

CREOLE AND DIALECT CONTINUA

CREOLE LANGUAGE LIBRARY (CLL)

A companion series to the
“JOURNAL OF PIDGIN & CREOLE LANGUAGES”

Editors

Pieter Muysken (Amsterdam)
John Victor Singler (New York)

Editorial Advisory Board

Mervyn Alleyne (Kingston, Jamaica)	George Huttar (Dallas)
Norbert Boretzky (Bochum)	Salikoko Mufwene (Chicago)
Lawrence Carrington (Trinidad)	Peter Mühlhäusler (Adelaide)
Chris Corne (Auckland)	Pieter Seuren (Nijmegen)
Glenn Gilbert (Carbondale, Illinois)	Norval Smith (Amsterdam)
John Holm (New York)	

Volume 18

Geneviève Escure

Creole and Dialect Continua
Standard acquisition processes in Belize and China (PRC)

CREOLE AND DIALECT CONTINUA

STANDARD ACQUISITION PROCESSES
IN BELIZE AND CHINA (PRC)

GENEVIEVE ESCURE

University of Minnesota

JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY
AMSTERDAM/PHILADELPHIA



The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences — Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Escure, Geneviève.

Creole and dialect continua : standard acquisition processes in Belize and China (PRC) / Geneviève Escure.

p. cm. -- (Creole language library, ISSN 0920-9026 ; v. 18)

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

1. Creole dialects. 2. Dialectology. 3. Language acquisition. 4. Sociolinguistics. 5. Grammar, Comparative and general--Syntax. 6. Pragmatics. 7. English language--Social aspects--Belize. 8. Chinese language--Social aspects. I. Title. II. Series.

PM7831.E74 1997

417'.22--dc21

97-4278

ISBN 90 272 5240 8 (Eur.) / 1-55619-173-1 (US) (alk. paper)

CIP

© Copyright 1997 - John Benjamins B.V.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by print, photoprint, microfilm, or any other means, without written permission from the publisher.

John Benjamins Publishing Co. • P.O.Box 75577 • 1070 AN Amsterdam • The Netherlands
John Benjamins North America • P.O.Box 27519 • Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 • USA

Acknowledgments

This book is first a tribute to the people of Belize, and more particularly the Creoles of Placencia and the Garifuna of Seine Bight, who shared with me their *joie de vivre*, and their love of language. There is no space here to thank all the men and women who opened their doors and inner lives to make me feel welcome.

I especially want to acknowledge the warm friendship and support provided in Placencia by the Lopez family (Miss Cordelia, Clarence, Therese and Errol), Miss Tila (Athelo) Cabral, Herbert, Miss Doris, Miss Lucille, Miss Sonia, Miss Tensy, Miss Pearl, Miss Lizzie, Blink, Dudu, Bobo, Captain Morgan, Peter, Karim, Philip, and all the *pikni* (many of them are now adults) especially Verna, Karen, Dennis, Dean, Edward, Chrissie, and Grayson. Special thanks to Errol who assisted me with the fieldwork in Placencia.

This is also a tribute to the Seine Bight Garifuna. It was thanks to Mr. Flores, who has now passed away, that I discovered Seine Bight and, later, Placencia. We became friends during the long bus ride from Punta-Gorda, and he invited me to his distant home across the lagoon from Mango Creek. Had he not extended such warm hospitality, I would probably have bypassed the Placencia peninsula, then totally isolated from the main road from Punta-Gorda to Belmopan and Belize-City. My old friend Roman Zuniga also passed away. He was my Garifuna teacher, and he shared with me his humor and his pride in his people's traditions and language. Little Mark, who at fourteen spoke Garifuna, Creole, Maya, and Kekchi was my most reliable guide in the *bush* of Toledo District. I cannot possibly mention the names of all the individuals who befriended me, showed me how to dive for conch and lobster, gut a fish, bake cassava bread, or invited me for fish and fufu. They were Creole, Garifuna, Maya, Kekchi, or Mestizo, in Orange Walk, Dangriga, Hopkins, Georgetown, Punta-Gorda, Barranco, San Antonio, Sartineha, Benque Viejo, Caye Caulker, and Belize-City. They instilled in me a profound love of Belize and its diverse people.

In China too, I met warm and friendly people in the rural areas as well as

in the crowded cities. I gratefully acknowledge the cooperation and open-mindedness of the officials and professors at Huazhong Central University of Science and Technology in Wuhan, especially Cheng En Hong, Lei Guo Pu, and Mu Li Ya, who invited me to teach a stimulating group of teachers for an entire academic year, and at subsequent times, and gave me the opportunity to travel freely and get to know China better than if I had been a mere tourist.

I owe a lot to my students, many of whom became my friends. They taught me a great deal about the sociolinguistic situation in China. Particular thanks to Chen Kairong, Cheng Kola, Deng Shan, Guan Xiangyang, Liu Lichun, Peng Yuanchu, Tan Xiangyun, Wan Youzhong, Wang Qunying, Zou Hong, and finally to Zhang Xianping who gave me the opportunity to give lectures in his distant Hubei hometown of Xianfan. I fondly remember the enthusiastic welcome I received at Xianfan University. I also benefitted from a summer teaching at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Thanks to Lu Ci and Wu Guohua for their hospitality, and mostly to Chun-Jo Liu for her initiative in organizing the summer program.

I gained a deep appreciation of the people and linguistic diversity of China mostly through chance encounters. Strangers went out of their way to help me when I got desperately lost in Chengdu—unable to get the right bus because of my difficulties with tonal differences; they bought tickets for me in the crowded train stations of Wuhan, Shanghai or Kunming; and they offered me tea on dusty Tibetan roadsides. Those strangers were kind to me; they saw me as a person, not as an alien (the distrusted *waiguoren*), and they contributed to humanizing the anonymous crowds of the Middle Kingdom.

During long train rides across the People's Republic, I pored over my Chinese notebooks, trying to figure out a language survival kit that would enable me to achieve basic communication in diverse linguistic areas. A novice learner relating new knowledge to old knowledge, and looking for shortcuts, it occurred to me that *Chinese syntax is very much like Creole syntax*. Thus germinated the idea of a comparison of Chinese and Creole structures. However, bringing the project to completion was as lengthy, hazy, and rocky as a train ride in a smoky “hard seat” compartment.

None of this work would have been possible without the steady support of the University of Minnesota Graduate School, that provided leaves, research assistants, and limited but steady financial support. I also acknowledge occasional contributions from the English Department. I am particularly grateful to J. Lawrence (Larry) Mitchell, for his encouragements to pursue my interest in nonstandard varieties, as well as to Sandy MacLeish for his positive attitude and moral support. All my thanks also to the various students and research assistants who discussed issues with me, and helped me transcribe data: Gail Ostrow, Dennis Dougherty, Chao Shoushing, Mao Luming, Ding Ersu, Guan

Xiangyang, Angela Karstadt, and most of all Anna Felleg, who provided invaluable scholarly comments and editing help in the final stages of the manuscript.

I hold a deep appreciation of Pieter Muysken's encouragements and patience. Chris Corne has my special thanks because he gave me the confidence to push onwards by providing helpful critical comments on the first part of the manuscript. I also acknowledge the help of Chun-Jo Liu in reading and commenting on parts of the Chinese sections. In the last stages, the detailed contributions of the reviewers, Stephen Matthews and Virginia Yip were extremely helpful in sharpening issues in the book and relating my findings to current developments in the field of Chinese sociolinguistics.

Finally, many friends and colleagues helped in indirect ways, in particular as contributors to the meetings of the Society for Caribbean Linguistics, the Society for Pidgin and Creole Languages, and the Institut d'Etudes Créoles.

Contents

Acknowledgments	v
I. Introduction: Developmental continua	
1. <i>General issues in linguistic change</i>	1
2. <i>Aspects of acquisitional studies</i>	3
3. <i>The linguistic analysis of nonstandard dialects</i>	10
4. <i>Creoles and noncreoles</i>	18
II. The Belizean speech community and the use of English	
1. <i>Introduction to the history of Belize</i>	25
2. <i>Ethnolinguistic composition and census data</i>	28
3. <i>The language situation</i>	36
4. <i>Focus on the Stann Creek district</i>	43
5. <i>Conclusion</i>	55
III. Creole acrolects as innovations	
1. <i>Radical creoles, postcreoles, and decreolization</i>	57
2. <i>Acrolects and standard dialects: Social aspects</i>	65
3. <i>Acrolects and standards: Linguistic aspects</i>	73
4. <i>Conclusion</i>	86
IV. The interaction of syntax and pragmatics in acrolects: Topic marking	
1. <i>Syntax and discourse features</i>	89
2. <i>Types of topic strategies</i>	94
3. <i>Distribution of topic strategies</i>	103
4. <i>Comparison with American English</i>	117
5. <i>Pragmatic aspects of syntax</i>	120
6. <i>Conclusion</i>	122
V. Sociolinguistic perspectives on Chinese	
1. <i>Chinese</i>	125
2. <i>Aspects of the linguistic history of China</i>	130
3. <i>Main subgroups of "Chinese"</i>	135
4. <i>The reform of Mandarin: Guanhua, Guoyu, Putonghua</i>	139

5. <i>Varieties of Mandarin outside Beijing: Wuhan</i>	144
6. <i>Wu varieties and Suzhou Wu</i>	146
7. <i>Conclusions</i>	148
VI. Topic mechanisms in Chinese: An overview	151
1. <i>Introduction</i>	151
2. <i>Topic fronting</i>	156
3. <i>Topic repetition</i>	163
4. <i>Topic presentation</i>	166
5. <i>Summary of topic strategies</i>	182
VII. Literary and colloquial Putonghua	185
1. <i>The Putonghua corpus: Methodology</i>	185
2. <i>Literature and the Cultural Revolution: Two New Friends</i>	188
3. <i>Literature after the Cultural Revolution: The Matchmaker</i>	202
4. <i>Beijing colloquial Putonghua</i>	209
5. <i>Overview of topic strategies in Beijing Putonghua</i>	219
VIII. Topic strategies in varieties of Putonghua as second dialects	223
1. <i>Introduction</i>	223
2. <i>Putonghua spoken in Wuhan</i>	224
3. <i>Comparison of Beijing and Wuhan Putonghua</i>	239
4. <i>Wu Chinese</i>	243
5. <i>Comparison of native and non-native varieties of Chinese</i>	258
6. <i>Conclusions: Toward a universal view of topic processes</i>	260
IX. Conclusions: Pragmatic universals in second dialect acquisition	263
1. <i>Patterns of topic marking: Summary</i>	263
2. <i>Topic marking in the Belizean continuum</i>	265
3. <i>Patterns of topic marking in Chinese</i>	271
4. <i>Dialect versus standard: Sociolinguistic universals</i>	273
5. <i>Conclusions</i>	285
6. <i>Postscript: Directions for education</i>	286
Bibliography	289
Index	303

Chapter 1

Introduction: Developmental Continua

Abstract

The issue of dialect acquisition is compared to other types of linguistic developmental continua, including second language acquisition. The impact of social attitudes on language development is examined in various communities, as such attitudes may affect the acquisition of standard varieties by speakers of nonstandard varieties. Methods and models for the analysis of language in spontaneous discourse are discussed, and the linguistic units selected are illustrated. A combination of sociolinguistic methodology and functional grammar appears to be the best suited to this study. Finally, I present a justification of the proposed comparative study of a creole context (Belize) and a noncreole context (China).

1. General issues in linguistic change

Language is an essential element of practically every human activity, yet its flexible and adaptive nature in social communication is largely ignored, and even denied, by its users. Despite the advances made in linguistics over the last fifty years, most speech communities cling to general normative attitudes toward language, believing that it is (or at least should be) static, monolithic, homogeneous, and primarily preserved, perhaps further refined, by scholarly experts, academicians, writers, and educators. While linguistic change is recognized, it is deplored as contributing to the deterioration of “pure” linguistic norms. Pop grammarians contribute to this prevailing view, claiming to correct the process of disintegration by denouncing the solecisms or barbarisms commonly attributed to the poorly educated and the younger generations. In fact, the popular view that blames change on specific social factors and age groups effectively signals a general awareness that linguistic change is highly dependent on such factors.

Correlating social and linguistic factors for explanations of language

change is a relatively recent target in linguistics. The search for factors that motivate linguistic change has been applied to many areas of language study. Language change is most evident in such areas as historical linguistics, native language acquisition, second language acquisition, pidginization, and creolization which are all characterized by developmental continua—dynamic levels or stages which are not separated from each other by clear boundaries. In contrast to the early structuralist view that synchronic and diachronic processes were not comparable, there has been increasing awareness of the potential structural similarities existing between different types of developmental continua. Such linguists as Meillet (1921) and Martinet (1955) already emphasized the regularity of change, commonly referred to by structural linguists as the Uniformitarian Principle. According to that view, the same mechanisms which operated in the past can be observed in contemporary variation, mostly because integrated rule systems are considered to be stable and to change or borrow only in the direction of “linguistic drift” or native tendencies. Sociolinguistic methodologies seem to reflect and endorse this approach in their use of apparent time (generational studies) and real time (longitudinal studies) to document linguistic change (Labov 1972a; 1972b).

Recently, attempts have been made (Andersen 1983; Muysken & Smith 1986) to compare second language acquisition (SLA) to pidginization, creolization (Valdman 1983), and decreolization (Rickford 1983; Schumann 1978; Stauble 1978; Andersen 1983); first language acquisition, as well, has been compared to creolization/pidginization (Bickerton 1981). Nevertheless, there is still no clear consensus as to the nature of the structural similarities linking those developmental continua and the reasons motivating the use of operating principles in language development. According to Bickerton (1981:238)

. . .no real connection exists between SLA and creolization: they differ in almost every particular. SLA is done alone, creolization is done in groups; SLA has a target, creolization hasn't; SLA is done mainly by adults, creolization mainly by kids; SLA gives you a second language, creolization gives you a first. . . .

There is, however, general agreement that the adoption of formal principles does not operate in a vacuum but that it is linked to practical aspects of the learning situation, such as available linguistic input, psychosocial motivation, and historical factors. For some linguists, “the history of a language is a function of the history of its speakers” (Thomason & Kaufman 1991:4). Proponents of the imperfect second language learning hypothesis as applied to pidgins and creoles say that they display features of “interlanguage systems,” such as invariant verb forms, a lack of determiners, the use of demonstratives as determiners, the invariable placement of the negator in preverbal position, the use of adverbs to express modality, a fixed single word order, a lack of inversion in questions,

and a reduced or absent nominal marking (den Besten, Muysken, & Smith 1995:97-98).

In the search for a better understanding of the principles instrumental in language development, I will focus on two types of linguistic situations which can be characterized as subtypes of second dialect acquisition. Specifically, I will examine the acquisition of standard varieties of a language by speakers of the nonstandard varieties of that same language, with special attention to 1) a creole continuum (Caribbean) and 2) a non-creole situation involving extensive dialect variation (Chinese). The advantages of comparing similar phenomena in obviously distinct contexts are multifold and can be summarized as presenting the following possibilities:

1. the formulation of cross-linguistic generalizations in studies of acquisition, particularly as they apply to oral discourse;
2. an inquiry into general social attitudes toward marginalized groups, and how this behavior affects the development and use of language varieties produced by those groups;
3. the observation of the interaction of three primary language components—semantics, syntax, and pragmatics—in spontaneous oral communication; and
4. an evaluation of the putative uniqueness of creole languages.

2. Aspects of acquisitional studies

Although a substantial amount of linguistic research has been devoted to code switching phenomena between languages, and to second *language* acquisition (SLA) primarily by adults, relatively little attention has been given to the mechanisms underlying second *dialect* acquisition (SDA); yet, this type of acquisition is undoubtedly more widespread for the simple reason that dialect variation is universal. Whereas not all individuals find themselves in social situations which require the acquisition of a second language, there is no single human being whose repertoire is limited to only one language variety, style, or dialect. Furthermore, unlike second languages, second dialects are typically acquired earlier in life and continue to be acquired throughout adult life.¹ Second dialect (usually standard) acquisition is often perceived to be an ambiguous, undefined linguistic process. In West Indian contexts, such learning situations have been characterized as those in which the standard to be learned is neither a native language nor a foreign language (Craig 1971:376; Stewart 1964).

SLA research has primarily focused on the analysis of acquisitional steps, particularly on errors occurring in the course of that process. Various mechanisms have been hypothesized to account for “imperfect learning” and the mis-

interpretation of linguistic input, which results in the learner's unstable inter-language continuum; the mechanisms include language transfer due to native language interference, overgeneralization, simplification, and the operation of universal strategies put into motion when linguistic input is deficient (McLaughlin 1987). Errors are usually traced to conflicts between the phonological or morphosyntactic systems of the two codes in contact (the native versus the target model). The learnability of certain features is accounted for by markedness relations, a theory asserting that a language is easier to learn if it contains more unmarked features than the learner's native language. Jakobson (1940) first introduced this mode of interpretation which points to correlations between the development of phonological features in first language acquisition, aphasic loss, and the patterning of phonological inventories across languages (see also Ellis 1994). Recent attempts to identify types of contact-induced linguistic change distinguish between two main mechanisms of interference, obviously related to acquisitional patterns: "interference that results from imperfect group learning during a process of language shift, and interference that results from borrowing, by native speakers of a language, of features of some other language with whose speakers they are in contact" (Thomason & Kaufman 1991:212).

A more focused group of studies have investigated non-native varieties of English (the New Englishes) examining the relationship between the acquisition of such varieties and claims made by theories of language acquisition and change, such as error analysis, mother tongue interference, and markedness theory (Williams 1987). For example, Platt (1991:376) considers English in Singapore as "a kind of fossilized interlanguage [which] became a *lingua franca* in the English-medium schools among students whose home language might be one of the Chinese dialects, an Indian language or Malay." He shows that many features of Colloquial Singapore English (articles, copula use, tense and number marking) suggest Chinese influence (Chinese constitutes 76% of the population of Singapore), especially from Hokkien, the dominant Chinese dialect. However, a recent investigation of reported language use and identity in Singapore documents the effects of the 1987 compulsory bilingual education policy, which made English the medium of education and required the study of a second "ethnic" language (Mandarin, Malay, or Tamil). At the same time, the Singaporean government discouraged the use of Chinese "dialects," such as Hokkien, enforcing a "Speak Mandarin" policy. Results indicate that English is increasingly used and that, among the majority Chinese group, there is a generational shift in reported identity from Chinese (especially specific Chinese group identity such as Hokkien, Cantonese, or Hakka) to Singaporean (Hvitfeldt & Poedjosoedarmo 1995). One may wonder to what extent these attitudes are affecting Singlish, and more specifically, whether Chinese substratal compo-

nents are yielding to other features.

Another New English acquired as a second language, Kenyan English is displaying mother tongue interference which reflects the learners' ethnic group. The Kikuyu show evidence of a liquid (l/r) phonological merger in their use of Kenyan English, whereas the Luo use affricates but no alveolar fricatives in their version of English. Both features echo native African features of Kikuyu or Luo (Schmied 1991:429). A similar distinctiveness linked to native language is found in Liberian English, a New English which happens to be integrated into a recognized creole continuum and similar to situations existing in other parts of Africa and in the Caribbean. Singler (1991:558), in his investigation of plural marking in Liberian English, indicates that plural marking in Kru Pidgin English, whose speakers have Kru as a first language, is neither identical to plural marking in Liberian Interior English, whose speakers have Mande as a first language, nor to plural marking in Settler English, spoken by the descendants of Black American immigrants to Liberia in the nineteenth century.

The traces left by the native or ancestral language in the newly developed, typically contact-induced, variety are commonly referred to as *substratal influences*, which reflect the lower status of the speakers of the new language. On the other hand, any influence of the linguistic component traceable to the socially dominant group is called *superstratal*. Theories of genesis will be briefly discussed in chapter two, and a comprehensive presentation of existing approaches appears in Alleyne (1980), Arends et al. (1995:9-10; 99-109), Holm (1988), and Muysken & Smith (1986).

Finally, pedagogically-driven research has focused on the identification of strata, or stages in the West Indian learning situation (and more particularly in Jamaica and Trinidad), and the implications for English-teaching methods (Bryan 1996; Christie 1983; Craig 1966; 1980; 1996; Pollard 1996; Roberts 1983; 1988; Shields-Brodber 1989). The important issue of the practical applications of linguistic research to social change will be discussed in chapter nine.

2.1 Universalist explanations of acquisition

One of the major explanatory approaches to issues of acquisition involves universalist explanations of the human language learning capacity. Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG) provides innateness as an explanation for cross-linguistic similarities. This theory postulates that all humans are biologically equipped with a language faculty that permits the generation of general linguistic principles. The language faculty is available at birth and becomes activated when input is insufficient to provide a full model of the target grammar, which is typically the case in first language acquisition. Grammar development consists of the setting of parameters for the specific language being learned. For

UG-proponents, the study of a child's language development is a sufficient basis for the research and testing of language universals, and external factors, such as communicative needs and social interaction requirements, are considered irrelevant.

The "Bioprogram Hypothesis," a version of UG introduced by Bickerton (1981), incorporates special reference to the emergence of language universals in pidgin and creole languages, a case of first language acquisition. The latter develop rapidly in contact situations in which speakers evolve a new system without the benefit of an already existing model, thanks to the resources of their innate linguistic ability. Bickerton's genetic view allows for some social input, since demographic, historical, and sociopolitical elements are necessarily involved in the genesis of pidgins, but he fails to include systematic reference to daily interactive needs.

Assuming that Chomsky and Bickerton are right about the existence of a language faculty in the brain, there may be other types of universals dependent on external factors, in addition to the commonalities which depend on the internal properties of the language faculty (Butterworth, Comrie, & Dahl 1984). Internal and external explanations can be distinguished as follows:

Cognitive and psychological explanations involve formal operations that the human mind can vs. cannot accommodate. . . while pragmatic or sociolinguistic explanations involve (formal?) operations that a human society or individual within a society can vs. cannot accommodate. . . (Hyman 1984:68).

Muysken & Veenstra (1995:121-134) summarize universalist models applied to pidgins and creoles, identifying two types of universals: procedural universals (referring to universal properties of processes such as L2 learning, grammaticalization) and constitutive universals which designate the properties resulting from those processes (e.g., TMA systems or word order). These principles and their applications in acrolects will be further discussed in subsequent chapters.

In view of the previous attempts at understanding language acquisition and change in various contexts, the question is open as to whether linguistic commonalities, internal or external, also emerge in the acquisition of *second languages*, such as pidgins and creoles, and *second dialects*, such as acrolects or standard varieties acquired by native speakers of nonstandard varieties. Clearly, the issue must be differentiated from first language acquisition, as presented by Chomsky and Bickerton, since learners of a second dialect or language already possess a native linguistic system which interacts with the target system (either causing errors, transfers, interferences, markedness patterns, or substratal and superstratal influences, according to existing theories). If there are contact-induced linguistic universals, how can they be differentiated from language-

specific influences? In which language components are they more likely to be identified? These questions and their applications in acrolects will be further discussed in subsequent chapters.

2.2 *The acquisition of second dialects*

The interpretations outlined above could conceivably be applied to other types of acquisitional situations of the “dialectal” type, especially in cases of second dialect learning—cases when there is no distinct mother tongue present in the competence of the standard learner. The general lack of interest in second dialect acquisition may be due to the difficulty involved in identifying second dialect situations as linguistically distinct from first dialect contexts. In spite of the paucity of research on dialect acquisition, or perhaps because of it, there is a popular consensus that standard dialect acquisition is less traumatic than SLA. This attitude is obviously reflected in the educational establishment: a standard variety is never taught in a formal, organized manner and, in contrast to foreign language learning, is not supported by any language manual or the “bidialectal” equivalent of bilingual programs. The learner is assumed to know the standard before going to school. We can infer from such attitudes that there is a deeply entrenched conviction that the acquisition of dialects involves less distance between the native and the target varieties (D1 and D2) than is the case between L1 and L2. Of course, the nonstandard speaker may have previously acquired a passive or partial competence of the standard model, depending on the degree of exposure and motivation involved in a specific situation. Public opinion as well as educational systems assume that a speaker of Geordie, a variety of Newcastle English (Graham 1980), will find it easier to learn RP than to learn French, or that a speaker of American Black English should learn standard English faster than Spanglish, and Spanglish faster than Spanish. On the other hand, there is apparently no clear opinion concerning the relative learnability of nonstandard dialects by standard speakers. Would it be easier for a speaker of standard English to learn Black English² or Geordie than Spanish? It is unusual, however, for speakers of prestigious dialects to strive to learn stigmatized forms, since there are neither the economic nor educational motivations to do so. Although the possibility is not excluded, SDA is typically a one-way social process.

There are no empirical studies of dialect versus language acquisition that prove or disprove the validity of the above intuitive statements. Although some nonstandard varieties such as Black English have become the object of scholarly study (Labov 1972a), the actual process of the acquisition of standard American English by speakers of Black English still remains to be explored. The spontaneous acquisition of a standard code as second variety—whether we call it *dialect* or *language*—is highly constrained by social factors, subjective attitudes, and the psychosocial context of learning. It is, therefore, essential to

distinguish between *guided* learning, the artificial classroom acquisition of a second language, and *unguided* learning which includes the acquisition of a standard dialect or language in a real life context. Unguided learning situations create the ideal circumstances for the study of the interaction between syntax and pragmatics, as will be discussed below.

2.3 Social attitudes and language/dialect acquisition

An important component of language development lies in the existence of social attitudes toward languages and their speakers; yet, SLA studies generally do not look at the potential significance of the relative social status of the target language and of the learner's native language. They also do not take into account the related but distinct issue of the social status of language learners and of native speakers of the linguistic target. For example, there is obviously a different social dynamics involved when comparing the acquisition of English by a Mexican migrant worker in Minnesota, a Mexican migrant worker in California, a Chinese graduate student in an American university, and a Chinese resident of Singapore. There is more of a group support system for Mexicans, or Chicanos, in California than in Minnesota, which has predominantly German and Scandinavian ethnicity and only a seasonal influx of Chicanos. Whether or not a large Mexican population in California, and the universal presence of Spanish or Spanglish in the streets and on the airwaves, facilitates or impedes the acquisition of English by Mexicans remains to be studied. In the other case, a Chinese graduate student on an American campus has a focused, academic motivation to learn English, and the process of SLA acquisition does not interfere with his or her sense of Chinese identity, unless of course there are personal motives for rejecting it to embrace an American identity. For the Chinese in Singapore, the local English variety is a lingua franca which now symbolizes their identity as Singaporeans, as seen above. Since Mandarin Chinese is officially supported by the Singapore government through the "Speak Mandarin" policy, there is good motivation to preserve a Chinese ethnic identity.

Social factors are essential to examine because they determine motivation, the availability of learning tools, and other factors instrumental in the developmental process of language acquisition. As pointed out by LePage & Tabouret-Keller (1985:247), "neither 'race' nor 'ethnic group' nor 'language' turns out to be a clearly-definable external object," and linguistic choices are "projections" of identity. The learning of non-native varieties, whether they are better definable as dialects or languages, is at least partially triggered by psychosocial and economic motives. Language is perceived as a marketable asset, a tool for upward mobility. An individual expects to reap benefits, such as status, "class," distinction, recognition and related economic bonuses from the acquisition of a

new linguistic code. Thus, subjective attitudes toward languages, accents, dialects, and other perceived linguistic entities are directly derived from social factors, and the speakers' histories (Thomason & Kaufman 1991:4).

2.4 *Linguistic bias*

Although the popular (not the linguistic) view defines a *dialect* as deviant from the norm, the difference between a language and a dialect may be impossible to determine unambiguously, either linguistically or socially. Bias plays an essential role in our perceptions of language varieties and in their acquisition. Linguistic bias reflects the social stratification present in every community, creating a circular pattern of cause and effect: language is a social mirror and, thus, perpetuates social and ethnic bias because linguistic behavior shapes attitudes and opinions. The lack of power of a stigmatized group is compounded by the negative values associated with the group's linguistic forms (typically described as incorrect, inadequate, inappropriate, uneducated, illogical, and politically dangerous). A nonstandard variety is often the subject of denial by its own speakers and by the society harboring it (Ferguson 1959). If at all recognized, it is assumed to be an immature linguistic habit which will be shed in the course of normal intellectual development. If such "bad" linguistic habits persist, users find it harder to establish their social credibility; they may even be denied access to the powerful world of standard speakers. Such attitudes often apply to foreign accents as well and, therefore, to the SLA process. Native speakers often associate—perhaps unconsciously—unflattering intellectual connotations to non-native renderings of their language. A related attitude is the feeling of embarrassment all language learners experience in the first stages of conscious adult acquisition. Clearly, we are strongly motivated to assess an individual's value as a social human being on the basis of that person's verbal ability and conformity to conventional local linguistic standards in addition to other superficial factors, such as physical appearance and behavior.

A prime example of language-based bias is reflected in the recent campaign to identify English as the sole official language of the United States. The English Only movement has as its goal to deny official status to Spanish, as well as to other immigrant languages, a position which may partly be derived from the common misconception that language unity promotes political unity and economic development.³ The threatening power of linguistic and ethnic diversity has long been reflected in the stigma attached to Black English varieties in the United States, as well as to creoles in the Caribbean and elsewhere.

As reflected in the case of Spanish in the United States, varieties which are commonly referred to as "languages," and that have official and prestigious status in a given country, may hold low status elsewhere. Castilian Spanish, for

example, is the official language in Spain and constitutes the prestige form in most of Spain except in Catalonia, the Northeastern province, where it has, for political and historical reasons, a much lower status than the local language Catalan. The use of Catalan was made illegal during General Franco's twenty-year dictatorship. In contrast, Catalan was mostly tolerated in Catalogne, the southern province of France adjoining Spain, and it has fallen out of use there despite the fact that it is actively promoted by cultural organizations. Thus, language differences sometimes disappear in cases of voluntary acculturation but are reinforced in cases of oppression. In Latin America, Spanish has a much higher official status than Indian languages (e.g., Quechua, Aymara) whose speakers are at the bottom of the social scale. In the United States, any variety of Latin American or Caribbean Spanish has low overt social status (which does not exclude high covert prestige) due to widespread negative social attitudes toward minorities, migrant workers, and recent immigrants. The circular pattern inherent in linguistic bias is particularly damaging to speakers of nonstandard or unofficial varieties who need to find creative ways to break the pattern of behavior and judgment. For example, the revalorization of Black English and African-American values through the medium of rap music illustrates the attempt to break the pattern of bias through a linguistic medium. Rap clearly has gone well beyond its original linguistic medium since it has been actively adopted in France with musical lyrics in standard Parisian French by Arab and African "rappeur" groups, as well as in Hong Kong as Canto-rap—rap with Cantonese lyrics by analogy with Canto-pop.⁴

Studies using the matched guise technique have documented the claim that social judgments are based on linguistic behavior, especially on the vague concept of *accent* (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor 1977). In England, Standard English (RP) is linked to traditional norms and the "public school" education reserved for the elite. A corpus of listeners found that RP evokes impressions of success, intelligence, and elegance but a certain lack of warmth, especially when used by women. Northern English varieties are associated with warmer but less educated and less successful individuals, which confirms that an official norm derives its prestige from the power of the speech community using it (Elyan et al. 1978). Such normative attitudes promoting the supremacy of standard dialects or official languages are universally shared, and elementary and secondary education teachers are often encouraged to convey this view to their students. The two case studies to be analyzed in this book will illuminate such attitudes.

3. The linguistic analysis of nonstandard dialects

Paradoxically, some of the most striking and productive developments in the

field of formal linguistics have been concomitant with a denial of the existence and importance of nonstandard varieties, which indeed runs parallel to public ideology. Transformational Generative Grammar (both in its original form and in its later version as Government and Binding), because of the priority it assigns to the search for an abstract linguistic competence and the identification of the universal linguistic capacity shared by all human beings, has intentionally ignored all references to linguistic variability and to the extralinguistic factors—social, cultural, psychological and political—that determine linguistic variability. For formal linguistics, the database consists of the linguists' intuitions. Apparently, those intuitions have not included nonstandard verbal structures; thus, omissions of large segments of speakers' repertoires are likely to have contributed to the rejection of nonstandard dialects as a valid field of study and a valuable component of education, and may even have reinforced the non-standard bias and the low status assigned to their speakers. Schiffrrin (1987b:392) claims that one of the major differences between formal linguistics and sociolinguistics is "a difference in data," adding that "the selection of a data type has a profound influence on the range of phenomena which a model aims to represent and a theory aims to explain."

3.1 Labovian sociolinguistics

Until twenty years ago, there had been no large scale study of the dialects of groups with low social status. Labov pioneered the field with his seminal studies of the social stratification of English in New York City (Labov 1966) and of Black English (Labov 1972a). Although the study of nonstandard dialects has since greatly expanded in the direction of increased observational adequacy, there is still a glaring absence of data documenting the degree of deviance existing between standard dialects as acquired by nonstandard speakers and the vernacular (native) forms of those standard dialects. Labovian sociolinguistics attempts to deal with speech variability *per se*, and its relevance to communicative competence rather than with the Chomskyan internalized competence of the ideal speaker/hearer. For the first time, questions are raised about the validity of our judgments of standard and nonstandard speech, and full scale scientific descriptions of nonstandard speech varieties are conducted. As issues of descriptive accuracy and observational adequacy are brought to the forefront, it becomes necessary to develop sound methodologies for the collection of linguistic data.

What are the observations that will reliably reveal the mechanisms operational in language development? How can we ascertain the difference between linguistic facts and the abstracted interpretation of those facts? Indeed, what theory will provide an explanation of the significant linguistic facts? The intu-

itions of generativists and the mailed questionnaires of dialect geographers obviously tapped limited, and manifestly selective, segments of the linguistic options open to speakers and are now no longer considered appropriate to satisfy the sociolinguists' interests in establishing the range and extent of linguistic variability. Matched guise techniques and laboratory experiments are commonly used to isolate linguistic features or identify subjective judgments in controlled situations and produce interesting results, as in the case of the evaluation of RP outlined above; however, they have the disadvantage of creating artificial situations which can only remotely match genuine language use and, thus, primarily define formal situations or tap conscious aspects of linguistic behavior.

One of Labov's methodological principles—the Principle of Formality—states appropriately that “any systematic observation defines a formal context in which more than the minimal attention is paid to speech” (Labov 1972c). Labov advocates methods whose goals are to capture an individual's full performing repertoire, from formal to casual, through elicitation of word lists and text reading (for formal speech) as well as through observations of spontaneous conversations (for careful to casual speech). The latter can only be successful if the fieldworker is a member of the speech community under investigation or has become fully accepted as a participant in the social activities of that community. Participation, therefore, helps solve the “Observer's Paradox,” as one observes “how people speak when they are not being observed” (Labov 1972c).

It has been claimed that sociolinguistics is merely a methodology and has no theoretical import. This is clearly inaccurate since all socially-oriented studies of language variation derive their premises from the basic theoretical viewpoint that the social context determines human behavior, language being just one aspect of human behavior. Variation studies emphasize the necessity of quantitative analysis as a research procedure with the hypothesis that variability in performance is predictable in terms of the correlated social and linguistic features of each natural interaction. Such approaches are traceable to a Marxist view of social class based on conflict and power. The issue of nonstandard dialects stands within this perspective because the social evaluation of language is based on power, or the perception of power and conflict, and on the human desire to change the power structure to one's advantage. Guy (1988:41) claims that Western social theories present an alternative definition of class based on social unity and status as opposed to the Marxist notions of power and conflict. He says that sociolinguists such as Labov have primarily been functioning from this “soft” perspective, with resulting gradient linguistic stratification, rather than the sharp stratification which is expected to evolve from violent conflict; however, sharp stratification in linguistic feature distribution or subjective attitudes toward language types has been found to occur in issues of minority lin-

guistic behavior—whether in Black English, creoles, or in politically-motivated language choice (such as the case of Catalan mentioned above).

Consequently, it seems pointless to separate or choose between unity-status and conflict-power dichotomies. Both types of social behavior obviously co-occur and contribute to the fashioning and development of linguistic behavior. The approach adopted here assumes that a social dynamic is essential in non-standard dialect learning but does not presume to predict the type of trigger involved in the acquisition process. It is, however, hypothesized that nonstandard native speakers will only effectively learn the standard if they have strong incentives to do so—if they envision a practical positive outcome to the acquisition of the linguistic code. If they assess the achievement of power as unrealistic, it can be predicted that they will not learn much of the standard.

The popular definition of the term *dialect*—a nonstandard variety which is somewhat “deviant” from the local norm—is a useful heuristic sociolinguistic concept because it is based on social attitudes regarding language varieties and their speakers. The notion will naturally be essential in this investigation of the process of acquisition of standard varieties by speakers of dialects or nonstandard varieties.

3.2 *Language in oral discourse and pragmatics*

The data base underlying this investigation of second dialect acquisition primarily consists of spontaneous conversations. It is the most common type of ordinary communication, however, which poses the most serious problems of analysis. The principles underlying oral discourse lie within the overlapping ranges of pragmatics and sociolinguistics. Yet, there is currently no comprehensive theoretical framework which adequately predicts the organization of discourse, “no theory of paragraphs and its parts which is nearly as elaborate as a theory of sentences” (Linde 1981:85).

The field of pragmatics encompasses a broad range of perspectives on language in context. Green (1989:2) places it

at the intersection of a number of fields within and outside of cognitive science: not only linguistics, cognitive psychology, cultural anthropology, and philosophy (logic, semantics, action theory), but also sociology (interpersonal dynamics and social convention) and rhetoric contribute to its domain.

The fuzzy boundaries that pragmatics shares in particular with sociolinguistics and semantics, as well as with other disciplines, make pragmatics hard to define clearly, although vague definitions are not lacking. It is defined broadly as “the study of understanding intentional human action,” requiring reference to the central notions of belief, intention, plan and act (Green 1989:3), and narrowly

as “the interpretation of indexical expressions” (Green 1989:2). Levinson (1983) provides an interesting evaluation of various definitions of pragmatics, from its philosophical foundation to a more empirical data-driven approach, implying the growing importance of observational adequacy. Some of those definitions include “meaning minus truth conditions,” “the study of the relation between language context that are basic to an account of language understanding,” “the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with the contexts in which they are appropriate.” Levinson concludes that “conceptual analyses using introspective data [are] replaced by careful inductive work based on observation” (Levinson 1983:285).

The functional approach endorsed by Dik (1980) and Givón (1979a; 1990), among others, also regards pragmatics as the primary framework within which “syntactic and semantic principles are explained in terms of the pragmatic purposes and requirements of verbal interaction” (Dik 1980:2). The functional view of natural language claims to consider language primarily as an instrument of social interaction but, paradoxically, does not discuss real life contexts and primarily aims to produce principles on the basis of isolated sentences. The advantage of this approach is its search for “typological adequacy”; as Givón (1990:vii) notes, “surface diversity of cross-language typological facts masks behind it a great measure of commonality of human languages. Part of that commonality is due to semantic and pragmatic universals.” Other linguistic research on language universals recognizes the combination of both formal and functional explanations for the commonalities found in human languages (Comrie 1984).

3.3 Theoretical framework for oral discourse

The question remains of what theoretical model would most adequately account for the type of speech data to be considered here: namely, spontaneous discourse in the context of standard acquisition by native speakers of nonstandard varieties. The concept of communicative competence and, furthermore, polylectal competence, must be central to this putative model, since I will have to account for the competence of speakers who shift easily between different language varieties depending on the social context. The principles and methods of quantitative sociolinguistics, as briefly outlined above, are well-suited to the detailed analysis of specific linguistic variables. One major aspect of sociolinguistic analysis is empirical, as it involves close attention to social context and to the collection of reliable speech data, an essential element of any attempt at explanations of linguistic facts.

In addition, an emphasis on typological generalizations will be essential in the projected comparison of two apparently unrelated linguistic contexts (Belizean and Chinese). Functional grammar provides that angle, with its spe-

cial emphasis on universal pragmatic aspects of human communication, especially in areas such as topic and focus. Since I elected to exclusively investigate topic marking in spontaneous verbal interaction, the functional approach provides a valuable framework within which to place the Belizean and Chinese facts. The processes involved in topic presentation and topic organization present particularly interesting insights into the ambiguous overlap of syntactic and pragmatic processes.

Thus, without committing myself fully to either model, I find it convenient and eminently feasible to combine the sociolinguistic framework with the functional-typological perspective. Indeed, I find the two perspectives to be complementary, in the sense that what is lacking in one is supplied by the other. Whereas sociolinguistics is generally restricted to individual linguistic situations, functional grammar provides options for cross-linguistic generalizations; while functional grammar has little to say about specific contexts and speakers, sociolinguistics has a well-developed methodology and theory to identify and control the extralinguistic variables which have significant impact on language choice.

Finally, the overlap of semantics, syntax, and pragmatics is an important aspect of the study of discourse, and the fuzziness of boundaries is often invoked in functional approaches. Although an account of the absence of neatly separated components presents a serious challenge, the issue cannot be skirted. The notion of overlap is particularly relevant to the study of marginalized varieties. Since nonstandard varieties are usually highly stigmatized, there is no formal or canonical description of their structure, and they are not subjected to a norm. They are, therefore, relatively free to evolve. It is the intent of this investigation to observe whether and how spontaneous contexts favor the closer association of semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic processes, as noted in creole situations. A hypothesis to be considered here is that unguided learners, as well as learners deprived of a stable model, are forced to rely on general pragmatic or functional principles rather than on the formal syntactic rules of the target language because of the continued inaccessibility of the standard grammar. In other words, speakers may pragmatically rearrange the target syntax. The hypothesis will be advanced that such pragmatic reorganization may derive from universally shared principles, regardless of the specific linguistic situation. The issue of the putative overlap of pragmatic and syntactic devices will be investigated here more particularly in the acquisition of Belizean acrolects by native speakers of Creole, and of Chinese standard dialects by native speakers of nonstandard Chinese varieties.

3.4 Units of analysis

An essential prerequisite in the linguistic analysis of discourse involves delim-

iting the domain of the study. The Chomskyan notion that the domain of linguistic analysis can and should be the sentence unit constitutes the standard basis for most analyses—but it is easy to demonstrate that investigations limited to isolated sentences fail to provide essential information about the broader psychosocial context that generates the parameters within which a sentence occurs. Furthermore, it is often difficult to identify sentence boundaries and, thus, to break discourse into significant sentential units. This structural uncertainty is represented in the following example, in which a Belizean speaker discusses “modernity”:⁵

- (1) This thing of modernity sometime, I am skeptical of it myself; I think when you talk of the economics of it you want to bring in some sophisticated system, make them become dependent on it, and, you know, look pan de land, look pan de people, and you just see them as factors of production rather than seeing them for what they really are, what the land can produce and how it will—de people who till it, rather than going into this sophisticated system, say small is beautiful (Co, 42, 1980, Placencia)

The definition of linguistic units in discourse, however, does require some reference to its boundaries and to its internal organization. Wald (1983:104) looks at narratives as “discourse units that are extended, potentially syntactically elaborate, commonly spoken, and easy to elicit.” Such descriptions capture the complexity of discourse but do not contribute much empirical help to the analyst intent on defining descriptively adequate measurements. A more productive attempt to delimit the “discourse origin” and “the end point” of a narrative leads Wald to refer to a variety of cues, for example: “a coda such as that’s it. . . or a falling intonation and slowing of the speech tempo finally lapsing into silence. . . [and] the following audience (or addressee) reaction” (Wald 1983:108).

Labov and Fanshel (1977), in their study of the language of therapy, identify “units of talk” which function as speech actions, and their goal is to formulate the set of principles organizing those units of talk, either as concatenation rules sequencing information, or mapping procedures which determine the production and interpretation of verbal elements.

According to Linde (1981:113), “discourse units have an internal structure that is as regular and accessible as the study of the structure of sentences.” She identifies certain internal organizational principles which provide coherence in discourse, such as temporal ordering, relations of dominance and inclusion, and a wide set of social and cultural assumptions and presupposition. Linde defines major linguistic units in terms of genres, such as stories, jokes, recipes, narratives of activities, and the like, all functioning as social units as well. One

advantage of this approach is that it makes sense to speakers, who are far more aware of undertaking to tell a story than they are of undertaking to produce a sentence. A disadvantage of the “genre as unit” interpretation is that it may be too broad. A story is likely to be subdivided into various components, interrupted by interlocutors’ comments, then continued and led to completion; thus, a topic can be maintained over alternating turns of conversation.

It may be practically more effective to define linguistic units shorter than the genre, while leaving open the potential of expanding beyond conventional idealized sentential boundaries. Sample (2) shown below illustrates the problem of discourse division. It is excerpted from a conversation taped in Placencia, between Co and his friend Ro. Co and Ro used to be coworkers at the income tax department and the customs office in Belize-City. They recall a common friend Xo. The topic of Xo is introduced by Ro’s basilectal question [*We he do now?*], but Co immediately shifts to an acrolect (more appropriate when discussing aspects of their official functions as civil servants in Belize-City) and sometimes to a mesolect (turn 5), although Ro occasionally shifts back to a basilect (turn 4).⁶ Beside the issue of lectal shifting, a point relevant to the definition of discourse units is represented in the fact that the topic is interrupted on turn 6 by Ro’s digression into recollections of office relationships, to which Co responds (turn 7); Ro then returns to the topic of Xo (turn 8). Thus, the problem is how to break down the following chunk of discourse. Should there be eight discourse units (each turn constituting one discourse unit)? Could it be three, the first discourse unit including turns 1-5 (discussion of Xo), the second (6-7) about office relationships, then the third resuming the topic of Xo (turn 8)? Or could the entire paragraph be considered as one single discourse unit:

(2) Ro: We he do now? (what does he do now?)

1. Co: I think he wanted to get into merchandising and maybe in bond stores, duty free shops.

2. Ro: I used to like work with he you know, they gave he lee [little] bad name and so but.

3. Co: I found him alright, boy, I got on pretty well with him, ahm, we were from way back, you and I know him even before being a civil servant, and ahm, then I worked with him the first time at income tax, then I worked with him at customs, but, I’m, telling you, I think he was a. . .he had ideas, right.

4. Ro: Dat da we I like with a [that’s what I like about him]; and he got good, to me, right, we got good staff relationship, right.

5. Co: He used to fine [He used to be fine]

6. Ro: I know one big place like customs funny for you, because the staff too big, right. but to me, like, I use to like ya [there], they make the staff

there feel at home, right, for instance da you lee birthday today and things like that.

7. Co: Yah, and I think it was good, right, kinda, you work together you must also fun together, you socialize, you find it makes for better working relationship.

8. Ro: Dat's right, I never find no fault with the man, man. If you mę ga wan man de but da Xo de [If you had to pick a man, it would be Xo]; yah, he da something else, he da dead scatterbrains, man. (Placencia 1980)

For the purpose of this investigation, I will opt to take the entire paragraph as a discourse unit of analysis. My definition of "topic units" is centered around the topic: all structures related to the topic make up the topic unit, as will be further illustrated in chapters four and six.

In many languages, including English, the basic syntactic structure of the sentence involves an SVO order in which topics do not have an especially high priority; yet, topic mechanisms occur more extensively in contextualized casual and nonstandard varieties related to English, which then appear to assign topic structures to the pragmatic component. The incidence of topic mechanisms in creole varieties, especially in acrolects, is of special interest here and is related to the claim that the pragmatic component takes over in spontaneous contexts. On the other hand, some languages clearly assign syntactic status to what is pragmatically constrained elsewhere, a phenomenon akin to grammaticalization. This may be the case in Chinese which displays consistent topic-comment discourse structures. The concept of *topic chain* (Shi 1989; Tsao 1979), to be also discussed in chapter six, may provide an appropriate framework for the study of creole topic mechanisms because of its flexibility in allowing a definition of the topic unit which combines syntactic and pragmatic elements. According to the theory of topic chains, the topic extends its domain to a sequence of several propositions. The topic chain, or topic unit is thus a discourse level phenomenon that raises the issue of the interaction of syntax and pragmatics, as illustrated in the Belizean examples above. And it thus appears that cross-linguistic observations provide a productive perspective on our understanding of topic mechanisms.

4. Creoles and noncreoles

Parallel to the growing interest in Black English evidenced in the last thirty years, and perhaps even more extensive, has been the development of the field of creolistics over the last twenty years. This creole scholarship has endeavored to rehabilitate stigmatized creole languages in their own communities, and else-

where, and to delineate a new field where social and linguistic factors are interlocked in language development. As indicated above, however, the attention devoted to the development of pidgin and creole-related continua has been somewhat limited. Several important books providing overviews of creoles, or case studies, have appeared since 1980 (Arends et al. 1995; Alleyne 1980; Bickerton 1975; 1981; Chaudenson 1992; Gilbert 1987; Holm 1988; LePage & Tabouret-Keller 1985; Muysken & Smith 1986; Rickford 1987; Romaine 1988; Thomason & Kaufman 1991).

One of the current challenges in the field of creole studies involves providing satisfactory accounts and explanations of the linguistic variability inherent in creole situations. There are apparently conflicting interpretations of variability, namely, the “continuum” and the “co-existent systems” perspectives (to be further discussed below). The varieties spanning a creole continuum are often characterized as unidimensional and displaying implicational patterns (Bickerton 1975; Rickford 1987). However, analyses leading to these interpretations are usually based on phonological or morphological variables, rarely on observations of linguistic features beyond the sentence level. A different view holds that only a multidimensional model can accommodate creole situations. In particular, LePage & Tabouret-Keller (1985:180-185) claim that the linguistic strategies used in Cayo District, a Western district of Belize with predominantly Spanish and Creole ethnicity, are necessarily multidimensional because each linguistic choice is an “act of identity” that implies solidarity with or distance from others. This perspective is in keeping with the speech accommodation theory, which involves the principles of “convergence” and “divergence” in human psychosocial interaction (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor 1977).

The multidimensional interpretation of linguistic variability need not be restricted to multilingual, multiethnic communities, as will be discussed later. The issue of decreolization is often linked to the continuum phenomenon. Decreolization has been interpreted as a development of the continuum in the direction of the standard model, leading from basilect to mesolect to acrolect, with concomitant loss of the “earlier” forms. The process has often been assumed to be a unidirectional substitution of the standard for the creole.⁷ Having embraced the decreolization view at early stages of my research (Escure 1981), I have come to the conclusion that the reality of creole continua, even in a relatively homogeneous speech community like Placencia, Belize, (see chapter two) is more complex than can be accounted for by a unidimensional model. The learning of acrolects does not necessarily imply the loss of native basilectal vernaculars. On the contrary, the acquisition of acrolects involves an extension of the repertoire available to speakers rather than a systematic sliding of the continuum toward a more standard set of linguistic segments (Escure 1981;

1982; Rickford 1987:31). There is a reasonable possibility that the process of change through extension and remodeling may be typical of any acquisitional situation, implying the addition of a second code to a first variety. This is likely to apply to SLA as well. I firmly believe that the acquisition of a second language does not systematically and irreversibly move forward but is subject to backsliding and the preservation of socially meaningful intermediate forms, not unlike the acquisition of varieties along a creole continuum.⁸ If this is true, SDA may not be drastically different from SLA, and creole situations may be structurally similar to other language variability situations, although they may still differ in other respects, perhaps historical or political. For Muysken & Smith (1995:4-5), "creole languages are not in the slightest qualitatively distinguishable from other spoken languages."

A comparison of second dialect acquisition in creole and noncreole contexts will help clarify the definition of the concept of "creole." In particular, the following problems will be addressed: are creole languages and their continua structurally different from others? Is the pattern of standard acquisition different for a native creole speaker as opposed to a native speaker of a noncreole, nonstandard dialect? Those questions will be examined in the very limited context of the discourse variables selected for analysis.

There is a strong indication that, even though the term *creole* is widely used in various types of contact-induced situations, it is not clear that a creole is typologically different from other language types which develop through some type of sociolinguistic contact (Corne 1995a; Escure 1993a). It will be hypothesized here that second dialect acquisition is somewhat analogous, though occurring under apparently less traumatic conditions, to the situations which permitted the genesis of pidgins and creoles. Even though a model exists (the standard is usually codified in written form and is also subject to informal standardization), it is never systematically related to the learner's native system; thus, the learner is forced into the same decision making situations—what to select from a variety of options. Furthermore, the same social pressures exist: both the incipient pidgin speaker and the nonstandard learner are in positions to be affected by varying degrees of social oppression and made to feel that they cannot meaningfully participate in social life unless they control, among other things, the "proper" code—which nobody is attempting to teach them properly or at all! In the case of nonstandard learners, language universals may have already been actively used in the natural development of their uncoded vernacular.

4.1 Two case studies

It is hoped that a detailed analysis of selected aspects of two ethnically different types of second dialect acquisition will contribute to our understanding of

cross-linguistic acquisitional mechanisms and of linguistic bias.

First, the case of Belize, Central America: in that former British colony, the official language is English, directly inherited from the colonial past of what was previously identified as “British Honduras.” English is the medium claimed to be used in all governmental and educational functions, but the reality is far from meeting official expectations. The Creoles (Afro-Europeans) overtly recognize the prestige of English, but their vernacular language is an English-based creole which has in-group prestige. Other groups manifest equally ambiguous attitudes and behaviors toward the standard acrolect. The acquisition of Belizean acrolects occurs in the context of a multilectal creole situation, which is likely to have always been variable, and definitely still is. It is a case of relatively recent language formation through pidginization and creolization.

Second, the case of the acquisition of Standard Mandarin by speakers of other varieties of Chinese having local, but not official, status occurs in the more traditional context (noncreole) of dialect acquisition, so far undocumented. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) has been actively promoting—through mass media and educational channels—the increased use of the new standard of Mandarin Chinese called *Putonghua* (the “Common Language”). Beijing natives claim that they cannot understand the provincial dialects spoken all over China, but most of the recent leading political figures of China are not natives of the Beijing province and sport remarkable accents: Mao Tse Tung was born in Changsha, Hunan, in the southern part of PRC, where a distinctive language—Xiang—is spoken; Deng-Xiao-Ping is a native of Chengdu, Sichuan, whose Southwestern Mandarin variety is also very distinctive.

Obviously, Belizean English-based creoles and Chinese dialects are genetically and historically unrelated, and the countries in which those varieties are spoken are maximally different in size and ethnic composition. This apparent lack of connection is one reason why I elected to analyze the linguistic situations in those two geographically distant sites. Comparing the two types of acquisition should highlight universal aspects of acquisition, as well as the issue of whether there is any substance to the notion that creoles develop in any distinctive way (Escure 1993a; 1994).

In addition, it is recognized that creoles constitute the linguistic product of relatively recent colonization and enforced transplantation and subjugation of one group to another region and culture, whereas a general assumption of homogeneity is typically associated with Chinese cultures and languages—a manifestly erroneous assumption. Both situations offer similarities in terms of the general social background underlying their respective developments. Chinese populations have been forever subjected to the constant oppression of various emperors and overlords invading each others’ territories, and there has

been a plethora of successive waves of colonization from the north to the south of China. The most recent invasion was the Manchu takeover which resulted in the domination of one nation by an outsider group. Linguistically, the dominant Manchu are said to have adopted the language of the subjugated nation and, more specifically, the Mandarin variety spoken in Northern China (Beijing variety). The Manchu invasion occurred at about the same time as the main slave trade from Africa, which changed the ethnolinguistic map of the New World. It is obvious that, historically, similar types of linguistic contact and ethnic mixing phenomena underlie China and Belize.

4.2 Outline of chapters

It is expected that close observations of the standard versions produced by native speakers of nonstandard dialects will provide interesting insights into the universal processes underlying the development of language in society. This volume investigates the development of second dialects in the context of the two distinct sociolinguistic situations outlined above:

The first part of this volume, chapters two through four, examines linguistic variation in the context of English-based creoles and the English acrolectal varieties acquired by native speakers of creole basilects, as spoken in Belize (previously British Honduras) where I have conducted fieldwork from 1978 to 1994. Chapter two provides the demographic, geographical, social, and historical background of the speech community of Belize, highlighting some of the conditions under which the creole continuum is currently developing English acrolects and focusing more particularly on the Stann Creek District which is the locus of this research. Chapter three is concerned with the acrolectal segment, the product of the acquisition of the standard as second (non-native) dialect. The intent is to identify potential differences between the acrolect and the standard variety, the apparent target in acrolectal development. Chapter four specifically investigates the use of topic strategies in Belizean acrolects, comparing syntactic and pragmatic aspects of standard acquisition to basilectal creole patterns and casual American English varieties.

The second part of this volume, chapters five through eight, investigates similar problems in Chinese dialects spoken in the People's Republic of China, including the native vernacular Mandarin/Putonghua spoken in Beijing, the non-native Putonghua acquired by speakers of the Wuhan varieties (Wuhanhua) in Wuhan (Hubei), and the narrative variety of Wu used for traditional tales in Suzhou (Jiangsu) which is also acquired as a second dialect. Speech data were collected since 1985 (Escure 1987), and vernacular data spanning the period from 1963-1985 are derived from contemporary written texts. As a counterpart to chapter two in the Belizean section, chapter five provides parallel background