CREOLIZATION

OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

ROBERT CHAUDENSON

REVISED IN COLLABORATION WITH
SALIKOKO S. MUFWENE

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Creolization of Language and Culture

Creolization of Language and Culture is the first English edition of Robert Chaudenson's landmark reference *Des îles, des hommes, des langues*, which has also been fully revised.

Focusing on major French Creoles of the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean, Chaudenson argues against traditional accounts of creole genesis and for a more sophisticated alternative that takes full account of the peculiar linguistic and social factors at play in the European settlement colonies.

This is an accessible book which makes an inspiring contribution to the study of pidgin and creole language varieties, as well as to the development of contemporary European vernaculars outside Europe. Key features include:

- Analysis of current debates on the development of creoles
- Discussion of many aspects of creole cultures, including music, medicine, cuisine and folklore
- Translation of all French sources, from which Chaudenson quotes extensively

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Robert Chaudenson

Revised in collaboration with Salikoko S. Mufwene

Translated by Sheri Pargman, Salikoko S. Mufwene, Sabrina Billings and Michelle AuCoin

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Editor's foreword

Creolization of language and culture is more than a translation of Robert Chaudenson's *Des îles, des hommes, des langues* (1992). It is an improved edition, providing more information (some of it updated to reflect current debates on the development of creoles) in a more accessible style. This is one of the reasons why the title of the present edition is not a literal translation of the original – another is to make clear that the book covers more than the linguistic aspects of the creole worlds. However, a number of practical considerations, not least space limitation, have prevented us from incorporating all the improvements into the main text, though all the more substantive additions have been so incorporated. Some corrections or additions are in the form of notes, a subset of which are clearly identified as contributions of the 'Editor'.

Some readers will ask, Why publish this English edition of *Des îles, des hommes, des langues* (1992) almost a decade after the French edition? There are a number of reasons. The first is that Chaudenson's book deserves all the attention it has received among Francophone creolists, students of creolization in other cultural domains, and students of naturalistic second-language acquisition. Unfortunately, however, most such experts outside France and its former colonies have not been able to read the French original, and their references to it typically have been based on citations in other English publications. Among the few who have read it in the original French, some seem not to have understood much of Chaudenson's complex prose and have missed a great deal of the wealth of information that *Des îles, des hommes, des langues* provides. The poor, virtually unedited presentation of the French edition did not help either, notably because of the absence of an index to facilitate returning to specific passages that would interest different users.

To maximize the intelligibility of the book, we have also translated all the French sources from which Chaudenson quotes extensively; the reader can always tell where this has been done from the apparent inconsistencies between the French source titles and the English texts of the quotations. On the other hand, we have made every effort to identify the English originals of French translations that Chaudenson (1992) also quotes. In the interest of preserving the original nuances of meaning, we now quote from these original publications. The only exceptions are Bateson (1977) and Ligon (1684), the original English

versions of which were not accessible to us; here we have had to translate the quotations back from French and take the risk that these retranslations may not preserve the original meaning intact.

Another reason for producing *Creolization of language and culture* is that Chaudenson's contributions to advancing knowledge of the development of creoles go beyond what has typically been presented in any book of this scope since the beginning of genetic creolistics. Never before has a book attempted to show that the development of creole vernaculars is not isolated from the development of other aspects of creole cultures, such as cuisine, folk medicine, music, and oral literature. Chaudenson is quick to observe that, in terms of the relative weight of contributions from different cultural (including linguistic) backgrounds, what took place in one cultural (sub)domain is not necessarily paralleled by creole systems that emerged in other (sub)domains. While congruence typically played an important part in the selection of features into the creole systems, ecology always played the most critical role: that of determining the model to be followed and the timing of when and how other influences, external to the model, could prevail or be incorporated. In the end, what emerged has always been something new, (somewhat) different from both the model and the other influences. Perceptive readers will notice that the *matériaux de construction* (roughly, 'building materials') often had to be customized to the larger system in which they would fit.

Making good and useful sense of Chaudenson's approach and hypotheses involves embedding the development of creole vernaculars and other cultural systems into the right colonial social and economic histories, and realizing that nothing happened overnight. Things proceeded gradually. At varying speeds, different territories proceeded from homestead societies to plantation societies, and later on to post-Emancipation societies. This periodization of history highlights the important fact that each phase was associated with different rates of immigration, different ethnic proportions within the colonial populations, different patterns of social interaction, and different linguistic targets, all of which cumulatively yielded different linguistic consequences. Some societies never went through all three phases of socio-economic organization, and therefore exhibit different patterns and degrees of language restructuring and evolution. Thus, what took place on Réunion is different from what took place on Mauritius; what happened on these Mascarene Islands is different from what took place on Haiti; and what happened in the French colonies that have had majority slave populations since their early plantation-society phases is even more different from what happened in Cuba and on St Barths (St Barthélemy), both of which had very long homestead-society phases. In any case, each territory has its own specific ecology, determined by its particular economic history. It is in this context that one also learns the importance of cross-colony migrations and learns what Chaudenson means by second- and third-generation creoles.

Here too the reader learns that it is not just language that could be exported from one colony to another, where it would be adapted to the local ecology. Other cultural domains too could be exported, as initial models that would even-

tually adapt to local conditions. Aside from the wealth of facts made available to the reader, one should not overlook the main motivation for this cross-disciplinary approach to the development of creole phenomena. Although Chaudenson observes that we now know more about the development of creole vernaculars than about other creole cultural systems, we should not be led into thinking that the state of the art about creole vernaculars sets up *the* model for investigating the other systems. Indeed there are a number of interesting facts in other cultural domains that should prompt us to rethink our present research methods and conclusions concerning vernaculars. For instance, what is the role of the colonial cultural ecology in determining the development of different aspects of a language variety? Is there any justification for assuming that a language must evolve uniformly in the overall population of a territory? The domains of music, folk medicine and magic, and cuisine in particular, offer plenty of opportunities to reassess our research paradigms, especially if we believe in uniform developments within specific domains.

Chaudenson also reminds us that data from naturalistic second-language acquisition, especially among immigrants in Europe, are useful in understanding what took place in the development of creole vernaculars and other cultural systems. Although the socio-economic ecologies are not the same, there are enough similarities for us to learn something about structural and ethnographic factors that bear on the restructuring of the target language into a new variety. Among the ethnographic factors are the variety that the learner is exposed to, how regularly he/she interacts with speakers of the target, whether he/she is integrated in the host community, and whether or not he/she immigrated as a teenager or an adult.

Every theory generalizes from a limited body of facts. So does the model that Chaudenson proposes here, which is based on the analysis of French creoles, especially those of the Indian Ocean. So also do many hypotheses based on the study of primarily English creoles. What matters most here is how much can be extrapolated from Chaudenson's study of the linguistic and other cultural consequences of French settlement colonization to similar forms of colonization by other European nations. How can the facts be used to improve our present hypotheses on the development of creole vernaculars and other cultural systems? These are among the enticing questions that make this book an outstanding and, in some respects, a leading contribution to genetic creolistics even almost a decade after publication of the first edition.

In this English edition, when a hypothesis or conclusion seems to bear on more than French creoles alone, the Editor chose to substitute 'the lexifier, the acrolect', or 'acrolectal' for the original word 'French'.[1] Just as the positions of some adverbials and parentheticals have been reshuffled for more clarity, (quasi-) redundant words or phrases have been omitted in the interest of a more fluid English prose – when semantic integrity was not compromised. Such cases are, however, rare. The translators and Editor have generally tried to be faithful to the original style of the author and even to preserve his wit, as long as the English prose permitted it. I hope that readers of this edition will enjoy the

beauty of some of Chaudenson's narratives of his experiences in the 'world of creoles.' The demographic information on the different territories described in Chapter 2 has also been updated. Likewise, deictic time reference devices such 'over the past decade' and 'ten years ago' have been adjusted for this edition. May every reader derive from this rich book whatever bears on their research in genetic creolistics,[2] naturalistic second-language acquisition, and why not genetic linguistics, where I am sure genetic creolistics belongs (Mufwene 2001).

This edition would not have been possible without the dedication of my students, Michelle AuCoin, Sabrina Billings, and Sheri Pargman. They worked meticulously, making sure that as little as possible was lost in the translation (*traduttore traditore*!) and pointing out problems in the first edition when they arose. Sabrina Billings joined the team in the later stages, when the Editor thought that an additional person would help move the translation faster, after so many hiatuses in the project. Sheri Pargman made it possible for us to meet the final deadlines by working hard on translations that other members of the team could not finalize for various reasons, double-checking with the Editor the final text, to make sure it didn't smack of literal translations, scanning the original bibliography before more work could be done on it, and tracking up to the copy-editing stage some of the bibliographical entries that were still missing from the French original edition. The Editor is very grateful for their invaluable assistance. As a team we feel indebted to Suzan Love for feedback on our translation and especially to John Wheelwright, our copy-editor, whose meticulous attention to stylistic details and coherence has saved us some embarrassments. He has contributed to making this book not only more accessible but also truly a second edition of *Des îles, des hommes, des langues*.

Robert Chaudenson himself is to be thanked for being cheerful and patient throughout the slow process of this project, which started in 1997 but was intermittently suspended when one reason or another prevented the Editor from attending to it. He gave feedback on the translations and changes introduced here and there, and mostly was willing to answer all sorts of questions and invitations to rewrite some French passages before the translations became final. In the end he was very co-operative in providing missing and additional bibliographical information and making sure his book remained current.

As usual, I am indebted to Pat and Tazie for allowing me some of the time I could have spent with them to work on this project. The project would not have started without seed funding in 1997 by the Agence de la Francophonie, then Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique, through the now defunct CIRELFA. Their support is very much appreciated.

Salikoko S. Mufwene
July 2000

Notes

1 It may be useful to clarify at this point that the *lexifier* is the language from which a creole has inherited the overwhelming majority of its vocabulary – typically an ensemble of non-standard dialects of the colonizers' language. In the case of French creoles, the lexifier was colonial *français populaire* 'folk French (speech).' The *acrolect* is the educated counterpart of the lexifier that is spoken in the same population that uses a particular creole. Readers should remember that the acrolect is unlikely to have played an important role, if any at all, in the development of the deeper forms of a creole (see below), though it probably developed concurrently with it. The way structures of creoles have been studied has led linguists to identify a *basilect* in each creole community. It is the deepest local creole variety, which is structurally the most different from its acrolect. Between the basilect and the acrolect lies a continuum of lects, or (individual) varieties, which has been called the *mesolect*. Both the basilect and the mesolect are parts of the *creole continuum*. The acrolect has usually been excluded from it for reasons that are debatable but need not be discussed here.

2 The term *genetic creolistics* is adopted here for the part of creolistics that focuses on its development – especially how it is related to, or has diverged from, its lexifier, notwithstanding influences from the other languages the lexifier came in contact with. This is the general subject matter of this book.

Preface

In his Editor's foreword Salikoko Mufwene explains quite clearly the spirit of the present undertaking. The one aspect of it that he sheds no light on is the critical role that he himself has played in the conception and fruition of the project.

I think the very idea of producing a second, English, edition of my book *Des îles, des hommes, des langues* owes its origin in part to the fact that Mufwene is among a handful of linguists who are linguistically and scientifically bilingual. Parochialism has fostered many misunderstandings among Anglophone and Francophone creolists, and accounts for several cases of mutual ignorance. Even though the bibliographies of many publications suggest that Anglophone and Francophone scholars are aware of relevant research in the other linguistic community, overall, Francophone scholars are better informed about Anglophone scholarship than vice versa. Few are scholars like Mufwene, who have closely followed the research of Francophone creolists and Africanists and brought it to the attention of their Anglophone colleagues. I am flattered that he not only read and liked *Des îles, des hommes, des langues* but also deemed it worth translating into, and disseminating in, English.

I have a hunch that the Editor underestimated the nature and extent of the work he was taking upon himself and his students when he undertook both to translate a book written over ten years ago and to update it and keep it current with present scholarship on the subject. We have integrated into this English edition insights gained from later publications by Mufwene and myself and by other scholars, not only in creolistics but also in areas such as naturalistic second-language acquisition, a research area that deserves more attention by genetic creolists.

Mufwene's contribution to this book is so significant that I wanted to list him as a co-author. He declined, because he thought his contribution to the substance of the work was too belated to deserve this kind of association. However, there may also be a tacit reason why he declined the invitation. Although in many respects our positions on the development of creoles are very similar, our approaches and the paths we took to reach these conclusions are different – aside from the more obvious fact that we have not worked on the same language varieties, and our theoretical backgrounds are different. His wisdom and natural moderation may have advised him against being identified

with some of my positions that he might prefer to formulate otherwise. Nonetheless, I am very grateful to him and his students for the time, effort, skill, and dedication they have invested in this meticulously produced English edition and for their commitment to a wider dissemination of my views.

ROBERT CHAUDENSON
Aix-en-Provence
July 2000

1 Creole people and languages

The current etymology of the word *creole* was proposed a long time ago. Recent lexicographic attempts to determine its origin more accurately have not been successful. Nonetheless, it is useful to start this study of creoles by citing two alleged sources. They are obviously false, but, in their respective ways, they illustrate perfectly how often extreme ideological fantasies can divert serious thinking, even in debates that are reputedly scientific.

I will present them chronologically, starting with Jules Faine, an eminent Haitian and learned Mulatto, fiercely opposed to the African origins hypothesis of French creoles upheld at the time (the 1930s) by a fellow Haitian, Suzanne Sylvain. Faine (1974:11) perceives in the 'universal unity' of such language varieties an essential argument for refuting the mistaken claim, also endorsed by Melville Herskovits, that Creole is a product of the West African linguistic mold. Although, as we shall see, Faine's basic position is in principle commonsensical, he gets carried away regarding the term *creole*. He formulates a strange hypothesis which discards a priori the established etymology of his time, which he knew.[1] According to Faine:

> The general opinion is that the word *creole* comes from Spanish *criollo* … French *créole* was apparently borrowed from Spanish in the seventeenth century. In Spanish, the word *criollo* meant 'a person of European descent born outside Europe.' It seems strange that Creole, a language variety that developed from dialectal French, was thus misidentified with a foreign name. Still stranger is the repetition of the same process, during the same period, in other places where Spanish was yet unknown. This is why the creole French varieties of the Mascarenes [i.e., Réunion, Mauritius, and Rodriguez] are identified as creole patois … It is significant that the word *creole* was able to transmigrate from the Caribbean to the Indian Ocean … Under such conditions, it is fitting to seek the origin of the term *creole* elsewhere than in Spanish, that is in the Patois ascent line – in other words, in the maritime language, which was shared by all these creole varieties. Thus, in the Norman patois, the verb *creire* means 'yes' or 'no' depending on whether or not it combines with negation (Moisy 1886). These forms are not unknown in the Haitian language. For instance, *Vous viendrez ce soir?* 'Will you

> come this evening?' – *Oui, ous a-vini à souè ha?* 'Yes, we will come this evening' *M'crei ça oui!* '(I think) yes' – *Non, je ne viendrai pas m'pas crei* 'No, I won't come (I don't think).' In French itself one says naturally *je crois bien* 'I think so,' *je vous crois* 'I believe you' for *oui* 'yes.' *Creire* is the corruption of Latin *credere* 'believe.' *Credere* produced *credo* 'I believe,' and *credo* became *creo* 'I believe' by syncopation of *d*. The Romance pronoun *lo*, the equivalent of French *le*, was affixed to the base *creo*, which finally produced *creolo*, hence *créole*. Thus *creolo* must mean 'I believe it.' Usage of *créolo* for *oui* 'yes' would follow the old Romance tradition that designated its dialects by the word they used for 'yes.' Thus *langue d'oïl* for the northern group, *langue d'oc* for the southern group, *langue de cia* for Italian, *langue de si* for Provençal, Catalan, etc. Likewise, the *creole language* would be that amalgamation of patois that we have identified as *maritime language* … We can conclude from all the above observations that it is not the term *criollo* that produced our term *créole* but rather the latter that produced *criollo*.
>
> (Faine 1974:148–19)

Even though the Spanish etymology is not inherently dangerous and does not imply 'African influence,' it appears that Faine seeks this extravagant hypothesis in order to assign the word an exclusively French etymology. It is in fact not impossible for words of Portuguese or Spanish origin to have migrated from the Caribbean Sea to the Indian Ocean. The logic of such contributions can easily be demonstrated (Chaudenson 1974a:591–632).

The second etymology, even quainter and more unexpected, was proposed in the *Rideau de cannes* (May–July 1963) by an anonymous author who is, most certainly, R. Nativel, follower of another Réunionnais scholar Jules Hermann (1846–1924). Hermann was a prominent local personality in his time: notary, Mayor of Saint Pierre, President of the General Council, first President of the Réunion Academy (founded in 1913), and member of the Malagasy Academy and of the French Astronomical Society. Interested in everything and author of many works on the most diverse topics, he fits, because of some of his theories, into the category of 'mad scientist' (homologue of the 'fous littéraires' who fascinated Queneau). His major work, *Les révélations du Grand Océan* 'Revelations of the Great Ocean', published posthumously (probably around 1927), clearly illustrates the dominant characteristic of his production: extensive and infinitely diverse knowledge produced by an overflowing imagination that was itself governed by a mind obsessed with systems. What is important to us is that, starting with reflections on the 'Franco-Malagasy' creole of Bourbon, Hermann negotiated a hazardous and complex path through anthropology, ornithology, geology, history, cosmogony, and linguistics, to demonstrate the prior existence of a 'southern continent where Réunion, South America, Africa, and the eastern parts of Madagascar and Hindoostan formed one country.' Based on this, he considered Malagasy to be the 'primitive language of humanity' (p. 157), which led him to elaborate a large chapter on 'global etymologies.' With some amazement, we learn from this that, for instance, *Pologne* 'Poland' 'comes from

Malagasy *polo ina*: 'that which has been divided into ten [parts]' – an admirable foreshadowing of the later breakups of this poor state! The word *Manche* 'Channel' is derived from *mantsa*: 'sly, astute, cunning,' which allegedly demonstrates that the prehistoric Normans already deserved their later reputation. His explanation of *Suisse* 'Switzerland' with *soïtra*: 'penetrating something with a crochet-hook or a pointed stick' would prove unequivocally that prehistoric people already used alpenstocks. Hermann concludes: 'I stop. I am myself confounded by such a revelation.' How could his readers not be equally confounded?

Surprisingly, these theories of Hermann's gave rise to a school, at least in the Indian Ocean. He exerted influence as much on literature – for instance in the works of R.E. Hardt or M. de Chazal – as on studies of local creoles – for instance, on M. Julien's study of Réunionnais toponyms (one of Hermann's specialties), on B. Gamaleya in the beginning, and on Nativel. This brings us back to our initial subject matter, on which the foregoing sheds some light. The anonymous author of the article in the *Rideau de cannes* submits indeed the following etymology for the word *créole*:

> The word *gris* is quite French, the word *grey* is English. If we consider *grec* or *grek* 'Greek,' we also find the word *gris*. Others more knowledgeable than us in linguistics have proposed and established that when the Hellenics or Hellas of the Peninsula made conquests, they set aside from those that they had defeated thousands of women whom they crossed with their men in order to have beautiful hybrids who made Greek plastic glory. These bastards were *gris* or *grek*s … Pounding in the same crucible *gris/grey/grek* and Malagasy *giri*, we get the word *gre*, which, adjoined to Malagasy *ol* (from *olona* 'person'), indisputably produces *creole* or grey person. It is by brute force that *Larousse* seeks to make a creole a person of pure white race born in the colonies. Nonsense!
>
> (*Rideau de cannes*, May-July 1963)

Despite some reservations,[2] the etymological approach is clearly similar to Hermann's. As may have been suspected from the biographical information already given, Hermann belonged to the Réunion's white bourgeoisie (such classifications are not very clearly determined on social or ethnic grounds). Nativel's goal is precisely the opposite of Faine's, however: he was absurdly and blindly eager to deny the established European origin of the word *creole* in favor of a Malagasy etymology – which, since the word was first attested in the American-Caribbean region (ACR), is daring, to say the least. And yet his attempts are identical to the Haitian scholar's endeavors to assign it a 'purely' French origin. Both these approaches to etymology exemplify the ideological confrontations that arise in studies of creole languages and cultures.

In reality, the facts about the word *creole* are now well known, even though experts can still discuss some details of its etymology. Is the original etymon the Spanish *criollo*, or the Portuguese *crioulo* (whose older form, according to Guy

Hazaël-Massieux, is *creoulo*)? Isn't the former a borrowing of the latter into Spanish? One is tempted to think so. However, although the original etymology is probably Portuguese, the first attestation of the term *criollo* in French is a citation from Spanish, in R. Regnault's 1598 translation of José de Acosta's book under the title of *Histoire naturelle et morale des Indes*. Arveiller (1963) established conclusively the history of the term in French. He showed that it was only toward the end of the seventeenth century that *criollo* lost its Hispanic character through Gallicization; *criole* and *criolle* were commonly attested around 1670. It is undoubtedly at that time, or perhaps a little earlier, that French colonists in the Caribbean orally borrowed *criollo* or *crioullo*, among other Spanish and/or Portuguese terms (the etymology of the term on the Islands may be different from that of the scholarly borrowing in French). It was modified to *créole,* which in French eventually superseded the scholarly word *criolle*, although the latter can be found in printed texts of the eighteenth century both in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. La Roque still uses it in his *Voyage de l'Arabie heureuse* (1716): 'The air of this Island [Bourbon] is wonderful for health; yet *crioles*, the locally born, do not ordinarily live to old age.' In any case, since then *créole* has been attested in French written documents (*Histoire générale des voyages*, vol. 9, p. 155, 1703) and on the Islands. This is the form that is most widely attested. On Bourbon (today's Réunion) it is the only one that appears in archival documents.

The sometimes quaint glosses or comments provided by the authors who use the term underscore its rare and exotic character. French lexicography has recorded its existence and highlighted its phonetic evolution. While Richelet's (1680) and Furetière's (1690) *Dictionnaire*s enter *criole*, the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* lists only the form *créole*, which has been without alternatives since then.

However, an often attested semantic opposition arose, which would lead to an interesting and significant diversification of the meaning of the term. French lexicographers have assigned to *créole* the meaning of 'European born on the Islands' – thus broadening the original meaning, which was sometimes retained, particularly in the beginning (according to Furetière, *criole* 'is the name that the Spaniards give to their children who were born in the Indies'). In the colonies themselves, though, *créole* was used to designate Whites and Blacks, as long as they were locally born.

According to *Histoire générale des voyages* (vol. 9, p. 155, 1703), on Bourbon, 'by the word *créoles*, one mustn't expect reference to deformed persons, men or women; some of them are very pretty and well built. *Their flesh color is somewhat brown* [my emphasis] but soft.'

In *Nouveau voyage aux Isles de l'Amérique* (vol. 4, p. 146, 1722), Father Labat wrote of the Antilles: 'The *Créoles* themselves [black slaves in this context], that is, those who were born in the country, regard them as their fathers.'

After 1725 the usage on Bourbon of *Mascarin*, to refer to slaves born on the Islands, was replaced by *créole*.

These examples show that the word was used on the Islands to designate individuals who were apparently of mixed (white and black) descent (1703) or Blacks (1703, 1722, 1725). In both the Caribbean and the Mascarenes, during the first half of the eighteenth century the modifier *créole* applied to Whites, Mulattos, and Blacks. Although the French lexicographic tradition has until very recently restricted the application of this designation to Whites, the term has evolved extensively, depending on the place and time, in different creoles and in the different regional French varieties that coexist with them. Constant misunderstandings and infinite polemics have of course arisen out of the use of French dictionaries as the ultimate and definitive references for the meaning of *créole* by individuals who lacked sufficient knowledge of these facts (the last sentence of the above quotation from Nativel is a case in point). The evolutions of the meaning of this word are interesting, since they often illustrate for a very sensitive term the influence of social factors on semantics – such cases are very rare in a lexical set.

In Haiti, where the Revolution and Independence (1804) led to the disappearance of the white population, the meaning of the term has been maximally extended, so to speak. Faine's dictionary (1974:148) gives the following information: 'Créyiole, créiole, langue pays la, paler créole, langue créole; Moune, bète, plante qui fait, qui natif-natal lans tel pays. – *D'où êtes-vous? Je suis de Camp-Perrin – coté ous moune? Moin cé créole Cam-Perrin*'; 'language of the country; creole speech; creole language; person, animal, plant native to such a country. – [from French:] Where are you from? I am from Camp-Perrin – [from Creole:] Where are you from? I am a Creole of Cam-Perrin.' Even more generally, the word also has the meaning of 'offshoot, offspring' in the domains of flora and fauna, implicitly admitting indigenity.

In other language varieties such as Réunionnais or Seychellois, *créole* applies indiscriminately to locally born Whites, Mulattos, or Blacks, but it cannot be used of individuals belonging to recent groups of immigrants, even if they were born on the Islands (Chaudenson 1974a:89). Besides, especially in older periods, the term was also used, as in Haitian Creole, to designate local flora and fauna, e.g., 'creole horse or cow' (although *péi* is more often used for this purpose today).

In these diverse language varieties, it appears that the word can apply to any native, regardless of his/her ethnic affiliation. In other types of societies, on the other hand, one has the feeling that different meanings have evolved because it seems impossible that the same term can be used to designate Whites, Mulattos, and Blacks alike. Thus, on Mauritius Island, *kreol* (like *créole* in the local regional French) is used to qualify any individual who is neither Franco-Mauritian (White), nor Indo-Mauritian, nor Sino-Mauritian. This term is reserved either for Mulattos or for individuals of the Malagasy or African type, which is relatively well marked. One can then specify, depending on the case, Malagasy Creole, Mozambican Creole, and even Rodriguez Creole. When necessary, a distinction is also made within the creole ensemble for 'people of color' (*dimoune, koulère* in Creole), who have a weak degree of hybridity. Thus, in the local regional French variety, one can hear people say *une femme de couleur bien blanche* 'a

woman who is quite white in color'. Strictly speaking, creoles are those who by their own phenotype cannot claim the term *white*. A person of color will never be integrated in the white category, regardless of how weak his/her degree of hybridity is. Integration criteria are not phenotypical but genealogical. Any deviation from the strict endogamy of the white group is completely irreversible. The boundary, which is so easily crossed from white to black, is absolutely impassable in the other direction. This fact is easily illustrated with the study of race vocabulary. It is characterized by the abundance of terms, always offensive, which describe light-skinned Mulattos, even Whites, whom a non-Mauritian would obviously consider white. One can cite in the local regional French the most common creole descriptors: *frontière* 'boundary,' *faire blanc* 'to make white,' *blanc fesse noir* 'White [with] black buttock,' *peau gratté* 'scratched skin,' *mélange* 'mix,' *quatorze carats* 'fourteen karats,' etc. (see Chaudenson 1974b for details).

In the Lesser Antilles, the semantics has evolved in the opposite direction. The term *créole* is reserved for Whites only, although over the past few years things have evolved concurrently with affirmations of Antillais identity. However, the evolution is limited. Joséphine de Beauharnais (a White woman) remains the historical stereotype of *la belle créole* 'the beautiful Creole.' Recently an Antillean author, who was locally identified as *chabin* 'a Mulatto with kinky hair,' was ridiculed for publishing his picture next to the portrait of Joséphine and titling it *le beau créole* 'the handsome creole.' The very importance of the Antilles, the fact that they are closer to and have more intense relations with the metropole, has led this local usage to strengthen the French lexicographic tradition somewhat without taking into account the different meanings that the term could have in other regions.

The most curious case is undoubtedly that of Louisiana, which is peculiar for the coexistence of the two essential meanings of the word *créole*, something that has not failed to arouse polemics periodically. As in the Lesser Antilles, in New Orleans, and more generally in Louisiana French, *créole* designates a white born in the colony. The good old white society of New Orleans refers to itself as *créole*. Usage of this term was strengthened, if not introduced, by close relations with the Lesser Antilles. Note, in addition, that this Louisiana society was among those that did not tolerate usage of the same term to classify both Whites and Blacks. (Local law still considers anyone who has one-thirty-second of black blood as a person of color.) On the other hand, in western Louisiana, *créole* designates Mulattos or Blacks. *Parler créole* 'to speak Creole' is equivalent to *parler nèg* 'to talk black.' This usage has spread to Cajun French, which is distinct from Louisiana French, due to frequent interactions between francophones (Cajuns) and creolophones. The origin of this is not easy to determine, and several hypotheses can be considered. Dominguez's (1977) explanation does not seem convincing; according to Neumann (1985:11), who cites her, the word allegedly had a purely local meaning (i.e., 'born in the colonies'), then a cultural connotation ('Creole' vs. 'American'), and later acquired a racial implication (White vs. Black).[3] The facts are undoubtedly more complex, as evidenced by the information collected by Woods:

> A century or more ago *Creole*, as used in Louisiana, designated a native of the state, regardless of his racial origin. In 1840, for example, the New Orleans *Picayune* used the term in reference to nonwhite slaves. But, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, George Washington Cable, the New Orleans novelist, excluded the descendants of French or Spanish stock who had a Negro strain, and his restricted application of the term became popularly accepted.
>
> (Woods 1972:7)

There seems indeed to be more of a conflicting juxtaposition of two different traditions than a historical evolution of the meaning of the word. The first, *créole* as White (similar to that of the Antilles), tends to disappear along with the francophone community of New Orleans; the second, *créole* as Mulatto or Black (proper to creole communities as they refer to themselves, and to Cajun communities, by borrowing, due to contacts), may have been introduced into Louisiana by the important immigrations from Saint Domingue (Santo Domingo) in the early nineteenth century (see Chapter 4).

Leaving aside the case of Louisiana, whose complexity seems to be related more to the twofold way it was settled than to the local evolution of the word *créole*, the above data can be summarized in the following table:

Table 1.1 Variation in the meaning of the word *créole*

Region	*Indigenous*	*White*	*Black*
Martinique	+	+	-
Guadeloupe	+	+	-
Haiti	+	-	+
Réunion	+	+	+
Seychelles	+	+	+
Mauritius	+	-	+

However, these situations are not set in definitive form and deserve frequent specific studies, which may themselves be revised as a result of possible evolutions (Chaudenson 1974b, Hazaël-Massieux 1977). Usage of the term *créole* appears to have been distrusted because it generates misunderstandings, especially in Louisiana and, even more so, on Mauritius (where the publication in the journal *Hérodote* of an article showcasing Mauritius as a 'creole island' aroused vivid, though low-key, irritation among some Indo-Mauritian intellectuals who read it). This distrust is expressed in the desire of those – like Virahsawmy (1986), for instance – who wish that on Mauritius people would no longer speak of their 'creole' (language), but of Mauritian. Their intent is to see a consensus develop on the truly national character of this language variety. The 'ethnic' usage of the term *créole* seems to be an obstacle to this desideratum; as was

pointed out above, the Island's population uses the term to identify a specific group.

In the Antilles, and on Réunion, there is a tendency to often substitute for the word *créole* terms which are derived from names of territories: viz., *Martiniquais*, *Guadeloupéen*, *Antillais*, and *Réunionnais*. The use of such terms stems both from claims to specific identities and from a desire for ecumenicity aimed at transcending the social and/or ethnic cleavages that the word *créole* implies everywhere. On the other hand, *Bann Zil Kréol* committees have emerged from meetings of the Comité International des Etudes Créoles since 1976. The name *Bann Zil Kréol* itself reflects an ambition for 'pancreolism': the *Bann Zil* part of the name comes from Indian Ocean creoles (in which it means 'islands'), whereas *Kréol* is characteristic of American-Caribbean creoles. The Committee's present views are somewhat less radical than its initial aims: the common use of a pancreole, or the dream of a mythical mutual intelligibility of creoles. However, its ongoing activities show that there exists a 'creole world,' – which still does not at all imply that one must deny the specificities of its diverse components.

The very title of this chapter reminds one that, in the history of colonization, creole people preceded by many years the languages that are identified by the same name. On Bourbon the first creole children were born less than two years after the Island was settled. It is thus quite logical that the adjective used to describe realities specific to the Islands (people, animals, and vegetation) was later on also extended to language varieties which exhibited the same endogenous character. According to Arveiller (1963), the first historical attestation of such use of the term *créole* occurs in *Voyage de la Courbe* (1688) referring to 'a certain jargon' spoken in Senegal that, although 'only remotely similar to the Portuguese language,' was nonetheless thought to be genetically related to it. The Natives spoke it in interactions with Europeans. Note the following passage: 'Besides their local language, those people [the Natives] also speak a certain jargon which is only remotely similar to Portuguese and is called *créole*, like *Lingua Franca* in the Mediterranean Sea' (p. 192). For French creoles, the first attestations are much more recent, in the late eighteenth century, although the existence of local varieties was signaled much earlier, when they were generally identified as bad varieties of French.

The case of the Antilles must in this respect be distinguished from that of Bourbon, because the Mascarenes were uninhabited when the French arrived. In the Antilles, the problem is complicated by the presence of the Carib population, and particularly by the development of relations between the Caribs (who themselves had invaded the Islands earlier) and the Europeans, which lasted quite a while before the French settled permanently. Numerous documents emphasize that a very rudimentary language variety called *baragouin* or *jargon* was used in those exchanges – though, unfortunately, the narratives are often quite vague. One of the oldest is Bouton's, which observes: 'They [the Caribs] have a peculiar language that is very difficult to learn, but they also have a certain baragouin mixed with French, Spanish, English, and Flemish' (1640:130). The author even gives some examples of this (1640:107–117): '*Magnane navire de France* ('a big

ship will arrive tomorrow from France') … *Non ça bon pour France, bon pour Caraïbe* ('this is not good for France; it is good for the Caribbean') … *Mouche bourrache* ('quite drunk') … *Mouche manigat mon compère, moy non faché à toy* ('very strong, my friend; I am not angry with you'). Du Tertre seems to have used both words indiscriminately (*baragouin* on p. 105; *jargon dont les sauvages usent avec les français*, '[a] jargon that the savages use with the French,' on p. 210). de Rochefort's (1658) report is more precise and extensive:

> The Caribs have an old and natural language … But, besides that, they have developed another one which is not pure and is a mixture of several foreign words from the trade that they have had with the Europeans. Mostly, they have borrowed words from the Spaniards, because they were the first Christians they encountered. They always use their old and natural language when they speak to each other. But when they converse or negotiate with Christians, they use their corrupted language. Besides this, they have a very pleasant baragoin when they want to start speaking a foreign language.

de Rochefort gives several examples which are reminiscent of Bouton's, though they are not absolutely identical. *Anonyme de Grenade* (1659/1975) uses the word *jargon* and also provides some attestations of it:

> *Il n'estoit pas bon d'avoir vendu à mariniers de France terre à luy c'est leur langue qui veut dire que c'estoit un méchant homme* (p. 61). 'It was not good to have sold one's land to French sailors. This is their language for it was a mean man.'

> *Les autres Caraïbes vouloient matter luy (le tuer) parce qu'il estoit bon aux mariniers France* (statement of the Carib Thomas, 1650: 67). 'The other Caribs wanted to kill him because he was kind to French sailors.'

> *Un sauvage se mit a crier que mariniers France mattaient caribbes* (p. 103). 'A savage started to call out that French sailors were killing Caribs'

> *Saint Amour qui estoit mouche bon à eux* (p. 205). 'Saint Amour who was very kind to them.'

It is evident that more or less the same formulae were used. Either some documents were inspired by each other, or else this 'corrupted language' essentially consisted of a limited set of stereotypical formulae. Hazaël-Massieux undoubtedly documented a more or less exhaustive list of these attestations, and I hope that analysis of them will shed some light on this complex question. So far as this chapter is concerned, what matters is whether there is a genetic connection between the baragouin or jargon that the Caribs used in their interactions with the Europeans and the French Creoles of the Lesser Antilles. In the

absence of sufficient linguistic evidence, I am forced to posit a hypothesis that is contingent on sociohistorical considerations.

In this connection, a clear distinction must be made (even if the facts succeed each other historically in the same geographical area) between, on the one hand, the colonization period strictly speaking, during which creoles started to develop, and, on the other, the preceding period that is marked by extensive contacts between the French and the Caribs. Indeed, French settlements in the American-Caribbean region (ACR) started in the late sixteenth century. The first French were perhaps those sighted on the 'Cannibal Coast' (today's Guyane, or French Guiana) in 1580.[4] However, these initial settlements were numerically of little significance, and in a few cases they were fortuitous and provisional; most often they consisted of the crews of wrecked ships or of ships that were in too bad shape to risk a sea crossing. This is how Captain Fleury and his crew spent nearly a year on Martinique (1619–1620), perfectly understanding the local Caribs. Like other witnesses, Fleury noted that 'they are very eager to learn foreign languages and customs' (Moreau de Saint-Méry 1797:96), which explains both the existence and the composite nature of 'baragoin' (an alternative spelling in the literature) because French was of course not the only language involved. Sometimes these forced stays by Europeans were the result of demotions and desertions; the settlers were sailors who had been punished, had deserted or been expelled from their ships, or had been abandoned. This is how the same report of Fleury's comes to mention a sailor 'named Chevalier, who had been abandoned on the so-called Sainte-Allouzie Island [today's St Lucia] and went to find Captain Fleury on Martinique' (Moreau 1987:83). It was among such abandoned sailors that *cabrittiers* were recruited; they were 'men that the [Spaniards] abandoned at, or exiled to, certain places that warships to Peru or Brazil passed by' (Moreau 1987:57). This practice was not at all specifically Spanish, and some individuals took up buccaneering after one or other of the misadventures invoked above.

Such situations which preceded colonization strictly speaking were also very different from it, although some of these first French settlers were able to become colonists (which seems to me not to have been generally the case). It is not clear why they would have spoken this 'baragoin,' whose expressive possibilities were very limited, except in their interactions with the Caribs. Early documents such as Father Pelleprat's (1655) seem to make a clear distinction between 'the language of the Negroes' (obvious approximations of French) and the composite 'baragoin' of the Caribs:

> The Negroes transported to the Islands are from various African nations, [from] Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea, and from a few other coastal lands. There are up to thirteen nations of these infidels on the Islands. They all speak different languages and do not understand the savage slaves from the coasts that are the most distant from the Islands, which are also diverse nations. It would be an infinite task to undertake teaching them in their natural languages. One must be gifted for language in order to succeed.

> That is why *we wait until they have learned French* before teaching them, which they do as soon as possible in order to be understood by their masters, on whom they depend for all their needs. We accommodate to their way of speaking, which is ordinarily with the verb in the infinitive, for instance, *moy prier Dieu* 'I pray(ed) to God,' *moy aller à l'Eglise* 'I went/go to church,' [and] *moy point manger* 'I have not eaten.' Adding a word that marks future or past tense, they say *demain moy manger* 'tomorrow, I (will) eat' [and] *hier moy prier Dieu* 'yesterday, I prayed to God'
>
> (Pelleprat 1655:52–53)

Unless one can provide linguistic justification for such a hypothesis, one need not postulate a genetic link between 'baragoin' and 'the language of the Negroes,' although there were cases where Caribs and Blacks interacted with one another and there were lexical transfers from one group to another. The confusions actually stem from the fact that *baragoin*, and to a lesser extent *jargon*, denote both the contact language used by the Caribs to communicate with the Europeans and the approximative French varieties produced by the slaves in their efforts to learn French. The latter was then the only target language of the slaves, as Pelleprat and other witnesses make clear. The same words are obviously also used for the slaves' language variety; Father Mongin (1679:135) uses *jargon* in this case, and Labat (1722:81) refers to the 'ordinary baragoin of the Negroes.' The most precise is Father Chevillard (1659:121), who calls it a 'jargon of the French language.' The distinction between the Caribs' contact variety and the Blacks' approximative French appears in late seventeenth-century documents:

> I told the Carib to turn but he was content to tell me in his baragoin: 'Compère ne pas tenir peur, si canot tourné, toi tenir coeur fort.' The Negroes who spoke better than him told me that it was impossible for the canoe to overturn
>
> (1696, quoted in Labat 1722:83)

This example, which, like several others, I owe to G. Hazaël-Massieux's systematic and thorough research, reveals that the Carib's utterance is more complex than those found in the works of the authors I cited earlier. It seems in fact to be closer to 'the language of the Negroes.' Under the new sociolinguistic conditions the latter must have tended to become the target for the Caribs, in place of the European languages themselves.

New colonial societies replaced the often sporadic contacts between the Caribs and the Europeans and their limited, functional need for pared-down and specialized communication, for which a pidgin is, after all, sufficient and adapted. Very different needs, related to the constant and complete interaction between Blacks and Whites, were associated with these new societies. The slaves were often uprooted from their native lands at a very young age and isolated among other slaves speaking different languages in very small *habitations*, 'homesteads,

dwellings,' which constituted semi-isolated social and economic units. There, they interacted constantly with the white families, on which they were dependent 'for all their needs' (Pelleprat 1655) but whose precarious living conditions they shared in a 'Robinsonnade' style of daily life (i.e., the destitute style of Robinson Crusoe marooned on his island). As we will see in more detail, in such situations the Black slaves were subjected to very strong linguistic assimilation, due to constant and intense contact with the French model. It is not clear how under such historical conditions a genetic relationship could have developed between the Caribs' 'baragouin' and 'the French spoken by the Blacks.' This is after all a variety of French variety and not at all a 'mixed language,' as some have sometimes liked to imagine.

Intercommunication between Blacks and Whites was thus probably established on a fluctuating continuum of approximations of French. In any case, and even making some allowance for some Gallicization in transcription, early documents on the language of the Blacks seem to indicate that these language varieties were closer to French than the utterances of today's creole-speakers on the same topics. This impression is confirmed by the fact that the languages of Blacks are generally not mentioned among local peculiarities or oddities – despite the fact that the witnesses (mostly priests and travelers) were, if not fond of the quaint and the exotic, at least often attentive to peculiarities of the territories and societies that they described. In both ACR and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), these local language varieties are always presented as corrupted French. A tourist arriving in Fort-de-France, Pointe-à-Pitre, Port-au-Prince, or Saint-Denis on Réunion would surely not define linguistic productions in the various creoles of the respective Islands in the same terms today.

There is probably a twofold explanation for this. First, the distance between Creole and French has increased somewhat in both directions, both because Creole has autonomized (which is typical of creolization) and because French has normalized (i.e., has developed its own norms). Second, present-day French-speakers have no doubt become accustomed to much less variation than that of francophones in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The generalization of a standardized French in the national metropolitan territory, the diffusion of the standard model via formal education, the generalization of the print medium, etc., have over the centuries considerably reduced the ability of speakers to adapt to French varieties different from their own. To be sure, some witnesses underscored the exotic and deviant nature of the French spoken by the Blacks. Father Labat (1722:169), for instance, defined it as a 'baragouin,' although he emphasized that their intention was to speak French: 'They [the Blacks] never learn French correctly, and they have only a baragouin that is the most pleasant and the most natural in the world.' There are also curious convergences between the assessment of 'the French of the Blacks' on the Islands ('corrupted' or 'altered') and the terms used in Abbé Grégoire's survey (Gazier 1880) to describe the nonstandard French of Poitou in the late eighteenth century: 'Usage of the French language is universal in our region [the Bas-Poitou], but generally people speak poorly. … City and rural people speak an *altered, corrupted French*' (p. 273;

my emphasis). On the Islands, other witnesses are less harsh about the language of the slaves. Without formulating the same criticisms, de la Bourdonnais (1743:163) invokes 'French-speaking Blacks' who, to him, made excellent soldiers for the India War: 'Four hundred faithful French-speaking Blacks are as adequate as Whites to handle a machine or tackle a canon.' We will see that other witnesses are even more enthusiastic, and submit that some Blacks could teach French to some French people.

Somewhat oversimplifying things and without claiming to reconstruct a precise chronology, we can admit that the sequence of the terms *corrupted French*, *altered French* (*approximative* would be more exact and less ideological), *creole patois*, *creole*, and even *creole language* emphasize the emergence of creoles as autonomous linguistic systems. They highlight a sociohistorical process of creolization that is significantly different from the traditional scheme that views creoles as evolutions from pidgins, which are associated with the first decades of colonization.[5]

Notes

1 One should not be misled by the 1974 publication date. Jules Faine died in 1958, and the work was published posthumously by Gilles Lefebvre.
2 The magazine was very closely aligned with the Communist Party.
3 More curious readers should read Dominguez (1986), which presents a more complex state of affairs (Ed.).
4 Captain Fleury's report published by J. P. Moreau (1987) is important proof of this.
5 For such a sociohistorical discussion of the terms *pidgin*, *jargon*, *creole*, and *koiné*, see Mufwene (1997a).

2 Concepts and settings

The case of French creoles

This book is intended as a contribution to studies of creolization in general, and, although I focus on French creoles, references to other creole language varieties are not excluded. Let us start with a description of the basic terminology and a brief examination of how the terms are used.

In lay language the terms *pidgin*, *sabir*, *lingua franca*, and *creole* are used indistinguishably as near synonyms, but specialists use them to designate languages that either have different functions or are in different stages of evolution. (For a comparison of this microlinguistic system among some 'classic' authors, see Bal 1975.) Interest in the study of creoles began around the end of the nineteenth century, springing from the assumption that this research area could shed light on, or provide arguments for, the theoretical debates which had divided European linguists.

Baggioni (1986) discusses this clearly, so it is unnecessary to dwell on it here. Suffice it to note that, in the mid-twentieth century, the classification of creoles in *Bibliographie Linguistique* still reflects uncertainties that stem from conflicting views of their genetic status. The 1957 edition of this important reference work includes a section entitled 'mixed languages,' in which creoles and pidgins are placed side by side with Jewish and Romani languages.[1] In subsequent editions this section has been removed, and its content is presented under various titles, one of them 'creolized languages,' which is organized into five subcategories: Spanish, Portuguese, French, and English creoles, as well as Pidgin (English). The change in theoretical viewpoint is noteworthy, even if the classifications remain somewhat disputable.

The inventory of languages that can be classified as 'creoles' is not established. Reinecke's (1975) monumental *Bibliography of Pidgin and Creole Languages* includes works on over a hundred such languages; Hancock (1977a) identifies 127 pidgins and creoles, grouping them in lexifier-based sets. More recently Holm (1989) and Smith (1995) have produced more extensive inventories, although Smith's identification criteria are not clear (Mufwene 1997b). Hancock, whose classification seems to have inspired Holm's, groups them as follows:

English-based varieties: 35, including not only the English creoles of Jamaica and Hawaii, which are spoken by 1 million and 500,000 people respectively, but also Pitcairnese, spoken by 150 descendants of the Bounty mutineers

who settled in Pitcairn in 1790 (it is interesting to note also that in the nineteenth century some of those mutineers' descendants emigrated to Norfolk Island, where approximately one thousand people now speak an English creole related to Pitcairnese).

French-based varieties: 15, including not only varieties traditionally classified as creole (viz., Louisiana Creole, Haitian, Guyanais, the Lesser Antilles varieties, Seychellois, Mauritian, and Réunionnais) but also many others much less known and whose existence or survival are uncertain. These include: Souriquois (now called Micmac – (formerly used between French fishermen and native Nova Scotians)), Michif (born out of contact between the French and Cree Indians, spoken in Manitoba), Franco-Icelandic pidgin, 'Petit Mauresque' (from North Africa), French Pidgin of Guinea (relexified from the Portuguese creole), 'Petit-Nègre' of Côte d'Ivoire and former French possessions of Africa, Tai-Boi (a Franco-Annamite pidgin), and the French pidgin of New Caledonia or Bislama (probably a relexification of an English pidgin; Charpentier 1979:42). This inventory highlights the problem of how to count such languages. For example, Hancock groups together all the Antillean French creoles (viz., Guadeloupéen, Martiniquais, Dominican, Saint-Lucian, and the creoles of Grenada, Saint Thomas, and Trinidad, though he does not take into account subvarieties spoken on smaller satellite islands, such as St Barths); and yet these varieties are often as different from one another as Seychellois may be from Mauritian – both of which he lists as separate creoles (though he ignores Rodriguais). All this shows that a realistic inventory of these creoles cannot be established in the absence of previously established criteria that make it possible to distinguish those cases where regional variation corresponds to two or more separate languages, as opposed to those where the varieties can be identified as dialects of the same language.

Portuguese-based varieties: 14 creoles or pidgins, including Papiamento (supposedly a Spanish relexification of a former Portuguese pidgin); some varieties of creolized Portuguese from Brazil; the Portuguese creoles of Cape Verde, Senegal, Guinea, and the Gulf of Guinea Islands (Annobon, São Tomé, and Príncipe); varieties of pidginized Portuguese in Africa ('Broken Portuguese'), particularly in Angola; and the Portuguese creoles of the Indian Ocean (Daman, Sri Lanka, West Malaysia, Macao).

Spanish based-varieties: These are appreciably less numerous (only 7, of which the best known and best described is Palenquero of Columbia). The small number of Spanish creoles is one historical linguistic enigma to which I will return. It is hard to explain *a priori* why, especially on the sugar islands, Spanish-based Cuban or Dominican Creoles did not emerge, whereas Haitian and Jamaican Creoles developed on the French part of Hispaniola (Saint Domingue) and on Jamaica, respectively.

Varieties based on other European languages: 5 have developed apparently from Dutch;[2] 3 are of Italian origin; 6 of German origin (including Yiddish, which suggests that he could also have included 'Judeo-Spanish' and

'Judeo-Italian' in his inventory); 1 of Slavic origin (Manchurian Sino-Slavic); 4 from diverse lexifiers (including Russenorsk and Mediterranean Sabir).

Varieties based on Native American languages: 6 languages from various lexifiers, including Chinook (dear to R. Queneau) and 'Lingua Geral,' which has a Tupi-Guaraní base.

Varieties based on African languages: 21. This is undoubtedly the section that gives rise to the most heated controversies, because Africanists are divided; many refuse to consider lingua franca varieties of various African languages as pidgins or creoles (Mufwene 1989, 1997a). Hence, authors differ over what they include in this category. Some will accept only two or three varieties (though not necessarily the same ones) as 'creolized' or 'creole' (e.g., Pidgin Hausa, Sango, Fanagalo, or Juba Arabic of the Sudan, Lingala, Kikongo-Kituba), whereas others, such as Owens (1998), have extended the category to include all lingua francas possessing certain features typically associated with creolization.

Diverse varieties from other non-European lexifiers: 10 or more. In principle, Holm (1989) provides more recent information than Hancock, although in a few respects it is no more reliable. In any case, the classification itself remains uncertain.

Thus the total number of language varieties included in the category of pidgins and creoles exceeds 200. (Smith (1995) lists over 500 varieties.)[3] However, as noted above, such estimates are of little significance. Since the debate on the distinction between language and dialect remains open (and, in any case, is beyond the scope of this study), it is necessary to define more precisely the terms we are using, terms whose usage and meanings are far from clearly and unanimously established. (See also Mufwene's 1997b critique of Smith's 1995 enumeration of pidgins and creoles.)

Pidgin

The etymology of this term, in contrast with that of *creole*, remains mysterious and controversial. It has long been admitted that its most likely etymon is the English word *business*, distorted in the pronunciation of Chinese-speakers during the first half of the nineteenth century. In fact, in the phrase *it's your business*, the word *business* is produced in Pidgin English as *pidjin*. Numerous other hypotheses have been proposed, however, none of which appears wholly convincing. Thus the term *pidgin* has also been related to the Portuguese term *occupação*, 'occupation, business' (Leland 1876, cited in Todd 1974:20), though with no clear explanation of its phonetic evolution. It has also been linked to a tribe of Oyapock Indians, the Pidians; the term *pidian* was supposedly diffused as early as the seventeenth century from South America, through vernacular English (Reinecke 1959, cited in Valdman 1978:3). According to another hypothesis, *pidgin* can be traced back to the Portuguese *pequeno*, 'small,' in the phrase *pequeno Português*, which is used to characterize 'corrupted' Portuguese varieties in Africa and elsewhere (a phrase resembling *petit français*). It has even been linked to the

Hebrew word *pidyom*, 'barter' used to designate the English spoken in the ghettos of London. This hypothesis is unlikely, given the relatively recent attestation of the term. Hancock (1979:81–86) provides a brief critical examination of these etymologies, with more detailed discussions (see also Baker and Mühlhäusler 1990 – Editor).

Regardless of the hypothesis one adopts, the term *pidgin* seems to have been used first of all to designate a language or language variety, before being used to characterize a language type – which is essentially a functional, rather than a structural, classification. (Pidgins are always contact languages for speakers who otherwise speak their native languages.) One of the sources of confusion therefore lies in the fact that the word designates either a type of language, as defined above, or particular languages, generally lexified by English, which differ among themselves. The latter are distinguished from each other by the name of the place where they are spoken, as in *Nigerian/Cameroon/Chinese Pidgin (English)*, etc. (exactly what one must in fact do with French creoles to avoid confusing them with each other).

Sabir and lingua franca

The problem is similar, though simpler, with the terms *sabir* and *lingua franca*. Indeed, these terms are applied, with differentiation, to languages which, like pidgins, serve as means of communication for speakers of different languages.

The main difference is that *lingua franca* is generally used for a contact variety of what is otherwise the vernacular of a community. Thus, Dioula is originally the vernacular of an ethnic group in Côte d'Ivoire, consisting of hundreds of thousands of members, identified by the same name. However, the language also serves as a trade language in West sub-Saharan Africa. It is spoken among itinerant merchants, who, regardless of their origin, are also called Dioulas.

The same is not true of a *sabir*, which may be closer to a *pidgin*, because it has been noticeably restructured. It designates an approximation, somewhat simplified (if a precise and established meaning can be attributed to 'simplification'), of a pre-existing language. Differentiating more finely, one could say that a contact language is a *sabir* when it is still in its initial stage of emergence through the restructuring of a pre-existing language; it becomes a *pidgin* after it has stabilized to some extent.

All that said, *Sabir* and *Lingua Franca* were originally the designations of particular languages that are now extinct; and those languages must be briefly taken into account, because some ingenious minds have assigned them roles in creole genesis. For *lingua franca*, the main reference is Schuchardt (1909), which has been translated and annotated by Markey (1979:26–47, 113–121). (The problem has also been approached by several authors – e.g., Hancock 1977b:283–291, Whinnom 1977:295–310 – from the perspective set out above. Whinnom includes an extensive bibliography on the subject.)

It is generally agreed that *lingua franca* and *sabir* designate more or less the same linguistic reality, with the second term having a more recent usage.

However, it should help to consider Schuchardt's observations, as translated by Markey:

> Lingua Franca is the communicative language formed of a Romance lexicon that arose in the Middle Ages between Romans and Arabs and subsequently Turks; it appears to have spread along the whole of the southern and eastern Mediterranean coasts. At the present time, it is unknown in the Levant. It is now restricted to the Berbers with the exception of those in Morocco. Many scholars share the opinion that it extends to all Mediterranean ports, while others contend that Lingua Franca does not actually occur anywhere. It is not difficult to resolve the contradiction between these two opinions. On the one hand, if one considers that the traveling speakers of Lingua Franca were seamen, then it was occasionally heard everywhere. On the other hand, one might object to recognizing Lingua Franca as a fixed, fully fledged language, but rather consider it a more or less individualized aberration from which, to be sure, it can scarcely be distinguished in specific cases.
>
> (Markey 1979:26)

Creolists have striven to push the origin of the Lingua Franca back well before the period proposed by Schuchardt. Hancock echoes these theories:

> One opinion is that Lingua Franca originated at the time of the Crusades (AD 1095ff) on the Jerusalem battlefields, later spreading westward along the shores of the Mediterranean with the military and merchant vessels. Basing her hypothesis upon a study of early documentary clues, Noeljeanne Adkins at the University of Texas at Austin believes that the beginning of the Lingua Franca is to be sought as many as a thousand years earlier than the Crusades.
>
> (Hancock 1977b:283)

There have undoubtedly been contact languages (i.e., 'lingua francas')[4] since the Roman Empire, but this by no means proves a historical continuity from these lingua francas to the Lingua Franca which Schuchardt investigated. The problem, in some respects, is similar to the one discussed in the preceding chapter: the fact that, in the ACR, 'Baragouins' (spoken by the native Caribs in their interactions with Europeans) and 'black varieties' (spoken by Africans in French colonies) succeeded each other does not in any way demonstrate a genetic relation between the former and the latter.

The term 'Roman,' which seems to have overlapped in meaning with the term 'Frank' did not specifically identify the Romans themselves; in some cases it seems to have designated people who lived in parts of the Roman Empire. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, the former Gaul (today's France) was for some time under Frankish (Germanic) domination, and the term 'Frank' was used to refer to those who lived in the western part of the former Roman

Empire. Besides, in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, the most common language was certainly Greek. We should therefore not be misled by the apparent Latinity of the term *lingua franca*. Schuchardt seems to have established the etymology of the word 'Franca':

> The Arabs termed the language of the Europeans with whom they came into contact the language of the Franks, *lisan al faranž* (*al-frandž*) or Frankish, as the Romans were called, while the name *rūm* applied to the Greeks or Byzantines, and certainly these 'Romans' were primarily Italians. It is particularly prevalent in Genovese and Venetian trade with the Levant .... The Europeans imitated the Oriental in this use of the expression *lingua franca* only when in contact with them. When they made use of the term among themselves, they applied it to a fractured Romance spoken by those with whom they came into contact. Thus, the original meaning was narrowed to that which is accepted as valid here, and this meaning was then finally expanded in another direction; that is, by *lingua franca*, one usually means any widely spread commercial argot. Thus, it has been translated as 'free speech'; just as *porto franco* is translated as 'free port.'
>
> (Markey 1979:32)

Schuchardt conducted a large survey of citations and attestations of Lingua Franca, from which it can be inferred, as he himself does, that in the eastern and central Mediterranean it was lexified essentially by Italian, whereas later, in the western Mediterranean, it was apparently lexified by Spanish. It is the first of these varieties which is illustrated in the famous *turqueries* 'pretensions' of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Molière was allegedly inspired, if not given the idea, by the Chevalier d'Avieux, who was the Minister Plenipotentiary to the Dey of Algiers and who, in his memoirs, reports that he was received in this language (Perego 1968:600). These two varieties of Lingua Franca were of course in contact with and influenced each other. As Schuchardt emphasizes, Algiers played a central role in the seventeenth century:

> The geographical mid-point of this essentially uniform Lingua Franca is formed by Algiers, though not due to the fact that it was here where Italian and Spanish spheres of power came into contact, but rather because it was here that there was a firm citadel whence a network of piracy spread over the Mediterranean. The commercial argot became chiefly a slave language.
>
> (Markey 1979:35)

According to Schuchardt, there were 25,000 Christian slaves in Algiers in the early seventeenth century and Lingua Franca served as a medium of communication between masters and slaves, as well as, undoubtedly, among slaves speaking different European languages. Lingua Franca remained in usage in Algiers until the French conquest. In 1830 a *Dictionnaire de la langue française ou petit mauresque* was published in Marseilles, providing evidence of the state of the

language as it was observed 'in seaboard towns of Algiers.' Under the French occupation, Lingua Franca evidently Gallicized and took the name *Sabir*. It is likely that this evolution was influenced, through convergence, by strategies that speakers of Arabic used while learning French, a phenomenon that is evidenced particularly by lexical contributions from Arabic that are attested in Lingua Franca in the seventeenth century.

It is thus necessary to clarify and determine both the meanings and usages of these different terms (applied, of course, to *types* of languages, rather than to *particular* languages). Perego (1968:604) introduced an additional term in proposing the name *pseudo-sabirs* for 'language varieties resulting from unilateral efforts made by individuals or groups of individuals to reproduce, when necessary, a prestigious or socially superior language in a given situation.' The existence of such language varieties is certainly evident. However, taking into account the intentions behind such productions, it seems preferable to identify them simply as approximations of the target language. The term *interlanguage* is also to be avoided, because some scholars apparently use it when focusing on interference, rather than more generally on second-language acquisition strategies (Chaudenson 1986).

Ducrot's *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage* (1972) proposes some definitions which merit attention insofar as they include a classic theory of creolization:

> The existence of regular relations between communities speaking different languages often brings about a mixed language which makes possible direct communication without recourse to translation. The resultant language is called *sabir* (not without a negative connotation)
>
> 1 when it is used in sporadic relations with limited functions, especially for trade; and
> 2 when it does not have a well-defined grammatical structure and allows mostly juxtapositions of words.
>
> On the other hand, once a grammatically coherent language emerges, it is called *pidgin*. Like national languages and dialects, it meets its speakers' communicative needs (with the potential to support literature). When such a language becomes the primary (or unique) language of a community, it is called a *creole*.

These definitions are not easy to accept, because, perhaps inadvertently, they suggest a premature typological classification of these languages as 'mixed languages' and they establish among these terms relations and a historical succession that are hardly admissible, as will be shown below. Such views implicitly refer to the most 'classic' theory of creole genesis, as formulated especially by Hall (1962:162), which posits a three-stage 'life-cycle': pidginization, creolization, and (eventually) decreolization. From this perspective, the initial pidgin is a rudi-

mentary linguistic system (with elementary grammatical structures and a reduced lexicon); its functions are limited, and it is not the mother tongue of any of its speakers. (This definition corresponds to what the above-cited dictionary calls a *sabir*.) Accordingly, a creole emerges when a pidgin becomes the mother tongue, first of part of the community that speaks it, then of the whole. This 'nativization' is accompanied by the stabilization and complexification of its system, as well as by the diversification and extension of functions. The language is no longer associated with reduced functions, nor is it any longer reserved to particular circumstances of communication. The link between structural and functional evolution is of course difficult to show, but a language adapts to the conditions in which it is spoken and becomes fit to meet its functions. (The notion 'language' is, of course, used here not only for the linguistic system itself but for the language/speaker combination.)

Terminology and theory

The study of creolization leads one to formulate reservations about the validity of the above hypothesis and to wonder whether the proposed pidgin-to-creole evolution is conceivable. Bollée (1977:11) was the first to put forward a clear critique of Hall's theory (about which my study of the genesis of Réunionnais had raised some skepticism): 'Let us, thanks to the work of Chaudenson, ask a question which we will also attempt to answer. Is it necessary to posit this intermediate pidgin stage in the genesis of this Indian Ocean creole?' Bollée points out justifiably that pidgins, as Hall imagines them, are

> for the most part, trade languages; that is, they are used in settings of very specific and limited communication, in which even before the self-service era, one could get by without an elaborate discourse. Hall uses the term *slightness of contact*, i.e., rare and superficial contacts, to describe social relations among speakers who communicate with one another by means of a pidgin. Consequently, pidgins are reduced languages which are fit only for reduced needs of communication.

Taking some examples from cases discussed above, the *baragouin* used by the Caribs in their interaction with the Europeans can be considered a pidgin. So can the Mediterranean Lingua Franca, at least before it 'found a home' in North Africa. On the other hand, as I suggested above and will demonstrate in detail, the varieties spoken by Blacks in the French colonies of the Antilles and Indian Ocean do not fit into the category of 'pidgins.' In addition, they did not in any way develop from *baragouin*s, even if usage of the terms *jargon* or *baragouin* may create ambiguities.

There is thus confusion which has arisen out of more or less complete ignorance of the real sociohistorical conditions of the genesis of creoles. The advances in our knowledge (though nonetheless significant) have not produced the results we might have expected on the theoretical level. This shortcoming