Creoles and acts of identity: convergence and multiple voicing in the Atlantic Creoles

Línguas crioulas e atos de identidade: convergência e vozes múltiplas nas línguas crioulas atlânticas

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Abstract: In this work, we analyze aspects of the phonology, morpho-syntax and lexico-semantics of the Afro-Atlantic Creoles to show how, by taking advantage of formal, structural, and functional convergence between and among African languages, European languages, a Proto Atlantic Portuguese lexifier Creole, and universals of language use, speakers of the Atlantic Creoles have shaped and deployed their creolized languages as instruments of double and multiple voicing (Du Bois 1903; Bakhtin 1930). This pluri-voicing has allowed Atlantic Creole speakers to equip themselves with a linguistic repertoire that has enabled them to use what appear at first glance to be the exact same words and structures to simultaneously assert Afro-Atlantic identities, Euro-Atlantic identities, Atlantic Creole identities and other identities. Following one of the many immensely helpful and intellectually sound approaches adopted by Holm (2000), we demonstrate how, as research on the Atlantic Creoles progresses, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify a single source for many Atlantic Creole words and constructions. We argue that linear, mono-causal and mono-dimensional accounts of creole genesis must therefore give way to multi-directional, multi-causal and multiplex scenarios of convergence among
forms and structures found in what have been traditionally classified as superstratal, substratal and adstratal input varieties as well as those found universally and in a Proto West African Portuguese Creole. We conclude that the Atlantic Creole words and constructions studied in this paper are best accounted for by a reconceptualization of Atlantic Creole speakers as creative and resourceful agents who have co-instantaneously used their creole languages to identify, counter-identify, and dis-identify with both African and European ways of understanding the world and acting in it.

**Keywords:** Creole languages, double voicing, agency.

**Resumo:** Este trabalho analisa aspectos da fonologia, morfossintaxe e léxico-semântica dos crioulos afro-atlânticos, para demonstrar que, através da convergência formal, estrutural e funcional entre línguas africanas, línguas europeias, um crioulo lexificador português proto-atlântico, bem como universais linguísticos aplicados ao uso, os falantes dos crioulos atlânticos definem e usam as suas línguas como veículos de vozes duplas e múltiplas (Du Bois 1903, Bakhtin 1930). Estas várias vozes permitem aos falantes dos crioulos atlânticos equiparem-se com um repertório linguístico, que lhes permite usar um conjunto idêntico de palavras e estruturas para simultaneamente afirmarem identidades afro-atlânticas, euro-atlânticas, crioulas e outras. Seguindo uma das várias propostas úteis e intelectualmente sãs de Holm (2000), mostramos que, à medida que a investigação sobre crioulos atlânticos avança, é cada vez mais difícil identificar uma origem única para as palavras e construções destes crioulos. Defendemos que as abordagens lineares, mono-causais e mono-dimensionais sobre a gênesis dos crioulos deve dar lugar a cenários multi-direcionais e multi-causais de convergência entre as formas e estruturas encontradas nas chamadas variedades de superstrato, substrato e adstrato, bem como nos universais e no referido crioulo português proto-africano. Por fim, concluímos que as palavras e construções dos crioulos atlânticos devem ser abordadas mediante a reconceptualização dos falantes enquanto agentes criativos e engenhosos que, de forma instantânea, usaram as suas línguas crioulas para se identificarem, contra-identificarem e des-identificarem com modos africanos e europeus de entender o mundo e de agir sobre ele.

**Palavras-chave:** Línguas crioulas, vozes multiplas, agentividade.
Meh Own Tongue
Broken English? Wha you tellin me at all?
I don’t talk no broken English, boy/ To besides,
When I talkin, dat ent no Englan language,
What Ah have is meh own baggage.
De two tings jus ent de same
My tongue have identity and it have name
What name? Creole, an don’t get fool up
Creole is not no English dat break up.
It have roots from Europe, Africa, an England.
But is in de Caribbean land dat it really born.
Structure? It have dat! Sentence pattern? Dat too!
Dem linguist makin it a study.
It have it own style an it own vocabulary.
Dey even learnin bout it in university.
An jus how English have standard, Creole have it too!
So meh tongue is a language fuh true.
Don’t mind some people ent want to recognize meh speech,
Leh meh tell yuh eh, Creole ent tryin to come, it reach.

Hazel Ann Gibbs DePeza

1 Multiple voicing in the Atlantic Creoles and the multiplex identities of their speakers

Although there is an increasing tendency among creolists to acknowledge the agency of creole speakers in the emergence of creole languages (Faraclas 2012), the full impact of Le Page and Tabouret Keller’s (1985) paradigm shifting work *Acts of Identity* has yet to be felt in the area of creolistics. The pluri-lingual and pluri-cultural peoples of the Afro-Caribbean have always projected multiplex identities, and this pluri-identification is reflected in all of the Atlantic Creoles. In this work, we analyze aspects of the phonology, morpho-syntax and lexico-semantics of the Iberian, Dutch, French, and English lexifier Creoles of the Afro-Atlantic in such a way as to show how, by taking advantage of formal, structural, and functional *convergence* between and among African languages, European languages, a Proto Atlantic Portuguese lexifier Creole, and universals of language use, speakers of the Atlantic Creoles have shaped and deployed their creolized languages as instruments of double and multiple voicing (Du Bois 1903; Bakhtin 1930). This pluri-voicing has allowed Atlantic Creole speakers to equip themselves with a linguistic repertoire that has enabled them to use what appear at first glance to be the exact same words and structures to simultaneously assert Afro-Atlantic identities, Euro-Atlantic identities, Atlantic Creole identities and other identities to the extremely diverse and often very hostile and dangerous audiences and communities of
practice in dialog with whom they have managed to survive (and even thrive) through slavery, colonialism, and neo-colonialism.

Following one of the many immensely helpful and intellectually sound approaches adopted by Holm (2000), we demonstrate how, as typological, descriptive, comparative, and socio-historical research on the Atlantic Creoles and their input languages progresses, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify a single source for many Atlantic Creole words and constructions, because so many creole forms and structures are identical to those found in a number of different African languages as well as in a number of different European varieties spoken in the Afro-Atlantic during the colonial period and beyond. We argue that linear, mono-causal and mono-dimensional accounts of creole genesis must therefore give way to multi-directional, multi-causal and multiplex scenarios of convergence among forms and structures found in what have been traditionally classified as superstratal, substratal and adstratal input varieties as well as those found universally and in a Proto West African Portuguese Creole. We conclude that the Atlantic Creole words and constructions studied in this paper are best accounted for by a reconceptualization of Atlantic Creole speakers as creative and resourceful agents who have co-instantaneously used their creole languages to identify, counter-identify, and dis-identify with both African and European ways of understanding the world and acting in it.

2 Multiple voicing and multifunctionality in the English, Dutch, and Iberian lexifier Atlantic Creoles

One of the few aspects of the grammars of the Atlantic Creoles about which there is near consensus is the tendency for lexical categories to be less specified in Creole languages than in their Western European lexifier languages. This means that a given lexical item is more likely to be pluri-functional in an Atlantic Creole than a similar lexical item in its European lexifier language. Pluri-functionality lends itself by its very nature to multiple voicing, because the same lexical item can be interpreted by listeners of different linguistic backgrounds to be playing different grammatical roles in what otherwise appears to be the exact same sentence. One case in point which is commonly encountered in the Atlantic (and Pacific) Creoles is that of the multifunctionality of words that refer to property concepts, which are normally interpreted by those familiar with European languages to be adjectives (A) and those familiar with West African languages to be stative verbs (V):
(1) Nigerian Pidgin *fyar* interpreted by one accustomed to European adjectives (Faraclas 1996: 140):

\[
\text{Dì man } \varnothing \quad \text{fyar}_A
\]

the man ('zero copula') afraid

‘The man is afraid.’

(2) Nigerian Pidgin *fyar* interpreted by one accustomed to Benue-Kwa property concept verbs:

\[
\text{Dì man } \text{fyar}_V
\]

the man fear

‘The man fears.’

Before its last speakers passed away, similar multiple interpretations were possible with property concept items in the Dutch lexifier Creole, Berbice Dutch:

(3) Berbice Dutch (Kouwenberg 1994: 118):

\[
\text{Idri gu } \text{bam}_{A/V}
\]

every thing ('zero copula') nice
every thing be.nice

‘Everything is nice.’

In most Atlantic Creoles, items such as *fyar* in Nigerian Pidgin and *bam* in Berbice Dutch can be used to project more than one identity and more than one way of looking at the world. The adjectival interpretation that typifies European languages tends to regard properties as static, while the verbal interpretation favored in West African languages tends to see properties as dynamic, that is, the words which express property concepts can take objects, can be specified by tense-aspect-modality markers, etc.

(4) Nigerian Pidgin *swit* interpreted by one accustomed to European adjectives (Faraclas 1996: 141):

a. \[
\text{Dì sup } \varnothing \quad \text{swit}_A
\]

the soup ('zero copula') tasty

‘The soup is tasty.’
b. Dì sup Ø swit_{A} Ø mì
   the soup  ('zero copula') tasty  ('zero preposition') me
   ‘The soup is tasty to me.’

(5) Nigerian Pidgin *swit* interpreted by one accustomed to Benue-Kwa property concept verbs, many of which can take objects:

   a. Dì sup swit_{V}
      the soup  appetize
      ‘The soup appetizes.’

   b. Dì sup swit_{V}  mì.
      the soup  appetize me
      ‘The soup appetizes me.’

It is often pointed out that this pluri-functionality or ‘underspecification’ of lexical categories is commonly found in the languages spoken along the west coast of Africa, where the boundaries between lexical categories are normally less rigid, more porous, and ‘fuzzier’ than in West European languages, where similar examples of pluri-functionality are less abundant. This relative lack of pluri-functionality is especially typical of European languages with a long tradition of standardization, which has suppressed the heteroglossic power of individual speakers to creatively transgress the artificial boundaries of the prescriptive grammars of unitary languages (Bakhtin 1930). We therefore argue that standardized European languages have been artificially overspecified, so that the designation of West African and Afro-Atlantic creolized varieties as ‘underspecified’ reflects an unconscious Eurocentric bias:

(6) Nigerian Pidgin multifunctional nominal (N) and verbal (V) use of the item *mánej* ‘manage’:

   a. Nà x_{N} wé  yu  x_{V}
      HL N COMP  S  V where N=V

   b. Nà manej_{N}  we  yù  manej_{V}
      HL/COP/EMPH manage_{N} that you manage_{V}
      ‘It is managing that you are managing.’
      ‘You’re making the best of it.’

Negerhollands multifunctional use of the item *slaep* ‘sleep’ (Magens 1770 in van Rossem & van der Voort 1996: 19):

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As shown in the above examples, for speakers of Nigerian Pidgin at present and for speakers of the now extinct Dutch lexifier Creole Negerhollands in the past, not only are the boundaries between the categories noun and verb regularly transgressed, but there are also patterns of multiple interpretation for the copula/emphasis/focus/highlighter forms *na* and *da* respectively. Such multifunctionality is dramatically illustrated in the typically Benue-Kwa series of constructions that constitute the following example from Nigerian Pidgin, where the item *kọt* not only functions as a verb, but where *kọt* and reduplicated *kọt* can function as nominals in associative noun constructions and triplicated *kọt* can function as an adverbial/ideophone:

(8) Nigerian Pidgin multifunctional use of the item *kọt* ‘cut’ (Faraclas 1996: 142):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A si di } & \text{[kọtkọt klot]} \quad \text{we } \text{[kọtkọt man]} \\
\text{I see the } & \text{[cut.cut}_N \text{ cloth]}_{\text{ASSOC}} \quad \text{SUBOR } \text{[cut.cut}_N \text{ man]}_{\text{ASSOC}} \\
\text{don tek } & \text{[kọt mashín]} \quad \text{kọtam} \\
\text{[+completive] take } & \text{[cut}_N \text{ machine]}_{\text{ASSOC}} \quad \text{cut}_N \text{-it} \\
\text{kọtkọtkọt}. & \\
\text{cut.cut.cut}_{\text{ADV/IDEO}}
\end{align*}
\]

‘I saw the shredded cloth that the shredder shredded with the shredding machine, shredshredshred.’

When we as creolists ask whether the items *fyar* and *swit* are verbs or adjectives, or whether *kọtkọt* is a noun or an adjective when it occurs before *man* or *mashín*, perhaps we are asking the wrong questions. If we want to be as truly free of prescriptive biases as we profess to be, we may need to approach the Atlantic Creoles as languages where a typically West African heteroglossic, creative, and performance-oriented cultivation of ambiguity and multiple interpretations plays at least as important a role as a typically European standardized, analytical, information-oriented cultivation of technical precision and specificity.
3 Tense, aspect, multiple voicing, and multiplex worldviews in Papiamentu

Andersen (1993) demonstrates that the preverbal tense-mood-aspect (TMA) markers ta and a in Papiamentu, which have normally been considered to be [±past] tense markers can just as easily be analyzed as [±completive] aspect markers (Faraclas, Rivera Castillo & Walicek 2007). It is interesting to note that the tense interpretation of ta and a accommodates listeners who are accustomed to tense prominent languages such as most of those spoken by Europeans in the Afro-Atlantic contact zone, while the aspectual interpretation of ta and a accommodates listeners who are accustomed to aspect prominent languages such as most of those spoken by West Africans in the Afro-Atlantic contact zone.

In his refreshing analysis of ta and a in Papiamentu, Andersen concludes by asserting that, on the basis of a number of factors such as co-occurrence restrictions, an aspectual interpretation of ta and a can be better justified than a tense interpretation. In this case, Andersen brings important new insights to much of the previous work done by creolists and others on TMA markers in Papiamentu, which more often than not had been based on the erroneous assumption that the grammatical structures of European languages are those that predominate in the Atlantic Creoles and which had not taken into account the grammatical features which typify the languages of West and Central Africa. Researchers in Africa and the Caribbean continue to be shocked by the degree to which this Eurocentric bias still pervades the work of creolists. Particularly distressing is the tendency among creolists to elevate the features and structures that typify European languages to the status of ‘universal’ categories and structures.

While we wholeheartedly concur with this critique advanced by our colleagues in Africa and the Caribbean, we argue that it does not go far enough. We contend that not only is it very common for creolists to ignore typically African categories and structures in favor of typically European categories and structures in their grammatical analyses, we also argue that it is even more common for creolists to ignore how West and Central Africans approach language in general and language contact in particular, in favor of how Europeans approach language and language contact. Most creolists still automatically assume that the imposition of one dominant unitary language, culture, and identity which people of European descent have experienced over the past few centuries of hegemonic rule is the universal norm in terms of how humans everywhere have always related to language and negotiated situations of language contact (Bakhtin 1930). In our critical investigation of the validity of these assumptions, however, we find time and time again that for most of human history and in most human cultures, pluri-lingualism, pluri-culturalism, and pluri-identification have been the norm rather than the exception.
African and Afro-Caribbean peoples brought a decentered, heteroglossic sense of personal authority over language and of personal power through language into the Creole Space. Rather than viewing language and power as located ‘elsewhere’, that is, among the cultural and political elites (an attitude that would come to typify European and Euro-Caribbean peoples), Africans and Afro-Caribbean peoples retained their traditional sense of personal and community control over their languages and their lives, effectively undermining and in some cases toppling, dominant regimes of truth. ... This type of heteroglossia has transformed the Creole Space and the Creole languages which emerged from it... Moreover, given that even an individual speaker exists as a site of differences, heteroglossia complicates the notion that a group or individual simply ‘has’ or ‘performs’ a specific identity. ... Ironically, when it [heteroglossia] is mentioned at all, most scholarly accounts of genesis have tended to describe... the alternative ways of speaking and belonging that it embodies as the result of nation-state formation or as a future problem which the nation-state should solve (e.g., through language standardization, ‘development’, or even ‘empowerment’). The reluctance to recognize cultural phenomena and social groupings that crosscut, undermine, hybridize, or exist outside dominant categories obscures the role that scholarship plays in creating, sustaining, and reproducing inequality based on race, language, gender, social class, and nationality. (Faraclas, Walicek, Alleyne, Geigel, and Ortiz 2007: 22)

From well before the onset of European expansion in the 1400s until the present, not only have pluri-lingualism, pluri-culturalism, and pluri-identification predominated on the West Coast of Africa and in the Caribbean, but the peoples of the Afro-Caribbean have developed ingenious and creative ways of dealing with language contact that include double and multiple voicing. In the case of TMA markers in Papiamentu, instead of taking sides in the debate as to whether ta and a are tense or aspect markers, we would argue that in fact, both the tense and aspectual interpretations ta and a are valid, and that Papiamentu speakers use these markers in such a way as to allow those who are more familiar with European languages to assign a tense interpretation to ta and a, while simultaneously allowing those who are more familiar with Afro-Atlantic languages (including other speakers of other Afro-Atlantic Creoles) to assign an aspectual interpretation to ta and a.
(9) Papiamentu a as interpreted by one accustomed to European tense prominent TMA:

\[
\text{M’a kana} \\
\text{I [+past] walk} \\
\text{‘I walked (sometime in the past).’}
\]

(10) Papiamentu a as interpreted by one accustomed to Benue-Kwa aspect prominent TMA:

\[
\text{M’a kana} \\
\text{I [+completive] walk} \\
\text{‘I already walked.’} \\
\text{‘I walk finish.’}
\]

This multiply voiced interpretation of ta and a does not preclude the meaningful exploration of the role of African languages, European languages, a Proto-Creole spoken on the west coast of Africa and/or universals in the emergence of the Atlantic Creoles. Instead, it enriches and deepens our understanding of the complex interaction of speaker, audience, and communities of practice, without which any meaningful analysis of the emergence of the Atlantic Creoles is not only impossible, but extremely dangerous, because it more often than not erases the agency of African descended creole speakers in the emergence of the Atlantic Creoles. The multiple voiced interpretations of ta and a confirm Faraclas’ (1990) observation that in both Benue-Kwa languages and Afro-Atlantic Creoles:

- Unmarked [+active] verbs are by default interpreted as [+ completive] and [+past]
- Unmarked [-active] verbs are by default interpreted as [-completive] and [-past]
- Verbs that are overtly marked as [+ completive] are by default interpreted as [+past]
- Verbs that are overtly marked as [-completive] are by default interpreted as [-past]
Similar patterns of default interpretation could also be considered to be statistical universals of language use (Siegel 2008). Of course, in Spanish and Portuguese the verbs *estar* and *haber/haver* which are among the sources for the Papiamentu forms *ta* and *a*, respectively, are used as preverbal TMA markers, not to mark tense per se, but *aspect*. Portuguese *estar* and *haver* would therefore be among the most promising candidates to mark TMA preverbally in a Proto-West African Portuguese lexifier Creole as well. This rich web of convergent functions motivates the emergence of *ta* and *a* as multiply voiced TMA markers in Papiamentu.

But the power of a multiply voiced convergence analysis for the emergence of Atlantic Creole TMA markers is not confined to function alone. Even a cursory review of Benue-Kwa languages will yield several TMA systems where the preverbal marker for [+completive] aspect is none other than the form *a*.

(11) Ashante Twi (Akosua Quarcoo, personal communication)

\[ 
\text{M'à} \quad \text{nántì} \\
\text{I [+completive] \ walk} \\
'I (have) already walked.' \\
'I walk finish.'
\]

So, alongside the (third person singular) forms of *estar* and *haber/haver* used preverbally in Spanish and Portuguese to mark progressive and perfective aspect, respectively, we have forms that are phonetically identical to *ta* and *a* and others that are nearly identical to *ta* and *a* used in Benue-Kwa languages to mark incompletive and completive aspect, respectively. So, multiple voicing in the Atlantic Creoles can involve the convergence of any and every possible combination of form, structure and/or function among African languages, European languages, a Proto-West African Creole and universals of language use.

4 Phonology and African agency in the French and English creole spaces

The relative prominence of features, functions, and structures clearly traceable to African languages is immediately identifiable in those English lexified Afro-Caribbean varieties whose speakers have had minimal contact with English, such as Saramaccan and the West African English lexifier Creoles, which are seldom considered by most creolists to be dialects of English. At the same
time, most Spanish lexified Afro-Caribbean varieties are usually analyzed by creolists and others simply as dialects of Spanish. Faraclas, Walicek, Alleyne, Geigel, & Ortiz (2007) contend, however, that these different outputs of contact between Africans and Europeans in the Atlantic Creole Space are the product of a similar multiply-voiced set of creolization processes, which in the less completely racialized Spanish Americas have generally favored the emergence of forms, functions, and structures which are more amenable to Euro-Atlantic interpretations, but in the more pervasively racialized English Americas have generally favored the emergence of forms, functions, and structures which are more amenable to Afro-Atlantic interpretations. They further assert that the socio-historical matrix from which the Afro-Caribbean French lexified creoles emerged lay somewhere between that which typified the Creole Space under the English and that which typified the Creole Space under the Spanish. This has thrust the French lexifier Atlantic Creoles into the epicenter of the often bitter debates concerning the genesis of the Atlantic Creoles, with creolists such as Claire Lefebvre (2000) arguing that these varieties are made up essentially of West African (specifically Fongbe) forms, functions, and structures which have been relabeled with phonetic strings from French, and creolists such as Robert Chaudenson (2001) arguing that these varieties are basically dialects of French.

A multiple-voicing perspective could play a particularly helpful role in explaining how such diametrically opposed analyses could be made, defended, sustained, and ultimately reconciled. In one of his very perceptive phonological studies of the French lexifier Atlantic Creoles, Emmanuel Nikiema (1999) demonstrates how speakers of these varieties use syllable structures that simultaneously incorporate elements of Euro-Atlantic and Afro-Atlantic phonotactics, ranging from those of French, which include many consonant cluster onset and consonantal final syllables, to those of the languages of the Western sub-branches of Benue-Kwa, such as Akan-Twi, Gbe, Yoruba, Edo, and Igbo, where onset clusters and consonant codas are largely absent. Nikiema begins his analysis by summarizing a set of observations made by Bernabé:

Selon Bernabé (1987), la forme du déterminant postposé varie dans les créoles de la région des Caraïbes: le déterminant est invariablement réalisé [a] en guyanais (que ce soit après une consonne ou après une voyelle), et invariablement [la] en guadeloupéen et en dominicain du nord. C’est seulement dans les variétés parlées à Haïti, Ste-Lucie, Martinique, Grenade, et la partie sud de la Dominique qu’on observe les variations allomorphiques en [la], [læ], [nã], [a] et [a] .... [les] formes comme liv et papa
Creoles and acts of identity...

Línguas crioulas e atos de identidade...

Nikiema convincingly demonstrates how the different patterns of the realization of the postposed determiner /la/ as well as the problematic behavior of /cl/ (consonant plus lateral) onsets in different French lexifier Creoles can be explained by the existence of typically Western Benue-Kwa type underlying syllable structures which do not permit consonantal codas (85-86) and onset clusters (89), and the simultaneous existence of a French phonetic ‘frame’ or template (trame phonétique française) (87) to which these structures are subject that disallows the realization of certain underlying vowels, and thus yields surface syllables that begin with clusters and end in consonants. In other words, the same string of syllables can be interpreted by a Euro-Atlantic audience or community of practice as typically French, but by an Afro-Atlantic audience or community of practice as typically Western Benue-Kwa, and by other audiences or communities of practice as both. To further complicate this situation, in the non-standard southern dialects of French, there are many fewer consonantal codas than in standard French, so that multiple voicing can (and more often than not does) project identities beyond those typically associated with superstrates and substrates and therefore the set of converging forms, functions, and structures upon which multiple voicing so often depends must be extended beyond typically binary and oppositional superstratal and substratal inputs.

Recent work by Sally Delgado (2013) based in part upon that of Sutcliffe (2003) and Faracas and Ramirez (2007) suggests that while most of the intonation patterns found in the English lexifier Atlantic Creoles are similar to the typical tonal and intonational patterns found in the languages spoken

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1 According to Bernabé (1987), the form of the postposed determiner /la/ varies in the Caribbean: the determiner is invariably realized as [a] in Guyanais (whether it comes after a consonant or after a vowel), and invariably as [la] in Guadeloupéen and in northern Dominican. It is only in the varieties spoken in Haiti, St. Lucia, Martinique, Grenada, and in the southern part of Dominica that one observes the allomorphs [la], [lã], [nã], [ã] and [a] ... forms like liv [‘book’] and papa [‘father’] are realized [livaa] et [papaa] respectively in Guyanais, [livla] and [papaa] in Haitian, southern Dominica, Martiniquais, Saint-lucien, Trinidaduais and Grenada, and finally [livla] and [papala] in Guadeloupéen and northern Dominicain. (Translation by the authors).
along the west coast of Africa, some commonly occurring English lexifier Atlantic Creole intonation patterns such as declarative final high rise are to be found instead in the Celtic languages and the Celtic influenced varieties of non-standard English spoken by a very significant number of the non propertied Europeans in the Atlantic Creole space, especially during the first few centuries of English colonialism. In our analysis, we therefore prefer to use the term ‘multiple voicing’ instead of ‘double voicing’ because in practice the speakers of the Atlantic Creoles have not just used these languages to project both dominant Euro-Atlantic and subaltern Afro-Atlantic identities, but instead to simultaneously project these and many other identities, including subaltern European identities, Indigenous Caribbean identities, Indo-Caribbean identities, etc.

5 Multiple voicing and the Lexicon, Grammar and Semantics of spatial reference in the Iberian, English and Dutch lexifier Atlantic Creoles

In his ground breaking work on the semantics and morphosyntax of spatial relations in the Atlantic Creoles, Micah Corum (2012) demonstrates that many Atlantic Creole locative constructions contain items and structures that show formal and functional convergence between superstrate and substrate sources. He notes (159-63) that while the spatial gram/locative marker na, which is found in Iberian lexifier Atlantic Creoles, is normally considered to be derived from the Portuguese contracted form na (consisting of the preposition em ‘in, on, at’ plus the feminine article a), many major West African languages also have identical or nearly identical forms with identical or nearly identical meanings:


a. E rapaz sta [na kasa]  
   the boy COP [LOC house]  
   ‘The boy is in the house.’

b. E rapaz sta [na kwartu]  
   the boy COP [LOC room]  
   ‘The boy is in the room.’
(13) Papiamentu Iberian lexifier Creole:

E mucha ta na kas
the child COP LOC house
‘The child is in the house.’


O bì na ṣiká.
he live LOC Awka
‘He lives at Awka.’


Tën na ndoke.
he/she LOC house
‘He is in the house.’


Të-na timqi bu-ma.
fire-LOC pot under-at
‘The fire is under the pot.’

Thus, a speaker of an Iberian lexifier Atlantic Creole can project both Afro-Atlantic and Euro-Atlantic identities through the use of the general spatial marker na. This case of double voicing becomes multiple voicing in other parts of the Afro-Atlantic, where items similar in form and function to locative na in Iberian lexifier Atlantic Creoles are also found in Dutch lexifier and English lexifier Atlantic Creoles. In such cases, Atlantic Creole speakers can be said to be able to project not only Euro-Atlantic and Afro-Atlantic identities, but also Creole-Atlantic identities that are associated with a Proto West African Portuguese lexifier Creole that played an important (but not determinant or preponderant) role in the emergence of all of the Atlantic Creoles:
(17) Negerhollands Dutch lexifier Creole (van Rosem & van der Voort 1996: 17):

\begin{center}
\textbf{Twee slem no kan kook Boontje na(-a) een Pot.}
\end{center}

Two smart no can cook bean \text{LOC} one pot

‘Two intelligent people cannot cook beans in one pot.’

‘No reason to get in each other’s way.’

(18) Krio (Sierra Leonean) English lexifier Creole:

\begin{center}
\textbf{Di pikin de na os}
\end{center}

the boy \text{COP} \text{LOC} house

‘The child is in the house.’

(19) Jamaican English lexifier Creole:

\begin{center}
\textbf{Di bway de ina(-a) di haos}
\end{center}

the boy \text{COP} \text{LOC} the house

‘The child is in the house.’

Corum shows that in the case of the locative item \textit{for} found in other English lexifier Atlantic creoles, similar patterns emerge where items with identical or near identical function and form exist in both English (the preposition ‘for’) and widely spoken West African languages:

(20) Nigerian Pidgin:

\begin{center}
\textbf{Di pikin de fôr haws}
\end{center}

the child \text{COP} \text{LOC} house

‘The child is at the house.’


\begin{center}
\textbf{Mi-ko fye no vo fiase}
\end{center}

I-go visit him \text{LOC} prison

‘I went to visit him in the prison.’
Corum also points out that the locative copula *de* which is found in the English lexifier Creoles on both sides of the Atlantic (see the examples from Jamaican, Nigerian, and Sierra Leonean above) and which is often traced back to the English item ‘there’ may also be traced back to a number of forms in major West African coastal languages such as Twi, Ewe, and Bini. These West African forms, which are just as similar to *de* in terms of form as is the English item ‘there’ are in fact more similar in function to *de* than any corresponding item in English, including ‘there’:

(22) Akuapem Twi (Christaller 1881: 56, in Corum 2012: 17):

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Ne kūro da bepo so
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his town lie mountain top

‘His town is situated on a mountain.’

(23) Ewe (Lord 1993: 11 in Corum 2012: 58):

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agbalē-a lè kplō-a dzi
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book-the LOC.COP table-the top

‘The book is on the table.’


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ô rré úwú òwá
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he LOC.COP inside house

‘He is in the house.’


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íràn rré ëkì
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they LOC.COP market

‘They are at the market.’

We will not allow ourselves to be seduced, however, into discounting superstratal motivation and multidirectional convergence for *de* because of the more exact fit between *de* and corresponding items in West African languages. Instead of seeing Creole genesis as a zero sum game, we prefer to acknowledge and explore multiple and convergent motivations for the multiply-voiceable forms, functions, and structures that that have emerged from the Atlantic Creole Space.
In her work on Crucian (the English lexifier Creole spoken in St. Croix), Aida Vergne (2011) problematizes the common assumption that the pronominal form *ayo* used for the second person plural is derived solely from a non-standard English form such as ‘all a [of] you’. Although *ayo* is also found in other English lexifier Atlantic Creoles spoken in the northeastern Caribbean and beyond, the apparently related forms *awi* used for the second person plural pronoun and especially the plural question word *ahu* ‘who (plural)’ seem to occur somewhat less commonly outside of St. Croix. She notes that in many Niger Congo languages, the nominal prefix *a*- is used on plural pronouns. For example, in Yoruba the emphatic first person plural form is *à-wa*, while the non-emphatic form is *wa* and the emphatic third person plural form is *à-wọn*, while the non-emphatic form is *wọn*. Furthermore, in the Western Benue-Kwa languages, where only traces remain of the Proto-Niger Congo prefixed-based nominal classifying system, *a*- tends to be the most robust relic prefix, as well as the default prefix which is assigned to new items, etc. In Papiamentu, *a*- is the prefix which is assigned to many pronominals in their emphatic forms (*a-mi* from first person singular non-emphatic *mi*, *a-bo* from second person singular non-emphatic *bo*, etc.). The emergence of the *a*- pronominal prefix in Crucian and other Atlantic Creoles can therefore be said to be motivated not only by the Euro-Atlantic form ‘all a you’ but also by several different patterns found in the Niger-Congo languages spoken along the west coast of Africa.

6 Unitary language, heteroglossia, and identities in the French, Spanish, and Dutch Caribbean

Thanks largely to community based initiatives and the tireless efforts of Antillean academics specializing in the study of creole languages, literatures and cultures, the status of the French lexifier Creoles of the Caribbean has improved significantly over the past decades. As a result, French lexifier Creoles are now being taught at many levels of formal education, including at the university level. These advances have entailed a process of standardization of the rules of orthography, grammar, etc. for these languages. Diana Ursulin Mopsus’s work (2013) on attitudes toward French and English lexifier Atlantic Creoles has revealed some very contradictory feelings on the part of Creole speakers toward the standardization of Martinican French lexifier Creole:

In the specific case of Martinique, some informants pointed out that learning Martinican [French-lexifier] Creole [MC] at school as an optional subject is not a bad idea. They stressed, however, that those hours dedicated to MC should be used to strengthen
the learning of French because the students should concentrate on French. Learning MC at the university is appreciated by most of the informants as a strategy to preserve the language. But they found the way in which MC was being developed and taught at the university level was too academic, making it difficult to read and understand because of features such as lexical changes and the use of an orthographic spelling very different from that of French. Even if the informants offer different definitions of what it is, they all affectionately say that MC is the language of friendship, feelings, jokes, and creativity. They add that it is an integral part of their life and ‘it comes from their guts’. Most of the informants considered MC as a marker of identity and they expressed their concerns regarding the loss of oral traditions in MC, such as storytelling and proverbs. They regret that academic MC has lost the spontaneity that used to characterize the language and some observe that young people are now reacting against this and are re-appropriating MC by converting it into a form of ‘bad boy creole’. (4-5)

The contradictions in attitudes unearthed by Ursulin Mopsus are evident at several levels and across several dimensions:

- While there is general approval of the formal recognition and teaching of Martinican Creole, there are some reservations about attention being diverted from Standard French in the process.

- While there is general support for the standardization of the lexicon and grammar of MC, there are some reservations that this process has resulted in lexical and grammatical rules that make MC more academic and more appropriate for Euro-Atlantic audiences and communities of practice, and less appropriate for Afro-Atlantic and Creole-Atlantic audiences and communities of practice.

- While there is general support for the standardization of MC orthography, there are some reservations that this process has resulted in orthographic rules that make it more difficult to write MC using the spelling conventions of French. The concern here is that these orthographic conventions make MC less academic and more appropriate for Euro-Atlantic and Creole-Atlantic audiences and communities of practice, and less appropriate for Euro-Atlantic audiences and communities of practice.
This apparently illogical set of highly contradictory attitudes becomes completely logical and understandable once we abandon a unitary language, unitary voiced understanding of the Atlantic Creoles and their speakers, in favor of a heteroglossic, multiple voiced understanding. Firstly, while these speakers of Martinican Creole are concerned with the gradual disappearance of MC, they do not want a resurgence of MC to take place at the expense of their present plurilingual, pluricultural, and pluri-identified competence in French, MC, and other varieties. Additionally, while they want MC to be used in the formal settings from which it has been all but banished under colonial and neocolonial law and practice, they don’t want MC itself to be ‘formalized’ and ‘Europeanized’ to the point that it can no longer be used as a means to simultaneously project multiplex Afro-, Euro-Atlantic, Creole-Atlantic and other identities. Finally, while they acknowledge and value the capacity that MC gives them to project non-European Afro-Atlantic and Creole-Atlantic identities, they are concerned that the proposed orthographic conventions for the language will prevent them from simultaneously projecting a Euro-Atlantic French identity as well.

The disastrous consequences and ultimate futility of efforts to impose unitary language, culture, and identity in the Afro-Atlantic are dramatically illustrated in the case of Puerto Rico, where the United States consciously attempted to impose English for the first 50 years of its colonial rule of the island, which has yet to achieve its independence. From the turn of the 20th century until the 1950s, English was forced on Puerto Ricans as the language of instruction in the schools, with the explicit goal of ‘Americanizing’ the population. Not only did this policy fail, resulting in the restoration of Spanish as language of instruction from mid-century onward, but it has also had a catastrophic impact on formal education in general and English education in particular for three or four generations of Puerto Rican students.

The population of Puerto Rico was expected to identify with Anglo-American language and culture by the colonial education system, but instead Puerto Ricans deeply counter-identified against this hegemonic imposition of a unitary language and culture. This means that, despite the fact that English has been taught to all Puerto Rican students as an obligatory school subject from Kindergarten all the way to secondary Grade 12 since the abandonment of the English only policy in the 1950s, less than 20% of the island’s population can carry out a sustained conversation in the language, and most of these speakers learned English from extended stays in the US or from family members who have spent years in the US. Recent work by Brenda Domínguez Rosado (2012) indicates that it is only now, after more than a century of visceral rejection of English in all of its forms, that the population of Puerto Rico is finally beginning to dis-identify with this zero-sum and exclusive approach.
by adopting increasingly inclusive and heteroglossic attitudes toward learning and speaking English alongside, rather than instead of, Spanish.

Atlantic Creole educators are devising ingenious and creative ways to integrate their multiplex identities and multiply voiced linguistic repertoires into the formal education system. Although the Iberian-lexifier Creole Papiamento is the first and main language of most of the population of Aruba, its official role in education has been severely limited under colonial and neocolonial law and practice, in favor of Dutch. At present Aruban educators have initiated the *Scol Multilingual* program, which aims to transform the monolingual Dutch education system into a multilingual system, where students use their fluency in their mother tongue Papiamento to become fluent in Dutch, Spanish, and English. A multiple-voiced, heteroglossic approach enables *Scol Multilingual* to validate the use of Papiamento in education without threatening the use of Dutch and other European languages in the classroom as well.

### 7 Conclusion: Anansi wants it all, and eventually gets it all

Anansi, the prototypical Afro-Atlantic anti-hero and trickster is often depicted as having two mouths. Speakers of the Atlantic Creole languages have refused to make the forced, zero-sum, binary choice between Euro-Atlantic and Afro-Atlantic identities that too many creolists have assumed has been the only choice available to them. For these creative and resourceful linguistic and cultural agents it’s never been about one or the other language, one or the other culture, or one or the other voice. Instead it’s been about both at the same time, along with a number of other identities and voices.

### Abbreviations

A Adjective, ADV Adverb, ASSOC Associative, Comp Complementizer, COP copula, EMPH Emphasis, HL Highlighter, IDEO Ideophone, LOC Locative, MC Martinian Creole, N Noun, S Subject, SUBOR Subordinator, TMA Tense, mood and aspect, V Verb.

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