INTD0112 Introduction to Linguistics

Lecture #22
Nov 23rd, 2009

Announcements

- LAP presentations order.
- Readings for last week:

(1) Materials on language endangerment both in the textbook (section 7.5 of Chapter 7) and materials on the syllabus table online, particularly Kenneth Hale's discussion of *Damin*. You should expect a question on this topic on the final exam.

(2) Read Section 8.1 of Chapter 8 on language and cognition (mainly the discussion of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis), and Section 5 of Part 1 in David Crystal's Encyclopedia (on reserve), pp. 14-15.

Transition

- We have seen *how* a language can change lexically, semantically, morphologically, syntactically, and phonologically.
- We have also seen *how* the changes can become so substantial to the point where one language, over time, gives rise to multiple related languages.
- We have also seen *how* historical linguists use the comparative method to reconstruct proto-forms in a proto-language from a set of cognates.

The "why" question

- Time to ask the "why" question: Why do languages change?
- As with other "why" questions, this is a harder question, but let's try.

Causes for language change: Technology, contact, social pressure

- Some changes are easy to understand: Creating new words to name new objects. Or borrowing for the same purpose. Or language contact.
- As we talked before, social pressure can actually lead to certain linguistic changes (the loss of postvocalic [r] in some parts of the east coast in the US).

Causes for language change: Ease of articulation

- Some sound changes might be driven by a desire for *ease of articulation*, e.g., assimilation of vowels preceding nasal consonants.
- French nasalized vowels originated from nasal assimilation followed by word-final consonant deletion: [bɔn] → [bɔ̃n] → [bɔ̃].
- But how do we account for the Great Vowel Shift or the Germanic consonant shift in terms of least articulatory effort?

Making sense of phonological shifts

Table 1 Diphthongization in Old High German and Spanish

Old High German diphthongization			Spanish diphthongization		
i: u:			i u		
ia: ua:			e je we o		
e: o:			ɛ ɔ		
ɛ: ɔ:			a		
a:					
Old High German			**Latin**	**Spanish**	
Earlier	***Later***				
hɛr [ɛ:]	hiar	'here'	petra	piedra	'stone'
flɔt [ɔ:]	fluat	'flood'	mortem	muerte	'death'

Causes for language change: Naturalness

- Certain patterns of sound change typically occur, though not others, suggesting that change might be in the direction of "*naturalness*".
- For example, the CV syllable is claimed to be the most natural of all syllables.
- As it turns out, CV is indeed universal: Every human language has it.

Causes for language change: Naturalness

- Sound changes in syllable structure are typically in the direction of the CV syllable, either through consonant deletion or vowel epenthesis:

  Consonant deletion:

  OE "cnēow" → ModE "knee" [ni:]

  Old Spanish "non" → Spanish "no"

  Vowel epenthesis:

  Italian "croce" → Sicilian "kiruci" "cross"

Causes for language change: Naturalness

- There is also evidence from language acquisition for the naturalness of the CV syllable. Children typically simplify longer syllables to change them into CV syllables:

  "tree" [tri:] → [ti:]

  "dog" [dɑg] → [dɑ]

Causes for language change: Analogy

- Some changes might be the result of *analogy*: the desire to reduce the number of exceptional or irregular forms in the language as much as possible:

  sweep-swept → sweep-sweeped

  wake-woke → wake-waked

But some changes are harder to explain than others

- Why would a language change its basic word order, the way it forms questions, the way it forms negation, verb placement, subject placement, its case and agreement system, its morphological typology, etc.?

But some changes are harder to explain than others

- And why are changes systematic and subject to the same constraints that govern cross-linguistic variation?
- So, phonological changes are subject to the same phonological rules that we find in human languages. And a syntactic change in a language never takes the language beyond the limits of what is possible in human languages in general.

But some changes are harder to explain than others

- The "why" question is obviously hard, and 19th century historical linguists felt sometimes the pressure to provide an answer, but only in ways that we cannot accept today.

Warning: This is *not* an explanation!

- So, Grimm explained the law of consonant shifts as

  "connected with the German's mighty progress and struggle for freedom … the invincible German race was becoming ever more vividly aware of the unstoppability of its advance into all parts of Europe … How could such a forceful mobilization of the race have failed to stir up its language at the same time, jolting it out of its traditional rut and exalting it? Does there not lie a certain courage and pride in the strengthening of voiced stop into voiceless stop and voiceless stop into fricative?"

So, …

Can we do better?

We discuss this today with regard to one aspect of syntactic change from the history of English.

A view from the "parametric" window

- Language change is systematic.
- Language change never takes a language outside the confines of what is a "possible human language."
- If so, then language change must be regulated by the same principles governing cross-linguistic variation in general.
- Hypothesis: Language change is the result of a change in a language's parametric settings because of a change in the primary linguistic data (PLD).
- Let's look at the example of word order change in English.

Change of word order in English

- As we mentioned last time, there was a change in word order from SOV in Old English to SVO in Middle and Modern English.
- OE had sentences like (a) below (using ModE words simply for convenience):

  a. *The man the dog bit*.

Change of word order in English

- But OE also developed an (extravagant) stylistic rule such that the verb will come before the subject if the sentence is introduced by a conjunction like "and" or a transition word like "then":

  b. *And bit the man the dog.*

  Then bit the man the dog.
- Suppose the occurrence of this type of sentence becomes really frequent in the PLD. What would the child infer about basic word order in her language?
- "Hmmm … is my language SOV or SVO?"

Change of word order in English

- Well, the sentences in (b) could be derived either from

  c. *The man the dog bit*.

  (which is the case in the OE adult grammar)

  or,

  d. *The man bit the dog*.

Change of word order in English

- Suppose further that this "V2 fad" led OE speakers to frequently produce sentences with the verb right after a topic phrase (e.g., adverbial):

  e. *Yesterday bit the man the dog*.
- Since subjects can also be topics, sentences such as (f) will also occur more frequently in the PLD of a child learning OE:

  f. *The man bit the dog*.

Ambiguity in the input

- For adults, the verb is fronted from final position. But for children, the PLD is ambiguous.
- Children may thus be driven to conclude that their language is actually verb-initial, not verb-final.
- Later on, when the fad for verb fronting dies out, English will be left with the VO order of today.

Language change as parameter re-setting

- The view of language as a biological system, thus, takes language change, at least in the area of syntax, to be the result of parameter re-setting by children because of innovations introduced by adults in the PLD.
- So, while innovations start with adults, under this approach, language change is actually done by children.

Language contact

Creating language out of thin air:

The case of Pidgins and Creoles

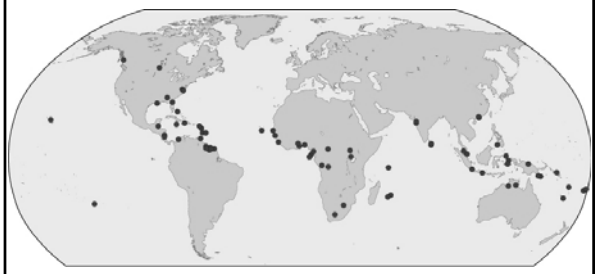
How about we listen to this English-based speech variety?

- http://www.ida.liu.se/~g-robek//audio/png-LorisDicksTokPisin.mp3
- How much did you understand?
- Maybe we can listen again while reading. Not sure it'll help, but let's try:
- 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.

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..
- 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 Ø), ***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 15th-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 ***decreolizatoin***.

The post-creole continuum

- As a result of decreolizatoin, 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*:

<--->

Acrolect Mesolects Basilect

The post-creole continuum

- http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~haroldfs/messeas/handouts/pjcreol/continuum.html
- Sample of Hawaiian Creole about President Obama (should be a piece of cake compared to Tok Pisin):
  http://www.mauimagazine.net/Maui-Magazine/January-February-2009/Dear-Prezadent-Obama/

- Well, that's it for me. Now, it's your turn to take the floor when we come back from the Thanksgiving break. Looking forward to your LAP presentations.

Have a wonderful break everyone!