

Title: Archetypal areal features in the African English-lexifier Creoles

Author: Kofi Yakpo

Affiliation: Assistant Professor, Linguistics, The University of Hong Kong

Address: School of Humanities, Run Run Shaw Tower, The University of Hong Kong,
Pokfulam, Hong Kong

Email: kofi@hku.hk

Archetypal areal features in the African English-lexifier Creoles

Keywords: creole, convergence, adstrate

It seems natural that the languages belonging to the African branch of the family of Afro-Caribbean English-lexifier Creoles and extended Pidgins (AECs) should form part of the convergence movement that typifies the greater West African linguistic area. In this paper, I will focus on several features to show that adstrate transfer from African languages due to widespread multilingualism as well as substrate transfer through language shift to creoles and extended pidgins has indeed been leaving traces in the linguistic systems of the creoles and pidgins. I argue that the AECs, despite them being largely neglected in the discussion, are of great value in the quest to identify cross-cutting areal features in West Africa. The heterogenous origins of these languages from genetically disparate African source languages means that in many areas of their grammar, the creoles and pidgins show the effects of selection and levelling typical of linguistic convergence. We therefore find the most salient, most generalized, and most frequent areal features being replicated in the African AECs, often in more regularized paradigms, and often but not always, stripped down to fewer, more essential distinctions. I employ the term “archetypal areal feature” as a label for such features that have been selected and have been maintained in the African AECs throughout their creation and continuing development under language contact in multilingual contexts.

Some of these archetypal features are, for example:

- Tone systems with two-tone contrasts - high versus no tone (realized as low), rather than three-tone systems or two-tone systems with full specification (Rivera Castillo & Faraclas 2006; Yakpo 2012).
- Scarcity of path-incorporating prepositions, general locative prepositions, the use of relator nouns and the use of directional serial verb constructions (Yakpo & Bruyn 2015; Yakpo 2016a).
- Prominence of aspect and mood, often involving a basic distinction between perfective and imperfective, with often fewer aspectual sub-categories than typical for West African languages.
- Split copular systems with a distinction between locative-existential and equative functions
- Asymmetric negation strategies (e.g. Jungraithmayr 1988) involving the use of special negators and/or negation patterns for specific TMA categories and suppletive negative copulas (Yakpo 2016b), as in many West African languages (Cyffer, Ebermann & Ziegelmeyer 2009).
- Scarcity of dedicated negative indefinite pronouns (Cyffer, Ebermann & Ziegelmeyer 2009; Van Alsenoy 2014).
- Modal systems characterized by the use of modal complementizers, marking one core modal category, namely deontic force (Yakpo 2012b).

In my talk, I will correlate findings on selected areal features from primary data gathered in West Africa from Krio (Sierra Leone), Ghanaian Pidgin English, Nigerian Pidgin, Cameroon Pidgin and Pichi (Equatorial Guinea), with control data from Caribbean AECs, as well as genealogically diverse languages of West Africa and adjoining regions. The objective is to show the far-reaching areal affinities of the AECs with their

linguistic area. A second objective is to explore the concept of “archetypal areal feature” as a tool for uncovering broad areal relationships in northern sub-saharan Africa that include the creole languages of the region.

489 words

References

- Alsenoy, Lauren Van. 2014. *A new typology of indefinite pronouns, with a focus on negative indefinites*. PhD dissertation, Universiteit Antwerpen.
- Cyffer, Norbert, Erwin Ebermann & Georg Ziegelmeyer. 2009. *Negation patterns in West African languages and beyond*. (Typological Studies in Language 87). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Faraclas, Nicholas Gregory. 1985. River Pidgin (Creole) English: tone, stress or pitch-accent language? In Russell Galen Schuh (ed.), *Papers from the 15th African linguistics conference*, vol. ppl. 9 to Studies in African linguistics, 111–113. (Suppl. 9 to Studies in African Linguistic). Los Angeles: African Studies Center & Dept. of Linguistics, Univ. of California at Los Angeles (UCLA).
- Jungraithmayr, Herrmann. 1988. Zur Negation in afrikanischen Sprachen. In Kosta Peter (ed.), *Studia Indogermanica et Slavica, Festgabe für Werner Thomas zum 65. Geburtstag*, 485–496. (Specimina Philologiae Slavicae). München: Sager.
- Rivera Castillo, Yolanda & Nicholas Faraclas. 2006. The emergence of systems of lexical and grammatical tone and stress in Caribbean and West African Creoles. *Sprachtypologie und Universalienforschung*(59). 148–169.
- Yakpo, Kofi. 2012a. Reiteration in Pichi: Forms, functions and areal-typological perspectives. In Enoch A Aboh & Anne Zribi-Hertz (eds.), *The morphosyntax of reiteration in creole and non-creole languages*, vol. 43, 251–284. (Creole Language Library). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Yakpo, Kofi. 2012b. Betwixt and between: Causatives in the English-lexicon creoles of West Africa and the Caribbean. In Jaako Leino & Ruprecht von Waldenfels (eds.), *Analytical causatives from “make” to “laskma,”* 9–39. München: Lincom Europa.
- Yakpo, Kofi. Under review. Unity in diversity: Locative constructions in the Afro-Caribbean English-lexifier Creoles and in African substrate languages. In Cecilia Cutler & Zvjezdana Vrzic (eds.), *Festschrift for John Singler: Language Contact in Africa and the African Diaspora in the Americas*. (Creole Language Library (CLL)). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Yakpo, Kofi. Under review. Business as usual: Pichi negation in its areal-typological context. In Viviane Déprez & Fabiola Henri (eds.), *Negation and Negative Concord: The view from Creoles*. (Creole Language Library (CLL)). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Yakpo, Kofi & Adrienne Bruyn. 2015. Transatlantic patterns: The relexification of locative constructions in Sranan. In Pieter Muysken & Norval Smith (eds.), *Surviving the Middle Passage: The West Africa-Surinam Sprachbund*, 135–75. (Trends in Linguistics, Studies and Monographs (TiLSM) 275). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.