Pidgins and Creoles

Ingo Plag

to appear in

Studying Processability Theory. A Textbook

*edited by*

Manfred Pienemann

and

Jörg-U. Keßler

Amsterdam: Benjamins

Note for the editors:

- All book-internal cross-references that still need to be checked and correctly specified are marked by ‘REF’.
- The bibliography is not fully consistent yet. This will be fixed together with the other final revisions.
- The spelling is American.
1. Introduction

Pidgins and creoles are languages that have emerged in situations of language contact where speakers of different languages had to communicate without being able to use a language that they had in common. Normally, in such cases of contact one of the languages involved in the contact is chosen as a basis for communication and the interlocutors quite naturally develop a simplified version of that language for their exchanges. These rudimentary languages are called pidgins and are second languages for all their speakers. They are - at least in their initial stages - characterized by a very restricted vocabulary and a very simple and variable syntax. This restrictiveness can be seen as a function of their limited use, for example in trade situations at the market, or for basic communication at the work place.

Below, you find a sample from the pidgin language Tok Pisin (spoken in Papua New Guinea), which I have transcribed and translated from the CD-ROM that accompanies Kortmann et al. (2004). The text is arranged in sets of three lines. On the first line of each triplet the text appears in near-phonemic, i.e. non-English, spelling. In such a spelling system the letter <a> stands for the sound /a/, <e> for an /e/-like sound, and so on. On the second line, I give the English source words in italics, with non-English source words and grammatical information given in parentheses. On the third line the reader can find an idiomatic translation into Standard English.

Tok Pisin (West Sepik dialect)

Mi laik stori long taim mi liklik iet na mi bin statim tok pisin.
me like story long time me little-little yet ? me been start-him talk pidgin
I like the story from a long time ago when I was still young and started to talk pidgin.

Mi bi...- papa bin stap long bus, em bin tich lo bus na mi bin gro lo bus.
me be papa been stop along bush him been teach along bush ? me been grow along bush
My father lived in the bush, he taught in the bush and I grew up in the bush.

Mi bin liklik iet, long eich long abaut faif, na mi bin statim tok pisin.
me bin little-little yet along age along about five ? me been start-him talk pidgin
I was still young, at the age of about five, and I started to talk pidgin.

Papa wantem mama save tok ples, tasol, mipla no sawe, kechim tok ples blo ol,
Papa want-him Mama (saber) talk place that’s-all me-fellow no (saber) catch-him talk place belong all
Papa wanted Mama to know the local language, but, we did not know, we had our local language
As is easy to see, the majority of lexical items in this pidgin are of English origin. The words have sometimes undergone striking phonological changes and simplifications, the verbs have mostly lost their inflectional endings, there seem to be no articles, and the vocabulary is also quite restricted (for example, there seems to be only one preposition long where English has several different ones). Since English provides most of the words for Tok Pisin it is called its ‘lexifier language’. The lexifier is usually the language with the higher social prestige in the contact situation, which is the reason why it is also called the ‘superstrate’, while the less prestigious languages are known as the ‘substrates’. Many pidgins have their origins in the times of colonization, with the consequence that their lexifiers are the languages spoken by the colonizers, i.e. Dutch, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. Pidgins based on non-European languages can, however, also be found (e.g. Fanakalo in southern Africa, which is based on Zulu). In many parts of the world it is common that numerous languages are spoken in a small area, and in such areas pidgins are often used on a daily basis and have an important function for their speakers.

Under special circumstances, pidgins may develop into fully-fledged languages, i.e. languages that are not only used for limited purposes (e.g. trade), but languages that are used for all purposes, including telling stories, raising and educating children, speaking to your lover or writing poetry. These languages are called creoles and the process of their emergence is called creolization. Creoles are the native language of a whole speech community, are a token of identity for their speakers and possess all ingredients of human languages, with a rich vocabulary, complex phonology and syntax, and everything else that native speakers of a language make use of in their daily lives. A typical setting in which creolization took place was the plantation society in the New World with large numbers of slaves speaking many different native languages, but eventually forming an essentially new society with its own new language, the creole.

To get an impression of such languages, have a look at the two sample texts presented below. One is an interview with a migrant worker taken from Huber’s (1999) book on Ghanaian Pidgin English (again there is an accompanying CD-ROM that contains the original sound file that interested readers can listen to). The other is an excerpt from a traditional folktale in Sranan, an English-based creole language spoken in Surinam, on the Caribbean coast of South America (in the transcription by Sebba 1995:149). The two languages show a more elaborate syntax than we saw in the Tok Pisin text from above (e.g. subordinate clauses and articles), but we also find structures that are similar to Tok Pisin, for example the lack of inflection.
Ghanaian Pidgin English

Afta de elekshen wi fo giv am - de man we i de fo top, dat dje dje rolins we i de fo top –
After the election we for give him the man who is at the top, that J J Rawlings who is at the top –
‘After the election we should give him – the man who is at the top, that J J Rawlings, who is at the top –
wi fo giv am tshans fo anoda fo jies. Mek wi si. Wetin? Biko i tel às se i de mek –
we for give him chance for another four years make we see what-thing because he tell us say he there make
‘we should give him a chance for another four years. Let us see. What? Because he told us that he made –
i giv ès development-development-development. Development tru-tru i dè develop fo de kontri for òs.
he give us development-id.-id. he there develop for the country for us
‘he gives us nothing but development. Truly, he develops the country for us.’
Jù dè hier àm? Bat onli se wan tin bi se i dè develop de kantri, den de pipu tu, hangri de.
you there hear him but only say wan thing be say he there develop de kantri then the people too hungri there
‘Do you understand? But only one thing is, (although) he develops the country, there is still hunger among the people.’
Laik hau à de laik dis. We dokta giv mi pepa se go tu hospitl go bai medisin. Mà parents a puo.
Just like myself. The doctor gave me a prescription to go to the hospital and buy medicine. My parents are poor.
‘Just like myself. The doctor gave me a prescription to go to the hospital and buy medicine. My parents are poor.’

Sranan

Wan dansi ben de. Dagu no ben habi krosi fu go dansi.
one dance been there dog no been have clothes for go dance
There was a dance. Dog had no clothes to go to the dance in,
Dan a leni wan bruku na Anansi. Ma di den go dansi,
then (3sg) lend one (broeken) (na) Anansi. (maar) this them go dance,
so he borrowed a pair of pants from Anansi. But when they went to the dance,
a bruku ben pikin fu Dagu. Te Dagu e dansi, a e bradi
(3sg) (broek) been (pequenho) for dog till dog (asp) dance (3sg), (asp) broad
the pants were too small for Dog. When Dog danced, he kicked out
en futu. A fosi tron, Anansi kari en tron na wan sey,
his legs. The first time, Anansi called him to one side,
You may have wondered why I included Ghanaian Pidgin text to illustrate how a creole may look like. The reason is that, although there is a terminological distinction between pidgins (as rudimentary second languages) and creoles (as fully-fledged first languages), there is no clear boundary between the two kinds of languages. For example, the pidgin/creole language Tok Pisin, the official language of Papua New Guinea, is spoken (to varying degrees) by most speakers as a second language, but also possesses communities of native speakers. It is used in newspapers and in parliament, and its structure and word stock is far from rudimentary. A somewhat similar case is Ghanaian Pidgin, that also shows more elaborate structure and lexicon and is on its way to becoming a creole. For the issues dealt with in this chapter, the distinction between creoles and more advanced pidgins is not crucial and I will therefore mostly use ‘pidgins and creoles’ or simply ‘creoles’ to refer to these languages.

These terminological problems aside, the really interesting question is how the structures that we find in pidgin and creole languages actually came about. For example, which mechanisms are responsible for the transformations that English has undergone on the way to Sranan, Ghanaian Pidgin or Tok Pisin? Why did Sranan lose verbal and nominal inflection on its way, how did it develop pre-verbal tense and aspect markers, and where do the phonological properties of this language come from? And, even more interesting, why is it that many pidgins or creoles share quite a number of properties, irrespective of their place of origin or the languages involved in the contact? Which mechanisms are responsible for the allegedly unmarked nature of many linguistic structures across pidgins and creoles?

In the field of creole studies there has been a long debate on these questions, and any approach that considers only one type of mechanism seems misguided. There is, however, a growing consensus that mechanisms of second language acquisition are important for the emergence of many of the properties we find in these languages (e.g. Kouwenberg & Patrick 2003, Lefebvre et al. 2006, Siegel 2008, Plag 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b). Plag (2008a) explicitly advocates what he calls the ‘interlanguage hypothesis’, which states that creole languages are conventionalized interlanguages of an early stage.

As we will see, important morphological and syntactic characteristics of pidgins and creoles can be nicely accounted for as originating in second language processing. In the following section we will apply Processability Theory to different domains in pidgin and creole grammar. First, inflectional morphology and, second, three types of syntactic constructions, i.e. basic word
order, question formation, and clausal negation. It will be shown that pidgins and creoles show clear traits of early interlanguages, which in turn can be taken as evidence that they emerge under the constraints of processability characteristic of early stages of second language acquisition. Insights from Processability Theory may thus help us to understand better the emergence and the typological characteristics of pidgins and creoles. The discussion will be based mainly on Plag (2008a, 2008b) and the interested reader is referred to these articles for more detailed discussion.

2. Inflectional morphology in pidgins and creoles

Until recently, it was widely believed that creoles do not have inflectional morphology, but this view is no longer tenable (see, for example, Plag 2005 for an overview). Although many of these languages may lack a significant amount of inflectional morphology, there are quite a few creoles that have nominal, verbal or adjectival inflection. Note that I adopt the traditional terminology that takes the terms ‘inflection’ (or ‘inflectional morphology’) to refer to bound morphemes expressing grammatical categories. Free grammatical morphemes such as the preverbal tense and aspect markers in many creole languages are thus by definition not instances of ‘inflectional morphology’.

The overviews in Holm (1988:95ff), Stolz (1989), and Baptista (2003) list numerous cases of inflectional morphology in creole languages. One can find, for example, plural or definiteness suffixes on nouns in Cape Verdian Creole or in Palenquero (Baptista 2003), while some French-based varieties offer long and short verb forms to mark tense or other distinctions (e.g. Veenstra 2003). Berbice Dutch and Fitzroy Valley Kriol (Australia) have aspectual suffixes (Kouwenberg 1994a, Hudson 1983, cited after Siegel 2008), Tok Pisin and other Pacific varieties have a suffixed transitivity marker (-im/-em in Tok Pisin, derived from English third singular and plural pronouns him/’em). A superlative suffix -st can be found in Negerhollands (Stolz 1989), and Luis (2007) shows that in three Indo-Portuguese creoles there are suffixes encoding four tenses and aspects with up to four conjugation classes.

How do these findings relate to second language acquisition and processability? If we want to investigate the kinds of morphosyntactic categories involved in creole inflection, it is very useful to distinguish between two types of inflectional morphology. The first is called ‘inherent’ inflection, the second ‘contextual’ inflection (e.g. Booij 1995). Inherent inflection is the kind of inflection that is not strictly required by the syntax, but has some semantic content and syntactic relevance. Examples are plural marking on nouns, comparative and superlative formation with adjectives, or tense and aspect suffixes on verbs. In contrast to this, contextual inflec-
tion is triggered by syntactic rules according to which one element in the sentence requires other
elements in the sentence to behave in a particular way. Subject-verb agreement is a case in point
because, the subject requires the verb to agree with the subject in number and person features.
Another example would be structural case assignment, where one element, for example a verb of
a preposition demands a certain case form of the dependent element (cf. kiss him/*he, or to
her/*she).

Why is this distinction relevant for creoles? Crucially, if creoles have inflection at all, the
inventory of the grammatical categories expressed morphologically in these languages shows a
very strong preference for inherent inflection. This fact has already been observed by Kihm
(2003:335), who writes that “creole languages exhibit little or no contextual inflection in com-
parison with the lexifier or substrate languages”. The creole facts thus raise the following ques-
tions:

- Why do creoles show so little inflection (in comparison to their respective lexifier lan-
guage)?
- Why do creoles lack almost entirely contextual inflection but preserve, if anything, inher-
ent inflection?

We will see that both questions can be answered if we look at the developmental stages of inter-
languages discussed in the previous chapters. We have seen (for example in chapter REF) that
plural marking on nouns occurs already at stage 2, while agreement within noun phrases (as in
[these\text{PLURAL} \text{books}\text{PLURAL}]\text{NP}) becomes possible only at stage 3, when intra-phrasal exchange of
grammatical information has become available. Subject-verb agreement occurs rather late, at
stage 5, since inter-phrasal information exchange is not available prior to this stage. Applying the
distinction between inherent and contextual inflection to the different stages of interlanguage
development, we can see that the complete lack of inflection characterizes stage 1, but may ex-
tend into the following stages, depending on which kind of inflection we are looking at. The
presence of inherent inflection is found from stage 2 onwards (e.g. with plural marking on bare
nouns), while the instantiation of agreement procedures or structural case assignment requires
the most advanced processing procedures and occurs therefore only at later stages.

Given the above insights into the nature of the processing of grammatical information in
speech production, the difference between contextual and inherent inflection can be conceptual-
ized as a matter information exchange. Contextual inflection (as in agreement or case assign-
ment) involves information exchange either between phrases or within phrases, while inherent
inflection does not presuppose information exchange between different constituents. Subject-
verb agreement and subject case assignment require, for example, an S-procedure, object case or
genitive case assignment requires information exchange across a phrasal boundary between head
and complement, and number or gender agreement within an NP requires intra-phrasal information exchange.

Now creoles seem to either lack inflection altogether, which is reminiscent of stage 1, or they display almost exclusively structures for which no information exchange between constituents is necessary. The prevalent kinds of morphosyntactic categories expressed inflectionally in creoles are plural marking on nouns, or tense and aspect marking on verbs, and these are typical cases of inherent inflection. On the assumption that SLA plays an important role in the emergence of creole languages, the observed facts can be nicely explained as effects of processability.

There are some problematic points, however, that seem to undermine the elegance of the processability explanation for the survival of inherent, but not of contextual inflection. First of all, there seem to be contemporary creole languages that do have certain kinds of contextual inflection. However, as argued by Plag (2008a), these cases can generally constitute developments that occurred long after creolization, i.e. at a stage where second language acquisition is no longer at issue as a possible source for these innovations.

A more serious challenge, however, comes from certain case assignment facts. Even if no creole marks structural case on full noun phrases, we know that at least some creole languages distinguish between object and subject pronouns, and these distinctions are not recent innovations. Furthermore, research in early interlanguage pronoun usage has shown that learners distinguish subject and object pronouns already at very early stages of their interlanguage development. Both facts seem to seriously undermine the idea that contextual inflection does not occur at early stages of interlanguage or creole development.

A closer look at the pertinent interlanguage research shows, however, that this is not the case. The distinction between two different sets of pronouns (that look like subject and object pronouns) occurs at an interlanguage stage where the learners can only produce sentences with canonical word order, i.e. very simple structures that look like subject-verb-object (SVO) or subject-object-verb (SOV). To use the terms ‘subject’ and ‘object’ (or ‘SVO’ and ‘SOV’) to describe these structures is in fact misleading since canonical word order involves a direct mapping of argument roles (agent, patient, etc.) onto the syntactic structures representing the respective participants (‘unmarked alignment’ see REF). In other words, at a stage where the notions of subject and object are not yet developed, we find interlanguage structures that look like SVO and SOV (the ‘canonical word order’ stage), with ‘S’ and ‘O’ standing here for thematic roles rather than grammatical functions. It is at this stage that one also already finds what looks like a case distinction on pronouns, but, as discussed in chapter REF, this distinction is a reflection of unmarked alignment and not comparable to structurally assigned case. What happens in creoles is that these patterns have become grammaticalized and now express a structural distinction be-
tween subject and object. The fact that this is the only case distinction that is more wide-spread in creoles together with the fact that it goes together with only SVO and SOV word orders in creoles (see below) is a direct reflection of the origin of these structures in the early interlanguages of the creolizers.

Let us summarize our main points so far. Creoles behave like interlanguages of an early stage in two respects. First, they largely lack inflectional morphology altogether, and second, if they do have inflection, they show mostly inherent inflection and largely lack contextual inflection. These otherwise strange facts can be accounted for under the assumption that the creole creators made use of the same mental processes as any second language learner does. In sum, the typology of creole inflection arises as the natural consequence of the operation of universal constraints on language processing and language acquisition, and exhibits the pertinent stages of interlanguage development resulting from the operation of these constraints.

3. Syntactic structures

Having explored the basic insights of Processability Theory with regard to creole inflectional morphology, I will now show how these insights may help us to understand better the cross-linguistic prevalence of certain types of structure in these languages. Furthermore, Processability Theory can shed some light on the issue of transfer, which has been a hot topic in creole studies and SLA alike (see chapter REF). We will see how Processability Theory can be used as a diagnostic tool to differentiate cases of transfer from cases of non-transfer in the emergence of certain creole structures.

3.1. Basic word order: SVO, SOV

Cross-linguistically, i.e. irrespective of L1 and L2, after an initial stage of exclusively formulaic or one-word utterances, L2 learners start producing predominantly sentences with what is known as ‘canonical word order’, i.e. SVO or SOV (cf. e.g. Håkansson et al. 2002:253). Using the terminology of Lexical Functional Grammar, Pienemann, Di Biase & Kawaguchi (2005) explain the learners’ initial behavior as the consequence of a fixed association between argument structure, functional structure and constituent structure, termed ‘unmarked alignment’ (2005:229, see also the discussion in chapter REF). This direct mapping does not require any language-specific processors or memory stores, which in turn allows the learner to produce target-like SOV or SVO sequences, even if their L1 does not have the respective constituent order. We know, how-
ever, also of learners that seem to transfer their basic SOV or SVO word order (see, for example, Odlin 1990 for an overview of some cases). This is possible also from a processability point of view since the L2 processor is already at a stage where it can (talking in LFG parlance) unify the pertinent lexical features, analogous to a corresponding process in L1, if available.

As shown in section REF, English learners of Japanese, for example, can produce SOV from the time they produce the first sentences, instead of necessarily transferring native SVO (as predicted by the Full Transfer Hypothesis, see section REF). For the problem of transfer vs. universal development this state of affairs means that neither SOV nor SVO word orders produced by SLA learners can be regarded as clear instances of L1 transfer, even if the L1 has the pertinent structure. Both word orders are processable at a very early stage of L2 acquisition.

Let us now look at creole languages and their basic word orders. (1) gives some examples, with the respective structures from the lexifiers and the substrate languages.

(1) a. Haitian (e.g. Lefebvre 1998, Lefebvre & Brousseau 2002)
   Haitian: S AUX VO
   Gbe: S AUX VO / OV
   French: S AUX VO

b. Sranan (e.g. Bruyn 2002:175)
   Sranan: S AUX VO
   Gbe: S AUX VO / OV
   English: S AUX VO, X S AUX V

c. Palenquero (e.g. Schwegler 1991, Bentley 1887, Laman 1936)
   Palenquero: S AUX VO
   Kikongo: S AUX VO
   Spanish: S AUX VO

d. Negerhollands (e.g. Muysken 2001)
   Negerhollands: S AUX VO
   Kwa: S AUX VO
   Dutch: V2nd, X AUX SOV

e. Berbice Dutch (e.g. Kouwenberg 1992, 1994a)
   Berbice Dutch: S AUX VO
   Eastern Ijo: SOV
   Dutch: V2nd, X AUX SOV
All creoles in our small sample have a word order that corresponds to ‘canonical word order’ in SLA. Again we see close parallels between early interlanguage structures and creole structures, and again we see that transfer cannot sufficiently explain the emergence of the respective structures. In many cases, lexifier and substrates share the same word order, but this alone is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for transfer, as argued above.

In cases of differences in word order between lexifier and substrates we find that the creole usually converges on S AUX V O. For example, Berbice Dutch emerges with SVO from a contact situation with verb second and OV word orders in the input languages, and Haitian and Sranan manifest SVO in a situation where the substrate allows also OV in certain constructions.

According to the interlanguage hypothesis we would also predict that some creoles have SOV. Even if rare, such creoles exist, as Nagamese shows (Bhattacharjya 2007:240):

(2) Kikatevla modu kha-yas-ile
Kikatema wine eat-PROG-PAST
‘Kikatemly was drinking wine’

Overall, the interlanguage hypothesis and Processability Theory in conjunction can nicely account for the fact that cross-linguistically in creole languages, we find basic word orders reflecting unmarked alignment, with no conclusive evidence in favor of transfer in this domain.

3.4. Question formation

As discussed in sections REF, question formation may involve quite different processing procedures, depending on whether there is *wh*-fronting or inversion in the language to be acquired. According to Processability Theory, *wh*-fronting only occurs at stage 3 of the processability hierarchy. The fronting (or ‘topicalization’) of constituents without accompanying inversion does not involve information exchange between different constituents within the clause, but only necessitates the availability of the phrasal procedure and of the topic position of the clause. At stage 3 this position is available (see again REF), but at this stage the topic position can only be filled by very specific lexical material, e.g. members of the classes ‘*wh*-word’ or ‘adverb’. Inversion of subject and verb is only possible at higher stages of SLA development because it involves more complex processing procedures at the sentence level. As shown in REF above, *wh*-movement accompanied by inversion is a stage 5 process. Cross-linguistically, inversion is rare, while the positioning of *wh*-elements in initial position is quite common.
How do creoles form questions? Veenstra (2007) finds that for yes/no-questions the majority of creoles in his sample chooses simply intonation to mark the interrogative status of the sentence, while some creoles, like Haitian Creole, Saramaccan Creole and Lesser Antillean Creole, employ initial or final question particles. With regard to wh-questions, the majority of creole languages have clause-initial wh-constituents, sometimes accompanied by a focus marker.

How does that fit with the interlanguage hypothesis? Simple intonation and wh-initial clauses correspond to early stages of SLA development irrespective of L1 and L2, which is in accordance with the interlanguage hypothesis. But how about initial or final question particles? Given that such particles equally do not necessitate information exchange at the sentence level, such particles can be processed already at the phrasal stage, similar to fronted wh-constituents. Interestingly, such structures would at the same time be candidates for early transfer under the Developmentally Moderated Transfer Hypothesis, as discussed in chapter REF. If we now take a look at those creoles that have such initial or final question particles, we find that the substrate languages involved do indeed have such particles, which may be taken as evidence for transfer.

To summarize the discussion of question formation, the pattern found in creoles can be nicely accounted for under the interlanguage hypothesis. Cross-linguistically, we find structures in creoles that correspond to early stages of SLA, with transfer effects in particular languages that are in accordance with the Developmentally Moderated Transfer Hypotheses. Crucially, question formation involving inversion, which would correspond to a very advanced SLA stage, seems not attested in creole languages.

3. 5. Negation

There are many studies available on clausal negation in creole languages, and often the question of substrate transfer is raised. For English-based pidgins and creoles, Schneider (2000:211) claims that a single pre-verbal negator no (or some other form of that function, one should add) is “practically universal”, and many creoles with non-English lexifiers show an analogous structure. On the one hand, this pattern has been suggested to be of substrate origin (e.g. Todd 1991: 21, Holm 1988: 172 for English), on the other hand this type of negation is cross-linguistically very wide-spread and seems to reflect a “natural universal tendency” among the world’s languages (Dahl 1979: 95). Preverbal negation with a single element is therefore one of the pertinent cases of seeming convergence of substrate substrate influence and ‘universal tendencies’. In the following, we will see that preverbal negation is also an example of a structure where these
‘universal tendencies’ in creoles can be accounted for as results of limited processing capacities in second language acquisition.

As shown in chapters REF, irrespective of their mother tongue, second language learners of English pass through four stages in the acquisition of negation. They start out with clause-external negation, followed by placement of a negator before the verb phrase, followed by the two-step acquisition of the complex interaction between auxiliaries and the negation marker not. Similar sequences exist with other L2s, irrespective of L1 and L2 (REF). In terms of Processability Theory, this acquisition sequence can be explained by, and follows from, the gradual build-up of the necessary processing procedures in the learner’s interlanguage. In particular, preverbal negation is located at stage 3 of the processability hierarchy (see REF), which is a relatively early stage.

Let us now turn to the creole situation and compare it to negation development in SLA. (3) lists negation patterns from a number of creole languages, with French, Spanish, English and Dutch as lexifiers, and various substrate languages.

   Haitian: NEG (AUX) V O
   Gbe: NEG (AUX) V O / V O NEG / NEG V O NEG
   French: NEG AUX NEG V O
   NEG V NEG O

b. Tayo: preverbal negation, postverbal pa with fixed expressions (Corne 1999: 58ff)
   Tayo: NEG AUX V O
   V NEG (se pa, kone pa)
   Kanak: variable w.r.t. position and means
   French: NEG AUX NEG V O
   NEG V NEG O

c. Sranan: preverbal negation with no
   Sranan: NEG (AUX) V O
   Gbe: NEG (AUX) V O / V O NEG / NEG V O NEG
   Sranan: mā ā mā ā
   English: AUX NEG V O
d. Negerhollands: preverbal negation with *no* (e.g. Muysken 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negerhollands</td>
<td>NEG (AUX) V O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwa</td>
<td>variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>AUX NEG O V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AUX O NEG V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

e. Palenquero: preverb. neg., clause-final neg., and a combination of both, with *nu* (e.g. Schwegler 1991, Bentley 1887, Laman 1936)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pal.</td>
<td>NEG AUX V O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kikongo</td>
<td>NEG V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>NEG AUX V O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>AUX V O NEG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>NEG AUX V O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

f. Berbice Dutch: sentence-final negation with *ka(n)* (e.g. Kouwenberg 1992, 1994b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berbice Dutch</td>
<td>VO NEG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Ijo</td>
<td>OV NEG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>variable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see from this small survey, preverbal negation is widespread among creoles, irrespective of the input languages involved. The fact that an interlanguage or creole pattern is found also in the substrate language(s) is no *a priori* evidence for transfer, especially in those cases in which the pattern in question manifests a universally attested developmental stage in interlanguage development, as is the case with preverbal negation. Hence, in none of the cases in (3a) through (3d) do we have find evidence of transfer, even if similar negation patterns may occur in the respective substrate language.

It is only with Palenquero and Berbice Dutch that transfer can be assumed, since in these languages we find patterns that go beyond pre-verbal negation, and which at the same time mirror structures we find in the substrate languages. Both Palenquero and Berbice Dutch exhibit sentence-final negation. The status of sentence-final negation in the processability hierarchy is not quite clear, but it seems reasonable to assume that it should be at the same level as sentence-final question particles, which can be assumed to be located at stage 3 (cf. again REF). Thus both preverbal negation and sentence-final negation instantiate a rather early stage of SLA. According to the Developmentally Moderated Transfer Hypothesis, these structures can therefore also be transferred already at stage 3, which gives an independent theoretical argument for a transfer analysis. There is additional evidence for transfer at least in Berbice Dutch, since the morphemes expressing negation in Berbice Dutch are either directly of Eastern Ijo origin or a combination of Dutch and Eastern Ijo morphemes (Kouwenberg 1994b:264).
In sum, the investigation of negation has shown that creoles primarily feature a structure that corresponds to early developmental stages of interlanguage development, i.e. pre-verbal negation. This is in accordance with the interlanguage hypothesis. The cross-creole attestation of preverbal negation (irrespective of the input languages involved in each particular case) can be explained in terms of the limited processing capacities available to the L2 learners at the time of creole emergence. Cases of alleged transfer, such as Palenquero and Berbice Dutch can receive independent psycholinguistic support under the assumptions of the Developmentally Moderated Transfer Hypothesis.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that the presence or absence of different types of morphology in interlanguages and creoles is the consequence of the availability of the necessary processing procedures. The scarcity of inherent inflection and the absence of contextual inflection in creoles is therefore readily explained if we assume that creoles are conventionalized interlanguages of an early stage. The investigation of three types of allegedly unmarked syntactic construction across creoles, i.e. basic word order, question formation, and clausal negation, has revealed that these structures are also naturally accounted for under the assumptions of Processability Theory. In addition, we were able to substantiate arguments in favor of transfer by offering independent evidence from processing, along the lines of the Developmentally Moderated Transfer Hypothesis.

The explanations put forward in the previous two sections raise the question, however, of whether there is independent evidence for the idea that creoles display features of early interlanguages, which in turn can be explained along the lines of Processability Theory. In other words, what do we know about creole languages that would support the idea that the creole-creators-as-second-language-learners did not advance any further in their interlanguage development?

Apart from processing, advancement in SLA is dependent on, among other non-linguistic factors, on sufficient input, the social context and motivation (see, e.g., Gass 2003, Siegel 2003, and Dörnyei & Skehan 2003 for overviews). It has been pointed out repeatedly that in many creolization situations there was a rather limited access to the lexifier language, hence even those speakers who would have been very much willing to learn the lexifier often did not have enough exposure to the language to acquire it to a more advanced degree. The second important set of factors that kicks in, and is probably more important than exposure or access to the superstrate, asre of a socio-psychological nature. Given the socio-historical circumstances of most creoliza-
tion situations, one can hardly imagine that the creolizers were especially keen on learning the language of their superiors or oppressors to perfection. In fact, scholars like Baker (e.g. 1994) have argued repeatedly that the creolizers did not see the lexifier as the language to be learned but only aimed at the creation of a means of inter-ethnic communication (see also Smith 2006). This process must have necessarily involved the acquisition of lexical material and also some structural properties of the superstrate, but not the acquisition of complexities of a more advanced kind, such as case marking or agreement morphology. Thus, the look at the socio-historical situations in which creolization took place would lead us to expect to find manifestations of early SLA stages rather than of more advanced stages.

Overall, Processability Theory provides good evidence for the idea that universal traits of SLA processing are chiefly responsible for the emergence of many creole structures in the domain of inflectional and syntactic structure. Insights from Processability Theory can help us to understand better the cross-linguistic similarity of creole structures, and also the provenance of language-particular structures in these varieties.

**Exercises**

1. The distinction between inherent and contextual inflection originates in morphological theory, where the distinction can help to better understand the structural properties of inflected words, or their behavior in language change and first language acquisition. Why is the distinction useful also for investigations of SLA? And how can the distinction be used to explain the properties of creole languages? Take the data from the Tok Pisin and Ghanaian Pidgin texts to illustrate your points.

2. First recapitulate the predictions of Plag’s interlanguage hypothesis (based on Processability Theory) for basic word order, question formation and negation in creole languages. Then check whether these predictions are borne out for Tok Pisin and Ghanaian Pidgin, using the above texts as your data base.
References


Bentley, W. Holman (1887) Dictionary and grammar of the Kongo language, as spoken at San Salvador, the Ancient capital of the old Kongo empire, West Africa. London: Baptist Missionary Society. (Republished 1967 by Gregg, Ridgewood)


Laman, K.E. (1936) Dictionnaire Kikongo-Français avec une étude phonétique décrivant les dialectes les plus importants de la langue dite Kikongo. Brussels. (Republished 1964 by Gregg, Ridgewood)


