Most pidgins and creoles either lack morphology entirely or have limited morphological resources compared with those of the lexifier and input languages. Morphology also tends to be extremely regular when it does exist in pidgins and creoles, without the widespread irregularities that are so very common (...) in other languages’ morphological system.

Thomason (2001, 168)
Outline

What are Creoles?

Creole Genesis

Creole Morphology
Strictly speaking, creoles (...) are new language varieties that developed out of contacts between colonial nonstandard varieties of a European language and several non-European languages around the Atlantic and in the Indian and Pacific Oceans during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. (...) Creoles emerged in settlement colonies whose primary industry consisted typically of sugar cane or rice cultivation, for which non-European slaves or contract laborers were employed who constituted the overwhelming majority of the plantation populations.

Mufwene 2015b, 133–134
What are Creoles?

Against the P-to-C life cycles

Creoles do not evolve from pidgins

Genetic Creolistics & Genetic Linguistics
Salikoko Mufwene M/Tr 3:30-5:20 PM
Against the traditional P-to-C life cycles

**General claim**: Pidgins arose from an abrupt break from the gradual development of languages.

![Diagram of pidgin and creole development]

**Figure**: Muysken and Smith (1994, p. 6)
What are Creoles?

Against the traditional P-to-C life cycles

- The post-creole stage: Decreolization

As can be seen from the table, the distribution of *fu/tu* is patterned implicationally. Speakers using *tu* after Class III verbs also use *tu* after Class II and I verbs, and speakers using *tu* after Class II verbs also use it after Class I verbs. It is also evident that the change from *fu* to *tu* starts in environment I. According to Bickerton (1973), what we see here is a change in progress by the step-wise incorporation of an acrolectal element. In the process of decreolization, basilect speakers do not randomly adopt rules from the acrolect, but instead start applying a rule in one specific environment, generalize the rule in this environment before proceeding to apply the rule in the next environment. The rows in Table 4 are not isolects: they simply represent speakers' outputs in different isolects. Constructing a table like Table 4 enables one to locate individual speakers' outputs in a poly-lectal grid as presented in Table 3. The data from speakers 1 and 19, for instance, may be considered as the output of the same most acrolectal isolect. The variable use of *fu/tu* by speakers 11 and 25 in environment II and by speaker 14 in environment III must be due to the application of two rules belonging to two different isolects: they are in the process of making the transition from one isolect to the other.

The use of implicational scales has produced some interesting and important findings. On the basis of synchronic data it may reveal the ways in which ongoing changes spread through time and space. The technique of implicational scaling as used by e.g. Bickerton (1975) has been heavily criticized as being unreliable and methodologically unsound (e.g. Romaine 1982: 177-182). Recent developments in variable rule analysis, however, have made it possible to uncover implicational patterns in variation, and to test the reliability of implicational scales constructed (see Dittmar & Schlobinski 1988 and D. Sankoff 1988).

The applicability of the model of a unidimensional continuum

The language varieties in a creole-speaking community form a continuum only if they can be ordered along a single dimension: [+/-creoleness]. Consider Figure 2.

![Figure: de Rooij (1994, p. 58)](image)

The creole continuum is at odds with creole as a ground-zero language.
Etymology the term *Pidgin* appeared in the 19th century while the term *Creole* dates from the 16th century.
What are Creoles?

Against the traditional P-to-C life cycles

They do not share the same geographical distribution

Figure: Mufwene (2007)
Creoles are not nativized by children
Outline

What are Creoles?

Creole Genesis

Creole Morphology
Theories of Creole Genesis

- The universal approach
- The substratist approach
- The superstratist approach
- The gradualist approach
1. The Language Bioprogram Theory (Bickerton, 1984)
   - Creoles are created by children
   - Similarities across creoles are explained by the language faculty
   - Creoles are unmarked

2. Maximization of semantic transparency (Seuren and Wekker, 1986)
   - Uniformity
   - Universality
     “This renders morphology essentially alien to creole languages.”
     (Seuren and Wekker, 1986, 66)
   - Simplicity
The Substratist Approach

- Emphasizes input from the substratic languages to account for the differences between lexifier and creoles
- Similarities across creoles are explained by substratic influence
  1. Relexification: European words but African grammar (Lefebvre, 1998)
  2. SLA and substrate transfer (Siegel, 2003)
The Superstratist Approach

1. Monogenesis
2. Baby/Foreigner talk
3. Imperfect Second Language Acquisition
4. European nonstandard dialect
The gradualist approach

The structure of a creole should be described in light of

(...) the nature of the lexifier, structural features of the substrate languages, changes in the ethno-linguistic makeups of the populations that came in contact, the kinds of interactions between speakers of the lexifier and those of other languages, and rates and modes of population growth.

Mufwene 2015b, 138

- Cognitive processes involved in language learning also contributes to the emerging creole.
Language change also applies to Creoles

- Creoles follows the same unidirectional path of language change but at a faster pace
  - Syntactic combinations morphologize
  - Phonological alternations morphologize
Multiple factors interact in the making of an object or a behavior. (...) identify instances of the targeted phenomenon, catalogue its local variability and try to identify interacting factors that recur in similar combinations, in e.g. different languages, in order to motivate its existence. Sometimes similar pathways defined by interacting factors lead to the same results, sometimes they lead to similar results, and sometimes unexpected results. Sometimes differing pathways lead to the same results, and sometimes they lead to similar results, and sometimes to different ones. The potential for language variation is vast when interpreted in this way.

(CHAPTER 1 Ackerman and Nikolaeva, 2010)

Rethinking and reconceptualization in linguistics using probabilistic modeling
Outline

What are Creoles?

Creole Genesis

Creole Morphology
The morphology of creole languages has long been a neglected area of study. One reason for this state of affairs may well have been the widespread belief among linguists that creole languages are characterized (among other things) by little or no morphology.

Braun and Plag (2003, P. 81)
Claim largely based on a particular view of word structure: **morphemic**
- More affixation
- TMA: Inflectional in the lexifiers vs mostly periphrastic in the creoles
- Language complexity

Less vocabulary

Not all languages can be described using a morphemic approach
Theoretical bases

Figure: Morphological lineages (Blevins et al., 2016)
Theoretical bases

*In the ancient model the primary insight is not that words can be split into roots and formatives, but that they can be located in paradigms. They are not wholes composed of simple parts, but are themselves the parts within a complex whole. In that way, we discover different kinds of relation, and, perhaps, a different kind of simplicity.*

Matthews (1991, P. 204)
Le maniement du verbe français avec ses flexions de mode, de temps, de nombre et de personne, offrait des complications que le créole devait nécessairement écarter. Ici la simplification a été poussée à ses dernières limites. Le thème verbal n’a qu’une forme unique : mo vini je viens; to té vini tu es venu; li va vini il viendra; etc., etc.

Baissac (1880, P. 23)
Historical bases

Creoles are characterized as corrupted versions of their lexifier languages during the colonial period. (Degraff, 2001a, 297)
Historical bases

Creole languages result from the adaptation of a language, especially some Indo-European language, to the (so to speak) phonetic and grammatical genius of a race that is linguistically inferior.

(VINSON 1889, Degraff, 2001a, 297)
Morphology & Complexity

- Morphology as a measure of language complexity in both creoles and non-creoles revived in the last decades
  - Traditional grammar = Morphology
    - Proto Indo-European → … → Latin → … → French
  - The comparative method has been used in creolistics for typological classification but also complexity classifications
    - Creoles form a natural class distinct from other languages (McWhorter, 2001; Bakker et al., 2017)
The world’s simplest grammars are creole grammars

McWhorter (2001, and subsq.)
“Anomaly” doesn’t exist in language, rather, lurking behind it are anomalous presumptions and convictions that obtain in linguistic theory.

Ackerman and Nikolaeva (A. E. KIBRIK, 2010, 304)
Goals of this course

- Using quantitative data where possible, we investigate why creoles have the type of morphology they have.
- Examine quantifiable aspects of creole morphology by applying the same concepts and methodology that have been applied to non-creole languages, without making claims about the complexity of the creoles as a whole.
- Empirical evidence clearly show that
  - The same complex inflectional phenomena found in non-creoles are also found in creole languages.
  - Morphology in creoles is not necessarily regular or transparent.
  - Morphological innovations in creoles.
  - There is no compelling evidence that creoles are more or less complex overall from that point of view.
## Course Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>July 7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Creole morphology – Prolegomenon</td>
<td>Degraff 2001b,a; Plag 2006; Bakker 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Tracing the origins of inflection (Mtian, I-Portuguese)</td>
<td>Chaudenson (2003); Becker and Veenstra (2003); Mufwene 2015a; Luís 2010; Bonami et al. 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Guest Lecture – Silvia Kouwenberg</td>
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<td>July 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>FACS5</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Opacity in French-based creoles’ inflectional paradigm</td>
<td>(Henri, 2010; Bonami and Henri, 2010)</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Guest Lecture – Greg Stump</td>
<td>(Luís, 2011; Bonami and Luís, 2014; Luís, 2014)</td>
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<td>July 25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Conversion relations</td>
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<td>July 28&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>The development of nominal inflection</td>
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<td>Aug 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Nominal inflections; Conclusions</td>
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