

Reviews

Comptes rendus

Claire Lefebvre. 2014. *Relabeling in language genesis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. xiii + 306. US \$56.00 (softcover).

Reviewed by Natalie Operstein, *University of California, Los Angeles*

This book examines substrate contributions to the genesis of creole languages by focusing on the role of relabeling (also called *relexification*). Relabeling is defined as “a process that consists in assigning a lexical entry a new label derived from a phonetic string drawn from another language” (p. 1). The equivalence between the relevant lexical entries is established on the basis of semantic overlap between the lexical entry in L_1 and the corresponding lexical entry in L_2 . To illustrate the concept of relabeling, Lefebvre provides the example of the verb *ansasinen* ‘to murder’/‘to mutilate’ in Haitian Creole. This verb combines the semantics of the substrate language (L_1) verb, which is Fongbe *hù*, with the phonetic shape of the superstrate language (L_2) verb, which is French *assassiner*. The shared meaning of the two verbs is ‘to murder’. In a previous contribution (1998), Lefebvre demonstrated the role of relabeling in the genesis of Haitian Creole. The present book is intended as an update on, and a more in-depth analysis of, the role of relabeling in creole genesis based on subsequent publications on the topic.

Chapter 1, “Introduction”, defines relabeling, explains the purpose of the book and provides an overview of the remaining chapters. Chapter 2, “Relabeling: A central process in language contact/genesis”, surveys the existing terminology for language-contact processes that result in matching a lexical entry from L_1 with a phonetic string (called *label*) from L_2 , and the language-contact situations in which relabeling takes place. It then briefly examines relabeling in three types of contact languages (mixed languages, pidgins/creoles and indigenized varieties of English), and relates the different input of relabeling into the genesis of these languages to sociolinguistic factors, which include the number of languages involved in a given contact situation and the amount of access to L_2 .

Chapter 3, “The relabeling-based theory of creole genesis”, summarizes and updates the theory of creole genesis developed by Lefebvre and her colleagues, reported in Lefebvre (1998). The relabeling approach is embedded within second-language acquisition (SLA) approaches to creole formation, which view creoles as “a crystallized incomplete stage of second-language acquisition” (p. 32). Methodologically, it consists of systematic structural comparison between creoles and their substrates, performed in isolation from the assumed processes of SLA. The theory assumes that relabeling occupies the central place in the creation of creoles, and that other formative processes, including reanalysis, grammaticalization and leveling, “apply to the output of relabeling” (p. 32). The agents of relabeling are adult speakers of the substrate languages. The chapter examines relabeling in lexical items, derivational affixes and selected functional categories, including tense-mood-aspect systems, determiners, complementizers and conjunctions. Special attention is devoted to interplay between relabeling and grammaticalization in the origin of creole functional categories.

Chapter 4, “Relabeling in two different theories of the lexicon”, by Renée Lambert-Brétière and Claire Lefebvre, looks at relabeling through the prism of two formal frameworks of grammar which differ in their modeling of the lexicon, the Principles and Parameters framework and Radical Construction Grammar. After briefly introducing each framework, the chapter argues that the latter approach is better at handling a relabeling-based account of the origin of several constructions in a subset of Caribbean creoles. Chapter 5, “Relabeling and word order: A Construction Grammar perspective”, by Claire Lefebvre and Renée Lambert-Brétière, uses Radical Construction Grammar to model a relabeling-based account of the origin of word order in several Caribbean creoles. Chapter 6, “Relabeling options: On some differences between Haitian and Saramaccan”, looks at selected structural differences between these two creoles from the viewpoint of a relabeling-based account of their origin. These creoles are chosen for comparison because of their shared substrates; the examined structural features include postpositions and morphological reduplication.

Chapter 7, “Relabeling and the contribution of the superstrate languages to creoles”, argues that the substrate and the superstrate contributions to creole grammars can be accounted for in a principled way, with the former languages contributing “meaning” and “function” and the latter languages contributing “form” (pp. 221–222). The specific focus of the chapter is on superstrate contributions to creoles in the areas of the lexicon and morphosyntax, with the examples drawn from three Caribbean creoles with shared substrates but different superstrates, Haitian, Saramaccan and Papiamentu. The superstrate influence on creoles is seen in the labels, order of derivational affixes, and word and constituent order. The chapter devotes special attention to the question of whether superstrates filter out constructions transferred from substrates when they lack the linguistic material for their expression.

Chapter 8, “Relabeling and the typological classification of creoles”, is based on the studies published in Lefebvre (2011), which compare selected subsystems of creoles’ grammars with those of their substrates. The comparisons point to a close

typological connection between the creoles and their substrates in the areas of “meaning” and “function”, but not in those of “form” (phonology and word order) (pp. 256–257). Typological differences in creole grammars, such as availability versus non-availability of serial verb constructions, are shown to correlate systematically with those of their substrates. This chapter also examines factors that affect the transferability of substrate features into creoles as well as some general questions of creole typology, including why creoles show isolating morphology and whether they constitute an identifiable typological class. Chapter 9, “Conclusion: A strong alternative to the Bioprogram Hypothesis”, recapitulates the main proposals of the relabeling approach to creole genesis and offers a critique of the feature pool hypothesis, which assumes that creoles and other contact varieties arise from the competition and selection process among the linguistic variants in a given contact environment (Mufwene 2001; see an overview in Lim and Ansaldo 2016).

The relabeling account of creole genesis explored in the book is a welcome addition to the growing body of literature on the contribution of substrate languages to creoles. The systematic structural comparison between creoles and their substrates, which forms the backbone of this approach, provides the basis for a principled hypothesis about the typological features of creoles and the sources of creole structures. Another principled hypothesis to which this work contributes is the division of labor between adults and children in the processes of language genesis and change. The author’s views on the issue are articulated toward the end of Chapter 3: while “adults are the principal agents of creole genesis” (p. 101), the role of children consists in continuing changes initiated by their parents, reanalysis of structurally ambiguous surface strings during language acquisition, regularization of unpredictable variation, and development of creoles’ morphophonemics (pp.101–102). Attention to these issues makes the book’s argument and findings relevant to current literature exploring this complementarity (e.g., Labov 2007, Meisel 2011, Trudgill 2011, Operstein 2015). Since imposition of substrate semantic and morpho-syntactic properties onto superstrate lexical entries may interact with acquisition of (aspects of) the superstrate, an explicit incorporation of SLA processes into the relabeling model presented in the book may be a natural step in further development of the model. Also, the relabeling approach appears to be stronger in some areas than others, and an explicit comparison of the relabeling account with alternative accounts would be welcome. The book will be of interest to a wide range of readers, including students and scholars of language contact, genesis, and change.

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Zdenek Salzmänn, James Stanlaw, and Nobuko Adachi. 2015. *Language, culture, and society: An introduction to linguistic anthropology*. 6th ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Pp. xiii + 512. US \$52 (softcover).

Reviewed by Zuochen Zhang, *University of Windsor*

This is the sixth edition of the book and it contains 15 chapters. Chapter 1, “Introducing linguistic anthropology”, gives an introduction to linguistic anthropology, the scientific study of the universal phenomenon of human language. After explaining the necessity and importance of studying language, modern myths about languages (especially misconceptions regarding “primitive” languages), grammar, and vocabulary, it provides a brief history of anthropology, followed by a section on anthropology, linguistics, and linguistic anthropology. In this section, the authors justify why the expression *linguistic anthropology* is preferable to *anthropological linguistics*, which is frequently used to refer to this subfield of anthropology.

Chapter 2, “Methods of linguistic anthropology”, first addresses the difference between linguistics, “the analytical study of language, any language, to reveal its structure – the different kinds of language units – and the rules according to which these units are put together to produce stretches of speech” (p. 21), and linguistic anthropology, “the study of language in its biological and sociocultural context” (p. 21). Two tables are used to illustrate paradigms in modern linguistics and linguistic anthropology.

Chapter 3, “‘Nuts and bolts’ of linguistic anthropology I: Language is sound”, and chapter 4, “‘Nuts and bolts’ of linguistic anthropology II: Structure of words and sentences”, introduce basic knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of speech and how speech sounds are articulated. When introducing sentences and grammar, the authors use examples from different languages (e.g., English, Chinese, Latin, etc.) to illustrate that some languages have more inflectional forms