

LIGN177: Multilingualism

October 20, 2009

Pidgins and creoles

Permanent language mixing

- Two types of mixed languages
- A. *Pidgins and creoles* – simpler structure from two or more languages which becomes expanded over time
- B. *Mixed language* - hybrid, complex language mixing elements of two (or more) source languages

Mixed language → pidgin

- a *reduced* language that results from extended contact between groups who have no language in common
- Pidgins are nobody's native language
- Pidginization involves reduction and *simplification* of source languages

Pidgins – social circumstances

- Pidgins usually emerge from more than two languages
- Socio-historical scenario:
 - Pidgins arise in trade situations
 - Pidgins formed in large indentured labor or slave-owning societies

Creole

- a mixed language which has expanded in structure and vocabulary to express the range of meanings and serve the range of functions required of a first language'
- Creoles have native speakers
- Creoles are assumed to grow out of pidgins via expansion and nativization → **creolist hypothesis**

Where are they spoken?

- Pidgins and creoles have formed all over the world, but are particularly concentrated in Africa, the Caribbean, Indian Ocean islands, Micronesia and Melanesia
- Examples:
 - Jamaican Creole (Jamaica)
 - Haitian Creole (Haiti)
 - Tok Pisin (Papua New Guinea)
 - Krio (Sierra Leone)

Atlas of Pidgins and Creole Language Structures

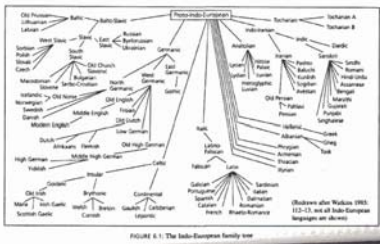


Names of pidgins and creoles

- Creoles are typically formed from one *dominant* language, known as the *superstrate* (i.e. English, French, Portuguese, Arabic) and two or more *subordinate* languages, known as the *substrate*
- The *superstrate* or *lexifier* contributes most of the vocabulary
- Convention is to name the creole after the *superstrate* language: ex. Jamaican Creole English or Juba Pidgin Arabic

Language family trees

- Creoles *do not fit* into *standard language family trees* (Stammbaum model)



Two major classes

- **Pacific** – arose in plantation settings in 19th century with indentured workers
 - creolization process was more gradual
- **Atlantic** – arose in 17th and 18th century in Caribbean and West Africa as a result of the slave trade
 - transition from pidgin to creole was abrupt

Hawaiian Creole English

- Also known as ‘pidgin’
- Formed on plantations in Hawai‘i by speakers of Hawai‘ian, Japanese, Chinese, Ilocano
- Spread to urban areas and now is a mark of Hawai‘ian identity

Atlantic creoles

- Atlantic creoles such as Jamaican, Haitian, Barbadian, Trinidadian, have their origins in the slave trade
- African slaves were kept in trade forts on the West African coast and transported to the Americas
- Ethnic groups were split up to discourage mutiny

Atlantic creoles

- Field slaves had limited contact with European overseers, house slaves had more contact
- Pidgin languages formed as a means of communication between slaves and master and among slaves
- Debate over whether this occurred in African trade forts or on the plantations
- Carribean creoles retain features of African languages

Older theories of creole genesis

- **Universalist**
the speakers of the superstrate deliberately simplified their language to facilitate its understanding - *functional pressure to communicate*
- similar to 'foreigner talk' or 'baby talk' / *no speak English*

Universalist – but..

- the characteristics of creoles are unlike Western European simplified speech
- pidgins were created by the non-native substrate speakers

Older theories of creole genesis

Monogenesis – pidgins and creoles derived from a widespread common ancestor, a 15th century Portuguese pidgin

- a) Portuguese were great explorers - Africa, India, Asia, South America
< Sabir, a medieval lingua franca used in the Mediterranean?
 - b) Nautical terms
kapsaiz 'turn over'
hais 'lift'
- Portuguese words:
save = know < sabir
pikin = child < pequeno

Monogenesis – but...

- Pidgins and creoles are formed through linguistic structures from more than one genetic pool
- Requires massive 'relexification' to account for Dutch/French/English differences

Current theories of genesis

- **1. Substrate hypothesis**
- Pidgins and creoles arose independently but developed in parallel ways because they use common linguistic material and were formed in similar socio-historical situations
- Creolist hypothesis – standard view
- Particularly relevant for the Atlantic Creoles, which have common West African substrate

African features

- **Serial verbs:**

- Ndjuka: a *teke* nefi *koti* a meti

- Nigerian Pidgin: a *tek* nayf *kot* di nyam

- Yoruba: *ó fi òbẹ́ gé ẹran*

- 'He *cut* the meat/yam with a knife'

- **Vocabulary:** *bukra* 'white man' used in Atlantic creoles < Twi, Efik, Igbo *mbakara*

Current theories of genesis

- 2. **Bioprogram hypothesis** – creoles develop based on innate bioprogram for language; due to limited input - child relies on innate knowledge
- Developed by Derek Bickerton (U. of Hawaii)
- Links first language acquisition, evolution of language in humans and creoles
- Main argument: Hawaiian Creole and the Caribbean creoles share features, but had separate source languages and developments

Examples

- Creoles have Subject-verb-object word order
- System of marking tense, mood, aspect
 - 'he is/was walking' 'he had walked'
 - Hawaiian he *stay* walk he *bin* walk
 - Sranan e *a* waka a *ben* waka
 - Haitian l'*ap* maché li *té* maché
- Negation precedes verb ('I no like dat')

Current theories of genesis

- 3. **Superstratist view**
- most of the 'creole' structures originate in the regional 17th century versions of the superstrate
- creoles developed gradually from their respective lexifiers
- Espoused by Robert Chaudenson (the 'French school') and Salikoko Mufwene

Current theories of genesis

- 4. **African monogenesis** (McWhorter 2000) - *African-origin* P/Cs arose in West Africa in trade forts and were transported to Americas.
- Explains major puzzle: Spanish colonies had extensive plantations, but no real Spanish creoles
- 'so-called' Spanish creoles resemble dialectal varieties of Spanish or were historically Portuguese creoles
- Why? Spain had no African colonies, so no trade forts - bought their slaves from slave traders

Examples

- **Krio**, an English-based creole spoken in Sierra Leone