INTD0112
Introduction to Linguistics

Lecture #22
May 8th, 2007

Announcements

- Good news:
  It's the final week of classes.
- Bad news:
  There's still some work you have to do: a research paper and the final.
- Good news:
  In ten days or so, you won't have to worry about this any more.
- Bad news;
  You have to worry about this for ten more days or so.

Today's agenda

- More on language variation, this time from language varieties that arise in unusual circumstances.

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. It's like a *lingua franca*.
- 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.

Some pidgins die quickly; others 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 (like prepositions, conjunctions, determiners, etc.)

Pidgins are linguistically simplified systems

- Since pidgin vocabulary is pretty limited, meanings are extended.
- 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:
      Little morphology. For the most part, no tense or aspect marking; no agreement, either.
- Syntax:
      Sentences are simple and short with no embedding.

Pidgin examples

- *Neo-Melanesian*:
  mi stap lɔŋŋ bɪglajn, mi kətim kopra
  "I was in the work-group, cutting copra."

- *Chinese Pidgin English*:
  Before my sell-um   for ten dollar
  Past   I   sell-*transitive* for ten dollar
  "I sold it for ten dollars."

A pidgin example

- *Nauru Pidgin English*:
  Mi hasɪbən flɛn   no waifu
  my husband friend no wife
  "My husband's friend has no wife."

Kids?

- Suppose you're a child born in a speech community where a pidgin is spoken (either by your parents or by some of the older 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 clauses, 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 they 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 and *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.
  Mo beta a bin go hanalulu fo bai maiself.
  "It would have been better if I'd gone to Honolulu to buy it myself."

  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?

- 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.
- A biological approach to language may actually provide us with an explanation for why creoles are so similar even though they evolve in different speech communities.

Bickerton (1981)

- Bickerton's view is that creolization provides strong evidence for a *bioprogram* for language.
- Kids learn a language even in the face of 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.

Nicaraguan Sign Language

- An often discussed case of creolization took place in Nicaragua, though this time with the sign language of the deaf.
- Remember that sign languages are natural languages, just like all spoken languages.
- When the Sandinistas came to power in 1979, one of their social reforms involved the start of two schools in Managua for the formal education of deaf children, who were brought together from all over the country.

Nicaraguan Sign Language

- The children who were brought together came without a sign language. There was no sign language of Nicaragua. At best, the children came with a limited number of "home signs," signs that they had been using at home with their families and with their playmates.
- Once put together in the schools, the children quickly developed a kind of *sign pidgin*, based on their home signs.
- Problems arose when teachers started teaching the kids a system of finger-spelling.

Nicaraguan Sign Language

- In 1986, a linguist and sign language expert, Judy Kegl, was invited to the school to clarify and improve the situation.
- She first analyzed the signing of teenagers, beginning with a registration of their words. Then, she looked at a group of very young children and suddenly she realized a profound difference between the way these two groups signed.
- The young group signed much better, more fluently and with a more complex grammatical structure.

Nicaraguan Sign Language

- The crucial explanation for the observed difference lies in the fact that the young children, when brought to the school, were of the appropriate age to start acquiring their first language, and their input came from the older first generation, i.e. the teenagers. The older generation was using what we called a pidgin. The crucial step of creolization was made by the second generation. Just like in the creolization of pidgins based on spoken languages, this step turned the sign pidgin into a full-fledged language.

Nicaraguan Sign Language

- "The Nicaraguan case is absolutely unique in history, We've been able to see how it is that children -- not adults -- generate language, and we have been able to record it happening in great scientific detail. And it's the first and only time that we've actually seen a language being created out of thin air."

  Steven Pinker in *The Language Instinct*

Nicaraguan Sign Language

- The Nicaraguan Sign Language case, thus, not only shows how a pidgin can evolve and how it can then develop into a creole, but also provides further evidence for the existence of a critical period for language acquisition.
- You can read more about Nicaraguan Sign Language here and here. It's a fascinating topic.

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 last week, 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*:

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  Acrolect   Mesolects   Basilect

Next class agenda

- Endangered languages. There's no chapter in the textbook about this, but you may read the chapter on Indigenous languages of North America. It's short, and has some information that we already covered.

Acknowledgement

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