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**Serial Verb Constructions:  
An argument for substrate influence**

**by**

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## **Dedication**

To my mother, Wanda Mahaffey who always believed that I could accomplish anything I set my mind to do. I promise to continue to aspire to be the person you always considered me to be. I love and miss you very much.

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The debate of the genesis of creole languages has been ongoing for many years. Although there are many theories that have been proposed, there are two that are the most polarized and have received the most amount of attention. These include universal theories and substrate theories. The central goal of the present paper is to investigate the role that serial verb construction (SVCs) can play in providing evidence for substrate influence in creoles. It does this by looking at the use of SVCs or lack thereof in the following creoles: Louisiana Creole, Haitian Creole, Papiamentu, and Palenquero. I provide evidence that demonstrates that the presence of SVCs in a creole depends on whether they can also be found in their substrate language. By doing this, I successfully prove that substrate influence plays a bigger role than suggested by universalist.

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# **Chapter1**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 OVERVIEW**

The central goal of the present paper is to investigate the role that serial verb constructions (SVCs) can play in providing evidence for substrate influence in creoles. It does this by looking at the use of SVCs or lack thereof in the following creoles: Louisiana Creole (LC), Haitian Creole (HC), Papiamentu, and Palenquero. These creoles are all spoken in North and South America and the Caribbean and have African language substrates. I hypothesize that a creole will only have SVCs if the substrate languages that predominantly contribute to it also have SVCs. In other words, if a creole's primary substrate language(s) does not have serial verbs, then it will not have them either. I believe that SVCs are a good candidate to illustrate substrate influence since they follow Singler's (1996) three criteria (see Section 3). Furthermore, I will discuss the consequences of my findings on the Language Bioprogram Hypothesis (LBH), a theory by Bickerton (1983, 1988, 1999a, 1999b) that states among other things that substrate languages have little influence on the features found in creole languages.

### **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE**

Through recent contact with speakers of Afro-Seminole Creole (ASC), a creole mostly spoken in Texas and Northern Mexico, I have come to believe that constructions that many scholars have noted as being features of pidgins and creoles may not be found in all

such languages. Specifically, the constructions I am referring to are serial verb constructions (SVCs), which are so called because they are comprised of two or more verbs grouped together to describe a single event (see section 3.2 for a more about these constructions). The fact that SVCs cannot be found in all creoles comments on one of the theories of the genesis of these languages-Bickerton's Language Bioprogram Hypothesis (LBH).

The debate of the genesis of creoles has been ongoing for many years. Although there are many theories that have been proposed, there are two that are the most polarized and have received the most amount of attention. These include universal theories (which include the aforementioned LBH) and substrate theories. The present paper although not discounting contributions that Bickerton has had on the research of creoles, argues against one particular idea within it that suggests that substrate languages are not a factor when considering the similarities between creoles. Particularly, it tries to demonstrate that in the case of SVCs, substrate influence is the most likely explanation for its presence in creoles. Furthermore, the present paper explores the usefulness of substrate theories in explaining both similarities as well as differences between creoles.

The outline of this paper is as follows: Section 2 provides a detailed account of the approaches to creole genesis and development. First, it presents the major claims of the LBH and how it has contributed to the debate of the origin of creole languages (Section 2.1). Following, it summarizes three arguments that refute these major claims (Section 2.2). Section 2.3 contains a brief synopsis of a position that leans toward the LBH but uses a different approach. This leads to an examination of the theories that can be used as support in the present paper for the presence of SVCs in creoles, the substrate

hypotheses (Section 2.3). It should be noted that although, I present specific theories about how substrates influence creoles, the present paper in no way endorses any of them.

Section 3 first provides an overview of the different definitions there are about serial verb constructions (3.1) then gives the criterion that will be used to determine serial verb usage in the creoles discussed in this paper (3.2). Section 3 ends with a discussion of why SVC's are a good contender to argue for substrate influence (3.3) while section 4 details the creole languages listed above, including the African languages that contribute to them as well as the SVCs each language contains. The paper concludes with a discussion of what my analysis implies about the LBH as well as suggestions for future research (Section 5).

## **Chapter 2**

### **Theoretical approaches of creole genesis and development**

Neumann-Holzschuh and Schneider (2000) suggests that in order to provide a thorough analysis of the restructuring of creoles, one must determine which framework provides the most appropriate description. Many proposals have been made in an attempt to account for the origins and development of creoles with many attempts appearing to be an extreme of another. Below I discuss some of the approaches there are to this topic, focusing when I can on what they say about serial verb constructions.

#### **2.1 THE LANGUAGE BIOPROGRAM HYPOTHESIS**

According to Bickerton's proposal, the Language Bioprogram Hypothesis can be used to explain grammatical patterns within and between creoles. Through his research of Hawaiian Creole English, he has concluded that the patterns he has found were not "inherited from preexisting languages but rather represented the surfacing, in an unusually direct form, of an innate program for the creation of language that formed part of our species' biological endowment" (1999, p. 196). This "innate program" is the main feature of his bioprogram and leads him to the assumption that children are the innovators of creole languages. In addition, his theory seems to comment on four main aspects of creole genesis.

Table 1. Four major tenets that led to Bickerton's Language Bioprogram Hypothesis

TENETS	
a. Single generation formation	c. Feature similarity of creoles
b. Rudimentary nature of pidgin	d. Lack of substrate influence

The first of the four discusses the time it takes for creoles to develop. He argues that at least in the case of plantation creoles, they are formed within a single generation. Specifically he states that his evidence proves that Hawaiian Creole English (HCE) had begun by 1900 and had finished by 1920 (Bickerton 1983). The second feature that has been highlighted in his work is the fact that these first generation children were able to create a fully developed language despite the fact that the linguistic input provided was inconsistent and unstable. This conclusion is reached on the basis of his belief that HCE was formed without borrowing much from the ancestral languages of the children's parents or from other contact languages. Instead, children in creole-forming environments are "required to build language out of input materials that ... are reduced well below the minimum required by natural languages" (Bickerton 1999b, p. 49).

The last two tenets are the two with which this paper is concerned. They include the similarities between creole languages and the fact that these similarities cannot be attributed to substrate influence. Instead of tracing similarities such as tense, aspect, and mood between creoles to ancestral languages, Bickerton argues that the reason that creoles are similar is due to the fact that the innate linguistic device within children (who are considered to be the originators of creole languages) is universal. In a comment about HCE being influenced by outside language sources, Bickerton dismisses similarities due

to ancestral or lexifier languages by claiming that “the claims of linguistic similarity between creoles and Portuguese or between creoles and West African languages are grossly exaggerated” (1983, p. 121). He further states that in the case of this particular creole, its source of creation was in Hawaii. According to him, if this was not the case then he would have been able to find immigrants who spoke a language that paralleled the creole in some way, but he could not. He supports his argument by pointing out that the Caribbean creoles and HCE do not share any of the same substratum languages, yet they have many features in common.

This innateness viewpoint of Bickerton’s is supported by Chomsky’s (1981, 1982) theory of language acquisition. Chomsky argues that during acquisition, children engage a Universal Grammar that allows them to correctly choose features of grammar that are appropriate. In fact, Bickerton himself (1999a) relates his bioprogram hypothesis to that of Chomsky’s stating that the main difference between the two is that Chomsky’s device has the ability to generate many grammars whereas the bioprogram only has one grammar that remains constant, but has the quality of being modified depending on the input. Another hypothesis that Bickerton uses as support for his theory is Borer and Wexler’s (1984) lexical learning hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that there is a set of universal syntactic properties that like Bickerton’s LBH is invariable. McWhorter (2005) endorses Bickerton’s idea of similarity between creoles by typologically categorizing them based on the simplicity of grammatical structure. These include lack of both inflectional morphology and tone.

The weakness with universalist accounts like Bickerton’s LBH is that they seem to suggest that the commonality between creole languages are that they relate in the same

way to one another in terms of grammatical features (i.e. simplicity) or that they were formed in a shorter amount of time than older languages. However, as recent work (Singler 1996; Baker 2000; Siegel 2007) indicates, this is not the case. These scholars comment on the issues above and Siegel deduces from recent linguistic research of HCE, that creole languages should not be used as support for the LBH. Following I will summarize these remarks against Bickerton's proposal.

### **2.1.1 CRITICISM OF THE LANGUAGE BIOPROGRAM HYPOTHESIS**

Singler (1996) challenges two of the tenets mentioned above, that of single generation genesis and of nativization. Instead, he argues for a longer period of creolization that occurs among adults and not children. For example, after presenting evidence that illustrates that the assumption that the larger the population of African children there are in a colony the more radical the creole within that colony is was faulty, he asserts that the inverse is true. This assertion allows him to conclude that contrary to what Bickerton claims, adults are the agents of creoles. Furthermore, he points out that creole genesis (at least in Martinique and Haiti) took longer than 25 years and could have taken as long as 80 years. From this, he is able to reject Bickerton's suggestion of a rapid creole emergence and settle instead on the idea of a gradual emergence.

Baker (2000) agrees with Singler's criticisms and adds that cross comparison studies on creoles have shown their features are not as similar as is claimed by Bickerton's bioprogram. Siegel (2007) looks at three of these features. These include the tense/mood/aspect (TMA) system, adjectives as a category of verbs, as well as sentential complementation. I summarize his arguments about the first feature below.



Siegel argues that contrary to what Bickerton (1981) claims, the TMA system does not have similar ranges of meaning in creoles. Particularly, he disputes the idea that the tense marker *bin* (which over time has phonetically changed to *wen*) was ever used to mark [+Anterior] (indicates past before past) in Hawaiian Creole English, but that it was instead used as a simple tense marker (i.e. simple past tense). He provides historical proof in the form of examples from the *Hawaii Educational Review* (HER) (September 1921) as well as from other sources such as the *Everyday English for Hawaii's Children*, by John A. Ferrerio (1937). An example of this evidence comes from a quotation from HER which states:

The Simple Past Form... is the tense form that is used more than all others combined... It is also the form most abused in Hawai'i, for it is the form for which the eternal *been* is most often substituted. (HER 1921 p.3 as quoted in Siegel 2007, p.60)

Some examples of the use of this simple past form from HER (1921 p.14) is found in (1):

- (1)    a. Us *been* go post office. 'We went to the post office.' (Siegel 2007, p.60)  
      b. You *been* go store? 'Did you go to the store?' (Siegel 2007, p.60)

These examples seem to support Siegel's argument that unlike what has been asserted by Bickerton (1981), *been* has not and does not mark anterior. If this is true, this is a behavior within the tense system that differs from those in other creoles.

Table 2. Summary of criticisms against Bickerton's LBH

- 
- |  |
|--|
| a. Creoles emerged gradually over multiple generations, not in a single one. |
| b. Creoles were the innovations of adults and not children.                  |
| c. Creoles are not as similar as claimed to be.                              |
- 

## 2.2 THE SEMANTIC CASE INSTANTIATION PRINCIPLE

The Semantic Case Instantiation Principle is a position held by Schiller (1993) that theorizes that the reason that creoles have SVCs is due to an absence of prepositions. He comes to this conclusion through an argument which simply stated says that semantic relations (i.e. Instrument, Goal, Source, and Location) will be realized within a language in the most accessible manner. By adhering to a hierarchy that he refers to as the Relative Abstractness of Levels, he claims that since morphology is less abstract than syntax which in turn is not as abstract as semantics it is the most “concrete possible mechanism” (1993, p.176) for expressing semantic relations. If a language lacks the necessary tools to manifest these semantic relations morphologically, then it will instead do so syntactically (i.e in the case of creole languages). In regards to the semantic relations mentioned above, this allows for lexical representations in the form of either verbs or prepositions.

As support for his point, he uses a statement by Bickerton (1988) about it being no fluke that creoles without serial verb constructions are those that inherited much of their morphology from their superstrate while those with serial verbs being those that inherited very little. In response to this statement he claims, “I agree that this is no accident; it follows from the Semantic Case Instantiation Principle” (p. 177). He uses Thai, a language that apparently does not have a category for prepositions, to illustrate his

point. Although he was able to elicit a sentence that contained a preposition, he argues that it was borrowed from Khmer, a contact language, and is highly marked.

Instead of arguing for the reliance of the substrate or superstrate, Schiller asserts that we must look to the pidgin. According to him, the creole will first see if the pidgin has the needed grammatical devices and if it comes up empty, then it will by chance choose the necessary material from one of its other sources. He states that, “in a process of creolization, two or more languages may be available as sources for borrowing” (1993, p. 179). This idea is not new. According to Hancock (1993), Huttar (1973) also argued that it is not necessary to look to the creoles’ European or indigenous substrate languages to explain their semantics.

Lefebvre (1998) explains that there is no correlation between a preposition category and the presences of serial verbs. In discussing Haitian Creole, she points out that although this hypothesis correctly predicts that its superstrate French does not have serial verbs, it does not correctly do so for Haitian Creole or for one of its substrate languages Fon. Instead, both are believed to have a lexical category for prepositions. If this is the case, then these data seemingly contradict the Semantic Case Instantiation Principle.

### **2.3 THEORIES OF THE ORIGINS OF SUBSTRATE INFLUENCE**

Although many creolists believe that universal and substrate hypotheses are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Alleyene 1980; Mufwene 1986; Holm 1986, Thomason & Kaufman 1988, Hancock 1993), substratists usually focus on the different possibilities

in which substrate languages have contributed to creoles. Explicitly, these hypotheses claim that creoles (particularly the Atlantic ones) have certain constructions because of the influence of their African substrate languages. In other words, they argue that the resemblances between creoles and their substrates are too remarkable to be serendipitous. Furthermore, they suggest that variation within creoles can also be explained by the contribution of different substratum languages.

In addition, instead of attributing the creation of creoles to children, they maintain that adults with fully developed grammars either 1) took grammatical structures from their languages and infused it with lexical items from European languages, or 2) made approximations about the structure based on their first language and settled on those estimates that were not rejected by the hearer. The usefulness of these hypotheses is that they are able to explain both similarities and differences which the LBH alone fails to capture. Below, I discuss these approaches in more detail.

### **2.3.1 THE COMPONENTIAL APPROACH**

Hancock (1993) argues that creoles (at least the English-lexifier Atlantic ones) are the result of the coming together of many segments under different circumstances. He uses this approach to explain both creole genesis as well as to account for similarities and differences between creoles. According to him, creole languages are made up of four elements which include African languages, various dialects of English, a West African Creole, and other languages. The African languages, of course, are the substrate

languages of the creole. The fact that there are many combinations of possible substrate influences for different creoles can account for the differences among these creoles.

This approach suggests that the reason that English-based Atlantic creoles have many shared features is because of the West African Creole. This is a creole that Hancock claims is a by-product of the coming together of Ship English and the African languages spoken by females in the Lançado communities. This combination became what he calls Guinea Coast English which was acquired by those who handled the slaves while they waited to be deported to the Americas. These people used this language in their dealings with the slaves and passed certain features on to them. These features were then transferred into the creoles that were developed once the slaves reached their final destinations.

### **2.3.2 THE RELEXIFICATION HYPOTHESIS**

Muysken (1981) defines relexification as, "... the process of vocabulary substitution in which the only information adopted from the target language in the lexical entry is the phonological representation" (p.61). He also indicates that relexification is depended upon the semantics of the source and target language, stating that the two must overlap in these features in order to be associated with one another. In other words, the lexical item in the target language needs to have at least one similar semantic denotation with the source language in order for it to be considered for relexification.

Although this theory was developed to explain the process of second language learning, there are those who believe that relexification can be used to explain creole

genesis (Lumsden 1999a; Lefebvre 2001). They suggest that speakers of substrate languages use this process to acquire the vocabulary of the superstrate language. Both Lumsden (1999a) and Lefebvre (2001) add to Muysken's definition claiming that after relexification, the lexical entry not only has the phonological features of the target language, but also has the semantic and syntactic features of the source language. However, instead of arguing for relexification being dependent upon the semantics, Lefebvre proposes that it is relabeling ("the process of assigning a new phonological representation to a copied lexical entry" p. 374) that needs the semantic features to overlap. This results in only the functional categories with semantic content being relabeled while those without semantic content only being allowed to be copied and not relabeled. Those forms that are only copied are usually not pronounced.

Since this process of relexification is a cognitive one, it is also individualized. Each speaker of the substrate languages relexifies his/her lexicon independent of others. Therefore, in the beginning stages of creolization, the features of the creole are not stabilized across the community. This process can be used to explain the presence of variation in creole development (Lefebvre 2001).

Lumsden (1999a) suggests that the way to test this hypothesis is to compare the vocabularies of creole languages with the vocabularies of their superstrate and substrate languages. If the predictions of the relexification process are correct, then the phonological forms of the creole words would correspond to those of the superstrates. However, if the syntactic and semantic features of the superstrate languages do not match those of the substrates, then the creole will tend to follow the rules of the substrate.

### 2.3.3 TRANSFER

Another argument for substrate influence also uses a process that is found in second language acquisition (SLA) literature called transfer. Transfer in the context of SLA refers to features (i.e. phonological, semantic, or morphosyntactic) found in the first language of the language learner being conveyed into the target language (Siegel 2003).

The process of transfer does not appear to be much different from the process of relexification. In fact Lefebvre (1998) argues that, “the notion of transfer in creole genesis corresponds to the results of the process of relexification” in that “it is claimed that substratal features are transferred into the creole by means of relexification” (p.34). Furthermore, Lumsden (1999b) claims that transfer, which he refers to as reanalysis is only one of three “mental processes in creolization” of which relexification is “the most important” (p.129). These statements seem to suggest that transfer and relexification would not be complete without the other.

Table 3. Summary of theories accounting for similarities and differences of properties in creole languages

	Similarities	Differences
Universal	The universality of innate linguistic capacity. Shared features of West African Creole.	Different combinations of substrate language found in each creole. Individualization of process in beginning stages.
Componential		
Relexification		

As can be seen in Table 3, each of the theories of creole origins can be grouped according to whether they assume creoles to be alike, different, or mixed. Some substrate

theories are able to explain both similarities and differences, while universal hypotheses are only able to explain half of the story. However, I believe that if taken together, each of the theories can tell a complete and compelling story.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Serial Verb Constructions**

Serial Verb Constructions (SVCs) are of particular interest to creolists. They can be found in West African, Southeast Asian, Papuan and Creole languages. Though SVCs have only been seriously discussed since the 1980s there is considered to be a lack of unanimity about what constitutes a serial verb (Crowley 2002). Some have attributed this to the vagueness of the authors writing on the topic (Sebba 1987), while others have credited it to the fact that every definition seems to have exceptions (Dillon 2004). The present section will examine some of those descriptions before explaining the one used for the present analysis.

#### **3.1 PREVIOUS STUDIES ON SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS**

Foley and Olsen (1985) used data from the SVCs of both the Kwa languages of West Africa and the Papuan languages of Papua New Guinea to discuss the issue of clausehood. Their argument is for the singleness of the clauses that contain SVCs. In other words, they are concerned with presenting serial verbs as occurring within one clause without one being subordinate to the other. One reason they contend that SVCs are single clauses instead of deriving from multi-clausal sources is because the two types result in a contrast in meaning. For instance, they suggest that the difference in meaning

in the examples in (2) (taken from Stahlke (1970; p. 78)) stems from the fact that (b) can be followed by (c) whereas the same cannot be said of (a):

(2) Youruba (p.19)

- a. mo mu iwe wa ile  
I took book come home  
'I brought a book home.'
- b. mo mu iwe; mo si wa ile  
I took book I and came home  
'I took the book and I came home.'
- c. sugbon mo gbagbe la ti mu u wa pelu  
but I forgot to take it come also  
'But I forgot to bring it along.'

They suggest the reasoning behind the allowance of (2c) following (2b) and not (2a) comes from the fact that the verbs following the first one in a verb series is used to add a semantic function to the first verb. Because of this, the action of taking the book in (2a) is linked with the coming home event. However, this is not the case in (2b) where the two are considered separate occurrences. Therefore, in this interpretation, one can take the book, but not bring it home with oneself.

They further challenge a multi-clausal analysis for serial verbs by illustrating that there is also a meaning difference between the verbs when used in isolation in comparison to when they are used in the verb series. They continue by discussing the fact that the verbs in SVCs must share the same tense, mood, and aspect. In addition, when there are adverbial operators present, all verbs in a serial verb construction must be modified by it. Furthermore, they also indicate that SVCs are single clauses because there is a constraint on these constructions that requires the verb in the series to share a subject or requires that the object and subject co-refer.

Sebba's (1987) influential work on serial verb constructions supports Foley and Olsen's (1985) analysis of SVCs as mono-clausal. This is evident by the fact that two of his principle criteria for SVCs are that there should be no clause boundary between the verbs in the series and they should not be separated by any type of conjunction. In addition, he too proposes that all the verbs in the construction should be marked with the same tense and aspect. However, information that he adds to the criteria is that all the verbs in the series must be lexical. Lexicality is also one of Seuren (1990) descriptions of serial verbs. He further summarizes that the definition of SVCs can be boiled down to the following:

“that of surface verbs without an overt complementizer in bare pseudocomplementation, often standing in for defective lexical argument structure or fulfilling certain standard semantic functions for which the grammar of the language has not so far developed standardized categories, combined with the criterion that no cyclic rules of complementation have been applied other than controlled subject deletion” (p.32).

Seuren defines a pseudocomplement as “a suppositious sentential complement, foisted on the syntax of a verb which either does not require such a complement semantically, or, if it does, does not allow for it on the grounds of lexico-grammatical restrictions” (p. 20). He exemplifies this with an English sentence *John went fishing* where the gerund *fishing* is argued to be treated syntactically as if it were the object of the suppletive when it cannot be semantically argued to be so.

### **3.2 A UNIFIED ANALYSIS OF SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS**

Aikenhenvald (2005) has conducted a crosslinguistic study on languages with SVCs. Her analysis unifies those of above by stating that they are “a sequence of verbs which act together as a single predicate, without any overt marker of coordination, subordination, or syntactic dependency of any sort” (p.1). She elaborates by saying that, “serial verb constructions describe what is conceptualized as a single event. They are monoclausal; their intonational properties are the same as those of a monoverbal clause, and they have just one tense, aspect, and polarity value ” (p. 1). I add to this statement that the semantic meaning of the verbs in the series as a whole, must be different from their independent meaning. Her definition continues with a statement that supports Schiller (1990) in that these constructions may share arguments, but that it is not necessary. Further she notes, as did Seuren (1990), that the verbs need to be lexical, occurring independently of one another. Her characterization of SVC’s concludes with the description that with the verbs in the series, the transitivity values have the option of being the same or differing. This explanation of SVCs will be the one that I will adopt for the present paper.

### **3.3 SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS AND SINGLER’S (1996) SUBSTRATAL INFLUENCE CRITERIA**

Determining which features can be used as support for substratal influence is not an easy task. Although a substratist, Singler (1996) acknowledges that a mere comparison of similar features in a creole and its substratum languages is not enough to argue for

substratal influence. Instead he maintains that the compared features should meet the following:

- (3) “a) they are not shared with the lexifier language,  
b) they are nontrivial, and  
c) they are linguistically marked” (p. 218).

In terms of the first criterion, the creoles that are part of the present study meet it. The lexifier languages are English, French, and Spanish and none of them contains SVCs (although they may be used in some dialects of English with the verbs ‘go’ and ‘come’, the uses of serial verbs are not very productive). I am unsure of what exactly he meant by the term nontrivial, but I assume that he means that the feature needs to play a substantial role in the language and be productive. The creoles that are claimed to have SVCs in this paper can be argued as containing verbs in the series that have a range of semantic and syntactic properties, unlike those stated above for English. Finally, I adopt Finney’s (2004) argument that verb serialization should be considered linguistically marked due to the fact that there is no syntactic framework that can adequately account for it. Because SVC’s meet the three criteria set by Singler, I believe that it is a prime candidate to show substrate influence.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Creole Descriptions**

Below I provide descriptions of the creoles that will be used in the present study. Included in these descriptions are their origins. The development of all the creoles in this study involves slave populations; therefore no discussion of the origins of any of the creoles would be complete without a mention of them. This will lead to an examination of the possible substrate languages in each of the creole languages. Each description will also consider the geographical information of where the creoles are spoken as well as information about whether or not it has serial verb constructions. If the creole contains SVCs, then there will be a discussion of the types of constructions in both the creole and the substrate languages.

#### **4.1 LOUISIANA CREOLE**

Valdman et al. (1998) claim that Louisiana Creole (LC) was created between 1699 and 1750. Klingler (2003) on the other hand, adjusts this period a little by pointing out that Blacks did not appear in colonial Louisiana until about 1706. He further states that the trading of Africans to French Louisiana began in 1719 and lasted until 1731. However, one could point out that some theories of creolization (see Section 2.3) would allow for the possibility that what eventually became known as LC predates settlement in Louisiana. Whatever the case may be, the period of slave trade into Louisiana resulted in

5,310 Africans who mostly came from the Sengelaese (3,719). After a twelve-year period where no slaves were brought in, one last ship arrived at French-controlled Louisiana bringing in another 190 slaves from the Sengelaese. Although most would agree that the place from which the slaves were shipped does not provide any specific information about which geographical area the slaves came from originally, leaving from Sengelaese does suggest that the slaves most likely came from the Senegambian region (Klingler 2003).

Even though the Spanish, once they gained control of Louisiana did not leave a linguistic impression on the colony (at least one that affected the creole), they did preserve its growth in the population of slaves by continuing to import slaves into the state. Discussing the slave population during the time of Spanish rule, Klingler (2003) states that, “of the 7,981 slaves identified as Africans, 1,699, or 21.3 percent, appear in documents with designations pointing to an origin in the Sengambian region” (p.21). However, the Sengambian slaves were no longer in the majority during this period. Klingler goes on to say that the slaves from other regions increased during this time in Louisiana as well. Table 4 provides a summary of these regions and the amount of slaves from them in Spanish-controlled Louisiana. It is this linguistic situation of both the French- and Spanish-ruled Louisiana that laid the foundation for the development of LC.

Hall’s (2005) discussion of the *Louisiana Slave Database 1719-1820* seems to support Klingler’s analysis of the slave population in Louisiana. Although she does not break down the years in such a way that definitively point to which particular ethnicities were there during the formation of LC, her data along with that of Klingler’s suggests

that the top three frequent ethnicities in Louisiana during the time of 1719 and 1820 were Kongo, Mandingo, and Wolof. If Valdman et al.'s (1998) date of 1750 is taken as the date by which LC was fully formed then this means that LC was being used before Louisiana was transferred to Spain. Klingler states that the increase in slaves from regions other than the Senegambia did not occur until after the Spanish were in control. Taking these facts into consideration, it can be assumed that the predominant languages spoken during the formation of LC were Wolof and Mandinka.

Table 4. African regions Louisiana slaves came from during its control by the Spanish

REGION	LANGUAGE GROUP	NUMBER
Sengambian	Wolof/Mandinka	1,699
Bight of Benin	Mina	321
	Chamba	251
	Yoruba	237
	Fon	133
Bight of Biafra	Ibo	242
	Calabar/Efik	79
Central Africa	Congo	1,060

LC is now identified as being spoken in four areas of Louisiana. According to Valdman et al. (1998), these include “(1) a central area in the Bayou Teche region ...; (2)...Pointe Coupee Parish north of Baton Rouge; (3) the German Coast along the Mississippi... between Baton Rouge and New Orleans; (4)...in Saint Tammany Parish north of New Orleans” (p. 3). LC, Wolof and Mandinka are languages that do not contain any productive use of verb serialization. Both Valdman et al. (1998) and Klingler (2003) seem to agree that the use of verb serialization in LC is similar to that of English. Although on rare occasions other verbs may participate in a type of quasi-verb



serialization, the most common verbs in these types of construction are *vini* or *kouri*, which are the French equivalent of the English words *come* and *go*. These verbs are so frequent that one of the local names of LC is *kourivini*. Furthermore, Klingler states that he does not believe that these verbs participate in verb serialization in its truest sense, “since in most cases they cannot be considered lexicalized units whose collective meaning differs substantially from that of the semantic combination of their component verbs” (2003; p. 311).

Some examples of the use of the verbs *kouri* and *vini* in SVCs can be found below:

(4) Louisiana Creole

- a. Mo pa war lœr li **vini rivi**.  
I not see what time she arrived  
‘I didn’t see what time she arrived’ (Valdman et al. p.13)
- b. Nou **kouri moule** nou koton .  
We went ground our cotton.  
‘We went to grind our cotton’ (Klingler p.312)
- c. Mo **vini koze** ave G.  
I came chatted with G.  
‘I came to chat with G.’ (Klingler p. 312)

As can be observed by the examples in (4), the serial verb usage in LC do not seem to abide by the second criterion set out by Singler (1996). In other words, they are not used productively. Grammatically, they only are used to indicate past tense and the only semantic role they demonstrate is theme.

## 4.2 HAITIAN CREOLE

Haitian Creole (HC) is alleged by some to have been formed in Haiti between 1689 and 1740 (Lefebvre 1998). However, Valdman (1970) argues that HC did not originate in Haiti. Instead he argues that it began during Portuguese trading on the Western and Southern coast of Africa and in the Far East in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. He claims that while the Portuguese traded in these areas, they needed to communicate with the natives. In order to do so, a pidgin that he calls Afro-Portuguese Pidgin was formed from what he refers to as *Lingua Franca*, “a trade language used by sailors and traders from a multitude of nations in the Mediterranean basin” (p.7). Afro-Portuguese Pidgin is considered by him to be a language system that consisted of a mixture of Romance and African grammatical features, with a substantial amount of its lexicon derived from Portuguese and other Romance languages.

This theory now appears to be antiquated and neither Singler (1993) nor Lefebvre (1998) make any mention of an Afro-Portuguese Pidgin being one of the language systems imported into Haiti during the time of the slave trade. Instead, they describe HC as many creolists describe creole languages, as a development of language contact between slaves and masters on a plantation. They argue that the African languages during the time that HC was developed, Kwa languages, specifically Ewe-Fon, were the most prominent. Valdman believed that theories such as these are simplistic and inaccurate. He supported his hypothesis that HC was not created in Saint-Domingue by arguing that there are many Creole French dialects that are not only mutually intelligible with HC, but also have common sound systems. However, I believe that even if Valdman were correct in his assertion that there was a pidgin formed and then brought to

Haiti, this only tells one part of the story of the formation of HC. It should be remembered that one of the approaches discussed in the substrate influence section allows for creoles to be made up of several different components. It may be possible that one needs to factor in a pidgin element as part of HC.

Table 5 illustrates that during the proposed formative years of HC, there was a vast number of slaves being imported into Haiti. Both Singler (1993) and Lefebvre (1998) affirm that during this time the predominant African languages spoken during the three time periods were Kwa languages, specifically Ewe-Fon. More precisely, Lefebvre states that during this time, fifty percent of the slave population was speaking one of these two languages. Keeping these assertions in mind, I assume that the substrate languages that contributed the most to HC are Ewe and Fon.

Table 5. Number of slaves imported into Haiti during 1689-1740<sup>1</sup>, the formation of HC

1676-1700	1701-20	1721-1740
71,600	70,600	79,400

Both the creole and the substrate languages are considered to have verb serialization. The serial verbs that make up HC are ‘take’ serial verbs. These types of SVCs are considered to be one of the most common types found in serializing languages (Sebba 1987). Examples of serialization in HC can be seen in (5):

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers are taken from Singler 1993

(5) Haitian Creole

- a. Li pran krab ale nan mache.  
3sg take crab go in market  
'He brought the crab to the market.' (Lefebvre (1998) p. 355)
- b. Mwen pran liv bay Pol.  
I take book give Paul  
'I gave the book to Paul.' (Lefebvre (1998) p. 291)
- c. Jan pran kouto a koupe pen an.  
J. take knife DET cut chicken DET  
'Jan cut the chicken with the knife.'

These examples show a productive use of serial verbs. For instance, they can be used to demonstrate both theme (5a and b) and instrumental semantic roles (5c). Furthermore, as the following sentences illustrate, the same is true of the uses of serial verbs in Ewe and Fon as well. What is also observable by the examples in (6) and (7) is that HC must have been directly influenced by Fon in the case of serial verbs because they both use the 'take' construction.

(6) Fon

- a. É só àsón yì axi mĕ.  
3sg take crab go market in  
'He brought the crab to the market.' (Lefebvre (1998) p. 355)

(7) Ewe

- a. Kofi no tsi ku  
K. drink water die  
'Kofi died by drinking water'
- b. Kofi xō nya la se  
K. receive word the hear  
'Kofi believed the message'

### 4.3 SPANISH-BASED CREOLES

It is generally believed that there are no true Spanish-lexified creoles. Therefore, much of the literature about the two creoles discussed in this section surrounds whether or not

they are true creoles while those who accept them as such tend to concentrate on whether or not they are relexified. The arguments that arise about whether or not Palenquero (PAL) and Papiamentu (PAP) are creoles come from the fact that there are not many Spanish creoles despite the fact that the situation that gave rise to French, Dutch, English and Portuguese creoles was present in Spanish speaking countries. For example, there was an abundance of African slaves working in mines and on plantations who had limited access to Europeans in the Chocó region of Colombia as well in the Chota Valley of Ecuador (McWhorter 2000). Yet, these areas did not yield creole languages but instead dialects of the metropolitan languages.

Work has been published that convincingly demonstrates that PAL is indeed a creole through description of its morphology and syntax (Bickerton & Esclante 1970, henceforth B&E; Schwegler & Green 2007, henceforth S&G). Particularly, these works claim that PAL replaces bound morphemes found in the Spanish superstrate that serve as tense or aspect markers with free morphemes. In addition, it shares with such creoles as Haitian Creole the postposition of pronominal determiners. However, S&G do point out that there are some differences between PAL and typical Atlantic Creoles. For example, it lacks predicate clefting and has a tripartite system of predicate negation. Furthermore, PAL differs from other Caribbean Creoles socio-historically as well. It is claimed to not have developed in a plantation-type environment and the people of Palenque always had direct access to Spanish (McWhorter 2000; S&G 2007). With these deviations from the norm, the confusion surrounding this creole is understandable.

Those who discuss that the possibility of Palenquero and Papiamentu being relexified creoles (Holm 1989; McWhorter 2000), believe that at one time these creoles

were Portuguese-based. McWhorter asserts that if only looked at synchronically, these creoles are without a doubt Spanish-based. However, if observed diachronically, they would be shown to have had at one time a Portuguese lexicon. Specifically he states, “these creoles arose not via the pidginization of Spanish input, but via subsequent relexification of Portuguese creoles, which had themselves developed via the pidginization of Portuguese” (p. 13).

He uses Goodman (1987) to support his conclusions about PAP. Goodman states that during the time when slaves were brought into Curaçao, there were not enough Spanish-speaking people on the island to serve as a superstrate for PAP. Furthermore, the slaves who were brought in were from Portuguese-speaking Brazil. Grant (1996) is also used to support the argument that PAP was derived from a Portuguese-based creole. McWhorter indicates that Grant presents an exhaustive list of lexical items that are clearly from Portuguese. PAL is also argued by McWhorter to be derived from a Portuguese creole. The support he uses comes from sociohistorical facts. For example, there is evidence of a connection between São Tomense and PAL. Additionally, like PAP, PAL has an extensive amount of lexical items that come from the Portuguese.

The fact that PAP and PAL may have ties to Portuguese is of importance to the present discussion. For example, it is believed that one of the predominate substrate languages of PAL is Kikongo which is spoken in Angola (among other places; Schwegler 2006). Angola is stated as one of the places for slaves who were shipped from São Tome (McWhorter 2000). This connection can be used as support for the African influences on the language. This issue will be discussed further in the following section.

#### **4.3.1 PALENQUERO**

As has already been alluded to, Palenquero (PAL) was not developed in the typical plantation type environment that was common for other creole languages. Instead, it is believed that the language is a result of the coming together of fugitive slaves (this is similar to the way that Afro-Seminole Creole was formed) from the coastal Cartagena region (S&G 2007). During the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, runaway slave communities began to emerge near this region in Colombia. Because the area was very mountainous it provided a haven for these communities due to the fact that outsiders did not want to venture into these areas (Hall 2005; S&G 2007). El Palenque de San Basilio (also known as Palenque), a village located approximately 50 miles outside of Cartagena is said to have been founded in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century by an ex-king of an African state and thirty followers (B&E 1970; Holm 1989). Soon after, runaway slaves from surrounding areas joined the group. By 1691, when the people of Palenque were attacked by Spanish troops, there were 450 men present in the battle (Hall 2005). This did not include women and children.

Although I could not find any explicit claim about the time period that PAL was formed, both B&E (1970) and Schwegler (2000) make note of a document dated at 1772 that speaks of both Spanish and an unusual language being spoken fluently by the inhabitants of Palenque. If I assume that this language was PAL, then it would not be unreasonable to state the formation of PAL as having occurred between 1691 (the time that Hall indicates that the Spanish offered a treaty to the Palenqueros) and 1772. During the early stages of the Cartagena slave trade, slaves were imported from both West and Central West Africa (B&E 1970; Hall 2005; Schwegler 2006; S&E 2007). Although this

fact suggests that PAL has numerous language choices as possible substrates, both linguistic and anthropological evidence suggests that PAL has been heavily influenced by Bantu languages-specifically Kikongo (Schwegler 2006; S&E 2007).

Table 6. Remnants of Kikongo in Palenque & Palenquero

Language	Lexicon, pronominal system, lack of serial verb constructions
Traditions	Funeral chants, burial practices

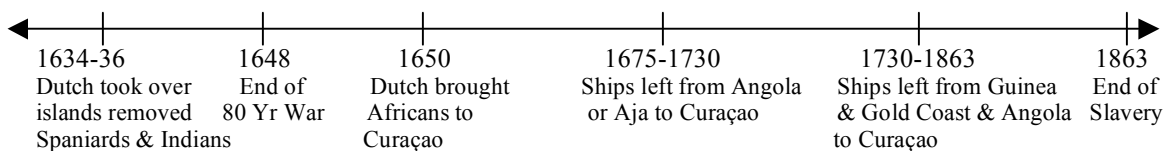
Kikongo influence is found in funeral chants that are found in both the PAL and the Kikongo communities. Archaeological and anthropological evidence of its influence can also be found in burial practices of the Palenquero (see Schwegler 2006 for details). Furthermore, although never the dominant language group during the time PAL was formed, Kikongo plays a role in the lexicon with at least 200 lexical items being derived from it. Examples include *mokuño* (type of small trap to catch certain wild animals) from Kikongo's *mu+kú+nyõ* (small prison) and *mongolona* (vulva; a woman's private parts) from Kikongo's *mu+ngúla* (private parts) (Schwegler 2006 p.210). There is also evidence of its influencing the pronoun system as well. For example, the plural marker for nouns is *ma* which is also a morpheme derived from Bantu. Since Central West African languages lack them, the presence of a Bantu substrate can explain the absence of serial verb constructions in PAL, as well.



#### 4.3.2 PAPIAMENTU

The origins of this creole is still heavily debated. There seems to be two main arguments: the African origin (discussed in section 4.3) and the Spanish-based theory. The Spanish-based theory places the beginning of the formation of PAP around 1499 when the Spaniards discovered the islands known as the ABC islands (i.e. the islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao). Proponents of this theory believe that PAP is a result of contact between the Spaniards and the Arawak-speaking Caiquetio Indians (Fouse 2002). According to them, the Indians then passed PAP on to the Africans slaves brought in by the Dutch. However, as has been pointed out, a weakness in this theory comes from the fact that when the Dutch conquered the islands, they removed both the Spaniards and most of the Caiqueto Indians. This, as illustrated in Figure 1, did not allow much time for the slaves to become acquainted with the Indians (Fouse 2002). Because of this and the fact that no Atlantic creole has been developed as early as has been suggested by proponents of the Spanish-based theory (Mufwene 2001), the present discussion will continue to assume that PAP could not have originated before 1634 when the Dutch took over the ABC islands.

Figure 1. Time Line of events that led to the Formation of Papiamentu<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Information taken from Fouse 2002.

Curaçao was considered valuable by the Dutch because of its saltpans and therefore it became the most important to them among the ABC islands. It is believed that PAP was formed between 1659 and 1700 on Curaçao, spreading later to the other two islands (Holm 1989; Fouse 2002). Estimations have the Dutch bringing in as many as six hundred slaves a year into the slaving center located at Willemstad, the capital of Curaçao during the 1650's (Thomas 1997). The center must have begun to flourish because between 1668 and 1674 approximately four thousand slaves a year were being exported from the island (Fouse 2002). The fact that the island had a huge number of African slaves at any given time during the proposed formation of PAP (see Table 7) lends credence to the idea that PAP was the result of contact between Europeans and Africans. What is interesting about PAP is that although Curaçao was controlled by the Dutch during the time of its creation, it did not evolve into a Dutch-based creole. Instead its lexicon is derived from Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch. Some attribute this to the fact that the Dutch were not concerned with the religious dealings of the slaves while the Spanish living on nearby islands were (Fouse 2002). Others suggest that the Spanish

Table 7. Number of slaves imported to Curaçao 1659-1700, the formation of PAP<sup>2</sup>

1662	1667-1674	1675-1699
700-1,400	23,500	25,400

influence comes from the interaction that Spaniards had while trading with the Dutch on the island (Holm 1989).

The intense focus upon the time that PAP was created has made determining the substrate languages that contributed the most to it a difficult task. So much has been discussed about whether or not the language began as Spanish-based or Portuguese-based, that no one appears to be concentrating on which African languages contributed to it. Considering information in Figure 1, the Dutch had slave ships coming into the harbor at Curaçao from either Angola or Aja for approximately 50 years. It is significant that, 25 of those years included the time period that PAP was being formed. If the majority of the slaves imported into Curaçao during this time were indeed from Aja, this would suggest that the languages present were Kwa languages-specifically Fon-Ewe. However, if Angola is the area from which most slaves were exported, then possible languages would include Bantu. The dilemma is that, as has been already discussed, Kwa languages make use of serial verb constructions while Bantu languages generally do not. Therefore, if Bantu languages predominated languages during the formation of PAP, then what would explain why its speakers selected the use of SVCs?

As the examples in 8 demonstrate, PAP is a language with serialization. These examples exhibit SVCs that evinces various syntactic properties. For instance, (8a) shows the verb series disrupted by the object *kas* indicating that the verbs do not have to occur simultaneously. Furthermore, in (8b) the second verb *hunga* qualifies the first verb *tren*, while the verb *su* in (8e) modifies the verb *bai* by indicating the direction of the running. Additionally, (8c) demonstrates an example of object sharing that occurs in SVCs with both *hibé* and *drecha* sharing the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular object. Also, both of these verbs share the same the aspectual marker *a*.

(8) Papiamentu (Kouwenberg & Murray 1994)

- a. Esei tawata nèt un dia ku mi kier a **keda** kas **hasi** algun otro kos ku  
that Tns-be just a day that 1sg want Asp remain house do some other thing  
mi tin di hasi  
1sg have of do  
'That just happened to be a day that I wanted to stay home to do some other things I had to do.'
- b. Ami ku Stephen ta **bai tren hunga** pingpong.  
1sgEmph with S. Asp go train play pingpong.  
'Stephen and I are going to practice playing pingpong.'
- c. Mi a **hibé drecha**.  
1sg Asp take-3sg repair.  
'I took it to have (it) repaired.' (lit. ...to repair (it)).
- d. Outo a **dal e mata**.  
car Asp hit 3sg kill.  
'A car hit her/him/it (and) killed (her/him/it)'
- e. Ela kore **bai su** kas.  
3sg Asp run go home.  
'S/he ran home.'

Examples of serial verbs from Kwa languages have already been provided during the discussion of Haitian Creole. However, since Papiamentu seems to have a much wider array of SVCs than Fon, which only had 'take' types, it is possible that it is much more influenced by Ewe (see 9 for more examples of Ewe SVCs).

(9) Ewe

- a. Kofi **fo** devia **wu**  
K. beat child the kill  
'Kofi beat the child to death'
- b. Xevia **dzò dzó**  
bird the fly go  
'The bird flew away'
- c. Nufiala **tsi** megbe **va** suku  
Teacher remain behind come school  
'The teacher was late to school'

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusions**

The aim of this study differs from those of others in that it was not only concerned with showing substratal influence, but also wanted to present evidence that the lack of a particular feature also meant lack of substratal influence. Specifically, it hypothesized that creoles with serial verb constructions will have substantial substrate influence from African languages that also have SVCs while those without SVCs will have substantial substrate influence from African languages without SVCs. I believe that thus far, I have been able to support my hypothesis with discussions of such creole languages as Louisiana and Haitian Creole, as well as Palenquero and Papiamentu. Through a description of these creoles, I was able to reason that the geographical areas where these creoles were formed had slaves imported into them that spoke languages that contributed significantly to the grammar and lexicon of the creoles.

I was also able to present evidence that led to the same conclusions as Siegel (2007) - creole languages may not provide the best support for Bickerton's (1983, 1988, 1999a, 1999b) Language Bioprogram Hypothesis. For example, the formation of the creoles discussed in this paper developed over no less than 50 years. I also demonstrated that features of creoles are not as similar as claimed by the LBH. Most important, by showing that the presence of SVCs in a creole depends on whether they can also be found in their substrate language, I successfully proved that substratal influence plays a much bigger role than asserted by Bickerton.

Instead of explaining the existence of creole languages, the LBH may be better suited to expound upon the genesis of newly formed signed languages. For instance, it has been shown that sign languages such as Nicaraguan Sign Language (NSL) and Al Sayid Bedouin Sign Language (ASBSL) were formed from very rudimentary home sign language systems of deaf children with hearing parents. Unlike creole speaking children, these children have no access to the languages of their parents and must have therefore been relying on an innate device when developing these languages. When placed in the right social environment (i.e. schools), these home sign systems have expanded into fully functional languages. However, these signed languages still do not support Bickerton's notion of rapid genesis as both have taken at least 50 years to develop (and may not be completely formed yet).

For my qualifying paper, I plan to add to my discussion of serial verb constructions in creole languages by looking at English-based creoles. Specifically, I plan to look at Sranan and Afro-Seminole Creole. Furthermore, because it could be taken as a weakness in my hypothesis, I plan to look more closely at Papiamentu in order to find a more definitive answer to which substrate languages contribute the most to the language.

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## Vita

Qiwana La'teese Lopez was born in Tampa, Florida on August 7, 1978 to Michael Charles and Wanda Gail Rosson. She graduated from South Bay Christian Academy in June 1996 and continued on to Southwestern College. After receiving her Associates degree in General Education, she transferred to San Diego State University. She graduated from this university in 2002 with a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Linguistics with a minor in English. She then went to graduate school at the same university before transferring to the University of Texas at Austin in 2005. During her time at San Diego State, she gained experience in her field by teaching writing to students who spoke English as a second language. At the University of Texas, she has had the opportunity to teach a course that she designed titled *African American English and Black Images in the Media*.

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