The Contemporary Debate

Monogenesis: unpopular; but still must account for shared lexical material
Substrate: Relexification key process underlying creolization
Superstratists: European Dialect Origin now assumed
Gradualist considerations accepted

Contemporary perspectives assuming multiple causality:

Simplification + L2 Learning
Substrate + Relexification
Bioprogram and Universals
The Contemporary Debate

Simplification Plus L2 Learning
Michel DeGraff (MIT, Generative Syntactician and Creolist)
1. What about cognitive processes at the root of pidginization (and creoles)?
2. Role of Children vs. Adults: Can we learn by studying language change, L2 acquisition, and creolization together?

Substrate Plus Relexification
John Singler (New York University, Creolist), Claire Lefebvre (U Quebec)
Sarah (Sally) Thomason (U Michigan)
1. Relexification can only happen when you have a native L1 (adults) to drive feature selection
2. Does founder population information truly predict linguistic survivals?
3. How different is PC Creation different from Language Shift?

Bioprogram and Universals
John McWhorter (UC Berkeley, Creolist)
1. Is there a creole prototype?

(1) There is a natural tense-aspect system, rooted in specific neural properties of the brain
   - separate preverbal markers (orderings and combinations) representing logical operators
   - serial verbs

(2) Generic/nonspecific ø article (in addition to definite and indefinite articles)

   Ow  much  tiebl*dem  im bild?  (Jamaican)
   “How many tables did he build?” (non-individuated)

(3) Fronting of NPs for focus

   Di  gwamba  Kofi  sabi  taa  mi  njan  (Saramaccan)
   The meat  Kofi  know  that 1SG  eat  “The meat, Kofi knows that I eat (ec).”

(4) distinction between attributive, locative-existential and equative copulas
   - e.g., Sranan
Bickerton

Bioprogram Model (1972, 1981): (Bickerton 1981, Roots of Language) humans have a built-in biological propensity for Language (not "a language") with certain universal features. (Originally: The Language Bioprogram Hypothesis, LBH)

(5) Multiple negation

\[ Mi \text{ noh waa noh moni } \]

Spanish)

“I NEG want NEG money.”

(6) Bimorphemic question words

\[ wat \text{ taym when } \]

\[ wat \text{ side where } \]

(Chinese Pidgin English)

(7) Realized and unrealized complements

(8) Relativization and subject-copying

(9) Existential and possessor “it”

(10) Passivization

“Pidginization is second-language learning with restricted input and creolization is first-language learning with restricted input.” (Bickerton)
DeGraff

(Language Creation and Language Change: creolization, diachrony, and development, 2001)

I(nternalized)-Language

- knowledge states
- (microscopic development)

E(xternalized)-Language

- externally-defined patterns resulting from language acquisition in varying sociohistorical settings:
  - so-called stable transmission
  - language change
  - creolization
- (macroscopic development)

Setting of Parameters

I-lang  I-lang  I-lang

E-lang type

(observable in speech community studies)

“Creoles are the product of extraordinary social historical factors coupled with ordinary internal linguistic resources inherent in the faculté de langage.”
DeGraff

(Language Creation and Language Change: creolization, diachrony, and development, 2001)

1. Each speaker recreates language.

2. Cues/triggers guide acquirers through parameter setting.

3. UG is the same for all speakers, therefore creolization differs from L1 acquisition only because of external factors:
   ...In “normally-changing” languages, differences between an idiolect and a TL are minimal (parents basically have same settings)
   ...In creoles, differences between an idiolect and TL are ones of greater or lesser degree: children’s acquisition process involves:
      -- relexification
      -- reanalysis effects
      -- frequency effects (which determine markedness)
        ... so creoles are special only because of external forces.
McWhorter

Creole Prototype Hypothesis (*Defining Creole*, 2005)

Disagrees with Hall (1966), who says: “There are no structural criteria which, in themselves, will identify a creole as such in the absence of historical criteria.”

McW’s claim: Creoles are the only natural languages predicted to lack or all-but-lack all of these three features:

- non-compositional derivational morphology
- (4+) lexical tones
- little or no inflectional morphology (derivational morphology is semantically compositional)

...so, creoles are special because they are structurally unique.

“The world’s simplest grammars are creole grammars.”