REVIEWS

Substrata Versus Universals in Creole Genesis (Creole Language Library, Vol. 1), ed. by Pieter Muysken and Norval Smith, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986, 315 pages, Hfl. 150, $76.05 CDN, $60.00 US, ISBN 9027252211/ 0-915027-90-9.

This first volume in the series Creole Language Library (general editor, Pieter Muysken) is a collection of fourteen papers resulting from a workshop held at the University of Amsterdam in April 1985. As the title indicates, sides are taken and defended, and the editors, Pieter Muysken and Norval Smith, act as moderators. The main topic is syntax, but there is one paper on semantics. Phonology is conspicuously absent.

The debate - a heated one - centers on a theoretical issue which has sparked more controversy than any other in recent creole language research. It has gained momentum especially since the publication of Derek Bickerton's 'language bioprogram hypothesis' in the debating forum of The Behavioral and Brain Sciences (1984). Bickerton hypothesizes that creole languages are largely 'invented' by children and show fundamental similarities, which derive from a biological program for language. An enormous range of disciplines and theories are involved: child language, second language acquisition, universal grammar, government-binding theory, psycho-linguistics, neuro-science, genetics, and on goes the list.

In the introductory chapter, the editors summarize the issues and critically evaluate each contribution. They present the argument as follows (p. 1):

> The universalist hypothesis claims, essentially, that the particular grammatical properties of creole languages directly reflect universal aspects of the human language capacity ... The substrate hypothesis claims, on the other hand, that creole genesis results from the confrontation of two systems, the native languages of the colonized groups, and the dominant colonial language, and that the native language leaves strong traces in the resulting creole.

Muysken and Smith also present certain aspects of Berbice Dutch (spoken along the Berbice River in Guyana), as good testing ground for substrate influence: in this creole, a large percentage of basic vocabulary (27%) derives from Eastern Ijo, spoken in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The editors suspect that there are both universal and substrate factors in creologenesis, in varying proportions, depending on precise social and historical circumstances. They thus side with Salikoko S. Mufwene, whose paper is entitled 'The universalist and substrate hypotheses complement one another.'

Muysken and Smith point out that 'the same debate rages now as it did one hundred years ago' (p. 2). This is just what Glenn Gilbert shows in 'The language bioprogram hypothesis: Déjà vu?.' Gilbert neatly sums up Bickerton's ideas and shows that they existed in germ in earlier writers such as Schuchardt and Hesseling. These writers are seen to be Darwinian in outlook, as against pre-Darwinians such as Schleicher. Gilbert gives us a clear understanding of the three currents of thought which have traversed Creole studies since 1880. These are 1) substratum influences; 2) biological laws; 3) societal constraints.

Bickerton combines 2) and 3) and sees them as the main evolutionary forces shaping Creoles, rather than 1). In a paper entitled 'Creoles and west African languages: A case of mistaken identity?,' he argues as follows (p. 25):

> One cannot prove similarity between two languages by simply producing superficially similar surface structures in those languages; one could only do so by producing grammars, or at least fragments of grammars, which were substantially identical.

Bickerton is careful to point out that 'a universalist account by no means rules out substratum influences' (p. 38). He repeats it is simply not enough to produce lists of superficially matching surface structures.

In the replies to this position, there is agreement on universals and the innateness of language capacity, but reluctance to dismiss entirely the possibility of substrate influence. We find either a strong endorsement of the substratist position (Koopman, Holm, Lefebvre, Alleyne), or some kind of intermediate position not excluding universalist or substrate influences but bringing in other factors (Mühlhäusler, Seuren & Wekker, Hancock, Arends, Mufwene, Baker and Corne, den Besten). We will give a brief indication of the main point made in each of these papers,

and comment on those which are more critical of Bickerton's stance regarding substrata.

Peter Mühlhäusler ('Bonnet blanc and blanc bonnet: Adjective-noun order, substratum and language universals') finds that for the development of Tok Pisin, it is the rule-changing ability of speakers, and consequent reinterpretation of structures, which seem to be important. He finds substratum and/or universal factor relevant in small areas only. Pieter Seuren and Herman Wekker, ('Semantic transparency as a factor in creole genesis') put forward the notion that creole languages are characterized by a tendency to maximize semantic transparency, that is, a property of surface structures enabling listeners to carry out semantic interpretation with the least possible effort. Ian Hancock, in his 'The domestic hypothesis, diffusion and componentiality: An account of Atlantic anglophone creole origins,' provides historiographical and linguistic evidence of the westward transmission of Guinea Coast Creole English during the seventeenth century. Jacques Arends ('Genesis and development of the equative copula in Sranan') shows that large-scale restructuring took place over three hundred years in this creole of Suriname. Salikoko S. Mufwene contends in his above-mentioned article that the universalist and substrate hypotheses are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Philip Baker and Chris Corne ('Universals, substrata and the Indian Ocean creoles') consider that universals and substrata, in varying proportions and at different times, must both have played a role in the development of the Indian Ocean Creoles. Hans den Besten ('Double negation and the genesis of Afrikaans') shows that processes of pidginization and creolization have played a role in the development of that language.

The last four papers in this collection - two on Haitian, one on Hawaiian, and one on Jamaican - present an array of cultural, historical and comparative data, as evidence in favour of substratum continuities. Hilda Koopman ('The genesis of Haitian: Implications for a comparison of some features of the syntax of Haitian, French, and West African languages') shows that West African languages share many properties among themselves, and secondly, that these properties (lexical and syntactic) tend also to be characteristic of Haitian. Clair Lefebvre ('Relexification in Creole genesis revisited: The case of Haitian creole') in a comparison of Fon and Haitian, says that the similarities are substantial enough to suggest that relexification was one of the processes involved in the formation of Haitian. She further points out that Haitian culture is related to Fon culture, and that the bulk of the slave population brought to Haiti came from the Gold Coast and the Slave Coast, where languages of the Kwa family predominated.

John Holm ('Substrate diffusion') says that the most compelling reason for rejecting Bickerton's data on Hawaiian is that it came from the wrong people speaking the wrong pidgin at the wrong time. He concludes that we cannot continue to dismiss the possibility that features in Hawaiian Creole English have their origin in the diffusion of Atlantic creole features that can in turn be traced to the influence of substrate African languages. Unfortunately, a bothersome point of chronology in Hawaiian Pidgin English makes things difficult to assess here.

In the last chapter in the book ('Substratum influences: Guilty until proven innocent'), Mervyn C. Alleyne suggests that the presence of substrate languages in the Caribbean should be accepted as a deeply rooted behavioural and cognitive competence. He supplies a great deal of linguistic and historical data, particularly from Twi-Asante, as evidence of substratum continuities in Jamaican Creole.

Coming back to Bickerton's major point - outlined above - it would have been nice to see somewhere a direct rebuttal along the lines of: 'What we have shown is precisely what Bickerton is asking for: substantially identical grammars of underlying systems, not just superficially matching surface structures.' I was left feeling 'a little in the air,' wondering precisely to what extent his opponents had demonstrated this, even though their arguments appear very convincing.

We must be grateful to the editors for an excellent job of summarizing and clarifying the issues, and providing a balanced point of view. One can only hope that present disagreements will eventually be ironed out; inevitably, of course, some wrinkles will remain. In the meantime, the message is: creoles provide important clues to language genesis, and cannot be dismissed as merely marginal, or unrepresentative of 'mainstream' language development.

REFERENCE

BICKERTON, Derek. 1984. 'The language bioprogram hypothesis.' The Behavioral and Brain Sciences 7:173-221.

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Focus on the Caribbean, ed. by Manfred Görlach and John A. Holm, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986, paper, ix, 209 pages, Hfl. 75, $38.03 CDN, $30.00 US, ISBN 90-272-44866-4.

Focus on the Caribbean is the eighth volume in the series Varieties of English Around the World edited by Manfred Görlach of Cologne University. The present volume is a collection of eleven essays, plus an Introduction by Manfred Görlach and John Holm. We are told on the back cover that half of the contributors are from the Caribbean region, and the other from Europe, Africa and the United States.

The Introduction contains an excellent summary of the contents of the volume. The main point of each paper is clearly presented and explained, and this proves a great aid in understanding the issues. In what follows we give a brief indication of the content of each paper, with quotations where appropriate. It must be pointed out that the order of the articles in Focus on the Caribbean is different from that given below. We regroup them so as to maintain a flow from those which are more purely linguistic (phonology, etymology and lexis, morpho-syntax), to those reaching into history and politics, language planning, sociology and psychology.

In 'Tracing elusive phonological features of Early Jamaican Creole,' Barbara Lalla attempts reconstruction with the aid of written documents from the eighteen and nineteenth centuries. She concludes that substantial evidence exists for consonant structure and phonotaxis, less for vowels, and not surprisingly, still less for suprasegmental features.

Frederic Cassidy, in 'Etymology in Caribbean Creoles,' discusses the problems besetting researchers who attempt to work out Caribbean creole etymologies: 'one has to deal with half a dozen European languages and dozens or even hundreds of African languages not to mention a number of American Indian languages, and possibly some others as well.' (p. 134). Velma Pollard, ('Innovation in Jamaican Creole. The speech of Rastafari') describes a speech variety that reflects the religious, social, cultural and philosophical positions of the movement named after Ras Tafari, the early title of Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia. The innovations are grammatical and lexical. With regard to Jamaican Creole pronouns, 'I and I and I replace the JC mi, ... while I and I and di I replace you and him.' (p. 158). Furthermore, the initial sound of any word may be replaced

by the sound of 'I': Imes = times, I-ceive = receive, I-hold = behold. Consequently, Rasta Talk has been called 'Iyaric,' or 'I-lect.' The author relates these changes to elements of Rastafarian philosophy. Other examples illustrating the formation of new words are: higherstand for understand, freenana for banana (indicating the abundance of this fruit in Jamaica), backative = stamina, strength.

There are three papers on morpho-syntax: 'The structure of tense and aspect in Barbadian English Creole' by John D. Roy; 'Notes on durative constructions in Jamaican and Guyanese Creole' by Salikoko S. Mufwene; and 'Evidence for an unsuspected habitual marker in Jamaican' by Pauline Christie. Roy demonstrates the basically creole structure of the rural Bajan, against the view that it is a regional non-standard variety of English. Mufwene maintains that the Jamaican and Guyanese progressive markers de/da and a most likely derive from English there and a- (the latter is a common colloquialism in the English-speaking world, e.g., 'she's a-comin'!). Mufwene seeks to show the weakness of Afrogenetic theory in trying to explain the origin of these preverbal markers, and also shows that historically, the progressive construction was essentially locative (cf. ashore, aside, aboard, abed). Pauline Christie cites examples where this same preverbal particle, a, marks habitual aspect, whereas previous analyses failed to uncover this use.

Useful background is provided by the first paper in the collection: 'The spread of English in the Caribbean area' by John Holm. Over three and a half centuries are covered, from 1600 to the present, and maps showing movements of English-speaking settlers from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries are most helpful. There are many well known English-speaking territories in the Caribbean, but it is seldom realized that English-based creoles also exist in Suriname, eastern Nicaragua and Honduras (the Miskito Coast), the Dominican Republic (Samaná Peninsula), and the Bay Islands off the coast of Honduras: these are some of the fascinating facts brought to light in Holm's historical survey. Central America in fact figures prominently in John Lipski's article entitled 'English-Spanish contact in the United States and Central America: sociolinguistic mirror images?'. The mirror image in question can be 'seen' by citing one of the twenty examples Lipski so abundantly provides (pp. 199-202): in the English speech of speakers of Central American English, interference from Spanish is lexical and syntactic; in the English of Mexican Americans living in the southwest United States (California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas) such interference is phonetic. Conversely, (here comes the mirror image), in the Spanish speech of Central American English speakers, interference from English is phonetic, but in the Spanish of Mexican American

speakers, it is lexical and to a lesser extent syntactic. Lipski contends that these different bilingual configurations should be taken into account in the design of research projects, and particularly when addressing questions of standardization and education policy.

These very questions are addressed by Hubert Devonish in a different context, that of former British colonies such as Jamaica, Grenada, and Guyana. His paper is entitled 'The decay of neocolonial official language policies. The case of the English-lexicon Creoles of the Commonwealth Caribbean.' This issue is far too complex to be summed up briefly. Suffice it to say that Devonish makes a very strong case for the elevation of Creole to the status of official language, with English being taught in the schools as a second language: this, he feels, is necessary for efficient communication between public officials and the masses, and for efficient education on a wide scale. He is supported by Marlis Hellinger who gives us a paper 'On writing English-related Creoles in the Caribbean.' Various writing systems are compared and evaluated, and Hellinger concludes that spelling should be related to the phonemic system, and compromises made so that the same orthography could be used for all English-related Caribbean creoles. The phonemic system used by Cassidy and Le Page in the Dictionary of Jamaican English serves as a model in this regard. Education, sociology and psychology figure in Dennis Craig's 'Social class and the use of language: A case study of Jamaican children.' In this study, Craig compares differing communication styles in low and high social-class groups, and finds that they are both equally effective.

A wide range of topics is covered in this collection. Much is quite specialized, but there is also material for the general reader interested in the affairs of the Caribbean, for example the historical survey by Holm, and the insight given by Devonish into the problems of the region. This is recommended reading for those interested in the varied development of the English language around the world.

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