

On the Role of Convergence in Creole Formation
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Creole languages are natural languages that typically emerge in a multilingual setting in which speakers of distinct native languages come in contact with each other, ultimately contributing to the formation of a new language. While the general consensus is that the lexicon of a given Creole mostly originates from its superstrate (the language with higher power), there is much debate regarding the source of its grammatical properties. Competing accounts of Creole formation have focused on specific processes such as processes of second language acquisition (Siegel, 2008; Plag, 2008; Winford, 2008), relexification (L1 transfer of grammatical properties onto the emerging Creole, see Lefebvre, 1998, 2004), L2/L1 acquisition cascade (wherein early creolophones are exposed to Creole varieties shaped by both recent learners and seasoned speakers of the Creole, see Aboh and DeGraff, 2014, 2017) or feature recombination (where features of the Creole source languages recombine in innovative ways, see Mufwene, 2001, 2008; Aboh, 2015).

This study casts a novel lens on Creole formation by focusing on the convergence process (one of many processes involved in creole genesis) whereby the similarities (the congruent features) that speakers perceive between the languages in contact are favored to participate in the emergence and development of a new language. Specifically, this presentation illustrates how morphosyntactic and semantic features are more likely to be selected into the grammatical makeup of a given Creole when they PREEXIST and are shared by some of its source languages (Kihm, 1990; Corne, 1999; Kouwenberg, 2000 among other).

Building on a previous study (Baptista, 2020), I provide an expanded account of the convergence process by conducting a cross-linguistic comparison of congruent morphemes and syntactic structures across 22 Creoles and 24 grammatical domains.

This provides us with the empirical grounding necessary to develop a model of MATTER (form) and PATTERN (syntactic structures) mapping showing how speakers of source languages can draw from the preexisting, congruent morphemes or syntactic structures in the linguistic ecology of the emerging Creole (see Matras and Sakel, 2007 for a bilingual perspective on these issues).

For each Creole under study, I provide a three-way comparison between the Creole (1), its superstrate (at the time of contact) (2) and substrate/adstrate (3). The examples in (1), (2) and (3) illustrate how the congruent passive marker $-(t)u$ in Wolof may have converged with Middle Portuguese $-do /du/$ to give rise to the passive marker $-du$ in Upper Guinea Portuguese Creole. Here, the passive marker (PASS) exemplifies congruent MATTER (form) and our study also includes numerous examples of congruent PATTERNS (syntactic structures).

Upper Guinea Portuguese Creole

- (1) *Porta fitcha -du* (Jacobs, 2008)
door close PASS
'The door has been closed.'

Middle Portuguese

- (2) *foy levantado por Rey.* (Castro, 2000: 94 from a 1521 poem written by Gil Vicente)
was raisePASS by King
'He was raised by the King.'

Wolof

- (3) *Bunt bi tej -(t)u*
doorDEF close PASS
'The door has been closed' (Ndiaye, 2004:30)

This model of MATTER and PATTERN mapping allows us to identify degrees of convergence along three dimensions: a) morpho-phonological, b) semantic, c) syntactic. Partial convergence is argued to occur along any two of the three dimensions and full convergence along all three.