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Modelling the emergence of creoles languages

Creole languages are nonstandard hybrid idioms which originated in the contacts of European colonists with typically the slaves they brought to their plantation settlement colonies. Some of the best known include Gullah and Jamaican Creole (lexified by, i.e., deriving most of its vocabulary from, English) as well as Haitian and Louisiana Creoles (lexified by French). Although most of the scholarship on these new vernaculars has been about their emergence, no attempt has been made to model the dynamical aspect of this evolutionary process, which can help resolve some of the controversies about what is involved in Creole-formation. In this talk I'll present a dynamical process that mimics the process of Creole formation in American contact ecologies involving European colonists and African slaves in the Eighteenth century. Inspired to the Naming Game, our modeling scheme incorporates demographic information about the composition of the colonial position during that period, which included Europeans, Mulattos/Creoles (both locally born), and Bozal (African-born) slaves. I'll show how this sole information allows to discriminate regions/territories that produced modern creole idioms from those that did not with a surprising accuracy. From this perspective the presented modeling scheme may turn out to be a useful tool to shed light on the formation of creole languages as well as to test specific hypotheses as they apply to the relevant ecologies. The basic algorithm is, in fact, flexible enough to accommodate additional relevant factors to explain specific spatial heterogeneities in creole formation. Finally the generality of the approach could provide valuable insights for further studies related to the emergence of languages in contact linguistic ecologies along as for the longstanding problem of the emergence and evolution of Language.