Ebonics, Pidgins, and Creoles (oh my!)

Dec. 18, 1996: Oakland School Board passes a resolution to recognize "Ebonics" as the native language of some of its students, and to take this into account when teaching them Standard English.

- "...a language that has no right or wrong expressions, no consistent spellings or pronunciations and no discernible rules."
 - --William Raspberry
- "...the patois of America's meanest streets."
 - --George Will

"Y'awl might be axin me why Ah be writin dis way. Y'awl might tink ma fambly didn't gib me a gud upbringin."

--Walter Williams, Detroit Free Press

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• "double negatives"

I ain't seen nothin

• "double negatives"

I ain't seen <u>nothin</u> Ebonics

non ho visto <u>niente</u> *Italian* not I-have seen nothing

ja n^je vid^jel <u>ničevo</u> Russian
I not saw nothing

- "double negatives"
- extremely rich tense system:

He runnin

He be runnin

He be steady runnin

He bin runnin

He BIN runnin

Present progressive

Present habitual progressive

Present intensive habitual

progressive

Present perfect progressive

Present perfect progressive

with remote inception

- "double negatives"
- extremely rich tense system
- rule-governed copula drop:

He is rich ————— He rich

- "double negatives"
- extremely rich tense system
- rule-governed copula drop:

He is rich

I don't know how rich he is

...how rich he

(sentence-final)

- "double negatives"
- extremely rich tense system
- rule-governed copula drop:

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He is rich

I don't know how rich he is ...how rich he

(sentence-final)

I want to be rich

I want to rich (inf.)
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- "double negatives"
- extremely rich tense system
- rule-governed copula drop:

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He is rich

I don't know how rich he is ...how rich he

(sentence-final)

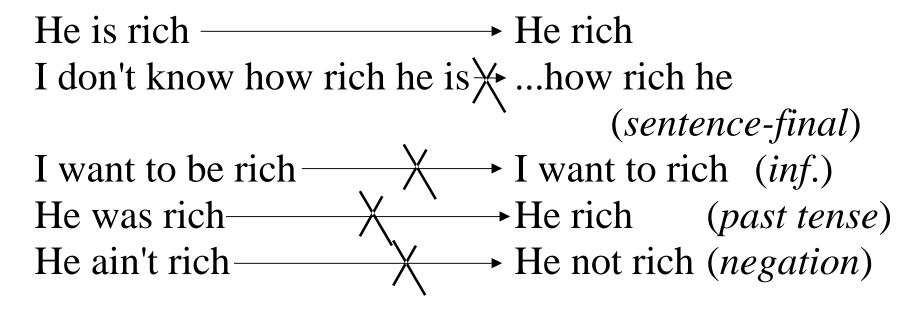
I want to be rich

He was rich

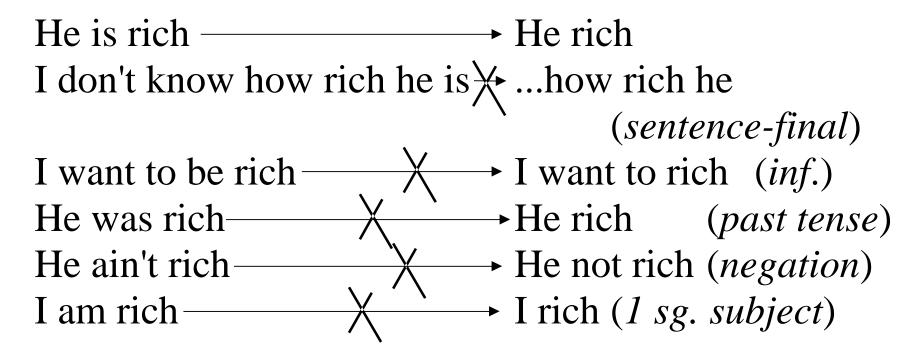
He rich

(past tense)
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- "double negatives"
- extremely rich tense system
- rule-governed copula drop:



- "double negatives"
- extremely rich tense system
- rule-governed copula drop:



- "double negatives"
- extremely rich tense system
- rule-governed copula drop
- rule-governed negative inversion

Can't nobody do it.

*Can't John do it.

...but don't we have to teach Standard English?

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1989, Aurora University (Chicago):

11-week study:

"contrastive" technique

vs. traditional methods

- ...but don't we have to teach Standard English?
- 1989, Aurora University (Chicago):
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 - 59% reduction in Ebonics use
- vs. traditional methods

- ...but don't we have to teach Standard English?
- 1989, Aurora University (Chicago):
- 11-week study:
- "contrastive" technique
 - 59% reduction in Ebonics use
- vs. traditional methods
 - 8.5% increase

Pidgins and Creoles

pidgin: language developed by people encountering each other's languages as adults.

Pidgins and Creoles

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<u>creole</u>: what happens to a pidgin when children learn it as a first language.

Pidgins and Creoles

Tok Pisin (Papua New Guinea)
Papa bilong mipela
yu stap long heven,
mekim nem bilong yu i kamap bikpela.
Mekim kingdom bilong yu i kam....

Jan vann bèf
Jan sell cattle
'Jan sells cattle'

Mwen renmen 1.

I love him/her
'I love him/her'

mwen 'I, me'

ou 'you'

li 'he, she, him, her'

nou 'we, us, you-PL'

yo 'they, them'

mwen manje 'I eat'

ou manje 'you eat'

li manje 'he/she eats'

nou manje 'we, you-PL eat'

yo manje 'they eat'

postnominal determiners

Jan achte liv la
Jan bought book the
'Jan bought the book'

postnominal determiners

Jan achte liv <u>la</u>
Jan bought book the
'Jan bought the book'

Jan achte liv **yo**Jan bought book the-PL
'Jan bought the books'

postnominal determiners

timoun [ki achte liv <u>la</u>] <u>yo</u> child who bought book the the-PL 'the children who bought the book'

postnominal determiners

timoun [ki achte liv <u>la</u>] <u>yo</u> child who bought book the the-PL 'the children who bought the book' ... <u>or</u> 'the child who bought the books'

postnominal determiners

timoun [ki achte liv <u>la</u>] <u>yo</u> child who bought book the the-PL 'the children who bought the book' ... <u>or</u> 'the child who bought the books'

timoun ki achte liv **yo** child who bought book the-PL 'the children who bought the books'

postnominal determiners

timoun [ki achte liv <u>la</u>] <u>yo</u> child who bought book the the-PL 'the children who bought the book' ... <u>or</u> 'the child who bought the books'

*timoun ki achte liv **yo yo** child who bought book the-PL the-PL 'the children who bought the books'

- postnominal determiners
- 'factative effect'

Jan vann bèf
Jan sell cattle
'Jan sells cattle'

Jan vann bèf <u>yo</u>
Jan sell cattle the
'Jan <u>sold the</u> cattle'

Jan ak Sisi Jan with Sisi 'Jan is with Sisi'

- postnominal determiners
- 'factative effect'
- predicate clefting

Se <u>fatige</u> m <u>fatige</u>. Se pale m pale ak li. it's tired I tired it's talk I talk with him 'I'm <u>tired</u>.' 'I <u>talked</u> with him'

Why are creoles different from their "parents" (<u>lexifiers</u>)?

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- UG?
- ordinary language change?
- substrate influence?

<u>Haitian Creole</u> <u>Fongbe</u>

Jan achte liv la Jăn xò wémà ò

Jan bought book the Jan buy book the