

Introduction

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The articles published in this special issue on pidgin and creole languages were originally presented at the 19th Annual Conference on African Linguistics at Boston University, 14–17 April 1988. They include all the papers presented at the Round Table on Pidgins, Creoles, and Theoretical Linguistics, which the organizers invited Mufwene to organize as a special part of the Conference, and a subset of the papers presented at the Pidgins and Creoles section which is normally included in the Conference. We are grateful to the editors of *Linguistics* for allowing us this special issue, to the contributors for their cooperativeness, especially in following the referees' suggestions, and to the following individuals for agreeing to referee the papers in spite of their busy schedules: Guy Carden, Walter Edwards, William Eilfort, Geneviève Escure, Ian Hancock, Guy Hazaël-Massieux, John Hutchison, James McCawley, John Rickford, Peter Mühlhäusler, Gillian Sankoff, Michael Silverstein, Arthur Spears, William Stewart, and Ellen Woolford.

Overall, the articles are representative of what current research in pidgin and creole studies is about. Many describe formal properties of pidgins and creoles, often taking issue with established analyses of the phenomena, either in this subfield of linguistics or in theoretical linguistics generally. Most of the articles in this issue report findings from this vantage point, particularly those by Francis Byrne, Alexander Caskey, Alain Kihm, John Lumsden, John Lumsden and Claire Lefebvre, Salikoko Mufwene, Pieter Seuren, and to some extent Frederick Jones.

Some of the articles, on the other hand, attempt to account for the origin of some formal properties of pidgins and creoles, attributing them here to influences from the lexifying languages or from (some of) the substrate languages, or to convergence from both. The articles by John Holm, Frederick Jones, and Pieter Muysken and Norval Smith fall into this category. The latter article even addresses the question of what formal linguistic principle might account for the selection of some of the question phrases discussed.

One article, by John Singler, reexamines the criteria traditionally associated with creolity. It focuses particularly on the Pidginization Index proposed by Derek Bickerton for predicting, for each creole or pidgin, its distance with regard to universal grammar as described in his bioprogram hypothesis. This contribution latches on to what is clearly a central issue in current pidgin and creole studies: what distinguishes pidgins and creoles from other languages, genetically or formally, or, most interestingly, both. As such it complements most of the theoretical-descriptive contributions in this issue, which treat formal features of pidgins and creoles just like those of other languages, until the evidence forces them to set the pidgins and creoles apart, as a separate category.

The theoretical-descriptive papers in this issue represent different theoretical frameworks, although most of them follow the theory of government and binding. As much as we may disagree with some of the analyses, they are all rooted solidly in a rich bed of empirical data. They provide additional relevant data to those who work on similar theoretical questions in different (groups of) languages and thus contribute to an adequate formulation of cross-linguistic generalizations. We are happy to present this body of data, with their analyses, to the linguistic community, and we hope that, if new questions are not raised, old questions can, at any rate, be looked at in a new light.

A caveat is in order here about the perhaps controversial way some terms are used in this issue. First the term 'creole', which is used in almost all the papers with reference to those creoles that have been lexified by European languages. This usage has been criticized particularly because it fails to take into account the creoles lexified by non-European languages. Even assuming that certain valid cross-creole generalizations can be made, both genetically and formally, it is still far from clear to what extent the creoles whose lexicon derives from non-European languages fit into this pattern. Our readers should be aware of the fact that the creole generalizations proposed in some of the papers are either meant to apply to, or have been checked for, only the creoles lexified by European languages. If it turns out that they fail to apply to the other creoles, some rethinking will be called for.

Our doubts, in this respect, are reinforced by the widespread identification, in creole studies, of the notions 'lexifier' and 'superstrate language'. Apart from the sociological associations of the terms 'substrate' and 'superstrate' (as with their parallels 'basilect' and 'acrolect'), it is by no means generally the case, in creole communities, that the lexifier and the superstrate languages are identical. We must, therefore, reckon with the possibility of much more varied patterns of creolization than we have so far considered. Our views in this respect may well have been biased by

our focus on 'colonial' creoles, which attracted the linguists' attention in the first place and which are so much more accessible than the ones that came about in different contexts. In general, it is our feeling that creole studies might perhaps benefit from a better integration into the more general field of studies of languages in contact, and vice versa. We do not think, however, that the value of the collection presented here is in any way impaired by such considerations. On the contrary, we hope and expect that it will prove to be useful and profitable to all those who take an interest in the nature and structure of language.

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