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Krio

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The Sociohistorical Development of Krio

Krio, one of the languages spoken in Sierra Leone in West Africa, is a creole language belonging to the Atlantic group of English creoles which are restructured languages with English as the superstrate language and varying degrees of structural influences of the Niger–Congo languages in Africa. It can be further subcategorized as West African on the basis of its areal distribution and immediate linguistic affiliations.

The Domestic and Jamaican hypotheses are two competing views that have been postulated for the origins of Krio. The Domestic Hypothesis, a corollary of monogenesis, is advocated by Hancock (1986) and other creolists. It is argued that Krio is an offshoot of an English variety of creole, which coexisted with and was influenced by a Portuguese-derived pidgin in West Africa. According to Whinnom (1965), this pidgin was related to Sabir, a Romance pidgin and Mediterranean lingua franca spoken between European and non-European sailors and traders from the Middle Ages to the early 20th century. A lesser known version of the Domestic Hypothesis is based on the view stated in E. D. Jones (1956), Berry (1959), and Peterson (1969) that contact between the local inhabitants and various groups of settlers after the founding of the 'Province of Freedom' in the peninsula of Sierra Leone in the 19th century gave rise to Krio.

Sociohistorical developments in the late 18th century and the first half of the 19th century and the attendant linguistic situation around the Sierra Leone peninsula contributed significantly to the establishment and spread of present day Krio. Henry Smeathman, a botanist, who had lived for 3 years on the Banana Island near the Sierra Leone River from 1771 to 1774, proposed the area as suitable for the establishment of an agricultural settlement populated by a free community of equal blacks and whites. Smeathman died before realizing his dream, but his idea was revived by Granville Sharp, one of the philanthropists behind the campaign to repatriate and rehabilitate emancipated African ex-slaves. Following the abolition of slavery in Britain in 1787, emancipated ex-slaves in London became destitute and created a social problem for the British government. Spitzer (1974: 9) describes their destitution and the acute need for repatriation and rehabilitation of these ex-slaves who became known as the Black Poor. A group of philanthropists campaigned vigorously for the identification, purchase, and establishment of a settlement for the Black Poor. Sharp and a group of social reformers known as the The Clapham Sect pioneered the repatriation of 411 Black Poor and some English women to the peninsula of Sierra Leone in 1787.

When they arrived in Sierra Leone, Captain Thompson, who was the leader of the expedition, purchased a piece of land from King Tom, the Temne Chief. The piece of land became known as The Province of Freedom and Thompson called the first settlement Granville Town after Granville Sharp. Historians have attributed the collapse of the first settlement to problems ranging from the fact that the settlers were ill-equipped for the weather to hostilities between the settlers and the Temnes. This occasioned a dispersal of the first settlers so that by 1791 only 48 of the Black Poor remained in The Province of Freedom.

The formation of the Sierra Leone Company and the repatriation of 1131 Africans from Nova Scotia in

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March 1792 saw the revival of the settlement and the return of some of the first settlers. The Nova Scotians were ex-slaves from the American colonies who had gained their freedom by fighting on the side of the British during the American War of Independence. After the war, they were offered asylum in the British settlement in Nova Scotia. When Thomas Peters, one of the ex-slaves, complained of their ill treatment in Nova Scotia, the British government transported them free to Sierra Leone where, together with the surviving Black Poor, they began a colony they called Free Town. Lieutenant John Clarkson of the Royal Navy, who led the Nova Scotians, became the first Governor of Sierra Leone. Like Granville Town, Free Town (Freetown became the capital of Sierra Leone) also had its fair share of misfortunes. Forty of the Nova Scotians died in the first few weeks of their arrival in the colony. Furthermore, the French razed the settlement to the ground in September 1794, but the surviving settlers rebuilt it.

In 1800, 550 Maroons from Jamaica arrived in the settlement. The Maroons were descendants of slaves who were originally from the Gold Coast but had been taken to Jamaica in the West Indies. They had organized several rebellious campaigns against the British and were promised an amnesty if they surrendered. The British expelled them to Halifax in Nova Scotia but during the bitter winter of 1796–1797, they petitioned to be removed to another place and were taken to Sierra Leone. Instead of being resettled in the Banana Islands, south of the peninsula, they settled in the colony after assisting to foil an uprising in the province. The Maroon population is reported to have dwindled after a decade because some of them died from diseases and others migrated to their original home in the Gold Coast, now known as Ghana.

When the slave trade was prohibited in 1808, Freetown became a Crown Colony. From then on it served as the springboard for British legal and naval operations aimed at combating the slave trade along the West Coast of Africa. Between 1808 and 1864, slave ships were intercepted on the high seas and the redeemed Africans, referred to as Liberated Africans or Recaptives, were released initially in Freetown, and later in other British ports. The Liberated Africans never landed in the New World and, according to Spitzer (1974: 10), "were of heterogeneous ethnic origin, speaking a Babel of African languages." The last batches of settlers were from ethnic tribes in Sierra Leone and other West African countries including Ghana and Nigeria.

The languages spoken in Freetown, including a dialect of West African pidgin/creole, coexisted with English, which was the official language used in the administration of the settlement. Even if historians and creolists disagree on when an English pidgin was first used on the coast of West Africa, or on the ethnolinguistic and demographic composition of the settlement, it is argued here that all of the languages spoken in the settlement, approximately 150 according to Koelle (1854), played roles in the creolization process that produced Krio. The African languages included Temne, the language of the people who sold The Province of Freedom to the first settlers, Mende, Sherbro, Joloff, Bambara, and Kissi. The adstratal influence of settlers from Barbados on the development of Krio probably occurred later, between 1819 and 1896 when, as Berry (1959: 299) points out, convicts from Barbados and disbanded troops from the 2nd and 4th West Indian Regiments were among the early colonists in Sierra Leone from the Caribbean area.

Thus, two periods can be identified in the development of Krio: the pre-1787 period during which a variety of West African creole was spoken in the Sierra Leone estuary and the post-1787 period (between 1787 and the 1860s) during which what is Modern Krio became established out of linguistic input from West African creole, New World creoles, and West African languages. From 1787 onward, the Sierra Leonean variety of West African creole and nascent Krio later converged as a result of pressure from and prestige of the latter. The process, which involved different creole varieties and West African languages, aptly demonstrates the roles of leveling and reconstruction in the creolization model.

Krio spread from Freetown to the interior of Sierra Leone and other West African countries due to the strategic role of Sierra Leone as the base from which Britain spread its colonial administration. The British employed educated Krio and sent them as administrators to other West African colonies in the 19th century. Varieties of Krio are spoken today in the Gambia, Cameroon, Guinea, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, and Fernando Po, which is now known as the Island of Bioko.

'Creo' and 'Creole' have been used as variant names for Krio but Fyle and Jones (1980) and Wyse (1980) argue that 'Akiriyo,' a Yoruba term which refers to the Krio habit of paying visits after religious services is the most plausible derivation of Krio. According to Hancock (1969: 19) in the past, 'Creole' was the generic term for the settlers and their descendants, from 1787 to the second half of the 19th century, and their language. At an orthographic conference held in Freetown in April 1984, participants recommended the adoption of Krio as the official designation of the language and name of the people. Krio is today one of the national languages of Sierra

Leone. It is estimated that native speakers of Krio constitute 3% of the population of Sierra Leone and two-thirds of the rest of the population of the country use the language as a lingua franca. The native speakers inhabit mostly Freetown and the western area of the country.

Krio has not decreolized for a variety of reasons. It has been used by writers as a medium of poetry, drama, and short stories. There is a Krio–English dictionary, portions of the Bible including the New Testament have been translated into Krio and many plays performed in Sierra Leone today are written in Krio. Most importantly, Krio has enjoyed an enhanced social status as one of the official languages of Sierra Leone. It is regarded as a full-fledged Sierra Leonean language and not a corrupt bastardized version of English. Along with the other Sierra Leonean languages, it is used in television broadcasts, as well as most business and official public engagements.

Official recognition of the language also extends to education. In the past, an additive bilingual program of language shelter was widely practiced in primary schools throughout the country. Children in primary schools used to be taught to a large extent through the medium of their first language and English was slowly introduced. The program of immersion had the educational aim of enriching the experiences of the children. The indigenous languages and cultures were maintained and further developed as they interacted with English. Sierra Leone's current education policy requires the extension of the use of Krio and the other indigenous languages to secondary education and there is ongoing work to standardize these languages and produce materials for use at this level. This policy will contribute to the extension of the domains of use and the continued stability and spread of Krio as well as the other national languages.

In addition to the other reasons given above, Krio has not decreolized notwithstanding pressure from English, the lexifier language, because it carries no stigma and is an identity marker.

Some Grammatical Features of Krio

Krio uses separate morphemes to express grammatical categories. In general, the plural is marked by the particle *dɛm*, for example:

dɛm pɛn
PLURAL pen
pens
pɛn dɛm
pen PL(URAL)
pens

Whereas English plural forms can be indicated by the suffixes -s, or -es, some Krio words appear to have suffixes attached without necessarily indicating plurality. Such words were acquired from English in their present forms and can be used with reference to both singular and plural objects, for example:

machis
'match'
sus/shuz
'shoe'

The possessive is marked by the particle *in*, for example:

Patrik in buk
Patrick POSSESSIVE book
'Patrick's book'

De or *di* is the progressive marker, for example:

Idit de rait.
Edith PROGRESSIVE write.
'Edith is writing.'

In certain contexts, verbs without preverbal particles express the default past tense but the particle *bin* is the past tense marker, for example:

Banadɛt bin rait.
Bernadette PAST rait.
'Bernadette wrote.'

Go is the future marker, for example:

Lamin go rait.
Lamin FUTURE rait.
'Lamin will write.'

Dɔn is the perfective marker and it combines with *bin* to express the past perfect, for example:

Angela dɔn rait.
Angela PRESENT PERFECT write.
'Angela has written.'
Mamie bin dɔn rait.
Mamie PAST PERFECT write.
'Mamie had written.'

Blan(t) 'used to' is a habitual aspect marker and the modal markers which can cooccur in a sequence as double or multiple modals are *mɔs* 'must,' *fɔ* 'should,' *go* 'intend to, must,' and *kin* 'can, could.' Consider the following examples:

I blant rait.
She HABITUAL ASPECT write.
'She usually writes.'
A bin fɔ mɔs dɔn rait.
I PAST + MODAL + MODAL + PERFECTIVE write.
'I should (would) most certainly have written.'

Some particles are multifunctional and the different functions are determined by context. These particles include:

- *Na* can function as a locative 'in, at, to,' verbal particle 'is,' and adjectival 'that.'
- *ɔt*, a preposition 'out' also functions as verb for 'extinguish, put out.'
- *De* functions as a verb 'to be,' durative marker, and locative adverb 'there.'
- *Bin* functions as a past tense marker and aspect marker.
- *Fɔ* functions as a preposition, modal auxiliary, main verb, and complementizer or infinitive marker.
- *Go* functions as a verb and modal particle.
- *Blant* is not only a past habitual marker 'used to,' but also functions as a main verb 'belong to.'

Other grammatical features of Krio include:

- multiple negation, for example:

   Nɔ tɔk tu am no moh.
   NEGATOR talk to him NEGATOR more.
   'Do not talk to him any more (again).'

- Serial verbs in Krio have the following basic structure:

   NP$_1$ Aux V$_1$ (NP$_2$) V$_2$ ...
   Agnɛs bin kuk rɛs gi Josɛf.
   Agnes (NP$_1$) bin (PAST AUXILIARY) cook (V$_1$) rice (NP$_2$) gi (V$_2$) Joseph.
   'Agnes cooked some rice which she gave to Joseph.'

- focus constructions involving *na* 'it-is,' for example:

   Na Mari bin kɔ'l.
   It-is Mary PAST call.
   'Mary called.'

Some Lexical Features of Krio

Many Krio words are of African origin. The main Sierra Leonean sources of the lexical items include, Mende, Temne, Sherbro, Susu, Yalunka, Limba, Kru, Vai, Fullah, and Mandingo. The other major African sources include, Yoruba, Wolof, Twi, Hausa, and Ibo. Most of the African items have multiple origins and indicate the multiple connections of the language as shown below:

Word	Sources	Meaning
banda	Mende, Kongo, Swahili	a basket made of palmetto straw or of marsh grass and sewn with palmetto, or a thatched house
bara (bala, balanji)	Bambara, Susu, Mandingo	a xylophone
bene	Wolof, Bambara, Mende	benne, sesame

fufu	Twi, Ewe, Wolof, Fon, Mende, and Hausa	mush, wheat flour made into a thin batter and cooked
nyam/ nyamnyam	Wolof, Fullah, Mbundu, Mandingo, Tshiluba, Efik, and Twi	to eat, eat up, food

Other sources of the lexicon of Krio include European languages: mainly English, Portuguese, Spanish, and French. The largest number of words in the lexicon of this creole derives from English. Between 70% and 80% of the Krio lexicon is derived from English and a lot of the words reflect an archaic usage in English. Examples include:

   berin 'a funeral, a burial.' Recorded in the OED as *bering(e)*, it is either obsolete or occurs in English dialects.
   titi 'girl' and *krabit* 'miserly, mean' are Scottish representations
   bre/ribre 'nag' comes from northern English dialect
   kɔstamɛnt 'customer' appears in the OED as an obsolete word *customance/custumaunce* in use as far back as 1386, which means 'customary practice; custom, habit, customary gathering, frequenting'
   baksay 'buttocks' is a fossil of an earlier English compound *baksyde, backeside* meaning 'the hinder or back part, the back, the rear.'

Vulgar words highlight slang and vulgar usages but some of these words have lost their European connotations. Examples include:

   pis 'urine'
   switpis 'diabetes'
   pisbag 'bladder'
   pishɔl 'urethra'

Some of the Krio words represent semantic Africanisms, for instance:

   bif 'meat'
   fut 'leg, thigh'
   met 'co-wife'

Although some Krio words are different from their English etyma, they are related to their etyma via a semantic change through inference, for instance:

   bisin 'to care, be concerned about' from 'business'
   drap 'arrive unexpectedly' from 'drop'
   bot 'to gang up' from 'both'
   ton 'penis' from 'stone'

Words derived directly from Portuguese, Spanish, and French include:

   pikin 'child' (derived from Portuguese *pequenno* 'little' or Spanish *pequeño*),
   bɔku 'plentiful, abundant' (derived from French '*beaucoup*'),

farinha 'flour' (derived from Portuguese but can also be traced to French *farine*)

sabi 'skill, knowledge' (derived from Portuguese *sabir* 'know' or Spanish *saber*. It also occurs in English as *savvy*)

plaba 'quarrel' (derived from Portuguese *palavra* 'words, talk,' Spanish *palabra*, Italian *parola*, French *parole*, and Latin *parabola* 'parable.')

dash 'present' (derived from Portuguese *das-me* 'give me')

Compounds

Some Krio compounds are created by juxtaposition of words of different grammatical categories. Some of the compounds are derived from English phrasal verbs for example:

fɔdɔm 'fall, fall down'
mekes 'hurry'
tayup/tringup 'tie up'

Two or three morpheme parallels in question words include:

wetin 'what'
udat 'who'
usay/wisay 'where'
ustem/wataym 'when'
wetin-du/mek-so 'why'
ɔmɔs/hɔmɔch 'how many'

Other compounds with different bases are instances of the use of metaphoric language through idiomatic calquing, for example:

Adjectives	Body parts (nouns)	Compound
big 'big'	*mɔt* 'mouth'	*bigmɔt* 'boastfulness'
gud 'good'	*bele* 'belly'	*gudbele* 'kind hearted'
big 'big'	*yay* 'eye'	*bigyay* 'greedy'

Other socially and culturally determined compounds include:

santem (sun time) 'midday'
domɔt (door mouth) 'door'
dede-hos (dead house) 'mortuary'
simun 'menstruation'

Some compounds are gender, occupation, actor, and nationality constructions, for example:

umanfɔl 'hen'
bɔy pikin 'male child'
gyal pikin 'female child'
inglishman 'Englishman'
amerikinman 'American'
ganaman 'Ghanaian'

There is also evidence of semantic calques and extensions as the forms borrowed from English gain new meaning. For example:

ɔpstyas 'the brain' (from 'upstairs')
bizi 'menstrual period' (from 'busy')
yad 'toilet' (from 'yard')
big 'older, wealthy, important'

Epenthetic vowels are inserted between consonants where clusters occur in English words, for example: *tikitul* 'kettle'

Reduplication

The following types of complete reduplication have been attested in Krio:

- intensive reduplication of adjectives, adverbs and verbs

Simplex forms	Reduplicated morphemes
tru 'true'	*trutru* 'very true'
dɛ 'there'	*dɛdɛ* 'exactly there; correct'
ay 'high'	*ayay* 'very high'
kwik 'quickly'	*kwikkwik* 'very quickly'

The following reduplicated verbs also indicate an increase in degree and/or intensity:

Simplex forms	Reduplicated morphemes
baŋ 'bang'	*baŋbaŋ* 'very loud noise'
fred 'be frightened'	*fredfred*, 'very frightened'

- iterative/repetitive/frequentative reduplication of verbs

Simplex forms	Reduplicated morphemes
aks 'ask'	*aksaks* 'repeated asking around'
chenj 'change'	*chenjchenj* 'habitually/always/ constantly changing'

- distributive reduplication of numerals

Simplex forms	Reduplicated morphemes
wan 'one'	*wanwan* 'one by one' or 'one to each'
tu 'two'	*tutu* 'two by two' or 'two to each'

- pluralizing reduplication of nouns.

- plurality bordering on uncountability, for example:

Simplex forms	Reduplicated morphemes
af 'half'	*afaf* 'bits', 'halves'
chuk 'thorn'	*chukchuk* 'thorns'

- increased mass, for example:

Simplex form	Reduplicated morpheme
chaf 'chaff'	*chafchaf* 'chaff'

Some Phonological Features of Krio

Consonants

The voiceless dental fricative /θ/ and the voiced dental fricative /ð/ are often occluded. The voiceless dental

fricative /θ/ is reduced to /t/ or in some dialects /f/, for example:

tin 'thin'
tiŋk 'think'

The voiced dental fricative /ð/ is replaced by the alveolar /d/, for example:

da 'that'
dis 'this'
dɛn 'then'

The voiceless glottal fricative /h/ is often omitted in initial positions, for example:

ol 'hold'
os 'house.'

Initial unstressed sounds are omitted in many words, for example:

gri 'agree'
mɛmba 'remember'
chenj 'exchange'
bot/bɐʊt/ 'about'

Consonant clusters involving a fricative and stop in final positions are often reduced, for example:

was was/was 'wasp'
gens 'against'
han 'hand'
fɔs 'first'
brɛs 'breast'

The stop after /l/ is often dropped and the rule appears to be the reduction of the clusters /lt/ and /ld/ to /l/ in final positions for instance:

/sɔl/ 'salt'
ol 'old'
wɔl 'world'

The /l/ before a labial consonant or a dental stop at the end of a word is deleted for example:

ɛp/hɛp 'help'
sef/sɛf 'self'

The final voiced stop /d/ in words ending in /nd/ is omitted, for example:

san 'sand'
tan 'stand'
blɛn 'blind'

Like some West African languages such as Mende and Temne, Krio has the following voiceless and voiced labiovelar coarticulated stops:

/kp/
/gb/

Krio has the following prenasalized stops:

/mb/, /nt/, /ŋg/, and /ŋk/

Consonants are palatalized and the different types are:

- nasalized palatal glide

  /ny/

- palatalized alveolars

  /dy/, /sy/, /ty/, and /zy/

- palatalized velars

  /gy/ and /ky/

The sound /v/ is realized as /b/ in certain words, for example:

ib 'heave'
oba 'over'
dreb 'drive'
koba 'cover'

The /v/ in final positions is often rendered as /f/, for example, 'move' is pronounced /muf/.

Adjacent consonants are often transposed. This is known as metathesis and examples include:

/ask/ 'ask' is pronounced /aks/
/rɪsk/ 'risk' is pronounced /riks/
/mɒsk/ 'mosque' is pronounced /mɔks/

Although this is irregular, there is evidence of rhoticism in Krio in a word like /bʁitʃ/ 'bleach' in which /l/ is realized as /r/.

Vowels and Diphthongs

Krio has seven pure vowels and the vowels lack corresponding pairs of long and short vowels. It also has three diphthongs, /ai/, /au/, and /ɔi/. Variants of these diphthongs are /ay/, /aw/, and /oy/. Vowels are introduced to replace English diphthongs for example:

/e/ replaces /eɪ/
/o/ replaces /əʊ/

Vowels are added at the end of a word. These are known as paragogic vowels. Examples include:

gladi 'glad'
dede 'dead'
arata 'rat'
lili 'little'

Suprasegmentals

Krio is a tone language whose intonation is influenced by African tonal languages. There are two tones, a

low tone / ˋ/ which is low in all positions and a high tone / ˊ/. The falling pitch / ˆ/ is used as a realization of the high tone. Tone is syllable-timed and each Krio word or segment has a relevant pitch pattern. Every syllable has a separate tone or relative pitch that is unrelated to stress. The pitch of syllables causes differences in meaning.

See also: Pidgins and Creoles: Overview; Sierra Leone: Language Situation.

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Kriolu *See:* Cape Verdean Creole.