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On the genesis of French and non-French Creoles of the Americas

From a typological point of view French Creoles of the Americas (hereinafter FCA) differ from English Creoles of the Americas and Papiamentu (hereinafter NFCA) in a number of ways. In sharp contrast to many if not most of its NFCA neighbors, no FCA makes phonemic use of tone, no FCA has any African-origin consonant phoneme, no FCA systematically eliminates word-final consonants, no FCA makes use of any borrowed African personal pronouns. More broadly, we may say that in all major respects, FCA's differ from NFCA's in showing considerably less African influence.

The goal of the proposed presentation is to seek to account for this set of differences between FCA's and NFCA's by proposing that whereas the latter derive from proto-pidgins spoken in West Africa (for English-based creoles, see McWhorter (1995), and for Papiamentu, Jacobs (2012)), the former must derive from a proto-pidgin originally spoken in the Americas. Parkvall (2000: 156) had already expressed the suspicion that a French proto-pidgin which arose in the Americas (unlike the ancestral proto-pidgins of NFCA's, with an alleged African place of birth) would explain the comparatively weak African influence upon FCA's. A likely candidate is the island of Saint-Kitts, which both the French and English settled in the seventeenth century, and which served as a springboard for the subsequent French and English colonization of other West Indian islands. Linguistic evidence in support of this hypothesis is the hitherto-unnoticed fact that a good many linguistic features of FCA's point to their common ancestor having been in contact with different varieties of English.

Jacobs, Bart. 2012. *Origins of a Creole: The History of Papiamentu and Its African Ties*. Berlin: Walter DeGruyter.

McWhorter, John. 1995. "Sisters under the skin: A case for genetic relationship between the Atlantic English-based creoles". *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*: 10: 289-333.

Parkvall, Mikael. 2000. *Out of Africa: African influences in Atlantic Creoles*. London: Battlebridge.