

IS THERE ANYTHING LIKE DECREOLIZATION?
SOME ONGOING CHANGES IN BISSAU CREOLE

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1. The socio-historical setting

The Portuguese landed on the shore of what was to become Guinea-Bissau probably in 1456, a few years before they discovered the Cape Verde Islands. Only a century later (1570) did they found a feitoria, a permanent trading-post, in Cacheu. Such a lag is probably due to the fact that, for diverse reasons, the coast of Guinea was less favorable a calling place for further voyages than was Cape Verde. Remember in particular that Cape Verde was completely uninhabited by the time of its discovery, while it took the Portuguese until the 20s of this century to 'pacify' the mainland. From the beginning of the 16th century onward, however, interchanges between both territories - united as one colony until 1879 - never ceased to be important and growing because of the development of the slave trade (starting about 1510). In Guinea (including Casamance, Gambia and the coast of Senegal South of Dakar) this trade was first organized on an individual basis. Principal among its agents were the so-called lançados, adventurers, jailbirds, or other 'marginal' characters, 'thrown' from Cape Verde into the depths of Africa to settle there, marry local women, and trade slaves and other valuables against cotton clothes (panos). Then, in 1755, the Companhia Geral do Grao-Pará e Maranhao was created. It was to monopolize all trade from Guinea. The stronghold of Bissau was built ten years later to defend the territory against the British and the French. Notice though that Guinea never turned into a first-rate supply for slaves if compared to the Gulf or the Congo; and also that there never was any local slavery (excepting limited domesticity) and plantation economy in Guinea proper.

Turning now to linguistic matters, pidginized/creolizing Portuguese, possibly born in Portugal (Naro 1978), probably came to Guinea from Cape Verde through the lançados (Schuchardt 1883; Celso Cunha 1981). But its comparative status in both territories was from the start strikingly different. In Cape Verde, due to transportation and ethnical mixture on the one hand, quasi complete miscegenation and christianization on the other, 'African' languages - i.e. the 20-odd West Atlantic and Mande languages spoken in Senegambia-Guinea - were totally eradicated and Creole became the sole vernacular of the population. In Guinea, on the contrary, local, 'ethnical' languages (and cultures) were there all the time. Therefore a double market developed. There were the relatively small communities of christianized so-called grumetes, mainly in Cacheu, Casamance, and later Bolama and Bissau. Among them pidginized Portuguese fully creolized, i.e. became a 'full' language (unless it was already so when imported from Cape Verde), and turned into their native language. On the other hand, this (partially) creolized (possibly repidginized) Portuguese began to be used as a lingua franca over the whole territory. Two interacting factors were probably active in this development: (1) the great linguistic diversity of the country, with no one language being significantly more widespread than the others, with the possible exception of

Mandinka, spoken however in the East and not on the coast; (2) the fact that it probably was the coming of the Europeans and the trading relations they settled which, if not started, at least enormously increased contacts among local people and made a lingua franca really necessary (which in turn may explain why it was not Mandinka that assumed this role as it did elsewhere and could have done in Guinea-Bissau).

Such was the situation until the middle of this century. The implication is that the overall variation was organized around the dichotomy native vs. non-native (perhaps repidginized) varieties, though we are in no position to document this considering the total lack of information about non-native varieties (for the old native variety see Schuchardt 1883; Marques de Barros 1900; Wilson 1959, 1962). Another, superimposed source of variation was, and still is, geographic inside the native variety - Creole of Cacheu, Ziguinchor etc., which may be called 'dialects' in the traditional sense - as well as inside the non-native variety, being then linked to the speaker's ethnical origin and first language.

It should be emphasized that, in its two varieties, the Creole of Guinea-Bissau (from now on Kriol by its vernacular name) never met with any decided opposition from the (white) Portuguese, as was e.g. the case with French Creoles in the French Antilles. Of course they despised it, but they used it. And they apparently remained quite satisfied with having a tiny minority of 'civilized' (civilisados) Africans or mestiços, defined by their being baptized and literate (and using Kriol among themselves), and a majority of 'savages' (selvagens) whose ways of life they never tried to modify.

Things began to change in the mid-60s, when the struggle for independence began. As the Independence Party (PAIGC) and the Liberation Army grew, drawing people from every ethnical origin, the need for an official common language was felt. Such a language had to be distinctive and symbolic of the rising new national identity. Therefore it could not be Portuguese or any of the 'local' languages. Kriol imposed itself, meaning that for the first time in its history it became legitimized and was used, for instance, as an oral medium of education in the 'bush schools'. But note - this will prove important - that Portuguese remained unchallenged for writing purposes, including of course Amilcar Cabral's political writings. The only sample of written Kriol from that period that I could find is a propaganda leaflet circulated by the Portuguese army!

One of the effects of the war was significant movements of populations, toward the bush, to the guerillas, or, more consequential for the future, toward the cities, especially Bissau which was spared the combats until the end. Indeed, the second most important factor shaping the present development of Kriol is urbanization. Actually this points toward one city, Bissau (other agglomerations being little more than villages) whose population reaches well over 100 000 out of a total census of ca. 800 000 (estimations of the National Census of 1979-80, unpublished).

I will come directly to the characterization of this new Bissau Kriol (BK). But I think it necessary first to outline the social frame inside which the language changes we are going to study take place, and which they help to constitute. Indeed, it shouldn't be said that language is in a social

space, but rather that, because of its inherent variation corresponding to social impositions and strategies, it is one incorporated component of every hierarchically differentiated social space, along with other elements such as tastes, bodily behavior, etc. (see Bourdieu 1979). The present question is therefore: what has urbanization to do with language?

Paradoxically, foreseeably, independence did not remove Portuguese as the ultimate source of linguistic legitimacy, in spite of the legitimization of Kriol. It remained, or rather regained its status of official language, Kriol being defined as 'national' along with Mandjak, Pepel, etc. But for a handful of publications (see references) Portuguese still is the only written language, e.g. in the official and sole newspaper Nô Pintchâ ('Let Us Go Forward' - only the title is in Kriol with the exception of a recent cultural supplement where some Kriol can be found).² On the radio, Kriol is used, but it is heavily lusitanized in intonation and syntax as anybody will jeeringly tell the enquirer. More importantly, Portuguese is the only accepted language for teaching at secondary school level (there is no university), and Kriol is unsystematically used at primary school level, though an alphabetization program using Kriol is now in preparation, given the poor results of the present system. Of course all text-books are in Portuguese. It should be noted however that the school-system does not effectively function as a spreading device for Portuguese, as (1) only a minority (not more than 10%) attend it at secondary level, and still less with any degree of success; (2) alphabetization, being largely conducted in a language that the pupils don't know, has by and large proved a failure so far - that might change with the new educational policy that the new leaders who came into power in November 1980 seem to have adopted. The result of all this is not that people living in the city (excepting of course the 'elite') learn to speak more or 'better' Portuguese - in fact they do not as their knowledge of it remains essentially passive, a hearer's competence - but that they are daily faced with an extrinsic model which has all the appearances of a norm and for which they have no active need in everyday interchanges.³ In short, being in the city means standing closer to but outside the ultimate source of linguistic legitimacy. This is one consequence of urbanization.

Another, seemingly contradictory consequence is the diffusion of Kriol as a first language, due to the blurring of ethnical differences inside the city. By first language I do not necessarily mean mother-tongue, but the language that the child uses most frequently, even exclusively from the time s/he integrates a peer-group, which is pretty soon in Africa. Of course, inter-marriages are an important factor too, and Kriol may be the only available medium between husband and wife (wives), in which case the children will acquire it still earlier.⁴ In any case, it is a fact that, listening to children playing in the streets, one hears nothing but Kriol. The same is true, to be sure, with teen-agers and young adults, and in less measure with older generations as well. Is it the same Kriol? We shall see below that it is not, not quite.

Meanwhile it is important to stress that both processes - (relative) imposition of Portuguese as a norm which almost nobody masters and spread of Kriol - act together to produce complex results. One unsurprising result is a certain amount of so-called 'decreolization'. Kriol-speakers are aware of

this, and it is a commonplace of their metalinguistic discourse to oppose the 'light' (lebi) Kriol of Bissau to the 'deep' (fundu) Kriol of Cacheu, Geba or the villages (tabanka).⁵ Corresponding to this spatial metaphor and just as commonplace there is a temporal distinction between 'old Kriol' (kriol antigu) and 'present-day Kriol' (Kriol di gosi, litt. 'of now'). Old people are reputed to speak old Kriol, but anyone who speaks 'deep' speaks 'old' (which is why Cacheu, being the historical center of Kriol, is reputed both for its deepness and its antiquity), and conversely with 'light' and 'new'. Both dimensions are thus coextensive. (Class distinctions in the Marxist sense should be taken into account, but they can be left aside for the present sketchy analysis, as they are neither subtle nor extensive.) Nevertheless, 'decreolization' is probably a misnomer in this case, since its usual correlate, the 'post-creole continuum' as described, e.g., in Bickerton 1975, is absent. In other words, while BK may be in certain non obvious ways closer to Portuguese than some other varieties,⁶ it is a fact that nowhere (except maybe for the partly artificial and widely criticized radio speech) is there a blurring of the boundary between what is Kriol and what is Portuguese. Actually the whole impression of BK being 'portuguesized' (aportuguesado) rests on nothing more than a few borrowings, mostly necessary and phonologically integrated. 'Code-switching' or admixture of Portuguese utterances into a Kriol discourse is almost non-existent. True, as we shall see, certain ongoing syntactical changes could be interpreted as approximations toward Portuguese - but just as well, even better, as consequences of an 'inner expansion' of the language (Sankoff & Laberge 1974; Mühlhäusler 1977). There does not seem to be any point then in calling BK a 'mesolect' as there is no 'acrolect' toward which it is obviously moving - if it makes sense to speak of languages as 'moving' or of systems as 'changing' as such (on this point see Saussure). What there is, because of the continuing presence of Portuguese as a foreign but partially normative body, is an ambivalent feeling on the part of the speakers, especially the young - linked to other ambivalent feelings that they have regarding their and their country's position in the world - that their language and culture are being drawn toward something that they basically dislike and, maybe, basically desire at the same time. This makes up for a rather more complex picture than just language change or 'decreolization', which furthermore belongs to quite another sphere. Mapping the latter on the former appears as mere reification.

2. The linguistic data

I will discuss a number a syntactic changes (with the above mentioned proviso) distinguishing old-deep Kriol from new-light Kriol in the domains of the copula, the tense-aspect (TA) system, the comparative phrase, and the lexicon. Note, to elaborate on the same proviso, that I am speaking of 'change' as if I knew that one system derives from the other or that it is in general possible for one system to derive from another. As a matter of fact, I don't. All I know is that it seems permissible to apply an analysis in terms of systemic derivation and expansion along an a priori defined scale of grammatical complexity. Whether it is legitimate to map linguistic change so understood onto the history of the language (i.e. of its speakers) is a question a fact (or maybe an epistemological question) for which I do not have the evidence - and it is just possible that nobody has it or will ever have it (for a negative assessment of the matter, see Lightfoot 1979).

2.1. If you want to express in Kriol 'he was a professor (and isn't any longer)',

you can say either:

(1) *i sedu ba profesor*
 he/she/it-COP-TA-professor

or

(2) *i profesor ba*⁷
 he/she/it-professor-TA

where (1) is deemed 'new' but, for once, not 'light', rather normal, and (2) is definitely old, even obsolete in Bissau (while it is the current form in Ziguinchor). An analysis of these two sentences and their relation has to take into account the whole system of the Kriol copula. Roughly (for more details, see Kihm 1980, 1983) we find the following possibilities in a NP (noun phrase predicate) context, with TA unmarked:

(3) *i bon kuridur*
 he/she/it-good-runner
 'he/she is a good runner'

(4) *el i bon kuridur*
 he/she/it (detached)-he/she/it (clitic)-good-runner
 'he/she is a good runner' (emphasis - but see below)

(5) *ami i fiju di Gine-Bisaw*
 I (detached)-he/she/it-child-of-Guinea-Bissau
 'I am a Bissau-Guinean' (no emphasis)

The last sentence is to be contrasted with:

(6) *(ami) n na bay*
 I (detached)-I (clitic)-TA-go
 '(as for me) I'm going'

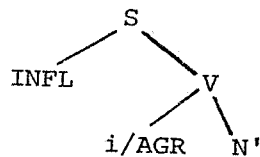
where topicalized ami (1sg 'strong' or 'detached' form) binds n (1sg clitic form) when the predicate is a verb. There appears then to be a problem with the category of i: in (4) and (3) it behaves like a 3rd person clitic pronoun,⁹ coreferential to the topicalized pronoun (or NP: ña pape i bon kuridur, 'my father (he) is a good runner') and bound by it. The same analysis cannot be true of (5). One way to maintain the unity of the form is to assume that i is actually a predicate-marker, much as the homophonous form in Tok Pisin. This category in turn is probably to be identified with the AGR(eement) component, understood as a nominal marking on the verb. (In other words, clitic pronouns in Kriol, perhaps universally, would be analysed as one possible segmental realization of AGR, therefore analogous to flexional endings - see Chomsky 1981). Now, if the predicate is a noun, it is non-finite - actually the only kind of non-finite predicates to be found in Kriol. It doesn't assign Case and the subject should be PRO, not an anaphor and free in its governing category. By (5) we see that i does indeed behave like PRO, and the appropriate if not elegant translation of the sentence should be 'I/me, it is a Bissau-Guinean', more or less as in French Les chiens, ça salit tout or mon père, c'est un..., where the coreference chiens-ça and mon père-ce is more a matter of pragmatics than of syntax. Whether or not one grants the possibility of PRO being phonetically non-null, the implication is that i is not an argument, and there is no argumental chain between ami and i (just as in the above cited French sentences, which share with (5) the property of being equative definitions - see Kayne 1983). If the predicate is a verb and the (logical) subject is 1st or 2nd person, then there must be a chain linking the necessarily argumental subject-topic and clitic-AGR, hence (6) and

(6') ^x(ami) i na bay

(The fact that a component like AGR can be assigned argumentativity should not surprise in view of what happens in so-called 'PRO-drop languages' - of which

Kriol, and French, might be one, as it doesn't require a subject under an NP node (see fn. 9): in Portuguese comei 'I ate' e.g. the personal ending is the only representation of the EGO argument.) Finally, if the predicate is a verb and the (logical) subject is 3rd person, realized in topic position outside S,¹⁰ we can assume i to be either argumental or non-argumental. It seems more coherent to submit that it is always non-argumental, in other words that its basic character is to be generic, 3rd person interpretation in the absence of all indication to the contrary being due to the fact that 3rd person is the unmarked member of the system, actually a non-person (see Tesnière 1959; Benveniste 1974). Such a generic character may in turn be linked to the fact that i does not distinguish gender, and number only when it refers to an animate.

In (3)-(5) the predicate is unmarked for TA (atemporal statements). What if it is so marked? Judging by (2), in old Kriol nothing had to happen. That is the noun-predicate apparently was a real predicate and could be inflected, though probably remaining non-finite, which means that inflection was outside the domain of V (see below). At least, it could be inflected for Past as in (2) and Determinate/Punctual Future (i na bin profesor 'he/she will be a professor'), Punctual (*i na profesor 'he/she is (in this very moment)/will be (in a short while) a professor') and Non-Punctual (*i ta profesor 'he/she (usually, periodically, duratively) is a professor') being excluded for semantic reasons. The structure of such sentences was then $\bar{\bar{S}} \dots \bar{\bar{INFL}} \bar{\bar{V}} \bar{\bar{N}}$ or



Such a structure is no longer possible in BK. When the noun-predicate is TA-marked, a segmental verb has to appear to bear the inflection, that is sedu, the lexical copula, also used when the V-slot has to be filled (so-called 'exposed position') as in:

(7) (i) profesor ki i sedu

IT-professor-COMP-IT-be

'it's a professor that he/she is', 'what he/she is is a professor'¹¹

(In accordance with the above analysis, i will now be 'translated' by IT in capital letters.) Now an important point is that TA marking does not have to be overt, meaning that sedu, as an ordinary stative verb, can be used with zero-marking which implies Past for non-stative verbs and Non-Past for stative ones. So that we find:

(8) kriol di Kaceu i ma... i sedu kriol ma bizaru

Kriol-of-Cacheu-IT-more... IT-be-Kriol-more-bizarre

'the Kriol of Cacheu it's... it's a Kriol that's more bizarre'

Such a sentence is particularly interesting because of the speaker's hesitation, as he seems to start having in mind an adjective predicate without sedu, then switches to a noun-predicate with sedu. So now the difference might stay between - uninflected noun-predicates (i profesor 'he/she is a professor') with structure $\bar{\bar{V}} \bar{\bar{N}}$;

- inflected noun-predicates (i sedu (ba)profesor 'he/she is/was a professor') with structure $\bar{\bar{V}} \bar{\bar{INFL}} \bar{\bar{V}} \bar{\bar{N}}$

The total change would amount to the apparition of V'', that is a 'real' VP where NP is c-commanded by V, whereas there is no such thing in a structure (if it is one) like $\underline{\underline{V}} \underline{\underline{N}}$. This can rightfully be called 'inner expansion' (see Woolford 1979 for a similar point in Tok Pisin).

But there may be more to it (and to IT). Note first that the distinction between uninflected predicate and zero-marked inflected predicate is a fuzzy one, being actually the distinction between nothing and zero. So is the semantic difference between, e.g., i bon kuridur and i sedu bon kuridur. In fact, nobody could ever tell me what the difference might be, and it certainly is not equivalent, as one might think, to the difference between Portuguese ser and estar, itself not clear-cut: 'Some people use the one, some do the other, it means the same'. If it does mean the same, and if it is a fact, as it seems to be, that sentences like (3) are being progressively replaced by the same plus sedu, then it is the whole copula system that is changing. The implication is that (3) is in the process of being reinterpreted as having variable zero-copula, something strongly reminiscent of what happened in Black English (see Labov 1968), the crucial difference being that it is a fully Kriol form that is used overtly, so that the change may remain entirely covert from the point of view of putative decreolization.

Another consequence might be that i would now obligatorily refer to 3rd person, since we have ami n sedu... replacing ami i... In other words, it would become less generic, less PRO-like, as there would not be left any non-finite predicates. But again, such a change would remain hardly noticeable 'en langue'. Perhaps it would be better described as 'semantic' or 'psychological', that is not decreolization, but something far deeper.¹² Note also that sedu is making its way into adjective predicates, as it is regularly found in front of 'learned' adjectives such as internasyonal, demokratiku, etc.¹³

2.2. The second change I wish to study is probably more limited in scope, both language-internally and inside the community, as it seems to be still restricted to children. But, for this reason also, it is interesting as it reminds one of similar phenomena that have been studied in Tok Pisin (Sankoff & Laberge 1974).

There is in Kriol a complex TA marker or combination TA marker plus auxiliary na bin, where na is Punctual and bin is homophonous (identical?) to bin 'to come', meaning 'punctual future', i.e. that such and such a thing will take place at such and such a time, explicitly stated or part of shared knowledge:

(9) amañan n na bin kunpra arus
tomorrow-I-TA-buy-rice
'tomorrow I will buy some rice'

For (9) children quite often say:

(10) amañan n nin kunpra arus
'id.'

where nin can be pronounced either $\underline{\underline{na}}\underline{\underline{in}}$ or $\underline{\underline{ni}}\underline{\underline{n}}$.¹⁴ The phonetical derivation is clear. Deletion trough fricativization of intervocalic /b/ is a fairly regular process in BK in 'small' atonic words. The grammatical result is the creation of a new, fully grammaticalized TA marker which, having no link to any other lexical item, can now enter into the speakers' competence with nothing but its grammatical meaning. Now, if one were to insist on the fact of this

form expressing the 'future', one might want to see decreolization here, i.e. some 'drift' toward a tense-based system alike Portuguese. I don't think this move would be justified. For one thing, I don't know what a tense-based system is as opposed en bloc to an aspect-based system, and I suspect nobody does really. Second, as already suggested, it won't do to speak of 'future'; it is a punctual future, as opposed to a non-punctual future marked by ba ta and meaning roughly 'from now on and for an indeterminate duration':

(11) ami n misti pa bo ba ta jubi n tudu dia

I-CLIT I-want-for-you-TA-look-CLIT I-every-day

'As for me, I want you to look at me every day' (from Montenegro & Morais 1979:1- my spelling)

I chose to write ba ta in two words because it is obviously made up of ba, the auxiliary variant of bay 'to go', and ta, the non-punctual marker. But there is no certainty that such a segmentation is synchronically valid, that is that ba ta is not felt as being one morpheme, especially as there is a tendency, again among the children, to reduce ba to a, leading to an unmotivated simplex marker a ta/ata or ta a ta/taata (ultimately \int ta:ta \int), given that non-punctual marking can be reduplicated for longer duration. All in all, the effect of the change, if it goes to completion, will be to enhance the symmetry of the system and, far from bringing it closer to Portuguese, to make it more or, at least, just as much 'creole' as it used to be.

2.3. Now there is a change that can be attributed to Portuguese influence. In old Kriol one could say (and still can, as the form is not obsolete, but only 'old' and maybe 'literary' - I only heard it in tales):

(12) i ma mi ta kuri

IT-more-OBL I-TA-run

'he/she/it runs faster than I do'

In modern BK one would rather say:

(13) i ta kuri ma ki di mi

IT-TA-run-more-than-of-OBL I

'id.'

What is the structure of (12)? The simplest analysis is, I think, to categorize ma (from Port. mais 'more') as a verb meaning 'to be more than'. West-Atlantic languages, e.g. Wolof, have such verbs. The precise analysis of whether we have here the reduction of two sentences or (probably the right solution) one sentence with a serial verb is irrelevant to the present point. In any case, we see here a nice instance of 'African' syntactic influence. And it seems clear that (13) looks more like Portuguese, with ma no longer being a verb but an adverb (whatever that is). We shouldn't be too fast in our conclusion, though. A translation of (13) into modern Portuguese would give us:

(14) corre mais (rapido) que eu

with eu (1sg strong form) that has no reflex in Kriol. Note also my qualification 'modern Portuguese'. Indeed, in old Portuguese, up to the 16th century, one said que mi(m), using the 'oblique' form of the pronoun (Said Ali 1971:95), which might point to the fact that we are not dealing with some recent decreolization process, but with an old alternation between more or less 'africanized' versions of the language, having to do, maybe, with the opposition vernacular vs. vehicular. Whatever the time of the influence, or the non-influence if (12) is to be interpreted as resulting from 'africanization', it is essential to appreciate the extent to which such a form as (13) has been integrated into Kriol syntax. Why indeed is it not possible to say *ma ki ami, the nearest equivalent to mais que eu, or *ma ki mi, but only ma ki di mi? I won't enter into details (see Kihm 1983), but the answer seems to be that it belongs to the lexical matrix

of ami (=Port. a mim 'to me' - id. abo 'thou', anos 'we', abos 'you' - 3pl. stands apart) that it is a 'detached' pronoun with inherent Case that cannot be part of a phrase but must stand under an S (or Topic) node of its own. On the contrary, mi (id. bo, nos, bos) has to receive its case from a preposition (or the negation: i ka mi 'it is not I/me'); ki, being a COMP, cannot give Case. And note that di mi means 'mine' (es i di mi 'this is mine'), also a Genitive, which is a universally good candidate for a comparative complement. Once again I cannot see any clear-cut case of decreolization here.

2.4. One reads in an old issue of the Boletim cultural da Guiné portuguesa (I unfortunately lost the exact reference) the amazing statement that plural in Kriol is formed by prefixing an obviously 'African' morpheme ba- to the noun (no examples were given as far as I remember). That such a form exists is a fact; that it must be of African origin (which precisely ?) is also probably a fact; that it is a plural marker has no reality outside the mind of this mercifully forgotten author.¹⁵ As a matter of fact, this ba- is currently used prefixed to a person's name, mainly a first name, to denote something like 'So-and-So and his/her friends/family/crowd', as in ba-Antoñu 'Tony and his...'. The interesting point is that in old Kriol one could say, and old people still say things like:

(15) ba-kin ki na bin?

ba-who-COMP-TA-come

meaning 'Who (pl.) is coming?', where it is implied that the coming people are a group and not just a collection of passers-by. And also:

(16) n oja ba-elis

I-see-ba-they

'I saw them'

with the same implication of togetherness. Such sentences are now replaced by:

(17) kal jintis ki na bin?

what-people-COMP-TA-come

'what people are coming?'

(18) n oja elis

'I saw them'

where the opposition group vs. non-group is lost to the profit of mere plurality. It would be worthwhile to investigate where exactly did this opposition come from. In any case, it is certainly true that its present loss must be due to some influence from Portuguese, and such is the opinion of the informants with whom I discussed the matter. Being a lexical phenomenon, it might be linked to the general, but not to be overestimated de-Africanization of the lexicon. This trend is particularly noticeable if one compares present-day Kriol with the language of the old texts from the 19th century (see Schuchardt 1883; Marques de Barros 1900). But it has to be noted that those texts, apart from the ubiquitous translation of the Prodigal Son, are all songs and tales, that is poetical pieces where the use of African terms when there is a Kriol equivalent (e.g. malan 'slave', from Mandinka, instead of katibu, from Port. captivo) may well serve an esthetic function.

3. Conclusion

It is a fact that Kriol is changing in the urban context of Bissau. But I don't think that 'decreolization' is the name we should give to such a process. For one thing, 'decreolization' (and its converse, 'creolization') as a linguistic term implies the disappearance of certain features that would be specific to so-called creole languages, the loss of which would alter their nature. But it

should be established by now that 'creole' is no linguistic descriptor. Creole languages are languages just like any other, except for the fact that they were born under special historical circumstances which marked, nay branded them as standing apart. One could even go as far as to say that the real difference is that they were born, period. In other words, they are deprived of the immemorability that is the hallmark and the nobility of other languages, down to the most humble patois. One knows where they come from, slaves'mouths. But here, we have left the realm of linguistics proper.

This is not to say that there is no interest in studying the formation of creole languages. In fact, there is immense interest, but just as far as such a study may constitute a central tenet of a theory of language change which, as L. Spitzer said commenting Schuchardt, always 'rests on language mixture (Sprachmischung)' (1976:6), geographically or generationally understood. If it is so, then 'creolization' serves no special purpose that 'language change' does not, and 'decreolization' still less, except as socio-historical terms denoting certain historical events that may have been dramatic, even horrible (though not everywhere: not in Guinea-Bissau, nor in India, for instance) but are certainly not unique.

Another argument against the concept is that it implies some kind of unidirectional movement toward some 'acrolectal' language or variety. Alleyne (1980) argued, successfully I think, against such a picture for the New World, showing that the so-called 'mesolect' may have been there all the time, and that there is no ready-made implicational scale regulating or characterizing the behavior of the speakers. This is all the more true in Guinea-Bissau where no 'continuum' can be said to exist. The language is changing, expanding, and there is a social context bearing on the change. But how does the social context bear on language change - and how language change on the social context - we don't know yet for sure, and there is nothing to be gained in mapping the one directly on the other, which 'decreolization' does.

The best linguistic model that we now have seems to be Chomsky's 'principles and parameters' coupled to the notion that knowledge of language is not a unitary phenomenon. Within such a model, language change, including creoles' formation and development, appears as a parametric process where many things come into play: universal grammar, interaction between UG and specific features of the (inter)changing language(s), pragmatic factors, etc. This is the space of knowledge. Society builds the space of praxis, that is what we do with our languages in societies where there always is something to struggle for, qualified language-use being one of the (unequally distributed) weapons. There must be an interface of what we know and what we do (see the concept of 'habitus linguistique' in Bourdieu 1979, 1982). But what it is is not self-evident (see Encrevé 1983). We must be very sophisticated if we wish to understand anything in our field.

FOOTNOTES

1. Portuguese racism might thus be envisaged as 'antique' racism (cf. the Greek concept) as opposed to French 'modern', 'assimilatory' racism, and British 'modern', 'separative' racism. Remember also that Guinea never was a lucrative colony.

2. This has to be evaluated in the context of the general imposition of reading and writing, that is a transition from an oral society to a literate society where printed characters and not spoken words are the source of knowledge and power.
3. A norm which furthermore they can no longer reject as being foreign.
4. Normally along with the mother's language. As a rule, everyone is at least bilingual, including the historical native speakers of Kriol. This has been implied all along as being self-evident. But it might be better to state it explicitly.
5. Note that 'léger' (light) is also used to characterize the variant of Lingala spoken by the young in Kinshasa. 'African' semantic universal or remnant of the alleged Portuguese lingua franca, or both?
6. But see Kihm 1983 for an analysis of the fact that 'closeness' and 'difference', except for the genetic viewpoint, are impressionistic notions - though their presence in the minds of the speakers/hearers may be quite significant as it may determine their attitudes toward the competing languages. It would imply that 'decreolization' may not be an objective phenomenon at all, but rather a subjective one resulting from shared and contradictory assessments inside the (multi)linguistic community - and the same for the lects-scale (see Alleyne 1980).
7. These sentences were taken as examples in a discussion I had with an informant about these problems.
8. Adjective predicates are no problem for the copula, since, as usual, adjectives are stative verbs. But this statement needs some qualification (see below).
9. I assume clitics (where they exist, e.g. in French, not in English or Portuguese) to be generated under V and to be equivalent, but for TA marking, to flexional endings (see Kayne 1975; Chomsky 1981).
10. ñã pape na bay 'my father is leaving' is grammatical (though rare in actual discourse) in which case AGR is \emptyset . On the other hand, we cannot have el na bay, due to the 'detached' feature of el (see below).
11. The probable derivation of sedu is from Port. ser 'to be', via epenthesis (cf. the 'dialectal' variants sede and sedi) and deltatism r d, both processes widely attested in the beginnings of pidginization (cf. Naro 1978; Teyssier 1959). Note that there exists an allomorph of sedu ba which is (y)era (ba) (Port. era 'was' and -va, 1,3sg imperfect). Contrary to appearances era is not a product of decreolization and is becoming increasingly rare in Bissau.
12. I argued in Kihm 1980 that, in sentences such as (4), i might be being reinterpreted as a copula, and I gave some diachronical reasons for such a move. I still believe it could have happened, but I do not think any more it is the actual course of events.
13. Locative predicates do not enter the picture as there is a special locative copula sta (Port. estar).
14. Of course, a real quantitative study should be performed on this.
15. The plural marker is -(i)s. Its use is highly variable, unlike Portuguese in that that it is systematically linked to definiteness, and deserves further investigation.

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