

Preface

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Pages xi–xiii of

Pidgins and Creoles: An introduction

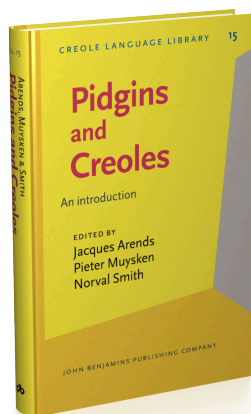
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Preface and acknowledgements

This is a new introduction to the linguistic study of pidgin and creole languages, written jointly by the creolists at the Department of Linguistics of the University of Amsterdam (with Ludo Verhoeven from Tilburg as a guest co-author). The contributing authors played an important role in the planning stage, when decisions were made about the themes to be emphasized.

The motivation for the book lies both in research and in teaching. From the perspective of research, we felt that enough new material is being uncovered and new insights are emerging to warrant a new book (realising full well that a few years from now some of the material presented here will be outdated). From the perspective of teaching we felt that the several excellent and very interesting books presently available either are insufficiently focused on the Atlantic creoles (Mühlhäusler 1986, Romaine 1988), which are emphasized in the present work, or are not designed as text books for a course (Holm 1988, 1989). The justification for a book on pidgins and creoles per se is clear of course. These languages are spoken by more than one hundred million people all over the world, and so cannot be ignored.

In addition to the Atlantic focus, the book has several other features worthy of note. First, pidgins are not treated as necessarily an intermediate step on the way to creoles, but as linguistic entities in their own right, with their own proper characteristics. In addition to pidgins, mixed languages are discussed in a separate chapter. Second, diversity rather than unity is taken to be the central theme. While every creolist will acknowledge the continuous excitement of little shocks of *déjà vu* when exploring the grammatical patterns of other creoles, careful analysis reveals as many differences as similarities. Third, the book does not demand a high level of previous linguistic knowledge, although theoretical concepts (particularly from the generative tradition) will often be introduced. We have taken care, however, to explain these concepts as they come up.

The book is structured in such a way that the eleven chapters in parts I and II, **General Aspects** and **Theories of Genesis**, constitute the core for presentation and discussion in the classroom, while the thirteen chapters in parts III and IV, **Sketches of individual languages** and **Grammatical features**, can form the basis for further exploration, student presentations, research for term papers, etc. They presuppose parts I and II, but the separate chapters can be read independently of each other. A concluding chapter attempts to draw together the different strands of argumentation, and the final chapter comprises an annotated language

list with background information on several hundred pidgins, creoles, and mixed languages. There are language, author, and subject indices. Two maps, locating the languages most frequently cited, are included.

Our major problem in this book was selection: of languages, topics, theories, constructions to be discussed. While trying to maintain some overall representativeness and topicality, we were guided most by the areas of expertise of the various specialists involved. Thus, a number of chapters are based on original fieldwork or archival data collected by the authors. We can only apologize for the topics and languages left out of consideration.

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- The Research Group on Language and Minorities of Tilburg University for Verhoeven;
- The P.J. Meertens Institute for Dialectology, Folklore and Onomastics for van der Voort and van Rossem.
- The Department of Linguistics, University of Amsterdam.

The material presented here was tried out in various courses at the University of Amsterdam. We are grateful for comments and suggestions from numerous students over the years.

In addition, we have greatly profited from the comments of Salikoko Mufwene and Philip Baker on individual chapters, and from Philip Baker, Frans Hinskens, Anthony Grant, Maarten Mous, and Thilo Schadeberg on the language list. Needless to say all remaining errors are our own.

A number of chapters are based on fieldwork. We want to mention the

- the Berbice River community, in particular the speakers of Berbice Dutch Creole
- the inhabitants of Annobon, Equatorial Guinea
- Swahili speakers in Lubumbashi, Zaire
- Saramaccans both in Paramaribo and in Amsterdam
- Papiamentu speakers from Aruba and Curaçao

Sranan literature in chapters 7 and 18 is quoted from Voorhoeve & Lichtveld (1975). An earlier and more detailed version of chapter 22 appeared in Adone & Plag (eds.) 1994. The Saramaccan passage in chapter 14 is from Rountree & Glock (1977). The English translation is adapted.

We are grateful, finally, for the encouragement and general comments by John Singler, co-editor of the Series. Peter Kahrel prepared the book for publication.