

### Aspects of DP Word Order Across Creoles

Based on a survey of 25 creoles, this paper makes two main arguments about DP word order across creoles.

First, the claims often made in view of IP constituent orderings that creole word orders are (i) similar and (ii) reflect unmarked patterns are generally unsupported by DP word order facts. Much of the literature on word order in creoles has focused on the fact that the ordering of IP constituents, especially TMA markers, and subjects, verbs and object(s), is similar across creoles. TMA articles are generally said to occur in that order—Tense, Mood, Aspect—and subjects, verbs and objects appear in the order, SVO (perhaps without exception). Bickerton (1975, 1981) and Muysken (1980) explain the similarity in IP orderings across creoles in terms of universal markedness. By this view, creole IP elements occur in the order T-M-A and S-V-O because linguistic universals play a strong role in creole genesis and these orderings are universally unmarked. However, while the IP structure across creoles has been widely studied, relatively little attention has been paid to DP constituent orders. The data presented here on the orderings of definite morphemes (Def), plural morphemes (Pl), demonstratives (Dem), numerals (Num) and attributive adjectives (Adj) relative to the head noun (N), fail to support strong views of similarity and markedness in creole word orders. The degree of heterogeneity in sequences of Dem, Num, N and Adj (Table 1) in the present sample is shown to approximate that found in natural language as described in comparative work by Hawkins (1983), Dryer (1989, 1992). In addition, the ordering of these elements in certain creoles is highly marked cross-linguistically. Finally, the orderings of Pl and Def relative to N also vary considerably in the present data sample. The data presented here, then, suggest that a strong universalist position such as that proposed by Bickerton (1975, 1981) and Muysken (1980) for the IP, is untenable for creole DPs.

Second, the data presented in this paper support the observation made by several authors for individual creoles or families of creoles that the relative order of Adj and N in creoles tends to follow that found in the lexifier language, and not necessarily those found in the substrates. In the present data, adjectives and numerals are unique among DP modifiers in that their position relative to the head noun unfailingly matches that found in the substrate: creoles in the first column of Table 2 all have lexifiers with prenominal adjectives, while creoles in the second and third columns of Table 2 have lexifiers with postnominal adjectives or mixed systems. These data, then, support Lefebvre's proposal that: "...[relexifiers] acquire the directionality properties of the superstratum major category lexical entries," (1998:39). However, this paper proposes an alternative explanation in terms of semantic and perceptual prominence: borrowed morphemes that are most semantically contentful and perceptually salient in the lexifier language are most likely to preserve their surface position in the creole. Generally, adjectives and other content morphemes tend to be more perceptually salient than functional morphemes in the DP structure, and less subject to phonological reduction. Consequently, creole creators may be expected to better identify these morphemes and better reproduce their position in the creole. This alternative account of word order may be independently needed to explain which functional morphemes are retained and lost cross-creoles. As Bruyn (1995:259) observes, French lexifier creoles generically have lost the clitic-like definite articles 'la' and 'le' as definite articles because they are subject to phonological reduction and not perceptually salient. In contrast, the definite morpheme in Germanic lexifier creoles (often *di*) tends to preserve its prenominal position, because the corresponding morphemes in the superstrate are not subject to phonological reduction.

**Table 1:** *Attested orderings of Dem, N, Adj and Num\**

<b>Dem-Num-Adj-N</b>	Bahamian Creole		
<b>Dem-Num-N-Adj</b>	Kriyol	Seychelles Creole	Kristang
	Tok Pisin	Mauritian Creole	Cape Verd. Creole
<b>Num-Adj-N-Dem</b>	Bislama	Berbice Dutch Creole	Sranan
<b>N-Adj-Num-Dem</b>	Fa d'Ambu	Nubi	
<b>Num-N-Adj-Dem</b>	Haitian Créole	Le Tayo	Angolar
	Papiamentu	St. Lucian Creole	Louisiana Creole
<b>Adj-N-Num-Dem</b>	Sango		
<b>N-Adj-Dem-Num</b>	Lingala		

\* Five creoles from the sample are excluded from this table due to incomplete data.

**Table 2:** *Relative orderings of Nouns and Adjectives by Creole (with Associated Lexifier)*

<b>Adj-N</b> <b>(Prenominal Adjectives)</b>	<b>(Adj)-N-Adj</b> <b>(Mixed systems)</b>	<b>N-Adj</b> <b>(Postnominal Adjectives)</b>
Ndyuka (English)	Kriyol (Port.)	Fa d'Ambu (Port.)
Berbice Dutch Creole (Dut.)	Haitian Creole (French)	São Tomé Creole (Port.)
Bahamian Creole (English)	Papiamentu (Span./Port.)	Nubi (Arabic)
Bislama (English)	Le Tayo (French)	Lingala (Bantu)
Sranan (English)	Tok Pisin (English)*	Kristang (Port.)
Sango (Ngbandi)	St. Lucian Creole (French)	
	Seychellois (French)	
	Reunion Creole (French)	
	Guyana French Creole (Fr.)	
	Mauritian Creole (French)	
	Louisiana Creole (French)	
	Angolar (Port.)	
	Cape Verd. Creole (Port.)	

\* Mühlhäusler (1985) shows that the N-Adj order in Tok Pisin is a recent development.

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