

LINGUISTIC VARIETIES AND MULTILINGUAL NATIONS

It is important to define and categorise languages according to their *status* and *function*!

Study the Example # 1, p. 76

1. Vernacular languages

Three components need to be recognized:

- (i) it is an unstandardized variety;
- (ii) it is acquired at home as a first language;
- (iii) it is used in restricted contexts.

Extended meaning of the term "vernacular" (UNESCO report, 1951):
 ... "a first language of a group socially and politically dominated by a group with a different language".

For example, Spanish is considered to be a vernacular language in the United States, but not in Spain, Chili, etc.:

"The term vernacular simply means a language which is not an official language in a particular context". (p. 77)

2. Standard languages

Members of a speech community share a particular language (or variety of a language) and the norms (=rules) for the appropriate use of their language in social context.

Norm:

- idealized rather than actual observed behaviour;
- selection and acceptance of norms: social criteria, associated with "power".

Standardization: The codification and acceptance of a formal set of norms defining "correct usage".

There are four aspects of standardization:

- a. selection of norm
- b. codification of form
- c. elaboration of function
- d. acceptance by the speech community

Codification:

- developing grammars (prescriptive!),
- developing dictionaries,
etc.

Elaboration:

Use of the codified language (in administration, education, literature, etc.).

THE IDEAL GOALS OF A STANDARD LANGUAGE:

Codification → minimal variation in form

Elaboration → maximal variation in function

Standardization is not a property of any language: not all languages have a standard variety!

Study the development of Standard English (p. 79).

3. World Englishes

Standard English -- a language with a status of prestige variety of English -- is spoken in many countries. "World Englishes" may be identified as *Inner*, *Outer*, and *Expanding* circles of English.

Study Figure 4.1, p. 81.

Provide an answer to the Exercise #3 on p. 81.

Compare your answer to the solution on p. 96.

4. Lingua francas

People speaking different languages have to find a way to communicate.

UNESCO (1953): lingua franca is ..."a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them".

Lingua francas may be referred to by different terms, for example, *trade language*, *international language*, *contact language*, among other terms.

Mixed languages may also function as lingua francas:

Example: Michif, a mixture of French and Cree (Cree grammar, French vocabulary); spoken now only by a few Métis speakers. Michif was to represent the identity of Métis speakers.

Study the examples #3 and #4 on pp. 82-83.

5. Pidgins and creoles

5.1. Pidgins

Pidgin languages emerge because of the *need for intercommunication* between speakers of different languages. There are no native speakers of pidgins!

Possible origins of the term “pidgin”:

- (i) Chinese pronunciation of the English word *business*
- (ii) Chinese pronunciation of the Portuguese word *ocupação* ‘business’
- (iii) Hebrew *pidjom* ‘exchange, trade’
- (iv) Yayo (a South American Indian language, colonized by Britain): *pidians_* ‘people’
- (v) South Seas pronunciation of the English word *beach* (the location where the language was typically used).

All of these etymologies (=word origins) may be genuine.

Development of pidgins:

Jargon -- pre-pidgin; multilingual idiolect; weakly conventionalized.

Stable pidgin -- coherent grammatical structure of its own;
relatively little variation among speakers.

Pidgins have a restricted function in a restricted number of domains. The grammatical structure is not as complex as that of the fully developed languages – most pidgin languages have only five vowels, they do not have consonant clusters, their vocabulary is not large, none (or very few) inflections, etc. Important role of context!!!

There is a tendency to confuse simplification (=greater grammatical regularity) with impoverishment (=lack of referential and non-referential power).

Study the examples #8 and #9, p. 88. Comment!

Summary of the characteristics of pidgin languages:

- Partially targeted or non-targeted second language learning;
- Developing from simpler to more complex systems as communicative requirements become more demanding;
- They have no native speakers;
- Social rather than individual solutions: thus they are characterized by norms of acceptability.

Implicit in the above points is the assumption that there are *qualitatively different stages* in the development of pidgins.

Pidgins have low prestige and are associated with negative attitudes.

5.2 Creoles

Creoles are pidgin languages (second languages) that have become the *first language* of a new generation of speakers.

PARENTS' INPUT:

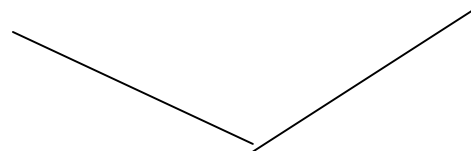


Parents' pidgin

UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE:

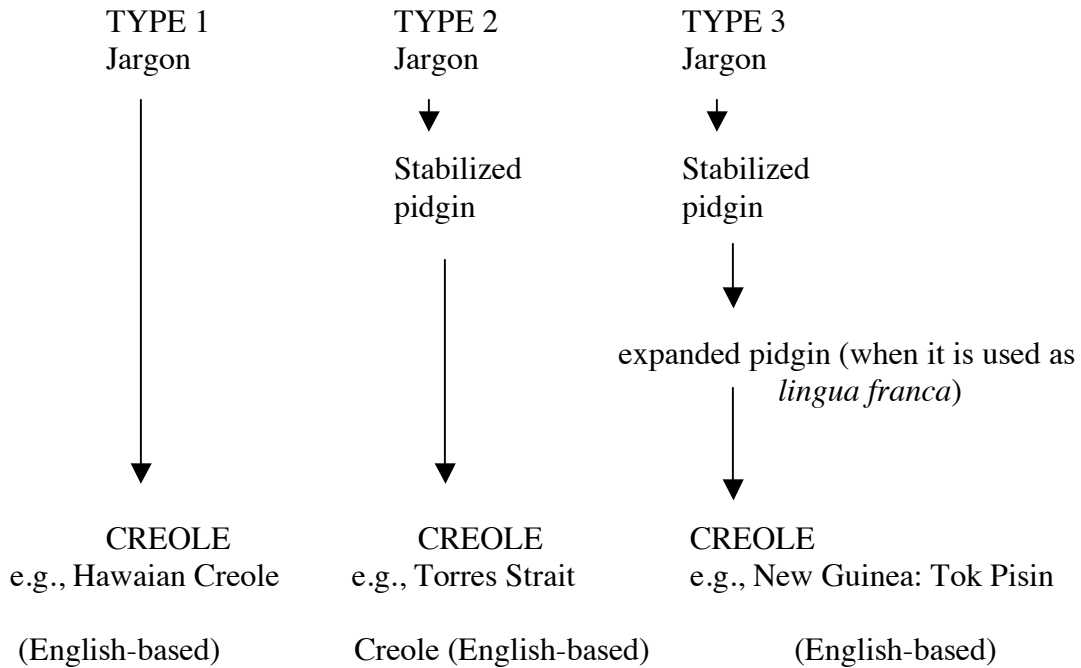


language acquisition device



CHILDREN'S OUTPUT: *creole*

The pidgin input may vary, thus creolization can occur in three main types:



Study the Tok Pisin creole, pp.91-92.

While attitudes to pidgins and most creoles are negative, some creole languages have acquired prestige status (e.g., Tok Pisin, see p. 94).

5.3 Origins and endings

5.3.1 Theories about the origins of pidgins and creoles:

- (i) “Baby talk” or “foreigner talk” (Bloomfield, 1933).
- (ii) Polygenesis or monogenesis??
 - comparative linguistic methods
 - search for proto-pidgin
- (iii) all pidgins have developed from the Mediterranean lingua franca Sabir that was relexified by the Portuguese (15th century).



substituted their own vocabulary into the existing grammar of Sabir

- (iv) pidgins have independent developments – no need to look for a common origin:

they arise in different contexts, but the function is similar;
the development conforms to universal linguistic processes (such as
simplification of structures and reduction of certain features).

5.3.2 Post-creole situations

creole → post-creole may develop

Conditions:

- (i) The dominant official language must be the standard language.
- (ii) Formerly rigid social stratification is *partially* broken down: there must be sufficient mobility to motivate large number of creole speakers to *modify their speech in the direction of the standard: decreolization process!*

Consequence: members of the speech community may be ranged along a continuum:

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| ACROLECT (H variety) | } | these are not distinct entities! |
| BASILECT (L variety) | | |
| MESOLECT (intermediate variety) | | |

Note: the H and L varieties are often unintelligible.

Examples: Jamaican Creole, Guyanese Creole (p. 95).

Creoles may be standardized (e.g., Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea), or may become the national language (Indonesian from Pidgin Malay).

