I - Pidgin & Creole

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Pidgin

Pidgin is a new language which develops in situations where speakers of different languages need to communicate but don't share a common language. The vocabulary of a pidgin comes mainly from one particular language (called the 'lexifier'). An early 'pre-pidgin' is quite restricted in use and variable in structure. But the later 'stable pidgin' develops its own grammatical rules which are quite different from those of the lexifier.

Once a stable pidgin has emerged, it is generally learned as a second language and used for communication among people who speak different languages. (Nigerian Pidgin)

Reasons for the Development of Pidgins

In the nineteenth century, when slaves from Africa were brought over to North America to work on the plantations, they were separated from the people of their community and mixed with people of various other communities, therefore they were unable to communicate with each other.

The strategy behind this was so they couldn't come up with a plot to escape back to their land. Therefore, in order to finally communicate with their peers on the plantations, and with their bosses, they needed to form a language in which they could communicate.

Pidgins also arose because of colonization. Prominent languages such as French, Spanish, Portuguese, English, and Dutch were the languages of the colonizers.

The superstrate (lexifier) language from the Papua New Guinea Creole example above is English. The other minority languages that contribute to the pidgin are called **the substrate languages.**

CREOLE

A language developed from a pidgin. A pidgin is a combination of two or more languages which sometimes occurs in trade contact, multi-ethnic or refugee situations, where participants need a functioning common language.

It is usually reduced in complexity and function and is learned as a second language by all speakers. Sometimes the pidgin becomes stable and established and comes to be spoken as a mother-tongue by children: the language has then become a **Creole**, which quickly develops in complexity and is used in all functional settings. The process of turning a pidgin into a creole is creolization.

Countless creoles have come into existence during the past few centuries, often because of the activities of European colonists. Speakers of English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch have established colonies in Africa, Asia and the Americas, in areas where the local languages were very different, and in many cases the Europeans imported African slaves speaking any of dozens of African languages.

The Caribbean has been a particularly fertile area for creoles, as Europeans and Africans (and to a lesser extent Native Americans) were forced to construct innumerable local pidgins, very many of which went on to be converted to creoles.

When a creole remains in contact with the prestige language from which it was largely constructed, it may undergo significant decreolization – **adjustment towards that prestige standard –** and the result may be a creole continuum, a range of varieties from a highly conservative version of the creole **(the basilect)** through increasingly decreolized versions (the **mesolects)** to something more or less identical to the prestige standard **(the acrolect).**

This stratification typically reflects the degree of education or a continuum between rural and urban speakers.

The study of creoles was pioneered by the Trinidadian John Thomas, the American Addison Van Name and the German Hugo Schuchardt in the late nineteenth century, and the topic has never since been really neglected, but it has prospered particularly since the 1970s, and it is now regarded as a major area of investigation.

Linguists studying contemporary language change have found creolization to be a rich source of information, particularly from the point of view of the construction of new grammatical systems.

At one time, there was a widespread belief that all creoles were descended from a single ancestral creole by massive vocabulary replacement (relexification), but this idea in its simple form is no longer taken seriously.

A variation on the notion is that syntactic similarities in unrelated creoles can be ascribed to the similarities in social setting and function of those situations, and these structures are then relexified by the local influential language.

Diglossia

Diglossia is the term usually applied to the sociolinguistic situation in much of the Arabic-speaking world. In these countries, there are two **FORMS OF THE SAME LANGUAGE** (conventionally called "High" and "Low") that are used in different situations.

The "High" form (called "Modern Standard Arabic") is normally used in **FORMAL** situations, such as writing, political speeches, university lectures, television news, etc. The "Low" form (referred to as "dialects,") is used in **INFORMAL** situations, such as conversations, etc. It is useful to think of the language situation as it applies to Arabic as being on a continuum. At one end of this continuum is the "High" form, i.e., Modern Standard Arabic, and at the other lies the "Low" form, i.e., the various dialects.

Diglossia is a situation where, in a given society, there are two (often) closely-related languages, one of high prestige, which is generally used by the government and in formal texts, and one of low prestige, which is usually the spoken vernacular tongue.

(Vernacular refers to the native language of a country or locality. it is used to describe local languages as opposed to linguae francae(**lingua franca** is any language widely used beyond the population of its native speakers), official standards or global languages.

It is sometimes applied to nonstandard dialects of a global language.

For instance: in Western Europe up until the 17th century, most scholarly work was written in Latin, so works written in a native language (such as Italian or German) were said to be *in the vernacular)* The high-prestige language tends to be the more formalised, and its forms and vocabulary often 'filter down' into the vernacular.

Fergusson in 1959 who gave it the following definition :

"diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which ,in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) variety , the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes, but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation"

- There are few cases of the diglossic situation in the world. We may find it in Switzerland (standard German and Swiss German), in Haiti (Standard French and Haitian Creole).

Code Switching

Speakers of more than one language (e.g., bilinguals) are known for their ability to code-switch or mix their languages during communication. This phenomenon occurs when bilinguals substitute a word or phrase from one language with a phrase or word from another language.

Traditionally, code-switching has been viewed as a strategy to compensate for diminished language proficiency. The premise behind this theory is that bilinguals code-switch because they do not know either language completely.

This argument is also known as semi-lingualism, which underscores the notion that bilinguals “almost” speak both languages correctly.

However, one concern with this account is that the notion of language proficiency is not clearly defined. It is not clear whether reading and writing language skills should take precedence over spoken language.

This reliance on reading and writing is problematic because most bilinguals receive their formal education in one language, whereas a majority of their social interactions take place in the other language. So, when their reading and writing abilities are tested in both languages, the language in which bilinguals received more formal education will usually fare better.

- Recent developments in psycholinguistic research has focused on how code-switching is a natural product of the interaction of the bilingual's two languages. Early researchers viewed code-switching as evidence that the bilinguals' two languages were organized in separate and distinct mental dictionaries.

For example, a general finding throughout the literature is that bilinguals take longer to read and comprehend sentences containing code-switched words as compared to monolingual sentences.

Apparently, this time consuming process is due to a "mental switch mechanism" that determines which of the bilingual's two mental dictionaries are "on" or "off" during the course of language comprehension.

This mental switch is responsible for selecting the appropriate mental dictionary to be employed during the comprehension of a sentence.

The general idea behind this view is that after a certain level of fluency and frequent use of the second-language, a language shift occurs in which the second-language behaves as if it were the bilingual's first-language.

In other words, the second-language becomes more readily accessible and bilinguals come to rely on it more.

Thus, regardless of which language the bilingual learned first, the more active (dominant) language determines which mental dictionary is going to be accessed faster.

This argument is reasonable since most bilinguals in the US, whose first-language is Spanish, obtain their formal education in English. Likewise, many of their everyday interactions involve the second-language.

As a result, words and concepts in English, the second-language, become more accessible than words in Spanish, the first-language. Thus, code-switching is not the same for both languages. Rather, it depends on language dominance.

In short, code-switching may be indicative of difficulties in retrieval (access) affected by a combination of closely-related factors such as language use (i.e., how often the first-language is used) and word frequency (i.e., how much a particular word is used in the language).

Finally, the notion that people code-switch as a strategy in order to be better understood and to enhance the listeners' comprehension is another plausible alternative.

Borrowing

There is a difference between code-switching and borrowing though on the surface they seem to include the use of “foreign words” in a conversation that is conducted in another language .

The difference lies in the existence and the use of one or more language system in the mind of the speaker. Borrowing usually occurs when the speaker is unable to find or ignores an appropriate equivalent for the borrowed word in the first language.

The borrowed elements are usually single words and are modified so as to conform to the first language rules.

In code switching, however, speakers switch codes not because they do not know an item/s in one of the codes; rather they do for necessary social considerations.

Code switching occurs completely i.e. in phonetics, morphology, grammar and vocabulary. There is no adjustment or change to the rules of the other code.

Thank you for your attention

&

Patience