

## Simplification and complication

### 1 How can we measure simplification?

#### 1.1 The characteristics of European-based CREOLE languages

**pidgin** a system of communication, based on an existing language (L<sub>1</sub>), which grows up amongst people who do not share a common language. Pidgins differ from creoles in that the former are no one's native language.

**creole** a pidgin language which has become the mother tongue of a community. There is no extensive contact with L<sub>1</sub> during this phase. Arbitrary to say exactly when creolisation occurs, probably when a stable form of the pidgin is reached and it begins to become more complex as a result of the need for fuller forms of expression.

**decreolisation** movement of a creole towards a standard language, sometimes, though not necessarily, L<sub>1</sub>, as model. At this point L<sub>1</sub> is sometimes referred to as the **lexifier**.

Creole languages are generally considered to be inherently simpler than 'primary' languages, though this depends on how far the creole has 'DECREOLISED' along the POST-CREOLE CONTINUUM.

Example of a Romance-based (LEXIFIED) creole language:

Guadeloupe Creole (French: Caribbean)

*Tini on fwa on misyé ki tè ka koupé on gro pyé-bwa*  
there-was once a man who ANT PROG cut a big tree

*avé on hach. i tè ja ni lontan kè i tè ka*  
with a axe. it ANT already have long-time that he ANT PROG

*koupé pyé-bwa la. Tè tin' on misyé akonpagné dè on*  
cut tree DEF ANT have a man accompanied by a

*chyen ki tè ka pasé' chak fwa i tè ka di ki-tan*  
dog who ANT PROG pass each time he ANT HAB ask when

*i tè ni lidé fin koupé pyé-bwa la.*  
he ANT have intention finish cut tree DEF

Some characteristics of creole languages:

- Vowel systems are symmetrical, with phonemes evenly spread
- A tendency towards CV syllabic structure
- Absence of inflectional morphology
- Analytic marking of number

- Tense/aspect distinctions in verb marked analytically by particles and an invariable base form
- No reflexive verb forms
- Lack of a definite article
- Unvarying SVO word order. This includes the placing of ‘atonic’ pronouns.
- Creoles are ‘restricted’ languages in that they are used for a reduced range of activities (everyday speech)

Some examples:

Simplification of Spanish/Portuguese lexicalising items in Papiamentu

<u>Papiamentu</u>	<u>Spanish</u>
<b>tende</b>	<i>entender</i>
<b>mucha</b>	<i>muchacho</i>
<b>riba</b>	<i>arriba</i>
<b>puntra</b>	<i>preguntar</i> (or Ptg. <i>perguntar</i> )

Effect of absence of gender marking in Ermitaño

<u>Ermitaño</u>	<u>Spanish</u>
<b>el vida / el olas</b>	<i>la vida / las olas</i>
<b>ele / ilós</b>	<i>él or ella / ellos or ellas</i>

Tense/aspect markers:

**Tense–Aspect Systems (Simplified)**

<b>Time</b> (± Past)	<b>Aspect</b> <i>Perfective</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Imperfective</i>	<i>Prospective</i>
Guy.				
–P	∅ (soti)	∅	ka	ke
+P	te	te	te ka	te ke
Mau.				
–P	fin (fek)	∅	pe	pu (a)
+P	ti fin	ti	ti pe	ti pu (ti a)
STo.				
–P	∅ (fi'ka, bi'la)	∅	sa ka, ka →	ka, ke (ka bi)
+P	tava	tava	tava ka	te, kja
GBi.				
–P	∅, +dʒa	∅	na → ta →	na (na bin) ta
+P	+ba dʒa	+ba	na_+ba, ta_+ba	ta_+ba
Pap.				
–P	a kaba (bira)	∅	ta	lo
+P	a	a	tabata	lo a
Cha.				
–P	∅ (ka'ba ja)	∅	ta	de
+P	ja_(+ja)	ja	ta_+ja	de ka'ba, de_+ja

Creole verb systems (from Green, 1988, p.451)

## 1.2 Some similarities and dissimilarities with Romance

It is extremely unlikely that Latin ‘creolised’ as such. But the Romance languages have a number of features which resemble the ‘simplifications’ of creoles.

### 1.2.1 Syllable structure

Ü A tendency towards CV syllabic structure, especially when the syllable-final consonant is a PLOSIVE, brought about by PALATALISATIONS:

Lat. FACTU(M) > Sp. *hecho*, Pg. *feito*, It. *fatto*  
 Lat. INSIGNARE > Fr. *enseigner*, Sp. *enseñar*, It. *insegnare*

✕ But LIQUID consonants often remain:

Lat. MULTU(M) > Sp. *mucho*, Pg *muito*, OFr. *mout*, but It. *molto*  
 Lat. palma > OFr. *paume*, but Sp./Pg./Cat. *palma*, (It. *palmo*)

✕ And syllable-final consonants are restored in many learned borrowings:

Lat. \*ADMIRARE [ADMIROR] → Fr. *admirer*, Sp. *admirar*  
 Lat. EXPLOSIONE(M) → Fr. *explosion*, Sp. *explosión*, It. *esplosione*

### 1.2.2 Reduction of inflectional morphology

Ü The Romance languages reduce noun/adjective morphology considerably: case-inflections are eroded and declension-types are merged. Spanish nouns/adjectives in *-a*, *-o* and *-C* or *-Ce* are residue of the first, second and third declensions of Latin (but the relation between singular and plural can be stated without reference to ‘declension-types’).

✕ Number is not analytically marked, but is marked by noun inflection: It. *libro/libri*, *donna/donne*.

### 1.2.3 Verb morphology

Ü Verb morphology is reduced somewhat (the Latin passive, future and perfect and imperfect subjunctive inflections are generally lost).

French has reduced person/number inflections considerably; this has been seen as linked with the obligatory presence of a subject pronoun:

Fr.

<i>j'</i>	<i>aime</i>	[ɛ:m(ə)]	<i>nous</i>	<i>aimons</i>	
<i>tu</i>	<i>aimes</i>	[ɛ:m(ə)]	<i>vous</i>	<i>aimez</i>	
<i>il</i>	<i>aime</i>	[ɛ:m(ə)]	<i>ils</i>	<i>aiment</i>	[ɛ:m(ə)]

It.

<i>amo</i>	<i>amiamo</i>
<i>ami</i>	<i>amate</i>
<i>ama</i>	<i>amano</i>

✕ But Romance verbal paradigms still distinguish tense, mood and person/number to a considerable extent.

ü The use of auxiliaries to form periphrastic tenses and aspects has increased in Romance, but auxiliaries maintain their person/number inflections and often show tense distinctions:

Sp.

*voy a hacerlo                    iba a hacerlo*  
*vas a hacerlo                    ibas a hacerlo*  
 etc.                                    etc.

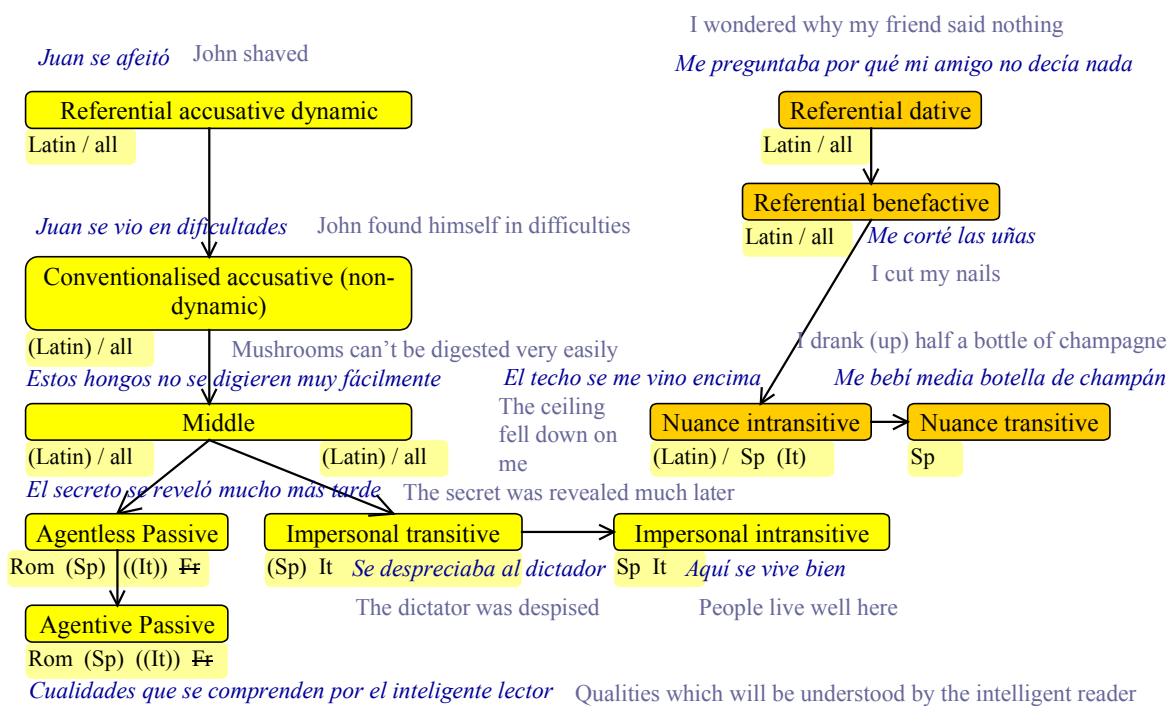
✕ In French it has been argued (Harris 1978) that the enclitic personal pronouns have become prefixal verbal inflections:

Fr.

*Moi je le sais*  
*Il dort lui*  
*Je le vois, Jean*  
*Je le lui ai donné, moi, le livre, à Pierre*

1.2.4 The reflexive

✕ The reflexive is heavily exploited in Romance and represents a complication in Romance morphosyntax:



1.2.5 Word order

ü The Romance languages generally have SVO word order

✕ But clitic pronouns very often precede the verb. The only Romance language in which there has been significant movement away from this is Brazilian Portuguese:

BrPg:

*A Maria viu ele na praia*

(Cf. EuPg *A Maria viu-o na praia*, Sp. *María lo vio en la playa*, Fr. *Marie l'a vu à la plage*)

**1.2.6** ð The standard Romance languages have undergone a process of elaboration (to *Ausbau* status (see Kloss 1967), which resembles DECREOLISATION.

Synonyms of Fr. *répugnance*: *répulsion*, *dégoût*, *nausée*, *antipathie*, *aversion*. Of these, only *dégoût* is an inherited word. *Répugnance* and *aversion* are first attested in the 13th century, *répulsion* and *nausée* in the 15th century; *antipathie* is a 16th-century borrowing from Greek.

## 2 Other general simplificatory processes

### 2.1 Greater TRANSPARENCY in relation between form and meaning

ð The adoption of analytic structures can be seen as a gain in transparency:

Lat. DŪRU(M) / DŪRIOR / DŪRISSIMU(M) → Fr. *dur*, *plus dur*, *le plus dur* (furthermore, the superlative and intensifying functions of DŪRISSIMU(M) are distinguished in Romance: Fr. *le plus dur* / *très dur*).

✕ But the widening of the use of the reflexive noted in 1.2.4 and the widening of meaning of many prepositions militates against transparency.

### 2.2 Increase in paradigmatic regularity

ð ANALOGICAL regularisation. Spanish and Portuguese in particular have reduced the number of different conjugation-types and regularised many verbs:

Lat. MITTO, MITTĒRE, MĪSĪ, MISSUM → Sp. *meto*, *meter*, OSp. *mise* → MSp. *metí*, *metido*

A major regularisation is represented by the abandoning of DEPONENT and SEMI-DEPONENT verbs (verbs with passive form but active meaning):

MORI [MORĪOR] → \*MORĪRE > Fr. *mourir*, Sp. *morir*, It. *morire*

NASCI [NASCOR] → \*NASCĒRE or NASCĒRE > Fr. *naître*, Sp. *nacer*, It. *nascere*

SEQUI [SEQUOR] → \*SEQUĒRE or \*SEQUĪRE > Fr. *suivre*, Sp. *seguir*, It. *seguire*

✕ On the other hand there has also been analogical complication. In Spanish, the pattern of a distinctive /g/ in the first person singular of the present tense of some verbs forms a model for further analogical irregularity:

Lat. DICO, DICIS, ... > Sp. *digo*, *dices*, ...

Lat. TENEŌ, TENES,... > Sp. *tengo, tienes*, ...

Lat. FACIO, FACIS,... > Sp. *hago, haces*, ...

Lat. AUDIO, AUDIS,... > Sp. *oigo, oyes*, ...

## 2.3 Reduction of REDUNDANCY

ü Many examples in the Latin/Romance lexicon of near-synonyms which are pruned.  
Words for ‘to kill’: NECARE, INTERFICĒRE, OCCIDĒRE, replaced originally by Fr. *tuer* < *tutare* ‘to take care of’ (*ocire* survives into OFr.), Sp. *matar* (associated with \*MATTU(M) ‘stupid’)

✕ But sometimes redundant forms are reutilised for other purposes in a process sometimes referred to as EXAPTATION (the cooptation, for new purposes, of structures that were developed for other purposes but then became redundant: see Lass 1990 and Posner 1996). An example of exaptation is the reutilisation of anomalous past participle forms as adjectives in Spanish:

Sp. *confuso* ‘confused, embarrassed’ / *confundido* (past participle)  
*absorto* ‘engrossed, absorbed’ / *absorbido* (past participle)  
*junto* ‘together, next (to)’ / *juntado* (past participle)

It is also possible for new series of near-synonyms to be created by exaptation, e.g. the two forms of the Spanish imperfect subjunctive.

## 2.4 ü The ‘principle of least effort’ in phonology

### 2.4.1 Lenition

CL:	pp/p/b	tt/t/d	kk/k/g
?	p/b/β or Ø	t/d/ð or Ø	k/g/ɣ or Ø
{OCast: MSp:	p/b~β	t/d~ð	k/g~ɣ
	CŪPPA > <i>copa</i>	GŪTTA > <i>gota</i>	SĪCCU[S] > <i>seco</i>
	LŪPU[S] > <i>lobo</i>	LĀTU[S] > <i>lado</i>	MĪCA > <i>miga</i>
	BĪBO > <i>bebo</i>	NĪDU[S] > <i>nido</i>	PLĀGA > <i>llaga</i>
	SABŪCU[S] > <i>saúco</i>	FRĪGĪDU[S] > <i>frío</i>	RĒGĀLE [RĒGĀLIS] > <i>real</i>

Phonemic mergers may take place because of a low FUNCTIONAL LOAD.

### 2.4.2 Assimilations

The simplification of complex consonantal groups

NASALISATION in French and Portuguese:

Lat. BENE > Fr. *bien* [bjɛ̃], Pg. *bem* [bɛ̃]

Lat. FINE(M) > Fr. *fin* [fɛ̃], Pg. *fim* [fɨ̃]

VELARISATION in French:

Lat. ALBA > Fr. *aube* [aʊbə] > [ob(ə)]

### 2.4.3 × Complications

Contextual conditioning produces phonemic split:

French vowels:

CATTU(S) > *chat* [a]

CLAVE(M) > *clef* [e]

CANTARE > *chanter* [ã]

PASTA > *pâte* [ɑ:]

CABALLOS > *chevaux* [o]

LAXARE > *laisser* [ɛ]

Palatalisation produces a more complex consonantal system, filling the ‘gaps’ of Latin

Lat.	f		s			(h)
Rom.	f/v	ts/dz	s/z	ʃ/ʒ	tʃ/dʒ	

#### *References and further reading*

Green, John, 1990. ‘Romance Creoles’, in Martin Harris & Nigel Vincent (eds), *The Romance Languages*. (London: Routledge).

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