

**Lecture II Review:  
Notes and Data Sample of Language Variation & Change**

**English 405  
Galasso**

**Creole** English-based creoles typically preserve the SVO word order for question and negation formations. This same strategy also shows-up in early stages of English Child Language Acquisition (though there are some data showing mixed word order for early stages of child language acquisition). Also, it is argued that creoles and child language alike don't involve 'syntactic movement'—i.e., there is no 'Aux-inversion' for questions (1a), nor is there morpho-syntactic movement operations regarding inflectional morphology. Regarding word order in question formations, it is true that creoles have little difficulty with maintaining a 'wh-word' initial structure (as shown in (2a) (3a)). Regarding negation, it seems the strategy is to take a declarative structure and negate it by inserting the negative 'no' in front of the sentence. Notice in (5a) how the accusative case shows-up by default. (6a) shows a double negative structure without Aux-inversion.

Creole/child language  
Question Formation:

(1a) You want juice?

(2a) Where you are?

(3a) Where the boy is?

(4a) How much coconut him did sell?

Adult Structure

(1b) Base order: You do want juice?

(1c) => Do you t want juice?

(2b) Where are you?

(3b) Where is the boy?

(4b) => How much coconut did he t sell?

Negation Formation:

(5a) No him work all day.

(6a) Nobody don't work here?

(7a) I didn't say nothin'

(5b) He does not work all day.

(6b) Doesn't anyone work here?

(7b) I didn't say anything.

Case: Notice how the default [-Nom] 'him' case is manifest in creole:

'Him a di uona. Him take dem an put dem an dis wie' (taken from S. Romaine)

(Him is the owner. Him take them and put them on the way'

(→ He is the owner. He takes them and puts them on the right road.)

Tense: Tense, as one aspect of morpho-syntactic inflection, also does not manifest in creole. Note how the verb 'take' above doesn't show 3person/singular/present tense {s}.

e.g., 'Him take' (→ 'He takes')

In fact, the 3PSgPres {s} has only recently in Early Modern English (17<sup>th</sup> c) become grammatically stable as part of the verbal paradigm. In earlier stages of English, such as Early or Middle English, such agreement was in flux and highly unstable. It is little wonder we find the same variation and instability with regards to English pidgin, creoles, and vernaculars.

Sample of Pidgin English (Papua New Guinea) (taken from Diamond, p. 166)

Kam insait long stua bilong mipela—stua bilong salim olgeta samting—mipela i-ken helpim yu long kisim wanem samting yu laikim bikpela na liklik long gutpela prais. I-gat gutpela kain kago long baiim na i-gat stap long helpim yu na lukautim yu long taim yu kam insait long dispela stue.

Kam insait long stua bilong mipela  
Come inside long store belong me-fellow—

stua bilong salim olgeta samting  
store belong sellim altogether something—

mipela i-ken helpim yu long kisim  
me-fellow can helpim you long catchim

what-name something you laikim big fellow  
wanem samting yu laikim bikpela

na liklik long good-fellow price  
na liklik long gutpela prais.

He-gat good-fellow kind cargo  
I-gat gutpela kain kago

Long buyim na he got staff long  
long baiim na i-gat stap long

helpem you na lookoutim you  
helpim yu na lukautim yu

long time you come inside long this fellow store  
long taim yu kam insait long dis pela stue.

Translation:

Come into our store—a store for selling everything—we can help you get whatever you want, big and small, at a good price. There are good types of goods for sale, and staff to help you and look after you when you visit the store.

Phonological rules

‘fellow’ → ‘pela’ /f/ => /p/

‘this’ → ‘dis’ /ð/ => /d/

‘something’ → ‘samting’ /θ/ => /t/

‘catchim’ → ‘kisim’ /tʃ/ => /s/

Morphological rules

{pela} = ‘fellow’ => suffix, adjective

{na} = ‘and’

Lexical rules:

bilong (long) = ‘of’ (possessive, (‘my’))

liklik = ‘little’

Other examples (Pidgin English, Papua New Guinea, Diamond p. 157)

'man i no gat gras long head bilong em'                      Aux 'do' missing for negation  
 (man, I no got grass long head belong to me)  
 (= I don't have long hair)

### **African American Vernacular English**

Examples of the unstable inflectional verbal {s} in African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

First Person singular:

I *forgets* about it.  
 I *forget* the place where he is.

Second person singular:

You *speaks* fine French.  
 When you *speak* with me fast, fast I don't . . . know what you tell me.

Third person singular:

When she *come* out she *goes* and she *takes* her children. When she's on vacation well,  
 she *remain* in the home.

First person plural:

We *call* her Virgie. (*Interviewer: Why?*) 'Cause that's the name we *calls* her.  
 That's her nickname.

Possessive {'s} missing:

I met his brother wife (Radford et al. p. 269)  
 His cat name is Peanut.

Verbal {s} missing:

He work on Fridays.

### **Indo-Lexical Vocabulary and change**

Basic examples of Indo-European vs. Non-Indo-European lexical vocabulary

Indo-European

English:	one	two	three	mother	brother	sister
German:	ein	zwei	drei	mutter	bruder	schwester
French:	un	deuz	trios	mere	frere	soeur
Latin:	unos	duo	tres	mater	frater	soror
Russian:	odin	dva	tri	mat'	brat'	sestra
Sanskrit:	eka	duva	trayas	matar	bhratar	svasar

Non-Indo-European

Finnish: yksi kaksi kolme aiti veli sisar

Indo-European: verb inflection

English: (I) am (he) is

Latin: sum est

Greek: eimi esti

Non-Indo-European: verb inflection

Finnish: olen on

**Language Variation.** There are well known differences in lexical vocabulary found between British English vs. American English.

Lexical variation:

<u>British English</u>	<u>American English</u>	(Taken from Radford et al. p. 257)
Housey	bingo	
Bakery	baker's shop	
Minerals	soft drinks	
Pictures	movies	
Lorry	truck	
Boot	trunk	
Nappy	diaper	
Chips	fries	
Crisps	potato chip	
Pushchair	stroller	

Historical lexical/word shift

'Nice'

13<sup>th</sup> century. The word 'nice' was introduced in Early-Middle English (13 c.) via Old French as a descendent of Latin 'nescius' or {ne} (= 'not') + {scius} (= 'knowing') ('not knowing') or 'ignorant'.

14<sup>th</sup> century. The word 'nice' takes on the meaning 'shy' or 'subtle'.

18<sup>th</sup> century. The word 'nice' takes on the meaning 'agreeable', 'good'.

(NB. The same pattern of meaning shift can be used to account for the lexical meaning of the word 'gay').

**Semantic broadening.** Consider the word 'companion': {con(m)} = 'with' + {pane} = 'bread', literal meaning 'to eat bread with'. The same *semantic broadening* has taken place with the word 'breakfast' = to break a fast {break} + {fast}.

**Semantic narrowing.** In Middle English, the word e.g., ‘girl’ meant young person of any sex. A ‘boy’ was a male person of any age.

**Syntactic variation** British dialects both under-extend or over-extend the inflectional paradigm:

<u>Over-INFL Dialect</u>	<u>Non-INFL Dialect</u>
I plays	I play-Ø
You plays	you play-Ø
He plays	He play-Ø
We plays	we play-Ø
You plays	you play-Ø
They plays	they play-Ø

Consider three forms of the INFL paradigm in ME (Radford p. 79):

<u>Standard English (SE)</u>	<u>East Anglian English (EAE)</u>	<u>South West English (SWE)</u>
I love	I love	I loves
we love	we love	we loves
you love	you love	you loves
he/she loves	he/she love	he/she loves
they love	they love	they loves

Modern English (ME—Belfast, Scottish)) (Radford p. 30)

Belfast Inflection/Agreement:

The eggs, they is cracked. Themuns is cracked (=them ones). They is ....

Us students, we is very hardworking.

Them oranges, they doesn't look to fresh.

How's her and them getting on together?

(NB. This type of Agreement is what is found in EME discussed above).

Scottish Inflection/Agreement (Double Aux):

(quoted in Radford p. 203)

They might can come

He should can do it.

You'll have to can drive the car (= 'can' aux insert in split infinitive)

Word Order:

Tell you me the truth. (VSO)

Over-extension of verbal {s}: Devon English (DE) exhibits variation of the verbal –s.  
(data taken from Godfrey et al. 1999)

*First person singular:*

a. I *forgets* now how long I stayed there. Quite a good while I *think* I stayed with 'em.

*Second person singular:*

b. You *goes* up that lane and you *goes* down another road.

*Third person singular:*

c. Nice maid, her. But her *likes* more the bloody old boy than her *do* the maid.

*First person plural:*

d. We *gets* a lot of trips, don't we? Once a month we *go*.

*Third person plural:*

e. Yeah they *drives* 'em... They *help* out.

f. The cattle all *goes* to, to the big markets, these days . . . they *go* straight to the slaughter house.

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