

THE GENESIS OF PIDGINS AND CREOLES AND VARIATIONS IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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Abstract: The Language Bioprogram Hypothesis is an idea proposed by Bickerton who believes that all humans are born with an innate bioprogram for language. After the 1930s when linguists realized the importance of Pidgins and Creoles, the people who were using them also became aware of the importance and that they were not bad varieties of languages. Pidgins and Creoles share characteristics all over the world even when they come from different linguistic backgrounds. This paper gives detailed information about the definitions of Pidgins, Creoles, and Lingua Francas. The similarities and the differences between these language varieties are provided with examples and studied thoroughly. Pidgins and Creoles are not important to people who use them but they give crucial information about their identities, for this reason, the paper includes data on this issue.

Keywords: Creole, Pidgin, lingua franca, relexification, language acquisition

Introduction

A pidgin is a simplified form of a language, especially as used by a non-native speaker of that language. It is argued that pidgins and creoles lack certain linguistic features like articles, copula, grammatical inflections, etc. (Wardhaugh, 2006: 58). Hymes (1971: 3) points out that pidgins and creoles were marginal and some people even called them bad languages because of the status of their origin and the judgments towards them. Therefore the paper includes interesting and important information that will draw attention to what actually pidgins, creoles, and lingua francas are and will explore the reasons why sometimes these language varieties were considered as bad languages.

Lingua Francas

The term "lingua franca" was first used during the Middle Ages and was described as a language created as a combination of French and Italian that was enhanced by the Crusaders and tradesmen in the east part of the Mediterranean. This language had simplified nouns, verbs, and adjectives from both languages and it was considered as a pidgin at first. Then over time this language turned into an early version of today's Romance Languages (<http://www.britannica.com/>). An example of a lingua franca is Arabic. The enormous size of the Empire led to the need of a common language for communication purposes and Arabic was chosen as that language (European Commission, 2010: 16).

People find it difficult to communicate with others when each one of them uses a different language. The language that is chosen for communication purposes which is used by people using different languages is called a lingua franca. There are other terms that are used instead of lingua franca like; trade language, contact language, international language, and an auxiliary language. These are usually the result of population migration. Michif is given as an example that is a mixture of Cree verbs and French nouns to create a lingua franca. Other examples for lingua francas are Arabic which was a lingua franca as a result of Islam and English which was a lingua franca for trade, commerce, and international relations. Greek Koien and Vulgar Latin were lingua francas in the Mediterranean as well. These two lingua francas were used prevalently in the ancient world but none of them were a homogeneous entity, they were spoken differently in different places (Wardhaugh, 2006: 58-60).

English is accepted as a lingua franca in various countries like India. An official language in India is Hindi but English is spoken in any possible area as a lingua franca for communication purposes. On the other hand, Swahili is a lingua franca of East Africa which continued to be simplified by the people as it got away from the coast. Finally it was incomprehensible to the residents who lived near the coast. In other words, the same language was used quite differently on the coast than the inland because people continued to simplify the language. Chinook Jargon is another example for a lingua franca which was used in North America among native people from British Columbia in to Alaska.

Pidgin Languages

Pidgins are developed by people who do not have a common language to communicate in the same geographical area. Pidgins can turn into creoles when they have been used for a long time. As a result of being used for a long time the structure starts to evolve and become more complex. Children who are born to an area where a pidgin is used, acquire it as their first language, in this case the pidgin becomes a creole (Polome, 1971: 57-60). An example for such a case is Tok Pisin which was a creole in Papua New Guinea and afterwards became a National Language when children started to acquire it as their first languages (Romaine, 1990: 187).

A Pidgin is nobody's first language/mother tongue, it doesn't have any native speakers, it is just used as a contact language for communication purposes. It is claimed that the reason for pidginization might also be because of the power of the language when the speakers dominate the other language speakers economically and socially. Sometimes the people use the expression

'reduced variety of a normal language'. In other words, it is the standard language but with a reduced or simplified grammar structure, vocabulary, or phonological variation. Sawant (2011: 1) also supports the idea that pidgins were formed because of political, social, and economic situations. The researcher calls pidgins hybrid languages because of the combination of different languages which form them.

An interesting claim made by Napoli (2003: 129) was that common futures are shared by creoles all over the world. For example, the auxiliary verbs are put before the main verbs and they have a subject verb object structure. Commonly creoles also have a lack of verbal conjugations. It is believed that these common futures are the result of an internal mechanism that all humans have as species.

At least two languages have to battle for dominance in pidginization and a good example for this is the battle between English and French in England after 1066. On the other hand when three languages are involved in this process, one language should be dominant and more powerful over the others and the people who use them should not only understand and accept the dominant language but also each other as less dominants. Therefore, it can be claimed that a pidgin arises when people from different languages simplify the dominant language to communicate. It is interesting that many different pidgins have similarities between them related to their origins and they carry information about history and structure.

Crystal (2003: 11) defines a pidgin language as a simplified version of one language that combines the vocabulary of different languages. The reasons for pidgins to occur are generally for trade matters when different cultures do not share a common language and when they feel forced to find a way to communicate. It is stated that members of the same population rarely use a lingua franca to communicate with each other and that pidgins are simplified versions of different languages and they generally have no native speakers.

It is important to state that Wardhaugh (2006: 78) claims that children play an important role in how languages change. A pidgin is always involved in the early stage of a creole. A Pidgin comes from a need to communicate from different languages. Most pidgins are lingua francas that exist to meet local needs of the people from different languages.

Wardhaugh (2006: 70) suggests that we need to examine the beginning of the pidginization process to provide the bases for most of the pidgins and creoles. Another important and interesting theory about monogenetic views 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. An example at this point will be the flagship called Victory that was crewed by sailors of fourteen different nationalities. The sailors used a common shipboard lingua franca rather than a pidginized variety of a standard language. This variety shares only a few sea-based terms from different pidgins and ignores the more serious structural similarities among existing pidgins and creoles.

Reasons for Pidgins to Arise

There are various reasons for pidgins to arise and one reason is that the people do not have a common language to communicate, therefore the need for communication leads them to create a pidgin. A good example for this is the slaves who were brought from Africa in the nineteenth century to North America to work on the plantations. They were from different parts of their country. They had no shared languages among themselves. Their bosses chose them from different regions to prevent them from communicating and escaping. So, they had to develop a language in order to communicate. They ended up with creating a pidgin language (Cassidy, 1971: 205).

Another reason for a pidgin to arise is colonization. Most pidgins were created from French, Spanish, Portuguese, English, and Dutch because of their power on colonies. It is obvious that there always has to be a superior and dominant language which most of the vocabulary of a pidgin is borrowed from (Versteegh, 2008: 161). These dominant languages are called superstrate languages. In the Papua New Guinea Creole the superstrate language was English. On the other hand all the other minority languages that contribute to a Pidgin are called substrate languages. The superstrate languages are the ones which pidgins or creoles are primarily based on and they are usually the language of the colonizing people (Arends *et al.*, 1995: 99).

Creoles

Creoles are developed by children that are born into a multilingual environment. It is interesting that creoles are similar to each other than they are to any other language. It is also claimed that pidginization is second language learning with restricted input and creolization is first language learning with restricted input as well (Wardhaugh, 2006: 94).

Wardhaugh (2006: 61) points out that there are certain things that pidgins involve; 'pidginization generally involves some kind of simplification of a language, tolerance of considerable phonological variation, reduction in the number of functions for which the pidgin is used, and extensive borrowing of words from local mother tongues'. In contrast to pidgins, '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'. Sometimes it is very difficult to say whether a variety is a pidgin, expanded pidgin, or a creole. For example, Tok Pisin is sometimes called a creole and sometimes a pidgin.

DeCamp (1977: 4-5) points out that Juba Arabic is a pidgin which is spoken in Sudan. A pidgin is not a native language with limited vocabulary and only for communication in trade but the vocabulary is supplemented with words from native languages

or from normal Arabic when needed. It is interesting that although this variety contains many words from Arabic, an Arabic person cannot just simply use it; he or she would have to learn it just as learning a different language.

Accordingly, many people agree that the language of Haiti is a creole. Almost all Haitians use it and it is their native language. This creole is a native language through standard French and has evolved through pidginized French. The vocabulary is French but the phonology and syntax are different from standard French. The grammatical structure is different from French and it is similar to Creole Portuguese, Creole Spanish, and Creole English. So, creolists reject calling it a dialect of French (Wardhaugh, 2006: 63).

Pidgins and creoles can be found in coastal areas and not just inland because of trade issues. For example, the Bush Negro is a pidginized variety of English which was used by the slaves who escaped. This language variety is a creole but it also serves as a lingua franca for the native Indians of Surinam. Another creole that is found in inland Suriname is Saramaccan 'which is sometimes regarded as Portuguese based and sometimes as English based'. The language distribution of areas reflects their social and political history.

Characteristics of Creoles

There are various features that are shared by creoles as follows;

Creoles have simplified vowel systems. Generally they have only five vowels.

Creoles have relatively restricted vocabulary but more than a pidgin language. A single word is used for various things. This is an issue found in many languages.

Eg: I **run** to the store

You can't **run** such a complicated business

Rivers **run** downhill

Children's noses **run** in the winter

Creoles express variations in time by having string for helping verbs rather than by having complicated word formation rules. Creoles express negation by placing a negative word immediately in front of the first verb.

Creoles place the verb between the subject and the object (like English) (Napoli, 2003: 131)

The similarities between Pidgins and Creoles

Pidgins and creoles have many similarities with a standard language but they are simplified in terms of morphology and phonology. As mentioned before although pidgins originate from different languages, interestingly they share quite a lot of similar characteristics (Wardhaugh, 2006: 61). Morphophonemic variation is not found in pidgins but the development of such a variation might be a characteristic of creolization, when a pidgin becomes a creole. Another characteristic of the process of creolization is the development of embedded clauses, relative clauses (Wardhaugh 2006: 67). Bloomfield (1994: 472) supports that there is no proof for any foreigner-talk or baby-talk theory about pidgins and creoles but that Europeans deliberately simplified the languages in order to communicate with others.

Relexification

Relexification is a theory that suggests that all the present European-language based pidgins and creoles are derived from a single lingua franca. Another important characteristic of relexification is that it proves that grammar structures can be learnt independently from vocabulary. The simplest description of relexification is lexical replacement; which refers to the lexical items that are replaced by borrowed lexical items from another language. The relexification hypothesis explains how superstrate languages come together to form a creole language. It is claimed that relexification happens when the semantics and syntax of a lexical entry (i.e., word meaning and usage) from a person's first language are transferred to a new phonetic string (i.e., a word in its phonetic form). In other words, the phonology of the superstrate language added to the semantics and syntax from a substrate language make up a new lexical entry in a Creole language (Goodman, 2003: 311).

Conclusion

As per the discussion above we can conclude that, pidgins quickly develop into a language but we call it a creole because of its origin. The difference lies in rate of change for creoles and pidgins. Difference between creoles and pidgins is that pidginization occurs very quickly, almost over a night but creolization takes approximately two generations to form. Creoles are mostly related to a dominant language so a creole continuum can arise. It is also important to state that continuum cannot be the case where different languages are involved. The information provided in this paper is a guide for the ones who are not sure of calling a language variety a pidgin or a creole. Lingua francas are also important language varieties which are given equal importance though out the paper.

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