WEEK 5 - Pidgins and Creoles

— The birth and development of new languages in special situations of language contact.

Outcomes of multilingual situations:

- Diglossia (Unit 4)

- Code-switching (Unit 4)

- Language change (Unit 3,11)

- **The development of new languages (this unit)**

- Pidgins and Creoles

Pidgin

The birth of Pidgin languages

- Pidgins often arise when two conditions are met:

  - [1] Speakers of more than two languages need to communicate and have no shared language.

  - [2] There is an <u>imbalance</u> in the power relations of the language groups - one particular group dominates the other groups.

- There is often limited contact between members of the dominant group and the subordinate groups.

  - Vertical Contact: Managers ↔ workers

  - Horizontal Contact: workers ↔ workers

The results — New Pidgin languages:

- (a) have a vocabulary mostly drawn from the language of the dominant group

- (b) very little grammar (because of the small amount of interaction)

- (c) are restricted in how they can be used

- (d) are not developed well enough for much social interaction

- The language of the dominant group is called the **'superstrate' language**.

- The languages of the subordinate groups are called the **'substrate' languages**.

Example: Hawaiian Pidgin English

- Between English-speaking managers and immigrant workers speaking Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, and Philippino languages

Four kinds of contact situations often cause pidgins to develop

[1] Workplace pidgins

- laborers from different language backgrounds

- working on plantations, as migrant laborers, and in (coal, and diamond) mines.

- Examples:

  - Hawaiian Pidgin English

  - Fanakolo (South Africa) mining community

  - Also: Communities of slaves working on plantations in the Caribbean and the southern US in 18-19thC, taken from different language groups in South Africa

[2] Trading pidgins

- Traders interact with groups speaking different/other languages.

- Examples:

  - Chinook Jargon (Pacific NW, USA)

  - Bazaar Malay (SE Asia)

  - Chinese Pidgin Russian (Chinese traders in Russia)

- Crews working on ships from different language backgrounds.

- Examples:

  - Sabir (Mediterranean)

- Foreign soldiers interact with local people.

- A pidgin evolves.

- Examples:

  - Bamboo English (Asia)

Geographical distribution of pidgins/creoles

- Coastal areas of W. Africa, Caribbean, SE Asia.

Pidgin/Creole superstrates

- Very many *lexified* by: English - French - Spanish - Portuguese - Dutch

- Pidgins with non-European languages:

Pidgin	Lexifier	Location
Nubi	Arabic	East Africa
Frankolo	Zulu	South Africa
Chinook Jargon	Chinook	Pacific NW

The life cycle of pidgins and creoles

Stage	Known as:	Spoken as:	Characteristics
1	Early Pidgin	L2	Simplification of superstrate input; grammar, sounds, vocabulary, morphology. Very basic language.
2	Stabilized Pidgin	L2	Word order becomes regular, vocabulary starts to grow.

Stage	Known as:	Spoken as:	Characteristics
3	Expanded Pidgin	L2	More complexity.
4	Creole	L1	New native L1 speakers. The rapid expansion of grammar, vocabulary, and domains of use.

Stage 1: Early pidgins

- A very basic form of communication.

- Much variations in the way people speak the new pidgin.

- Very little/no grammar.

- Very variable word order.

- Meaning is communicated only through words and gestures, often ambiguous.

- Very restricted in what can be communicated – work-related information, not social interactions.

The development of early pidgins

[1] Elimination of functional words.

- Substrate speakers simplify the grammar of the superstrate language and eliminate words such as:

    - auxiliary verbs: 'will', 'have V-ed', 'did', 'is'.

    - determiners: 'the', 'a'.

    - complementizers: 'if', 'whether'.

- Superstrate English: 'The doctor is a good man.' → Early pidgin English: 'Doctor good man.'

- Superstrate English: 'I did not go to the market.' → Early pidgin English: 'Me no go market.'

[2] Simplification of superstrate morphology

- on verbs: walked → walk; walks → walk

- on nouns: many cats → many cats

[3] Reduction of superstrate vocabulary size

- Early pidgin vocabulary: 200-300 words

- Superstrate English vocabulary: 50,000 words

[4] Reanalysis of words

- Words from the superstrate are given new meanings.

- Examples from Tok Pisin (New Guinea):

    - long → long = in, at, on, for

    - belong → bilong = of, belonging to

    - haus bilong John = John's house

    - on top of → antap = on

    - *antap haus bilong John* = *on John's house*

    - 'Mary' → a woman (not nec. called Mary); female

    - hos meri = female horse/mare;

    - pik meri = female pig/sow

[5] Adjustment of the pronunciation of words borrowed from the superstrate: phonology/sounds.

- Superstrate English: 14 different vowel sounds

- Early pidgin English: 5-7 vowel sounds

- The principle of 'convergence':

    - If the same sounds occur in both the superstrate and the substrates → substrate speakers retain these in the pidgin. The pidgin sound system converges on sounds common in both superstrates and substrates.

- 'Levelling' = getting rid of sounds that aren't shared.

- Example of leveling and convergence:

    - Some sounds frequently used in English are not very common in other languages, and so get adjusted/replaced in early pidgin lexified by English

Sound	adjusted as:	superstrate	pidgin
th	d	this	dis
th	t	thing	ting
sh	s	ship	sip
f	p	fellow	pela
nd	n	hand	han

[6] Word order

- 'Sara cooked yams.' could be expressed as:
  - Sara cook yam. Sara yam cook.
  - Yam cook Sara. Cook Sara yam.
- 'Me coffee buy' could mean:
  - I will buy coffee.
  - I bought coffee.
  - He bought me coffee.
  - He will buy my coffee.

Stage 2: Stabilized pidgins

[1] **Word order stabilization.**

- Speakers establish regular ways of ordering subjects, objects, and verbs:
  - SVO or SOV or VSO
- Reduces ambiguity and increases efficiency.

[2] **Vocabulary growth**

- Allows the pidgin to be used in an increased set of domains, to talk about a wider range of topics.
- The vocabulary is increased in a variety of ways
  a. **Polysemy**: a word can be used with more than one meaning
     a. English 'mole' = (a) animal, or: (b) a spy

b. **Multi-functionality**: A word is used with different functions - verb, noun, adjective, etc.

    a. Tok Pisin 'bad':

        a. Adjective: tu bad pikin = two bad children

        b. Noun: W no laik dis kain bad. = We don't like this kind of badness.

c. **Further reanalysis of superstrate words**:

    a. e.g. "Before" reanalyzed as 'past time marker' in Chinese pidgin English → "Before me sell …" = "I sold"

d. **Compound words**: Novel combinations of two+ existing words to create a word with a new meaning

    a. English: 'green house', 'wet suit', 'hard drive'

    b. German: 'Schützengrabenvernichtungspanzerkraftwagen' = (military) tank

Tok Pisin	English Words	Meaning
kilman	kill man	murderer
daiman	die man	corpse
trikman	trick man	magician
haus buk	house book	library
haus mani	house money	bank
haus pepa	house paper	office
tok pait	talk fight	argument
tok orait	talk all right	agreement
tok win	talk wind	rumor
drai ai	dry eye	brave
big ai	big eye	greedy
krai dai	cry eye	funeral for a young person
chop dai	chop die	funeral for an person
gras bilong fes	grass belonging to face	bear

Stage 4: Creolization

- When a pidgin becomes the L1/a mother tongue of speakers, it is called a **creole**.

- Creoles are used in all domains of life, to talk about everything a person experiences.

- It's grammar becomes more complex.

- It's vocabulary increases.

[1] Vocabulary size increases significantly.

- By compounding and other word formation processes such as 'reduplication'.

- Repeating a word, often to form an intensified version.

English	Pidgin (Tok Pisin)
enormous	bigbig
stare at	lukluk
walk fast	gogo
party	singsing

[2] New grammatical words develop.

- 'been' → past tense in many creoles:

  - Mi <u>bin</u> kaekae wan krab. 'I ate a crab.'

- Future tense 'bae' in Tok Pisin:

  - <u>Bae</u> hem I go. 'He will go.'

- 'aspect' markers arise specifying how an event unfolds over time – continuously, instantaneously etc

- '**Determiners**' are created/re-introduced.

  - Equivalents to words such as 'the' and 'a'.

- '**Predicate markers**' arise in some creoles.

  - Especially in creoles in the South Pacific.

  - The particle 'i' is used between subjects and verbs:

- Jim i bin go long singsing. 'Jim went to the party.
- '**Classifiers**' are developed = words to used to help count nouns as in English 'two head of cattle'
  - Many languages of Asia use special words when nouns occur with numbers: 'classifiers'/CLs
  - 'two books' in Chinese, Japanese and Korean:
  - '2 CL book': (C) liang ben shu

[3] Faster speech causes sound changes

- When people are confident L1 speakers of a language, they speak it faster than L2 speakers and learners.
  - I am → I'm
  - we have gone → we've gone
- 'their' Tok Pisin pidgin form: bilong em
  - Tok Pisin creole form: blem
- 'one person': pidgin – wan pela, creole – nla
- A good example of sound change, reduction and the creation of new grammar: the future tense marker 'will' in Tok Pisin
  - Origin: English 'by and by', produced bas baimbai

Stage	I will go
1	baimbai mi go
2	baimbai mi go
3	bai mi go
4	mi bai go
5	mi ba-go

The significance of Creolization

- Children developing creoles create all kinds of sophisticated grammatical elements.

- Creole speakers spontaneously recreate types of grammar found in older languages.

- Creoles can express the same kinds of complex thoughts and propositions that older languages can, and can be used in all areas of life.

- Creoles diverge more and more from the superstrates they are related to.

Part II: Overview of upcoming themes

1. Theories of why pidgins and creoles around the world seem to be very similar in many ways.

2. Different final outcomes of the pidgin-creole life cycle and attitudes to pidgins and creoles.

3. Movie on pidgins.

Theories of the global similarity of pidgins and creoles

- Question 1: Pidgins and creoles all over the world have been noticed to be very similar in their grammar. How can it be explained?

- Question 2: Simple pidgins are developed into complex creole languages by children who become L1 speakers of the pidgin. How are children able to do this?

- Question 3: Pidgins and creoles all over the world often have some Portuguese words in them, even if they have not been lexified by Portuguese. Why?

A single-origin theory of pidgins

- Hypothesis. All pidgins lexified by European-languages relate to a single, early source:

  - 'Sabir', a maritime-trading language spoken in the Mediterranean during the Middle Ages.

- Key idea: relexification.

- The words from one language A gradually replace the words in another language B, without affecting the grammar in language B.

- Language B comes to be spoken mostly with words from language A.

Relexification

- [1] NW China: Uyghur has been relexified with Mandarin Chinese - it now has Chinese words used with original Uyghur grammar.

- [2] Saramaccan pidgin, spoken in Suriname. Originally a Portuguese pidgin, but later became an English pidgin, as English words were substituted for Portuguese, after the British took over the Portuguese territory.

- [3] A 'language savant': Christopher Taylor

  - A 'language savant' – spoke 15+ languages very well.

  - But Christopher was just relexifying English with words from other languages.

Repeated relexification of Sabir

1. Suggestion: the trading pidgin Sabir was lexified with Portuguese words.

2. Then spread as a Portuguese pidgin around the world.

3. Later relexified with words from English, French, Dutch and Spanish.

- Result: new English/French/Dutch pidgins with some remaining Portuguese words.

Hypothesis 2

- Maybe pidgins and creoles arise from the same mental processes of language acquisition that all children make use of when trying to develop language.

- This could account for the similarities in pidgins – all 'created' by the same processes of analysis and reproduction.

The 'Universal Grammar' approach

- Noam Chomsky: All humans are born with part of their brain dedicated to understanding and producing language.

- General design principles of language are hard-wired in the brain in all humans in a fully parallel way. ⇒ '**Universal Grammar/UG**'

- We are genetically pre-programmed to develop languages structured in the same basic way, because of the brain structures/UG we are all born with.

- There is a special 'window of opportunity' to make the best use of UG.

    - Access to UG is much stronger in children than in adults (the **Critical Period Hypothesis**, Unit 8).

    - Children are better, faster language learners than adults.

    - It becomes increasingly difficult to learn new languages as we get older (for most people).

Back to pidgins and creoles..

- UG is taken to be used by adults to create pidgin languages, and by children to develop pidgins into much more complex creoles.

- Pidgins and creoles resemble each other around the world because all humans have the same UG – the same specialized tools to develop language.

- Creoles are much more complex than pidgins because children have stronger access to UG – the early window of opportunity.

- Adults struggle harder with limited UG access and create simpler pidgin languages.

Comparing the single-origin and language acquisition hypotheses

- Do the two hypotheses provide answers to the three questions about pidgins and creoles?

Questions:	1: Pidgin and Creoles similarity around the world	2: Children create complex creoles from simple pidgins	3: The frequent presence of Portuguese words
The single-origin hypothesis	Yes (sort of)	No	Yes

Questions:	1: Pidgin and Creoles similarity around the world	2: Children create complex creoles from simple pidgins	3: The frequent presence of Portuguese words
The language acquisition hypothesis	Yes	Yes	No

A pidgin/creole sign language

- Nicaragua 1970s. New schools for the deaf set up.

- Tried to teach lip-reading and spoken language.

- Outside class, young teenage students innovated signs to communicate with each other - very basic and varied – like an early pidgin.

- Younger children spontaneously developed this into a much more complex system with a much larger vocabulary and shared signing conventions – the creation of new grammar.

- The creation of a signed creole. Possible because the younger children still had strong access to UG.

Further outcomes

(1) Stable (extended) diglossia

- Situation: the OL of a country where a pidgin/creole is widely spoken is <u>not</u> the superstrate of the pidgin.

- Can lead to stable extended diglossia – pidgin/creole used for L functions, the OL for H functions.

- Suriname (South America)

    - L = Sranan: an English-lexified pidgin:

    - H = Dutch: OL

(2) De-creolization

- Situation: a creole and its superstrate language are spoken by members of a single population.

- Over time, creole speakers and superstrate speakers come into contact more than in the past.

- Creole words and grammar gradually get replaced with words and grammar from the standard form of the superstrate language.

- A continuum of variation is found – some varieties closer to the creole (the 'basilect'), others closer to the superstrate (the 'acrolect').

Example: Guyanese creole

- A range of varieties from the acrolect to the basilect.

Language status	Example
1. The acrolect (pure superstate)	I gave him one.
2.	Ah gave im wan.
3.	Ah did give we wan
4.	Mi di hi ee wan
5. the basilica (pure creole)	Mi bin been am wan.

- With de-creolization, a creole can "hide its tracks" over time, so that its origins and identity as a creole are lost

(3) Promotion into NL or OL

- Some extended pidgins/creoles may be promoted into NL or OL roles, and used in education.

- The pidgin/creole may become standardized and used in newspapers and official documents.

    - In New Guinea, the pidgin Tok Pisin has been made into an OL. It is the most widely used language in New Guinea – mostly as an L2.

Example: Bislama in Vanuatu.

- A workforce pidgin created on Australian plantations and then brought back to Vanuatu by returning laborers.

- Vanuatu was jointly administered by the colonial powers Britain and France.

- The struggle for independence created nationalism and unity among the 100+ language groups.

- Independence 1980. Bislama was made NL and OL, alongside English and French (both OLs too).

- However, Bislama was not promoted for use in formal domains, unlike English and French.

- No support for use of Bislama in education, at any level.

- Studies showed that children schooled with Bislama got higher grades and learned English better.

- Teachers admitted it would be easier to teach in Bislama.

- But prejudices against the value of pidgins are deep and strong, when compared with older European languages.

(4) Re-creolization

- People sometimes switch from speaking a standard variety of English, French etc. to the regular use of a creole language.

- Referred to as "re-creolization" of a person's speech.

- A switch in the opposite direction to de-creolization.

- Re-creolization = standard → creole

- De-creolization = creole → standard

Two examples of re-creolization

[1] Teenagers of Afro-Caribbean origin living in large cities in the UK – London, Birmingham..

- Found to adopt the use of Jamaican creole which they hear in tv, movies, and popular music. Why?

- Assertion of a shared, group identity:

  - Being young and black and faced with challenges of inner-city life and prejudices from other segments of British society.

- Expressing pride in an Afro-Caribbean cultural identity.

[2] Gullah in the US

- Gullah is a creole spoken on the east coast of the US.

- Young people grow up speaking Gullah.

- Later leave the community to find jobs.

- This requires a switch to use of standard American English/SAE.

- Later return to retire in the Gullah area, and re-creolize their speech – switch from SAE to Gullah again.

- Symbolizes a reconnection to the original social and ethnic group.

Summary

- New languages are developing in multilingual communities and follow a common life cycle with different stages and final outcomes.

- People hold strong attitudes toward new hybrid languages.
    - Positive: speakers may value pidgins and creoles for reasons of social identity.
    - Less positive: speakers may feel that pidgins and creoles are not worthy to be used in formal areas of life – not as prestigious as older standard languages.