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A Theory of Creole Genesis
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The most intriguing question about creole languages is no doubt that of how they come about. Since creole languages are natural languages, it must be possible to formulate a theory of their origin within the framework of the processes that play a role in language creation and language change in general. This is the assumption that I had in mind when I first started working on the problem of creole genesis in the early eighties.

The first part of my talk will outline the theory that we developed within the aforementioned framework. This theory involves the process of relexification or relabelling, as well as the processes of leveling, grammaticalisation, reanalysis, lexical diffusion and innovation. The second part of the talk will summarize the various dimensions of a valid test of this theory. On the basis of data drawn from various creole languages, the third part of the talk will illustrate how the various processes interact in creole genesis and development. The fourth part will show that the proposed theory can account for all the features that characterize the emergence and early development of a creole language, and it will discuss the consequences of the findings for historical linguistics.
