Perspectives on Creole Genesis and Language Acquisition

Heather Barikmo[1]

Abstract

Creolists tend to view the genesis of creole languages as more complicated than do other linguists. While most linguists define creoles as those languages which originate as pidgins and then acquire native speakers, creolists have long questioned the plausibility of this claim and debated alternate theories of genesis among themselves. Universalism (Bickerton, 1981; Bickerton, 1984), posits Chomskyan language universals to account for creole formation within a second-language acquisition (SLA) framework. Substratism (Lefebvre, 1998; Lumsden, 1999) acknowledges the SLA framework set forth by universalism but goes farther in allowing for the influence of the first languages of the creolizing community on the emerging language. This paper examines these two theories, and findings from SLA research are used to critique their respective positions. Additionally, an apparent dichotomy presented by these theories is explored. The complementary hypothesis (Mufwene, 1996; Mufwene, 1999; Mufwene, 2001), which retains an SLA-oriented approach to the theory of creole language origins, is presented as a viable alternative to the question of genetics. Since creoles do not appear to form along strictly first-language acquisition lines, SLA researchers would benefit from exploring the vast body of creolist literature which assumes and proves an SLA framework in the formation of these languages.

[1] Heather Barikmo received her M.A. in Applied Linguistics from Teachers College, Columbia University. She currently teaches reading and writing at LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York, and is also a freelance test developer. Her current research interests include classroom assessment and pedagogical pragmatics. Correspondence should be sent to heatherbarikmo@gmail.com.

Introduction

Creole languages formed under the context of colonialism, whereby large numbers of people from diverse language backgrounds formed new societies, most of which were characterized by the economic and political dominance of the colonizing group. Most linguists are content to acknowledge the superficial similarities of creoles to the languages of colonial dominance, allowing that any structural variance from these forms was the result of influence from the languages spoken by the dominated populations. Furthermore, most linguists are content to define creoles as "those languages which emerge from pidgins" or "pidgins which have acquired native speakers". These textbook explanations oversimplify the central questions of creole genesis. Creolists have long resisted this reductionism and have noted the relationship of language acquisition processes and creole formation. What processes govern the variation between creoles and their ancestor languages, for example? What accounts for the emergence of African/Asian/Melanesian/etc. language structures in superficially European language forms? What does it mean for a pidgin to acquire native speakers? Does this have first- or second-language acquisition implications?

This paper examines two of the dominant theories of creole genesis proposed by scholars in the field - universalism and substratism – and analyzes the features which distinguish these positions from one another. Evidence to support or refute each theory is then presented, and an effort is made to demonstrate how creolist scholarship is in some ways hindered by dichotomous thinking. In particular, examples from language acquisition theory are used to demonstrate strengths and weaknesses of the two theories and demonstrate the (somewhat) false dichotomy espoused by universalists and substratists. A

viable reconciliation of the competing theories of creole genesis, drawn from Mufwene's complementary hypothesis (1996, 1999, 2001), is then put forward. Creole genesis must be informed by broad linguistic universals as well as influences from dominant and non-dominant language forms, and evidence will be provided to substantiate this claim.

The Universalist Account of Creole Genesis

The universalist conception of creole genesis is most closely associated with the seminal work of Bickerton (1981, 1984). Bickerton was among the first creolist researchers to present a language- universal and generative account of creole formation. Previous creolist scholarship was mainly interested in providing descriptive taxonomies of specific creole language grammars without giving much attention to the formation of these language systems; the widely held position that creoles derive from pidgins was seen as explanation enough for their existence. Bickerton, however, combined extensive descriptive work on Hawaiian Pidgin English (henceforth HPE) and Hawaiian Creole English (henceforth HCE) with a generative account of the formation of HCE, arguing that human language universals provided the framework for the development of this particular creole language, and by extension, all creole languages.

In the late 19th century, the population of Hawaii changed drastically as a result of the rapidly growing sugar industry and the resulting immigration of people from many diverse language backgrounds (Bickerton, 1981). The native languages of the people in this abruptly-formed plantation society included English, Japanese, various forms of Chinese, Visayan and other Filipino languages, and native Hawaiian; the contact language forms reflected this diversity. Arguably, English was an acquisition target for many in this new environment, as economic power

was concentrated among English-speaking groups. Therefore, the emergence of an English-based pidgin and subsequent creole was a natural outcome.

Bickerton (1981) considered the following speech samples typical of early HPE as spoken by native-born Japanese (examples 1 and 2) and native-born Filipino (example 3)[2]:

1. mista karsan-*no tokoro* tu eika sel *shite*
   MR. CARSON-POSS PLACE TWO ACRE SELL DO
   "I sold two acres to Mr. Carson's place"
2. *sore kara* kech *shite kara* pul ap
   AND THEN CATCH DO THEN PULL UP
   "When he had caught it, he pulled it up"
3. *luna,* hu *hapai*? *hapai* awl, *hemo* awl
   FOREMAN, WHO CARRY? CARRY ALL, CUT ALL
   "Who'll carry it, boss? Everyone'll cut it, and everyone'll carry it" (p. 9-10)

The free borrowing of lexical items from multiple language systems and lack of anaphora were noted as characteristic of early HPE, as was variable syntax. The Japanese speaker in example 1 exhibited the SOV structure characteristic of the L1, whereas the Japanese speaker in example 2 exhibited no discernible word order (due in part to the omission of any NPs). The Filipino in example 3, however, exhibited a VS structure characteristic of the L1, Visayan. None of these speakers exhibited English-based SVO word order, though Bickerton (1981) acknowledged that later HPE was marked by production of SVO word order by non-native born speakers at least some of the time. Later stages of the pidgin were also marked by greater use of English lexical items, though L1 syntax was at least occasionally retained.

4. da pua pipl awl poteito it
   "The poor people only ate potatoes"
5. wok had dis pipl
   "These people work hard" (p. 11)

[2] The italicized words are lexical items from the speakers' native languages, in this case Japanese and Visayan.

Though all lexical items used by both speakers were derived from English, the speaker in example 4 was still identifiable as native Japanese and the speaker in example 5 was still identifiable as native Filipino due to the syntax of their utterances. Thus, later HPE was thought to be marked by a mainly English lexicon, little to no anaphora, and an occasionally variable yet consistently simple syntax. HCE, however, was defined as having a stabilized SVO syntax and as exhibiting five innovative structures wholly absent in the earlier pidgin: the presence of movement rules, inventive article usage, inventive use of verbal auxiliaries, *fo-go* complementation, and relativization coupled with subject copying.

HCE (like later HPE) exhibited a basic SVO syntax, but all speakers of HCE had available to them movement rules which allowed the fronting of either the object or the entire predicate for pragmatic purposes. Bickerton (1981) provided the following exchange as context:

> Interviewer: You ever saw any ghost?
> HCE Speaker: no – ai no si.
> Interviewer: What about, you know, dakine fireball?
> HCE Speaker: *o, daet wan ai si* (p. 19)

In the final utterance of this exchange, the HCE speaker fronted the object of his sentence to indicate the exception to his earlier claim that he has never seen a supernatural entity.

HCE was also marked by innovative use of articles. Bickerton's (1981) analysis of HPE revealed that native Japanese tended to undergeneralize article usage whereas native Filipinos tended to overgeneralize their use; as neither of these languages makes use of an article system, this was seen as expected. Native HCE speakers, however, exhibited uniform usage of articles regardless of ethnicity. In HCE, *da* served as the definite article whereas *wan* served as the indefinite article (presumably from English *the* and *one*). Also characteristic of HCE article usage, however, was zero-marking in those cases where English would require article usage.

6. *dag* smat
   "The dog is smart" (in answer to, "Which is smarter, the horse or the dog?")
7. bat nobody gon get *jab*
   "But nobody will get a job" (p. 23-24)

In both of these cases, no specific reference is intended; the nouns in question are generic and non-specific. This usage was found to have no parallel in English.

Verbal auxiliary usage was also uniform for speakers of HCE in Bickerton's (1981) study. *Bin* was used to mark past tense and *go* was used to mark modality; both of these forms were also widely present in HPE, however, and as such could not serve to mark the emergence of HCE. *Stei* was only present in HPE as a main verb, yet it was widely found as an aspectual auxiliary in the data collected from speakers of HCE. Its use marked four categories – present continuous, past continuous, present habitual and past habitual (examples 8-11, respectively).

8. ai no kea hu stei hant insai dea, ai gon hunt
   "I don't care who's hunting in there, I'm going to hunt"

9. wail wi stei paedl, jaen stei put wata insai da kanu
   "While we were paddling, John was letting water into the canoe"

10. yu no waet dei stei kawl mi, dakain – kawl mi gad
    "You know what they call me, that bunch? They call me God"

11. i stei tel mi, o, neks wik, hi kamin, kamin
    "He kept telling me, oh, next week it's coming, it's coming" (p. 28-29)

Bickerton suggested that conceiving of *stei* as semantically representative of the four categories listed above resulted from adopting overly English-oriented perspective. From the perspective that HCE represented an independent linguistic system, s*tei* could alternately be conceived as an HCE aspectual innovation representing 'nonpunctuality' as opposed to 'punctuality'.

Bickerton (1981) claimed that HPE, in its structural simplicity, exhibited only single-clause constructions; a complex system of complementation was available to all speakers of HCE, however. *Go* as a complementizer (akin to English *to*) was found widely in the HCE data, with sentences such as the following serving as prototypical:

12. dei wen go ap dea erli in da mawning go plaen
    "They went up there early in the morning TO plant"

13. ai gata go haia wan kapinta go fiks da fom
    "I had TO hire a carpenter TO fix the form" (p. 32)

Fo, however, was found to replace *go* in environments which at first glance seemed identical.

14. aen dei figa, get sambadi fo push dem
    "And they figured there'd be somebody TO encourage them"

15. mo beta a bin go hanalulu fo bai maiself
    "It would have been better if I'd gone to Honolulu TO buy it myself" (p. 32)

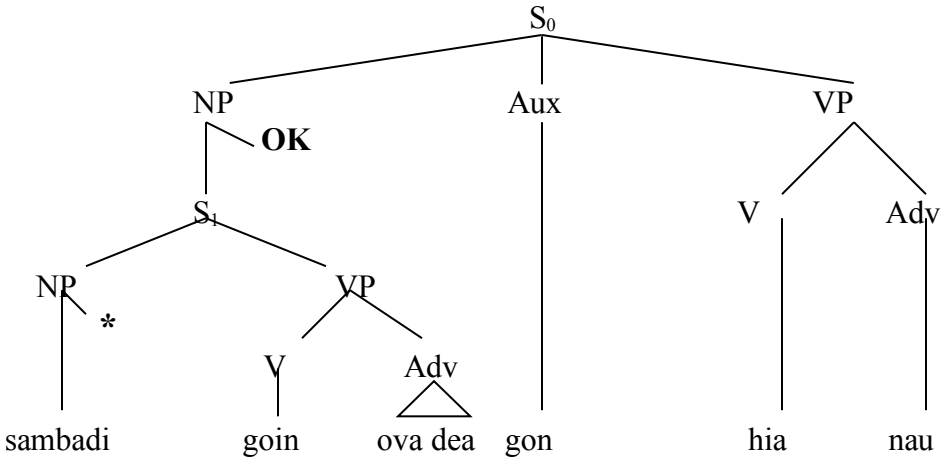
Bickerton's explanation for this alleged duplicity is that HCE grammatically marked a semantic distinction between realized and unrealized events; the events in examples 12 and 13 actually happened, whereas those in 14 and 15 were hypothetical.

The fifth and final characteristic which marked HCE as distinct from HPE was a movement which combined relativization and subject-copying. Bickerton's (1981) data indicated that example 16 was allowable while examples 17-19 were not.

16. sambadi goin ova dea dei gon hia nau
    "Anybody WHO's going over there will hear it now"
17. *sambadi dei goin ova dea gon hia it nau
18. *sambadi dei goin ova dea dei gon hia it nau
19. *sambadi goin ova dea gon hia it nau (p. 35)

The position of the relativized and reduplicated subject *dei* was accounted for by appealing to Chomsky's (1964) "A-over-A principle", which requires that if a major category is dominated by another major category of the same type, then any rule appearing to apply to the lower category node must in fact apply to the higher node. Figure 1 below illustrates how the placement of *dei* conforms to this principle; Bickerton (1981) considered this evidence that HCE was generating innovative structures in line with documented linguistic universals.

Figure 1



(Bickerton, 1981, p. 36)

Bickerton (1981) argued that these five developments - predicate/object fronting, article and auxiliary usage, complementation and relativization/subject-copying - marked the creolization of the earlier pidgin. This creolization claim was based in part on the complexification of the simpler pidgin structural system. More significantly, however, this claim was based on the linguistic innovation represented by these developments. None of these features of HCE appeared to be simple transfers from any of the ancestor languages which preceded the pidgin. It was suggested that one of two possible alternatives could account for the production of these

innovations - either a general problem-solving device was at work, or innate human language faculties were operating – with the latter being the preferred account.

Bickerton (1981) reasoned that speakers of the creole (rather than the pidgin) acquired the previously identified innovative structures either as adults or as children. If acquisition took place in adulthood, it must have required use of acquisitional processes also available to adult speakers of the pidgin; yet, these structures were not found in the data gathered from immigrant pidgin speakers. They were, however, found in the speech of all creole speakers surveyed. Bickerton argued that these structures could only have been acquired by processes which were in some way inaccessible to the speakers of the pidgin. It was suggested, then, that creolization must have taken place among children exclusively. Krashen's (1973) critical period hypothesis was cited as evidence for this limitation which precluded adult pidgin speakers from acquiring the creole structures. Furthermore, in acknowledging the variability of the pidgin data and the lack of models for complex structures in the pidgin, Bickerton (1984) asserted that a "language bioprogram" must have been operating which allowed the children genitors of the creole to create HCE via human language universals. This position came to be known as the Language Bioprogram Hypothesis (LBH). The LBH asserted that since human language universals were operating in the formation of HCE, the same universals were likely to have operated in the formation of other creole languages.

The LBH was conceived along Chomskyan Univeral Grammar lines. Bickerton (1984) asserted that:

> …the single core grammar that is actualized to varying extents in the course of creolization constitutes the totality of preexperiential linguistic knowledge, and that this grammar is of a nature that will permit its possessor to construct or compute all those rules, structures, and features of natural languages that are not explicitly specified in the single core grammar, given minimal exposure to such rules, structures and features. (pp. 178-179)

UG, then, represents inherent linguistic information which is "actualized" in creole formation. The bioprogram was conceived as the means by which UG makes sense of variable and structurally simple pidgin forms.

Adult speakers of HPE must have had fully formed first languages, however. Bickerton (1984) even conceded high levels of bilingualism (even trilingualism) among the native-born HCE population. In such an environment, it is not hard to assume that the pidgin would have served as the lingua franca of the street, marketplace and workplace. The universalist position minimized the role that exposure to other languages had for children acquiring language (whether first or second, pidgin or creole, etc.) in the pidgin environment. Was it possible, in fact, that children in the pidgin community were fully acquiring Japanese, Visayan, Chinese or any other number of languages as their L1, and that the complexification of the pidgin was taking place among the population as a whole? Early criticism against Bickerton raised this exact point. Bloom (1984) suggested:

> With respect to the formation of creole languages, Bickerton proposes that the children learned the pidgin as the first language and creolized it because they did not have access to the dominant language. But what was the input that first-generation pidgin speakers provided their infants at home? If a pidgin language originates in the workplace and the streets as a means of economic survival, why would parents use it to communicate with their children? (p. 191)

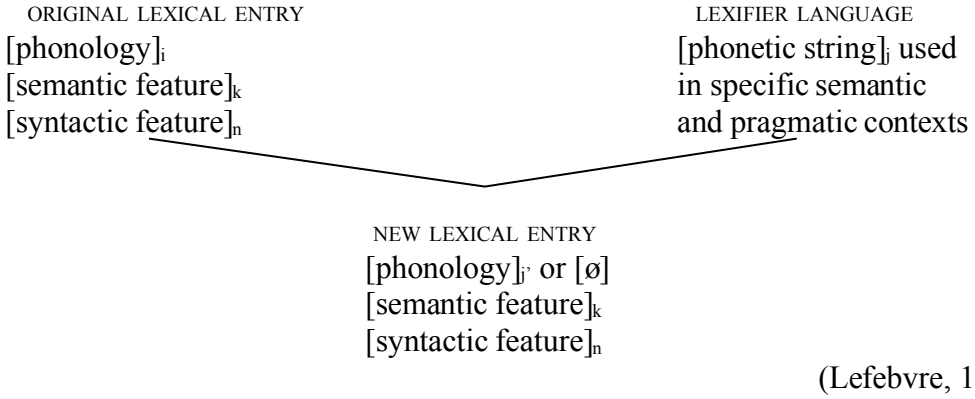
This line of thinking would then suggest that pidgins are learned as second languages as opposed to first languages, and that second-language acquisition factors would necessarily be a factor in the acquisition and complexification of a pidgin. Furthermore, SLA scholarship post-Bickerton conceives of "maturational constraints" on acquisition rather than a strictly bounded "critical period" after which adults can no longer acquire target-like competency in a second language. The role of so-called substrate languages would need to be considered, as these languages would represent the first languages of the creolizing community.

A Reaction to Universalism: Substratism

What, then, is a substrate language? Whinnom (1971) suggested that in a purely bilingual community, one group will inevitably acquire the language of the other group (either as a first or second language) and that pidgins and creoles only arise in multilingual contexts. Lefebvre (1998) elaborated that pidgin and creole communities typically have speakers of one superstrate and many substrate languages. The superstrate represents the language of economic or social dominance even if it is spoken by the fewest number of speakers in the community; the substrate languages are spoken by the majority of the population. A widely-held assumption regarding creole genesis is that the superstrate represents a target for acquisition for speakers of the various substrates. Bickerton (1981, 1984) assumed this view, as do most substratists.

According to substrate theorists, the primary cognitive process at work among the genitors of creole languages is relexification. During relexification, speakers of a substrate language will impose phonetic properties of the superstrate language on semantic and syntactic representations in their existent (L1) language system. Figure 2 below illustrates this phenomenon.

Figure 2



(Lefebvre, 1998, p. 16)

Data from Haitian Creole (hereafter HC), which has French as its superstrate, demonstrate how the notion of a 'phonetic string' copied from the lexifier is preferable to a direct phonological, word-for-word transfer. In example 20 below, the HC phonology entails the lexical entry for each item as well as functional information (determiner and/or case marker).

20.

(French)	(English gloss)(HC)		(English gloss)
l'ancre	the + anchor	lank	anchor
de l'eau	of + the+ water	dlo	water
les amis	the (PL) + friends	zanmi	friend

(Lumsden, 1999, p. 149)

The example above illustrates how semantic content from the substrate languages makes its way into the creole; presumably, substrate speakers applied French phonetic strings to their semantic notions of 'anchor', 'water' and 'friend' to produce the HC lexical innovations 'lank', 'dlo' and 'zanmi'. The model of relexification advocated by Lefebvre (1998) suggests that syntactic information also enters a creole language via this process. Lumsden (1999) demonstrated how the HC preposition *a(vè)k* entails the syntactic properties of its substrate influence rather than that of its superstrate. Consider that both HC and French make use of *a(vè)k/ avec* to mark an instrumental adjunct.

21. (HC)
Jan koupe pen an *ak* kouto a.
JAN CUT BREAD THE *WITH* KNIFE THE
'Jan cut the bread with the knife.'

22. (French)
Jean a coupe le pain *avec* son couteau.
JEAN HAVE CUT THE BREAD *WITH* HIS KNIFE
'Jean cut the bread with his knife.' (Lumsden, 1999, p.135)

HC, however, can also use this form as a conjunction. French must use the conjunction *et* in similar circumstances.

23. (HC)
    Jan *ak* Mari kite Ayiti.
    JAN *WITH* MARI LEAVE HAITI
    'Jan and Mari left Haiti.'

24. (French)
    *Jean *avec* Marie ont quitté la France.
    JEAN *WITH* MARIE HAVE LEAVE THE FRANCE

    Jean *et* Marie ont quitté la France.
    JEAN *AND* MARIE HAVE LEAVE THE FRANCE
    'Jean and Marie left France.' (Lumsden, 1999, p.136)

Lumsden (1999) suggested that it was not impossible that early French colonists used *avec* as both a conjunction and preposition; evidence from historical linguistics lends some support to that position. More likely, Lumsden argued, was that substrate influence was at work in the evolution of HC *a(vè)k*. Fongbe, a West African language from the Kwa family, is considered to be one of the primary substrates of HC. In Fongbe, the instrumental adposition *kpódo…kpó* can also serve as a conjunction.

25. Kòkú sɛn wòxúxú ò *kpódo* jìví ò *kpó*.
    KOKU CUT BREAD THE *WITH* KNIFE THE *WITH*
    'Koku cut the bread with the knife.'

26. Kòkú *kpódo* Asíbá *kpó* gósín Bénín.
    KOKU *WITH* ASIBA *WITH* LEAVE BENIN
    'Koku and Asiba left Benin.' (Lumsden, 1999, p.136)

In examples 21 and 23, HC *a(vè)k* is evidenced to derive phonetically from French *avec*, and in example 21 it mirrors the semantics of the same word. In example 23, however, there is evidence of divergence. The relexification hypothesis would suggest that speakers of Fongbe

encountering French *avec* and noting its (sometimes) semantic and syntactic similarity to *kpódo…kpó*, would then have mapped the French phonetics onto the Fongbe lexical entry. Lefebvre (1998) suggested that any failure on the part of a substrate speaker to realize discrepancies between the grammars of the superstrate and his or her own native language would have been the direct result of insufficient exposure to native production of the superstrate langauge. This mechanism would account for HC's frequent divergence from French grammar despite the similar phonological representations in the two languages.

Lefebvre (1998) found evidence to suggest that relexification operates in the creation of functional (versus lexical) categories in creole languages also. Example 20 above demonstrates how the French determiner phonetically transferred to HC without retaining any of its functional role in these cases; arguably, the creators of HC did not identify these particular phonetic strings as determiners. Lefebvre compared certain features of the determiner in HC, French and Fongbe nominal phrases. French NPs place the determiner before the head noun, require determiners for generic noun categories, and make use of partitive determiners in some cases; conversely, HC has postnominal determiners which are obligatorily anaphoric, exhibits phonologically null determiners for generic nouns, and allows so-called 'bare' NPs with no partitive determiners. Examples 27 – 29 below illustrate these distinctions[3].

27. *le* livre (French)
DET BOOK

'the book'

liv *la* (HC)
BOOK *DET*

'the book (in question)' (p.79)

[3] *La/an* variation in the HC determiners below is phonologically conditioned and does not affect the analysis.

28. *(*Le*) pain est bon pour *la* santé. (French)
(*DET*) BREAD IS GOOD FOR *DET* HEALTH

Pen (*an) bòn pou lasante. (HC)
BREAD *DET* GOOD FOR HEALTH

'Bread is good for one's health.' (p.80)

29. Jean a mangé *du* pain. (French)
JEAN AUX EAT *DET* BREAD

Jan manje pen. (HC)
JAN EAT BREAD

'Jean/Jan ate bread.' (p.80)

HC determiners were found to operate much like those in Fongbe.

30. wémà *ón* (Fongbe)
BOOK *DET*
'the book (in question)'

Wòxúxú (**ó*) nyón nú lànmɛyén.
BREAD *DET* GOOD FOR HEALTH
'Bread is good for one's health.'

Kòkú dù blédì.
KOKU EAT BREAD
'Koku ate bread.' (p.81-82)

Lefebvre asserted that the semantic and syntactic properties of the Fongbe determiner were retained in the HC determiner. Its phonological representation was likely derived from the French locative *là* which was misidentified by substrate speakers as a determiner due to its postnominal position in the French noun phrase (i.e., 'cet homme- *là*' = 'that man'). Thus, Lefebvre argued, relexification takes place for functional categories of language as well.

Lexical and functional categories of language have been shown to enter creoles via the relexification process; substratists have also argued that basic phrase structures of creoles can be

accounted for in similar terms. In an analysis of the argument structure of the HC noun phrase, Lumsden (1999) argued that a form of "ellipses" from Fongbe accounts for divergence from French noun phrase structure. French NPs are reiterative, allowing a theoretically infinite amount of complementation, and these complements follow the head noun. HC complements follow the head noun as in French, but there is a single-argument constraint on the NP. Fongbe takes complements both before and after the noun, though the prenominal complement position is the only iterative one. Lumsden posited that Fongbe speakers encountering French, noting postnominal complementation in that language, made use of only the Fongbe postnominal complement function in the language contact environment. Thus, the syntactic restrictions on postnominal complements ellipted from the substrate language into the creole while the prenominal iterative complements did not.

Lefebvre (1998) has asserted that relexification is the central cognitive process operating during creolization from a substrate theoretical perspective, and Lumsden (1999) has demonstrated how a similar process can account for the transmission of non-lexical features of substrate languages into a creole. Noting the centrality of this process in creolization, and conjecturing as to its agency, Lefebvre claimed that "relexification is a mental process that is available to speakers who are in possession of a mature lexicon" (p.10). Relexification would then necessarily take place among adult speakers rather than among children, whose L1 lexicon would not be fully acquired. If relexification is central to creolization, then from a substratist perspective and counter to the universalist position, adults are the agents of creolization. In fact, creolization could in some ways be seen as adult second language acquisition *en masse*.

We might therefore expect to see examples of relexification in the SLA literature as well, and in fact we do. In an examination of lexical transfer between adult L2 learners of French and

English in Canada, Adjémian (1983) noted that lexical items inherently contain phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic qualities. As such, lexical transfer might entail transfer of more than one of the above-mentioned properties. Consider the production of the following French phrases (which require reflexive pronouns) by Anglophone Canadians; the correct usage appears in parentheses next to the entry.

31. *Tu assieds sur une chaise. (t'assieds)
    YOU SIT ON A CHAIR
    'You are sitting on a chair.'

32. *Je vais préparer pour la fête. (me preparer)
    I GO PREPARE FOR THE PARTY
    'I'm going to get ready for the party.' (p.259)

Also consider parallel examples from Francophone Canadians speaking English.

33. *At sixty-five years old they must retire *themselves* because…
34. *They want to fight *themselves* against this (tuition increase). (p.259)

In each of the above cases, the learner's L1 lexicon has influenced L2 acquisition, with L1 morphology and syntax transferring along with semantics at least occasionally (the data here give no clues as to phonological transfer). This conception of L1-L2 transfer is in line with Lefebvre's (1998) conception of relexification, and thus lends support to the claim that similar cognitive processes operate among adult L2 learners and the adult agents of creolization.

The substratist position is falsifiable, however, and has been criticized by creolists who have found counter-evidence to the claim that syntactic features of creole languages derive from their substrates. McWhorter (1999), for example, found that copular usage in Saramaccan Creole (henceforth SC, an English-based creole found in Suriname) is unlike that found in any of its West African substrate influences. West African languages found to act as substrates in various Atlantic

Ocean English-based creoles divide their copular functions between equative and locative functions ('I *am* a person' vs. 'I *am* here'). Figure 3 below illustrates this claim.

Figure 3

	Wolof	Mandinka	Akan	Yoruba	Ewe	Gã	Igbo	Kikongo
Equative	*la*	*mu*	*yɛ*	*jɛ*	*nye*	*dzhi*	*bù*	*i*
Locative	*nekk*	*be*	*wo*	*wà*	*lè*	*yɛ*	*dì*	*-ina*

(p. 122)

SC was indeed found to retain both equative and locative distinctions in its copular forms; however, the equative function was further subdivided into identificational and class functions. For example:

35. Mi *da* I tatá. (identificational)
    I *COP* YOUR FATHER
    'I am your father.'

36. Dágu *dɛ* wan mbéti ku fó fútu. (class)
    DOG *COP* A ANIMAL WITH FOUR PAWS
    'A dog is an animal with four paws.' (p.123-124)

A substratist account of copular usage in SC would require that at least one of the major substrate languages further divides its equative function copula; notably, none of the conjectured substrate influences makes this distinction. Thus, McWhorter claimed that a purely substratist view fails to account for a salient feature of this particular creole.

DeGraff (2005) has argued that a substrate theoretical approach fails to account for numerous French structural features in HC which have no counterpoint in any of the substrate languages[4]. DeGraff further noted that substratists, especially those who take a strict

[4] Superstratism is another account of creole genesis which is not explored in this paper due to space constraints. According to this position, colonial vernacular, i.e. nonstandard, varieties of the superstrate language should be considered in the history of creole development. Certain HC features might derive from a historical nonstandard variety of French, for example, and contemporary standardized French is not the appropriate form for analysis. Much of the scholarship in this vein is Francophone; Chaudenson (1992) is often cited in the literature I reviewed.

relexificationist account of the process, have occasionally made the erroneous assumption that creole genitors were unable to abstract anything other than phonetic information from their target languages. This is counter to what has been observed in the interlanguage of other second-language learners, who are able to abstract many morphosyntactic and semantic features from their target languages.

SLA-oriented research has also found shortcomings in substrate theory. Siegel (2003) argued that the substrate perspective fails to account for which particular substrate features transfer to creoles and which do not. Substratists provide evidence to support their theory of creole genesis at the expense of using said theory to make any broader language-universal claims; SLA research on universal transfer constraints could thus inform the substratist view. Siegel argued that perceptual salience and congruence are primary factors constraining L1-L2 transfer. Andersen's (1990) notion of "somewhere to transfer to" was invoked in the perceptual salience argument; in creolist terms, the superstrate must have an easily identifiable morpheme (or morphemes) which can be reanalyzed according to the rules of the substrate. The congruence argument entailed that the superstrate and substrate morphemes should be at least superficially congruent for transfer to take place. In the case of HC, which West African substrate features failed to make their way into the new language and why did they fail to do so? An SLA perspective on universal transfer constraints could likely inform this theoretical problem.

A Complementary Approach

Substrate theory is falsifiable, and though examples which expose its shortcomings (McWhorter 1999) may exist, it should not be dismissed as a theory unless a critical amount of such counterevidence is amassed. Substrates have been shown to affect the development of the

majority of creoles to at least some degree, and should therefore be considered in the broader genesis question. Similarly, the universalist position should not be discounted in its entirety simply because it accords too much agency to children in the creation of creole languages. Principles of Universal Grammar are assumed by most contemporary linguists, and these principle are widely understood to operate in both adult and child language acquisition. Bickerton's "bioprogram" (1984) approach, in arguing that universal linguistic mechanisms operate in the development of creoles, suggests that creole languages offer insight into the fundamental nature of our human linguistic faculty. Creole genesis scholarship in some ways suffers from reductionism. Universalists argue that creolization is group first-language acquisition in the absence of a unified target, while substratists argue that creolization is group second-language acquisition suffering from lack of sufficient exposure to the target. In many ways, these camps argue past each other and miss the valuable insights the other provides.

Mufwene (1996, 1999, 2001) has argued for a complementary approach to understanding how creoles develop, with insights gleaned from the strengths and weaknesses of both of these positions. The "Founder Principle" analogizes 'language' to 'population' in the context of population genetics, and seeks to use this analogy to illustrate how features of language transmit from one generation to the next. Mufwene (1996) asserted that much creolist scholarship is misguided in its comparison of the structural features of creoles with the standard varieties of their lexifiers (the basic superstratist position). The language varieties in contact were invariably vernacular forms (as opposed to those forms spoken in the European economic and political centers), and these vernacular origins account for continued non-standard features of many creole languages when compared to their lexifiers. Furthermore, Mufwene (1996, 2001) argued that demographic information has too often been overlooked in creole genesis scholarship. Colonial

populations were in flux, and the balance of ethnolinguistic influences ought to be considered in substrate theoretical approaches in particular. Bickerton (1984) had previously made this exact criticism of the early substratist literature in noting that the features of West African languages were often conflated, or that one particular language (which may not have represented the linguistic majority in a given colony) served as an example of a pan-African substrate influence without proper sociohistorical justification. Mufwene (1996, 2001) has argued that historical data should be used to support any claims about ethnolinguistic influence in a given creolization context. These efforts represent a methodical approach to understanding the genetic predecessors of contemporary creoles and the attending variation and complexity in these contact situations, with a view to establishing why contemporary creoles exhibit the features they do.

Mufwene (1996) identified the predominance of serial verb constructions (hereafter SVCs) in Atlantic English- and French-lexified creoles as demonstrative of this thesis. Substrate theorists have pointed to the prevalence of SVCs in the Kwa languages of West Africa as well as the putative lack of these constructions in both English and French to support their position. Conversely, universalists have noted the absence of SVCs in the Bantu languages (which Mufwene asserted represented a substrate majority during most of the creolization era) as evidence that UG principles facilitated their development among children. Mufwene pointed out, however, that serial-like constructions are present in modern colloquial English (example 37) and that French infinitival complements can also be interpreted as examples of the same sort of construction (example 38). Varieties of the Bantu languages Kikongo and Kituba also exhibit serial-like constructions (examples 39 and 40, respectively).

37. *go get* the book (English)
come get the paper

38. *va chercher* ton couteau (French)
GO GET YOUR CUTLASS

39. Maria *ú+bák+a* mbeele, *ú+lwek+ a* bákála di+ándi (Kikongo)
MARY AGR+*TAKE*+TA CUTLASS AGR+*CUT*+TA HUSBAND HER
'Mary hit her husband with a cutlass.'

40. Maria báka mbelé búla yakála na yándi (Kituba)
MARY TAKE CUTLASS HIT HUSBAND HER
'Mary hit her husband with a cutlass' (p. 115-116)

Thus almost all language varieties in contact in the Atlantic creole region exhibit evidence for SVC-like constructions in their grammars. Any ethnolinguistic balance (European or African majority population, Kwa or Bantu substrate dominance) might therefore favor the emergence of SVCs in the creolization context.

Mufwene (2001) also argued for a "markedness model" in creole genetics, much like the model of markedness posited by second-language acquisitionists. In SLA theory, learners are understood to acquire those features of language which appear unmarked relative to the L1 before they acquire those features which are marked. In a similar fashion, Mufwene conjectured that a creolizing population will choose those features which are less marked (i.e, have communicative capacity to the greatest number of people) in the broader contact scenario for inclusion in the new creole language. Ethnolinguistic demographics contribute to markedness, but so do structural features of language. Thus a creole might exhibit both substrate-influenced features (due to population-majority influences or structural and communicative advantage) and superstrate-influenced features (due to economic or political dominance or structural and communicative advantage). Furthermore, universal language acquisition functions may partly determine markedness levels, though future first- and second-language acquisition parametric research would need to instantiate this claim.

Mufwene (1999) also found support for the LBH in a study comparing the first-language acquisition patterns of an English-speaking child with Bickerton's (1984) rubric for bioprogram grammar acquisition. The child in this study had a basic sentential structure of NP – PredP before 28 months, and her nonverbal PredPs did not require a copula as she had not yet acquired the adult syntax rule requiring PredPs to translate to VPs with dummy-verb, or copula, insertion. Acquisition of the copula was gradual, and was first attested in imperative constructions such as *Be careful*. Bickerton argued that the most radical creoles (those closest to bioprogram grammar) exhibit this same tendency to allow adjectives and prepositions to head PredPs and not require copulas (example 41).

41. a. Jean tall. (Gullah)
    b. Jean taller 'n/more tall 'an she brother. (p.112)

Mufwene asserted that the subject's grammar supported the structural claims of Bickerton's hypothesis, though genetic claims were not similarly supported. The UG orientation of Bickerton's LBH was deemed valuable, though Mufwene suggested that UG features of acquisition are also available to adults and hence would afford them agency in the creolization context.

Conclusion

Creolists interested in the genesis of these language forms have often made appeals to language acquisition theory to account for the process of formation and the particular structures of individual creole languages. Broadly speaking, universalists favor a child language acquisition view of development and substratists favor a second-language acquisition view of the matter. A UG view of acquisition proper, however, must place similar parametrics on language acquisition for both adults and children. Therefore, a complementary position of creole genetics along Mufwene's lines is valuable in that it allows for the operation of all such universals in the

formation of creole languages. Mufwene stops short of suggesting that creolists are oblidged to better understand the contemporary and evolving findings of language acquisition theory, but I would suggest that an increased awareness oflanguage acquisition on the part of creolists would serve to reveal patterns in the genesis of these forms. Likewise, language acquisition scholars of all stripes have much to gain from an understanding of how the structures of creoles were shaped by acquisition processes. Creole languages provide a fertile ground in which to explore universals of language in general and acquisition parametrics in particular, and applied linguists should be involved in this conversation.

References

Adjémian, C. (1983). The transferability of lexical properties. In S. Gass & L. Selinker (Eds.), *Language transfer in language learning* (pp. 250-268). Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.

Andersen, R. W. (1990). Models, processes, principles, and strategies: Second language acquisition inside and outside the classroom. In B. Van Patten & J. F. Lee (Eds.), *Second language acquisition – Foreign language learning* (pp. 45-68). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Bickerton, D. (1981). *Roots of language.* Ann Arbor: Karoma.

Bickerton, D. (1984). The language bioprogram hypothesis. *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 7,* 173-221.

Bloom, L. (1984). A bioprogram for language: Not whether but how. Commentary. *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 7,* 190-191.

Chomsky, N. (1964). *Current issues in linguistic theory.* The Hague, The Netherlands: Mouton.

DeGraff, M. (2005). Linguists' most dangerous myth: The fallacy of Creole exceptionalism. *Language in Society, 34,* 533-591.

Krashen, S. (1973). Lateralization, language learning and the critical period: Some new evidence. *Language Learning, 23,* 63-74.

Lefebvre, C. (1998). *Creole genesis and the acquisition of grammar: The case of Haitain Creole.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Lumsden, J. (1999). Language acquisition and creolization. In M. DeGraff (Ed.), *Language creation and language change: Creolization, diachrony and development* (pp. 129-157). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

McWhorter, J. (1999). Skeletons in the closet: Anomalies in the behavior of the Saramaccan copula. In J. R. Rickford & S. Romaine (Eds.), *Creole genesis, attitudes and discourse* (pp. 121-142). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Mufwene, S. (1996). The Founder Principle in Creole genesis. *Diachronica, 13,* 83-134.

Mufwene, S. (1999). On the language bioprogram hypothesis: Notes from Tazie. In M. DeGraff (Ed.), *Language creation and language change: Creolization, diachrony, and development* (pp. 95-127). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Mufwene, S. (2001). *The ecology of language evolution.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Siegel, J. (2003). Substrate influence in Creoles and the role of transfer in second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 25,* 185-209.

Whinnom, K. (1971). Linguistic hybridization and the 'special case' of pidgins and Creoles. In D. Hymes (Ed.), *Pidginization and creolization of languages* (pp. 91-115). New York: Cambridge University Press.