

Variation and effects of register in multilingual creole societies

Tonjes Veenstra

Leibniz-Zentrum Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft & SFB 1412 Register.

In this talk we present the outline of a multi-generational scenario of how creole languages emerge. We focus on Kreol Morisien (KM) which is a French-related creole spoken in Mauritius. It arose out of contact between typologically very diverse language groups. A major part of the slave population involved in the creation of KM were speakers of Malagasy and several (Eastern) Bantu languages (Allen 2008, Baker 2008). It is also clear from historical research that these languages were present in the colony long after the abolishment of slavery (Larson 2009). This means that KM emerged in a highly multilingual setting, which is in line with recent proposals on the importance of processes of bilingual convergence and pattern replication leading to substrate effects in creoles (Muysken 2015). The leading question, therefore, is to what extent we find traces of these language groups in the ensuing creole. We discuss four areas of grammar: (i) article incorporation; (ii) serial verb constructions; (iii) verb alternation; (iv). The conclusion is that from the perspective of linguistic typology KM is best viewed as a Bantu language.

References

- Allen, Richard B. 2008. The constant demand of the French: The Mascarene slave trade and the worlds of the Indian Ocean and Atlantic during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Journal of African History* 49. 43–72.
- Baker, Philip. 2008. Elements for a sociolinguistic history of Mauritius and its Creole (to 1968). In Philip Baker & Guillaume Fon Sing (eds.), *The making of Mauritian Creole*, 307–334. London, Battlebridge Press.
- Larson, Pier Martin. 2009. Ratsitanina's Gift : A Tale of Malagasy Ancestors and Language in Mauritius. Réduit: Centre for Research on Slavery and Indenture, University of Mauritius.
- Muysken, Pieter. 2015. Relexification and other language contact scenarios for explaining substrate effects. In Pieter Muysken & Norval Smith (Eds.) *Surviving the Middle Passage. The West Africa-Surinam Sprachbund*. Series:Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs [TiLSM], 107-132. Berlin, De Gruyter Mouton.