

Minicurso 1: Describing contact languages: The English Creoles of Africa and the Americas

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Afro-Caribbean English-lexifier Creoles (AECs) are spoken across a vast area from Cameroon (Central Africa) to Costa Rica (Central America). With more than hundred million speakers on two continents, the AECs today form one of the largest language clusters of the western hemisphere, and the numbers are growing. The AECs were created by Africans and African-descended peoples in the Americas from the 17th century onwards as an adaptive response to European enslavement. Therefore, they emerged through the interaction of speakers of typologically and genealogically diverse languages. They combine elements stemming from these diverse sources in innovative ways. While the lexicon is largely derived from English, the origins of many grammatical structures are distinctly African. At the same time, cognitive mechanisms of language acquisition have shaped particular areas of their structure. The AECs were not only born of contact but their continuing evolution and differentiation continues to be profoundly shaped by contact in varying degrees of intensity with (1) African substrate languages for populations that have shifted to a creole, with (2) adstrates for creoles spoken alongside other African and non-African languages in highly multilingual societies like Cameroon or Suriname, with (3) the lexicon-providing superstrate English in countries like Jamaica or Nigeria, where English is the official language and with (4) superstrates that did not provide the bulk of the lexicon, like Dutch in Suriname, or Spanish in Equatorial Guinea. For a field linguist working on the Afro-Caribbean English-lexifier Creoles the complexity of these contact scenarios can be challenging: How do we deal with the continuous code-switching and code-mixing that forms part of any stretch of discourse in the communities where these languages are spoken? How document multiple lexicons involving, for example, mixed numeral and color systems? How describe the lexically stratified phonological systems of many English-lexifier Creoles typified by stress and tone at the same time? How handle the lexical, grammatical and phonological syncretism, mixed and blended structures, borrowings and calques, and the range of variation that is part of conventional communicative practices? In this workshop, we will look at different linguistic ecologies in which AECs are spoken, the challenges of language description and documentation in these scenarios, and talk about how to adapt methods of linguistic field research, description and documentation to capture the richness of the plurilingual practices associated with the AECs and other contact languages.

Minicurso 2: El contacto lingüístico en la Amazonía: Áreas, procesos, y metodologías

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Amazonía is one of the most linguistically diverse and complex regions of the world, being home to a remarkable number of genealogically distinct indigenous linguistic families and isolates. At the same time, indigenous Amazonian languages have been profoundly shaped by language contact processes that have resulted in phonological, grammatical, and lexical convergence among the languages of the region.

The goal of this course is to provide students with a knowledge of the major language contact processes and outcomes among the indigenous languages of Greater Amazonia, as the expanse of the lowland neotropical regions of South America is sometimes called. The language contact processes and outcomes that we will examine include: 1) mutual structural convergence due to long-term stable multilingualism, as found in the upper río Negro, upper río Xingú, and Mamoré-Guaporé regions; 2) creolization-like processes due to large-scale captive-taking as found among certain peoples of Tupí-Guaraní origin; 3) and cultural-ideological factors that have been argued to inhibit lexical borrowing among Amazonian peoples, as well as seeming exceptions to these factors such as northwestern Amazonian Wanderwörter. We will seek not only to understand the linguistic processes and outcomes involved in these facets of Amazonian language contact, but also the social processes that underlie them. In addition, we will discuss recent quantitative methods that have sought to identify traces of language contact among the languages of the region on the basis of the analysis of the distribution of phonological and grammatical features.