

Creole genesis and the acquisition of grammar

The case of Haitian creole

This study focuses on the cognitive processes involved in creole genesis – relexification, reanalysis and dialect levelling – processes which the author demonstrates play a significant role in language genesis and change in general. Dr Lefebvre argues that the creators of pidgins/creoles use the parametric values of their native languages in establishing those of the language that they are creating and the semantic principles of their own grammar in concatenating morphemes and words in the new language. The theory is documented on the basis of a uniquely detailed comparison of Haitian creole with its contributing French and West African languages. Summarising more than twenty years of funded research, the author examines the input of adult, as opposed to child, speakers and resolves the problems in the three main approaches, universalist, superstratist and substratist, which have been central to the recent debate on creole development.

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CREOLE GENESIS AND THE
ACQUISITION OF GRAMMAR
THE CASE OF HAITIAN CREOLE

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**To Ken Hale and to Mathieu,
both magicians in their own way**

To an extent unparalleled in the study of languages anywhere else in the world, African language classification has been beset by persistent hypotheses of language mixture, intermediate or transitional languages, substrata, pervasive external influence far in excess of what is usually recognised as normal, and innovative exuberance unmatched in recorded language history. Perhaps the most dramatic – and preposterous – example of speculation in linguistic theory is provided by Sir Harry Johnston (1919 p. 27): ‘A great jumble of events, and lo! – new languages spring suddenly into existence.’ (Welmers 1973: 2)

Sapere aude!
[Dare to think by yourself.]
Immanuel Kant

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Preface

This book focusses on the cognitive processes involved in creole genesis: relexification, reanalysis, dialect levelling and parameter setting. The role of these processes in creole genesis is documented on the basis of a detailed comparison of Haitian creole with two of its major source languages: French, its main lexifier language, and Fongbe, one of its West African substratum languages. The findings reported on in this book are based on twenty years of research that I have done on the languages involved, alone or in collaboration with colleagues and students, through various projects carried out at the Université du Québec à Montréal.

From 1976 to 1980, with Lynn Drapeau, I conducted a project on popular French (financed by fcar, fir-uqam and olf). In parallel (1975–7), I started a small project on the syntax of Haitian creole (financed by fir-uqam) with some Haitian students and Hilda Koopman, who was then a visiting student in our department, writing an M.A. thesis on Haitian. This project led to the publication with Karoma Press of *Syntaxe de l'haïtien* (1982), written in collaboration with Hilda Koopman, Hélène Magloire-Holly and Nanie Piou. Building on the results of this project, I began comparing the lexicon and grammar of Haitian creole with the lexicons and grammars of two of its source languages: French and Fongbe. This work was done in the framework of the project *Le créole haïtien: langues africaines relexifiées?* that I directed together with Jonathan Kaye from 1985 to 1989 (financed by fcar). This project also involved the participation of several students: Anne-Marie Brousseau, Joëlle Brillon, Réjean Canac-Marquis, Rose-Marie Déchaine, Sandra Filipovich and Jean-Robert Cadely. The research continued with the project *The morphology and the syntax of Haitian* from 1986 to 1988 (financed by sshrcc), in which Diane Massam and, later, John Lumsden participated as professional researchers; some of the graduate students from the first project also took part, as well as some new students who joined the team such as Rollande Gilles, Marie-Denyse Sterlin and Danielle Dumais. The results of these projects enabled me to formulate a long-term project to test the hypothesis that the mental processes of relexification and reanalysis play a major role in creole genesis.

I obtained a major grant from sshrcc (and complementary grants from fir-uqam) for a project designed to test this hypothesis in detail, based on the case study of Haitian creole. This project, *La genèse du créole haïtien: un cas particulier d'investigation sur la forme de la grammaire universelle*, which I

directed with the collaboration of John Lumsden, lasted five years (1989–94). It focussed significant professional and material resources on the lexicon and grammar of Haitian creole and its source languages. Besides the two major researchers, the team included several other researchers: Elizabeth Ritter, Paul Law, Kinyalolo Kasangati, Alain Kihm (from the CNRS, France), John Singler (from New York University) and Anne-Marie Brousseau; research technicians Danielle Dumais, Monique Poulin, Andrée Bélanger and Anne-Marie Benoit; our secretary Lorraine Rainville; several graduate students, most of whom are native speakers of one of the languages under study: Anne-Marie Brousseau, Aimé Avolonto, Maxime Da Cruz, Joseph Sauveur Joseph, Hérold Mimy, Juvénal Ndayiragije, Michel Platt and Efoe Wallace; an autonomous researcher, France Martineau; visiting graduate students: Tonjes Veenstra (University of Amsterdam) and Chris Collins (mit); a series of visiting scholars: Elizabeth Cowper (University of Toronto), Kenneth Hale (mit), Richard Larson (mit) and Gillian Sankoff (University of Pennsylvania); and various collaborators: Albert Bienvenu Akoha (Centre béninois des langues étrangères), Hounkpati Capo (Labo Gbè, Université nationale du Bénin), Pierre Vernet (Université d'État d'Haïti) and Marc Laurent Hazoumé (cenala, Université nationale du Bénin). Finally, some thirty native speakers of Haitian and Fongbe were involved with the project as informants. Complementary grants in collaboration with John Lumsden entitled *Les propriétés lexicales, leur représentation dans le lexique et leur projection dans la syntaxe* (fcar 1990–2) and *L'organisation des lexiques et des entrées lexicales* (fcar 1993–5) also contributed to the realisation of this research. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time that sufficient resources have been gathered together to make a detailed and extensive comparison of the grammar and lexicon of a creole language with those of its superstratum and substratum sources. Furthermore, this project has included original research to document the historical situation at the time of the creation of Haitian creole. Finally, it should be noted that recent developments in linguistic theory (e.g. in the theory of parametric variation, functional category theory, lexical semantic theory, the results of the mit Lexicon Project, etc.) have provided us with precise tools for the comparative analyses.

The aim of this book is threefold. First, I present the theory of creole genesis formulated around the major processes involved and the methodology developed for testing it. Second, I present an extensive comparison of the properties of the lexicon and the syntax of Haitian with those of its contributing languages. Third, I evaluate the hypothesis on the basis of the data presented in this book. The data and analyses presented in this book draw not only on my own work on the languages involved, but also on data and analyses available in the literature and research produced by the members of the various teams involved in the projects mentioned above. Putting it all together in this book and filling the holes required a lot of additional work. Danielle Dumais assisted me in compiling the enormous amount of Haitian and Fongbe data. Olivier Tardif assisted me in compiling seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French data. Andrée Bélanger formatted the

manuscript and Zofia Laubitz copy-edited it. This work was financed by a grant from sshrcc (1994–7). Finally, work referred to as Brousseau (1995a and b) was financed in part by a grant to John Lumsden and in part by an sshrcc grant to me. The usual disclaimer is in order here: none of the people involved in the above-mentioned projects are to be held responsible for the views advocated in this book, nor for the particular analyses I propose to account for the data. This book was written between April 1995 and February 1997.

I would like to thank my university and my department for supporting this research and the funding agencies for making it possible. Patricia Dunn and Elaine Isabel from sshrcc gave me invaluable support to begin and complete this research. I would like to thank my collaborators mentioned above for their work, for fruitful discussions and for the good times that we had together. I am grateful to my colleagues of the local and international community for their numerous questions, comments and even objections related to this research; their reactions contributed to making the claims and analyses more precise. Many thanks to Anne-Marie Brousseau, Mark Durie, Ken Hale, Rich Larson, John Lumsden and Lisa Travis for most insightful discussions on several theoretical issues raised in the course of the research. Special thanks to Jean-Robert Placide for sharing with me his knowledge of the Haitian lexicon and grammar over all these years. I am indebted to the following people for their comments on drafts which became part of some of the chapters in this book: Marthe Faribault, Yves-Charles Morin, Elizabeth Ritter, Pierrette Thibault, Lydia White and Raffaella Zanuttini.

Julie Auger, Anne-Marie Brousseau, Bernard Comrie, Christine Jourdan, Lisa Travis and an anonymous reader read a first draft of this manuscript; their questions and comments contributed a great deal to its final form. I owe special thanks to Andrée Bélanger, Anne-Marie Brousseau and Danielle Dumais for their friendship, support and encouragement in the final phase of this research. Bernard Comrie gave me invaluable support during the time I was working on this manuscript. I do not know how to thank Ken Hale for supporting this research throughout. I would also like to express my gratitude to Gillian Sankoff and Paul Kay, who taught me how to work. Finally, last but not least, I would like to thank my friends, my parents, my family and my son Mathieu. They were there all the time.

Abbreviations

acc	accusative	infl	inflection
adv	adverb	ins	markers of insistence
ag	agentive affix	int	interrogative
agent	agent	irr	irrealis
an	animate	lo(c)	locative
ant	anterior	log	logophoric pronoun
ap	plural article	même	French emphatic <i>même</i>
asp	aspect	mo	mood
ass	assertive	Neg	negative marker
att	attributive affix	neg	negation marker
aux	auxiliary	nom	nominaliser
body	body-part reflexives	Num	number
case	Case	obv	obviative
cl	clitic	op	operator
comp	complementiser	part	partitive
de+les	partitive+plural	p(a)st	past
	determiner	pl	plural
def-fut	definite future	poss	possessive
deic	deictic	post	postposition
dem	demonstrative	prep	preposition
Det	determiner (clausal)	pro	covert pronominal
det	determiner (head of DP)	prog	progressive
dm	discourse marker	prosp	prospective
ec	Eastern Cushitic	prox	proximate
emph	emphatic	q	question marker
fc	functional category	ref/rfl	reflexive
foc	focus	rel	relative marker
fp	focal pronoun	res	resumptive
fem	feminine	sc	Southern Cushitic
fut	future	self	-self anaphor
fut-possib	future-possibility	sem	semantic properties
gen	genitive	srp	subject-referring pronoun
hab	habitual	sub	subjunctive
imp	imperfective	surp	surprise
inan	inanimate	to	topic marker
ind-fut	indefinite future	val	validator

1 *The problem of creole genesis and linguistic theory*

This book addresses the cognitive processes hypothesised to account for the properties of creole languages. It presents a theory of creole genesis based on processes otherwise observed to play a role in language genesis and in language change in general. It is intended as a contribution to our understanding of the mechanisms by which the properties of the source languages of a creole manifest themselves in the creole in the way they do. This chapter summarises the salient features of creole languages which any theory of creole genesis must be able to account for and situates this book with respect to other approaches to the problem. Section 1.3 introduces the theoretical framework within which these problems are addressed. Section 1.4 presents the hypothesis underlying the research. Section 1.5 discusses the scope and limitations of this book.

1.1 The complex problem of pidgin and creole genesis

The history and structure of pidgin and creole languages are characterised by the following features.¹ First, as was pointed out by Whinnom (1971), these languages are only developed in multilingual communities. Whinnom argues that, in bilingual communities, the speakers of one group will eventually learn the language of the other group.²

Second, communities where pidgin and creole languages emerge generally involve several substratum languages spoken by the majority of the population and a superstratum language spoken by a relatively small but economically powerful social group. Crucially, the substratum community does not have one common language. This situation creates the need for a lingua franca (see e.g. Hymes 1971a; Foley 1988), not only to permit communication between the speakers of the substratum languages and of the superstratum language, but also to permit the speakers of the substratum languages to communicate among themselves (see e.g. Foley 1988; Singler 1988: 47; Thomason and Kaufman 1991).

Third, in communities where creole languages emerge, speakers of the substratum languages generally have very little access to the superstratum language (see Thomason and Kaufman 1991). As Foley (1988: 163) puts it: 'the language of the dominant group is not easily made available to the members of the subordinate group(s)'. In fact, as has been pointed out on several occasions in the literature, creoles that most resemble their superstratum languages were created in communities where the speakers of the substratum languages had relatively

more access to the superstratum community. Creoles that are more radical (i.e. less like the superstratum language) come from communities where language learners had very little access to the superstratum community (see e.g. Bickerton 1977: 55; Baker and Corne 1982; Andersen 1983a; Thomason and Kaufman 1991; Baker 1993; Valdman 1978, 1993). For example, as is argued in Valdman (1993), Louisiana creole is closer to French than Haitian is because the substratum speakers had more access to French in Louisiana than the African population had in Haiti. Baker and Corne (1982) also discuss this issue on the basis of data from Mauritius and Reunion creoles. On Reunion, French native speakers outnumbered substratum speakers during the formative period of the creole, and Reunion creole grammar displays a significant number of French grammatical categories. By contrast, during the formative period of Mauritius creole, the proportion of native French speakers was much lower, and thus the West African speakers had a much stronger input into the creole.

A fourth point is that, ordinarily, languages change gradually. Within the span of several generations, speakers of innovative and conservative dialects are able to communicate, even though, over the course of centuries, a new language may evolve (see Lightfoot 1979). By contrast, creole languages are created in a short span of time (see e.g. Hall 1958; Voorhoeve 1973; Alleyne 1966; Chaudenson 1977, 1993; Bickerton 1984). This observation dates back to Van Name (1869–70: 123, cited in Goodman 1964: 135): ‘Under ordinary conditions these changes proceed at so slow a pace as to be appreciable only at considerable periods of time, but here two or three generations have sufficed for a complete transformation.’ Hesseling (1933: xi) further reassesses this point in the following terms:

The genesis of human language is a psychological problem that no single language will ever solve, but from creole one can best learn how a given language emerges from old data and develops, because here something takes shape at a high speed, in a past recognisable to us, something which is the product, in other cases, of many centuries, with a very obscure past in its background.

Thus, in contrast to regular linguistic change, creole languages diverge abruptly from their source languages (see Thomason and Kaufman 1991), so that, within one or two generations, a different language is created. Hancock (1987: 265) claims that: ‘most of the principal characteristics that each creole is now associated with were established during the first twenty-five years or so of the settlement of the region in which it came to be spoken’. Hymes (1971a), Mintz (1971) and Ferraz (1983) suggest that a creole can develop within fifty years or less. Singler (1996) is of the opinion that it takes sixty to eighty years for a creole to form. Whatever the outcome of this issue may be, creole languages constitute a unique case of accelerated linguistic change when compared with regular cases of linguistic change.

Fifth, creole languages tend to be isolating languages. This observation goes back to Schuchardt (1979) and Hesseling (1933: xvi). It is also found in Hagege (1985: 39). But it was Mufwene (1986, 1990, 1991) who clearly established this property of creole languages and the problem it poses for scholars who work on

creole genesis. Indeed, Mufwene has documented the fact that this tendency appears to hold even when the contributing languages are not isolating languages. For example, Mufwene (1986) shows that Kituba, a creole language that has emerged almost exclusively from contact among agglutinative Bantu languages, is an isolating language. 'Kituba has selected Kikongo's seemingly marked periphrastic alternative over the more common and apparently unmarked agglutinating system' (Mufwene 1990: 12).

Sixth, it has long been noted in the literature that creole languages are mixed languages in that they derive some of their properties from those of the substratum languages and some from those of the superstratum language (see e.g. Alleyne 1966, 1981; Holm 1988). Moreover, several scholars have noticed that the type of mix we find in radical creoles is not random. For example, Adam (1883: 47) states that:

J'ose avancer . . . que les soi-disant patois de la Guyane et de la Trinidad constituent des dialectes négro-aryens. J'entends par là que les nègres guinéens, transportés dans ces colonies, ont pris au français ses mots, mais qu'ayant conservé dans la mesure du possible, leur phonétique et leur grammaire maternelles . . . Une telle formation est à coup sûr hybride . . . La grammaire n'est autre que la grammaire générale des langues de la Guinée.

[I go so far as to claim . . . that the so-called patois of Guyana and Trinidad constitute Negro-Aryan dialects. By that I mean that the Guinean Negroes who were transported to the colonies adopted the words of French but, as much as possible, kept the phonetics and grammar of their mother tongues . . . Such a formation is clearly hybrid . . . The grammar is no different from the general grammar of the languages of Guinea.]

Speaking of Haitian creole, Sylvain (1936: 178) observes that: 'Nous sommes en présence d'un français coulé dans le moule de la syntaxe africaine, ou . . . d'une langue éwé à vocabulaire français.' [We are in the presence of a French that has been cast in the mould of African syntax or . . . of an Ewe language with a French vocabulary.] Similarly, in his extensive study of French-based creoles, Goodman (1964) observes, over and over again, that particular lexical items in the creoles have a phonological representation similar to a French expression but that these creole lexical items share properties with corresponding lexical items in the African substratum languages. On the basis of data drawn from Djuka, Huttar (1971: 684) also remarks that 'the use of morphemes borrowed by a pidgin or a creole language . . . from a European language often diverges from the use of the source morpheme in the source language' and often corresponds to the use of the corresponding word in the substratum languages. Voorhoeve (1973) makes a similar remark on the basis of Sranan and Saramaccan data. These observations suggest that creole languages are not formed by an arbitrary mixture of the properties of the languages present at the time they are being created. The general pattern that seems to emerge from the observations reported above is the following: while the forms of the lexical entries of a radical creole are derived from the superstratum language, the syntactic and semantic properties

of these lexical entries follow the pattern of the substratum languages. This raises the question of what the process which generates such a division of properties could be. The answer to this question is the main topic of this book.

Any theory of creole genesis must account for the properties of these languages. Therefore, as has been pointed out in Lefebvre and Lumsden (1989a), an optimal theory of creole genesis must account for the fact that creole languages emerge in multilingual contexts where there is a need for a lingua franca and where the speakers of the substratum languages have little access to the superstratum language. It must account for the fact that creole languages tend to be isolating languages even when they emerge from contact situations involving only agglutinative languages. It must also account for the fact that creole languages manifest properties of both their superstratum and substratum languages and explain why these properties are divided as they are.³ In this book, the problem of creole genesis is addressed on the basis of an in-depth study of the genesis of Haitian creole, a typical example of a radical creole (see Bickerton 1984).

Pidgins and creoles have long been considered as separate entities on the basis of the following two sets of criteria. While pidgins have been defined as reduced codes, creoles have been defined as expanded versions of these reduced codes (see e.g. Hymes 1971b). Also, while pidgins have been found to always constitute the second language of the speakers who use them, a creole is often considered to be a pidgin that has become the first language of a new generation of speakers (see Kay and Sankoff 1974). In more recent literature, the distinction between pidgins and creoles has been levelled out in view of the fact that there are some pidgins (still used as a second language) that have been shown to have expanded in the same way as languages known as creoles (see e.g. Mühlhäusler 1980, 1986a, for an extensive discussion of this point). Hancock (1980a: 64) states: 'I prefer not to acknowledge a distinction between *pidgin* and *creole*, and to consider *stabilisation* more significant than *nativisation* in creole language formation.' Similarly, Mufwene (1990: 2) uses the term creole to refer 'to varieties traditionally called creoles but also to those called pidgins that serve as vernaculars or primary means of communication for at least a portion of their speakers'. Moreover, in recent literature in the field, scholars have started referring to pidgins and creoles as *pcs*, suggesting that they fall into a single category. Furthermore, as will be seen in chapter 2, pidgin and creole languages cannot be distinguished on the basis of the processes which play a role in their formation (see also Woolford 1983, for a general discussion of this point). Indeed, the processes hypothesised to play a role in the formation and development of human languages apply to both pidgins and creoles. This is a major drawback to Bickerton's (1977, 1981, 1984) Language Bioprogram Hypothesis of creole genesis, which crucially requires that pidgins and creoles be different entities formed by different processes. Since this book is about the processes involved in the genesis of these languages and since these languages cannot be distinguished on the basis of these processes, I will not make any distinction between them.

1.2 The perspective of this book

In this book, the problem of pidgin and creole genesis is cast within the framework of the cognitive processes otherwise known to play a role in language genesis and change in general. This general perspective is akin to Van Name's (1869–70: 123) claim that the type of changes undergone in creole genesis are no different in kind from those observed in regular cases of linguistic change: 'the changes which they [the creole dialects] have passed through are not essentially different in kind, and hardly greater in extent than those, for instance, which separate the French from the Latin, but from the greater violence of the forces at work they have been far more rapid'. The major processes hypothesised to be involved in the genesis of pidgin/creole lexicons are relexification, reanalysis and dialect levelling. These processes can be argued to play a significant role in language genesis and language change in general (see chapter 2). It is also hypothesised that the creators of the pidgin/creole use the parametric values of their native languages in establishing those of the language that they are creating and the semantic principles of their own grammar in concatenating morphemes and words. This approach compares with others as follows.

The presence of substratum features in pidgin and creole lexicons has traditionally been considered to result from *calquing* (see e.g. Keesing 1988) or *transfer* (see e.g. Naro 1978; Andersen 1980, 1983b; Mufwene 1990, 1993c; Siegel 1995). In this book, it is argued that such cases constitute examples of relexification when lexical properties are involved. Parametric values are hypothesised to be set on the basis of those in the substratum languages and to be carried over into the creole by its creators. The same hypothesis applies to semantic interpretation (see chapter 2).

The problem of pidgin and creole genesis has traditionally been addressed from the point of view of simplification, or reduction, and expansion (see e.g. Hymes 1971a, 1971b). Pidgins and creoles have traditionally been viewed as reduced or simplified codes when compared with their superstratum languages. Such a view, however, has been challenged by Alleyne (1966: 281), among other researchers, on the basis of a comparison between a creole language and its contributing languages.

Dans l'histoire de la morphologie, est-il permis de partir du système de flexions français et de ne voir dans les créoles français qu'une réduction ou une simplification de ce système amenant des 'pertes' ou des 'disparitions' des flexions françaises? Ou bien notre point de départ devrait-il être la morpho-syntaxe ouest-africaine, qui est caractérisée par l'invariabilité du mot, donc par l'absence de flexions?

[In the history of its morphology, is it permissible to start from the French inflectional system and to see in the French creoles only a reduction or simplification of this system, resulting in the 'loss' or 'disappearance' of French inflections? Or should we start with West African morphosyntax, which is characterised by invariable words, i.e. by the absence of inflections?]

The two questions posed in the quotation from Alleyne above stress the fact that the notion of simplification/reduction arises only when creoles are compared with their superstratum languages. These notions do not have the same relevance, however, when creoles are compared with their substratum languages (see also Brousseau, Filipovich and Lefebvre 1989). The approach taken in this book builds on the second alternative raised by Alleyne. The cognitive process of relexification will be shown to account for the link that exists between the morphosyntax of a creole and that of its substratum languages. The notion of expansion, as referred to in Hymes (1971a), corresponds to the result of the process of reanalysis, claimed to play a role in the development of pidgins and creoles.

In the last twenty years, discussions of creole genesis have centred around the debate over three main approaches to the problem (see Muysken and Smith 1986b): the universalist approach (see e.g. Bickerton 1981, 1984, 1986; Seuren and Wekker 1986), the superstratist approach (see e.g. Chaudenson 1993) and the substratist approach (see e.g. Alleyne 1981; Holm 1988).⁴ The universalist approach does not account for the fact that creole lexicons manifest the properties of their source languages in the way they do (see section 1.1). Furthermore, creole languages are not uniform; like other natural languages, they manifest language-specific features, as is extensively documented in Muysken (1988b). The universalist approach does not account for the variation that exists between creoles. The superstratist approach raises a problem best stated by Mufwene (1996: 166): 'One of the problems with the superstrate hypothesis is the absence of any explanation for why creoles lexified by European languages do not correspond to any particular dialect of their lexifiers.' Finally, the problem with the substratist approach has been stated by Hall (1958), who points out that creoles in general have retained very few, if any, *visible* features of their substratum languages. The perspective adopted in this book isolates the discussion of pidgin and creole genesis from these approaches in addressing the problem from the point of view of the processes at work in their formation. Furthermore, it resolves the problems with all three approaches; indeed, the nature of the processes hypothesised to play a role in the formation of these languages will be shown to predict the respective contributions to pidgins or creoles of the languages involved in their formation.

Traditional accounts of creole genesis have generally addressed the problem using the notion of *language*. Given the nature of the mix found in creole languages, however, it is necessary to distinguish between a particular form and its properties. This requirement has been clearly stated by Alleyne (1966: 282) on the basis of the status of temporal and aspectual morphemes in Haitian.

Il est aisé de voir que ce système diffère beaucoup de celui des verbes français, dans lequel les distinctions temporelles sont beaucoup plus importantes que les distinctions d'aspect. Par contre, les langues ouest-africaines font preuve de systèmes verbaux du même genre que celui du créole français, et il serait évidemment plus valable d'attribuer au système verbal du créole une origine

africaine plutôt qu'une origine française. Mais les particules qui marquent les aspects et les temps dans le système verbal créole semblent toutes dérivées de mots ou de groupes de mots français. Ainsi *ap(é)<après; té* (particule du passé)<*était; ava, va, a* (futur)<*avoir* (ou peut-être *va* ou *avant*, d'après d'autres hypothèses); *fèk<fait que* (*mwè fèk kumāsè* 'je viens de commencer'). Donc si notre point de départ réside dans les formes et non pas dans le système, nous serions amenés à chercher les moyens par lesquels le sens et la fonction grammaticale de certaines formes françaises ont pu évoluer ou se transformer dans le créole. Cela peut fausser nos perspectives et nous plonger dans des hypothèses irrationnelles pour exprimer le changement de fonction de *après* en créole.

[It is easy to see that this system differs greatly from the French verb system, in which tense distinctions are far more important than distinctions of aspect. On the other hand, the West African languages have a verb system of the same kind as that in the French creole, and it would obviously be much more valid to attribute an African rather than a French origin to the creole verb system. But the particles that mark aspects and tenses in the creole verb system all seem to be derived from French words or groups of words. Thus, *ap(é)<après;*⁵ *té* (past particle)<*était; ava, va, a* (future)<*avoir* (or maybe *va* or *avant*, according to other hypotheses); *fèk<fait que* (*mwè fèk kumāsè* 'I just began'). Thus, if our starting-point resides in the forms, rather than the system, we shall be led to look for the means whereby the meaning and grammatical function of certain French forms evolved or were transformed in the creole. This can distort our point of view and immerse us in irrational hypotheses to account for *après*'s change of function in the creole.]

The situation described above calls for a theory of grammar which allows forms and functions to be manipulated independently. Models developed within the framework of generative grammar do allow for such analyses, for they provide a modular approach to the various components that define a grammar. In this approach, each module is independent from the others. Hence, phonological representations may be treated independently from the semantic and syntactic properties that define the functions of particular lexical entries. This general approach provides a tool to address the problem posed by Alleyne.

1.3 Linguistic theory

The last thirty years have seen a significant shift in the focus of linguistic theory from E(xternal) language to I(nternal) language. E-language stands for the neo-grammarians' and structuralists' view that a language is a habit system assumed to be overdetermined by the available evidence. I-language refers to the generativists' view that a language is 'some element of the mind of the person who knows the language, acquired by the learner, and used by the speaker-hearer' (Chomsky 1986: 22).

While traditional accounts of the genesis of creoles have addressed the questions posed by their origin from the point of view of E-language, the account proposed in this book takes them up from the point of view of I-language. As Chomsky (1986: 3) puts it:

Generative grammar . . . is concerned with those aspects of form and meaning that are determined by the *language faculty*, which is understood to be a particular component of the human mind. The nature of this faculty is the subject matter of a general theory of linguistic structure that aims to discover the framework of principles and elements common to attainable human languages; this theory is now often called *universal grammar* (UG) . . . UG may be regarded as a characterisation of the genetically determined language faculty. One may think of this faculty as a *language acquisition device*, an innate component of the human mind that yields a particular language through interaction with presented experience, a device that converts experience into a system of knowledge attained: knowledge of one or another language.

Since creole languages are natural languages, it must be the case that the properties of creole languages follow from the more general properties of the cognitive system which are pertinent to the configuration of natural languages and to the transmission/acquisition of language in general.

The theory of principles and parameters (see Chomsky 1981, 1986 and related work) holds that natural languages are basically similar. In this model, those properties of language that are universal are formulated in terms of universal principles of grammar. The properties that are language-specific are hypothesised to be located in the lexicon, the syntactic parameters and the interpretive component of the grammar. This model constitutes a most useful tool for addressing the problem of creole genesis for it provides us with a principled division between language universals and language-specific features. Thus, on this approach, universals of language will be manifested in creoles in the same way as in any other natural languages. What is specific to a particular creole will be found in the components of the grammar that allow for variation between languages. Thus, using such a model provides us with a tool to identify areas where the creole can diverge from or resemble its source languages. A comparison of the language-specific features of a particular creole with corresponding features in its contributing languages should tell us the source of those features. Likewise, this model provides us with a tool to address the problem of variation between creoles.

The mentalist approach to grammar and lexicon allows for the manipulation of semantic and syntactic information independently of phonological representations, and it provides us with the appropriate tool to discuss transmission/acquisition in contexts of creole genesis in terms of the transmission/acquisition of grammar in spite of the fact that, in these cases, a new language has been created.

Finally, the mentalist approach to grammar and the lexicon defines the object of inquiry (and hence, the methodology) with regard to a creole language as follows: (1) What does a creole speaker know about the grammar and the lexicon of his/her language which enables him/her to produce and understand utterances in this language? (2) Abstracting away from the phonological representations of the lexical entries of the various languages involved in the genesis of a creole language, how does this knowledge compare with the knowledge speakers of the creole's source languages have of their grammars and lexicons? These two questions constitute the central core of the research reported on in this book.

1.4 The hypothesis

The general hypothesis tested by the research reported on here is that the creators of a creole language, adult native speakers of the substratum languages, use the properties of their native lexicons, the parametric values and semantic interpretation rules of their native grammars in creating the creole. Creole lexical entries are mainly created by the process of relexification.⁶ Two other processes fed by the output of relexification, dialect levelling and reanalysis, also play a role in the development of the creole (see Koopman and Lefebvre 1981; Lefebvre 1984, 1993a; Lefebvre and Lumsden 1994b; Lumsden and Lefebvre 1994).

Relexification is a mental process defined as follows by Muysken (1981a: 61): 'Given the concept of lexical entry, relexification can be defined as the process of vocabulary substitution in which the only information adopted from the target language in the lexical entry is the phonological representation.' In testing the role of relexification in creole genesis, we have adopted the strong position that all the lexical entries listed in the lexicon could, in principle, undergo relexification (see e.g. Lefebvre and Kaye 1985–9 Projects; Brousseau, Filipovich and Lefebvre 1989; Lefebvre and Lumsden 1989a). Thus, based on a theory of the lexicon which, in addition to listing major category lexical items, lists functional category lexical items, productive derivational affixes and idiosyncratic expressions such as unpredictable compounds (see e.g. Lieber 1980, 1992), all these lexical entries⁷ should, in principle, undergo relexification, within the limits imposed by the definition of the process (see chapter 2). This book presents evidence that all these types of lexical entries do, in fact, undergo relexification. The relexification hypothesis predicts that the lexical entries of the creole will have the semantic and syntactic properties of the corresponding lexical entries in the substratum languages and phonological forms derived from phonetic strings found in the superstratum language. To a great extent, this is exactly what we do find.

The idea that relexification plays a role in pidgin and creole genesis is not a new one. For example, Stewart (1962), Whinnom (1977), Voorhoeve (1973) and others have long claimed that this is so. At one point, Muysken (1981a: 77) also proposed that relexification plays a role in the formation of these languages: 'If it is the case that the Caribbean creoles show numerous African survivals in their syntax and semantics, then I think we can argue that it is not interference which led to these survivals, but relexification.'⁸

The research presented here has gone further than previous studies in several ways. First, our research has improved the formal characterisation of how superstratum data are processed in relexification (see chapter 2). Second, our theory provides a clear statement of how relexification applies in the case of functional category lexical entries and derivational affixes. Such a theory has never been proposed in the past, for the general assumption was that functional categories and derivational affixes do not undergo relexification. For example, Muysken (1988a: 15) claimed that functional lexical entries do not undergo relexification. '[Functional categories] do not have a meaning outside the linguistic system that

they are part of, since their meanings are paradigmatically defined within that linguistic system. So when you relexify a system of function words, automatically the semantic organisation of the target language comes in, and the result is at best a compromise between source and target language systems.' Muysken (1988c) also claimed that affixes and clitics may not undergo relexification either. This view is compatible with a theory of the lexicon where functional category items do not constitute lexical entries. On this approach to the lexicon, the functional category lexical items of a creole must be hypothesised to have evolved through reanalysis only, as is extensively discussed in Lefebvre (1984). In a theory where functional category items and derivational affixes are listed in the lexicon, however, such lexical entries are, in principle, eligible for relexification. The third difference between this project and previous research is that we were able to gather the resources to test this hypothesis from a global perspective (see chapter 3). To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time in the history of creole studies that such a large enterprise has been undertaken.

It is claimed here that, in creole genesis, the process of relexification is used by speakers of the substratum languages as the main tool for acquiring a second language, the superstratum language. The account proposed in this book is a further development of the second language acquisition theory of creole genesis (see Lefebvre and Lumsden 1989a). For example, Alleyne (1971, 1981), Schumann (1978), Valdman (1980), Andersen (1980), Mufwene (1990), Thomason and Kaufman (1991), and Chaudenson (1993) have proposed that pidgin/creole languages constitute a crystallised incomplete stage of second language acquisition. Without relexification, however, this approach to creole genesis does not explain why creole languages have crystallised in the way they have (see Lefebvre 1984, to appear a; Lefebvre and Lumsden 1989a). It is argued that the relexification hypothesis does explain why creole lexicons reflect the properties of both their superstratum and substratum source languages in the way they do.

By definition, relexification is a mental process that is available to speakers who are in possession of a mature lexicon. The relexified lexicons constitute the first instantiation of a new language: the early creole. Hence, according to the relexification hypothesis, a creole is not created by children who are deprived of a model for language, as is advocated by Bickerton (1981, 1984). Rather, it is created by speakers who already have a mature lexicon. This claim is compatible with the fact that the lexical entries of the relexified lexicons reproduce the semantic and syntactic properties of the substratum languages. On the basis of both historical and linguistic facts involving the genesis of Haitian creole, it is argued that creole languages must be created by adult speakers with a mature lexicon.

On the one hand, relexification is a mental process and hence it is an individual activity. On the other hand, situations where creoles are created typically involve several substratum languages. Consequently, and as has been pointed out by Lumsden and Lefebvre (1994), the new lexicons may present differences which, by hypothesis, should reflect the differences between the original lexicons.

After more than two hundred years of independent evolution, and because of dialect levelling (see below), the differences between these lexicons might not be as great as they were in the early creole. Some of these differences, however, appear to have been maintained, since they can be observed when comparing modern Haitian with the lexicons of its substratum languages. Examples of such cases will be presented in several chapters of this book.

By its very nature, relexification cannot be the only process involved in the formation of a creole, even a radical creole. First, as has been observed in Lefebvre and Lumsden (1994b), relexification applies in creole genesis when speakers of the substratum languages are targeting the superstratum language. When these speakers stop targeting the superstratum language and start targeting the relexified lexicons, that is, the early creole, they are no longer using this process. Second, as was also pointed out in Lumsden and Lefebvre (1994), since situations where creole languages are formed typically involve several substratum languages, the lexicons produced by relexification in the context of creole genesis are not necessarily uniform. Thus, when language learners begin to target the language of their own community (the early creole), some compromises may be required to reconcile these variants.

The process of dialect levelling, observed in dialect contact situations (see e.g. Domingue 1981; Trudgill 1986; Siegel 1995, to appear), is proposed to account for the compromises that speakers of different relexified lexicons may have to make in creating a new language (see Lumsden and Lefebvre 1994). The proposal that dialect levelling plays a role in the development of pidgins and creoles has existed in the literature for some time (see e.g. Mühlhäusler 1980; Mufwene 1990, 1993a; Harris 1991; Siegel to appear). The originality of our proposal (Lumsden and Lefebvre 1994) lies in the claim that, in this case, dialect levelling operates on the variation resulting from the relexification of the various substratum lexicons. Several examples of the process will be provided throughout this book.

It is further hypothesised that reanalysis – a mental process whereby a particular form which signals one lexical entry becomes the signal of another lexical entry – which is observed in cases of regular linguistic change (see Lightfoot 1979), plays a role in the development of a creole (see e.g. Lefebvre 1984; Koopman and Lefebvre 1981; Lefebvre and Lumsden 1994b). Again, the idea that reanalysis is involved in creole development is not new (see e.g. Sankoff and Laberge 1973; Washabaugh 1975; Valdman and Highfield 1980; Mühlhäusler 1986a; Rickford 1987; Foley 1988; Romaine 1988; Sankoff 1990, 1991; Baker and Syea 1996). The originality of the proposal developed in the course of this research (see Lefebvre and Lumsden 1994b) lies in the claim that, in the early creole, reanalysis assigns a phonological form to a lexical entry produced by relexification (see chapter 2). The formal account that is proposed will be shown to resolve the paradox observed in the literature (see e.g. Mühlhäusler 1986a, 1986b; Mufwene 1990; Sankoff 1991) to the effect that substratum languages may influence a creole even when they are no longer in use in the community where it is developing.

The proposal advocated in this book thus argues that three major processes are involved in the formation of creole lexicons: relexification, dialect levelling and reanalysis. It is argued that relexification produces the input that feeds the other two: dialect levelling and reanalysis. As for the syntax, it is hypothesised that, in creating the creole, speakers of the substratum languages use the parametric values of their own grammars. This predicts that the creole should pair with the substratum languages when they differ from the superstratum. To a great extent, this prediction will be shown to be borne out by the data.

In particular grammars, there are facts related to semantic interpretation which are independent of lexical entries and of the parametric options relevant to the syntax. The semantic principles governing the concatenation of simplexes into productive compounds or of affixes with bases, or the semantic interpretation data associated with specific constructions (e.g. cleft constructions) are examples in point. It is argued that in these cases, as well, the creole patterns on the model of the substratum grammars rather than on that of the superstratum, showing that its creators use the semantic principles of their own grammars in creating the new language.

It is often assumed that creolisation involves a break in transmission. This is the position advocated by Bickerton (1981, 1984), who claims that creole languages emerge in situations where children lack sufficient data to acquire the language that they are exposed to. Thomason and Kaufman (1991: 152) have claimed that creole languages 'resulted from a sharp break in transmission' and that 'they did not arise through any sort of direct transmission'. While I fully agree with these authors that creole genesis involves a break in the transmission of language, my hypothesis is that there is no break in the transmission of semantic and grammatical properties when these are looked at from the perspective of a given creole's substratum languages. Relexification produces a new language, the creole. In this new language, the phonological representations of lexical entries are derived from superstratum forms, but their semantic and syntactic properties are derived from the corresponding lexical entries in the substratum languages. The adult native speakers create a creole on the basis of the properties of their own lexicon and grammar through relexification, on the one hand, and by using the parametric values of their own grammar, on the other, and they speak this new language to their children. The first generation of children exposed to the incipient creole deduce the properties of the lexicon and grammar they are exposed to on the basis of the data that they are presented with, just as in any other case of first language acquisition. What they learn, then, is what they are exposed to: the properties of the relexified lexicon and the parametric values of the early creole. In the view advocated in this book, this explains why, after more than two hundred years of separation between the substratum languages and the creole, they can still be argued to share semantic and syntactic properties.

Finally, as has been pointed out in Lefebvre and Lumsden (1994b), like any other language, a new language created as described above may innovate. In this book, innovations will be referred to as cases of independent development.

1.5 The scope and limitations of this book

The aim of this book is to document the role of relexification, reanalysis and dialect levelling in creole genesis, to show how parametric values are set in this context, and to document how semantic interpretation is established. This is done on the basis of Haitian data. Due to space limitations, I cannot cover all the material available, so I have chosen to limit myself to the most controversial cases: functional (and functional-like) categories, the syntactic properties of verbs, derivational affixes, the principles governing the concatenation of morphemes, and syntactic parameters. The remainder of the available data (e.g. major category lexical entries and phonology) will be discussed elsewhere.

The question of how these processes are implemented in everyday life (given new arrivals of slaves over several decades, etc.) is not discussed here (see Durie *in progress*, for a discussion of this topic). The claim that the incipient creole is created by adult native speakers of the substratum languages does *not* entail that children have no role to play in creole genesis. I assume that, as in other situations of linguistic change, children play an important role in the development of creoles. I refer the reader to the insightful work of G. Sankoff and her associates for a thorough discussion of this issue based on case studies of ongoing changes in Tok Pisin (see e.g. Sankoff 1990, 1991; Sankoff and Laberge 1973). The processes identified above as playing a role in the genesis and development of pidgin/creole languages take place in communities and, hence, they interact with the social components which define the features of these communities. Although social factors are not discussed here, I assume that they interact with linguistic processes (particularly dialect levelling) in a way similar to that described in Labov's (and his associates') meticulous work on the interplay of linguistic and social factors in linguistic communities (for an extensive discussion of this point, see also Jourdan 1985 and Siegel *to appear*).

The book is organised as follows. Chapter 2 provides a formal definition of the processes hypothesised to play a role in creole genesis: relexification, dialect levelling and reanalysis. It shows how these processes apply in other cases of language genesis and language change and how they apply in the specific context of creole genesis. It also provides a definition of parameters and how parametric values are hypothesised to be set in creole genesis. Finally, this chapter ends with a discussion of how the concatenation of morphemes is hypothesised to apply in creole genesis.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology developed to test the hypothesis using Haitian creole. Since any account of the genesis of Haitian must be compatible with the external factors that prevailed at the time the creole was formed, the research included a historical study, designed to establish when Haitian creole was formed and the characteristics of the Haitian population during that period. This chapter starts with a summary of the major findings of the historical research. It discusses the typological features of the languages spoken in Haiti at the time the creole was formed and the issue of the French data the

African population in Haiti was exposed to. The linguistic test of the hypothesis rests on a detailed comparison of the lexicons and grammars of a given creole with those of its contributing languages. This chapter reports on the linguistic test we were able to make and discusses the database used for the research.

The second part of the book presents the results of an extensive comparison of the lexicons and grammars of Haitian and its contributing languages. Chapters 4 to 8 discuss the properties of the functional category lexical entries involved in Haitian nominal and clausal structures. The data presented in these chapters support the claim that relexification has played a major role in the genesis of Haitian creole. Furthermore, they show that both *functional* and *lexical* items have been relexified in the process of creating Haitian. Some cases of reanalysis and dialect levelling will also be discussed. Chapter 9 discusses the syntactic properties of verbs. It is shown that, in this area of the lexicon as well, relexification can be argued to have played a major role. Chapter 10 addresses the question of whether derivational affixes undergo relexification and argues that, like other lexical entries, they do. In chapter 11, the concatenation of words into compounds is shown to follow the pattern of the substratum languages rather than that of the superstratum language. Chapter 12 shows that the parametric values of Haitian pair with those of the substratum languages and contrast with French. Cases of dialect levelling and reanalysis will be discussed throughout. Haitian data which do not follow from the relexification hypothesis will be pointed out, as will innovations. Finally, chapter 13 evaluates the general hypothesis on the basis of the data presented in this book and chapter 14 discusses the consequences of these findings.