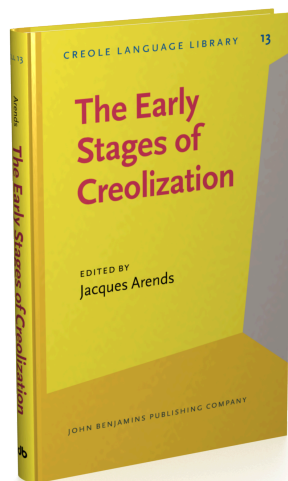


Introduction

Jacques Arends

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/cll.13.02are>



Pages ix–xvi of

The Early Stages of Creolization

Edited by Jacques Arends

[Creole Language Library, 13] 1996. xvi, 297 pp.

© John Benjamins Publishing Company

This electronic file may not be altered in any way. For any reuse of this material written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: www.copyright.com).

For further information, please contact rights@benjamins.nl or consult our website at benjamins.com/rights

Introduction

Jacques Arends
Universiteit van Amsterdam

During the last fifteen years creole studies has witnessed a remarkable growth of interest in the early stages of creolization. This interest has manifested itself in two different but interconnected directions, one linguistic—the study of early creole documents—, the other extralinguistic—the investigation of the sociohistorical and demographic matrix of creole genesis. Both directions are represented in this book, although the ‘intralinguistic’ papers are clearly in the majority, which probably reflects the current state of affairs in the field. I believe, therefore, that this volume—the first collection of papers devoted entirely to the early stages of creolization—offers a representative view of the type of research that is presently being done in ‘historical creolistics.’

This historical orientation in creole studies has come relatively late. After all (ignoring for the moment cases of ongoing creolization such as Tok Pisin and Nigerian Pidgin English), creole genesis is essentially a historical phenomenon. Nevertheless, for quite some time the field has been pervaded by a deeply rooted ahistoricism (cf Arends 1993). Since the 1950s, the study of creole genesis has been characterized by theoretical issues such as the monogenesis *cum* relexification hypothesis and the universals versus substrata debate. Also, in the late 1970s generative linguistics began to occupy itself with creole languages, combining abstract linguistic analyses with a disregard for the actual historical process that gave rise to these languages.

At the same time, however, historians of slavery and plantation societies have provided us with large amounts of information on the sociohistorical and demographic matrix of creole genesis. Curtin’s (1969) general survey of the slave trade has been followed up by case-studies such as Debiën (1974) on the French and Postma (1990) on the Dutch slave trade. Detailed studies of early plantation societies have been published by, among others, Petit Jean Roget (1980) on Martinique, Oostindie (1989), Van Stipriaan (1993) and Beeldsnijder

(1994) on Surinam and a number of scholars such as Dunn (1972) and Craton (1978) on the English Caribbean. These studies have made it possible for creolists to determine with much more precision the ethnolinguistic origin and the demographic profile of groups of Africans brought to the New World. Also the social and demographic structure of plantation societies at different points in time is now beginning to be revealed.

In addition to this, during the past decade and a half substantial archival sources for at least some creoles (Sranan, Negerhollands, Saramaccan) have been uncovered and begun to be examined. Especially for Sranan and NH large amounts of early documents are available. (For NH see Stein 1986; for Sranan and Saramaccan see Voorhoeve & Donicie 1963 and Stein & Perl 1995.) While the existence of such documents for Sranan and Saramaccan had been known among creolists for some time through Voorhoeve & Donicie's (1963) bibliography, the wealth of early NH sources, such as the so-called 'Slave Letters,' had gone largely unnoticed until Peter Stein began to scrutinize the contents of the Moravian Archives in Herrnhut (Germany) in the early 1980s. (As far as is known, the Slave Letters, written and/or dictated from the 1730s onward by black native speakers, form the earliest substantial native speaker material in any creole language.) Substantial collections of early texts in all three creoles have recently been published or are being prepared for publication: Arends & Perl (1995), a collection of 18th-century Sranan and Saramaccan documents; Van Rossem & Van der Voort (to appear), an anthology of both early and later Negerhollands texts; an edition of the Slave Letters is currently being prepared by Peter Stein and Hartmut Beck. These creole languages, however, are by no means the only ones for which early texts are available. Early sources in the French creoles have been published by Chaudenson (1981), while older Guyanese and Jamaican texts can be found in Rickford (1987) and in the twin volumes by D'Costa & Lalla (1989, 1990), respectively.

It is the combination of early language data and detailed extralinguistic information which provides creolists with a unique opportunity to study creole genesis from a historically realistic perspective. For the first time it is now becoming possible to determine with a sufficient degree of reliability which language groups were present when and where during the formation of particular creoles, thereby providing substrate research with a badly needed empirical foundation. Knowledge of demographic developments among slave populations through time makes it possible to get a more precise picture of the proportions of children versus adults and of locally born versus African-born during creole formation. Finally, detailed information on the sociohistorical context of

creolization may enable creolists to explore correlations between sociohistorical and linguistic developments (cf Labov 1994:24).

This does not mean, however, that there are no problems left in this type of research. For example, the question of the reliability and representativeness of early sources deserves some attention, especially their authorship and the question which lect they represent. In the case of 'Moravian sources' efforts should be made to establish whether and how the Moravian missionaries' linguistic activities have influenced the course of development of the creoles in question. In addition, further archival research may yield early creole data of a different and perhaps more reliable nature, such as court testimonies where the actual words spoken by native speakers are recorded (cf Roberts 1995 for an illustration of this approach for Pidgin Hawaiian and Hawaiian Creole English). As far as substrate research is concerned, one of the problems is that our knowledge of the relevant African languages is largely restricted to their 20th-century (or at best late-19th-century) varieties. However, the fact that for at least some relevant African languages, such as Gbe, Akan and Ga, earlier, i.e. 17th- and 18th-century, sources are available (Hair 1970) provides an opportunity for substrate researchers to strengthen the empirical basis of their investigations.

As to the contents of this book, the opening paper is a comparative historical study by Philip Baker on a number of features in seven pidgins/creoles, providing a good illustration of how early data from several languages may serve to lead to new insights, such as the finding that nativization does not seem to speed up the process of pidgin/creole formation. Also, from this type of research a number of linguistic criteria may be derived according to which particular pidgins/creoles can be placed on a scale of linguistic development. Such a procedure would be very welcome since it could serve to replace the custom of categorizing languages as either 'pidgin' or 'creole' on the basis of rather arbitrary, external grounds, such as whether a language is spoken natively or not. Finally, the paper also provides evidence in support of the gradual creolization hypothesis, advocated in the work of, among others, Singler (1986, 1990) and Arends (1986, 1989). Other papers in this volume providing evidence for gradual creolization are those by Van der Voort & Muysken, Singler, and Arends (but cf Plag's and Bruyn's contributions for (partly) different views).

Stein's paper, drawing on the Negerhollands Slave Letters, focuses on the effects the establishment of a writing tradition by the Moravian Brethren may have had on the development of the emerging creole, a subject which up to now

has received little attention, not only for Negerhollands but for other creoles as well with which Moravian missionaries have occupied themselves, such as Sranan and Saramaccan. The papers by Hinskens & Van Rossem and Van der Voort & Muysken draw on another type of early Negerhollands material, namely a number of interrelated late-18th-century Negerhollands translations of a so-called 'Gospel Harmony' (a compilation from the four Gospels) made by the Moravian missionaries. Both contributions present fully quantitative studies of early creole development, illustrating an approach which is methodologically more sound than is sometimes the case in this type of research.

As to Sranan, some of the earliest material was discussed as early as 1914 by Hugo Schuchardt in the introduction to his edition of Schumann's (1778) Saramaccan dictionary and other early Saramaccan texts. But it was not until Jan Voorhoeve started working on the Surinam creoles in the 1950s that this line of research was taken up again. Although Voorhoeve's publications in this area were largely restricted to the cataloguing (Voorhoeve & Donicie 1963) and editing of texts (Lichtveld & Voorhoeve 1958; Voorhoeve & Lichtveld 1975), he was instrumental in inspiring a younger generation of creolists to carry out diachronic investigations of the Surinam creoles. During the last fifteen years a number of dissertations in this area have been published, the most recent of which are those by Ingo Plag (1993) and Adrienne Bruyn (1995). Both Plag and Bruyn are represented in this volume with papers which are based on their doctoral research but merit independent publication. Both Plag's paper on the development of *taki* and Bruyn's on relative clauses, apart from providing a wealth of information on the development of Sranan, demonstrate the important role of grammaticalization processes in creolization.

Although the amount of early texts in Bajan is insignificant when compared to Sranan and Negerhollands, enough sources are available to allow Linda Fields to reconstruct in her paper the creole nature of early Barbadian speech. (A similar diagnosis was made independently by Rickford & Handler 1994 on the basis of partly identical data). Fields' paper provides an example of how early sources can serve to force a decision in a debate which up to now had to remain unsettled due to the absence of relevant data (Cassidy 1980, 1986; Hancock 1980).

The historical-demographic approach to creole genesis, introduced by Philip Baker in the early 1980s (Baker 1982a, 1982b) in the context of his 'Events Hypothesis' for Mauritian Creole, is represented here with papers by John Singler and Jacques Arends. Singler, who has been among the first to advance our knowledge of the demographics of Caribbean creole genesis,

presents a comparative study of the demographics of creole genesis in Martinique and Haiti. Among other things his paper shows the importance of the introduction of sugar production as a crucial event in the social matrix of creole genesis. Finally, Jacques Arends' contribution on the demographics of creolization in Surinam is a quantitative assessment of the demographic factors involved in the formation of Sranan.

These nine papers offer, I believe, a representative view of the research that is currently being done in the empirical investigation of creole genesis. Hopefully, they will serve to stimulate further work in this young but growing field.

References

- Arends, Jacques. 1986. "Genesis and development of the equative copula in Sranan". *Substrata versus universals in creole genesis*, ed. by Pieter Muysken & Norval Smith, 103–27. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
1989. *Syntactic developments in Sranan: Creolization as a gradual process*. Ph.D. diss. University of Nijmegen.
1993. "Towards a gradualist model of creolization". *Atlantic meets Pacific*, ed. by Frank Byrne & John Holm, 371–80. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Arends, Jacques & Matthias Perl. 1995. *Early Suriname creole texts: A collection of 18th-century Sranan and Saramaccan documents*. Frankfurt: Vervuert.
- Baker, Philip. 1982a. *The contribution of Non-Francophone immigrants to the lexicon of Mauritian Creole*. Ph.D. diss. University of London.
- 1982b. "On the origins of the first Mauritians and of the creole language of their descendants: A refutation of Chaudenson's 'Bourbonnais' theory". Philip Baker & Chris Corne, *Isle de France Creole: Affinities and origins*, 131–259. Ann Arbor: Karoma.
- Beeldsnijder, Ruud. 1994. *'Om werk van jullie te hebben.' Plantageslaven in Suriname, 1730–1750*. Ph.D. diss. University of Leiden. BSA 16, Department of Anthropology, University of Utrecht.
- Bruyn, Adrienne. 1995. *Grammaticalization in creoles: The development of determiners and relative clauses in Sranan*. Ph.D. diss. University of Amsterdam.
- Cassidy, Frederick. 1980. "The place of Gullah". *American Speech* 55.3–15.
1986. "Barbadian Creole—possibility and probability". *American Speech* 61.195–205.
- Chaudenson, Robert. 1981. *Textes créoles anciens*. Hamburg: Buske.
- Craton, Michael. 1978. *Searching for the invisible man: Slaves and plantation life in Jamaica*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

- Curtin, Philip. 1969. *The Atlantic slave trade: A census*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- D'Costa, Jean & Barbara Lalla, eds. 1989. *Voices in exile: Jamaican texts of the 18th and 19th centuries*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press.
- Debien, Gabriel. 1974. *Les esclaves aux Antilles Françaises (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles)*. Basse-Terre: Société d'Histoire de la Guadeloupe; Fort-de-France: Société d'Histoire de la Martinique.
- Dunn, Richard. 1972. *Sugar and slaves: The rise of the planter class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Hair, P. E. H. 1970. "The contribution of early linguistic material to the history of West Africa". *Language and history in Africa*, ed. by David Dalby, 50–63. New York: Africana.
- Hancock, Ian. 1980. "Gullah and Barbadian—origins and relationships". *American Speech* 55.17–35.
- Labov, William. 1994. *Principles of linguistic change. Vol 1: Internal factors*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lalla, Barbara & Jean D'Costa. 1990. *Language in exile: Three hundred years of Jamaican Creole*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press.
- Lichtveld, Ursy & Jan Voorhoeve. [1958] 1980. *Suriname: Spiegel der vaderlandse kooplieden*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Muysken, Pieter & Hein van der Voort. 1991. "The binding theory and creolization: Evidence from 18th century Negerhollands reflexives". *Development and structures of creole languages*, ed. by Frank Byrne & Thom Huebner, 145–58. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Oostindie, Gert. 1989. *Roosenburg en Mon Bijou: Twee Surinaamse plantages, 1720–1870*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Petit Jean Roget, Jacques. 1980. *La société d'habitation à la Martinique: Un demi-siècle de formation, 1634–1685* (2 vols). Thèse Paris VII. Paris: Librairie H. Champion.
- Plag, Ingo. 1993. *Sentential complementation in Sranan: On the formation of an English-based creole language*. Ph.D. diss. University of Marburg. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
- Postma, Johannes. 1990. *The Dutch in the Atlantic slave trade, 1600–1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rickford, John. 1987. *Dimensions of a creole continuum: History, texts, and linguistic analysis of Guyanese Creole*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Rickford, John & Jerome Handler. 1994. "Textual evidence on the nature of early Barbadian speech, 1676–1835". *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 9.221–55.

- Roberts, Julian. 1995. "Hawaiian court records as a source of old pidgin texts: An update on recent research". Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics, January 1995, New Orleans.
- Schuchardt, Hugo. 1914. *Die Sprache der Saramakkaneger in Surinam*. Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Afdeeling Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, vol 14, no 6. Amsterdam: Johannes Müller.
- Schumann, Christian Ludwig. 1778. *Saramaccanisch Deutsches Wörter-Buch*. MS.
- Singler, John Victor. 1986. "Short note". *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 1.141–45.
1990. "On the use of sociohistorical criteria in the comparison of creoles". *Linguistics* 28.645–59.
- Stein, Peter. 1986. "The documents concerning the Negro-Dutch language of the Danish Virgin Islands, St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John—Negerhollands—, in the Unitätsarchiv (Archives of the Moravian Brethren) at Herrnhut: A commented bibliography". *Amsterdam Creole Studies* 9.19–31.
- Stein, Peter & Matthias Perl. 1995. "The Sranan and Saramaccan documents in the Unitäts-Archiv (Archives of the Moravian Brethren) at Herrnhut: A commented bibliography". *Amsterdam Creole Studies* 12.49–72.
- Van Rossem, Cefas & Hein van der Voort. To appear. *Die Creol Taal: 250 years of Negerhollands texts*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Van Stipriaan, Alex. 1993. *Surinaams contrast: Roofbouw en overleven in een Caraïbische plantagekolonie, 1750–1863*. Leiden: KITLV Press.
- Voorhoeve, Jan & Antoon Donicé. 1963. *Bibliographie du négro-anglais du Surinam*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Voorhoeve, Jan & Ursy Lichtveld, eds. 1975. *Creole drum: An anthology of creole literature in Surinam*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

