the ultimate aim of this paper is show how such an approach may be deconstructed and refuted entirely if one subscribes to an analysis of creole and pidgin languages which opposes their respective social histories and thus their supposed ancestral links. The study of creole and pidgin languages has generally been dominated by reference to the origins of these languages or more specifically how the supposed structural similarities between these languages might be explained in terms of how they originated. For some researchers, the shared properties of creoles lie at the heart of contemporary creole studies. As Singler states (Singler, 1990, :vii),

“no hypothesis of creole genesis can be seriously considered that fails to account for the phenomenon of shared properties”.

The classical approach claims that pidgin and creole languages separated not only by geographical distance but also by their “parent” language have been found to exhibit “remarkable” similarities. It has also been claimed that pidgins and creoles based on the same standard language but found as far apart as the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific exhibit high levels of mutual intelligibility. However, such notions of mutual intelligibility and indeed structural similarity are not necessarily universally accepted. The alternative, altogether more divergent approach treated in this paper, prompts one to wonder whether these shared characteristics are unique to creole languages? Is it even the case that these characteristics are indeed shared amongst creoles, or have the facts been twisted in order to create sweeping generalisations in support of varying structural theories of creolization? Such theories tend not to examine the social conditions which underpinned the creation of these languages, but rather the human activities and linguistic processes which contributed to their development. If these languages are indeed similar in structure, could it be that they all developed from a single prototype language and were subsequently “reflexified” depending on the dominant European language in use? Perhaps each language of this type received as its primary input a kind of “baby talk” universally employed by Europeans when communicating with non-Europeans in New World colonies who were supposedly incapable of comprehending the subtleties of classical European languages - thus influencing each different pidgin and creole in a similar direction? Further still, is it necessary to suggest such theories at all if one believes that the factors and processes involved in the development of a creole to be no different, for example, to those factors that precipitated the emergence of various varieties of English, such as Irish-English or American English(es)? In an attempt to respond to those questions left unanswered not only by the inconsistency of classification regarding creoles and pidgins but also by the paucity of historical documentation
regarding their genesis; this paper will also examine the social nature of pidgin and creole development. Therefore the demographics of the contact situation will be taken into account which must be considered to be an important tool in validating or refuting those theories, monogenetic, polygenetic or otherwise which attempt to account for the characteristic similarity of creoles and pidgins. It is important to note that this paper does not necessarily intend to promote one particular viewpoint but rather to show how a classification of creole and pidgin languages which treats these varieties as an abnormal, unplanned linguistic process, may be challenged by a simpler and arguably more acceptable theory. One which considers the processes involved in the creation of creoles and pidgins to have been the same processes which have occurred throughout history in language contact situations.
Chapter 2

Pidgin Languages - The Classical Approach

The following discussion of pidgin languages intends to define pidgins from the classical point of view i.e. that point of view which considers pidgins and creoles to be inherently linked in line with a family tree model of language genesis. Such an approach is adopted to establish the popular standpoint before proceeding to offer an alternative opinion regarding how and where pidgin languages developed as well as their relationship to creole languages.

2.1 Definition

Perhaps the simplest definition of a pidgin language is that which defines it in terms of a lingua franca. A lingua franca is a language adopted by people who have no language in common for means of communication. Terms such as “trade language”, “contact language”, “international language” and “auxiliary language” effectively describe the same phenomenon. In Africa for example, English and French languages are not indigenous to the region and require formal education, and are often used as linguae francae between people who speak mutually exclusive African languages. Various languages have evolved as linguae francae throughout history such as Greek koiné, Vulgar Latin and Sabir, a language used as a lingua franca in the Mediterranean throughout the middle ages.

A pidgin is effectively a lingua franca, which has no native speakers. Nobody can claim a pidgin as his or her first language and mother tongue. Holm defines a pidgin as:

“a reduced language that results from extended contact between groups of people with no language in common; it evolves when they need some means of verbal communication, perhaps for trade, but no group learns the native language of any other group for social reasons that may include lack of trust or of close contact” (Holm, 1980, :4).

Rickford and McWhorter state that pidgins are generally regarded as vehicles of trade between varying ethnic groups (pidgins of Papua New Guinea), as lingua francae on plantations (Fanakalo
between the British and Zulus in the mines of Natal in South Africa), as linguae francae for multi
ethic ship crews (Melanesian Pidgin English in Pacific trade of the early nineteenth century) and
as languages of service (Tây Bội between the French and their Vietnamese servants (Rickford &

2.2 Development

The development of a pidgin is thought to occur in an environment where an imbalance of
power exists and hence the speakers of one language tend to dominate the speakers of other
languages leading to a highly simplified form of the dominant language to facilitate commu-
nication within such an environment. Throughout history, these environments have been created
primarily through reasons of trade whereby people of varying backgrounds have been forced to
come together and communicate without the aid of a common language. Examples of trade rela-
tionships historically include Europeans trading along the Mediterranean. West Africans traded
with one another and with Europeans along the coast of the African continent, East Africans did
the same with other Africans and also with Arabs. The slave trade was also a major factor in
the development of multilingual communities and a classical approach to pidginization tends to
include colonies and plantations - where slaves were transported and exchanged en masse - as
ideal environments for the development of pidgins. African slaves were brought to North Amer-
ica, and the Caribbean where they were required to communicate with their European masters. In
the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries thousands of workers from Asia and the Pacific
were brought to Hawaii to work on sugar plantations. The practice of such plantations was to
separate those workers with a common language and therefore no one language could be fully
acquired. Hence workers were required to communicate with one another using jargons based
on the language of the plantation owners and these jargons would become known as pidgin lan-
guages. As will be outlined later, divergent opinion suggests that pidgin languages did not form
in plantation colonies, nor was it the case that language in such colonies underwent a period of
being simplified and grammatically impoverished. Rather the development of pidgins was con-
fined to trade colonies where contact between Europeans and Non-Europeans was limited.

The process of pidginization requires a situation where at least three languages are present. If
only two languages are present (bilateral), a direct struggle for dominance is likely to occur.
However, where at least three languages are present (multilateral) with one language dominant
over all others, a pidgin is likely to develop not only to facilitate communication between the so-
cially dominant group and the speakers of the “inferior” languages but also between the speakers
of the “inferior” languages who also require a means of communication. It is pertinent at this
point that the terms superstrate and substrate in relation to language be outlined. A superstrate
language is the language which is said to be socially dominant within a contact situation where
multiple languages are present. The superstrate is the language adopted to facilitate commu-
nication within such a multilingual society. Historically speaking, these languages were generally
the languages of those European countries that had established plantations and colonies in West
Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere. The term substrate language refers to those socially subor-
Chapter 2. Pidgin Languages - The Classical Approach

2.3 Characteristics

According to Valdman (Valdman, 1978, :5), every pidgin is characterised by the following traits in addition to its bilateral or multilateral usage in a multilingual context, as already described:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Trait</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Simplification of external form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Reduction of internal form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The interpenetration of those linguistic systems present in a particular environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Reduction in the number of domains of usage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Pidgin Traits

The first two traits above are defining characteristics of pidgins. These characteristics distinguish pidgins from other languages such as Chinese which is said to have limited morphology and hence a simplified external form. Pidgins on the other hand have both a simplified external and internal forms. Generally speaking, compared to their superstrate languages pidgins exhibit simplified phonology and morphosyntax. Valdman offers the example of West Coast Cameroon Pidgin English to illustrate this point showing how initial and final consonant clusters, common in English do not appear in this particular pidgin form. Such clusters are generally broken up by the vowel /i/ e.g. Spear - /sипa/ or by simply removing one of the consonants word finally e.g. camp - /kam/. Reduction of internal form is characterised by an impoverished lexicon which in turn leads to a reduction in grammatical categories, the number of parts of speech as well as the extension of semantic interpretation afforded to individual words. Hence a word in a European language employed in a particular context may be used to represent a variety of different meanings in the language’s pidginized form. It is generally agreed that most of a pidgins lexical stock comes from the superstrate language whereas the phonology, syntax and semantics are provided by those socially subordinate languages in a particular contact situation. Rather than describing pidgins as the amalgamation of a lexicon derived from a superstrate language and a grammatical system derived from a substrate, Valdman suggests that there is rather an “interpenetration” of linguistics systems that leads to the development of a pidgin. Therefore a particular trait of a pidgin such as the nasalisation of a vowel when in the company of a consonant may be the result...
of a convergence of traits from several substrate languages. Lexically speaking, this interpenetration is evidenced by calquing through such combinations as /draibele/ “sterile” and /faimedisin/ “anti-septic”. A pidgin is characterised by its use only in certain limited situations. Unlike a “normal” language, it is not used to express one’s emotions or identity. Pidgins generally possess a purely denotative function.

Once a pidgin language has been imported into a particular society its survival is dependent on the role it plays within the society, the attitude displayed towards the language and the social distance maintained between the speakers of the superstrate language and the speakers of its pidgin form. Should the need for minimal communication persist between the two population sets the pidgin will be deemed sufficient for that purpose with very little expansion to its structure, vocabulary or social function. However, should the situation arise where social distance is reduced, the speaker of the pidgin form will be motivated to learn the correct version of the superstrate language in order to gain access to more numerous domains of usage and hence the pidgin form will be expanded leading to greater alignment with its base language. Of course, if a pidgin language is no longer needed or deemed useless, it will die out. (DeCamp, 1971, :25) argues that the limited vocabulary and syntactic devices, unlike social prejudices, need not threaten the survival of a pidgin as any pidgin is capable of expanding it’s form should social conditions require a greater function than merely minimal interlingual communication. According to (Mufwene, 2007, :7),

“as the pidgins communicative functions increased (such as in the cities that emerged from erstwhile trade factories), these “contact varieties” became structurally more complex, and regularity of use gave them more stability. These additional characteristics changed them into what is known as expanded pidgins, like Tok Pisin and Nigerian Pidgin English”

What is particularly noteworthy about the above citation is the definition of Tok Pisin as an expanded pidgin. Tok Pisin is one of the three official languages of Papua New Guinea (Foley, 1986) and began life as a trade jargon consisting of varieties of broken English before begin expanded in function and structure due to its role as a lingua franca in plantation environments. Tok Pisin is often classified as a creole language because - as will be made clear in the following chapter - Tok Pisin would appear to fit the creole model perfectly. It developed directly from a preceding stabilised pidgin, characterized by extreme simplicity in inflectional morphology compared to the European language which provided its lexifier i.e. English. However, those theories which oppose pidgins and creoles based on their social history and the places in which they originated suggest that the development of Tok Pisin does not coincide with the creole model and must therefore be considered as an expanded pidgin. This in itself provides a concise and precursory insight into the difficulty of providing a succinct classification for those languages that are members of the creole ‘set’ and those that are not. The chapter that follows provides an outline of how opinion relating to the definition of creoles tends to conflict.
Chapter 3

Creole Language Genesis

3.1 A Nativist Approach

Described as “nativized pidgins” by Robert A. Hall (1966), a creole language is usually described as the descendant of a pidgin language and created when a pidgin language acquires native speakers and develops into a mother tongue, hence the popular assertion that a creole language is any language with a pidgin in its ancestry. This process of creolization occurs when a pidgin is no longer used merely for the purposes of trade but becomes the main means of communication between people in a settled community. The pidgin language becomes the primary source of linguistic input for the children of such a community and it therefore becomes more elaborate developing such characteristics as fixed word order, verbal inflection, subordinate clauses and expanded vocabulary. Creolization is therefore sometimes described as “the linguistic inverse of pidginization” (McMahon, 1994, :260). Whereas pidginization involves reduction and simplification, creolization involves expansion and elaboration in terms of external form, internal form and domains of use. Valdman’s descriptions of the characteristics of creole languages are in opposition to those described in the previous chapter for pidgin languages. (Siegel, 1987, :16) describes creolization as being a process containing three separate components: stabilization, expansion and nativisation. A pidgin language first becomes stable by continued use in a ‘polyglot’ contact situation (a situation where two or more different languages are present). Once the use of this stabilised pidgin is extended to new contexts it becomes an ‘expanded’ pidgin. This stage is characterised by increased complexity of grammar and lexicon and further reduction of irregularity. Once the pidgin becomes the native language and the mother tongue of a particular population, a pidgin may be considered a creole. Siegel also notes that a pidgin may become a creole at any time if nativisation takes place, hence the processes of stabilisation and expansion may be considered to have been skipped or to have occurred simultaneously with nativisation. Rickford and McWhorter distinguish between three types of creoles, fort creoles; plantation creoles; and maroon creoles. Fort creoles are described as those which developed in and around European outposts in West Africa between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries and used between Europeans and local Africans working in the fort or assisting in the slave trade. Plantation creoles are those creoles presumed to have been created on plantations in the Atlantic,
Pacific and Indian Oceans. Maroon creoles are believed to have been created by runaway slaves who, on escaping from slavery, developed their own communities usually in inland and highly inaccessible areas.

In addition to the notion of creolization there is also a notion of decreolization, a theory based on the idea of a creole continuum with those languages furthest removed from the superstrate language at one end of the continuum and the superstrate language itself at the other. Decreolization takes place when creole varieties, whilst remaining in contact with their donor languages begin to shed those notably creole characteristics and come to resemble more standard forms of their superstrate languages. There is a gradual introduction into the creole of irregularities and redundancies derived from the source language and elements taken from languages other than the source are discarded. Hence an African or Caribbean creole with English as a source language, would lose those lexical and grammatical items derived from African or Caribbean languages. The idea of a creole continuum emerges from those divergent creolized forms which are generated as the process of decreolization takes place. (Bickerton, 1975) proposed a number of terms that may be used to refer to the various parts that compose this creole continuum. He employs the term acrolect to refer to the language variety which may be considered to be the educated variety i.e. the variety that most closely resembles the standardised form of the given language. The term basilect refers to the other extreme of the continuum i.e. the language variety that would be the least comprehensible to a speaker of the standardised variety. The term mesolect denotes the intermediate varieties which fill the space between the basilect and the acrolect. By way of an example, Bickerton cites (Allsopp, 1958) to show the following Guyanese varieties of the Standard English sentence “I told him” which may appear as follows in the various parts of the continuum: (Wardhaugh, 1986:78)

1. ai tould him
2. ai to:l d hlm
3. ai to:l im
4. ai tünst im
5. a tünst im
6. ai tünst i
7. a tünst i
8. mi tünst i
9. mi tünst am

The first three varieties (1–3) are typical acrolect forms and are used by the middle classes; the next four (4–7) are mesolect forms found in the lower middle and urban working classes. Form 8 is found in the rural working class; form 9 is used by old and illiterate rural labourers, and both are typical basilect forms.
3.2 A Superstratist Approach

This section describes creole languages as being unrelated to pidgin languages and hence may be considered to be in opposition to the above description of creole languages. This is intended as a brief introduction to a superstratist theory of creolization that rejects the creolization as nativization approach.

Closer examination of the social histories of creole speech groups has led to dispute regarding the generally accepted definition of a creole as a “nativized pidgin”. The basis of this argument is that pidgin languages and creole languages did not necessarily develop under the same conditions nor did they even develop in the same places. One of the strongest motivations driving overseas exploration was the pursuit of trade, especially in luxury goods such as precious metals, jewels, furs, silk, aromatic scents, and spices (see figure A.3 – Appendix). In the 1600s organizations such as the East India Company made historic ocean voyages to the Orient and South Pacific. Initially, such trade led to the establishment of permanent trading posts, however subsequent exploration developed into permanent colonization via settlement colonies. Mufwene (2002) argues that pidgins were produced in trade colonies where contact between Europeans and non-Europeans was sporadic and a lingua franca was necessary to facilitate communication between Europeans and the indigenous population, however, creoles developed in plantation and settlement colonies where such contact was more regular specifically in the early stages (see Figure 3.1). This position suggests that it is the European language that has the greatest impact on the development of a creole language within the colony and is thus referred to as the superstratist position. According to (Mufwene, 2007, :4)

“It is surprising that the pidgin-to-creole developmental scenario has hardly been disputed for almost a whole century … to the present day. A simple look at the geographical distribution of our heuristic prototypes of creoles and pidgins – those lexified by European languages – suggests already that the alleged ancestor-to-descendant connection is tenuous”

The fact that the term creole in reference to a language variety was coined about 150 years previous to the use of the term pidgin in 1807 is further evidence according to Mufwene for this dichotomy in creole and pidgin development. The effect of such theories is to render inaccurate Hall’s description of creoles as “nativized pidgins”. However, if creoles do not contain pidgin languages in their ancestry, under what conditions did these languages develop? One is obliged to turn to the social histories of plantation colonies in order to find an answer.

Chaudenson refutes those theories which posit creolization as inversely related to pidginization saying: (Chaudenson, 2001, :142)

“The schema that posits a creole as the result of the evolution of a pidgin through ‘complexifications of the external form’, ‘expansion from the internal form,’ and ‘expansion of the domains of use’ … is therefore quite incompatible with the socio-historical and sociolinguistic facts that characterise the initial phases (I and II) of colonial societies”
According to (Mufwene, 2002), Chaudenson states that creoles developed by basilectalising away from the lexifier, i.e., acquiring a basilect, which is the variety the most different from the acrolect, the educated variety of the lexifier—the language which contributed the largest part of a creole’s lexicon. The initial phases of colonial societies mentioned above referred to those developmental phases of colonial societies when the population was actually disproportionately composed of white people and not black slaves, a fact, which Chaudenson states, is often ignored by those wishing to construct theories of creolization. The reason for this initial phase in the development of European colonies was purely economic. It was deemed impossible to proceed from a situation where the majority of the colonial population spoke different languages to the realisation of a fully-fledged colonial industry. Plantation communities were therefore preceded by homesteads on which mesolectal approximations of European lexifiers, rather than pidgins, were spoken by earlier slaves. The process of basilectalising away from the lexifier took place only in the later stages of colonial development when

“infant mortality was high, life expectancy was short, the plantation populations increased primarily by massive importation of slave labour, and the proportion of fluent speakers of the earlier colonial varieties kept decreasing ” (Chaudenson, 1992, :21) quoted (Mufwene, 2002).
Chapter 3. Creole Language Genesis

(Alleyne, 1971, :172) further supports this theory of basilectalising away from the lexifier. Alleyne notes that the French articles (la, l’, du, des) have survived in many of the French based creoles and cites this as strong linguistic evidence that French in its full morphological form was used in the colonial situation. Indeed Alleyne goes further suggesting that the contact situations under which creole languages developed, was no different to the classical contact situation, i.e. Latin with Celtic, Iberian or Italic, an example of language contact which precipitated the development of the Romance languages. On the one hand existed a European community and on the other hand an African community, who, for the purposes of communicating saw it in their interests to learn the language of the European community. The differences with the classical contact situation however, were primarily the degree of social integration, the conditions of the learning situation and the diverse manner in which the European/African contact situation later developed. Hence the transfer of native speech habits of Africans into the learning of a European language is greater than would have been the case for the learning of Latin by the Celts or Iberians.

One thing is clear, there is a great deal of diversity of opinion regarding the exact clarification and genesis of both pidgin and creole languages. Is creolization a follow on from pidginization or are the two processes completely separate entities occurring at different times in different places under conflicting social conditions? As is the case with many branches and sub-branches of linguistic study, the study of pidgin and creoles languages, dating back to Hugo Schuchardt’s pioneering Kreolisch Studien in the 1880’s, has many varying schools of thought relating in particular to theories of origin. Of course, the classification of pidgin and creole genesis and the notion of shared characteristics with regard to grammatical structure, go hand in hand with one another. If a range of creoles or pidgins share certain characteristics be they grammatical or lexical, what can one infer from this with regard to the conditions under which these languages developed? Is it possible to infer anything at all? Is it undeniably the case that such characteristics are even common to these languages? What evidence is there to support those many theories of origin which already exist? What evidence is there to contradict such theories? What follows is a concise description of those features, lexical, phonological, and syntactical which are said to be “shared” characteristics of pidgin and creole languages. Such evidence has provided the basis for the argument regarding theories of origin and will contribute to this paper’s attempt to reply to the above questions in subsequent sections.
Chapter 4

Structural Similarity - A set Apart?

As alluded to previously, a popular assumption regarding creole languages is that they are abnormal forms of language. Such an assumption appears to suggest that their underlying developmental conditions are unique and unparalleled historically. Therefore many linguists have considered it necessary to posit theories to account for their development, theories inspired by the similarity of structure common to creole languages. Various studies have been carried out which attempt to draw parallels between creole languages lexified by the same European language, between creole languages that have grown up side-by-side geographically speaking, as well as creoles which share merely the social conditions which underpinned their creation but not necessarily the European language which provided the lexicon. The aim, in each instance has been either to support or refute theories that posit developmental phenomena in some cases peculiar to all creoles in and in the case of the LBH peculiar to all first and second language learners. So what exactly are those similarities that have emerged from such studies? Any discussion of theories of origin should surely be preceded by evidence supporting the inspiration for such theories. This chapter will present an objective and introductory overview of such similarities focusing on the lexicon, phonology and syntactic structure.

4.1 Lexicon

Pidgin and creole lexicons tend to show a survival of archaic and regional lexical items drawn from their superstrates, specifically those European superstrates that provided the lexicon. According to (Holm, 1980, :75), in a comparative lexical study Bollée (1981) found that 16% of the lexicon of Haitian creole French and 9% of it’s Seychellois equivalent could be attributed to words considered archaic or regional in France. An English example of the survival of such forms is the use of the word “from”, in Atlantic creoles, as a conjunction with the temporal meaning “since” e.g. “From I was a child, I do that.” This usage is part of both archaic and regional English. Nautical words also tend to appear in creole and pidgin lexicons due to the fact that most creoles arose in maritime colonies and hence words such as kapsaiz (“turn over”) and hais (“lift”) have survived. Many lexical items attested in creoles and pidgins are notable due to the vulgar connotations expressed by such items in their superstrate language.
This is due to the fact that many of the settlers brought the dialects of their social class, however, words considered vulgar in the standardised form of the European language were accepted into the lexicon of the creole or pidgin language most probably due to frequency of use and the fact that such negative connotations would not have been perceived by those who did not speak the language as a mother tongue. The following words from Krio Creole English and taken from (Holm, 1980, :78) illustrate this point: *switpis* “diabetes”, *pisbag* “bladder”, *pisol* “urethra”. Of course it must be mentioned also that the European superstrate did not have the sole influence on a creole’s lexicon as the substrate language also provided lexical items. Various estimates have been suggested regarding the percentage of African lexical items in Atlantic creoles e.g. Bollée (1981) suggested that 2.7% of Haitian creole French lexical items are African in origin however she concedes that had she had access to a more complete lexicon, this figure would have been higher (Holm, 1980, :81). Processes such as calquing (whereby words or idioms in one language are translated word for word into another language) and reduplication (the repetition of a word for emphasis), are also present in creole languages with African substrates. As an example of calquing, (Holm, 1980, :86)suggests the Bahamian creole English term *big-eye* to mean greedy, whereas the Haitian Creole French term *grä-grä* (particularly big) is an example of reduplication of the word grand in standard French.

### 4.2 Phonology

Various studies into the phonology of pidgins and creoles have revealed that they have in common a number of phonological processes. Generally speaking, the overriding characteristic of creole languages is a consonant-vowel (CV) syllable structure with little or no consonant clusters. They select their vowels from the restricted set /i e a o u/ and their consonants from the set /p t k b d g f s m n l–r w j/ (McMahon, 1994, :261). Holm goes into great detail in his study of creole phonology, however, he is careful to point out that his analysis refers only to the basilect creole form i.e. the form which would be most in tune with any unique developmental process at play in the formation of the creole. He discusses processes such as apocope, prothesis, epenthesis, aphasis, syncope, paragogue and metathesis, which generally speaking, involve the insertion, addition and omission of one or more sounds to the beginning and end of a word. In order to propose commonality amongst creoles, Holm cites examples from creole languages lexified by varying European superstrates where the processes occur. For example, aphasis – the omission of one or more sounds from the beginning of a word – is evidenced by *tan* meaning “stand” in Sranan Creole English and *tomp* meaning “stump” in Negerhollands Creole Dutch (Holm, 1980, :109). Phonological homogeneity is also evidenced by common vowel systems. In the case of Atlantic creoles in particular, a basic African seven vowel system prevails rather than the vowel systems of their European base languages. Divergence from this pattern tends to occur with creole varieties that have undergone decreolization and have thus borrowed vowels from their superstrates. Generally speaking creole varieties adapted their vowel systems depending on their parent language. Vowels present in both substrate and superstrate were retained in the creole and vowels attested in the superstrate but not in the substrate were adapted to fit the vowel system of the substrate and hence the creole. For example, the schwa sound /ə/ present in
Portuguese, French, Dutch and English has no equivalent in the vowel systems of many African substrate languages and therefore Portuguese /a/ often became /i/ in the Gulf of Guinea creoles, for example (Holm, 1980, :116).

4.3 Syntax

Comparative studies of the syntax of creole languages have tended to focus on a common system of tense, mood and aspect hereafter referred to as TMA. (Muysken, 1981, :183) observed the following about the preverbal TMA particles characteristic of creoles:

a) Each Creole language tends to have three of them: a past tense marker; a potential mood marker; and a durative aspect marker.

b) When we find more than one particle accompanying a verb, the particles always occupy a fixed order: tense, mood, aspect, main verb. The combinations of the particles are interpreted in fixed, and rather complex ways. quoted from (Singler, 1990, :vii)

The past tense marker generally signifies anterior tense for action verbs and simple past for state verbs. The mood marker refers to “irrealis” or “unreal time” i.e. future, conditional or subjective time. This marker therefore signals phenomena which have not yet happened either because they are imaginary or conjectural or in the future or conditional. The aspect marker signals “non-punctual” and marks progressive or habitual actions (McMahon, 1994, :264).

TMA has been a much-debated area for creolists who have attempted to provide comparative studies to prove or disprove compliance, within a fixed set of creole languages, with the above stipulations. Derek Bickerton, for example, compared the TMA systems of Sranan, Guyanese, Haitian Creole French and Hawaiian Creole English and used the similarities in their TMA systems as evidence for his language bioprogram hypothesis of creole origin. However, Bickerton’s study of Haitian Creole French has been challenged by Arthur Spears (Spears, 1990), whose own investigation stated that the TMA system of Haitian Creole French differed markedly from Bickerton’s assertion of a classic system common to all Creoles. A further anomaly is Bickerton’s own suggestion that Papiamentu (a Portuguese based creole) is an exception to this TMA system. According to Anderson (Andersen, 1990), Bickerton proposed various explanations to account for Papiamentu’s divergence from a common system he had classified, however a subsequent study of Papiamentu (Anderson, 1990), asserts that the tense-aspect system is much closer to Bickerton’s bioprogram than Bickerton himself has realized. Andersen notes that Bickerton’s original observations were based on (Goilo, 1972), a textbook not intended to be a “sophisticated linguistic treatise” (Andersen, 1990, :89).

Such limited linguistic evidence seems to have provided the basis for many generalizations intended to support various theories of creole origin, certainly as Chaudenson suggests (Chaudenson, 2001, :39), in the case of monogenetic theories. Chaudenson argues that many hypotheses have been founded on mere “observable similarities” and that no hypothesis can be taken se-
riously without a comparative analysis of the relevant creoles. Hence Chaudenson sees fit to examine those putatively shared creole characteristics and dismiss them with regard to French creoles claiming that were these characteristics symptomatic of some unique process at play in the creation of creoles, all characteristics should be attested in all creoles. Chaudenson cites the following characteristics as being supposedly “peculiar” to all European-based pidgins and creoles (Chaudenson, 2001:48):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Pidgin and Creole Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Lexical correspondences, including syntactic function words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Elimination of inflections for number in nouns and for gender and case in pronouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>A system of preverbal particles to express tense, mood and aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Identity of adverb and adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Iteration of intensification and adverb-adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The use of an all-purpose preposition na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Development of compound prepositions of the type na + noun + de or some other genitive marker (as foe in Sranan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The word for ‘thing’ as interrogative (cosa in Philippine creoles, sani in Sranan), a fact which corresponds to the assertion that creoles have no syntactic difference between statements and questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The word for ‘much’ derives from a model language word that means ‘too much’: tro, tumsi, maisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The overall simplicity of these languages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Suggested Pidgin and Creole Characteristics

Chaudenson, however, does not consider such characteristics to be peculiar to creoles and dismisses them as follows: 1 and 10 are too general to conclude anything worthwhile. Simplicity is difficult to define and therefore difficult to use consistently. 2 and 3 are typical of lingua franca varieties of many languages, 4, 5 and 9 are well attested in both folk and/or regional French and 6, 7 are not attested in French creoles whereas 8 does not correspond to current usage in most of them. The bottom line is that one cannot accept the above proposed similarities as being defining characteristics of creole languages as they are not unique to creole languages nor are they all present in all creole languages. According to Mufwene (1986:131)

“The features which hitherto have been associated with creoles cannot distinguish these languages from noncreole languages. There are many of the latter which have not only the same features but also the same combinations thereof.” quoted (Chaudenson, 2001:145).
Furthermore, Chaudenson stipulates that proposed similarities must be present in all creoles and no

“circular or specious reasoning should lead us to deny a priori the ‘creoleness’ of those languages which appear to be exceptions” ((Chaudenson, 2001, :144)).

The intent of such evidence, it would appear, is to suggest that structural similarity alone is not a defining characteristic of creole languages. It is not necessarily the case that a creole language is a creole language simply because its structure corresponds to a predetermined set of features present in all creoles. Monogenetic theories in particular appear to suggest that were one to intersect the set of all languages with the set of proposed features common to creoles and pidgins, one would end up with the set of creole and pidgin languages alone. Such a narrow definition is inevitably subject to scrutiny. Hence Chaudenson’s viewpoint which states: (Chaudenson, 2001, :145).

“I claim that there are truly no structural features which define creoles independently of the sociohistorical circumstances of their genesis. Neither structural nor sociohistorical considerations alone suffice to characterise creoles. To really understand the development of these new vernaculars, both considerations must be combined.”

4.4 Theories of Origin

The fact remains however that similarities do appear to exist whether or not such similarities are themselves definitive with regard to the classification of a creole language. Given the notion of “abnormality” often assigned to creoles it is intuitive to assume that one should account for such shared characteristics, hence the presence of a number of theories, unique to pidgin and creole languages which attempt to explain how these languages originated. Such theories have, on one level, been subdivided into monogenetic and polygenetic categories and have generally explained the origins of creoles and pidgins from the points of view of those linguists who consider the two to be related. Monogenesis suggests that all pidgin and creole languages are descendants of a common ancestor i.e. a Portuguese contact language developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries between the Portuguese and West Africans. This contact language may itself be related to Sabir, the medieval lingua franca of the Mediterranean. Hand in hand with the theory of monogenesis is the idea of reflexification, which suggests that as later colonisation occurred this original contact language was subsequently influenced by other European languages and became “reflexified” with words from the locally dominant language replacing the original Portuguese word forms. Polygenetic theories include the idea of “baby-talk” or ‘foreigner talk’, which suggests that all Europeans when coming into contact with non-Europeans in trade colonies or plantations would simplify their speech in order to make themselves understood and a pidgin form would develop based on this simplification. This “baby-talk” theory explains similarities amongst pidgins and creoles by suggesting that all Europeans would have simplified their speech in a similar manner regardless of their language, however it has also been dismissed based on the predominance of structural similarities among pidgins and creoles associated with very different European languages. This theory also has racist undertones, suggesting as it might, that
non-Europeans are intellectually incapable of mastering a European language. Further theories include the nautical jargon theory, briefly aforementioned, which assumes that pidgins are derived from the lingua franca used by ship crews, however, this theory fails to account for the vast majority of similarities present in these languages and can be swiftly dismissed. The independent parallel development theory suggests that pidgin languages developed independently and are similar in structure because they are simplifications of similar languages, as the superstrates are predominantly European and the substrates predominantly African. This theory does have the advantage of also positing the shared social conditions of these languages as being a contributing factor to their shared characteristics. An alternative subdivision of theories of origin is that which opposes universalism and substratism. Universalism explains structural similarities as being influenced by universally unmarked features and is most famously supported by Bickerton’s Language Bioprogram Hypothesis or LBH. According to (McMahon, 1994, :270), Bickerton’s LBH attempts to answer three questions: How did creoles originate? how do children acquire language? and how does language evolve? According to Bickerton, creolization provides the answer, as creoles tend to share particular features of grammar despite variant substrate influence. Bickerton suggests that children are the innovators of creole languages due to an innate bioprogram, which allows them to develop language, uninfluenced or suppressed by a fully-fledged language in common usage within their environment. Substratists on the other hand view pidgins and creoles as being primarily influenced by the language that provides the grammar independent of the lexicon i.e. the substrate. In this theory creole grammars are seen as reflexified substrate grammars. Although the lexicon is taken from the superstrate, it merely maps new phonetic strings onto an old substrate grammar. According to Muysken and Smith, substratism sees creole genesis as stemming from the confrontation of two systems, the native languages of the colonized groups and the dominant colonial languages. The native language leaves strong traces in the resulting creole.

At this point, despite the numerous theories outlined which view structural similarity as being the sole definitive characteristic in classifying those languages acceptable as creoles, one cannot ignore Chaudenson’s suggestion that were such similarities indeed definitive, then they would need to be attested in all creole languages and only in creole languages. It would however be more instructive to present such shared characteristics in tandem with the social histories of creole languages in order to provide an all-encompassing definition of what is creole and what is not. In doing so one would hope to provide a clear distinction between creole languages, and those languages which share those putatively creole characteristics as briefly summarised at the beginning of this chapter, as well as those languages which have emerged from language contact situations but not necessarily classified as creole languages. The following chapter will attempt to explore the social history of those plantation colonies which fostered the development of creole languages during the period of European colonial expansion.
Chapter 5

Deconstructing the Status Quo - The Sociohistory

5.1 Deconstructing the status quo

In his 2006 paper (Mufwene, 2006), Mufwene adopts the term “myth” when describing many of the supposed characteristics of creole development which have emerged from the classical approach to the discipline as already outlined. For example he disputes the fact that creoles developed abruptly from erstwhile pidgins and instead suggests a gradual development from a colonial koiné (a vernacular spoken by the Creole populations of both European and non-European descent in the homestead communities that preceded the plantation communities). The claim that creoles result from imperfect second language learning of the colonial language by slaves is also rejected by Mufwene because one cannot assign the label “creole” to one divergent variety if one does not assign it to all. Why then does one not include Irish, American and Australian English as creole languages given that their characteristic variation from Standard English renders them imperfect (if we accept that any deviation from a standard form of the lexifier renders the variant imperfect). A further proposed myth attempts to explain the radical divergence in a creole’s structure from that of its European lexifier as being the result of a break or a time gap in the transmission of the lexifier. Such a gap may be due to a transfer in ownership of a particular colony for a period of time to a different colonial power before being restored to the original coloniser. However, such a discontinuity hypothesis fails to explain why such a large proportion of creole vocabularies are retained from their lexifiers, or why so many of their structural features are related to the structural features of non-standard varieties of their lexifiers (as opposed to the standard varieties to which creole languages are usually compared). It has also been claimed that the comparative method cannot apply to creole languages to determine whether or not they are related to their European ancestors. The comparative method is a procedure which searches for systematic correspondences between words with similar meanings in certain languages believed to descend from a common ancestor, in the hope of rebuilding the phonological system of the ancestral language. Creole languages however, are generally considered as genetically unrelated to the European languages from which they evolved and therefore inapplicable to comparative
studies. According to Mufwene, the basis for the rejection of this standpoint however is quite simple – it has never been tried, due to the fact that a creole’s structure is generally mistakenly compared to standard varieties of the lexifier. It is likely also that the European population was composed of people from low socio-economic backgrounds who would therefore have spoken a range of dialects not at all identical to the standard variety. This is especially interesting if one recalls that the period of colonisation to which we refer took place (primarily) before the nineteenth century, when many different dialects of the same language would have existed due to a lack of widespread population movement. One should also note that many theories of creole genesis base their hypotheses on “observable” similarities. However, if one recalls that the comparative method is considered inapplicable to creole languages, it is difficult to see how such similarities could be proved. Chaudenson says as much when he states that:

“any study purporting to prove such a position should in principle rely on a comparative analysis of the relevant creoles, but plainly, this has not been the case” (Chaudenson, 2001, :39).

Indeed, it seems as though Chaudenson is completely disenchanted with the idea of striking similarities amongst creole languages and also refutes the claim that creole languages lexified by the same European lexifier exhibit mutual intelligibility. Such a misconception is based largely on etymological graphic conventions in written documents, and experiments carried out by Chaudenson himself on monolingual French creole speakers of the Caribbean and Indian Ocean have found the opposite to be the case.

It would appear that the challenge to the classical approach is both varied and intense and suggests that there is very little, other than a unique social history, to distinguish these languages from any other language. If one posits an abnormal development theory to account for the existence of pidgins and creoles such as those monogenetic and polygenetic theories outlined, then clearly one considers these languages to be unrelated to more “normal” or acceptable forms of natural language such as those European languages generally considered to have provided the lexicon for these “impure” creations. Is it necessary to adopt

“a disjoint view of language diversification, which has treated creoles as children out of wedlock?” (Mufwene, 2006, :1)

Or can one proceed from a point of view which considers creoles, not as bizarre language mutations, but rather as being no different from their “parent” languages in terms of their purity as language? Are diverse and far-reaching theories required to explain the existence of these languages, when one does not seek such theories to explain the existence of English, French, Portuguese or any other European language? According to Chaudenson (Chaudenson, 2001, :41), any hypothesis must respond to conditions of validity and necessity before it may be considered worthy of investigation. Do theories of creole origin fulfil the second condition especially when we consider that the similarities between creoles lexified by English, French, and Portuguese etc may be no more striking than similarities in the lexifiers themselves when compared with a language such as Chinese? The answers to the above questions can perhaps be uncovered if one
attempts to examine the social histories of the trade colonies and plantations which accommodated the development of pidgins and creoles.

5.2 A Sociohistorical Examination

As outlined earlier, one may distinguish between trade and plantation colonies on the basis of the level of contact that took place within such colonies between Europeans and Non-Europeans. In trade colonies contact was sporadic and intermittent and therefore communication could be fulfilled by the acquisition of a simplistic common trade language i.e. a pidgin language. On a plantation colony however, the requirement for communication between speakers of varying languages was much greater. A plantation can be defined as follows (Siegel, 1987, :11):

- A European-controlled unit of land in a tropical or subtropical region.
- Used to raise commercial crops for sale in European markets.
- Populated by a large number of imported Non-European slaves or indentured labourers controlled by a small number of Europeans and all subject to the sovereignty of a European nation state.

In the early fifteenth century Portugal became the first European nation to set up plantations after discovering offshore islands in the Atlantic Ocean such as the Madeiras, the Azores, the Cape Verdes, and later São Tomé and Principe. At the end of the fifteenth century Spain joined Portugal as an expansionist power and England, France and Holland followed soon after. By the mid seventeenth century most of the islands in the Caribbean Sea and some in the Indian Ocean had plantations. The establishment of plantations in the Pacific did not come about until two centuries later, after 1850. Opinion is somewhat divided regarding the exact levels of interaction between Europeans and their slaves or indentured labourers within these plantation environments. It is acceptable to suggest that plantation labourers came from varying language groups and that all residents of the plantation, be they Europeans or labourers, were immigrants in a new environment. However, Siegel’s assertion (Siegel, 1987, :12), that social distance between master and labourer restricted social interaction between them and thus language contact, is not necessarily shared. Such an opinion would seem to support the creolization as nativization hypothesis, given that restricted language contact leads to restricted language development in a contact situation when one is obliged to acquire a target language through limited input. However, Chaudenson and Mufwene, counter this claim. They suggest instead that plantation colonies in their infancy were populated by roughly equal percentages of Europeans and Non-Europeans and during this initial homestead phase, interaction between the two groups was regular. Chaudenson – whose study of creoles deals primarily with those creoles lexified by French – cites the example of Bourbon (now Réunion) where the European population was larger than the Non-European for the first fifty years of colonisation. Chaudenson describes how this previously uninhabited island was occupied by the French from 1665 and by 1720; the respective populations had become numerically equal. A further example is that of Louisiana where colonisation did not take hold until
1717. Initially the colony consisted of 600 Europeans and 100 non-European slaves. In 1743, the European population was still greater than the Non-European population, consisting of 4000 Europeans and 2000 Non-Europeans. What is striking here and what tends to be ignored by those who construct theories of creolization is that the populations of the initial phases of colonial societies were disproportionately comprised of Europeans (Chaudenson, 2001, :55). It would have been unlikely that non-Europeans, speaking the same mother tongue, would find themselves working alongside one another in the same homestead. (Mufwene, 2007) picks up on this point, suggesting that Non-Europeans were obliged to communicate in the European language because they would have been isolated from those who spoke the same language. Non-Europeans would have spoken approximations of the European colonial languages. Children of European or Non-European parentage would have spoken the language in the same manner, regardless of how their parents spoke it, as they grew up in one another’s company on the homestead.

If we recall that this initial homestead phase lasted fifty years in the case of Bourbon, it is difficult to justify the development of a pidgin language on a plantation homestead given the length and nature of social contact between the varying populations. The purpose of this initial homestead phase would appear to be straightforward. The aim of such colonies was to implement colonial agricultural industry and in order to do this a period of settling in was required. It is important to remember that for European colonists it would not have been easy to acclimatise to these new territories. Little would have been known of the resources available, the nature of the environment and of course colonies had to be constructed where no infrastructure had previously existed. Therefore it was necessary to proceed cautiously. However, once colonial industry had been established, the need for large volumes of manual labour intensified and it was at this stage in the colony’s development that the proportion of Non-Europeans to Europeans began to increase and eventually become the majority. The slave ranks were augmented by the successive arrival of bozal slaves i.e. those recently arrived slaves expected to work in the field. It is perhaps this wave of slave arrivals, which distinguishes the social history of creole language and culture from any other and may in itself provide the somewhat anti-climactic solution to the conundrum of creole genesis. What we are dealing with here is not some fanciful, poorly justified hypotheses but rather an application of theories relating to second language acquisition. We may at this point refer to those slaves present during the initial homestead phase of a plantation colony as creole slaves in contrast to those slaves who arrived later in order to respond to the need for intensified manual labour i.e. bozal slaves. Recall that during the homestead phase, creole slaves would have had greater levels of interaction with their masters and would have therefore enjoyed greater success in their attempts to acquire the European language of the colony. The result of their attempts may be considered to be an approximation of the lexifier not only because it was acquired as a second language but also because of the varying nature of the input received from the colonists themselves due to their non-identical dialects. Slaves who arrived after the initial settlement however, would have had less contact with the colonists and in their attempts to acquire the language of the colony they would have been exposed primarily to the approximations of creole slaves. This led to a situation where the linguistic environment of the colony was characterised by approximations of approximations of the lexifier.
This mixture of abilities in speaking the language of the colony is a pivotal factor in those theories which characterise creoles based on sociohistorical factors. The central argument in these theories being that creoles develop during second language acquisition in somewhat unique circumstances and under unstable social conditions. The following section charts the development of a creole language within the plantation environment as influenced by the various stages which characterised the establishment of a colony.
Chapter 6

The Role of Second Language Acquisition

It is not adequate to state that creole languages are merely the product of second language acquisition undertaken in unusual circumstances. One must attempt to clarify exactly what these circumstances were likely to have been and how they affected the particular stages, which characterised the development of a creole. The aim of this chapter is to present a theory of creole development, which is consistent with the social history of creole languages as outlined in the previous chapter. According to (Siegel, 2004, :152), a plausible explanation for the morphological simplicity exhibited by creole languages is due to normal processes of language change, the kind of language change one is likely to find in the history of any language and which can lead to the erosion of inflectional morphology and/or the regularization of morphological distinctions – quoting (DeGraff, 2001, :72). However, as Siegel points out, we must still explain what these mental processes are and how they have been applied in similar ways in various areas of divergent creoles. If we accept that creole languages emerged from the contact of numerous languages, we must ask ourselves what is it about this type of contact that distinguishes creoles from other examples of language change. The theory that results from such an analysis is one, which considers sociohistorical criteria to be the principal delimiting factor separating creole languages from other forms of language change.

6.1 A Superstratist theory of creolization

We can begin by recalling the nature of the European language spoken by the colonists themselves. It is likely that the Europeans spoke a range of varying dialects as a result of their differing social backgrounds. Many of the colonists would have been illiterate and according to historical accounts, would have been comprised of defector soldiers and sailors, destitute farmers, indentured labourers and sometimes convicts. This range of dialects would have contributed to the making of a colonial koiné i.e. “a compromise variety from among diverse dialects of the same language” (Mufwene, 2001, :3) whereby some common features of the various dialects would be retained but only some of those distinguishable features. This idea of an initial colonial koiné created by the founder population of a colony and influencing the development of creole languages within the colony is known as the “founder principle”. Therefore, before the colony had
even been established, a new colonial dialect had emerged. This is particularly interesting if one considers the assertion of (Buccini, 1995) – quoting (Mufwene, 2001) – that such colonial varieties may even have developed in the port cities of Europe where the colonists stayed for a period of time before setting sail for the colonies. The processes involved in creating such a compromise variety may be described as a mixing, levelling, or restructuring of a pool of variants. On coming into contact with one another the diverse features of each dialect were forced to compete with one another. Those identical features were either reinforced or slightly modified whereas some but not all of those features in competition would have been incorporated into the ‘new’ dialect. Mufwene informs us that ‘markedness’ was a crucial tool in regulating the selection process. Those features which were considered to be more salient, regular or transparent were preferred to their less salient, regular or opaque alternatives. Therefore given the choice of PERFECT tense with done as opposed to the PERFECT tense with have + past participle, one would choose the former due to it being more salient than its alternative construction. If certain forms were used more frequently than others then it was possible for them to be re-analysed as base forms as evidenced in many creoles by the preference for sentences such as wi go lef/dead to mean we will leave/die (Mufwene, 2001, :57). The significance of this colonial dialect relates to the fact that this variety, rather than the standard variety, would have been the target language for the creole slaves attempting to acquire the language of the colony during the homestead phase (This in itself may explain the survival in many creoles of the archaic word forms alluded to in an earlier section, given that these forms would have been present in the colonial koiné i.e. the target language. The same stages and processes one normally associates with second language acquisition would have been applicable to these creole slaves.

6.1.1 The Role of Second Language Acquisition

The acquisition of a second language may be considered to occur along a continuum with little or no knowledge of the target language, and full acquisition marking the extremes of the continuum. The stages between the two extremes are the various forms of interlanguage. Interlanguage has been described as an approximative system (Nemser, 1971) as well as an idiosyncratic dialect or a form of transitional competence (Corder, 1971). (Ellis, 1985, :47) describes it as a structured system, which the learner constructs at any given time in his development. The early stages of interlanguage are characterised by the existence of a ‘basic variety’ i.e. “a variety of language very similar to restricted pidgins and pre-pidgins in terms of morphological simplicity” (Siegel, 2004, :147). According to (Klein, 1997) (quoted from (Siegel, 2004, :147))

“Strikingly absent from the BV (basic variety) are . . . free or bound morphemes with purely grammatical function”.

For example, instead of TMA markers, lexical items, such as adverbs, are used (Siegel, 2004, :147). Eventually the interlanguage of the creole slaves, whilst still in contact with fluent speakers of the lexifier, would proceed through a gradual complexification and the acquisition of a range of grammatical functors in order to arrive at an approximation (not necessarily complete) of the target language. A general characteristic of second language acquisition is that the ‘acquisition order’ of the various grammatical features is more or less the same regardless of a subject’s
language background. The order is as follows (Ellis, 1985, :56):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>GRAMMATICAL FEATURES ACQUIRED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CASE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nominative/Accusative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Singular Copula (‘s/is)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plural Auxiliary (are)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Past Irregular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possessive (‘s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd Person Singular (–s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1: Grammatical Feature Acquisition Order

Studies have been carried out which seem to provide evidence for the role of second language acquisition in creole origins. (Siegel, 2004, :154) cites the work of (Véronique, 1994) who notes several formal similarities between features found in the early interlanguages of Moroccan Arabic speaking learners of French as a second language and those features of French-lexified creoles considered to be “simplified”. (Mather, 2000) examined the efforts of West-African Ewe speaking learners of French and found correlations between their second language learner varieties of French and French-lexified creoles. Mather concludes that such correlations were as a result of simplification in second language learning. Siegel cites a further study by (Muysken, 2001) who uses data from several studies of second language learner varieties of Dutch to compare features of learners’ varieties with features of the now extinct Dutch-lexifier creole, Negerholands. He reports many similarities in formal simplicity, including the absence of inflections on verbs. Such evidence would appear to support the contention that creole slaves did attempt to acquire the language of the colony by undergoing those characteristic processes of second language acquisition.

6.1.2 The Effect of Subsequent Colonial Expansion

The underlying question posed by this evidence however, is why are certain morphological features absent in creole languages due to processes of simplification and others are not? It is undeniable that a theory of creole development which cites the initial colonial dialect as the source of the ‘peculiarity’ inherent in creole languages needs to go further and account for the mismatch between those grammatical features present and those grammatical features absent from creole languages. Once more it is the social history and the manner in which plantation colonies evolved that appears to provide the answer. Although the composition of a colony’s population may not have altered greatly during the initial homestead phase, post-homestead colonial expansion required a large increase in manual labour and therefore a significant influx of slaves into
the colony. This influx in conjunction with a high mortality rate among the plantation labourers, led to rapid population replacement and growth. Moreover, institutionalisation of segregation on large plantations - meant that outside work time, contact between Non-Europeans and even the European indentured servants who worked with them, became limited. Therefore newly arrived African slaves were required to learn the colonial language mostly from the approximations of the creole slaves (Mufwene, 2001, :51). This resulted in the pool of second language variants within the colony becoming even more widespread. A situation existed whereby newcomers into the colony were being exposed to increasingly divergent and restructured models. According to (Mufwene, 2001, :51), this restructuring process led to

“the basilectalization of the colonial vernacular among its segregated users, i.e. the emergence of sociolects identified as basilectal”.

(Siegel, 2004, :154) suggests that, amongst the slave population, there would have been a variety of different ways of expressing similar concepts or meanings. This would range from lexical means (by those in the early stages of acquisition of the vernacular to which they were exposed) to grammatical means (by those in the later stages of acquisition). The establishment of a particular sociolect would be influenced by the most common variants. Therefore if a particular concept is most commonly expressed by lexical means, then we would expect that this means of expression would be retained in the creole and vice versa. Of course it would also be expected that some concepts would be expressed using lexical means and others using grammatical means. (Siegel, 2004, :155) cites the example of Saramaccan as a creole lacking in morphology due to a lack of contact with its lexifier and hence the preference for expression using lexical means whereas Hawai’i Creole exhibits a greater number of morphological features due to increased exposure to the lexifier. The overriding suggestion here is that those selection processes, which characterised the establishment of a colonial koiné – where numerous varying dialects were forced into competition with one another –, are mirrored somewhat in the creation by the slaves of colonial vernaculars. Therefore, some morphological features may have been retained in the creole due to greater salience or frequency of use whereas others may have been rejected in favour of alternative lexical means of expression. A further impact on the feature pool already influenced by diverse idiolects and sociolects is suggested by Chaudenson’s theory of generalisations of creoles. This theory posits the existence of first, second and potentially further generations of creoles, whereby a second-generation creole or any other generation of creole is

“one whose development is marked by contributions from an earlier creole introduced by immigrants from another, creole-speaking territory”(Chaudenson, 2001, :35)

This is a particularly interesting theory, which, according to Chaudenson is necessary to account for the relationships and migrations between creole territories as well as providing a convenient explanation for those genetic and structural relationships among creole languages (Chaudenson, 2001, :35). (Mufwene, 2001, :39) provides evidence of a variety of African languages and their influence on certain colonies at different stages in their development due to inter-plantation slave migration. For example, in the colonies of South Carolina and Jamaica, the presence of Africans
from the Windward Coast – speaking Mande, Kru and Western Kwa languages – was significant mostly during their respective homestead phases. However, in other colonies such as Barbados and Suriname, their presence was significant during the plantation phase. During the early eighteenth century when the basilectalization of many Atlantic creoles was underway, Africans from the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin – also speaking Kwa languages – became demographically significant. This meant that those features of the lexifier, which were similar to Kwa, gained an advantage in terms of selection into the restructured creole. Therefore, were we to accept the above theory of generalisations, it would hardly be surprising that similarities seem to obtain amongst creole languages given that, at various stages in their development, they would have been forced into contact with one another with their respective features required to compete for retention in the restructured colonial vernacular.

In summary, this chapter is an attempt to explain the development of creole languages as being the result of second language acquisition undertaken in an unstable linguistic environment. This is a theory which developed out of the belief that creole languages cannot be defined in terms of a pidgin predecessor, but rather as a special group of languages whose inherent ‘peculiarity’ and simplicity relative to their non-creole kin can be explained by the demographics of the language contact situation from which creoles evolved. Essentially, a creole’s evolution begins as an approximation of a non-standard variety of its lexifier. Successive periods of rapid population replacement lead to a continuum of speech varieties amongst the slave population from those varieties closest to the lexifier (due to increased contact with the non-slave population) to those more diverse varieties. As the colony expands and its slave population is deprived of regular lexifier input, the colonial vernacular is forced to level or restructure through competition amongst a competing pool of language variants or features. The relative morphological simplicity of creoles can thus be explained by the availability of grammatically impoverished variants amongst the pool of features. Questions remain however, if we accept the above classification of creole development. A theory which explains creole languages through second language acquisition surely blurs the line somewhat between those language varieties identified as creoles and those accepted as dialects or varieties of European languages but whose pattern of development does not seem to diverge wildly from that attributed to creole languages in this chapter. The following chapter is an attempt to examine the boundary separating creoles lexified by European languages from ‘legitimate’ dialects and varieties of the same European languages.
Chapter 7

A Reconstructed Definition

On the face of it, it would appear that theories of “creolization as nativization” have the advantage over definitions which focus on circumstances such as geography and social influences. It is surely easier to identify a creole language if we take the view that it must have had a pidgin in its ancestry, a pidgin which resulted out of limited contact between its speakers and those whose language influenced its lexical stock. We can then explain why the resultant creole diverged so radically from its parent language, as it was forced to resort to the universal language template in children as well as significant substrate influence in order to counteract the impoverished grammaticality of the original pidgin. However, the counter-theory which explains creole languages as being the result of the processes of second language acquisition, albeit in certain distinct circumstances, would appear to expand the set somewhat. If we accept that creoles resulted out of language contact where one group was forced to speak the language of another, what is it that distinguishes those languages we are permitted to refer to as creole languages from those languages such as Irish English which also resulted out of languages in conflict and hence must have involved the application of processes of second language acquisition? If we can consider the Irish-English as a dialect or variety of English, why do we deny the same classification to English based creoles? It would appear that the classification of language whether it be in relation to purity or its genetic relationship to other languages is quite difficult to discern.

7.1 Language contact in Europe

Language change has occurred uninterrupted throughout history due to invasions and colonisations of one nation by another, even before the era of European colonisation between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. This is true even in the case of those languages considered to be ‘pure’ language forms, in contrast to impure, mongrel manifestations such as creoles or pidgins. However, if one examines the history of English, one can see that it too has been forced to adapt and restructure over time due to the pressures exerted by competing languages in a conflict situation. The language brought over to England by the Anglo-Saxons may have survived the Danish invasions with limited effect on the English language however one can still recognise evidence of restructuring. According to (Wardhaugh, 1987, :67),
There is evidence in the English language itself of a period of close contact between the English and Norse peoples . . . and even the introduction into English from Norse of the pronouns they, them and their."

Of course the Norman invasion had a much greater impact on the English language, introducing the French language and thus “the English language was in addition borrowing vocabulary from French in great quantities” (Wardhaugh, 1987, :69). One wonders whether the selection into English of Norse pronouns is analogous to the selection of various features into creole languages from the pool of available variants in the contact situation. Romance languages, such as French, have themselves developed from Latin due to the influence of Celtic languages on non-standard Latin vernaculars. Before the Roman invasions of France in the first and second centuries BC, France was Celtic and the influence of the Celtic language is evidenced by the names of French rivers e.g. Seine, Rhône and Marne (Wardhaugh, 1987, :99). It would appear that a language’s purity is determined less by the influence of other languages on its structure and more by the time period during which such influence occurred. There is therefore nothing particularly unusual about the language contact situation in the development of creoles as such situations have been attested throughout history. However, one is reluctant to suggest that English and French developed by creolization if only because it is these languages and other European languages that have been implicit in the emergence of those bona fide creole language varieties between the seventeenth and nineteenth century. It seems more realistic to reserve the term ‘creole’ for those languages already accepted as such and instead to ask ourselves why such language varieties may or may not be considered, at the very least, dialects of their European parent languages, when one can draw parallels between the development of Irish English for example, and creoles.

7.1.1 The English Language in Ireland

The English language began its advance into Ireland in the mid-seventeenth century roughly during the same period in which European colonisation of the New World began. Up until this point the English had made several attempts to colonise Ireland through the establishment of plantations however, such attempts had been met with resistance and it was only after the Cromwellian Settlement that progress was achieved. Landowners in three of the four Irish provinces were now English-speaking and different in culture, religion and language to their tenants and servants (Bliss, 1979, :19). The similarities therefore, between the plantation of Ireland and the establishment of plantation colonies by the British Empire in the New World are already quite clear. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries people began to abandon Irish as their tongue and instead turn to the language of the new developing regime i.e. English. Tenants and servants alike had to learn some English in order to communicate with their masters, and given the isolation of the masters from a fluent English-speaking population, their own variety of English began to be influenced by the ‘gaelicized’ English of the native Irish (Bliss, 1979, :19). Thus, the English-speaking masters had developed a non-standard variety in much the same way as the planters in New World colonies developed colonial koiné. According to (Wardhaugh, 1987, :91), “Irish did hold its own for a while but after about 1800 began the precipitous decline from which it has never been able to recover”. It is noteworthy therefore that one can draw parallels
between the time span for the establishment of English in Ireland and the time it took for creoles to emerge in the New World. This strongly refutes the suggestion that creoles may be characterised by the fact that they emerged almost ‘overnight’ in contrast to other language varieties. (Bliss, 1979, :20) tells us that the English spoken in most areas of Ireland, is descended from the English of Cromwell’s planters and since the beginning of the eighteenth century, no other type of English has been spoken in any part of Ireland except in Ulster.

7.2 Language contact in North America

The difficulty of classifying a language as ‘creole’ or indeed a ‘legitimate’ offspring is further illustrated by the English of North America. The English spoken in North America can be subdivided into various dialects including White American English Vernaculars (WAEV’s), and African American English (AAE). AAE can be further categorised into varieties such as African American Vernacular English (a lower-class variety) and Gullah, a coastal language variety generally identified as creole. If one examines the social histories of these varieties, it is clear that in the development of each variety and sub-variety, population contact and movement played a defining role. Even with regard to WAEV, the various dialects of the British settlers would have been in contact with one another along with the languages of those Europeans who had previously settled North American colonies bought by the British and were sometimes subsequently employed as indentured servants in resultant colonies. There is no overriding motivation for trying to separate the social histories of plantation colonies in North America from the rest of the New World. Colonial America can be subdivided into three main colony groups i.e. the New England colonies, the Middle Colonies and the Southern Colonies (see figure A.4 – Appendix).

In New England and the Middle Colonies, colonisation proceeded along the same pattern already outlined in chapter 5. The white population significantly outnumbered the black population and it would therefore have been unlikely that a pidgin language would have developed under such circumstances. Rather, the Black population would have been obliged to learn English as a second language. In the southern colonies, the switch to plantation-based rice-cultivation rather than cotton plantations necessitated a large slave population for manual labour. Therefore, after an initial homestead phase where the White population outnumbered the Black population, considerable importation of slave labour quickly reversed the demographic and by the mid eighteenth century, the Black population in the southern colonies constituted 86.6 percent of the whole North American Black population (Rickford, 1997, :323). It is for this reason that basilectalization is perceived to have started earlier and proceeded further in the Southern Colonies and in particular South Carolina and the coastal plantations. This increased basilectalization would appear to account for Gullah, the creole variety still in existence today. AAVE, however has remained closer to other non-standard American vernaculars, as it emerged from plantation colonies where the Black population was rarely the majority and both the black and white population interacted for over two hundred years before the institutionalisation of segregation with the passing of the Jim Crow laws in 1877, which meant that many states (and cities, too) could impose legal punishments on people for consorting with members of another race. In addition, Mufwene suggests that plantation colonies were demographically smaller in North America than in the Caribbean.
as cotton plantations required fewer labourers and that an important proportion of servants on these colonies were actually from the British Isles and continental Europe. Can we therefore consider AAVE to be a creole given the pronounced level of social interaction between slaves and their masters and the demographics of the colonies from which they emerged? The social history would appear not to justify such a position. (Holm, 2004, :11) attempts to label AAE as a semi-creole suggesting that the language of the slaves was English with some creole features rather than a creole with some English features however as Holm himself points out, (Schneider, 1990) has disagreed with such a position due to the limited number of languages to which one can apply the term semi-creole. A common position then is that AAVE and other varieties of AAE are not creoles but simply varieties of English “created by Africans and bearing the distinctive mark of that creation” (Holm, 2004, :12) quoting from (Winford, 1997). Their divergence from Standard English is not entirely due to restructuring by slaves in a colonial environment however - as this restructuring would not have been as extensive as in other New World colonies –but is rather accentuated by the segregation of Black and White populations and the desire of the Black population to accentuate their ethnic identity.

### 7.3 Creolization - A Reconstructed Definition

In attempting to provide a definition for a creole language, a definition which ignores the pidgin to creole hypothesis, one is forced to assume that creolization is not a structural process. If it were then we would be obliged to refer to every language that resulted out of a language contact situation and resultant restructuring as a creole language and this is clearly of no benefit given that even the most established of European languages cannot claim to have been created independent of exterior language influence. Therefore one is invited to draw the conclusion that the only characteristic, which isolates creole languages from other productions of language contact, is the social environment from which they emerged. Creoles may therefore be characterised as follows:

- a social process resulting out of large-scale population movements as conditioned by the slave trade between the seventeenth and nineteenth century.
- new language vernaculars created in specific geographical areas i.e. European settlement colonies in tropical regions (Mufwene, 2001, :140).
- may be further differentiated from other colonial language varieties by the racial affiliation of their speakers.

It is this last point, which appears to oppose creoles and AAE. Although the colonies that produced AAE did contain African slaves, the proportion of these slaves to the European population was much less significant than in Caribbean and other New World colonies. It is also likely that even in the absence of the slave population; the colonial language would have diverged significantly from Standard English due to the numerous divergent dialects and vernaculars of the settlers. An important caveat is that the above creole distinction gives us no reason not to suppose these languages are indeed dialects of their lexifiers. There are merely the results of languages in
contact and as illustrated by the development of English and the Romance languages, this gives us no reason to question their purity or legitimacy. Languages throughout history have been forced to restructure but at what point do we decide that they are no longer genetically related to previous varieties? It would be rather unfortunate to suggest that we must draw the line when a language comes into contact with those languages indigenous to people of a different race or ethnic affiliation. However, it is precisely such notions of superiority and racism that have, in the past, denied creole languages the right to be considered as genetic offspring of their lexifiers. Those who speak creoles languages do not necessarily share the view, however, that the language they speak is not a form of English, French or any other European language implicit in their derivation. If one sets aside for one moment delusions of language purity, one is surely left with spurious reasoning for rejecting claims that creole languages are legitimate varieties of European languages. This is one of the main tenets of the superstratist theory of creolization as a social process. However, one will not be surprised to learn that this position has not gone unchallenged. A defence has been launched in favour of reaffirming the pidgin-creole link as well as the notion of creole exceptionality in relation to non-creole languages. These intellectual conflicts beg the question – just who are we to believe?
Chapter 8

Conclusion - Where does the truth lie?

At the beginning of this paper, I posed a series of questions which I intended to answer throughout the course of my discussion, relating to varying attempts to characterise pidgin and creole languages. I referred to the structural similarities between divergent pidgin and creole languages and wondered if such similarities were unique to creole languages or even genuinely shared. I referred briefly to theories of origin and wondered whether structural processes could really be responsible for the emergence of pidgin and creole languages or was it more likely that these languages were no more abnormal than the English spoken in Ireland or North America? It would appear that any reply to these questions is determined by whether or not one is convinced by those superstratist arguments outlined against creolisation as nativisation. Regarding structural similarity, one need only refer to (Holm, 1980) for evidence of semantic, syntactic and phonological homogeneity across a range of pidgins and creoles lexified by varying superstrates. However, if one were to believe (Chaudenson, 2001), then such similarities are based on mere observable similarities rather than on a comparative analysis of the relevant creoles and hence need not be considered as indicative of any structural process at play. It has been my intention throughout this paper not to promote the cause of one position of creolisation over another as I wish merely to illustrate a divergence in opinion and how successful superstratist theories of creolisation are in deconstructing the textbook description of creoles as descendants of pidgins. However in his book ‘Defining Creole (2005)’, John H McWhorter has attempted to do the reverse and launch a stark defence of creolisation as nativisation in the face of the recent attack on the merits of the pidgin to creole ancestral connection as well as the validity of creole languages as a separate and exceptional class of language. In the chapter “The Founder Principle versus the Creole prototype – squaring theory with data”, McWhorter undermines the integrity of the superstratist position. He refutes the claim that equal numbers of white and black slaves in the early stages of plantation colonies would have led to approximations of the lexifier. He cites a text dating from 1671 documenting creole French spoken in Martinique just 36 years after its colonization when the demographics of the plantation population would suggest according to the superstratist position, the existence of an approximation of French rather than a French creole. Further evidence of this contradiction arises from Sranan (A creole English spoken in Surinam), Louisiana French creole, Palanquero Spanish creole, Pitcairn creole English and Hawaiian creole English, where creoles developed despite close contact between Europeans and non-Europeans and roughly equal num-
bers of each population group. He suggests that data used to support the theory that creoles are simply varieties of their lexifiers, is highly selective and ignores those creole features which are clearly unrelated to any version of their lexifier standard or otherwise. McWhorter suggests that such contradictions support those claims relating to the original theories of origin debate and that the above evidence reaffirms the idea of European lexified creoles being transplanted between colonies rather than emerging independently in each colony. A further theory relating to English based creoles in particular is that they developed from an English pidgin born on the West African coast. This theory is supported by the existence of creoles in the pre-plantation phases of colonies, creoles which developed before there were any colonies per se to which to transport labour. McWhorter also appears to dismiss the claim that creolization is a social process by suggesting structural criteria for identifying creole languages in the form of a creole prototype, thus contradicting the claim that one language cannot be more or less creole than another. The creole prototype has three specific traits: inflectional affixation is extremely rare or inexistent, tones are not used to encode morphosyntactic distinctions, and there is no noncompositional derivation. McWhorter even goes as far as to conclude that the data ultimately dictate that we maintain the conception of creoles as a unique language type born from the pidginization and subsequent reconstitution of a lexifier (McWhorter, 2005). What is interesting here is that McWhorter is essentially adopting similar tactics to Chaudenson in order to reject rival theories of creolization by referring to the manipulation and careful selection of data. One is left to wonder who exactly to believe? Whereas Chaudenson perceived the social history of plantation communities to be incompatible with the existence of a pidgin in the ancestry of every creole, how does he propose to align the existence of a French creole in Martinique 36 years after the creation of a plantation where the homestead phase lasted 50 years according to Chaudenson himself (Chaudenson, 2001, :113)? However one may also wonder how McWhorter can point to features present in English creoles and yet clearly unrelated to English to disprove theories of creolization relating to the founder principle and second language acquisition. Surely such features are licensed by Mufwene’s suggestion of a feature pool of variants that allows for the selection of certain features over others (English or otherwise) during the process of basilectalising away from the lexifier? Furthermore, what is one to make of McWhorter’s own admission that not every creole language conforms to the three structural traits of the creole prototype? Presumably, an acceptance of a creole prototype affirms the suggestion that a language may be more creole than another and rejects the role of social history in creole definition. However one is obliged to conclude that certain non-creole languages, which evolved independently of the conditions laid down by the slave trade between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, may thus be considered more or less creole than accepted creole languages if they conform to any of McWhorter’s three creole traits.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that there is a middle ground to be sought between creoles as distinguishable structurally or socially. Undoubtedly, creole languages deserve special attention given their emergence as conditioned by unique historical and social phenomena and in this vein it is perhaps prudent to attempt to reconcile the extremes of the creole genesis continuum. The important question is not necessarily where lies the truth, social or structural? But rather can a creole definition be agreed upon that considers both social and structural characteristics,
one that does not resort to challengeable or spurious classification criteria. For example, is it
genuinely necessary or even useful to refer to Tok Pisin as an expanded pidgin rather than a cre-
ole given its structure, social history and its current status as one of the three official languages
of Papua New Guinea? It is surely more reasonable to suggest that both the classical and the
superstratist approach describe two separate and plausible creole life cycles and that Tok Pisin is
just one of the creole languages with a pidgin in its ancestry emerging from the social conditions
laid down by European trade patterns and colonisation in the New World. However, may one
also suggest that there exist some creoles where the initial pidgin stage was not required due to
increased levels of social contact between the population groups? (McWhorter, 2005) is evidence
that the pidgin to creole hypothesis is still very much alive and kicking however his dismissal
of the superstratist position although compelling is not altogether convincing. Perhaps what is
required is an objective and meticulous comparative analysis of all creole languages in order to
determine exact structural similarity as well as an in-depth survey of the demographics of plan-
tation colonies to allow greater precision with regard to social history. It is likely however, that a
lack of recorded information and documentation would render such a task extremely difficult to
carry out and thus the pidgin and creole classification debate will continue to inject the fractious
energy referred to at the outset into the once much maligned field of pidgin and creole studies.
Appendix A

Figure A.1: Creole Languages of the Northern Caribbean
Source: www.ethnologue.com
Figure A.2: Creole Languages of the Southern Caribbean
Source: www.ethnologue.com
Figure A.3: Triangular Trade Routes
Source: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk Copyright: Maps in Minutes and Crown copyright
Figure A.4: British Colonies of North America
Bibliography


