The development of the nominal domain in creole languages: A comparative-typological approach
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Citation for published version (APA):

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Chapter 3

The issue of creole genesis

In the previous chapter, we saw that the contact between typologically different languages in the specific context of the European colonial expansion gave birth to new language varieties identified as creoles. One issue that now remains open is the issue of how exactly creoles came about: which linguistic processes have led to creole formation and what are the sources of creole structures? This issue is known in creolistics as the issue of creole genesis.

The issue of creole genesis constitutes without a doubt the most intriguing and challenging aspect of creole studies. For decades, it has puzzled creolists and attracted the attention of researches working in other fields of linguistics. Creole genesis has always been the subject of hot debate and scholars remain far from reaching a consensus. In fact, it would be difficult to find any other issue in linguistics that has given rise to so many conflicting theories which, in their radicalism, deny each other completely.

In this chapter, I discuss various proposals concerning the origins of creoles and the processes that led to creole development. In chapter 2, I already mentioned that creoles often developed in settings where slaves did not have sufficient access to the European language. This observation has given rise to the idea that creolization represents the result of a break in normal language transmission. This idea underlies a number of famous scenarios of creoles genesis such as Lefebvre’s (1998) substrate relexification hypothesis and Bickerton’s (1981) universalist Language Bioprogram hypothesis. Break-in-transmission scenarios of creole genesis are discussed in section 3.1. Section 3.2 discusses the opponents of the view of creole formation as a result of the break in language transmission, Chaudenson (2003), Mufwene (2001, and other work), Aboh (2006, 2009), and Ansaldo (2009). Section 3.3 shifts the focus of the discussion from the sources of creoles to the processes underlying creole development. Section 3.4 concludes the chapter.
3.1 Creolization as a result of a break in language transmission

The idea that creoles resulted from a break in normal language transmission has been around for a long time, providing the basis for many prominent theories of creole genesis. The idea goes back to the 19th century, when it was argued that the break in language transmission from masters to slaves resulted from the biologically conditioned inability of the latter to learn a European language (cf. DeGraff 2003, 2005). In post-colonial creole studies, the idea that slaves were unable to learn a European language has remained, having acquired a different explanatory basis. The modern advocates of the break in transmission idea suggest that normal language transmission was barred due to the peculiar linguistic, socio-economic and demographic environment of colonial communities.

In the modern break in transmission scenario, the following factors are considered to be particularly important for understanding the reasons for creolization:

- The ethnolinguistic heterogeneity of the colonial communities, and slave communities in particular.
- An uneven growth of the population groups in plantation communities, which resulted in an extremely high ratio of non-European slaves to European colonizers (see section 2.2.1.2).
- Strict racial segregation, which created a vast socioeconomic distance between the slaves and the European colonizers.

These factors are incorporated into the break-in-transmission creolization scenario in the following way: It is assumed that the colonial order characterized by political, socioeconomic and cultural dominance of the European colonizers put pressure on the slaves to shift to the dominant European language. At the same time, the multilingual settings of slave communities diminished the functionality of the native languages of the slaves. According to Thomason and Kaufman (1988), in normal two-language shift situations the shifting group shares the same native language. This language can continue to be used by this group until all its members become fluent and eventually nativize the target language. Plantation slaves were not granted this prolonged transition phase. While the socio-economic context and the multilingual environment put pressure on the slaves to acquire the European language, access to this language was restricted due to racial segregation and to uneven growth of the European and the slave populations, which made it increasingly difficult for slaves to gain access to L1 models of the European language. Thus, a break in language transmission was determined by the need for rapid language shift in a situation in which the shifting group was deprived of sufficient access to the target language.

Advocates of the idea that creolization resulted from a break in language transmission from the Europeans to the slaves further hypothesized that, in order to reconstitute the language structure lost as a result of this break in transmission, creole
creators had to fall back on sources other than the target language. Regarding the nature of these sources, there are two competing proposals. While some creolists ascribe the primary role in creole formation to innate universal principles of language, others adhere to the idea that creoles acquired their structure as a result of a significant contribution of substrate languages. These two approaches to creole genesis will be considered in detail in the two following sections.

3.1.1 Universalist accounts of creolization and Bickerton’s Language Bioprogram

Before we proceed to the discussion of Bickerton’s Language Bioprogram, it needs to be said the idea that the process of creole genesis was governed by principles or tendencies of the universal nature as such does not necessarily imply the idea that this process is different from the processes of normal language acquisition and development. For instance, some scholars argue for the role of what Muysken and Veenstra (1994) identify as procedural universals in the development of creoles. The term “procedural universals” refers to universal properties of the processes involved in language change such as grammaticalization or second language acquisition. Needless to say, such procedural universals are also assumed to be involved in normal language acquisition and change. This type of universals will be discussed in section 3.3, which deals with the processes underlying creole genesis. In this section, we focus on the ideas of those researchers who believe that language universals and, specifically, Universal Grammar (UG) had a special function in the process of creole genesis, different from the function it has in normal language development.

The idea that language universals might have somehow been involved in the process of creole creation often rests on the assumption that creoles display broad structural similarities which go beyond the similarities that can be accounted for by reference to similarities among the contributing languages. Several scholars have claimed that these cross-creole similarities manifest universally unmarked principles of structural organization. The universally unmarked grammatical properties are often characterized as non-complex and semantically transparent. The semantic transparency theory put forward by Seuren and Wekker (1986) claims that the structure of creole languages manifests universal semantic structures. According to Seuren and Wekker, this is reflected in the fact that creoles often manifest one-to-one correspondence between meaning (a semantic feature) and form (a morpheme). Examples of semantically transparent structures they provide include, for instance, TMA markers and bi-morphemic question words.

The most prominent advocate of the idea that creoles manifest unmarked settings of grammatical organization is Derek Bickerton, who proposed the Language Bioprogram Hypothesis (LBH) of creolization (1981, 1984, 1988). The LBH is based on the observation that creole languages display remarkable structural uniformity. Bickerton (1981) lists 12 structural features diagnostic of prototypical creoles. The list
includes such well-known manifestations of cross-creole uniformity as the expression of tense, modality and aspect by means of preverbal particles, the use of different forms for each semantically distinct copula function, and the bimorphemic structure of question words. One of the typical creole features pointed out by Bickerton, namely the restriction in use of overt (in)definite determiners to specific nominal expressions, is very relevant for our discussion of the distribution of (in)definite determiners in creoles (chapters 8 and 9).

To account for the broad similarity, which he observes even among unrelated creoles (i.e. creoles that emerged in different geographic areas and had different source languages), Bickerton proposes that creole structure universally derives from the Language Bioprogram (LB), a species-specific program for language, which is “genetically coded <…> in the structures and modes of operation of the human brain” (1984: 173).

The idea of the LB explicitly relates to the Chomskyan theory of linguistic innateness. The latter suggests that a child’s capacity to process a language is provided by a genetically transmitted human-specific Language Acquisition Device (LAD). The LAD contains a set of linguistic universals that comprise UG. UG determines the basic principles of language structure and delimits the range of possible variability. The latter is determined by a set of parameters, hence the theory of Principles and Parameters. Operating on the basis of UG principles and parameters, the LAD converts the input a child receives from the environment into systematic linguistic knowledge. It is important to realize that, in terms of the Principles and Parameters framework, UG embeds no preset or unmarked parameter in the absence of linguistic input.

Bickerton’s view differs on this point. As Bickerton (1981: 297) claims, his work “complements and amplifies” the theory of Chomsky. Contrary to the LAD, which contains all potential language grammars, Bickerton’s LB specifies a “core structure for human language” (1981: 297), a set of default, or unmarked grammatical options. As a child develops, the LB unfolds, providing specific structures that express grammatical distinctions essential to human language. However, usually, children who are born in the environment where a full-fledged language is spoken receive a ready input in the form of this language. This input interferes with the unfolding of the LB. The result of language-building in accordance with the grammatical settings provided by the LB can only be observed when the process of language acquisition takes place without adequate input. And this only obtains when normal language transmission from generation to generation breaks down, which is what, according to Bickerton, happened in plantation colonies.

In his break-in-transmission scenario, Bickerton employs the famous pidgin-to-creole life cycle idea (Hall 1966 and much related work), assuming that the emergence of creoles is always preceded by pidginization, a drastic simplification of the target language resulting from imperfect L2 acquisition. According to Bickerton, a pidgin developed by the first generations of adult slaves represented a “highly variable, extremely rudimentary language state” (1981: 5), a language without grammatical structure. Children born to the pidgin-speaking adult generation of plantation slaves
found themselves in a “linguistic vacuum” as the pidgin spoken by their parents was not suitable to be acquired and to function as anybody’s first language. Note that Bickerton emphasizes that the transition from a pidgin to a creole happened abruptly, within the lifetime of one generation, and that within such a short time span no structurally stable and referentially adequate pidgin could have developed. With no adequate language they could acquire, these children had to create a new language out of an extremely restricted and structureless input. And, because they were equipped with the innate LB, they were able to fulfill this task. In the absence of evidence for language-specific grammatical settings, which had been stripped away in a pidgin, the LB served as the sole source of linguistic structure. It provided default grammatical settings, reconstructing the essential grammatical distinctions which were lost in a pidgin. According to Bickerton’s scenario, creoles, which were recreated out of pidgins through a process of nativization, universally manifest the same default grammatical settings in their structure.

Bickerton’s scenario of creole genesis represents a radical interpretation of the break in language transmission idea. According to this scenario, no pre-existing language was transmitted and a new language was produced ab ovo. Bickerton argues that only those creoles that emerged as a result of such complete break in language transmission represent pure manifestations of the LB. Other contact languages which are considered to be creoles but which do not fully conform to the LB are, according to Bickerton, results of partial break in transmission, cases in which the transmitted structural properties of the preexisting languages interfere with the LB. In Bickerton’s framework, these latter cases are not considered to be true creoles.

Bickerton posits categorical restrictions on a type of situation which could produce a purely LB-based creole. He argues that a LB-based creole could only be a language that (a) arose out of a prior pidgin which had not existed for more than a generation and (b) developed in a community where no more that 20 percent were native speakers of the dominant language and where the remaining 80 percent (i.e. the slaves) were composed of diverse language groups (1981: 4). Condition (a) rules out the possibility that an incipient pidgin would undergo expansion and acquire a stable grammatical structure prior to the moment of nativization. Condition (b), controls the input from the pre-existing languages, superstrates and substrates. On the one hand, the low proportion of native speakers of the dominant language restricts the access of the slaves to this language, thus excluding the possibility of transmission of its structural properties into the pidgin and, consequently, into the creole. On the other hand, the linguistic heterogeneity of the remaining population, the slaves, largely restricted the functionality of their native languages, making it impossible for these languages to be sustained for more than one generation. As Bickerton (1981: 4) puts it, “[b]y limiting our research area in this way, it becomes possible to concentrate on those situations, in which the human linguistic capacity is stretched to the uttermost”. Thus, Bickerton’s understanding of the term “creole” is a newborn language, with no relation to any preexisting language.
In his later work (1984, 1988), Bickerton rethinks some of his 1981 claims. Most importantly, instead of strictly limiting himself to the cases of complete break in language transmission, he tries to accommodate his model to the deviating cases, in which the transmission was bent but not completely broken. He suggests that there is a continuum between purely LB-based and other creoles, which absorbed elements from the superstrate languages to varying degrees. Instead of the simplistic conditions (a) and (b), he suggests a more flexible model of creole genesis. This new model incorporates a number of variables, which determine the “richness” (=the amount of retained superstrate features) of the pidgin and, hence, the amount of deficit to be reconstructed during creolization. Thus, the model suggests that “the effectiveness of transmission of preexisting languages will vary inversely with the degree to which bioprogram features are able to emerge.” (1984: 176)

Although, in this later model, Bickerton accommodates the possibility of the transmission of superstrate features into the emerging creole, he remains reluctant to the idea that substrate languages could have also played a role in creole formation. He strongly adheres to the assumption that, because of the diversity of languages spoken by the slaves (see condition (b) of Bickerton’s (1981) creolization scenario), none of them could have affected the structure of the emerging creole.

### 3.1.2 Creole exceptionalism

The idea that creoles develop as the result of a break in normal language transmission and are thus not phylogenetically related to any pre-existing languages has led to a widespread belief which DeGraff (2003, 2005) identified as **creole exceptionalism**. This is the belief that creoles form a special typological class, somehow different from the rest of the world’s languages. While the idea that creoles can be synchronically defined is highly disputable, it has a number of strong advocates. Although no feature has been found that would be diagnostic of “creoleness”, the advocates of creole exceptionalism commonly argue that creoles are, on the average, morphologically and phonologically less complex than the rest of the world’s languages (although the criteria on which the opposition simple/complex relies are not always clearly formulated). While Bickerton (1981) argued that the prototypical creole features represent manifestations of the unmarked settings of UG, modern advocates of the break-in-transmission scenario relate the lack of complex features in creoles to the fact that creoles are much younger than the rest of the world’s languages.

At present, the most prominent advocate of the break-in-transmission scenario of creole genesis is McWhorter (2001, 2005), who proposes three features to characterize what he identifies as the creole prototype. While many old languages may have one of these prototypically creole features, the combination of the three can, according to McWhorter, only be found in prototypical creoles.
• lack or very restricted range of inflectional morphology (not more than two or three morphemes);
• lack of tone on monosyllabic words and tone-based lexical distinctions;
• lack of semantically opaque derivation.

McWhorter argues that inflectional morphology, tone-based lexical distinctions and semantically opaque word formation are “ornamental” features that typically emerge in languages over time. Creoles, of which the oldest we know of have only existed for five centuries, have not had time to develop these features yet. Interpreting these features as diagnostic of structural simplicity, he concludes that “the world's simplest grammars are Creole grammars”.

McWhorter’s claims are both theoretically and empirically problematic. For instance, Gil (2001) demonstrates that Riau Indonesian structurally conforms to McWhorter’s characteristics of a prototypical creole, although, from a sociohistorical perspective, it cannot be characterized as a creole. Also, there are creole languages that do not conform to the creole prototype. For instance, Berbice Dutch displays multiple instances of inflectional morphology, while Papiamentu and Saramaccan have tonal distinctions. With regard to creoles that deviate from the prototype, similarly to Bickerton (1984), McWhorter observes that creoleness is a matter of degree, which implies that some languages that are identified as creoles on socio-historical grounds would have less affinity with the creole prototype than others.

Parkvall (2008) also argues that creoles, as a group, are less complex than any other typological, geographical, or genealogical groupings of languages. In Bakker et al. (2011), Bakker, Daval-Markussen, Parkvall, and Plag dissociate the issue of creoleness from the simplicity vs. complexity debate. Using computational tools of quantitative typology (i.e. phylogenetic trees and networks) to measure the typological distance between creoles and other world languages, based both on features that are considered typically creole and on an arbitrary set of features, they argue that creoles are extremely similar to each other, which, as they claim, provides empirical evidence that creoles form a structurally distinguishable subgroup of the world’s languages.

These modern advocates of the assumption that creoles are different from other world languages limit their claims to the synchronic definition of creoles. They explicitly state that they “consider creoles in a comparative and synchronic perspective, and […] do not make any claims as to whether the diachronic developments in creolization differ from those in language change in non-creoles” (Bakker et al. 2011: 7). In other words, their claims about the synchronic properties of creoles are not intended to make inferences with regard to the issue of creole genesis.
3.1.3 Substratist accounts of creolization and Lefebvre’s Relexification Hypothesis

While Bickerton (1981) considers creolization to be the result of a complete break in language transmission and remains particularly reluctant to the idea of substrate influence, some creolists believe that substrate influence played a decisive role in the formation of creole languages. According to such advocates of the substratist approach to creolization as Lefebvre (1998), there was only a break in transmission of a superstrate language from masters to their slaves, while the grammatical and semantic properties of substrate languages are argued to be transferred to an emerging creole without any break in transmission.

The idea that creoles diverged from the European languages as a result of massive influence from the native languages of the slaves is not new. It has repeatedly been demonstrated in creole literature that creoles possess many structural properties which show close resemblance to their suggested substrate sources and have no parallels in their European superstrate languages. Extensive substrate-oriented research has been conducted over the past decades (e.g., Alleyne 1971, 1980, 1986; Boretzky 1983; Holm 1988-89; Smith 1987; Kouwenberg 2007 for Atlantic creoles; Keesing 1988 for Melanesian Pidgin).

Lefebvre’s (1998) Relexification Hypothesis is the most radical line of thinking in the history of the substratist tradition. She proposes that not just some structural properties, but creole structure as a whole replicates the structure of the substrate, while the European contribution to creoles can only be observed in the phonetic shapes of vocabulary items and some word order principles.

Lefebvre assumes that creoles emerged in a multilingual context, where there was an immediate need for a lingua franca and where the speakers of substrate languages, the slaves, had very limited access to the superstrate language spoken by their European masters. Based on these assumptions, she puts forward a more specific claim that the slaves’ exposure to the European language was not sufficient to make any inferences about the semantic and syntactic properties of the words and word combinations they heard. She argues that what they could perceive were just “phonetic strings used in specific semantic and pragmatic contexts” (1998: 16).

The Relexification Hypothesis offers an explanation of how, in the absence of sufficient input, creoles acquired their structure. The general idea of the Relexification Hypothesis is that creoles were created through a process of relexification, which is defined as “a mental process that builds new lexical entries by copying the lexical entries of an already established lexicon and replacing their phonological representations with representations derived from another language” (see figure 3.1 below).
The process of relexification takes place during L2 acquisition. A learner uses the properties of his native lexicon to interpret the input in the target language and, as a result, creates associations of the forms of lexical items (or their combinations) in the target language with the semantic and syntactic properties of semantically/functionally similar lexical items in his native language. To put it in more technical terms, one could say that a learner copies a lexical entry of his native language into his/her interlanguage, replacing its original phonetic representation with that of the target language. Thus, the lexical entry in the interlanguage retains the semantic and syntactic properties of the corresponding lexical entry in the learner’s native language, and the only thing acquired from the target language is the phonetic representation, which is itself parsed through the learner’s native phonological system.

Lefebvre considers creolization to be a particular case of L2 acquisition, in a context where learners have very limited access to the target language. She claims that it is this limited access to the target language that makes relexification so overwhelmingly important in the formation of creoles. While in cases of “normal” L2 acquisition the result of relexification is open to further revision as a learner progresses towards a closer approximation of the target, in case of creolization, where the social context makes closer approximation impossible, the result of relexification stabilizes in a creole.

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4 Lefebvre emphasizes that the phonological representations of the relexified lexical entries do not always replicate phonological representations of the lexical entries of the target language. She gives examples of cases in which phonetic strings used to relexify copied lexical entries do not correspond to words in the target language (1998: 17).

5 \( j' \) reflects the fact that second language learners only approximate the phonological representations of the target language vocabulary items, and do not replicate them perfectly.

6 \( [\emptyset] \) suggests that lexical entries of the original language which do not have a semantically/functionally corresponding lexical item in the target language can be assigned a zero phonological representation.
Emphasizing the role of relexification, Lefebvre argues that, in cases of creolization, it operates not only on lexical items (as in the case of mixed languages analyzed in terms of relexification by Muysken (1981)), but also on functional items. Based on the idea that creole creators “typically fail to identify the functional categories of the superstratum language” (36), she assumes that the functional categories of the substrate language are relexified on the basis of lexical items of the superstrate language which possess similar semantic and distributional properties.

Finally, Lefebvre suggests that creole creators use not only the properties of their native lexicons, but also L1 settings of parametric values, semantic interpretation rules and principles of morpheme and word concatenation in order to establish those of the creole. Thus, according to Lefebvre, all grammatical and semantic properties of an emerging creole derive from the native language of its creators, i.e. the substrate. As for superstrate “contribution”, she proposes that, apart from the approximations of phonetic representations of lexical items, the only thing acquired from the superstrate is the directionality (word order) properties of the lexical items.

3.2 Against the break-in-transmission idea

The break in transmission idea has long been prominent in creole studies. For a long time, it largely defined the mainstream views on the development and structural properties of creoles. However, it has also always had it opponents, who argue that creolization should be treated as a case of normal language change, without any significant break in transmission. The earliest prominent representative of this tradition, Chaudenson (1977, 1992, 2003), argues that creoles result from a gradual, non-disruptive development of their superstrate languages in the context of intensive language contact. While Chaudenson plays down the role of substrate languages in creole genesis, the advocates of the feature competition-and-selection model of creole genesis (Mufwene 2001; Aboh 2006; Aboh and Ansaldo 2007; Ansaldo 2009) assume that both superstrate and substrate languages contributed to the formation of creoles.

3.2.1 Creolization as gradual restructuring of the superstrate

The superstratist hypothesis crucially relies on a different interpretation of the social history of creoles, which highlights the existence of two socio-economically and demographically distinct phases in the history of creole communities. These phases are identified as the homestead society (la société d’habitation) and the plantation society (la société de plantation). In chapter 2, I already invoked this distinction in the discussion of the socio-economic and demographic conditions of creole formation.

Chaudenson (1977, 1992, 2003) and Chaudenson and Mufwene (2001) justly state that break-in-transmission models of creolization ignore the existence of the homestead phase, emphasizing the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of
the later plantation phase in defining the major preconditions of creolization. According to Chaudenson, this leads to wrong conclusions concerning the initial stages of creolization, which can and should be eliminated once the significance of the homestead phase is considered. He argues that linguistic developments which took place during the homestead phase served as a basis for the subsequent process of creolization, which occurred during the plantation phase. Therefore, in his framework, the homestead phase is considered crucial to understanding the nature of the process of creolization as a whole.

The homestead phase characterized the first decades of existence of many colonial communities, between early settlement and the time when colonial agricultural industry began to develop. The homestead economy was based on small farms, where African slaves were often outnumbered by indentured European workers. As small-scale farming did not require many laborers, slaves were never imported in large numbers. Throughout the homestead phase, they formed a minority of the colonial population, and the number of locally born slaves exceeded the number of newcomers.

An important socioeconomic characteristic of this period is the proximity between the Europeans colonizers and the slaves. The two groups led identical daily lives, worked alongside each other and shared the same living conditions. Slaves working in small homestead colonies were integrated into the master’s family. Due to the lack of European women in the early colonial community, racially mixed unions between European men and their female slaves became a widespread practice. Ties between slaves from different homesteads were, on the other hand, rather weak. The autonomy of homesteads did not allow the slaves to move around and to interact with each other freely. This description corresponds to the socioeconomic profiles of the Hispanic colonies and the Dutch Cape Colony in South Africa discussed in chapter 2. Chaudenson emphasizes that plantation colonies must have also gone through the homestead stage.

As demonstrated in chapter 2, homestead settings typically gave rise to contact varieties that are closer to their superstrates than prototypical creoles (such as Sranan or Haitian Creole) and that are therefore identified as semi-creoles or as colonial dialects. According to Chaudenson, in the demographic and socioeconomic settings of the homestead community, the slaves were sufficiently exposed to the target language and were motivated to learn the European language due to their proximity with their masters. In his own words, in the conditions of a homestead “...communication was oriented in a highly centripetal fashion” towards the language spoken by the European colonizers, which “served not only as the language of the colony, but also as the language of communication at the heart of the basic social unit formed by the homestead” (Chaudenson and Mufwene 2001: 108). Therefore, Chaudenson argues that, instead of creating a new autonomous language, the homestead slaves simply appropriated an approximative L2 variety of the European language. In support of this interpretation, he presents details of travelers’ reports of various slaves across settlement colonies who could speak the European language well. Based on this evidence, he emphasizes that
these approximative varieties could not be classified as pidgins either on the basis of their structural properties or on the basis of their function (primary language of communication for many speakers).

Substrate languages, according to Chaudenson, did not influence these early slaves’ varieties of the European language. The linguistic heterogeneity of the slaves, the low proportion of newcomers from the substrate-speaking areas, combined with the relative isolation of the homesteads and the weak ties between the slaves of different homesteads, are put forward as factors that downplayed the role of substrate languages in the slave communities.

Creolization, which Chaudenson defines as the *autonomization* of the approximative varieties spoken by the slaves in relation to the language spoken by Europeans, took place during the plantation phase. The substitution of homesteads by plantations had as a consequence the rapid growth of the slave population, produced by the importation of large numbers of new slaves. Unlike homestead slaves, the newcomers had no significant contact with Europeans, who were removed from work on the agricultural units and occupied ruling positions in the colonial society. Their only exposure to the colonial language was through the approximative varieties spoken by locally born and already “acclimatized” slaves. Having developed their own approximative varieties, they, in turn, provided linguistic models for the next generations of arrivals. The continuous series of new arrivals created a continuum of “approximations of approximations”, in which each new approximation was more distantly removed from the European languages than the previous one. This continuum of approximations eventually led to the emergence of a new, autonomous linguistic system, a creole. Thus, in contrast to the break in transmission scenario, the superstratist scenario suggests that creolization was not an abrupt process, but a gradual transition from a superstrate to a creole, through a continuum of intermediate stages.

From a linguistic perspective, Chaudenson describes the evolution from a European language to a creole as the result of cumulative restructuring. This process of restructuring is viewed as an instance of normal language change, accelerated and radicalized by two factors: the absence of normative pressure and the presence of a large proportion of non-native speakers. As is known, low exposure and sensitivity to norm represent a very favorable factor to variation and the restructuring of a linguistic system. Chaudenson emphasizes that, in colonial societies, “there was no explicit norm, in that the dominant social group, comprised of Whites, was itself relatively heterogeneous and made up essentially of illiterate individuals of humble origin and modest social condition” (Chaudenson and Mufwene 2001: 164). Thus, even during the homestead phase, the slaves did not have a stable linguistic target. The European language spoken by the colonizers already contained variation and deviations from the metropolitan standard.

Restructuring that had already taken place in the homestead phase was radically enhanced as a result of the mass influx of non-native speakers which happened during the plantation phase. Similarly to Lefebvre (and to other advocates of the substratist
idea), Chaudenson assumes that unguided second language acquisition played the crucial role in the process of creolization. However, he is strongly opposed to the idea that this process of second language acquisition involved either mixing of superstrate and substrate linguistic systems, or relexification. His position is that “…the elaboration of approximative systems does not proceed by simply transferring syntactic structures of the first/source language to the target language <…>, but by elaborating hypotheses on the structure of the target language” (2001: 158). In other words, Chaudenson argues that the process of restructuring which takes place during unguided second language learning always depends on the variants and developmental directions available in the target language.

Based on this position, Chaudenson develops his hypothesis about the dynamics and structural properties of the outcome of the process of creolization. He argues that earlier and closer approximations of a European language offered variants and provided directions for the subsequent approximative varieties. Although he does not exclude that the direction of the restructuring process could be partly determined by convergence with the learners’ native language(s), in his view, native language influence does not go beyond the reinforcement of converging features. His claim is that “...in creole languages there are almost no positive transfers of obviously non-European linguistic features” (2001: 148). The superstratist hypothesis posits that most creole structural features could be in a more or less direct way related to similar or congruent features of their European superstrates. In accordance with this position, creoles are considered to be varieties of the European languages.

3.2.2 Mufwene’s competition-and-selection scenario of creole genesis

In the literature, Mufwene is often treated as a representative of the superstratist “camp” on a par with Chaudenson (see for example McWhorter 1998, Siegel 2007). In the present section I would like to emphasize that, despite the considerable compatibility of Mufwene’s and Chaudenson’s views on the socioeconomic and sociolinguistic developments which took place in colonial communities, Mufwene proposes a rather different view of the issue of creole genesis.

What often leads scholars to characterize Mufwene as a superstratist is his view of creoles as the result of gradual development of their superstrate languages. Similarly to Chaudenson, Mufwene (2001) highlights the role of the initial, pre-plantation phase of the existence of colonial communities as a crucial phase in creole linguistic history and treats it as an important argument against the idea that creoles developed as the result of a break in transmission of the lexifiers. He fully concurs with Chaudenson in the assumptions that, in the integrated settings of a homestead, the slaves must have developed close approximations of the European language, and that only the later socioeconomic and demographic developments during the plantation phase (i.e. institutionalized segregation, which minimized the contact between the slaves and the European colonizers, and rapid slave population growth and replacement due to high
mortality rates and massive importation) promoted continual restructuring, leading to the divorce of the varieties spoken by the slaves from the language spoken by the Europeans. Mufwene defines this divorce of the slaves’ varieties from the local acrolect as basilectalization.

Also similarly to Chaudenson, Mufwene assumes that, in the socioeconomic conditions of colonial communities, European languages represented the linguistic target for the slaves. Assuming that the slaves always strove to approximate the local dominant language, he emphasizes the role of locally born and acclimatized (“seasoned”) slaves as intermediaries who provided linguistic models for the newcomers.

Based on this assumption, Mufwene (1996, 2001) formulates the Founder Principle in creole genesis. The Founder Principle proposes the following: because the varieties spoken by the founder populations were always the ones being targeted and because the features of these varieties acquired more and more carriers and became more and more entrenched through their repeated adoptions by newcomers, these features had a better chance to be preserved in an emerging creole than the newer alternatives brought in by subsequent generations of arrivals. In other words, the Founder Principle suggests that “the structural features of creoles have been predetermined to a large extent [...> by characteristics of the vernaculars spoken by the populations that founded the colonies in which they developed” (2001: 29). In the case of creoles, these populations were the European colonists.

The Founder Principle should not, however, be misinterpreted as a purely superstratist claim. Mufwene explicitly states that “as a concept, the Founder Principle is adopted here [Mufwene 2001] rather loosely, to underscore the influence of earlier populations in every colony, not always those who founded the colony” (2001: 60). He further emphasizes that “the Founder Principle does not preclude later influence as the ethnographic conditions of the contact setting changed during the gradual and protracted development of the new vernacular, especially during its basilectalization phase” (2001: 76). When applied to the basilectalization phase, the Founder Principle suggests that the features introduced by the first generations of slaves were more likely to be preserved in the emerging slaves’ vernacular than the innovations introduced by the subsequent arrivals. Positing the Founder Principle in creole genesis this way does not imply that all creole structural properties derive from the superstrate languages. There is nothing in Mufwene’s formulation of the Founder Principle that argues against the possibility of substrate influence.

In his work, Mufwene explicitly argues against the exclusively superstratist approach to creole genesis, which is based on the assumption that creole languages owe very little or nothing to the native languages of their creators. Discussing Chaudenson’s proposal, he states: “Convergence is [...> not mutually exclusive with substrate influence [...> and one should be cautious about refuting the latter by fiat” (Mufwene 1996a: 166). In Mufwene (2001), he states: “There is no a priori reason why some features could not have been selected from substrate languages, except possibly that targeting the lexifiers disfavored the substrate languages” (56). Mufwene treats substrate
influence as an important factor, which determined the direction of restructuring of the European superstrate, especially during the process of basilectalization.

The Founder Principle should not be taken as a hypothesis of creole genesis in the same way as the universalist, substratist or superstratist hypotheses are claimed to be. It does not stipulate any particular source for creole structure, but offers a historically grounded perspective of the dynamics of creole development out of contact between European and non-European languages in the context of colonization. Combined with information about the demographic and socioeconomic histories of individual colonies, it can help establish which linguistic varieties are likely to have served as sources of a creole’s structure and when.

Based on the assumption that superstrate and substrate influence are not mutually incompatible and that they complemented each other during the gradual development of creoles, Mufwene formulates his complementary hypothesis of creole genesis, which represents a compromise between the superstratist and the substratist proposals. It proposes that creoles emerge out of competition and selection of the structural features provided by superstrate and substrate languages in contact. Given this, the main objective of a creolist is to identify the principles that would justify particular selections made from among the competing alternatives.

Mufwene’s competition-and-selection model is intended to account not only for the development of creoles but also for normal language change. In both cases, contact between speakers is considered to play a crucial role, regardless of whether they speak varieties of the same language or typologically different languages. Creole development is regarded as a case of accelerated language change, typical of what Mufwene identifies as high contact settings.

Mufwene’s interpretation of “language” is crucial to the understanding of his contact-based model of language evolution. Mufwene adopts Chomsky’s (1986: 19-24) distinction between internalized language (I-language) and externalized language (E-language). E-language is considered to be an abstract term, an extrapolation. In reality, it only exists as an ensemble of similar I-languages, linguistic systems of individuals who are said to be speakers of this language. Based on this reasoning, Mufwene suggests the metaphor of language as species based on an analogy with biological species, which only exist as an extrapolation from similar individual organisms.

Language evolution is seen as a result of interaction between speakers, in the same way as the biological evolution of species is a result of interbreeding between their individual representatives. While interacting with each other, speakers exchange linguistic features (=linguistic units and principles of their use) of their individual linguistic systems or I-languages. The set of linguistic features produced by the I-languages of all individuals in a certain contact environment is referred to as the feature pool. The feature pool represents an arena of competition between linguistic features associated with the same or similar grammatical functions. In the course of language acquisition and daily linguistic interactions, individuals replicate the features of ideolects they are exposed to, thus making particular selections out of the competing alternatives.
present in the feature pool. Every I-language recombines the features present in the feature pool on the model of blending inheritance in biology. As a result, while sharing features with I-languages of individuals who contributed to the feature pool, it is not identical to any of them.

Thus, linguistic interaction sets in motion constant feature competition-and-selection processes, which bring about changes in the linguistic systems of interacting individuals. The changes in individual linguistic systems, which result from individual selections, can amount to changes in communal systems, E-languages, affecting the trajectory of language evolution.

Crucial in Mufwene’s biological metaphor is the rejection of the common idea that language represents a well-defined entity which can be transmitted from one speaker to another as a whole. The units of language transmission are linguistic features, and the process of language transmission, which is always selective, involves restructuring of features of the existing linguistic systems into new ones. Thus, according to Mufwene, restructuring of the existing linguistic systems takes place not only during the formation of creoles (and other contact languages), but also in course of “normal” language development.

Although restructuring of linguistic features is modeled on genetic recombination in biology, Mufwene emphasizes that the two processes are not identical. In biology, innovations in new genotypes arise only from the way the parental genes are recombined, while genes themselves are replicated perfectly. Linguistic restructuring, apart from recombination, involves imperfect replication, modification of “original” features. This modification results from the co-influence of competing features or from the dynamics of the emerging linguistic system itself.

The degree and rate of language restructuring depend on the conditions in which a language is being transmitted and acquired. These conditions are referred to as the ecology of language. The notion of ecology of language is crucial to Mufwene’s account of language evolution. It determines the evolutionary trajectory of language (language birth, language change and language death) in the same way as biological ecology determines the evolution of species. Ecology of language is a complex notion. It subsumes all the linguistic and extralinguistic factors which affect the processes of feature competition, selection, and modification.

An important ecological factor, which distinguishes cases of creolization from cases of “normal” language evolution, is the degree of heterogeneity of the feature pool. The degree of heterogeneity of the feature pool depends on whether a language exists in the relative isolation of a monolingual community, or whether it coexists with other language varieties being spoken by bilinguals or appropriated by non-native speakers in a community where other languages are spoken. In the latter case, the typological distance between the language in question and the coexisting languages also plays an important role. When the linguistic systems in contact are largely identical (as is the case in monolingual communities), their similar or congruent features do not compete, but reinforce each other, leaving little room for recombination and modification. When the
contributing linguistic systems are diverse, they offer alternative strategies for the same grammatical functions. The presence of competing alternatives gives a broader range of recombination options and provides the grounds for greater feature modification, which leads to more extensive restructuring. While the first scenario describes the evolution of “normal” (presumably, unmixed) languages, the second refers to cases of the development of mixed varieties, such as creoles.

Thus, according to Mufwene, creoles represent the result of the evolution of European languages in the specific ecological conditions of colonial communities, which were distinct from “normal” linguistic communities because of high multilingualism. The massive appropriation of the European languages by the slaves brought them in competition with the slaves’ native languages. On a par with the European languages, the native languages of the slaves contributed features to the feature pool, out of which selections for the emerging creole systems were made.

Although, according to Mufwene, the socioeconomic conditions of the colonial communities “encouraged” slaves to target European linguistic features, thus giving them selective advantage in the competition with the features of their native languages, other factors could allow substrate influence to prevail and to affect the way superstrate features were selected and modified in creoles.

One of the most important factors to determine the outcome of feature competition is congruence. Mufwene explains the role of congruence in creole genesis from a pragmatic perspective: “In learning an umpteenth language speakers typically apply the principle of least effort, trying to identify things that are the same in the lexifiers and the languages they already speak...” (2001: 36). In the context of substrate/superstrate feature competition, congruent features reinforced each other, which gave them dominance over non-congruent competitors and favored their selection in the emerging creoles. In this way, some of the features which were infrequent or limited in use in the European language could have been selected into a creole as a result of their congruence with the features of substrate languages.

On the other hand, congruence could also hinder the selection of superstrate features into an emerging creole: “when structures of most of the substrate languages were very similar typologically, their common features often prevailed over alternatives provided by lexifier” (2001: 52).

Mufwene stresses that, in order for two features to interact, congruence need not be absolute. Partially congruent (similar, but not identical) features from two different sources can converge, producing modified variants of the originals. The results of such modifications can often be observed in creoles, where superstrate-derived forms and constructions acquire new usages based on the way similar items are used in substrate languages. The abundance of such modifications in creoles shows that “grammatical substrate influence is not incompatible with items from the lexifiers which have only partially congruent patterns” (Mufwene 2001: 56) and that the source of the building blocks of a language (matériaux de construction, in Chaudenson’s terms) need not be the same as the principles for using them.
When there is no congruence, feature competition is resolved by other factors. Factors that give selective advantage to competing features can be of a structural as well as of a non-structural nature. Mufwene points out that structural and extralinguistic factors differ crucially with regard to the level of feature competition-and-selection in which they apply. Extralinguistic factors such as the relative frequencies of competing features (which depend on the ratios of the bearers of these features in a community) or the socioeconomic, cultural or ethnic undertones associated with the different features in competition apply at the communal level, the level of E-language. According to Mufwene, these factors, accommodated under the Founder Principle, explain why European languages were chosen as the target in creole communities and why most of the lexical material for emerging creoles was selected from the European languages.

Structural factors operate at the level of an individual speaker, the level of I-language, regulating the way features from different linguistic systems interact in this individual speaker’s mind. In the discussion of structural factors underlying the process of creole genesis, the notion of markedness has often been invoked. Recall Bickerton’s LBH, which suggests that creoles developed in accordance with the unmarked settings of UG. Mufwene (1991, 2001) discusses an alternative interpretation of the notion of markedness, which argues against Bickerton’s assumption that in UG certain parametric settings are more or less marked than others. Mufwene’s ecology-sensitive model of markedness treats markedness in grammar not as an absolute, but as a context-relative value. It proposes that the markedness value of each linguistic structure can only be determined relative to other alternatives it is competing with in a given context, and that the factors which determine markedness may vary from one type of context to another.

According to Mufwene, in the context of creole genesis, which was characterized by high multilingualism and large proportions of second language learners, next to congruence, such factors as “regularity or invariance of form, frequency, generality, semantic transparency, and perceptual salience” (2001: 36) determined the relative markedness values of the competing features.

### 3.2.3 Mentalist approach to feature competition-and-selection

During the past few years, Mufwene’s ideas have inspired a considerable amount of discussion and research in creole and contact language studies. Aboh’s (2004c, 2006, 2009) work stands out as an attempt to integrate the idea of feature competition-and-selection into the mentalist perspective on languages as it is envisaged in the generative framework.

Mufwene identifies two levels of feature competition-and-selection, the level of the population (or the level of E-language) vs. the level of the individual speaker (or the level of I-language). The two levels differ crucially with regard to the type of factors determining the outcome of the feature competition-and-selection process. At the population level, the chances of competing features of I-languages in contact to be selected into an E-language are determined by extralinguistic factors such as the number
of carriers of a certain feature and their socio-economic status and cultural identity. The principles of feature selection that apply at the level of I-language appear to be much more obscure. Mufwene distinguishes markedness and perceptual salience among potentially relevant factors, but remarks that there is probably a host of other factors at work.

Mufwene’s evolutionary model of language change mainly deals with the level of the population, as only at this level can language evolution be identified. Although the idea of individual speakers as agents of language evolution is the cornerstone of Mufwene’s proposal, feature competition-and-selection at the level of I-languages is mainly regarded as a contribution to variation and change in the communal language. The focus on the population level explains why Mufwene puts emphasis on sociohistorical factors in his discussion of the ecology of language evolution (2000a,b, 2001, 2002, 2008).

Studying the process of feature competition-and-selection at the level of the individual speaker gives one a different perspective. Generative grammar offers a useful tool in addressing this matter. According to the generativist view of language competence, extralinguistic factors are not directly relevant to the way the speaker’s linguistic knowledge is organized. In this respect, language competence is crucially distinguished from individual language performance, which certainly does get affected by external factors such as the ones Mufwene encompasses under the notion of linguistic ecology. Following Chomsky’s opposition between I-language and E-language, DeGraff (1999: 9) introduces the distinction between E-creole, a socio-historically identified linguistic state, and I-creole, “a mental grammar that shows a certain typological distance from the grammars of the languages in contact”. Importantly, DeGraff argues that, when it comes to the level of I-language, creolization is only quantitatively different from the processes of “normal” language acquisition and language change. Following the same line of thinking, Aboh (2006, 2009) argues that the competition-and-selection of features at the level of language competence is blind to ecological factors, which can assign certain non-linguistic values (e.g., prestigious, cool, rural, literary, etc.) to the features of competing systems. Regardless of the way certain features are valued at the community level, in the mind of an individual speaker all features are equal. In terms of creole genesis, this implies that, in the mind of an individual creole creator, superstrate-derived features had no selective advantage over the competing features from substrate languages. The mentalist approach to language proposed within the generative framework allows one to abstract from the external environment of language contact and attempt to envisage the structural factors that determine the way competing linguistic systems interacted in the minds of creole creators.

Regarding the factors that underlie the process of feature competition-and-selection at this level, Aboh emphasizes the role of the syntax-semantics interface. He argues that areas of grammar which are interpretable at the discourse-semantic interface are visible in the situation of language contact and are more likely to be selected in the emerging contact variety than other areas of grammar that may involve purely formal
features only. According to Aboh (2006, 2009), this explains why elements and structures with discourse-semantic content survive in emerging contact varieties, and those that are semantically vacuous (e.g., agreement) get lost.

Unlike Bickerton, whose LBH is also rooted in the generativist notion of language faculty, Aboh does not assume that UG has any special role in creole creation different from the role it plays in normal language change. He defines the role of UG in language contact as “an ultimate filter for the relevant combinatory possibilities” (Aboh 2006: 233).

3.3 Processes underlying creole development

In the previous sections, I identified several approaches to creole genesis and discussed the claims of their most prominent representatives. Although most of the approaches to creole genesis discussed above only make sense when they are contextualized within the assumption that creolization represents a (special) case of first or second language acquisition, the discussion in the previous section mainly revolved around the sources of creole structures. In this section, I will discuss claims made with regard to the role of (imperfect) second language acquisition and grammaticalization in creole formation.

3.3.1 Second language acquisition

The idea that tendencies observed in (imperfect) L2 acquisition play an important role in creolization is accepted by many researchers. The claims regarding the role of imperfect L2 in creolization do not boil down to the claims concerning the role of L1 transfer discussed in the previous sections. Some scholars believe that pidgins and creoles are the result of unfinished, or imperfect second language acquisition of the dominant lexifier language and characterize them as fossilized interlanguages (Mather 2006; Plag 2008a,b, 2009a,b). Although the equation between creolization and fossilization of an interlanguage undoubtedly gives an oversimplified picture of the process, it has been repeatedly demonstrated that pidgins and creoles do share some properties with interlanguages. Just like in interlanguages, elements which are necessary for successful communication and/or which are perceptually salient are easily acquired by creole creators, while “ornamental” features marginal to the immediate requirements of a successful communication are often omitted. As a result, just like interlanguages, creoles possess a grammar which is characterized by a minimum of (inflectional) morphology, lack of agreement and other instances of redundancy and the use of lexical items to express notions that are grammaticalized in the target languages, such as definiteness or tense.
3.3.2 Grammaticalization

The massive loss of superstrate morphology which takes place in the initial stages of creole formation is assumed to result from accumulated effects of imperfect second languages acquisition or, as argued by some scholars (e.g., Bickerton 1981), pidginization. In the rudimentary language state characterized by Givón (1979) as the “pragmatic mode”, the absence of morphosyntactic marking leads to the dependence of communication on context, shared knowledge, intonation, and non-verbal means of communication. The subsequent functional expansion of creoles, which begin to gain the role of primary languages in the creole community and to acquire native speakers, is accompanied by their structural and lexical expansion. During this expansion phase, the process of grammaticalization is argued to have played a crucial role in the development of creoles (Bruyn 1995, 2007, 2008).

Grammaticalization, “the change whereby lexical items and constructions come in particular linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions, and, once grammaticalized, continue to develop new grammatical functions” (Hopper and Traugott 2003: xv), is a universal process which takes place in all languages of the world. Grammaticalization involves morphosyntactic change (change of grammatical category and corresponding change in distribution), which is usually accompanied by phonological reduction and semantic shifts which can be described in terms of weakening or bleaching of the original meaning, the development from a more concrete to a more abstract meaning.

While many functional elements in creoles have lexical origins, and their development can therefore be claimed to instantiate the process of grammaticalization, it is debatable whether the notion of grammaticalization is fully appropriate when applied to creole structural elaboration. The main objection to the assumption that functional items with lexical etymons in creoles develop through grammaticalization is that, while grammaticalization in “normal” languages is a gradual process that involves multiple changes and may expand over several centuries, in creoles grammaticalization is exceptionally rapid or even abrupt. Some superstrate-derived lexical items are only attested in creoles with a grammatical function. In such cases, no language-internal process of grammaticalization appears to have taken place and one can more appropriately speak of reanalysis during the process of acquisition.

While grammaticalization is usually assumed to be brought about by a complex interplay between the need for expressiveness and creativity on the one hand, and for regularization and routinization on the other, the accounts of the unusually high rate of grammaticalization in creoles appeal to the notion of communicative need. As observed by Bruyn (2007: 389), “[i]t is problematic to regard communicative need as a factor that induces grammaticalization. To assume that grammaticalization occurs in order to fill functional gaps in the grammar leads to the normally unwarranted implication that a language is in some respect inadequate before the grammaticalization took place”. Creoles are, however, often considered different in this respect, as they are assumed to
lack grammatical material that was not transmitted from the lexifier. Based on this, Bruyn (2007: 389) hypothesizes that “[i]t may […] be the case that grammaticalization in the early stages of P[idgin]/C[reole] development sometimes involves the creation of new categories or constructions in order to fill functional gaps”. On the other hand, she justly remarks that “[t]o the extent that languages vary widely in what is coded by grammatical means, it is difficult to establish on independent grounds what would count as a functional inadequacy” (2007: 389).

In addition to functional pressure, the fact that grammaticalization in creoles often takes shortcuts can be accounted for by appealing to external influence. While grammaticalization is normally conceived of as a language-internal process, in creoles language contact can often be claimed to have influenced the direction of reinterpretation of the items undergoing grammaticalization. For instance, while in many Atlantic creoles the superstrate-derived form of the 3Pl pronoun grammaticalized into a plural marker, this development is often assumed to have resulted from substrate influence (but see the discussion in chapter 5). Some instances of grammaticalization found in creoles can be claimed to represent the continuation of a process already started in the superstrate. As observed by Arends and Bruyn (1994), the development of the marker of immediate future from the verb go may be affected by the fact that English be going to is also used to express future.

Thus, while the grammatical functions assumed by superstrate-derived lexical elements in creoles often correspond to the outcomes of universal or frequently observed grammaticalization paths (e.g., development of indefinite determiners from the numeral ‘one’, or definite determiners from a deictic element), the motivation as well as the internal mechanisms of the reanalysis of superstrate-derived lexical items might be different from the motivation and internal mechanisms of grammaticalization. In what follows, I will therefore use the term grammaticalization in a lose sense, to refer to the traceable linguistic change as defined by Hopper and Traugott (2003) cited above, without making any claims with regard to its motivations and underlying mechanisms.

### 3.4 Summary and discussion

In the previous sections, we considered various approaches to the issue of creole genesis. We observed that, while some scholars focus on establishing the major source(s) of creole languages (UG, substrates or superstrates), others attempt to identify the processes (second language acquisition, grammaticalization) underlying creole formation. While the role of second language acquisition and grammaticalization in creoles (as well as in normal language change) is rather widely acknowledged, the debate on the major sources of creolization encompasses extremely radical claims, which are completely at odds with one another. One cannot but be puzzled by the fact that the same phenomenon has given rise to mutually incompatible ideas.
The UG-oriented, substratist and superstratist accounts of creolization can be better understood once they are contextualized in the different interpretations of the socioeconomic conditions of creolization. The advocates of each of the three hypotheses of creole genesis highlight those factors that lend support to their analysis of the linguistic data. For instance, both Bickerton (1981) and Lefebvre (1998) strongly adhere to the assumption that the socioeconomic conditions in the colonies significantly restricted the slaves’ access to the superstrate language. From this assumption, they derive the idea that creole creators had to resort to other sources of linguistic structure to compensate for the break in transmission of the superstrate. Chaudenson (2003, and other work), on the other hand, emphasizes the functional and symbolic significance of the European language and highlights the role of locally born and previously assimilated slaves as linguistic mediators between the European masters and the newcomers. This supports the idea that superstrate structural properties were passed down to the emerging creoles without any break in transmission.

Another aspect of the history of creoles subject to conflicting interpretations is the degree of homogeneity of substrate languages. As convincingly demonstrated by Singler, “degree of homogeneity in substratal input bears crucially on the extent of substratal influence in a pidgin or creole” (1988: 27). Bickerton and Chaudenson, who deny the role of substrate influence in creole formation, emphasize the linguistic diversity of the slave population as an important factor accounting for the rapid disappearance of the slaves’ native languages and for their weak contribution to the structure of the emerging creoles. Lefebvre’s analysis, on the other hand, presupposes the existence of a rather homogenous substrate.

The analysis of the demographic, socioeconomic and ideological settings of the European colonies shows that the degree of access the slaves had to the superstrate, functionality and symbolic status of the dominant colonial language, as well as the degree of heterogeneity of the substrate are all variables whose actual values differ from colony to colony, as well as within the same colony over time (see chapter 2). In other words, the historical truth appears to be more complex and diverse than some approaches to creole genesis assume. In the empirical chapters of this book, engaged with an analysis of the origins of the structural properties of creole NEs, I will attempt to demonstrate that the same conclusion holds for the linguistic facts.