Now we're going to apply the same exercise that we just did.

So here what we did, we showed that there is no fundamental difference between [INAUDIBLE] and English, which is [INAUDIBLE] in the history of Haitian and Creole.

Because what we're doing here, we are questioning this notion that Creole formation is something which is very idiosyncratic, which separates Creoles from non-Creoles, in a fundamental sense.

Now what we're going to do, we're going to look at the history of French itself from Latin.

And we're going to ask, so does that history, can it be in any way compared to what happened in the history of Creole.

In fact, what we are going to see is that if we compare Latin and French, in many ways, they show that French also out Creolization Creole.

We're just going to do it very-- In fact, what I'm going to do now is very tendentious.

But I'm warning you that it's tendentious.

When I'm comparing French and Latin is exactly what other linguists do when they compare, say, Haitian Creole to other languages.

They pick a small set of patterns and they say, well, look, these set of patterns make Creole really special.

So now I'm picking these set of patterns I say, which are very fundamental to the grammar of any language, which is the order of words.

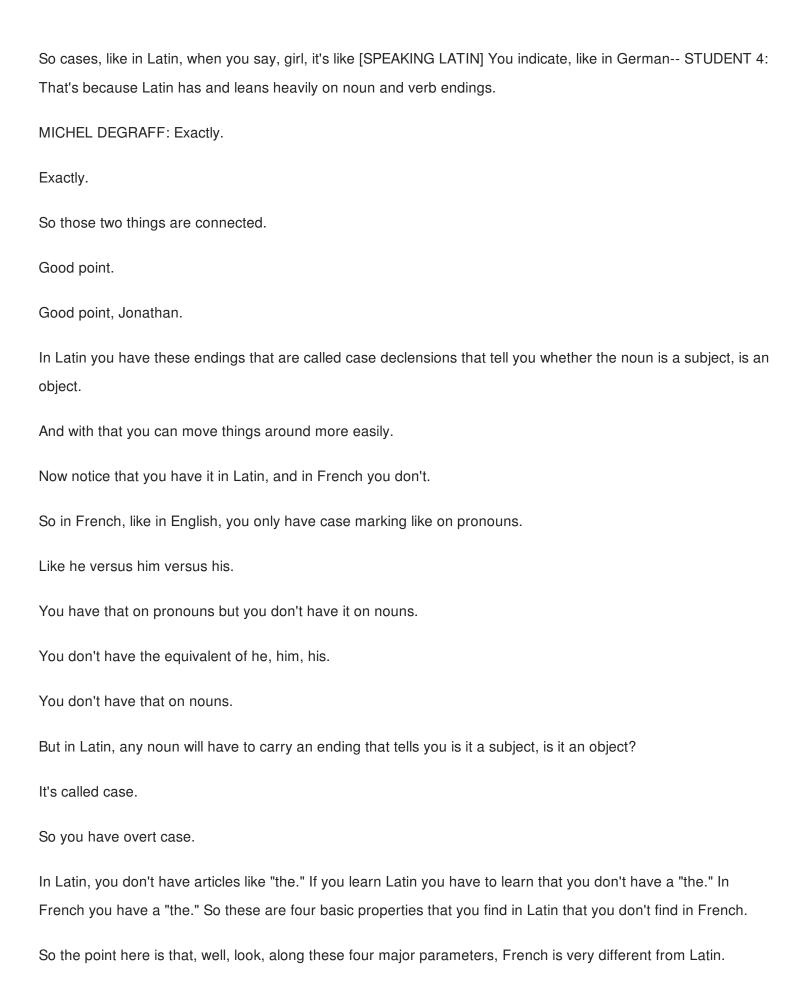So scrambling is a technical term.

Any of you know German?

Who knows German?

You know German.

OK.

So German has this property that you can pronounce-- If you say, I don't know, Mary love pancakes, you can move things around.

You can say pancakes loves Mary.

NICK: The verb has to be in the second position.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: Yeah.

But the argument is can move around.

So the verb has a strict position, but then arguments can move around.

It can come first-- and Latin is of the same nature.

Any you has Latin?

Any of you knows Latin?

[INTERPOSING VOICES] STUDENT 3: It's the same in Arabic too.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: OK.

So many languages have this capacity called [INAUDIBLE] Certain kinds of linguists, like at MIT, would call it scrambling.

It's like scrambled egg.

You can scramble things around.

So you can have a sentence, you have the subject and the object.

And if you have other things like, I don't know, like object.

If you say, John gave a book to Mary, you have three roles in that sentence, the giver, what's being given, what's received what's been given.

And things can move around in this sentence.

They can be scrambled.

Now Latin has that.

You can scramble things around.

Not French.

So cases, like in Latin, when you say, girl, it's like [SPEAKING LATIN] You indicate, like in German-- STUDENT 4: That's because Latin has and leans heavily on noun and verb endings.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: Exactly.

Exactly.

So those two things are connected.

Good point.

Good point, Jonathan.

In Latin you have these endings that are called case declensions that tell you whether the noun is a subject, is an object.

And with that you can move things around more easily.

Now notice that you have it in Latin, and in French you don't.

So in French, like in English, you only have case marking like on pronouns.

Like he versus him versus his.

You have that on pronouns but you don't have it on nouns.

You don't have the equivalent of he, him, his.

You don't have that on nouns.

But in Latin, any noun will have to carry an ending that tells you is it a subject, is it an object?

It's called case.

So you have overt case.

In Latin, you don't have articles like "the." If you learn Latin you have to learn that you don't have a "the." In French you have a "the." So these are four basic properties that you find in Latin that you don't find in French.

So the point here is that, well, look, along these four major parameters, French is very different from Latin.

So if one were to take the kind of words that are used to describe Creole, you would say, well, French has broken

Latin's grammar.

French has broken Latin.

That's what you would have to say because we have four basic properties of Latin that somehow French speakers have lost as they learned to speak Latin and create in French.

Now guess what?

If we take those very same properties and we compare French and Haitian Creole, they are the same.

Canonical order in both languages.

For pronouns, we have a difference of pronouns.

But for full nouns you have the same verb, object order.

Scrambling, French and Creole, we have the same.

Overt case, the same.

Article, the same.

So what does that show?

That at least along these four parameters, Haitian Creole is much better behaved than French.

In fact, if you were to create a degree of Creoleness based on how broken the grammar is, which is often what lay people do often.

They think of Creole as Jamaican Creole is broken English.

Haitian Creole is broken French.

So here, you would have to say then that French is broken Latin.

Actually, there is a very well-known historical linguist called Antoine Meillet.

Antione Meillet was aware of that.

Antione Meillet actually wrote something which I find very striking.

He said that if we compare the Romance languages, not only French, but Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, so they are called the Romance languages.

Actually, I often hear people say they are romantic languages.

They can be romantic, but the technical term is they are Romance, Romance languages.

So those Romance languages, they have structures that are-- actually, he used the term "fundamentally different from their Latin counterparts." So linguists, very smart linguists, are aware of that.

And even say that, this is still Meillet, "All this makes," he called it, "neo-Latin languages fall into a typological class that is quite remote from the structural type of Latin." And that's very clear, right?

I couldn't be any clearer.

So which means that this notion of Creole languages having broken the syntax of their European ancestors is very tendentious because [INAUDIBLE] linguists realized that all languages evolve through these structural breaks, even those that are often presented as prototypical genetic languages.

Meaning that, languages with parents.

Go ahead, Nick.

NICK: Were the Gaulish languages, did they have those features that neo-Latin language?

MICHEL DEGRAFF: That's a very good question.

[INAUDIBLE] Yeah, I don't know about Gaulish language.

That's what you are going to find out.

So how did French develop those patterns?

Is it from the substrate languages, which is like the Gaulish?

That's a very good question.

Yeah, that's exactly what you would want to ask.

Because we know, and in the case of Haitian Creole, not all-- and I want to stress, not all-- but many of the features of Haitian Creole were inherited from the African substrates.

For example, the fact that you have the article after the noun not before the noun, that's straight out from the Gbe languages, which have the same pattern.

So there's a common thread here in the argument.

Those breaks that you see in the history of Creole languages, you also find them in the history of non-Creole languages.

JOSE: Is Afrikaans a Creole?

MICHEL DEGRAFF: That's a very good point.

So there was one linguist who some time ago called Afrikaans a Creole language.

And he got into big trouble because the Afrikaans speak-- is very upset.

JOSE: It's like a Creole, but for Dutch people.

MICHEL DEGRAFF: That's right.

Exactly.

So the Afrikaaners were upset that they dared compared the Afrikaans language to Creole.

Because for them, Afrikaans was a variety of Dutch and it should not be never called Creole.

STUDENT 4: What year was that?

MICHEL DEGRAFF: Oh, that was in the early '80s, I think, early '80s.

But that was a very live discussion, in fact.

At some point there was a linguist who had to step back and say, well, OK, Afrikaans isn't a Creole, it's a semi-Creole.

[LAUGHTER] JOSE: So I guess that's [INAUDIBLE] MICHEL DEGRAFF: Yeah, definitely.

So what I have to add, that linguist, actually, his name is John Holm, the late John Holm, I asked him, how do you measure semi-Creoleness?

How many features must you have to be a semi-Creole?

Which goes back to that question, can you define Creoleness based on a set of features, which is very problematic, actually.