# PIDGINISATION AND THE MULTI-LINGUAL

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In the past, Pidgins were given scant linguistic attention. They were considered to be linguistic aberrations, sports, bastardised lingos, worth little more than a passing reference. Significantly, those who knew them well, who had learnt to use them efficiently, were aware of their linguistic adequacy. Thomas (1869: 105) argued the viability of Trinidadian creole, but cautioned that, to use it well, a francophone must:

" . . . forget his French and believe (for it is a fact) that he is using

a dialect fully capable of expressing all ordinary thoughts, provided

the speaker is master of, and understands how to manage, its resources."

De Saint-Quentin (1872), struck by the structural simplicity of creoles, by their regularity of patterning, and their avoidance of redundancy, went even further and suggested that if a group of individuals needed a language which could be acquired quickly, but one which would permit a systematic exchange of ideas, they could not:

"... adopter des bases plus logiques et plus fecondes que celles

de la syntax creole."

None of the pro-Pidgin[1] voices were very influential in the last century, but the tide against these languages has turned and since the 1940s there has been a steady stream of material on them, first description (cf. Reinecke 1937), then muted acceptance

(Hall's "good little languages"), and finally recognition of how useful they are as vehicles of communication and how illuminating they may be in the search for linguistic universals. The turn of the tide has had the sociological side-effect of helping to raise the status of pidgins in the eyes of their speakers; the implications for the study of language, though potentially considerable, have not yet been fully assessed. It would be true to say that before 1940 not more than 30 different pidgins were recognised. Now the number is approaching 100 — and shows no signs of stopping there. In addition, many linguists have come to realise that the process of pidginisation — the process whereby languages shed linguistic irregularities, reduce inflection, thus putting a premium on word order and analytic structures — can be seen in the Romance Languages, in English, in Swahili, in colloquial Arabic — in short, in all languages which have been in relatively close contact with others. Pidgins have thus, in the course of the past 40 years, developed from being either ignored, derided or patronised, through acceptance, to their present role of helping account for universal processes of change in languages.

Acknowledgment of the linguistic viability of pidgins and recognition of the potential service they may give in the establishment of linguistic universals has not, however, altered the fact that very little is known either about the relationship between Pidgins and their lexical source languages or about the relationship between the various Pidgins. These two questions formed the starting point for the present investigation which led to the formulation of a tentative new hypothesis concerning the origin of Pidgins.

In comparing two English-based Pidgins, an Atlantic one, Cameroon Pidgin (C.P.), and a Pacific one, Tok Pisin (T.P.), a number of apparently basic and pervasive structural similarities were discovered, which are illustrated below.

1. <u>The Verb Phrase</u>

    1.1.   In both Pidgins the VP can be described as consisting of an unchanging verb, which can be preceded or followed by one or more auxiliaries, when temporal or aspectual or negative distinctions need to be made overt.

(1)

| | English | C.P. | T.P. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | eat | (yu) chɔp | yu kaikai |
| 2. | don't eat | no chɔp | yu no kaikai |
| 3. | he/she/it eats | i* chɔp | em* i kaikai |
| 4. | he/she/it doesn't eat | i no chɔp | em i no kaikai |
| 5. | he is eating | i di chɔp | em i kaikai yet |
| 6. | he is not eating · | i no di chɔp | em i no kaikai yet |
| 7. | he has eaten | i dɔn chɔp | em i bin kaikai |
| 8. | he ate | i bin chɔp | em i kaikai pinis |
| 9. | he will eat | i go chɔp | bai em i kaikai |
| 10. | he can eat (is able to) | i fit chɔp | em i inap kaikai |
| 11. | he must eat | i gɛt fɔ chɔp | em i mas kaikai |
| 12. | he is about to eat | i wan chɔp | em i laik kaikai |

*There is no 3rd person distinction according to sex in either pidgin.

1.2.  In both Pidgins the occurrence of "analytic group expressions"
      (Liefrink 1973), where English would have a so-called "synthetic verb",
      is common.

(2)       English                 C. P.                    T . P .
          feed                    gif chɔp                 givim kaikai
          inject                  gif chuk                 givim sut
          dress                   put klos fɔ man i skin    putim klos long
          confess                 tɔk man i bad            telimautim ol sin
          bleed                   blɔd i kɔmɔt             blut i kamap
          suffer                  si trɔbul                karim pen
          quarrel                 fain palava              pait long toktok
          impregnate              gif bele                 givim bel
          smell                   hia smel                 harim smel
          frown                   tai fes                  pes i tudak

2.  The Noun Phrase

    2.1.  In both Pidgins the noun is not overtly marked for either number of sex,
          though 'man' and 'woman'/'meri' are marked for natural gender and can
          be used in combination with other nouns when one wishes to make a sex
          distinction overt.  In the following table, 'dog' is taken as a nuclear noun
          around which a set of related forms can be built.  In this, it is representative
          of a large group of other animate nouns.  Both pidgins have borrowed the word
          from English and both de-voice the final consonant so that, phonemically, they
          could both be transcribed as /dog/.  We shall follow the orthographic con-
          ventions most frequently used with these languages, however, using 'dɔg'
          for Cameroon Pidgin and 'dok' for Tok Pisin.

(3)          <u>C.P.</u>                                 <u>T.P</u>.

             dɔg                                 dok

         mandɔg                          dok man[2]

       womandɔg                        dok meri

           dɔg pikin              pikinini dok[2]

       man pikin dɔg                   dok pikinini man

         bush dɔg                      wel dok

     man bush dɔg                     wel dok man

Plurality is often implied by the context, but it can be made overt by the use of a marker which is identical in form to the third person plural pronoun. Thus, for example:

(4) Eng.:     A dog ran off into the forest

    C.P.:     sɔm dɔg bin rɔn go fɔ bush

    T.P.:     wanpela dok i bin ran i go long bus.

    Eng.:     The dogs ran off into the forest.

    C.P.:     di dɔg dɛm bin rɔn go fɔ bush

    T.P. :     ol dok i bin ran i go long bus.

One can compare the plural marker in the above examples with the third person plural pronoun in (5):

(5) Eng.:     They brought the food to the house.

    C.P.:     dɛm bin bring di chɔp kam fɔ haus.

    T.P.:     ol i bin bringim kaikai i kam long haus.

27.

2.2.(i)  In both pidgins 'man' frequently combines with another form to produce
a related noun.  T.P. utilises 2 structural patterns, namely 'X+man'
and 'man bilong X' whereas C.P. uses only the former:

(6)  | Eng. | C.P. | T.P. |
|------|------|------|
| corpse | daiman | dai man |
| hunter | hɔntaman | sutman |
| liar | laiman | man bilong giaman |
| thief | tifman | stilman |
| trickster | kɔniman (cunning man) | trikman |

2.2.(ii)  C.P. has a general purpose preposition 'fɔ' which occasionally parallels
T.P. 'long/bilong' and which is often used in the combination of nouns:

(7)  | Eng. | C.P. | T.P. |
|------|------|------|
| bedroom | rum fɔ slip | rumslip |
| garage | ples fɔ mɔtu | haus ka |
| bark | nkanda fɔ stik | skin diwai |
| toe | finga (fɔ) fut | finga bilong lek |
| moustache/beard | biabia (fɔ) mɔt | maus gras |

3.  C.P. & T.P. have both been exposed to ever-increasing pressure from
standard English, a pressure which has affected the language at all levels
but especially at the level of lexis.  It seems likely that, at an earlier
stage, C.P. and T. P. made extensive use of 'negative'   adjective to
imply the adjective's converse.  This technique is still apparent in such
pairs as (8):

(8)

| Eng. | C.P. | T.P. |
|------|------|------|
| heavy | hɛvi | hevi |
| light | nohɛvi | no hevi |
| strong | trɔng | strong |
| weak | notrɔng | no strong |

but, this device – a relic of the time when the pidgins had 'sharply
reduced vocabulary' (Hall 1966 : xii ) – is less apparent in the speech
of the younger generation and so may well disappear.

How can we explain such pervasive similarities in C.P. and T.P. –
languages which have never been in contact? One answer to the question
is that offered by Hall (1966 : 58):

"No matter how much they [pidgins] have been changed
and have been brusquely restructured near the surface, they
still maintain a basically Indo-European pattern."

If we substitute 'English' for 'Indo-European' we have a possible explanation,
but it seems difficult to reconcile this explanation with the views of
Africanists, who have claimed a relationship between Atlantic Pidgins and
African vernaculars. The most extreme position was that espoused by
Sylvain (1936 : 178) who described Haitian Creole as "une langue éwé,
à vocabulaire français." More recently too, scholars like Hancock (1972)
and Gilman (1972) have drawn attention to the phonological and syntactic
similarities that exist between African languages and Atlantic Pidgins. The
bulk of the vocabulary of such languages is European, but even there an
African influence can often be seen in the combination of words:

| (cry & die) | krai dai | – | a wake |
|-------------|----------|---|--------|
| (day & clean) | dei klin | – | dawn |
| (long & throat) | langa tru | – | desire, extreme desire |

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In the case of Tok Pisin, too, a claim has been made for a Melanesian substratum influence in its syntax. As Wurm (1971 : 3) expresses it:

> "Throughout its history, New Guinea Pidgin has been used very predominantly as a means of intercommunication between indigenous people speaking different languages, and as a result of this, Pidgin has developed into a highly complex language showing much of the intricacies and subleties of the native languages of Melanesia."

However, the two features which are supposed to show most clearly a Melanesian substratum influence, viz.

(1) The verbal marker 'i'

(2) The transitivity marker '-im'

have clear analogues OUTSIDE the Melanesian area.


(1) In W. Africa, the 'i', thought to derive from 'he', is frequently recapitulated after a subject e.g.

'den gɔd i bigin'

'dat wɔman, i no get no pikin'.

Such sentences are not uncommon in colloquial English, cf:

'my father, he's a butcher'

'And God he created heaven and earth'

though the 'i' may well have been reinterpreted by later speakers of Melanesian Pidgin and equated with an indigenous verbal marker. If a form had a dual source, i.e. an indigenous and a non-indigenous one, then it had a greater chance of survival. The idea of multiple etymologies is fairly well established in Atlantic creolistics (cf. Cassidy 1966).

(2) If one compares:

C.P. : yu no fainam?      Have you not looked for it?

T.P. : yu no painim em?

or

C.P. : putam fɔ kwa      Put it into the bag

T.P. : yu putim em long bilum

one sees how the English: 'Take 'em and put 'em away' - type construction could have influenced both pidgins, the '-am' becoming a 3rd person object pronoun in Cameroon Pidgin and an overt marker of transitivity in Tok Pisin.

In order to help us determine whether the formal patternings of English-based pidgins which we have described reflect Indo-European or indigenous influence or a combination of both - or neither - we will turn our attention to two other pidgins, Ewondo Populaire, an indigenous Cameroon Pidgin, and Hiri Motu, a pidginised version of Motu. Neither has any relationship with the Indo-European family of languages and neither until recently, were in contact with any variety of (pidgin) English. Yet, in both these Pidgins, the occurrence of the analytic type patterns we have discussed in Cameroon Pidgin and Tok Pisin is attested. With regard to Ewondo Populaire (E.P.), Pierre Alexandre (1962:253-54) writes that it has a limited vocabulary, and that there has been considerable reduction in the inflection and syntactic contrasts which occur in full Ewondo. The Verb Phrase in particular is much simpler than the VP in standard Ewondo, tending to indicate verbal distinctions by means of separate auxiliaries rather than by affixation and, in addition, E.P. has only one negator 'ke' which has a fixed position in the sentence (whereas the negator is both variable and mobile in Ewondo).

These features occur also in Hiri Motu:

(9)
| English | Hiri Motu |
|---|---|
| eat | aniani |
| don't eat | aniani lasi |
| he has eaten | ia aniani vadaeni |
| he is eating | ia aniani noho |
| he will eat | do ia aniani |

In Hiri Motu we also find the type of analytic group expressions illustrated in 2.2. above for C.P. and T.P.:

(10)
| English | Hiri Motu |
|---|---|
| bleed | rara ia diho (blood it goes down) |
| dress | dabua atoa (clothes put on) |
| frown | vaira haukaia (face harden) |
| hew | ira dekenai utua (axe with cut) |
| mend | turia lou (sew again) |
| sharpen | matana karaia (tip make) |
| smoke | kuku ania (tobacco eat) |

Such analytic group expressions often correspond to a single synthetic verb in standard Motu:

(11)
| English | Motu | Hiri Motu |
|---|---|---|
| adorn | haherahera | herahera atoa (decorations put on) |
| bow | igodiho | kwarana atoa diho (head put down) |
| insert | toia | doria ia lao lalonai (put it it go inside) |

Again, the Noun Phrase and Adjective Phrase patterns that were so similar in the two English based Pidgins, can also be found in Hiri Motu:

32.

(12)   English                          Hiri Motu
       pig                              boroma
       sow                              boroma hahine (woman)
       boar                             boroma tau (man)
       piglet                           boroma maragina (little)
       male piglet                      boroma tau maragina


(13)   English                          Hiri Motu
       sailor                           sisima tauna (ship man its)
       teacher                          hadibaia tauna (teach man its)
       author                           buka torea tauna (book write man its)
       disciple                         murinai raka tauna (behind its at walk man
                                                                      its)
       enemy                            kerere henia tauna (trouble give man its)
       chair                            helai gauna (sit thing its)
       clock                            dina gauna (time thing its)


(14)   English                          Hiri Motu
       heavy                            metau
       light                            metau lasi
       strong                           goada
       weak                             goada lasi


The structures to which we have drawn attention are of fundamental importance in these languages. Without them they would lack flexibility and subtlety. Those listed under 1.2 and 2 are typically used when Pidgin speakers need an expression for a new concept, and writers on Tok Pisin advocating the use of the syntactic processes inherent

33.

in the language in the creation of new words, in preference to borrowing, include
these constructions in their discussion (Mühlhäusler 1973).

The feature uniting all the constructions we have exemplified, in all four pidgins,
is that of analiticity. In Liefrink (1973) it was argued that in a full language like English,
which provides its speakers with a choice of using either analytic or synthetic construc-
tions, the surface structure of analytic sentences is more clearly indicative of underlying
semantics, than that of their synthetic counterparts. In the former, more components
of meaning are overtly manifested in the surface structure than in the latter.

Much of the literature dealing with the linguistics of West Africa and Melanesia
suggests that the natural languages of these areas tend to show an inclination towards
analytic rather than synthetic structures: In Yoruba, for example, we find that

1) The noun is invariable, plurality being (often optionally)
marked by the prefixing of a separate morpheme, the emphatic
3rd·person plural pronoun 'awon', 'they' (Rowlands 1969:40).

2) In the verb phrase, temporal and aspectual distinctions are carried
by a set of auxiliaries (Rowlands 1969:92ff.).

and the following table suggests certain interesting ways in which Cameroon Pidgin,
Tok Pisin and Yoruba all differ from English:

| (15) | English | C.P. | Yoruba | T.P. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | he is small | i smɔl | ó kéré | em i liklik |
| | she is small | i smɔl | ó kéré | em i liklik |
| | it is small | i smɔl | ó kéré | em i liklik |
| | he is extremely small | i smɔl tumas | ó kéré púpò (pupo=much) | em i liklik tumas |
| | is he small or not? | i smɔl i no smɔl | ó kéré àbi kò kéré | em i liklik o ˙em i no liklik |
| | he is smaller than I | i smɔl pas mi | ó kéré jù mí lo (he small sur- pass me go) | em i moa liklik long mi or liklik i win long mi |

34.

In Austronesian languages we find, according to Capell (1969:50), that the verb 'normally does not carry in itself any mark of tense or mood; such features are expressed by particles set between the person or subject marker and the verb'.
Thus in Kuanua:

e.g.     yau gire              -                    I see it

         yau ga gire           -                    I saw it

         yau tar gire          -          .         I have seen it

         yau ina gire          -                    I shall see it

It would seem then, that there is a predilection for analytic structures in pidgins, in West African languages like Yoruba and Melanesian languages like Kuanua. All of these languages have one other feature in common.    They are used by people who tend to be multi-lingual.  One might well argue that multi-linguals find it more economical to master one grammar, several vocabularies and several sets of items for indicating plurality, temporality aspects, negation (see Todd 1974), items which differ in form not in function.  Such 'economy of effort' is well known in phonology and there is no reason why it should not occur also in syntax.  Multi-linguals who use two or more languages daily - as opposed to those who know about them or have mastered standard versions - <u>do</u> seem to use either the same grammar for both or all of their languages or very similar grammars.

Gumperz (1967) found this to be the case among the illiterates along the Mysore - Maharashtra border.  Capell (1969:47) suggests a similar pattern in Austronesian languages. As he puts it:

    'Certain features are common to verbs in AN [= Austronesian] languages ...

    but the actual morphemes involved are quite different.'
and Dalby (1970:6) writing about the West African situation claimed:

'Divergences in their structures, i.e. in their grammatical, phonological
and semantic systems, are frequently less extensive than their divergences
of vocabulary, and, relative to the structures of European languages,
West African languages are found to share many widespread structural
features.'

An analysis of all the areas of the world where elaborated pidgins have arisen shows
multi-lingualism to be a criterial factor. We have demonstrated that a characteristic
of pidgins is the favoured use of analytic constructions and we hypothesise that this
is connected with a similar predilection for analytic structures on the part of multilinguals.
Such an hypothesis, we hope, will gain support when more information is available on the
structures used by other multilinguals in their everyday linguistic behaviour. The analytic-
type structures so frequently commented on in pidgins are, indeed, a marked characte-
ristic of these languages, but they occur widely in other linguistic contexts where effective
communication is of more importance than style.

## NOTES

1.   Reference will not be made to marginal, unstable pidgins, nor will a distinction
     be drawn between extended pidgins and creoles, such languages being distinguished
     mainly by the sociological criterion of mother tongue status (Todd 1974).

2.   It may be noticed from the tables that the ordering (occasionally) differs in the
     two pidgins. There seems to be a pattern to these differences but, as yet, we have
     not formulated an explanation which is sufficiently comprehensive.

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