



# 1 Introduction

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## 1 Background

That there is a reason – and a need – for *The Handbook of Pidgin and Creole Studies* in linguistics today comes from the recognition of the challenges that pidgin and creole languages pose for linguistics as a field. At the same time, an assessment of the state of pidgin and creole studies is timely for those who work within it.

The questions that drive pidgin and creole studies today revolve around the nature and interaction of the forces that have shaped these languages. These questions are not new; they are what motivated the study of these languages in the first place. However, in recent years insights from other branches of linguistics as well as careful sociohistorical studies have moved the field forward.

Creole studies has attained this point within linguistics, it can be argued, as a logical progression from three events that occurred half a century ago:

- the publication in 1957 of Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures*,
- the publication four years earlier of Weinreich's *Languages in Contact*, and
- the convening in 1959 of the first international conference on creole studies at Mona, Jamaica.

### 1.1 *The Chomskyan paradigm*

The publication of *Syntactic Structures* – a defining moment in the history of modern linguistics – has, additionally, special relevance for creole studies. The Chomskyan paradigm emphasized the interaction of language and the mind. The structure of the brain for language provides the basis for universals – the properties that characterize and, indeed, define all human language. Further, linguists working within the Chomskyan paradigm sought to understand the nature of the acquisition of language, the way in which the intersection of universal principles with language-particular input resulted in children's acquisition of language.



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Given this interest in the nature of acquisition, creoles posed a challenge. The best-known creoles had the lexicons of western European languages like English and French yet were most definitely not English or French; this raised intriguing questions about what had happened. Whatever the explanation, this was clearly not acquisition as usual.

A further point about the intersection of generative linguistics with pidgin and creole studies is that, while definitions of *pidgin* and *creole* vary (and we address this below), a widely held view of the difference between the two was that a pidgin was no one's native language, i.e., had no native speakers, while a creole was a nativized pidgin. Given the Chomskyan interest in acquisition, specifically first language (L1) acquisition, far more attention was paid to creoles than to pidgins.

### 1.2 *Contact linguistics*

After the achievements of historical linguists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in working out genetic relationships among languages (as expressed by family trees), Uriel Weinreich's *Languages in Contact* (1953) laid the groundwork for the study of the ways in which contact between languages has the power to change them. Despite its title, the book's focus is overwhelmingly on bilingualism. Still, it moved linguists to consider external sources for change and has more recently given birth to the field of contact linguistics, which includes bilingualism but is not confined to it. In that sense, the book's publication can fairly be said to have launched the field of contact linguistics.

From the writings of Hugo Schuchardt (1882–8) onward, creole languages had been shown to be problematic for the *Stammbaum* model, i.e., the idea that each language was a direct descendant of some other language (in the way, for example that Romance languages are seen as descending from Latin). Pidgins and creoles have more than one source language; indeed, Whinnom (1971) was later to suggest that pidginization (and creolization) could only occur when three or more languages were involved. Thus, pidgins and creoles are contact languages *par excellence*: by definition, a pidgin or creole cannot come into existence in a monolingual context.

At first, attention to contact phenomena and attention to pidgins and creoles were seen as parallel yet distinct enterprises. In recent times a growing number of scholars have seen the two as part of the same field of inquiry. An illustration of this comes in recent books about contact linguistics by creolists (Thomason 2001, Winford 2003) and also books with a more narrow focus within creole studies that place contact linguistics in their titles (Migge 2003, Holm 2004).

### 1.3 *The study of creole languages*

The 1959 Mona Conference was the first to assemble those who studied creole languages, in particular – but not exclusively – those of the Caribbean. Certainly





there had been work by individual scholars prior to this (Sylvain 1936 on Haitian Creole, Hall 1943 on Tok Pisin and Hall 1953 on Haitian Creole, and Taylor 1951 on Caribbean creoles among the most prominent), but this was the first time that scholars who worked on pidgins and creoles had convened in this way. In the years immediately following, with the emergence of a generation of scholars from the Caribbean, linguists more generally began to recognize creole languages as an appropriate object of intellectual interest.

A part of the legacy of slavery in the Caribbean and elsewhere has been the stigmatization of the languages associated with slaves, i.e., creoles. Popular attitudes against pidgins and creoles were reflected in academic settings as well. Thus, up until this period linguists' willingness to apply the concept of linguistic relativism – whereby every language is understood to be complete and valid – may have been extended to Hopi and Hausa, but it generally stopped short of being extended to pidgins and creoles. The value of the 1959 Mona Conference, then, was its scholarly attention to these languages, its recognition of them as speech systems. (See the conference papers in Le Page 1961.)

The first conference at Mona was followed by a second one there nine years later. The growth in the field of creole studies in the years between the two conferences is reflected in the expanded format of the second conference and, especially, in the book that emerged from the conference, *The Pidginization and Creolization of Languages*, edited by Dell Hymes and published by Cambridge University Press in 1971. More than any other, this was the book that brought pidgins and creoles to the wider attention of linguists.

The three events we have singled out contributed three strands to the study of pidgins and creoles that was to follow. The Mona conferences introduced a comparative component to creole studies and raised the question of how theories of language relate to pidgins and creoles, generativism asked how we as linguists relate what we know about acquisition to the emergence of creoles, and the Weinreich tradition asked similar questions from the perspective of language contact.

## 2 The Growth of a Field

Subsequent developments within linguistics in the 1960s and 1970s were to inform the basic inquiry into pidgin and creole languages. Linguists as far back as Addison Van Name (1869–70) had posited a causal link between the social circumstances that produced creole languages and the particular properties that creole languages had in common. Now the emergence of the field of sociolinguistics (particularly variationist sociolinguistics, as led by William Labov) legitimized creolists' attention to the link between social forces and their linguistic consequences.

The observation within linguistics of a connection between Caribbean creoles and African languages dated at least as far back as Hugo Schuchardt (1882–8)



(see Meijer & Muysken 1977). Beginning in the 1960s, much more research was being carried out on African languages. As a consequence, those interested in creoles with African substrates now had access to grammatical information about relevant African languages. The bonds between African languages and Caribbean creoles featured prominently in particular in the scholarship of the new generation of Caribbean linguists (e.g., Alleyne 1980).

Within creole studies itself, although most of the attention thus far had been devoted to Caribbean creoles and secondarily to Pacific pidgins, attention was now extended more generally to creoles and pidgins elsewhere, e.g., the Indian Ocean, West Africa, and the Pacific Northwest of North America.

## 2.1 Universals vs. substrata

Across the history of the study of pidgin and creole languages – from scholars like Van Name, Schuchardt, and Hesseling (see Holm 1988) through the events we have referred to from the 1950s to the present day – the overriding question has been that of creole genesis. How do creoles come into being? What is to explain their character? Or, phrased another way, to the extent that a creole is distinct from the language from which it draws its lexicon (the lexifier language), what is the source of those differences?

By the early 1980s, how to account for creole genesis had become the *only* question in creole studies. A fundamental difference in opinion pitted “universalists” and “substratists” against each other.

The primary author of the universalist position was Derek Bickerton. In a series of works culminating in *Roots of Language* (1981) and “The Language Bioprogram Hypothesis” (1984), Bickerton argued that creole languages result when children, forced to acquire a first language on the basis of unprocessable input, create language by the application of hard-wired linguistic universals. He claims that this is the situation that arises in the multi-lingual context of plantation societies where the common language is a macaronic, defective pidgin.

For many other creolists, the scenario for creole genesis that the Language Bioprogram Hypothesis requires is crucially at odds with established facts about the history of the colonies where the creoles arose. And various creolists presented detailed accounts (not all of them, to be sure, fully rigorous) that directly linked African language phenomena to creoles. The relevance of the African data was this: if the people who created Caribbean creoles originally were themselves either slaves brought from Africa or their locally born children, then their languages (the substrate languages) were likely to have played a role in shaping the resultant creole.

No creolist denied the relevance of linguistic universals to creole genesis; indeed, we are hard pressed to understand what that would entail. Rather, the divergence of opinion lay in the strength of the substrate contribution to creole genesis, ranging from outright denial of its role (Bickerton 1986) to the assertion





that in some cases at least a creole language is a relexified version of a substrate language (Lefebvre 1986, 1998, 2004).

Despite the attention that Bickerton's position attracted and the appeal of his work outside creole studies (see Veenstra, this volume), the anti-substratism of his view isolated him. When "The Language Bioprogram Hypothesis" appeared in *Brain and Behavioral Sciences* (1984), it was accompanied by commentaries from a number of creolists who voiced their skepticism about so absolute a universalist hypothesis. At the 1985 Amsterdam conference on "Substrata versus Universals in Creole Genesis," most participants espoused positions which incorporated substrate contributions (see the papers of the conference in the volume of the same name edited by Muysken & Smith 1986).

## 2.2 *Pidgin and creole studies today*

Two decades after the publication of *Substrata versus Universals*, the debate continues. Virtually no one within creole studies denies a role either to the substrate or to (first) language acquisition. Rather, the questions that engage the field today involve the nature of the interaction of substrate, lexifier, and universal forces.

During these two decades there has been far more attention to the cultural matrix (Alleyne 1971) of creole genesis; to the demography of the setting in which creole languages arose; to establishing links between individual creoles and the specific African languages that would have contributed to them as well as the variety/varieties of the lexifier language that would have been present; and to the social setting in which creole languages emerged. At the same time, creolists have increasingly framed their understanding of creoles in current theories of language, including theories of language change and language contact.

Insights from the study of pidgins – in particular those of the Melanesian archipelago – have likewise contributed to the field, raising important questions about the relationship between morphosyntactic expansion and nativization as well as the role of substrate languages. Finally, there has been increased attention to the language-particular properties of individual pidgins and creoles.

## 3 The Organization of the Handbook

This handbook sets out to represent the state of the art in creole studies by reflecting what creolists have learned, what the topics are that they are wrestling with, how pidgin and creole languages bear on larger questions about the nature of language, and how different developments in linguistics outside of the field bear on it. In preparing this volume, we have not sought to provide a catalogue of all pidgin and creole languages in the world. We refer the reader in search of this to Holm (1989) and Smith (1995).



Several chapters in the Part I of the book, “Properties of Pidgins and Creoles,” tackle the formal characteristics of pidgins and creoles, while others survey the inclusiveness of these labels. Most of what gets written about pidgins and creoles is about syntax. To do justice to the breadth of the syntax literature, we have included two chapters, Winford’s on Atlantic creole syntax and Meyerhoff’s on Pacific pidgin and creole syntax, alongside Crowley’s chapter on morphology and Smith’s on phonology. Within creole studies, the relationship of pidgins to creoles remains vexed. Bakker’s chapter aims to define different categories of language within the pidgin-creole ambit. While the preponderance of research on pidgins and creoles is devoted to varieties whose lexifier language is a Western European one and which emerged in colonial contexts, Versteegh’s chapter examines pidgins and creoles whose lexifier is non-Indo-European, and which arose in a wide array of contexts. It gives a feel of the immense variety awaiting further research efforts, while also pointing to common patterns of development.

The Part II, “Perspectives on Pidgin and Creole Genesis,” contains chapters that approach the central question in the field, that of genesis, from a diverse range of perspectives. These begin with second language acquisition (Siegel) and first language acquisition/the Language Bioprogram Hypothesis (Veenstra). Thomason presents the perspective of historical linguistics, Mesthrie that of contact linguistics generally, and Muysken that of bi- and multi-lingualism in particular. Arends, Singler, and Jourdan approach genesis from related fields – demography, social history, and anthropology, respectively.

“Pidgins/Creoles and Linguistic Explanation,” Part III, considers pidgin and creole phenomena in the context of grammaticalization theory (Bruyn), markedness (Kihm), lexical semantics (Huttar), and variation studies (Patrick). In “Pidgins/Creoles and Kindred Languages,” Kegl explores the emergence of signed languages in relation to creolization, while Spears and Lipski assess African American Vernacular English and *Bozal* Spanish respectively from the point of view of their putatively creole characteristics.

In Part IV, “Pidgins/Creoles in Society,” Escure argues for the centrality of the study of discourse in these languages. Devonish focuses on the politics of language planning where pidgins/creoles are involved, while Craig considers these languages’ role in education. Buzelin and Winer analyze the different literary traditions involving French- and English-lexifier creoles of the Caribbean.

## 4 Themes

In the handbook’s coverage of the field of pidgin and creole studies, several themes recur. In the subsections that follow, we present some of them, not as an effort to provide a comprehensive summary of the handbook’s contents but rather to give a broad sense of consensus among many authors as to the nature of pidgin and/or creole languages and their genesis.







### 4.1 *On monocausal solutions*

In addressing the debate regarding pidgin/creole genesis, we chose not to divide and organize the handbook by competing theories. With the exception of Veenstra's "Creole Genesis: The Impact of the Language Bioprogram Hypothesis," which assesses the contribution made to the field by Bickerton's work, there are no chapters devoted exclusively to any one of the genesis theories. Certainly, the genesis question figures in many of the chapters, with respect to both pidgins and creoles (in the present discussion, we use "pidgin" to refer to "extended pidgin" – see section 4.2.1 for discussion of the terminology). Thus, Meyerhoff, in discussing developments in Pacific pidgins and creoles, identifies the semantics of the lexifier, synchronic functions and use in discourse, and speakers' substrate models as having played mutually reinforcing roles. In her view, while substrate factors are seen as important, they should not necessarily be taken as the starting point for all grammaticalized structures in Pacific pidgins and creoles. Implied in this is the position that no single explanation for pidgin and creole genesis is sufficient.

This is very much in line with positions taken by other authors, and we may be justified in postulating broad agreement among many of the contributors on the view that no single mechanism fully accounts for pidgin and creole genesis – indeed, that if the influence of any of these diverse factors were taken out of the equation, we would not expect to see the development of pidgins and creoles. Whenever specific properties of these languages are under scrutiny, authors identify lexifier-related properties, substrate-related properties, and independently developed properties. This is true, for instance, of Crowley's discussion of morphology, of Bruyn's discussion of grammaticalized forms, of Smith's discussion of marked phonemes, and of Huttar's discussion of semantics.

By and large, the idea of "ordinary processes, extraordinary results" (Thomason 1995) is applicable to the positions taken on pidgin and creole genesis in many of the chapters. Thus, Muysken adopts the Uniformitarian Hypothesis (Labov 1972), which means that the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic processes operant in the genesis of pidgins and creoles are the same as those operant in contemporary multi-lingual settings. In this vein, Singler discusses the relevance of covert prestige in the emergence of creole languages – an insight gained from modern sociolinguistic research.

Nevertheless, the "ordinary processes" that produce pidgin and creole languages need to be better understood. Chapters such as those by Siegel on second language acquisition, Muysken on multi-lingualism, and Patrick on variation address the nature of some of these processes.

At the same time, Huttar identifies a glaring contradiction in the way many creolists have treated superstrate-related properties. The focus on structures that appear to be different from those of the respective superstrates implies that structures resembling those of the superstrates do not require explanation; it also implies that creole structures in general derive from superstrate sources



– except for those structures studied because they are different. Recently, there has been a surge in interest in superstrate-related genesis scenarios and hence in superstrate-related properties (DeGraff 2001; Mufwene 2001). In this volume, Bruyn shows that some apparent grammaticalizations in pidgins and creoles are in fact extensions of processes already operative in the lexifier, thus pointing to the validity of “restructuring” as a process involved in pidgin and creole genesis (but she also identifies substrate-related grammaticalizations). Kihm points to parallelism between Romance-lexified creoles and their lexifiers in the placement of negation and adverbs, contra DeGraff (1997) and Roberts (1999).

## 4.2 *Nativization and terminology*

### 4.2.1 *The life cycle model and nativization*

An assumption that has been widespread in creole studies over the years and indeed dates to Schuchardt (1909, p. 443, cited in Meijer & Muysken 1977, p. 30) is that a creole arises from a pidgin. In this view, known as the “life cycle model,” the pidgin is seen as having emerged as a medium of communication among people who lacked a language in common and becomes a creole upon nativization, undergoing morphosyntactic expansion in the process. The life cycle model sees creoles as crucially different from prior varieties by virtue of their communicative expansion and greater regularization and holds, further, that it is nativization – when the speech variety in question becomes the first language of children born in the community – that effects these changes.

The term “pidgin” in this scenario has meant widely divergent things to different people. For Bickerton, the term referred to an irregular, even chaotic, speech variety, inadequate for full communication. For others, any contact variety with few or no native speakers was designated a pidgin, no matter how fully adequate a system of communication it might be and no matter how extensive the grammatical system. Terminology arose to distinguish among non-native varieties, with Mühlhäusler (1997, p. 6) dividing what had hitherto been subsumed under “pidgin” into “jargon,” “stable pidgin,” and “expanded pidgin.” In his chapter in this volume, Bakker distinguishes among “jargon,” “pidgin,” and “pidgincreole.” (Accordingly, what Bickerton calls a pidgin is what others would call a jargon.) Briefly, where such distinctions are made, there is assumed to be a line of progression in terms of morphosyntactic elaboration along a cline, from jargon initially to creole ultimately.

The central position of the Caribbean in the history of pidgin and creole scholarship has had as a consequence that the varieties most studied have all been their speakers’ first languages and have long ago undergone nativization. Hence, the life cycle model and, especially, the role – or non-role – of nativization in creole genesis could not be tested on the basis of Caribbean language data. Rather, it is contact varieties of the Pacific that provide the most apt testing ground for it. In particular, varieties of Melanesian Pidgin are at various stages of nativization, yet the evidence from them generally agrees







against the idea that there is a direct and incontrovertible link between their grammatical elaboration and their nativization.

This point is discussed at length in Meyerhoff's and Bakker's chapters, but others make similar points: Crowley points to mismatches between native/non-native status and morphological elaboration, where non-native varieties sometimes display properties one would expect to see in native varieties instead. Bruyn's discussion of the development of the Melanesian Pidgin future marker *baimbai/bai* illustrates that innovative developments are not confined to creole varieties but take place as well in extended pidgins. Escure points out that there is little merit in differentiating pidgin discourse from creole discourse. Versteegh points to cases where a speech community contains both first and second language speakers of the same variety. Veenstra, in elaborating the social context in which Hawaiian Creole English was formed, shows that the grammatical features ascribed to nativization in Bickerton's work on this language emerged first in the non-native speech of a generation of bilinguals (Roberts 2000). Several authors point to extra-linguistic factors which bring about morphosyntactic elaboration. Bakker's view is that the social trigger for the transformation of a non-native communication system into a full-fledged human language is the formation of a speech community, and that nativization plays only a minor role at most. Kegl, in her discussion of the emergence of signed languages, similarly assigns a pivotal role to the presence of a community of "speakers" – specifically a Deaf community – and argues that a critical mass has to be attained for language emergence to take place. She does, however, point out that the community must consist of "language-ready" children and argues that the gestural communication systems which arise outside of such a context do not constitute language. The latter include the gestural communication systems of mixed communities of hearing and deaf where the deaf are a minority, and the gestural system of the first generation of students in Nicaraguan schools for the deaf.

In many ways, the views expressed in these and other chapters assign a pivotal role to language use as driving developments of expansion, whether in pidgins or in creoles. Thus, Meyerhoff's view is that discourse is "both the starting point and the primary medium for the development of syntax." Jourdan sees pidgins and creoles as the result of negotiation of linguistic meaning in the broader context of negotiation of culture, and identifies social interaction, power, the ideological dimension of culture, and human agency as constituting the "matrix" of pidgin and creole genesis. Siegel sees the adoption of L1 features into the contact variety occurring during a phase where its use is extended into different domains, challenging speakers to use a second language of which they have acquired too little in a range of situations.

If we recognize that the traditional distinction between pidgin and creole based on non-native vs. native speaker status is of little consequence in predicting either their social functions or the extent of their grammatical elaboration, the logical consequence is that the terms themselves become less useful as labels for particular kinds of languages – indeed, where Pacific and West



African Pidgins and creoles are discussed, the terms are felt to be an encumbrance, to stand in the way of achieving proper insight in the developments that gave rise to these languages. Versteegh points to this problem when he posits that the continued use of the terms “pidgin” and “creole” with the implications for (non-)native status directs our attention toward what “a language can be” – that is, on issues of prototypicality – and away from the processes of restructuring which give rise to these languages and the potential range of their outcomes. Additionally, the life cycle model is based on assumptions that no longer stand up to scrutiny about the structure of the plantation societies where creole languages emerged; hence, its applicability even in the Caribbean context can be questioned, as argued by Singler.

Different authors deal with the terminological problem in different ways. Thus, Jourdan consistently uses the term “pidgins” to refer to both non-native and native varieties – including those of the Caribbean, which are usually thought of as the prototypical “creoles.” In contrast, Meyerhoff and Devonish both prefer to speak of “creoles” for languages that are used for the full range of social functions, irrespective of native/non-native status – including the still largely non-natively spoken Melanesian Pidgins. Thomason takes non-native/native status to distinguish pidgins from creoles – as is traditionally done – but uses the term “pidgin” to refer to fully crystallized languages, excluding rudimentary pidgins from that label, although she allows that a pidgin which remains a secondary language used for quite limited purposes may be limited in lexicon and grammar.

Alternative to all this is the viewpoint, associated with the work of authors such as Chaudenson and Mufwene, which holds that creole languages emerge from successive cycles of approximation of their lexifiers, and are their descendants; as pointed out in Singler’s chapter, this viewpoint entails that there is no prior pidginization.

#### 4.2.2 *Other terminological issues*

In the previous section, we pointed to the difficulties surrounding the different ways in which authors have used “pidgin.” In this section we address other terminological points.

Bickerton (1981) classifies creoles as fort creoles, plantation creoles, and maroon creoles. He bases his distinction on the social context in which the pertinent languages emerged. The distinction has become widely accepted, although the question of the formal typological implications remains unresolved. Fort creoles, the creoles which originated around European forts or settlements, often in mixed relationships (local mothers, European fathers) arose in situations that are presumed to have involved no displacement for the “substrate” population (although this claim is probably disputable, at least for some of the West African forts where the designation is commonly applied), whereas plantation creoles and maroon creoles arose in contexts of displacement. The plantation and maroon creoles are distinguished by access to





superstrate speakers in the plantation context and isolation from the superstrate population in the maroon context. In fact, however, maroon communities subsisted on the fringes of plantation societies and their survival often depended on considerable contact with plantation populations. Some maroon communities did develop linguistic practices different from – although related to – those of the plantation societies, e.g. those in Suriname, Jamaica, and, in one instance, Colombia; however, for most known maroon communities, no special linguistic practices have been documented. Where relevant, the chapters in this book consider plantation creole data alongside maroon creole data; they do so without reflecting on the distinctions. Fort creoles are not considered here.

The creolist community has appropriated the terms “superstrate” and “substrate” from historical linguistics but has altered their meanings in the process. For creolists, “superstrate” ordinarily refers to the language of the socially and economically dominant group. In colonial situations, this is usually the language of the colonial power. It typically provides the basis for the lexicon for the emergent pidgin or creole. When it does so, it is also referred to as the “lexifier language.” “Substrate” refers to the first languages of the socially and economically subordinated populations; in plantation situations the speakers of substrate languages usually comprise the labor force. Sometimes, as Bakker points out, there are pidgins whose lexical basis is a language that is not associated with socioeconomic or political power; however, the known instances of this are limited to unexpanded pidgins. Versteegh similarly points out that contact varieties may emerge in situations where the different linguistic groups are equal, but says that such situations are rare. The terms are generally used by the authors in this handbook with reference to situations where the socioeconomic conditions were such that substrate speakers were politically and economically subordinate to superstrate speakers.

The term “lexifier” (in place of superstrate) has the advantage that it is devoid of implications with regard to socioeconomic status, but its adoption leaves a gap in that no straightforward alternative term is available for the notion of “substrate.”

Apart from the terms substrate and superstrate, the term “adstrate” has had some relevance in the field, designating languages that have either had a peripheral presence in the contexts where pidgins and creoles emerged or came on the scene after pidgin and creole genesis. In either case, it is assumed that the pertinent languages were not in a position to make significant contributions to the grammar. In the Caribbean, indigenous languages – where they survived European onslaught – and late-arriving African and Asian languages are considered adstrates. Since adstrates are not considered to have relevance to pidgin and creole genesis, they do not figure in the present pages beyond passing mention.

The “creole continuum” (originally the “post-creole continuum”) is a model posited by DeCamp (1971) to designate the situation that arose in, among





other places, Guyana (Bickerton 1975, Rickford 1987) and Jamaica (Patrick 1999). In both these cases, the continued coexistence of creole and lexifier has resulted in intermediate varieties, such that the term “creole” is ambiguously used to refer to a range of varieties. In order to distinguish within the range, the terms “basilect,” “mesolect,” and “acrolect” are used to designate varieties farthest from, intermediate, and closest to the lexifier, with the possibility of further differentiation within, e.g., the basilect (cf., for example, Singler 1996). Although the competence of speakers within the continuum tends to correlate with the ruralurban divide and with socioeconomic status, continuum variation does not simply translate to geographical or social variation. Most speakers will be competent in more than one variety, and it is possible for individuals to have competence in varieties that are discontinuous on the continuum (Bickerton 1975).

In some work by creolists, particularly those dealing with the Caribbean, the terms basilect, mesolect, and acrolect have been extended to designate what might be called a pan-creole continuum, with, for example, Bajan and Trinidadian Creole – because they are deemed closer to English than are most other Caribbean English Creoles – designated acrolectal and mesolectal, respectively. Still within this paradigm, it is sometimes the case that the Surinamese creoles, because they are much further from English than any of the other English-lexifier languages of the Caribbean, are given a designation like “radical” or “conservative.” In his chapter on Atlantic syntax, Winford designates them “radical.” Arends discusses some of the demographic factors which may have contributed to the status of creoles on this continuum.

The terms “creolization” and “pidginization” have been subject to a range of definitions. As a general rule, pidginization is identified with simplification, and creolization with expansion, as in the following observation by Hymes (1971a, p. 84): “Pidginization is usually associated with simplification in outer form, creolization with complication in outer form.” For those who define a creole language as a nativized pidgin, the term creolization is often simply identified with nativization. As a result, except when explicitly defined, the domain of “creolization” is ambiguous. A further point in this regard is that, while creolists may tend to have positions regarding what they consider to be the most important contributing factors in pidginization and creolization (such as the substrate, universals of second language acquisition, and the like), they rarely have a clear position on the actual mechanisms involved in these processes. Exceptions to this statement include Bickerton’s Language Bioprogram Hypothesis (1984 and elsewhere) and Lefebvre’s Relexification Hypothesis (1998 and elsewhere), each of which postulate very specific mechanisms by which features enter creole languages. Both proposals have been subject to the criticism that no single mechanism is able to account for the full range of results, and both have required auxiliary hypotheses to make up for their lack of explanatory power, thus coming much closer to compromise positions than their authors allow for.



### 4.3 *Pidgin/creole typology*

As Mesthrie points out, from a synchronic point of view, creoles are “normal” languages (see Muysken 1988 and Singler, this volume, for the same point). It is only for certain linguistic inquiries, with either a technical historical focus or a typological focus, that their status as contact languages is at issue. Thus, Thomason, who approaches the subject from the point of view of historical linguistics, considers pidgins and creoles of interest as a class of languages because of their historically “mixed” nature.

Nevertheless, the idea that we can identify certain characteristics with pidgin and creole languages has endured – although many authors now correlate these characteristics with social expansion rather than with nativization – alongside an increasing awareness that there is a great deal of structural diversity across pidgins and creoles. For instance, Bakker, who argues that distinctions between pidgins and creoles have primarily a social basis, still recognizes that the social categories appear to correlate with structural features.

Winford identifies structures which are shared across many – if not all – Atlantic Creoles in the areas of word order, tense-aspect marking, movement processes (in passivization and focus constructions, etc.), serial verb constructions, and so on, while cautioning that we can find the full gamut of languages ranging from those that are quite close in structure to their superstrates to others that diverge quite significantly even within a single region and within a single lexifier group, for instance English-lexifier creoles of the Caribbean.

Singler considers the proposition that at least some of the shared features in, for instance, Atlantic creoles, may be the result of diffusion, as strongly argued in the work of Baker (1999) and Baker and Huber (2001); while supported by Singler in principle, he points to serious flaws in the methodology by which diffusion is purportedly established.

Kihm addresses the question whether creole structures can be considered to instantiate “unmarkedness,” arguing that this term has to be interpreted in the Chomskyan sense of referring to core grammar, and more specifically that unmarked is to be interpreted as referring to parallelism in complexity between syntactic and LF representations, and that this represents the default option in grammar.

One author who points to a possible difference between expanded pidgins and creoles is Huttar. In his chapter on semantic structure he identifies the auxiliary status of Tok Pisin as the reason that certain semantic domains in its lexicon suffer from lack of elaboration as compared to the substrate languages. A similar point is made by Jourdan, based on an evaluation of the system of kinship terms in Melanesian Pidgin. Thus, prolonged coexistence with ancestral languages may well mean that elaboration of culturally important semantic domains is held back – contrary to what one might expect. In contrast, rapid nativization of a creole language, which presumably goes hand in hand with equally rapidly diminished use of ancestral languages, means that the



creole must be the vehicle for expression of culturally important concepts, which are expected to derive at least to some extent from the substrate language(s), as shown for Ndyuka in Huttar's own work.

Two chapters that look anew at the presence of creole features in varieties that are generally considered not to be creoles are those by Lipski and Spears, which consider this issue in regard to *bozal* Spanish and African American English, respectively.

#### 4.4 *Applied issues*

The recognition of the morphosyntactic independence of pidgin and creole languages from their lexifiers (e.g., Muysken 2004) has led to a recognition among linguists in pidgin- and creole-speaking societies that the institutions of these societies need to make use of the pidgin/creole in order to function efficiently. In particular, linguists have long argued that vernacular literacy is a prerequisite to educational success. This issue is taken up in Craig's chapter. Devonish's chapter addresses the role of the state in efforts to include or exclude these languages from public functions.

Pidgin/creole-speaking societies usually have long-standing oral traditions which make use of the vernacular. This "orality" is often seen as a factor in the lack of interest both on the part of pidgin/creole-speaking populations and their governments to accord official status to these languages. Buzelin and Winer's chapter considers the ways in which writers of the Caribbean have brought creole within the purview of a literary tradition and have struggled with questions of orality and literacy.

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