

Convergence and Congruence in Creole Formation

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Creole languages typically emerge in multilingual settings and result from the multiple, complex processes involved in language emergence and development. Among those processes, genuine transfer (Siegel, 2008), restructuring (Neumann-Holzschuh & Schneider, 2000) and feature recombinations (Mufwene, 2001; Aboh, 2015) have been observed to contribute to Creole genesis. This study focuses specifically on the particular process of language convergence whereby the similarities (the congruent features) that speakers perceive between the languages in contact are favored to participate in the emergence of a new language. I document the congruent forms that have been reported in the scholarly literature (Kihm, 1990; Corne, 1999; Kouwenberg, 2000, among many other studies) and build a cross-linguistic dataset of congruent morphemes and syntactic structures across 22 Creoles and 20 grammatical domains. This dataset provides the empirical foundation to a model of MATTER (form) and PATTERN (syntactic structures) mapping, showing how speakers of source languages can draw from the preexisting, congruent morphemes or syntactic structures in the linguistic ecology of the emerging Creole.

For each Creole congruent form I report on, I compare the Creole (1) to its superstrate (at the time of contact) (2) and substrate/adstrate (3). (1), (2) and (3) illustrate how the congruent passive marker *-(t)u* in Wolof may have converged with Middle Portuguese (MP) *-do /du/* to give rise to the passive marker *-du* in Upper Guinea Portuguese Creole (UGPC).

UGPC

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

MP

- (2) *foy levantado por Rey.* (Castro, 2000)
was raisePASS by King
'He was raised by the King.'

Wolof

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

The model of MATTER and PATTERN mapping identifies degrees of convergence along three dimensions: a) morphophonological, b) semantic, c) syntactic. Partial convergence occurs along any two of the three dimensions and full convergence along all three.