

## INTD0111A

### The Unity and Diversity of Human Language

Lecture #20  
April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009

## Announcements

- Assignment 4 is posted online. I know it's going to be nice weather, but since the assignment involves an interviewing task, you want to start working on it as early as you can.
- Linguistic Profiling:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAZMIC\\_OwTw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAZMIC_OwTw)

## Language and gender

- Sociolinguistic studies on the speech of men and women showed that both genders differ in their usage of language.
- For example, women have been noted to use more standard forms than men. Why?
- "Linguistic insecurity?"
- "Child rearing?"
- Or perhaps the studies didn't take into account other factors than just gender.

## Nichols (1983)

- Study of linguistic behavior in an African-American community in Georgetown County in South Carolina.
- After several months living there, she described the sociolinguistic situation as:  
"a speech continuum which ranges from an English creole known as *Gullah* or *Geechee* on the one end, to a variety of Black English [AAE] in the center, to a regionally standard variety of English at the other end."
- Of the three, Gullah, is the most local and least prestigious.

## Nichols (1983)

- Nichols studies how frequently speakers use the following Gullah terms in their speech:
  - a. the pronoun *ee*, e.g., *Miss Hassel had – ee had all kinds of flowers.*
  - b. the word *fu*, used to mean 'to', e.g., *I come fu get my coat.*
  - c. the preposition *to*, used to mean 'at,' e.g., *Can we stay to the table?*

## Nichols (1983)

- It turned out that older men and women used Gullah terms generally, but among the younger women and men there was a sharp difference.
- Beginning at age 10, males used more Gullah than females.
- Obviously, age differences mattered here.
- An analysis of the social network of the community might explain the patterns.

### **Nichols (1983)**

- Men, both young and old, take construction jobs, which require little education but pay well. On the job, they use Gullah for interaction and group identification.
- Older women primarily worked as farm day laborers or maids, where interaction is again with coworkers.
- Younger woman, by contrast, are taking up jobs in the tourist industry, as sales clerks, mail carriers, and school teachers, hence need a higher level of education and interact with speakers of Standard English.

### **Nichols (1983)**

- Nichols' study thus shows that we cannot isolate gender as the only factor leading to differences in standard language use. In Georgetown County, it is also the economic opportunities afforded women and men that shape their language usage.

### **More on linguistic diversity**

#### Language emergence: The case of Pidgins and Creoles

### **The return of Mr. and Mrs. Advocate**

- We're baaaaaaaaaack!
- Good grief!
- We had great fun in Hawaii over the last few weeks. Sorry we missed class, but fun is a great teacher as well. ha ha.
- Ok, welcome back.

### **The return of Mr. and Mrs. Advocate**

- The only problem we had in Hawaii was this local "broken" English that we found so difficult to understand. It's really bad English.
- Well, Mr. and Mrs. Advocate, if you had valued learning more than fun, you would have probably realized by now that describing someone's speech as "broken" or "bad" has no scientific validity whatsoever. If a speech variety is unintelligible to you, this means it is just a different variety; it's neither bad nor broken.

### **The return of Mr. and Mrs. Advocate**

- In any event, you came back at the right time, since today we talk about language varieties such as Hawaiian English, and we show how they are regular languages like the rest of human languages on this earth.
- No such thing as "broken" English? Hmmm ... Interesting! You never fail to be provocative, Mr. Linguist.

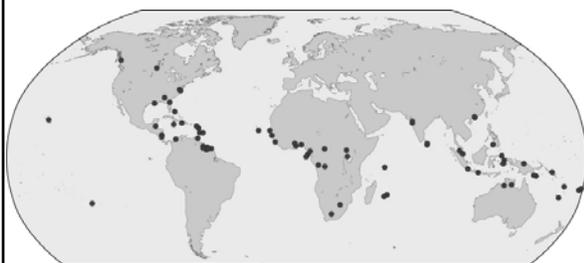
### How about we listen to this English-based speech variety?

- <http://www.ida.liu.se/~g-robek/png-LorisDicksTokPisin.mp3>
- How much did you understand?
- Maybe we can listen again while reading:
- <http://roberteklund.info/PNG-TokPisin.htm>

### Emergence of Pidgins and Creoles

- A *pidgin* is a system of communication used by people who do not know each other's languages but need to communicate with one another for trading or other purposes.
- By definition, then, a pidgin is not a natural language. It's a made-up "makeshift" language. Notice, crucially, that it does not have native speakers.

### Pidginization areas



### Where does "pidgin" come from?

- It's not clear.
- Probably from the non-native pronunciation of the word "business."
- Or from "pequeno portugues"?
- Some people even suggested Hebrew "pidjom" meaning "barter," as a source?
- Why not from "pigeon," then?

### Some pidgins die quickly or get killed

- Some pidgins may not last for very long, typically dying once the reason for using them diminishes or disappears.
- For example, the pidgin French that was used in Vietnam disappeared after the French left. Same for the pidgin English during the Vietnam war.
- Pidgins may also disappear due to government interference, as in the cases of Chinese Pidgin English and the pidgin spoken in New Zealand by the Maoris.

### The lexicons of Pidgins are typically based on some dominant language

- While a pidgin is used by speakers of different languages, it is typically based on the lexicon of what is called a "dominant" language in the area where it is spoken.
- Dominant languages were typically those of the European colonialists, e.g., French, English, Dutch, etc.
- The dominant language is called the *lexifier*, or the *superstratum* language. The native languages of pidgin users are called *substratum* languages.

### **Pidgins are linguistically simplified systems**

- As you should expect, pidgins are very simple in their linguistic properties.
- Lexicon:
  - a. Words from lexifier languages;
  - b. Words belong to open classes (nouns, verbs, adjectives);
  - c. No or few closed class words (prepositions, conjunctions, determiners, etc.)

### **Pidgins are linguistically simplified systems**

- Since pidgin vocabulary is pretty limited, meanings are extended (cf. semantic broadening.)
- So, *stick* is not only used for sticks, but also for trees, in Solomon Islands Pidgin.
- In Korean Bamboo English, *grass* is used in “*gras bilong head*” to mean “hair”, and in “*gras bilong mouth*” to mean “moustache”.
- Compounds are also frequent, e.g., *dog baby* for “puppy”, or  
*“Him cow pig have kittens?”*

### **Pidgins are linguistically simplified systems**

- Phonology:
  - a. Phoneme inventory: Consonants and vowels that are phonetically easy.
  - b. Syllable structure: Typically CV or CVC.
  - c. Stress: fixed stress location.
- Morphology:

Pretty much none. No tense or aspect marking. No agreement, either.
- Syntax:

Sentences are simple and short with no embedding.

### **A pidgin example**

- Hawaiian Pidgin English (HPE), ignoring pronunciation:
  - You see, I got wood there; plenty men here no job, come steal.
  - Honolulu come; plenty more come; too much pineapple there.
  - No can. I try hard get good ones. Before, plenty duck; now, no more.
  - All 'ight, all 'ight, I go; all same, by'n bye Honolulu all Japanese.
  - *Mr. D. Advocate: This is what we were referring to earlier.*

### **Kids?**

- Suppose you're a child born in a speech community where a pidgin is spoken (either by your parents or by the other kids in the neighborhood).
- The pidgin utterances are your primary linguistic data (PLD).
- But remember that a pidgin is not a natural language.
- So, what language are you going to end up learning on the basis of these PLD?

### **Creole: The birth of a language**

- As it turns out, kids impose structure on the language input they receive, ending up with a language that has prepositions, articles, tense marking, aspect morphology, embedded sentences, etc..
- Wow, miracles exist?
- No, UG does. We'll get back to this later, though.
- When a pidgin is acquired as a first language by a generation of children, it becomes a *creole*. A creole thus, unlike a pidgin, is a natural language.

### Where does “creole” come from?

- The term comes from the Portuguese *crioulo*, and originally meant a person of European descent who had been born and brought up in a colonial territory. Later, it came to be applied to other people who were native to these areas, and then to the kind of language the spoke.
- Creoles are typically classified based on their lexifier language, e.g., *English-based*, *French-based*, etc.

### When a pidgin becomes a creole, ...

- Compare the linguistic properties of Hawaiian Pidgin English (HPE) and Hawaiian Creole English (HCE).
- Word order:  
HPE: S always before O.  
  
HCE: basically SVO, but allows other orders for pragmatic use.

### When a pidgin becomes a creole, ...

- Articles:  
HPE: definite/indefinite articles if existent are used fairly randomly.  
  
HCE: Definite *da* used for all and only known specific references. Indefinite *wan* used for all and only unknown specific references. Other NPs have no article.

### When a pidgin becomes a creole, ...

- HCE: *bin* marks tense, *go* marks modality, *stei* marks aspect.  
Wail wi stei paedl, jaen stei put wata insaid da kanu—hei, da san av a gan haed sink!  
  
“While we were paddling, John was letting water into the canoe—hey, the son-of-a-gun had sunk it!”  
  
As tu bin get had taim reizing dag.  
  
‘The two of us used to have a hard time raising dogs.’

### When a pidgin becomes a creole, ...

- HCE: complementizers *fo* vs. *go*, where the former is used with hypothetical events, and the latter with events that actually happened. Notice the embedding as well.
  - a. Mo beta a bin go hanalulu fo bai maiself.  
*“It would have been better if I’d gone to Honolulu to buy it myself.”*
  - b. Ai gata go haia wan kapinta go fiks da fom.  
*“I had to hire a carpenter to fix the form.”*

### Cross-creole similarities

- Interestingly enough, many creole languages exhibit the same linguistic properties that we noted for HCE.
- For example, they all use fronting for emphasis or contrastive focus, as shown in the following examples from Guyanese Creole (GC):
  - a. Jan bin sii wan uman.  
‘John had seen a woman.’
  - b. A Jan bin sii wan uman.  
‘It was John who had seen a woman.’
  - c. A wan uman Jan bin sii  
‘It was a woman that John had seen.’

### Cross-creole similarities

- Creoles also show similar patterns for articles, as noted for HCE.
- Consider these data from GC for illustration;
  - a. Jan bai di buk 'John bought the book (that you already know about).'
  - b. Jan bai wan buk 'John bought a (particular) book.'
  - c. Jan bai buk 'John bought a book or books.'
  - d. buk dia fi tru 'Books are really expensive.'

### Cross-creole similarities

- Similarities also appear in the tense-modality-aspect system of creole languages, where preverbal free morphemes are typically used.
- Complementizers are also typically of two kinds: one for realized events, and the other for hypotheticals, as already seen in HCE and on the next slide from French-based Mauritian Creole.

### Cross-creole similarities

- Mauritian Creole (MC): *al* (realized; or  $\emptyset$ ), *pu* (unrealized; or *pu al*)
  - a. li desid **al** met posoh ladah  
she decide go put fish in-it  
'She decided to put a fish in (the pool).'
  - b. li ti pe ale aswar **pu** al bril lakaz sa garsoh-la me lor sime  
ban dayin fin atake li  
he TNS MOD go evening for go burn house that boy-the but  
on path PL witch COMP attack him  
'He would have gone that evening to burn the boy's house,  
but on the way he was attacked by witches.'

Where do pidgins and creoles come from, then?

### Polygenesis

- One view is that every creole is a unique independent development, a product of language contact in a particular area.
- The problem with this **polygenesis** approach is that it does not account for the fact that creole languages around the world share a lot of similarities with regard to their linguistic properties.

### Monogenesis?

- Perhaps pidgins and creoles all came from the same ancestor language then?
- This is the *monogenesis* view. A candidate common origin has actually been suggested: a 15<sup>th</sup>-century Portuguese pidgin, which may have in turn descended from the Mediterranean lingua franca known as Sabir.
- Evidence for this view comes from the fact that there is a considerable number of Portuguese words in the pidgins and creoles of the world.

## Monogenesis?

- Main Problem for the monogenesis view is that there are pidgins and creoles that do not seem to have any Portuguese effect of any kind, e.g., Chinook Jargon in the Pacific Northwest in the USA.

## Bickerton's bioprogram theory

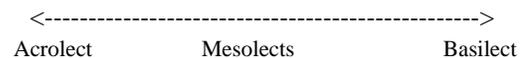
- Creoles are similar because they reflect language universals.
- Bickerton's view is that creolization provides strong evidence for a *bioprogram* for language.
- Kids learn a language even in the face of a non-language input. This is an extreme case of the *poverty of the stimulus* argument.
- Under this approach, a creole is as close a reflection of the bioprogram for language as possible.

## The post-creolization situation

- Creoles tend to co-exist with their lexifier languages in the same speech community. Since they are based on these languages, at least lexically, they come to be viewed as "nonstandard" varieties of the lexifier language.
- As we noted a couple of weeks ago, under desires for overt prestige, some speakers start to move away from the creole to the standard lexifier language, in what is often called *decreolization*.

## The post-creole continuum

- As a result of decreolization, a range of creole varieties exist in a continuum. The variety closest to the standard language is called the *acrolect*, the one least like the standard is called the *basilect*, and in between these two is a range of creole varieties that are called *mesolects*:



## The post-creole continuum

- <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~haroldfs/messeas/handouts/pjcreol/continuum.html>
- Sample of Hawaiian Creole:  
[http://www.nokaoimagazine.com/Top/web-exclusive\\_content/tita2.html](http://www.nokaoimagazine.com/Top/web-exclusive_content/tita2.html)

## Acknowledgements

- Some of the materials for this lecture is based, among other things, on online class notes by Paul Haegstrom (from BU) and Harry van der Hulst (from UConn). So, thanks to them both.

## **Next class agenda**

- Sign languages: Diversity in modality.
- Read Crystal's pp. 219-225 on sign language (the encyclopedia is on reserve in the library).
- Read Jackendoff (1993): American Sign Language (available online on course website).