

# An Introduction to Sociolinguistics

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*Second Edition*

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fically on social dialectology. English dialects are the concern of Hughes and Trudgill (1979), Trudgill (1990), Wakelin (1977), and Wells (1982). Joseph (1987) discusses the standardization of languages and Grillo (1989) the dominant positions of Standard English and Standard French. Milroy and Milroy (1985) deals with issues of 'authority' and standardization. Bailey and Görlach (1982), Strevens (1972), and Trudgill and Hannah (1982) discuss the different varieties of English found in various parts of the world. Dorian (1981) discusses language 'death' and Joos (1962) provides an account of stylistic differences.

### 3 Pidgin and Creole Languages

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Among the many languages of the world are a few often assigned to a somewhat marginal position: the various *lingua francas* (or *lingue franche*, the 'learned' plural form), pidgins, and creoles. To the best of our knowledge all have existed since time immemorial, but, in comparison with what we know about 'fully fledged' languages, we know comparatively little about them. There is a paucity of historical records; the history of serious study of such languages goes back only a very few decades; and, because of the circumstances of their use, they have often been regarded as being of little intrinsic value or interest. Until recently, pidgins and creoles have generally been viewed as uninteresting linguistic phenomena, being notable mainly for linguistic features they have been said to 'lack,' e.g., articles, the copula, and grammatical inflections, rather than those they possess, and those who speak them have often been treated with disdain, even contempt.

Hymes (1971, p. 3) has pointed out that before the 1930s pidgins and creoles were largely ignored by linguists, who regarded them as 'marginal languages' at best. (Some linguists were even advised to keep away from studying them lest they jeopardize their careers!) Hymes points out that pidgins and creoles 'are marginal, in the circumstances of their origin, and in the attitudes towards them on the part of those who speak one of the languages from which they derive'. They are also marginal 'in terms of knowledge about them', even though 'these languages are of central importance to our understanding of language, and central too in the lives of some millions of people. Because of their origins, however, their association with poorer and darker members of a society, and through perpetuation of misleading stereotypes . . . most interest, even where positive, has considered them merely curiosities.' He adds that much 'interest and information, scholarly as well as public, has been prejudicial. These languages have been considered, not creative adaptations, but degenerations; not systems in their own right, but deviations from other systems. Their origins have been explained, not by historical and social forces, but by inherent ignorance, indolence, and inferiority.'

Fortunately, in recent years such attitudes have changed and, as serious attention has been given to pidgins and creoles, linguists have discovered many

interesting characteristics about them, characteristics that appear to bear on fundamental issues to do with all languages, 'fully fledged' and 'marginal' alike. The study of pidgins and creoles has become an important part of sociolinguistic study, with its own literature and, of course, its own controversies. To some extent, too, the speakers of such languages have benefited as more and more of them have come to recognize that what they speak is not just a 'bad' variety of this language or that, but a language or a variety of a language with its own legitimacy, i.e., its own history, structure, array of functions, and the possibility of winning recognition as a 'proper' language.

## Lingua Francas

Pidgins and creoles arise from a basic need that people who speak different languages have to find a common system of communication. Such a common system is often called a *lingua franca*. In a publication concerned with the use of vernacular languages in education published in Paris in 1953, UNESCO defined a *lingua franca* as 'a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them'. A variety of other terms can be found which describe much the same phenomenon. Samarin (1968, p. 661) lists four: a *trade language* (e.g., Hausa in West Africa or Swahili in East Africa); a *contact language* (e.g., Greek koinē in the Ancient World); an *international language* (e.g., English throughout much of our contemporary world); and an *auxiliary language* (e.g., Esperanto or Basic English). At one time or another, Greek koinē and Vulgar Latin were in widespread use as lingua francas in the Mediterranean world and much of Europe. Sabir was a lingua franca of the Mediterranean (and later far beyond); originating in the Middle Ages and dating back at least to the Crusades, it survived into the twentieth century. In other parts of the world Arabic, Mandarin, Hindi, and Swahili have served, or do serve, as lingua francas. Of these, Arabic was a lingua franca associated with the spread of Islam. Today, English is used in very many places and for very many purposes as a lingua franca, e.g., in travel and often in trade, commerce, and international relations.

A lingua franca can be spoken in a variety of ways. Although both Greek koinē and Vulgar Latin served at different times as lingua francas in the Ancient World, neither was a homogeneous entity. Not only were they spoken differently in different places, but individual speakers varied widely in their ability to use the languages. English serves today as a lingua franca in many parts of the world: for some speakers it is a native language, for others a

second language, and for still others a foreign language. However, in the last two categories abilities in the language may vary widely from native-like to knowledge of only some bare rudiments. This is certainly the case in India, where even though Hindi is the official language, English, spoken in all kinds of ways, is widely used as a lingua franca. Swahili is a lingua franca of East Africa. On the coast it has long been spoken as a native language. As Swahili spread inland in Tanzania, it was simplified in structure, and even further inland, in Zaïre, it underwent still further simplification. Such simplification was also accompanied by a reduction in function, i.e., the simplified varieties were not used for as many purposes as the fuller variety of the coast. In rural northern parts of Zaïre even more simplification resulted so that the Swahili spoken there became virtually unintelligible to coastal residents. While the existence of this variety demonstrates that Swahili was being used as a lingua franca, what many people were actually using was a pidginized form, Zaïre Pidgin Swahili. In this respect those who used that variety were not unlike many today who use English as a lingua franca: they use local pidginized versions of English, not Standard English. Today, that Zaïre Pidgin English has become a creole, Restructured Swahili, and it is considerably different from the Swahili of the coast (see Holm, 1989, pp. 564–7).

In North America, Chinook Jargon was used extensively as a lingua franca among native peoples of the northwest, from British Columbia into Alaska, during the second half of the nineteenth century. Today Chinook Jargon is virtually extinct. Its vocabulary came from various sources: principally, Nootka, Chinook, Chehalis (all Amerindian languages), French, and English. The sound system tended to vary according to the native language of whoever spoke Chinook Jargon. The grammar, ostensibly Chinook, was extremely reduced so that it is really quite difficult to say with conviction that it is more Chinook than anything else. Even though today hardly anyone can use Chinook Jargon, a few words from it have achieved limited use in English: e.g., *potlach* ('lavish gift-giving'), *cheechako* ('greenhorn'), and possibly *high mucky-muck* ('arrogant official') (see Taylor, 1981). There is an interesting distributional relationship between Chinook Jargon and another lingua franca used widely by native peoples, Plains Sign Language: Chinook Jargon is basically a coastal phenomenon and Plains Sign Language an interior one on the plateau. Hymes (1980, pp. 416–17) has observed that we do not know why the plateau developed a sign language and the coast a jargon. Perhaps the reason was slavery or the amount of slavery. The Chinook held slaves in considerable numbers, mostly obtained by purchases from surrounding peoples, but also secondarily through raiding parties. It seems likely that the slaves learned a reduced form of Chinook and that this reduced form was used between them and their owners. As we will see, it is in observations such as these that we may find clues as to the origin and spread of pidgins and creoles

and come to realize how important social factors have been in their development.

### Discussion

1. A particularly interesting lingua franca is Plains Sign Language used by aboriginal peoples in North America (see Taylor, 1981, for a description of this and other Indian lingua francas). Try to find out in what ways Plains Sign Language may be distinguished from American Sign Language, i.e., the communication system that many deaf people use.
2. Esperanto and Basic English have both been proposed for use as auxiliary languages, i.e., as lingua francas. What advantages are claimed for each? Do you see any disadvantages? (There are numerous other proposals for auxiliary languages, so you might care to extend your inquiry to these too.)

### Pidgins and Creoles: Definitions

A *pidgin* is a language with no native speakers: it is no one's first language but is a *contact language*. That is, it is the product of a multilingual situation in which those who wish to communicate must find or improvise a simple code to enable them to do so. A pidgin is sometimes regarded as a 'reduced' variety of a 'normal' language, with simplification of the grammar and vocabulary of that language, considerable phonological variation, and an admixture of local vocabulary to meet the special needs of the contact group. Holm (1988, pp. 4-5) defines a pidgin as:

a reduced language that results from extended contact between groups of people with no language in common; it evolves when they need some means of verbal communication, perhaps for trade, but no group learns the native language of any other group for social reasons that may include lack of trust or of close contact.

The process of pidginization probably requires a situation that involves at least three languages, one of which is 'dominant' over the others. If only two languages are involved, there is likely to be a direct struggle for dominance, as between English and French in England after 1066, a struggle won in that case by the socially 'inferior' language but only after more than two centuries of

co-existence. When three or more languages are involved and one is dominant, the speakers of the two or more that are inferior appear to play a critical role in the development of a pidgin. They must not only speak to those who are in the dominant position, but they must also speak to each other. To do this, they must simplify the dominant language in certain ways, and this process of simplification may or may not have certain universal characteristics. One may argue, therefore, that a pidgin arises from the simplification of a language when that language comes to dominate groups of speakers separated from each other by language differences. This hypothesis partially explains not only the origin of pidgins in slave societies, in which the slaves were deliberately drawn from a variety of language backgrounds, but also their origin on sea coasts, where a variety of languages might be spoken but the language of trade is a pidgin. It also helps to explain why pidginized varieties of languages are used much more as lingua francas by people who cannot speak the corresponding standard languages than they are used between such people and speakers of the standard varieties. For example, Pidgin Chinese English was used mainly by speakers of different Chinese languages, and Tok Pisin is today used as a unifying language among speakers of many different languages in Papua New Guinea. In both cases few speakers of Standard English ever really mastered the pidgins.

A common view of a pidginized variety of a language, for example, Nigerian Pidgin English, is that it is some kind of 'bad' English, that is, English imperfectly learned and therefore of no possible interest. Consequently, those who speak a pidgin are likely to be regarded as deficient in some way, almost certainly socially and culturally, and sometimes even cognitively. Such a view is quite untenable. Pidgins are not a kind of 'baby-talk' used among adults because the 'simplified' forms are the 'best' that such people can manage. Pidgins have their own special rules, and, as we will see, very different pidgins have a number of similarities that raise important theoretical issues having to do both with the kind of origin we have so far ascribed to them and with the human capacity for language acquisition. Individual pidgins may be ephemeral, e.g., the pidgin German of the *Gastarbeiters* ('guest-workers') in Germany that developed in the 1970s and 1980s in cities such as Berlin and Frankfurt among workers from countries such as Turkey, Greece, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. The phenomenon itself however is persistent and between 2 and 12 million people in the world are estimated to use one or other of them. Furthermore, they are used for matters which are very important to those concerned, even self-government in Papua New Guinea. They are highly functional in the lives of those who use them and are important for that reason alone if for no other.

In contrast to a pidgin, a *creole*, often defined as a pidgin that has become the first language of a new generation of speakers, is a 'normal' language in

almost every sense. A creole has native speakers. However, just like a pidgin, a creole has no simple relationship to the usually standardized language with which it is associated. If a variety of pidgin English has a complex relationship to Standard English, so Haitian Creole, which is French-based, has a complex relationship to Standard French. As we will see, the latter relationship is quite different in still another way from the relationship between Jamaican Creole, which is English-based, and Standard English. However, speakers of creoles, like speakers of pidgins, may well feel that they speak something less than 'normal' languages because of the way they and others view the language they speak compared with languages such as French and English. The result is that the many millions of people who speak almost nothing but creole languages – the estimates range from a low of 6–7 million to as many as 10–17 million – are likely to feel a great sense of inferiority about their languages. In fact, as mentioned above, it was only very recently that linguists themselves – those who try to be most objective and least oriented toward making value judgments on linguistic matters – have found creoles worthy of serious scholarly attention.

If we look at the actual processes involved in pidginization and creolization, we can see that they are almost diametrically opposed to each other in certain important ways. Pidginization generally involves some kind of 'simplification' of a language, e.g., reduction in morphology (word structure) and syntax (grammatical structure), tolerance of considerable phonological variation (pronunciation), reduction in the number of functions for which the pidgin is used (e.g., you usually do not attempt to write novels in a pidgin), and extensive borrowing of words from local mother-tongues. On the other hand, creolization involves expansion of the morphology and syntax, regularization of the phonology, deliberate increase in the number of functions in which the language is used, and development of a rational and stable system for increasing vocabulary. But even though the processes are different, it is still not always clear whether we are talking about a pidgin or a creole in a certain situation. For example, the terms *Hawaiian Pidgin English* and *Hawaiian Creole English* may be used by even the same creolist (Bickerton, 1977, 1983) to describe the same variety. Likewise, Tok Pisin is sometimes called a pidgin and sometimes a creole.

Recognizing how difficult it is to achieve agreement on what exactly constitutes pidgins and creoles, DeCamp (1977, pp. 4–5) has offered descriptions of what he regards as 'clear-cut' examples of one of each of these. He says that:

Everyone would agree that the Juba Arabic spoken in the southern Sudan is a pidgin. In most communities it is not the native language of any of its

speakers but functions as an auxiliary interlingua for communication between speakers of the many mutually unintelligible languages spoken in that region. It is a new language, only about a hundred years old. It has a small vocabulary, limited to the needs of trade and other interlingual communication, but this restricted vocabulary is supplemented, whenever the need arises, by using words from the various native languages or from normal Arabic. It has a very simple phonology with few morpho-phonemic processes. The complicated morphological system of Arabic (which includes, for example, suffixes on the verb to indicate tense, negation, and the person, number, and gender of both the subject and the direct and indirect objects) has been almost entirely eliminated. Such grammatical information is indicated by word order, by separate uninflected pronouns or auxiliaries, or else is simply missing. Yet Juba Arabic is a relatively stable language in its own right, with its own structure, not just half-learned or baby-talk Arabic. It is easier for an Arabic speaker to learn than for an English speaker, but the Arabic speaker still must learn it as a foreign language; he cannot simply improvise it.

Similarly, everyone agrees that the vernacular language of Haiti is a creole. It is the native language of nearly all Haitians, though standard French is also spoken by some people and is the official language, and one also hears many varieties intermediate between the standard and the creole. Historically it probably evolved from pidginized varieties of French at the time when these began to be acquired as a native language. Because it is a native language and must perform a wide range of communicative and expressive functions, it has an extensive vocabulary and complex grammatical system comparable to that of a so-called normal language. In fact, scholars disagree on whether there are any formal characteristics by which we could identify Haitian as a creole if we did not know its history. Although its vocabulary is largely French, the phonology and syntax are so different that most varieties are mutually unintelligible with standard French. In some ways its grammatical structure is more similar to creole Portuguese, creole Spanish, and even to creole English than to standard French, and most creolists object to calling it a dialect of French.

These two descriptions succinctly describe most of the defining features of pidgins and creoles. I will turn to some of these feature in more detail in the following section and discuss some of the implications of others in succeeding sections.

### Discussion

1. If someone told you that pidginized varieties of a language are 'corrupt' and 'ungrammatical', and indicated that their speakers are either 'lazy' or 'inferior', how might you try to show that person how wrong he or she is? What kinds of evidence would you use?
2. The 'stripped-down' nature of pidgins has led them to being called 'reduced' or 'minimal' languages. They have even been compared to forms of 'baby-talk'. A different view is that they are 'optimal' communication systems, perfectly appropriate to the circumstances of their use. Do you see any merit in this latter view?
3. While there is little dispute about the origin of the term 'creole' when used to describe a type of language, there is some dispute about the origin of the term 'pidgin'. What can you find out about the origins of the two terms, particularly about the origin of the latter (see especially Todd, 1974, pp. 20–6 and Romaine, 1988, pp. 12–13)?

### Geographical Distribution and Linguistic Characteristics

Pidgin and creole languages are distributed mainly, though not exclusively, in the equatorial belt around the world, usually in places with direct or easy access to the oceans. Consequently, they are found mainly in the Caribbean and around the north and east coasts of South America, around the coasts of Africa, particularly the west coast, and across the Indian and Pacific Oceans. They are fairly uncommon in the more extreme northern and southern areas of the world and in the interiors of continents. Their distribution appears to be fairly closely related to long-standing patterns of trade, including trade in slaves. Such varieties of language also tend to be associated with dark skins and membership for their speakers in the Third World community of nations, to use what has become standard late twentieth-century terminology. A basic source on their distribution is Hancock (1977), a survey that was intended to list each language that had been treated as either a pidgin or a creole whether or not Hancock himself agreed with the classification. The list includes Maltese and Hindi for example, languages which Hancock believes should not be included. Another more recent source is Holm (1989).

Hancock lists 127 pidgins and creoles. Thirty-five of these are said to be English-based. These include such languages as Hawaiian Creole, Gullah or Sea

Islands Creole (spoken on the islands off the coasts of northern Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina), Jamaican Creole, Guyana Creole, Krio (spoken in Sierra Leone), Sranan and Djuka (spoken in Suriname), Cameroon Pidgin English, Tok Pisin, and Chinese Pidgin English (now virtually extinct). Another fifteen are said to be French-based, e.g., Louisiana Creole, Haitian Creole, Seychelles Creole, and Mauritian Creole. Unlike English-based creoles, French-based creoles (both Caribbean and Pacific varieties) are mutually intelligible. Fourteen others are listed as Portuguese-based, e.g., Papiamentu (used in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao), Guiné Creole, Senegal Creole, and Saramaccan (spoken in Suriname); seven are Spanish-based, e.g., Cocoliche (spoken by Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires); five are Dutch-based, e.g., US Virgin Islands Dutch Creole (or Negerhollands), now virtually extinct, and Afrikaans (creolized in the seventeenth century); three are Italian-based, e.g., Asmara Pidgin (spoken in parts of Ethiopia); six are German-based, e.g., Yiddish and Gastarbeiter Deutsch; and the rest are based on a variety of other languages, e.g., Russenorsk (a Russian–Norwegian contact language, now extinct), Chinook Jargon (a virtually extinct contact language of the Pacific Northwest of the United States and Canada), Sango (extensively used in the Central African Republic), various pidginized forms of Swahili (a Bantu language) used widely in East Africa, and varieties of Hindi, Bazaar Malay (a variety of Malay in widespread use throughout Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia), and Arabic. Of the one hundred-plus attested living pidgins and creoles, the majority are apparently based on one or other of the European languages, although several, e.g. Chinook Jargon and Sango, show little or no contact with a European language. We will see that this lack of contact is an important factor when considering the possible origins of pidgins and creoles or attempting to form hypotheses to account for their various shared characteristics.

The Caribbean area is of particular interest to creolists because of the many varieties of language found there. There are countries or areas that are almost exclusively Spanish-speaking and have no surviving pidgins or creoles as a result of their settlement histories, e.g., the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. Others have only English-based creoles, e.g., Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, and Guyana. Still others have only French-based ones, e.g., Martinique, Guadeloupe, St Lucia, and Haiti. Some have both, e.g., Dominica and Trinidad. Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao have Portuguese-based creoles, and one, the US Virgin Islands, has a virtually extinct Dutch-based creole. The official language in each case can be quite different: it is English in all of the above except Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Haiti, where it is French, and Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, where it is Dutch. In the southern United States, there are different versions of French in Louisiana (Louisiana Creole, the Cajun French of Acadians from Nova Scotia, and even a very little Standard

French), Gullah, and the variety of English now often referred to as Black English (which, I should add, has also become a noticeable phenomenon of the northern industrial states as blacks have migrated north from the various parts of the South).

Suriname, the former Dutch Guiana, a country on the northeast coast of South America, is particularly interesting linguistically. The official language of Suriname is Dutch, but that language is the native tongue of less than 2 percent of the population. However, two English-based creoles, Sranan and Djuka, are spoken. Sranan, spoken in the coastal areas, is said to be a 'conservative' English creole that bears little resemblance any more to English. Inland, Djuka, the most important of a group of creoles known collectively as 'Bush Negro', is descended from a pidginized variety of English used by runaway slaves. It is a creole, but it is also found in pidginized varieties among the native Indians of the interior of Suriname for whom it has become a lingua franca. Also found in inland Suriname is another creole, Saramaccan, which is sometimes regarded as Portuguese-based and sometimes as English-based. It seems to have been undergoing a process which we will refer to as *relexification* (see p. 75), when those who spoke it were cut off from contact with England after England ceded the colony to Holland in 1667.

The language distribution of this whole Caribbean area reflects its social and political history. That is the only way you can explain why a French-based creole is spoken in St Lucia, which now has English as its official language; why the former island of Hispaniola contains both the Spanish-speaking Dominican Republic and the French-creole-speaking Haiti; why the people of Dutch Curaçao speak Papiamentu, which is a Portuguese-based creole (or perhaps Portuguese with a little Spanish, there being some controversy on this matter); and why Suriname, officially Dutch-speaking, has two (or perhaps three) English-based creoles.

Other parts of the world are no less complicated linguistically. Sierra Leone has both pidginized and creolized Englishes. The pidgin is West African Pidgin English, widely used as a trading language in West Africa and to that extent indigenous to the country. The creole, Krio, is found in and around the capital, Freetown, and appears to have originated among the slaves who returned to Africa from Jamaica and Britain. It is not a creolized version of West African Pidgin English. In addition, Standard English is spoken in Freetown but with two norms, one deriving from the British Isles and the other locally based. Consequently, it is possible in Freetown to hear even the simplest of propositions expressed in a variety of ways according to who is speaking and the occasion: Standard (British) English, Standard Sierra Leone English, Krio, and West African Pidgin English.

In describing the linguistic characteristics of a pidgin or creole it is difficult to resist the temptation to compare it with the standard language with which it

is associated. In certain circumstances such a comparison may make good sense, as in the linguistic situations in Jamaica and Guyana; in others, however, it seems to make little sense, as in Haiti. In the brief discussion that follows some such comparisons will be made, but they are not meant to be invidious to the pidgin or creole. Each pidgin or creole is a well-organized linguistic system and must be treated as such: you cannot speak Tok Pisin by just 'simplifying' English quite arbitrarily: you will be virtually incomprehensible to those who actually do speak it, nor will you comprehend them. You will instead be using *Tok Masta*, a term used by Papua New Guineans to describe the attempt which certain anglophones make to speak Tok Pisin. To use Tok Pisin properly you have to learn it, just as you must learn German or Chinese in order to speak these languages properly; you might find Tok Pisin easier to learn than those two languages, but that is another matter, something of the same order as being likely to find German easier to learn than Chinese.

The sounds of a pidgin or creole are likely to be fewer and less complicated in their possible arrangements than those of the corresponding standard language. For example, Tok Pisin makes use of only five basic vowels and also has fewer consonants than English. No contrast is possible between words like *it* and *eat*, or *pin* and *fin*, or *sip*, *ship*, and *chip*: the necessary vowel and consonant distinctions (contrasts) are not present. Speakers of Tok Pisin distinguish a ship from a sheep by calling the first a *sip* and the second a *sipsip*. It is also because of the lack of the /p/-/f/ distinction that some written versions of Tok Pisin record certain words with *p* spellings, whereas others record the same words with *f* spellings. So far as speakers of Tok Pisin are concerned, it does not make any difference if you say *wanpela* or *wanfela* ('one'); you will be judged to have said the words in the same way, any difference being no more important to speakers of Tok Pisin than the difference to us between typical North American and British English pronunciations of the middle consonant in *butter*. While the numbers of sounds used in pidgins and creoles may be smaller than in the corresponding standard languages, they also tend to 'vary' more as to their precise quality.

One additional point is worth stressing. A language like English often has complicated phonological relationships between words (or *morphemes*, the small bits of meaning in words) that are closely related, e.g., the first vowel in *type* and *typical*, the *c* in *space* and *spacious*, and the different sounds of the 'plural' ending in *cats*, *dogs*, and *boxes*. The technical term for this is *morphophonemic variation*. Such variation is not found in pidgins, but the development of such variation may be one characteristic of *creolization*, the process by which a pidgin becomes a creole.

In pidgins and creoles there is almost a complete lack of inflection in nouns, pronouns, verbs, and adjectives. Nouns are not marked for number and gender, and verbs lack tense markers. Transitive verbs, that is, verbs that take

objects, may, however, be distinguished from intransitive verbs, that is, those that do not take objects, by being marked, e.g., by a final *-im* in Tok Pisin. Pronouns will not be distinguished for case, so there will be no *I-me*, *he-him* alternations. In Tok Pisin *me* is either 'I' or 'me'. The equivalent of 'we' is either *mipela* ('I and other(s) but not you') or *yumi* ('I and you'). *Yu* is different from *yupela* ('singular' versus 'plural'), and *em* ('he', 'she', or 'it') is distinguished from *ol* ('they' or 'them'). In Tok Pisin there are few required special endings on words, and two of these are actually homophones: *-pela*, a suffix on adjectives, as in *wanpela man* ('one man'), and *-pela*, a plural suffix on pronouns, as in *yupela* ('you plural'). Another is *-im*, the transitive suffix marker on verbs that is mentioned above.

We should not be surprised that there is such a complete reduction of inflection in pidgins. Differences like *one book-two books*, *he bakes-he baked*, and *big-bigger* are quite expendable. No one seems to have any interest in maintaining them, and alternative ways are found to express the same concepts of number, time, and comparison. In contrast, we should note how important inflectional endings and changes are in a language like English, particularly irregular ones such as *go-went*, *good-better*, and *drink, drank, drunk*. They are used as one of the indicators of regional and social origin. Which set of inflections you acquire is almost entirely an accident of birth, but if it is not the socially preferred set the accident can prove to be a costly one. Pidgins do comfortably without inflections, but it is not surprising that some people view their absence as a sign of deficiency and inferiority in both languages and speakers in much the same way as they view acquisition of a set which is dispreferred.

Syntactically, sentences are likely to be uncomplicated in clausal structure. The development of embedded clauses, e.g., of relative clauses, is one characteristic of the process of creolization: pidgins do not have such embedding. The use of particles, that is, usually small isolated words, is also quite frequent. Negation may be achieved through use of a simple negative particle *no* in the English-based Krio, e.g., *i no tu had* ('it's not too hard') and *pa* in the French-based Seychelles Creole, e.g., *i pa tro difisil* ('It's not too difficult'). One particularly interesting feature is the use of particles to show that an action is continuing, i.e., to show 'continuous aspect'. We can see this in the use of *de*, *ape*, and *ka* in the following examples taken respectively from English, French, and Portuguese creoles: *a de go wok* ('I'm going to work' in Krio); *mo ape travaj* ('I'm working' in Louisiana French); and *e ka nda* ('He's going' in St Thomas). What we can see from even these few examples is that creoles associated with quite different standard languages apparently use identical syntactic devices. This phenomenon has intrigued many creolists and, as we will see in the following section, has led to the formulation of certain hypotheses about the origins of pidgins and creoles.

The vocabulary of a pidgin or a creole has a great many similarities to that of the standard language with which it is associated. However, phonological and morphological simplification often leads to words assuming somewhat different shapes. As noted above in the example of *sip* and *sipsip*, it is sometimes necessary to use this *reduplicative* pattern to avoid possible confusion or to express certain concepts, e.g., 'repetition' or 'intensification'. Consequently, we find pairs like *talk* ('talk') and *talktalk* ('chatter'), *dry* ('dry') and *drydry* ('unpalatable'), *look* ('look') and *looklook* ('stare'), *cry* ('cry') and *crycry* ('cry continually'), *pis* ('peace') and *pispis* ('urinate'), and *san* ('sun') and *sansan* ('sand'). Certain concepts require a somewhat elaborate encoding: for example, in Tok Pisin 'hair' is *gras bilong het*, 'beard' is *gras bilong fes*, 'feathers' is *gras bilong pisin*, and 'moustache' is *gras bilong maus*, and 'my car' is *ka bilong me* and 'bird's wing' is *han bilong pisin*. A pidgin or creole may draw on the vocabulary resources of more than one language. Tok Pisin draws primarily from English but also from Polynesian sources, e.g., *kaikai* ('food'), and even German, because of historical reasons, e.g., *rausini* ('throw out' from the German *heraus*, 'outside'). The source may not always be a 'polite' one, e.g., *bagarap* ('break down') is from the English *bugger up*. So *ka bilong mi i bagarap* is 'My car broke down.' In examples like *pikinini man* ('boy' or 'son'), *pikinini meri* ('girl' or 'daughter'), *pikinini dok* ('puppy'), and *pikinini pik* ('piglet'), we can see not only the process of showing 'diminutives' through this use of *pikinini* but also a connection to Portuguese *pequeno* ('little') through that word. In the Caribbean, there is also often a noticeable African element in the vocabulary (e.g., see Turner, 1949, on Gullah).

## Discussion

1. Pidgins and creoles have been said to have 'the grammar of one language and the vocabulary of another'. In what sense is such a statement true, false, or a bit of both?
2. Examine the following example of British Solomon Islands Pidgin (from Trudgill, 1983b, p. 180) with its English gloss. Describe as many of its grammatical features as you can.

Mifelə i-go go ləŋ solwater, lukautim fiš, nau win i-kəm. Nau mifelə i-go ələbaut ləŋ kimú, nau bigfelə win i-kəm nau, mifelə i-fafasi ələbautə, rəŋ tuməs.

We kept going on the sea, hunting for fish, and a wind arose. Now we were going in canoes, and an immense wind arose now, and we were thrown around and were moving very fast.

3. Mühlhäusler (1982, pp. 462–3) offers the following two versions of Mark 5: 1–5, one in Tok Pisin and the other in Solomon Islands Pidgin. (On p. 463 he gives a third version in New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) Bichelamar.) Compare these versions to each other and to the original. According to Mühlhäusler it takes a speaker of the Solomon Islands variety about three months to master Tok Pisin. What kinds of differences appear to account for this?

#### Tok Pisin

Ol i kamap long hapsait bilong raunwara, long graun bilong ol Gerasa. Em i lusim bot pinis, na kwiktaim wanpela man i gat spirit doti i stap long en, em i kam painim Jisas. Dispela man i stap nabaut long ples matmat na i kam. Em i save slip long ples matmat. Na i no gat wanpela man inap long pasim: em. Sen tu i no inap. Planti raim ol i bin pasim em long hankap na sen. Tasol em i save brukim sen na hankap tu. Em i strongpela tumas, na i no gat man inap long holim pas em. Oltaim long san na long nait em i stap long matmat na long maunten. Na em i save singaut nogut na katim skin bilong em yet long ston. [*Tok Pisin Nupela Testamen*, Canberra and Port Moresby: The British and Foreign Bible Society, 1969]

#### Solomon Islands Pidgin English

Bihaen olketa i go long narasaet long big wata Galili. Desfala haf ia olketa i go soa long hem, i haf bulong oketa pipol long Gerasa. Steretwe taem Jisas i go soa, wanfala man wea i stap long berigiraon i kamaot fo mitim hem. Desfala man ia devol nogud i stap long hem. Ples bulong hem nao long berigiraon. Bikos hem i karangege tumas, no man i save taemapim. Plande taem olketa i hankapem han an lek bulong hem, bat hem i smasing olgeta nomoa. No man i storong fitim fo holem. De an naet hem i no save stap kwait. Hem i waka long go olabaot long melewan berigiraon an olketa hil. Hem i waka tu long singaot karangege an katem bodi bulong hem wetem ston. [From an unpublished translation by T. Faifu under the auspices of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and United and South Seas Evangelical Church]

4. The Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe uses local varieties of English in his novels. The following extract is from *A Man of the People* (1975a, pp. 14–15). What characteristics of pidgins and creoles do you find in it?

The same man who had drawn our attention to the Minister's humility was now pointing out yet another quality. I looked at him closely for the first time and noticed that he had one bad eye – what we call a cowrie-shell eye.

'You see how e de do as if to say money be san-san,' he was saying. 'People wey de jealous the money gorment de pay Minister no sabi say no be him one de chop am. Na so so troway.'

Later on in the Proprietor's Lodge I said to the Minister: 'You must have spent a fortune today.'

He smiled at the glass of cold beer in his hand and said:

'You call this spend? You never see some thing, my brother. I no de keep anini for myself, na so so troway. If some person come to you and say "I wan' make you Minister" make you run like blazes comot. Na true word I tell you. To God who made me.' He showed the tip of his tongue to the sky to confirm the oath. 'Minister de sweet for eye but too much katakata de for inside. Believe me yours sincerely.'

'Big man, big palaver,' said the one-eyed man.

It was left to Josiah, owner of a nearby shop-and-bar to sound a discordant, if jovial, note.

'Me one,' he said, 'I no kuku mind the katakata wey de for inside. Make you put Minister money for my hand and all the wahala on top. I no mind at all.'

Everyone laughed. Then Mrs John said:

'No be so, my frien'. When you done experience rich man's trouble you no fit talk like that again. My people get one proverb: they say that when poor man done see with him own eye how to make big man e go beg make e carry him poverty de go je-je.'

5. Hall (1966, p. 157) cites the following utterances from the French-based Dominican Creole (from Taylor, 1951a). He employs a *phonemic* (i.e., broad phonetic) writing system. What parts of the creole are French, and what are not? Would the use of a spelling system based on Standard French (rather than this kind of spelling) make these sentences easier to comprehend, or would it suggest similarities that are not really there? What might such a spelling look like in this case? You might compare responses of people who know some French with those who do not in answering the preceding questions.

mun sot.  
nu fē

People [are] stupid.  
We [are] hungry.

u pa-las sottiz. per esit. u se-madam li. ri duvā plere deyer. parol ā-buš pa-šay.	You [are] not tired [of] stupidity. [The] priest [is] here. You are his wife. Laughter ahead, weeping behind. Words in [the] mouth [are] not [a] load [ <i>that is</i> , Fine talk is no guarantee of deeds or intentions].
nu gade jo. jo gade nu. pa-pale sot. žordī mwē malad. i-pa-ākor malad āpil. i-pa malad āpil ākor. i-ramase jo a-ter. mwē ba žanin sĕk predjal pu-i- gāje pē ba mwē.	We looked at them. They looked at us. Don't talk nonsense! Today I [am] sick. He (she) [is] not yet very sick. He (she) [is] no longer very sick. He picked them up off [the] ground. I gave Jeannine five 'predials' [15 cents] for her [to] buy bread for me.
ba mwē i vit. u ža di mwē listwer sa. jo vini esit kote mwē. es jo maše?	Give it to me quickly. You already told me that story. They came here beside me. [Did] they walk? [Have] they walked?
pući u pa-vini ā-travaj ijer?	Why didn't you come to work yesterday?
mwē te-ni mal dā. se-su u te-su. nu prā šimē par bwa, se-la solej kuše nu.	I had tooth-ache. It's drunk you were! We took [the] path by [the] woods, it's there [the] sun laid us [down] [ <i>that is</i> , It's there darkness over- took us].
šjē epi šat pa-ka-dakor. tu-le-žu kalbas kaj laivjer, jō i-ni pu-recte la.	Dogs and cats don't agree. Every day [a, the] calabash goes [to the] river, one day it has to remain there.

6. Webster (1960) cites the following as an example of Korean Bamboo English, a pidginized variety of English that flourished for a brief while during the Korean War in the early 1950s. He cautions as follows (p. 261): 'I would surmise it was written by a relatively sophisticated soldier', and 'is a good bit more fluent than the general speech used in talking to Koreans'. Is this a typical pidgin? (Certain words are glossed for you.)

*The Story of Cinderella-San*

<sup>ㅏㅑㅓ</sup> <sup>ㅕㅗㅛ</sup> <sup>ㅜㅝㅞ</sup>  
 Taksan years ago, skoshi [little] Cinderella-san lived in hootchie [house] with sisters, poor little Cinderella-san ketchee no fun, have-no social life. Always washee-washee, scrubee-scrubee, make chop-chop [food]. One day Cinderella-san sisters ketchee post cardo from Seoul. Post cardo speakie so: one prince-san have big blowout, taksan [big] kimchi [Korean food], taksan beeru, play 'She Ain't Go No Yo Yo'. Cindy-san sisters taksan excited, make Cinderella-san police up clothes.

Sisters go blackmarket, ketchee fatigues, new combat boots, bring to hootchie and Cinderella-san cut down fatigues, shine-shine boots. Come night of big shindig, sisters speak sayonara, leave Cindy-san by fire.

Eiiii . . . is appearing fairy Godmother-san. She speak: 'Cindy-san, worry hava-no, I ketchee you number one outfit and you go to hoedown number one prince.' Godmother-san speak Cindy-san ketchee one mouse and one mouse-trap. Godmother-san waving wand and mouse-trap and mouse becoming streamlined oxcart. Then wave wand again one time and old rubber shoes changee into polished Corcoran jump boots. 'Meda-meda [look],' say Cindy-san. 'Number one.'

'One thing, kiddee,' speak fairy Godmother-san, 'knock it off by 2400. I gotta get these clothes back to QM warehouse.'

'Hokay,' speak Cindy-san, taksan happy, and rush off to Seoul to hootchie of number one prince. Cindy-san ketchee big hit at barn dance. All rest jo-sans [girls] bags by Cindy-san. Number one prince is on make, ketchee beeru and Spam sandwiches for Cindy-san and dance to 'I Ain't Got No Yo Yo' eight times.

Suddenly clock starts to strike 2400. Cindy-san has skoshi time, can speak only sayonara to number one prince before chogeying [going] to oxcart pool to go home. She hubba-hubba [hurry] home but lose Corcoran jump boot. Time to stop hava-no and number one prince ketchee.

Next day big bulletin go out: Number-one prince meda-meda for jo-san who has foot to fit Corcoran jump boot, ketchee and marry, make number one jo-san in Korea.

Prince try taksan feet in boot – all time no fit. Finally come to hootchie of Cinderella-san. Sisters all shook up, sit and giggle on straw mat as prince tries on number twelve feet.

'Never hatchie,' he speak. 'Who is jo-san who do washee-washee?' Sisters laugh. 'Ugly Cinderella-san,' they speak. 'Nevah hoppen [impossible].' 'What to lose,' speak Prince. 'Edewa [come] shipsho [hurry] bali-bali [quick] ugly jo-san.'

Cindy-san grins. She ketchee five aces in this deal, all time know jump boot fit. Boot slide on skoshi foot with number one fit.

'Kid, you dai jobu [OK],' he speak. 'Come on my house, be number one princess.'

'Sayonara, old bags,' speak Cindy-san to sisters, and go home with number one prince. Taksan happy ever after.

## Theories of Origin

Linguists who have studied pidgins and creoles have long been intrigued by the similarities they have found among them. Pidgins from very different parts of the world exhibit remarkable similarities in structure even when the standard languages with which they are associated are quite different. Furthermore, pidgins and creoles based on the same standard language but found in places far distant from one another may have a high degree of mutual intelligibility, e.g., the various pidginized and creolized varieties of French found geographically as far apart as the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, and the South Pacific. How can we account for these similarities?

One theory about the origins of pidgins is easily dismissed. This is the idea that pidgins arise because the people among whom they are found lack the ability to learn the standard languages with which the pidgins are associated. Such a view may sometimes be associated with another one, that European languages are somehow 'better' than others and that many people speak 'primitive' languages, i.e., languages that are 'deficient' in certain respects. Such deficiencies may then be cited as evidence that the people themselves are inferior. We must note that linguists have been unable to locate a single such 'primitive language', that claims about associated intellectual deficiencies are largely 'racist', and that this theory about the origins of pidgins ignores many important facts. Pidgins arise as contact languages under very special social circumstances.

There is no evidence either for any 'foreigner-talk' or 'baby-talk' theory (see Bloomfield 1933, pp. 472-3) for the origin of pidgins and creoles, i.e., that they result from Europeans deliberately simplifying their languages in order to communicate with others. According to this theory, these simplified forms then serve to provide pidgins with their basic structures and vocabularies. There are too many structural similarities among pidgins and creoles associated with very different European languages to make such a theory of origin plausible, e.g., between the English-based creole of Jamaica and the French-based one of Haiti. If there is evidence of simplification, it is evidence of some

very different process at work than any kind of 'talking down', 'baby-talk', or 'mimicry' can explain. Moreover, pidgins are far less frequently used between Europeans and non-Europeans than among non-Europeans. In fact, many Europeans who must deal regularly with pidginized varieties of their languages speak them very badly indeed, failing to understand some of the basic structural characteristics of the pidgins. Finally, there is plenty of evidence that it is Europeans who learn the pidgins from non-Europeans rather than the opposite, although the use of so much European vocabulary may tend to conceal that fact.

Pidgins are not imperfectly learned standard languages, the imperfections in learning arising from lack of either the ability or the opportunity to learn the standard varieties thoroughly; nor are they the consequence of very simple processes of simplification. What is more, all pidgins apparently share some of the same features, no matter which languages they are based on. The 'foreigner-talk' or 'baby-talk' theory fails to offer an adequate account of these similarities.

Another view concerning any similarities that are found is that these owe their origin to an African *sub-stratum*; that is, pidgins and creoles retain certain characteristics of ancestral African languages. According to this explanation, African slaves were often multilingual, spoke languages of similar structure but different vocabulary, and tended to treat English, French, and Portuguese in the same way. In this view the pidgins and creoles are European-language-based and were freshly created in different places; what similarities they have they owe to this common African element. Bickerton (1977, pp. 61-2) has argued that it cannot be the case that pidgins and creoles owe their similarities to influences from African languages. He maintains that the sub-stratum theory really does not account for the similarities that exist among pidgins and creoles since it is impossible to trace certain basic similarities back to an African source, e.g., the characteristic creole tense-aspect system for verbs. Moreover, the theory fails to explain how, from among the many different African languages which were represented in the slave groups brought to the Americas, one particular group of African languages appears to have had more linguistic influence than any other. But to Bickerton the most decisive counter-evidence is provided by creoles such as the one found in Hawaii, which contain many of the same features that all other pidgins and creoles possess yet lack any connection at all with an African source. Therefore, some other explanation than the sub-stratum one is necessary.

An alternative theory, the theory of *polygenesis*, is that pidgins and creoles have a variety of origins; any similarities among them arise from the shared circumstances of their origins. For example, speakers of English have had to make themselves understood for the purposes of trade and those trading with

them have had to be understood. Consequently, certain simplified forms of English have developed independently in a number of places, giving rise to varieties of pidgin English. Because in every case the target language is English, these local varieties will have certain similarities. In this view a 'pidgin X' or 'creolized Y' is a variety of X or Y, much as Cockney English is a variety of English.

A polygenesis theory of origin is behind the work of a number of creolists, particularly Hall (1966). It also leads certain linguists to treat the data from various pidgins and creoles by means of the *comparative method*, which is used widely in historical linguistics, and to make hypotheses concerning *proto-pidgins*, i.e., the 'original' pidgins from which those that we observe concurrently may be said to be derived, just as French, Spanish, and Italian may be said to derive from Latin. However, it does leave some very important questions quite unanswered, questions which a number of linguists today regard as crucial in understanding the development of pidgins and creoles.

A number of linguists believe that, while a polygenesis theory of origin and the comparative method might appear to work if you consider data from only a single group of related languages, if you look at 'pidgin X' and 'pidgin Y', that is, at two pidgins (or creoles) associated with unrelated languages, you must ask yourself: Why do such pidgins share so many similarities? These similarities cannot be accounted for simply as some kind of areal phenomenon, that is, as the kind of similarities we occasionally find when completely unrelated languages are spoken in the same geographical area, e.g., Indo-European and Dravidian languages in the south of India or in Sri Lanka. Pidgins with similar characteristics may be separated by vast geographic distances. The quest to discover a common origin for pidgins and creoles – that is, the quest for a *monogenesis* theory of origin rather than a polygenesis theory – is now a serious one.

One variant of such a theory is that the similarities among pidgins and creoles might be attributable to a common origin in the language of sailors in some kind of nautical jargon. It is a well-known fact that the crews of ships were – and sometimes still are – often drawn from a variety of sources. For example, Nelson's flagship *Victory* is said to have been crewed by sailors of fourteen different nationalities. A common shipboard lingua franca, or nautical jargon, developed among the members of the sailing community. In this view, it was that lingua franca, rather than a pidginized variety of a standard language, that was carried along the shipping routes. However, the evidence for this theory is weak, consisting of a few sea-based terms in different pidgins. Moreover, it almost completely ignores the more serious structural similarities among existing pidgins and creoles, similarities that seem to require a more profound explanation.

The theory of *relexification* offers such an explanation. According to this theory, all the present European-language-based pidgins and creoles derive from a single source, a lingua franca called Sabir used in the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Portuguese *relexified* this language; that is, they introduced their own vocabulary into its grammatical structure, so that a Portuguese-based pidgin came into widespread use as a trade language. Later, this pidgin was in turn relexified into pidginized French, English, and Spanish. In each case the underlying grammatical structure remained largely unaffected, but a massive shift occurred in vocabulary. It is also argued that Portuguese relics still remain after relexification, e.g., *savvy* and *piccaninny* (from Portuguese *saber*, 'know,' and *pequeno*, 'little'), in English-based creoles.

Such a theory attempts to provide a serious explanation for the fact that pidgins and creoles associated with different standard languages have certain common structural features but quite different vocabularies. In this view a pidgin English is therefore an Anglicized version of the original pidgin and a pidgin French is a Gallicized version. The theory leads creolists such as Todd (1974) to go so far as to use a version of the classical comparative method in an attempt to show how various pidgins and creoles have descended from a Portuguese-based ancestor. Todd provides a family-tree type model (p. 40) for pidgins and creoles, which shows them originating in Sabir. Sabir then becomes Proto-Portuguese Pidgin, which in turn splits into two distinct branches, Atlantic Portuguese Pidgin and Indo-Pacific Portuguese Pidgin. The former has sub-branches with Portuguese varieties (e.g., Guiné Crioule), Hispanic varieties (e.g., Papiamentu), Anglicized varieties (e.g., Jamaican), and Gallicized ones (e.g., Louisiana, Haitian); the latter has its sub-branches too – Gallicized ones (e.g., Seychelles), Nederlandized ones (e.g. Afrikaans), and Anglicized ones (e.g., Tok Pisin).

The theory of relexification is not without its problems. One is that pidgins are so stripped down that they lack most of the features that linguists usually rely on to relate one language to another. The similarities among them are very general, and it is quite possible that some alternative theory may better explain them, e.g., the general principles of language acquisition. Relexification is also dubious in that it asks us to believe that, in learning a language, people somehow can learn the grammar quite independently of the vocabulary and that they do indeed learn the first but completely replace the second during the process of learning. We might also expect more Portuguese to have survived.

There is actually some good evidence that relexification has occurred. If we look at Saramaccan, it seems to be a pidgin in the process of relexification from Portuguese to English (hence the disagreement I noted earlier about its classification). It was 'frozen' in this intermediate, transitional stage when its

speakers were cut off from England in 1667 when the colony became a Dutch possession. There is also some evidence that in parts of West Africa such kinds of replacement do occur, that people know the vocabularies of different languages but use a kind of common grammar in speaking them so that when they come across a new language they employ the 'new' vocabulary in the 'old' grammatical framework and manage to make themselves understood (Todd, 1974, p. 38). We could argue, however, that all we have in this case is a reintroduction of the sub-stratum theory in a new and subtle form; in any case, such a theory seems inadequate on other grounds. There is also no apparent relexification possible for varieties such as Pitcairnese (spoken by descendants of the *Bounty* mutiny of 1790), Sango, and Chinook Jargon. At least some pidgins and creoles cannot owe their origin to this process.

One of the severest condemnations of relexification comes from Bickerton (1977, p. 62), who argues that: 'We are asked to believe that an original contact language could be disseminated round the entire tropical zone, to peoples of widely differing language background, and still preserve a virtually complete identity in its grammatical structure wherever it took root, despite considerable changes in its phonology and virtually complete changes in its lexicon.' Bickerton considers that relexification asks us to accept too many improbabilities. Instead, he offers (1981) an alternative theory to account for the similarities we find: his *bioprogram* hypothesis or the theory of *universal language learning*.

Bickerton (1983) claims that only one hypothesis adequately explains the similarities among creoles and that is that universal principles of first language acquisition are involved. Jespersen (1922, p. 234) had previously pointed out certain similarities between pidgins and creoles and children's language. Bickerton argues that it is better to focus on what pidgins and creoles *have* and *do* than on what they *lack*. Typically, creoles are developed by children who find themselves born into a multilingual environment in which the most important language for peer contact is a pidgin. Children are compelled to develop that language because each child has a *bioprogram* to develop a full language. Children use this bioprogram in the same way wherever they happen to be and the consequence is that 'the grammatical structures of creoles are more similar to one another than they are to the structures of any other language' (p. 121). Bickerton further develops this thesis, claiming that children have certain innate language abilities that they are actually forced to suppress as they learn languages like English and French. 'It [is] only in pidgin-speaking communities, where there [is] no grammatical model that could compete with the child's innate grammar, that the innate grammatical model [is] not eventually suppressed' (p. 121). It is in just these circumstances that creoles arise. Bickerton says that the essential difference between pidgini-

zation and creolization is that pidginization is second-language learning with restricted input and creolization is first-language learning, also with restricted input.

A word of caution is in order when talking about universals in connection with languages or language learning. You may look for the wrong kinds of universals. Pidgins are often considered to be 'stripped-down' languages. They are often discussed in terms of what they lack in comparison to 'ordinary' languages: lack of inflections, articles, tense-markers, subordinate clauses, and so on. What they are left with are 'universals', those characteristics shared by all languages. But it is not at all clear that the characteristics they are left with *are* universals, because until recently much of the discussion of language universals has involved many of those kinds of features that pidgins are particularly short of (see Greenberg, 1963, 1966). Pidgins and creoles may be better examples of the results of universal principles of language acquisition than they are of universal distributional patterns in 'mature' languages. It is in this latter sense that we must consider Bickerton's claims and consider his use of the concept of 'language universals'.

It seems fair to note that currently the major contestant theories as to the origins of pidgins and creoles are Bickerton's theory and the theory of relexification, with the scales tipped toward the former so far as general acceptance is concerned.

## Discussion

1. Hall (1966, p. 122) points out that 'English has been extensively relexified, in the last thousand years, with morphemes [i.e., words and parts of words with meaning] . . . from French, Latin, and Greek; yet it is still to be classified as a Germanic, not a Romance, language' because of its basic structural features, which are Germanic. In what ways is this the kind of relexification similar to and different from the kind discussed in this chapter?
2. Bickerton (1977, p. 49) says that, essentially, 'pidginization is second-language learning with restricted input, and . . . creolization is first-language learning with restricted input.' How valid do you think Bickerton's claim is?
3. Bickerton (1983, p. 116) claims that there is now an impressive body of evidence to support the following claim: 'between the ages of two and four the child born into a community of linguistically competent adults speaks a variety of language whose structure bears a deep resemblance to the structure of creole languages.' Assess this claim. You should consult Bickerton (1990).

## From Pidgin to Creole and Beyond

Whatever their origins, it is generally acknowledged that a pidgin is involved in the earliest stage of each creole. The pidgin comes about from the need to communicate, particularly when those who need to communicate speak a variety of languages and the speakers of the 'target' language are 'superior' in some sense and perhaps transient too. Thus, pidginization seems to have happened – and seems still to happen – repeatedly, for it is one of the basic means by which linguistic contact is made among speakers of different languages. The fact that is especially interesting is how similar the results are from place to place and from time to time.

Not every pidgin eventually becomes a creole, i.e., undergoes the process of creolization. In fact, very few do. Most pidgins are lingua francas, existing to meet special local needs. They are spoken by people who use another language or other languages to serve most of their needs and the needs of their children. If a pidgin is no longer needed, it dies out. It may also be the case that the pidgin in a particular area must constantly be 'reinvented'; there is no reason to believe, for example, that either Cameroonian Pidgin English or Hawaiian Pidgin English have had uninterrupted histories.

Creolization occurs only when a pidgin for some reason becomes the variety of language that children must use in a situation in which use of a 'full' language is effectively denied them. They creolize the pidgin. We can see how this must have happened in Haiti when French was effectively denied to the masses and the African languages brought by the slaves fell into disuse. We can also see how, while many of the guest workers in Germany have developed pidginized varieties of German to communicate when necessary with one another, their children have not creolized these varieties but, with varying success, have acquired Standard German, since they must go to school and be educated in German. A full language is available to them so they have no need to creolize *Gastarbeiter Deutsch*.

The example of Tok Pisin is useful in considering how a pidgin develops into a creole so far as both its forms and functions are concerned. Mühlhäusler (1982) has noted that in Tok Pisin grammatical categories such as time and number have become compulsory, a word-formation component has been developed, devices for structuring discourse are now present, and there are opportunities for stylistic differentiation (p. 449). So far as functions are concerned, Tok Pisin has become symbolic of a new culture; it is now used in many entirely new domains, e.g., government, religion, agriculture, and aviation; it is employed in a variety of media; and it is supplanting the vernaculars and even English in many areas (pp. 448–9). Aitchison (1981,

pp. 203–5) also has noted what is happening to Tok Pisin. She points out four kinds of change. One of these is that people speak creoles faster than pidgins and they do not speak them word by word. Consequently, processes of assimilation and reduction can be seen at work in Tok Pisin: *ma bilong mi* ('my husband') becomes *mamblomi*. A second change is the expansion of vocabulary resources: new shorter words are formed, so that *paitman* ('fighter') exists alongside *man bilong pait* ('man of fight'). There is also much borrowing of technical vocabulary from English. A third change is the development of a tense system in verbs. *Bin* is used as a past time marker and *bai*, from *baimbai* ('by and by'), as a future time marker. Finally, greater sentence complexity is now apparent. Some speakers are now able to construct relative clauses because *we* (from 'where') is developing as an introductory marker. In ways such as these, the original pidgin is quickly developing into a fully fledged language, which we call a creole only because we know its origin.

This last point is important: it is only because we know the origins of creoles that we know they are creoles. Hall (1966, pp. 122–3) has observed that:

All the evidence available so far indicates that the type of linguistic change and the mechanisms involved – sound-change, analogy, borrowing of various kinds – are the same for pidgins and creoles as they are for all other languages. The only difference lies in the rate of change – far faster for a pidgin (because of the drastic reduction in structure and lexicon) than for most languages. When a pidgin has become nativized, the history of the resultant creole is, in essence, similar to that of any other language. Hence, whereas a pidgin is identifiable at any given time by both linguistic and social criteria, a creole is identifiable only by historical criteria – that is, if we know that it has arisen out of a pidgin. There are no structural criteria which, in themselves, will identify a creole as such, in the absence of historical evidence.

Hall adds that the kinds of changes we associate with creolization normally take thousands of years in languages for which we have certain kinds of historical data.

Recent intensive study of pidgins and creoles has revealed how quickly such languages can and do change. Pidginization can occur almost 'overnight'. Relexification also seems to be a rapid process. Creolization takes no more than a generation or two. And even 'language death' can come quickly. The particular combination of language and social contact that gives rise to pidgins and creoles seems also to have recurred frequently in the history of the human species.

What this suggests is that many now traditional views about how languages change may need revision. Such change may not be slow and regular at all, or it

may be so only in the absence of certain kinds of language contact. Since contact situations appear to hasten change, the study of pidgins and creoles offers important clues to the kinds of changes that you might seek to discover. For example, does a contact situation lead to a reduction in inflectional morphology? Does it favor the development of a fixed word order in sentences? Finding answers to questions such as these may provide interesting insights into how languages change, and the study of pidgins and creoles seems to provide one of the best sources of data.

As Hudson (1980, p. 67) points out, there is possibly only one exception to the claim that creoles are languages just like all other languages: 'namely, that there may be a rather special relationship between a creole and the variety which is the present-day representative of the dominant language on which its parent pidgin was based, if the two coexist in the same country, as they often do.' That situation sometimes gives rise to a *post-creole continuum*, although another kind of possibility is the *diglossic* one (to be discussed at greater length in chapter 4).

A post-creole continuum arises when there is *decreolization*, that is, when a society has two languages, a creolized X and standard X, and that standard exerts considerable influence on the creole. People start to 'improve' their creole by using the standard language as their model, and a whole range of varieties, which form a *continuum*, is created with standard X at the 'top' and the original creole at the 'bottom'. In discussing the post-creole continuum that exists in Guyanese English, Bickerton (1975, p. 24) has proposed a number of terms that may be used to refer to different parts of that continuum. He uses the term *acrolect* to refer to educated Guyanese English, a variety which really has very few differences from other varieties of Standard English. He uses the term *basilect* to refer to the variety at the other extreme of the continuum, the variety that would be least comprehensible to a speaker of the standard, perhaps even incomprehensible. *Mesolects* are intermediate varieties. However, these are not discrete entities, for one important characteristic of these intermediate mesolects is that they blend into one another to fill the 'space' between the acrolect and the basilect.

As we might expect, there is considerable social stratification involved in such a situation. Bickerton cites Allsopp (1958) to show the following Guyanese varieties of the Standard English sentence *I told him* may be pronounced in the various parts of continuum:

1. ai tould him
2. ai to:ld him
3. ai to: l im
4. ai tɛl im
5. a tɛl im

6. ai tɛl ɪ
7. a tɛl i
8. mi tɛl i
9. mi tɛl am

The first three varieties (1–3) exemplify middle-class usage and are typical acrolect forms. The next four (4–7) are mesolect forms found in the lower middle and urban working classes. Item 8 is found in the rural working class, and item 9 is used by old and illiterate rural laborers: these are typical basilect forms.

Additional evidence on the Guyanese continuum is provided by Bell (1976, p. 136), who produces the sentences found in table 3.1. He uses information supplied by Cave (1973) to show how, in the Guyanese continuum, there are eighteen different ways of rendering a sentence like *I gave him one*. In this continuum the 'highest' acrolect sentence is [aɪ geɪv hɪm wʌn], the 'lowest' basilect sentence is [mɪ gi: æm wʌn], and there are intermediate mesolect sentences such as 8 [a dɪd gɪv i: wʌn], and 13 [mɪ dɪ gi hi: wʌn]. Todd (1974, p. 64) gives examples from the Jamaican creole continuum as follows, with a representative acrolect sentence first and the basilect one last: *it's my book, iz mi buk, a fi mi buk dat; where is it?, wier i de?, a we i de?; and I didn't eat any, a in nyam non, mi na bin nyam non*.

Writing of the continuum that exists in Jamaica, DeCamp (1977, p. 29) has observed that particular speakers control a span of the spectrum not just one discrete level within it. He says that the breadth of the span depends on the breadth of the speaker's social activities:

A labor leader, for example, can command a greater span of varieties than can a sheltered housewife of suburban middle class. A housewife may make a limited adjustment downward on the continuum in order to communicate with a market woman, and the market woman may adjust upward when she talks to the housewife. Each of them may then believe that she is speaking the other's language, for the myth persists in Jamaica that there are only two varieties of language – standard English and 'the dialect' – but the fact is that the housewife's broadest dialect may be closer to the standard end of the spectrum than is the market woman's 'standard'.

What is particularly important here, though, is the additional observation that Jamaicans do not perceive the existence of a continuum. Instead, they perceive what they say and hear only in relation to the two ends and make any judgments and adjustments in terms of the two extremes, Standard English or 'the dialect', 'patois', or 'Quashie', as it is sometimes referred to.

Table 3.1 A Guyanese continuum

1	at				wan
2				him	wan
3	a	getv		lm	
4				i:	
5				him	
6		giv		lm	
7				i:	
8		did	giv		
9		di			
10		did	gi		
11			gi:		
12					
13	ml	dt	gi	hi:	
14				i:	
15					
16		btm			
17			gi:		
18				æm	

Source: Bell (1976, p. 136)

Hudson (1980, p. 68) claims that a continuum situation has two peculiarities which mark it as different from other linguistic situations. The first is that 'there are more profound differences between the varieties which coexist in the community than one might expect in a community fragmented by the normal processes of dialect formation', particularly so far as syntax is concerned. The second is that 'only a single chain of varieties connects basilect and acrolect, allowing speakers only a single linguistic dimension on which to locate themselves with reference to the rest of society', a situation which 'contrasts sharply with the large number of independent dimensions that items in a variety normally provide for a speaker to use in locating himself'. However, Jamaicans and Guyanese are quite adept at using the continuum: when two

people meet they can indicate such things as formality, social distance, and solidarity in the choices the continuum makes available to them. Perhaps, therefore, Hudson's claim is not as strong as he would have it.

A continuum can arise only if the two extreme varieties are varieties of the same language, as with standard X and creolized X (e.g., Standard English and Jamaican Creole English). When different languages are involved there can be no continuum, as between Sranan, an English-based creole, and Dutch in Suriname. But another kind of continuity also seems necessary. If the total society is highly stratified, so that there is little or no contact between the groups who speak the creolized and standard varieties, and/or if these two varieties have separate and distinct functions in the lives of people, then there will be no continuum. We will have a *diglossic* situation (see chapter 4), as in Haiti between Haitian Creole and French. A continuum appears to require that there be some kind of continuity in society among the various sub-groups, especially that there be some chance of upward social mobility. It arises from the standard version coming to influence the creolized version so that intermediate varieties develop, the process we have called *decreolization*. The different linguistic situations in Jamaica and Haiti would therefore suggest that the social situations in these countries are very different, a suggestion which seems to have some validity.

It is also appropriate to note that critics such as Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) reject the idea of the continuum as being altogether too simplistic. They claim that it results from simplifying and manipulating data rather than trying to confront the evidence in all its complexity. Moreover, it is essentially a uni-dimensional approach to a situation in which all the factors suggest that only a multi-dimensional approach can offer an appropriate account of speakers' linguistic behavior.

According to theorists such as Rickford (1977) and Dillard (1972), the process of decreolization can also be observed in the United States in what has happened in the linguistic history of the black slave population that was brought to work the cotton plantations. The original slaves brought with them a number of West African languages, but many must also have arrived with some knowledge of Portuguese-based or English-based pidgins, the trading lingua francas of the African coast. Slave owners deliberately chose slaves from different language backgrounds to discourage rebellion. Such circumstances fostered the development of English-based pidgins and the process of creolization. So long as whites and blacks kept a considerable distance apart, physically and socially, there was little opportunity for decreolization. We can see that this was the case with Gullah, geographically isolated on the Sea Islands off the southeast coast and still today the most distinctive indigenous black speech in the United States, particularly because of its large African

vocabulary. However, as blacks began to win more and more recognition of equality under the law and opportunities for various kinds of advancement increased, Standard English began to exert a strong influence on the original creole, so that today a genuine continuum exists. In fact, this continuum is so strong that many people, both whites and blacks, regard any characteristics which seem to 'mark' the speech of US blacks as being instances of either 'southern' speech or 'lower-class' speech. In other words, whatever is left of the original creole is now regarded as either a regional or social variant of the standard language. We will return to these matters in chapter 14 because of some of the consequences that arise in resolving certain educational issues.

A *diglossic* situation is one in which the creole and the standard lack continuity so far as functions are concerned, and that functional discontinuity is generally strong supported by severe social stratification. Haitian Creole and Standard French differ almost as much as two quite unrelated languages; there are no intermediate varieties in Haiti, and the two are kept socially and functionally apart. In Haiti one possible solution to such a diglossic situation would seem to be the elevation of the creole to 'full' language status through the process of standardization. However, the socially and politically elite in Haiti, even though they themselves use Haitian Creole in certain circumstances, officially disdain any language other than Standard French and the general populace find little or no encouragement for thinking well of the creole. On the other hand, Afrikaans, of possible creole origin, has been developed into a 'full' language in South Africa, Bahasa Indonesia has been developed out of certain varieties of Malay, and Tok Pisin is now used in Papua New Guinea as a unifying language.

As Bell (1976, pp. 160-1) has pointed out, various things can happen to a creole. It can reach a quite stable relationship with the language or languages of the community, as in the current relationship between Haitian Creole and French. It may for one reason or another be extinguished by the standard language: for example, in the Dutch West Indies Dutch has virtually extinguished Negerhollands, and English is severely cutting into Gullah in the Sea Islands. A creole may in some cases become a standard language, with possible examples being Afrikaans, Swahili, Bahasa Indonesia, and Maltese. Finally, a post-creole continuum may emerge, as for example in Jamaica and Guyana, where the creole varies in such a way that it becomes continuous with the standard at its 'top' and to the extent that its 'bottom' varieties and that standard may not be mutually intelligible.

The different linguistic situations create different social and educational problems for the speaker of the pidgin or creole. In a diglossic situation such as in Haiti there are traditional power relationships exemplified in the distributions of the two varieties of language, e.g., Haitian Creole and the local variety of French. Everyone speaks the former, but the latter is known additionally

among the 'upper' levels of Haitian society. The creole is associated with ignorance, poverty, and inferiority, even by those who speak it, but at the same time it provides a feeling of solidarity as a people: it is what makes Haitians distinctively Haitians. The variety of French, though quite alien to well over three-quarters of the population, is the preferred variety for education and access to the outside world (although recently English has been making inroads). Those who have knowledge of French regard it as the language of culture even though, by the standards of Continental French, the Haitian variety of French tends to be grandiose, flowery, and archaic. The result, predictably, is that little or no progress is made in Haiti in solving pressing social and educational problems. Many of these are directly related to linguistic matters so it is not surprising that they should be as severe as they are if we remember that the creole is said to have no grammar, that the elite have long resisted literacy campaigns (there was only 20% literacy in 1984!), and that it was not until 1961 that the creole gained any limited official recognition at all and not until 1979 that it became the medium of instruction for the first four years of schooling.

Jamaica might appear to offer more hope that a unified language will evolve. However, the subtle gradations that exist in a continuum can also be put to use to 'classify' people. The people who use the two ends of the Jamaican continuum are almost as far apart socially as those Haitians who speak only Haitian Creole are from those who are completely bilingual in the creole and French. Some varieties of Jamaican English are clearly felt to be 'superior' and others clearly 'inferior', so the particular span of varieties a Jamaican uses serves as a clear social class marker. DeCamp (1977, p. 26) has pointed out some of the serious educational consequences of such attitudes. He says that in Jamaica 'most educators persist in treating the "dialect problem" as if it were a problem of speech correction, attributing it to careless, slovenly pronunciation . . . The creole is inseparably associated with poverty, ignorance, and lack of moral character.' There is a strong social prejudice against the creole, a prejudice which inhibits even the middle class, many of whom 'lead lives of desperate linguistic anxiety, loudly proclaiming the superiority of their own "standard" English while nursing inward doubts about whether their English is really sufficiently standard'.

This problem is no longer unique to Jamaica. In recent years there has been considerable emigration from Jamaica (and from other countries in which the same kind of continuum is normal), so that a further dimension has been added to the continuum: a new standard is superposed on the previous Jamaican one, e.g., British English or Canadian English. How best to deal with the social and educational factors associated with a continuum is no longer a problem unique to certain places where creoles have developed, but is now a problem for educators in cities like London, Toronto, and New York. Edwards

(1986) has pointed out how in England black youth of West Indian origin not only learn the local variety of English but often too a particular variety of West Indian English that differs from that of their parents. They deliberately *recreolize* English in an attempt to assert their ethnic identity and solidarity because of the social situation in which they find themselves (p. 111). We will see too (in chapter 8) that claims have been advanced that the speech of certain blacks in the United States may now be diverging from that of the wider society.

Creating a new 'full' language from a creole also has its own special problems. Bahasa Indonesia has to be standardized and taught to speakers of many different languages. Afrikaans has already been standardized. Both states have found that a strong unifying 'national' consciousness among potential speakers has been of immense value. To some extent Tok Pisin relies on the same motivation, but in this case the numbers in support of a new language are small and the price to pay in terms of linguistic isolation, which must be added to the geographic isolation that already exists, is high. Currently Tok Pisin is rapidly being creolized and attempts are being made to standardize the emerging creole. Its uses are being extended in a variety of ways, e.g., in the House of Assembly, in broadcasting, in newspapers, and in primary education. However, the process has not been without its problems. One is the growth of varieties of the language, so that there are now both rural and urban varieties, a situation which threatens Tok Pisin's development as a lingua franca. Another is that there has been wholesale borrowing into Tok Pisin of English words rather than exploiting native sources. If Tok Pisin were to become more and more recognizably 'English', we might anticipate the development of a post-creole continuum with all the attendant problems, not the least of which, of course, is the threat that such a development poses to the native creole, as in Jamaica, Guyana, and Nigeria, placing, as it does, that creole in an unfavorable light in the eyes of those that speak it. Tok Pisin could fall into jeopardy if this should happen.

### Discussion

1. While all linguists believe that all languages change over time, some believe that they change at a fairly fixed rate, particularly over very long periods of time. This belief enables them not only to reconstruct proto-languages (i.e., common ancestral languages) but also to attempt to date these. What problems might the existence of creoles pose for such views?
2. Hall (1972, p. 151) has commented that the major factor that brings about a change of status for a pidgin or a creole is 'political, i.e., pressure

effectively exerted by or on behalf of the population which uses it, for its recognition'. He adds that the 'correlation between political factors and status-achievement, for pidgins and creoles, is so close that we may expect to see other such languages rise to the status of standards only where the areas where they are spoken gain political independence or autonomy, and use the local tongue as a symbol of nationality'. If Hall is correct, what do you think will happen to the many pidgins and creoles that exist today? Are there any countervailing forces which must also be recognized?

3. Saville-Troike (1989) quotes the following from a letter to the editor of the Trinidad *Guardian*. A report on a Language Arts syllabus had recognized that most Trinidadians spoke a creole and that English was not their native language. The letter writer protests as follows:

If the language of the barrack yard and the market is to be the accepted mode of expression in the school-room . . . there would be no need for teachers . . . we could save the high wages of these experts and set them free to go and plant peas . . . where they can give full vent to this dialect stuff . . . What, if not broken English, is this dialect? . . . I feel that such discussions should be banned from our news media as a most damaging . . . exercise.

What might you say in a follow-up letter to the editor of the *Guardian*?

4. Many Jamaicans speak disparagingly of Jamaican creole or 'the patois'. The language of education in Jamaica is Standard English. However, much of the teaching of Standard English proves to be ineffective. Why might this be the case?
5. Aitchison (1981, p. 87) takes Whinnom (1971, p. 110) severely to task for saying the following:

without wishing to spark an emotionally loaded discussion, I feel that someone should venture the suggestion that modern linguists may have been dangerously sentimental about creole languages, which, with only a few notable exceptions, constitute in most communities a distinct handicap to the social mobility of the individual, and *may* also constitute a handicap to the creole-speaker's personal intellectual development.

Read what each has to say on this matter and try to reach some conclusion about the issues.