5

Contact Languages: Structural Consequences of Social Factors

Key Concepts

Defining lingua francas

Elaboration and nativization in creole formation

Multiple influences in creole genesis

Features of creole languages

How creole languages differ from mixed languages

Among the many languages of the world are a few that have been assigned a somewhat marginal position in the study of linguistics: the various lingua francas, pidgins, creoles, and so-called mixed languages. Such languages have apparently existed since time immemorial, but we know much less about them than we know about languages that have a long history as standard languages spoken by a dominant group. The history of serious study of such languages goes back only a few decades. 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. A major issue in contact linguistics today is the status of such languages, an issue which we will return to below in our discussion of creole languages. At the

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center of this controversy is the issue of how different contact languages really are from other languages. For example, English (which is a Germanic language) is notorious for having loanwords from Romance languages which were borrowed during different periods of its development; it clearly changed considerably through language contact. Many, if not most, languages have been influenced at some point in their history by contact with other languages. Although we have certain categories of types of contact languages, as we will discuss in this chapter, it is important to remember than most languages have developed in contexts of language contact. The goal of this chapter is to survey what we find in the literature on language contact, providing an overview of the development of the approach to language contact in sociolinguistics. In the following sections, we will first discuss lingua francas, then turn to a discussion of pidgin and creole languages, and end this chapter with a brief discussion of so-called mixed languages.

Lingua Francas

People who speak different languages and are in contact with each other must find some way of communicating, 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' (Barotchi 1994: 2211).

At one time or another, Greek koiné 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 serve as lingua francas. Of these, Arabic is 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, for example, in travel, business, technology, and international relations.

A lingua franca can be spoken in a variety of ways. Not only are they spoken differently in different places, but individual speakers vary widely in their ability to use the languages. English, for example, is for some speakers a native language, for others a second language, and for still others a foreign language (see also the discussion in chapter 13 about English as a lingua franca in Europe). 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 (see chapter 14 for further discussion of this), English, spoken in all kinds of ways, is widely used as a lingua franca.

Kiswahili (the name used by its speakers to refer to what is often called Swahili in Anglophone circles) is a lingua franca of East Africa. On the coast, primarily in Kenya and Tanzania but also as far north as Somalia and as far south as Mozambique, it has long been spoken as a native language (Polomé 1967, 1). However, it

also spread as a lingua franca inland and it is used in education in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi; it is also widely used in politics and other public venues through the Great Lakes region (Kishe 2003).

In North America, Chinook Jargon was used extensively as a lingua franca among native peoples of the coastal northwest, from as far south as northern California and up the coast of British Columbia into Alaska, during the nineteenth century. Its peak was the second half of the 1800s; today it is virtually extinct. Despite the name, Chinook Jargon was an established pidgin, largely based on Chinook (a Native American language of the Northwest) which apparently developed before Europeans arrived but was also used by English and French speakers in the region (Thomason 1983, 820). Even though today hardly anyone can use Chinook Jargon, a few words from it have achieved limited use in English: for example, *potlach* ('lavish gift-giving'), *cheechako* ('greenhorn'), and possibly *high mucky-muck* ('arrogant official') (see Taylor 1981).

Exploration 5.1: Lingua Francas and Foreign Languages

Have you ever been in a situation where you needed to use a lingua franca? How is this different from a situation in which some people are speaking their native language, and others are speaking that language as a second/foreign language?

Pidgin and Creole Languages: Definitions

Before delving into the (problematic) definition of pidgins and creoles, we should define other basic terms. Linguists studying pidgins and creoles often use the terms superstrate and substrate to refer the different roles languages play in the development of a contact language. The **superstrate** language (usually only one) is the socially, economically, and politically dominant language in the multilingual context in which the pidgin or creole develops. It is also usually the language which provides the vocabulary for the pidgin or creole, and in that case may also be called the **lexifier language**. Although socially dominant, we must also recognize that the variety of the superstrate language spoken in a particular context was not always what was considered the standard. The European colonists who often provided the superstrate varieties for pidgins and creole languages were very rarely speakers of prestige varieties of their language. Mufwene (2001, 35) describes them as 'defector soldiers and sailors, destitute farmers, indentured laborers, and sometimes convicts … from the lower strata … [who] … spoke nonstandard varieties.'

The **substrate** languages (by definition two or more) are the native languages of the speakers who contribute to the development of these pidgin or creole languages by providing some vocabulary but also phonological systems and grammatical structures. The speakers of these languages are usually socially subordinate to superstrate language speakers. While this social configuration is not necessary for the linguistic development of a pidgin or creole language, exceptions to this pattern are rare (Bakker 2008, Versteegh 2008).

Providing definitions of pidgin and creole languages is no simple matter. Up until fairly late in the twentieth century, what was called the **life cycle model** was widely accepted (see figure 5.1). This model proposes that pidgin languages develop in situations in which speakers have no common language other than the superstrate, but a lack of access to this language. Because of limited input in the superstrate language, they do not simply acquire the superstrate but create a pidgin form of it to use among themselves. While there are many social environments in which a pidgin can arise, the two most common are in situations in which there is either mass migrant labor or increased trade (Winford 2003, 271). In either situation, there are people with a variety of linguistic backgrounds who need to communicate with one another, but one language is very much socially dominant.

Pidgins are thus simplified languages. In some cases, they are used in contexts in which there is continued contact with the lexifier language and a continuum between the pidgin and the lexifier develops, usually ending with the pidgin dissolving and the lexifier language being spoken. In other contexts, the pidgin expands and becomes stabilized. At this stage, if there is contact with native speakers of the superstrate language, it may again develop a continuum of varieties between the expanded pidgin and the lexifier, with the lexifier language ultimately winning out.

In some cases, the expanded pidgin is used by the children in a community, and it becomes more elaborated and regularized grammatically and acquires registers so that it can be used in all social contexts. It may also become the first language of the next generation. The life cycle model is based on the idea that the distinction between a pidgin and a creole is about nativization, that is, that nativization brought about elaboration. Thus, the generalization was that these two aspects separated pidgins (non-native, simplified languages) from creoles (native, fully elaborated languages). Thus the role of first language acquisition was key to the development of creole languages from pidgin languages.

This model is critical in the **language bioprogram hypothesis** proposed by Bickerton (Bickerton 1981, 1983), which argues that humans are programmed to create languages, and given only input in a simplified pidgin language, they will

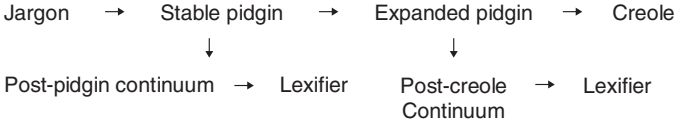

Figure 5.1 The life cycle model of pidgins and creoles

create an elaborated, full-fledged language. Bickerton claims that only this hypothesis adequately explains the similarities among creoles: universal principles of first language acquisition are involved (Bickerton 1983). 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' (1983, 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' (1983, 121). It is in just these circumstances that creoles arise. Bickerton (1977, 49) says that the essential difference between pidgin formation and creole formation is that pidgin formation is second-language learning with restricted input and creole formation is first-language learning, also with restricted input.

Bickerton's hypothesis is not widely accepted, and recent research shows a problem with this proposed chain of events in the life cycle model in general. In a number of creole languages, elaboration appears to develop when expanded pidgins are being spoken by non-native speakers, that is, before nativization occurs. What has been called the **gradualist model** or **gradualism** has been the assumption of much research on creole formation since the late 1980s (e.g., Arends 1993, 1995, Singler 1990, Wekker 1996). Part of the reason for this development is based on methodology; it was not until the 1980s that creolists began to use historical documents as a source of information about earlier forms of creole languages and the social situations in which they arose (Arends and Bruyn 1994, 111)

In general, the finding is that it is not native speakers but the communicative context which gives rise to elaboration. Elaboration occurs when there is a group of speakers who use the code for regular communication; thus, it is discourse which plays the major role in creole development. While no one dismisses the role of first language acquisition in the process, it is no longer generally accepted as the catalyst for grammatical elaboration. One perspective on the roles of adult non-native speakers and child learners is expressed as follows: 'Adults have a creative impact on the language, in expanding the already rich syntactic resources and lexicon; whereas the children have a regularizing impact, particularly as they streamline and condense phonology and generalize grammatical patterns' (Jordan 1991, 195, cited in Bakker 2008, 146).

It should also be noted that there are some cases in which nativization does indeed seem to play a role in elaboration, such as with Hawaiian Creole English and some recent research on sign languages such as American Sign Language and Nicaraguan Sign Language (see Veenstra 2008, 231, for a brief summary of this). However, it does not seem to be a necessary requirement.

If we abandon the idea that elaboration, which is the hallmark of a creole as opposed to a pidgin, necessarily occurs with nativization, then the distinction between a pidgin and a creole becomes less useful. While there are languages which are simplified and non-native which we can call pidgins, and those which are elaborated and native which we can call creoles, there are also other scenarios: elaborated languages which have not undergone nativization, and also processes of nativization and elaboration that occur over many generations. We are left with no simple definitions for, or clear distinction between, pidgin and creole languages, but many interesting questions. We will often use the notation of **P/C languages** to refer to these contact varieties, in keeping with our discussion above about the difficulty in distinguishing between the two.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, we will address how the study of second language acquisition is relevant to our discussion of P/C languages, consider some theories about the process of P/C language development, give an overview of pidgin and creole languages world-wide, and finally present some classic features of these contact varieties. We will also discuss some disputed ideas about a continuum between a Creole and its superstrate language. Finally, we will introduce the basic concepts about mixed languages, and how they are similar to and different from P/C languages.

Connections between P/C languages and second language acquisition

There are two interrelated issues involved in the discussion of the relationship between P/C languages and second language acquisition. First is the issue of the similarities between these two processes; second is the role of second language acquisition in the development of PC languages. We will briefly discuss both of these topics as represented in the study of P/C linguistics.

An early work which discussed second-language learning as 'pidginization' was Schumann (1976), which looked at learners of English and argued that one speaker in particular showed simplification which was evidence of pidginization. While this study was often criticized by both second language acquisition scholars and researchers on P/C languages, it raised the idea of the connection between different types of language contact which has proved to be productive.

Winford (2003) discusses the important ways in which a pidgin can be distinguished from other types of simplified language use such as 'imperfect' second-language learning (**interlanguage**). One important distinction is that pidgins are conventionalized systems of communication, not idiosyncratic production. A pidgin can itself be a target language, that is, something which a speaker is trying to learn. However, both pidgins and interlanguage have a substrate influence (i.e., influence from the speaker's native language). Although it is often recognized that some similar linguistic and cognitive processes are at work in second language acquisition and pidginization, the distinction has been made between the development of an

interlanguage spoken by an individual and the sociolinguistic process involving communication between various individuals speaking a second language which forms a pidgin (Siegel 2008, 191).

This leads us to the second issue, the role of second language acquisition in P/C language development. Obviously, some sort of second language acquisition is at work in P/C language development, but the question arises of why the acquisition does not come closer to the target language, that is, why what is called **fossilization** occurs. There is no general answer to this, as pidgin formation scenarios differ, but researchers have raised the issues of social and psychological distance as well a sociohistorical factors which limit the access speakers have to the superstrate/lexifier language (Siegel 2008, 195–6).

The concept of **transfer** in second language acquisition is that learners use features of their first language in the language they are learning. We will discuss below the parallel issue of the influence of the substrate languages in P/C language formation, but again, the issue is the distinction between transfer in an individual interlanguage and the establishment of a transferred feature in a pidgin language spoken by a group of people. (See Siegel 2008 for a more detailed discussion of how the processes of simplification and transfer as discussed in second language acquisition research are relevant for P/C language researchers.)

Pidgin and Creole Formation

If we look at the usual understandings of the processes involved in the genesis of a pidgin (understood as a simplified code) and a creole language (understood as a full-fledged language), we can see that they are almost diametrically opposed to each other in certain important ways. Pidgin formation generally involves some kind of 'simplification' of a language, for example, 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. Winford (2003, 302) points out that 'so-called pidginization is really a complex combination of different processes of change, including reduction and simplification of input materials, internal innovation, and regularization of structure, with L1 influence also playing a role.'

On the other hand, creole formation involves expansion of the morphology and syntax, regularization of the phonology, increase in the number of functions in which the language is used, and development of a larger vocabulary. Even though the processes are different, it is still not always clear whether we are talking about a pidgin, an expanded 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, an expanded pidgin, and a creole.

Scholars studying pidgin and creole languages have moved away from using the terms pidginization and creolization. Winford (1997) has pointed out that these terms cover a wide variety of phenomena that are not well understood. He suggests **pidgin formation** and **creole formation** as alternatives so that investigators focus on the specific linguistic input and processes that are involved: 'we should be asking ourselves … which kinds of linguistic processes and change are common to all … contact situations and which are not, and how we can formulate frameworks to account for both the similarities and differences in the types of restructuring found in each case' (1997a, 138). A further issue with the term creolization is pointed out by Bakker (2008, 146), who notes that it is used to mean the process of becoming a mother tongue and the process of structural elaboration, which, as discussed above, do not necessarily happen in tandem.

Mufwene (2008, 461) also adds a political dimension to the problems with these terms when applied to varieties developed from European languages in contexts of colonization or slavery, saying 'Usage of the terms *creolization* and *indigenization* to identify their divergence from the European languages from which they developed reflects both a colonial disfranchising attitude toward the populations speaking them and ignorance among linguists of the role that contact has always played in language diversification.'

Theories of creole genesis

In the above sections we have touched upon different perspectives of the central question of P/C languages: how and why do they emerge? This section will provide an overview of ideas about how to answer this question within the framework of the historical development of the field of pidgin and creole studies.

An early perspective on the study of creole languages was that they were structurally similar and that this similarity needed to be explained (although note that this perspective was also challenged, e.g. Muysken 1988, Arends et al. 1995). One theme that emerges in this research is the influence of **linguistic universals** in creole genesis. As mentioned above, one theory by Bickerton is the language bioprogram hypothesis, which focuses on the innate abilities of humans to create language. While this particular theory has not been well accepted, the idea that there are linguistic universals is not a bone of contention among scholars. As noted by Kouwenberg and Singler (2008, 5): 'Virtually no one within creole studies denies a role either to the substrate or to (first) language acquisition. Rather, the questions that engage the field today involve the nature of the interaction of substrate, lexifier, and universal forces.'

In an earlier phase of creole studies, however, there was a sense that Bickerton's position was in opposition to the so-called **substratist** position, which held that the substrate languages held an important role in creole genesis. The idea of a shared substrate seems particularly appropriate to explain many similarities among the

Atlantic Ocean and possibly certain Indian Ocean pidgins and creoles on the one hand and Pacific Ocean pidgins and creoles on the other. The former are said to have an African substrate and the latter an Oceanic one, that is, each contains certain language characteristics of the native ancestral languages of their speakers. In this view Atlantic pidgins and creoles retain certain characteristics of ancestral African languages. African slaves were often multilingual, spoke languages of similar structure but different vocabulary, and tended to treat English and French, and to a lesser extent Portuguese, in the same way. Therefore, the pidgins and creoles are European-language-based and were freshly created in different places. What similarities they have they owe to this fusion of European and African components (see Holm 1988, 2004, and Winford 2003, 16–17).

One theory which focuses on the role of the substrate in creole genesis is the **relexification hypothesis** (Lefebvre 1998, 2004), which is the idea that the phonological form of the superstrate language is used while retaining the semantic and syntactic features from the substrate language; that is, there is substitution of the vocabulary but not the grammatical patterns. This is a strategy for second language acquisition with lack of access to the target language, and leads to variation in the early creole community; in order for a uniform creole to emerge, the process of **leveling** must also occur (see Lefebvre 2001).

Another view of the similarities among Atlantic pidgins and creoles requires us to examine the very beginnings of the pidgin formation process. For example, according to McWhorter (1995, 2000), their similarities can be accounted for if we look back to the beginnings of the slave trade and the existence of English and French slave forts on the West African coast. In these forts contact languages developed, with the most important of these from this point of view being West African Pidgin Portuguese. These contact languages provided the bases for most of the pidgins and creoles that later developed across the Atlantic. This is his **Afrogenesis hypothesis** concerning origin. McWhorter points to the relative paucity of Spanish-based creoles in the New World as evidence which supports this claim as well as to the fact that such creoles are also missing from places we might expect to find them, for example, Puerto Rico and Cuba. (The Spanish creoles that do exist, e.g., Papiamentu, are relexified Portuguese ones.) McWhorter points out that Spain came late to the sugar industry, did not use labor-intensive cultivation systems, sometimes took areas from Portugal, and did not have large slave forts and settlements in Africa. This view of the development of pidgins and creoles is a **monogenetic** view, claiming as it does that a single source accounts for the perceived similarities among the varieties we find.

In contemporary study, most creole scholars would agree that the opposition of universals versus substrate influence is a false dichotomy; most studies today acknowledge multiple influences in P/C language formation. Further, in addition to focus on the contributions of linguistic universals and the substrate languages, there is an increased awareness that we need to also better understand the superstrate-related properties of P/C language structures. While individual studies may focus

on one influence or the other, most linguists who study pidgin and creole languages agree that there are multiple factors at play in the development of these contact varieties; the relexification hypothesis does not demand that relexification was the only process that was operative during the creation of pidgins (Winford 2006). Further, processes which influence the development of all other languages also play a role in creole formation. Like all other languages, creoles have complex histories of development which involve multiple factors, language contact being only one of them.

Geographical Distribution

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. (See the link to *The Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures* on the website to see a map marking the locations where pidgin and creole languages are spoken.) 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.

A classic source on P/C language 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. Hancock lists 127 pidgins and creoles; those derived from seven common lexifier languages and some examples are given in Table 5.1. (More recently Holm (1989) provides a useful survey of pidgins and creoles, and Smith (1995) lists 351 pidgins and creoles along with 158 assorted mixed languages.)

In addition to these eighty-four languages based on European superstrate languages, Hancock lists another forty-three creoles based on a variety of other languages, for example, 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, discussed above), 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.

For many of these languages, it is not immediately obvious if they are pidgin or creole languages, and some (e.g., Gastarbeiter Deutsch) were never firmly established as pidgins and are no longer in use. However, this list does provide a view of the wide variety of contact languages that have caught the notice of linguists.

Table 5.1 Pidgins and creoles by lexifier language

Lexifier Language	*Number Listed*	*Examples*
English	35	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)
French	15	Louisiana Creole, Haitian Creole, Seychelles Creole, and Mauritian Creole
Portuguese	14	Papiamentu (used in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao), Guiné Creole, Senegal Creole, and Saramaccan (spoken in Suriname)
Spanish	7	Cocoliche (spoken by Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires)
Dutch	5	US Virgin Islands Dutch Creole (or Negerhollands), now virtually extinct, and Afrikaans (here said to have been creolized in the seventeenth century)
Italian	3	Asmara Pidgin (spoken in parts of Ethiopia)
German	5	Yiddish and whatever still remains of Gastarbeiter Deutsch

Source: based on information from Hancock (1977)

Linguistic Characteristics of P/C Languages

Winford (2003, 307) says that 'creoles constitute a motley assortment of contact vernaculars with different histories and lines of development, though of course they still have much in common … [and] there are no structural characteristics that all creoles share … [and] no structural criteria that can distinguish creoles from other types of language.' This last point has been disputed, most notably by McWhorter, who posits a Creole Prototype (1998, 2005). For a deeper discussion of this debate, see Mufwene (2008) and Ansaldo et al. (2007).

In describing the linguistic characteristics of a pidgin or creole it is difficult to resist the temptation to compare it with the superstrate 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 P/C language. 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. In the next sections, we will discuss some features of P/C languages which illustrate some commonly found characteristics as well as differences across languages.

Phonology

The sounds of a pidgin or creole are likely to be fewer and less complicated in their possible arrangements than those of the corresponding superstrate 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 sound in *butter*. While the numbers of sounds used in pidgins may be smaller than in the corresponding superstrate 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, for example, 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 subsequent elaboration leading to an expanded pidgin or creole language.

Morphosyntax

In pidgins and creoles there is likely to be 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, for example, 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' vs. '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. In their absence, alternative ways can be found to express the same concepts of number, time, and comparison. Tense marking is often expressed through **periphrastic constructions**, such as the use of *bin* and the unmarked verb for past tense and *bai* and the unmarked verb for the future tense in Tok Pisin (Verhaar 1995).

Syntactically, sentences in pidgins are likely to be uncomplicated in clausal structure. The development of embedded clauses, for example, of relative clauses, is one characteristic of the process of elaboration. Negation may be achieved through use of a simple negative particle *no* in the English-based Krio, for example, *i no tu had* ('It's not too hard') and *pa* in the French-based Seychelles Creole, for example, *i pa tro difisil* ('It's not too difficult'). One particularly interesting feature is the use of pre-verbal particles to show that an action is continuing, that is, 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-based 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 superstrate languages apparently use similar syntactic devices. As discussed above, theories of creole genesis have sought to explain such similarities.

Vocabulary

The vocabulary of a pidgin or a creole has a great many similarities to that of the superstrate language with which it is associated. However, the pidgin will be much more limited, and 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, for example, 'repetition' or 'intensification.' When the pidgin is expanded to a creole, it may become more complex in terms of both phonology and morphology, but will of course retain these lexical remnants of its pidgin past. Consequently, in Tok Pisin we find pairs like *tok* ('talk') and *toktok* ('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, 'hair' is *gras bilong het*, 'beard' is *gras bilong fes*, 'feathers' is

gras bilong pisin, 'moustache' is *gras bilong maus*, '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, for example, *kaikai* ('food'), *pukpuk* 'crocodile,' and *guria* 'earthquake,' and even German, because of historical reasons, for example, *rausim* ('throw out'; compare to German *raus* '[get] out'). The source may not always be a 'polite' one, for example, Tok Pisin *bagarap* ('break down') is from the English *bugger up*. So *ka bilong mi i bagarap* is 'My car broke down.' In varieties with African substrate languages, there is also often a noticeable presence of these languages in the vocabulary (e.g., see Turner 1949, on Gullah). Still another source of vocabulary will be innovation. A good example from Winford (2003, 322) is '*as* (<Engl. *arse*) means not just "buttock," but also "cause, foundation." Similarly, *bel* means not just "belly," but also "seat of the emotions"."

From Pidgin to Creole and Beyond

Not every pidgin eventually becomes a creole, that is, undergoes the process of creole formation. In fact, very few do. Most pidgins are lingua francas, existing to meet temporary 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.

Elaboration occurs only when a pidgin becomes the language of a speech community. 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 may have developed pidginized varieties of German to communicate when necessary with one another, their children did not creolize these varieties but acquired German, since they had to go to school and be educated in German. A full language was available to them so they had no need to creolize Gastarbeiter Deutsch.

The example of Tok Pisin is useful in considering how a pidgin expands and develops into a creole. It was not until the 1960s that the pidgin was nativized, that is, children began to acquire it as a first language; it had been an extended pidgin for previous generations. Mühlhäusler (1982) noted that in Tok Pisin grammatical categories such as time and number had become compulsory, a word-formation component had been developed, devices for structuring discourse were present, and there were opportunities for stylistic differentiation (1982, 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, for example, 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 (1982, 448–9). Aitchison (1991) has also 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. As mentioned above, *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. Mufwene (2008, 460) writes:

> I maintain that there are no particular restructuring processes than can be identified as *creolization* or *indigenization* in the sense of speakers applying a special combination of evolutionary processes that transform a language into a creole or an indigenized variety. Both creole and indigenized varieties have developed by the same restructuring processes that have produced other languages, be they in terms of particular changes in the production of phonological, morphosyntactic, or semantic units, or in terms of selecting particular phonological, morphosyntactic, or semantic-interpreation rules. The varieties are reminders of how languages have changed and speciated several times throughout the history of mankind.

Of course, as mentioned above, while this is a general trend in creole linguistics today, this does not mean that everyone agrees. Some linguists (e.g., McWhorter 2005) still maintain that creole languages have distinct features.

Recent intensive study of pidgins and creoles has revealed how quickly such languages can and do change. Pidgin formation can occur almost 'overnight.' Relexification also seems to be a rapid process. Creole formation can take as little as two generations, although a language can also become elaborated over many generations and still not be spoken as a native language. The particular combination of language and social contact that gives rise to pidgins and creoles, despite a sense that these languages are unusual, seems also to have occurred frequently in the history of the human species.

What this suggests is that many now traditional views about how languages change may need revision (look at chapter 8 for our discussion of this). 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 apparently occur. 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.

Creole continuum?

Some scholars of creoles suggest that because a creole can be related to some other dominant (or superordinate) language a **creole** (or post-creole) **continuum** can arise. DeCamp (1971) used this term to discuss Jamaican and Guyanese Creoles because those were situations in which the lexifier language (i.e., English) co-existed with the Creole. This process has become known as **decreolization**, although this term has fallen out of favor with some researchers. For instance, Aceto (1999), Ansaldo et al. (2007) and DeGraff (2001) argue that change in creole languages should be discussed in the same terms as change in other languages. Changes in creole languages are not just a reversion to some past or more standard form.

In discussing the creole continuum in Guyanese English, Bickerton (1975, 24) has proposed a number of terms that may be used to refer to its different parts. 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, and there is variation within them. One important characteristic of these intermediate mesolects is that they blend into one another to fill the 'space' between the acrolect and the basilect. That space is, as we might expect, considerably socially stratified.

Writing of the continuum in Jamaican Creole, DeCamp (1977) has observed that particular speakers often 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.' (DeCamp 1977, 29)

What is particularly important here is the 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. Patrick (1999) points out that at least in Kingston the continuum is much more complicated: multi-dimensional rather than uni-dimensional. The idea of a simple continuum may therefore be little more than a neat theoretical concept, since the variation found in everyday language use requires taking into consideration many other explanatory factors.

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. If the total society is highly stratified, so that there is little or no contact between the groups who speak the creolized and superordinate 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 what has been described as a diglossic situation (see chapter 4), as in Haiti between Haitian Creole and French. A continuum would require that there be some kind of continuity in society among the various subgroups. It arises from the development of varieties intermediate between the original pidgins and the superordinate variety. 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.

Exploration 5.2: Another View: 'Broken English'

Saville-Troike (2003, 196) 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 would you say in a follow-up letter to the editor of the *Guardian*? Compare your letter with letters that others write. On which points do most of you agree? How effective are such discussions in newspapers on issues of this kind in bringing about change?

It is also important to note that not only Patrick (1999) but others such as Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) reject the idea of the continuum as being altogether

too simplistic. Aceto has also noted the lack of any evidence of a creole continuum or decreolization in some lesser-known English-based creoles in the Caribbean (Aceto 2006, 2010). Patrick (1999), Aceto (1999), and LePage and Tabouret-Keller (1985) claim that in some cases, the concept of the creole continuum results from simplifying and manipulating data rather than trying to confront the evidence in all its complexity. Aceto notes that the creole languages function like other languages in a multilingual society, and that speakers switch in and out of different codes if they have them in their repertoire. All argue that the creole continuum does not explain the linguistic choices that speakers make. 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.

Exploration 5.3: Continua

If the argument is that creole languages are not qualitatively different from other languages without the same type of history of language contact, then we should be able to apply the concepts of the basilect, mesolect, and acrolect to *all* languages. That is, all languages might have a version which is farthest from the standard, a version which is like the standard, and something in-between. How does this work for the variety of English that you speak, or other languages in your speech community? Do you think this concept can be usefully applied to all languages, or should it be abandoned, or reserved only for creole languages?

Other Contact Varieties: Mixed Languages

We can use the term 'contact variety' to refer to a number of different kinds of phenomena, such as dialects of immigrant languages which take on features of the majority languages; for example, what is commonly called Pennsylvania Dutch is a variety of German with lots of lexical borrowing and structural changes which have occurred over the hundreds of years it has been spoken in the United States. While not all of these changes are necessarily due to direct influence from English, because this variety has emerged in a situation of language contact, the label 'contact variety' may be applied. Of course, it is important to remember that no language is completely isolated and it is possible to argue that most languages develop in contexts in which there is some multilingualism. Nonetheless, even if we see this as a matter of degree rather than a clear difference, we can distinguish between languages which show clear features from the languages they are in contact with and those which, for instance, show little beyond **cultural borrowings** in terms of influence from other languages.

There are also cases of the development of languages which seem more clearly to result from a combination of two particular varieties. Thomason (2001) distinguishes these languages from creoles in that there are just two languages involved, and the components of the **mixed language** can be easily traced back to one or the other language. She offers this simple definition: 'A mixed language is a language whose lexical and grammatical structures cannot all be traced back primarily to a single source ("parent") language' (Thomason 2008, 255), noting that this definition draws on the notion of a **language family** used in historical linguistics.

The social circumstances under which mixed languages arise is different from what we know of the social environments in which P/C languages develop. Mixed languages develop when there is widespread bilingualism and thus, unlike pidgins, they do not develop due to a need for a lingua franca.

Bakker (1997) describes one such language, Michif, a mixture of Cree and French spoken mainly in Canada by well under a thousand people of *métis* (First Nation and French) ancestry. Michif is sometimes characterized as a language that mixes Cree verbs and French nouns but probably more accurately is one that uses Cree grammar and French vocabulary. It is a clear marker of group identity for those who use it and emerged to express 'a new ethnic identity, mixed Cree and French. A new language was needed to express that identity. The most obvious way to form a new language was through mixing the two community languages, Cree and French' (Bakker and Papen 1997, 355). Winford (2003, 206) adds that the Michif are an example of 'newly emerged social groups who wanted a language of their own … [and] who saw themselves as distinct from either of the cultural groups from which they descended.'

Another commonly cited example of a mixed language is Ma'a, also called Mbugu, which is spoken in the Usambara Mountains of northeastern Tanzania. In this case, the structure of the language is largely Bantu (the Bantu languages spoken in the region, and by the Ma'a people, are Pare and Shambaa), but the lexicon is at least half from Cushitic languages or Masai, a language related to neither Cushitic nor Bantu. Thomason (2001, 200) reports that earlier descriptions of the language noted more structural features that were not Bantu, so the language cannot be simply described as a Bantu language with borrowings, but is a mixed language.

Media Lengua is another frequently cited case of language mixture, and is described as being of predominantly Quechua grammatical structure and 90 percent Spanish-derived lexicon (Muysken 1981, 52). Like other mixed languages, it is an ingroup language, spoken by people living in villages in the central Ecuador highlands. Muysken describes the motivation for its creation as the desire to express a distinct group identity which was neither acculturated into Spanish-speaking urban society nor completely part of the traditional rural Quechua culture.

These examples, along with those from the chapter 4, show that the different social contexts of multilingualism create different linguistic consequences for the languages in contact. In some cases, language learning occurs, in other cases, new codes such as pidgins, creoles, or mixed languages are formed. The languages which emerge differ from 'regular' languages more in degree than in kind, however, because

nearly all languages show signs of language contact through lexical if not structural borrowing. Once again we return to a basic idea presented in chapter 2: languages are both ideologically and linguistically constructed.

Exploration 5.4: Language Contact Phenomena: Similarities and Differences

From descriptions in this chapter and chapter 4, what do you see as the differences between multilingual discourse, creole languages, and mixed languages? Address this question both in terms of the social situations which give rise to these different language contact phenomena, and in terms of their structural features.

Chapter Summary

While the chapter 4 explored how speakers use their different languages, this chapter investigated how the languages themselves change and develop in different types of multilingual scenarios. The main focus is on pidgin and creole languages, and we explore the different ideas that researchers have about how these languages are formed and why they share certain similarities. A final section introduces another type of contact language, called mixed languages, which both are structurally very different from pidgins and creoles and arise in different types of social scenarios.

Exercises

1. Look at the following questions and answers about pidgin and creole language from Wikianswers.com (see http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_are_pidgins_and_creoles). What problems are there with these answers, and how could you improve on them?

   What are pidgins and creoles?
   Answer:
   Pidgins and creoles are two types of artificial language.

   A **pidgin** is formed when two cultures first come into contact with each other; since neither speaks the other's language, an artificial basic language is created as both sides try to communicate. The word itself is a corruption of the English word *business* as pronounced by 19th-century Chinese.