

RELEXIFICATION AND REGRAMMATICALISATION

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I gat wanpela rot bilong tok ples i kamap senis i olsem. Olgeta manmeri ol i save tanim tok liklik tasol. Olsem pikinini ol i no bihainim nek bilong mama papa stret, nogat. Ol i save tanim liklik na bihainim nek bilong ol yet. Olsem olsem na bihain narapela nek bilong tok ples i kamap.

Orait, dispela rot bilong tok ples i kamap senis, em rot bilong olgeta tok pisin i kamap senis wantaim. Olsem yumi kaunim Tok Pisin ol i mekim long taim pait i no kamap na yumi kaunim Tok Pisin bilong tude na yumi ken save i gat narapela narapela nek. Ol i save tanim nek liklik i kam i kam na tok i kamap olsem narapela nek.

Orait, sampela saveman ol i tingim olsem. Tok bilong olgeta tok pisin (tok pisin bilong Papua Niugini, bilong Saina, bilong Aprika, na bilong olgeta hap) ol manmeri i bin pulim i kam long tok ples bilong ol waitman. Tasol rot o pasin bilong skruim tok i go na i no kamap kranki, dispela rot em samting bilong tok ples bilong ol manmeri bilong as ples. Na ol i save senisim tok i kam i kam i kam, tasol ol i no save senisim rot bilong skruim tok i go. Nogat, em i stap olsem olsem tasol.

Na narapela tingting bilong ol saveman i olsem. Bipo, long namba wan taim, ol i gat wanpela tok pisin bilong ples ol i kolim Wes Aprika. Na dispela tok pisin em mama bilong olgeta tok pisin bilong olgeta hap.

Orait, mi harim dispela toksave bilong ol na mi tingim i no stret. I gat fopela rong bilong en olsem.

(1) Sapos yumi skelim olgeta kain kain tok pisin bilong olgeta hap, yumi ken luksave olsem. Hap liklik tok bilong olgeta tok pisin i wankain tasol. Na yumi ken tingim olsem. Dispela em samting bilong olgeta kain kain tok pisin tasol. I no samting bilong tok pisin bilong Wes Aprika tasol na ol i pulim i kam.

(2) Tru, sampela pasin bilong autim tok pisin na skruim tok i go em i olsem pasin bilong autim tok long tok ples bilong ol waitman. Tasol yumi no ken tingim em samting bilong tok ples bilong ol waitman tasol. Nogat, em samting bilong olgeta tok pisin.

(3) Na rot o pasin bilong skruim tok i go dispela rot i no

bikpela samting na winim olgeta narapela rot bilong autim toktok. Yumi ken senisim tok orait yumi ken senisim rot bilong skruim tok i go wantaim.

(4) Orait, long wanpela kantri ol i kolim Surinam, bipo ol manmeri ol i toktok na mekim long wanpela tok pisin bilong ol waitman ol i kam long wanpela kantri ol i kolim Potugal na tok ples bilong ol ol i kolim Potugis. Orait, ol i mekim i go i go, tasol ol i lusim dispela tok pisin bilong ol Potugal na ol i kisim wanpela tok pisin bilong ol Ingran na as bilong dispela tok pisin bilong ol i olsem as bilong Tok Inglis.

Orait mi tingting planti long dispela na tingting bilong mi olsem. As bilong Tok Pisin i olsem. As bilong Tok Pisin em wankain as bilong Tok Inglis na as bilong lain tok ples bilong Papua Niugini. Olsem Tok Pisin i bungim. Na yumi ken makim long wanpela wanpela tok pisin bilong ol olsem. As bilong tok pisin bilong ol i bungim as bilong tok ples bilong wanpela lain waitman na as bilong lain tok ples bilong ol pipel bilong as ples. Em tasol.

The normal process of linguistic change, as envisaged by virtually all scholars, involves the gradual substitution, over centuries, of a number of features of phonology, morpho-syntax, and lexicon, one for another. Bloomfield's phrasing (1933: 281) is, I believe, typical:

Every language is undergoing, at all times, a slow but unceasing process of *linguistic change*. [...] A speaker has no difficulty, in youth, in conversing with his grandparents, or, in age, in conversing with his grandchildren, yet a thousand years--say, thirty to forty generations--have sufficed to change the English language. [...] During these generations, it must have seemed to each London-English mother that her children were learning to speak the same kind of English as she had learned in her infancy.

In contrast to this situation, a pidgin language can arise, as is well known, in a very short time indeed. It takes very little time to perform the reductions in grammatical structure and lexicon which are an essential characteristic of all pidgins. (I once observed an elementary variety of Pidgin Hebrew develop in a few hours in a Roman *pensione*, because lodgers and staff had to communicate with a three-year-old Israeli boy.) For reasonably well-established pidgins on whose earlier stages we have much information, it is evident that they arise in only a few years or decades. In Melanesia, for instance, Europeans did not begin to penetrate until the first part of the nineteenth century; but Melanesian Pidgin English was already in extensive use by the middle of the century.¹

It is evident to even the most superficial observer that any pidgin (or any creole, which by definition has developed out of a pidgin) faces two ways, as it were. CPE, for example, has a great many similarities with English, but also differs from it in many ways.² Most of the vocabulary is English, e.g., /gó/ 'go', /táp-sâjd/ 'up, above, "top-side"', /têbəl/ 'table', /pŭsi/ 'cat', etc. Many grammatical features are also clearly English in origin, such as the pronouns /mɛj/ 'I, me',

/hí/ 'he, him; she, her; it', and /jú/ 'you'; the passive-suffix as in /spɔ̃jləm/ 'ruined'; or the auxiliary verb /həb/ 'have' and its use in past phrases such as /həb káçci/ 'took' (e.g., /maj həb káçci hí/ 'I took it'). On the other hand, many constructions of CPE are foreign to English, and bear a close semantic resemblance to those of Chinese, e.g., the numeral-suffix /-pisi/, as in /túpisi tébəl/ 'two tables'. In its use, this suffix resembles the numeral classifiers or 'measures'³ of Chinese, such as *kwái* 'hunk', *fēn* 'division', or the general measure-slot-filler *ge*, as in *sān kwái chyán* 'three hunk money = three dollars', *sān fēn chyán* 'three division money - three cents', *sāngē lǐbái* 'three weeks'.

Similar relationships are found in almost all other pidgins attested in modern times. Any given pidgin will show close resemblances in vocabulary (and hence in phonological correspondences), morphology and syntax to a particular language, normally European (English, French, Portuguese, etc.). It will also show syntactic and semantic similarities to one or more languages of a different type, normally spoken in the area where the pidgin has arisen and/or is used -- e.g., China, West Africa, or Melanesia. We may refer to the first type of language as 'European' in general, and to the second type as 'native'. Both have unmistakably played a rôle in the rapid and drastic restructuring involved in the sudden formation of a pidgin, as discussed in our first two paragraphs. But the question is, what rôle does each play?

On first contact, the naïve speaker of a European language, especially of the one which a given pidgin resembles, will be impressed above all by the way it has been 'bastardised' in the pidgin by mixture with the 'native' language(s) the pidgin also resembles.⁴ On acquiring at least a smattering of the local speech, he will immediately conclude that the pidgin is simply "the native language spoken with European words".⁵ On the other hand, the linguist with some training in historical-comparative method will see, above all, the correspondences in sounds and forms by which languages are classed in 'genetically' related families.⁶ For this reason, I have not hesitated to consider English, for instance, as the basic common source of CPE, WAPE, Sranan, APE, and MPE, although they all show more or less strong influences from the native languages of their areas;⁷ and Goodman (1964) similarly treated as of French origin all the Creole French languages, from the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean to the Indian Ocean.

In recent years, it has been suggested by some⁸ that the historical-comparative method is not applicable to pidgins (and hence not to their out-growths, creoles), because of the rapidity with which pidgins are formed and the type of language-change involved. Instead, we are told, the similarity of any pidgin or creole to a given European 'source' is due only to a process of *relaxification*. This process involves the substitution of vocabulary-items for others, with the maintenance of a stable syntactic base. In the case of the pidgins and creoles which resemble European languages, they are, according to this theory, to be traced back to a single common origin in a West African Pidgin Portuguese, which used Portuguese words in West African syntactic patterns. Formed in the early days of contact between Portuguese traders and African natives, it would have been brought to the New World and 'relaxified' along the way to give the apparently English-based creoles of Surinam, Jamaica, and other regions in the Caribbean area; the apparently French-based creoles extending from Louisiana to French Guiana; and the Papiamentu of Curaçao and the neighboring islands.

The theory of relexification is, despite its surface attractiveness, only a slightly more sophisticated version of the theory that a pidgin is "a native language spoken with European words" referred to above. This theory can be faulted on three grounds: those of geography, descriptive linguistics, and historical linguistics. On the first point, it is enough to observe that many phenomena characteristic of pidgin languages the world over (e.g., simplification of phonological and morphological structure; use of equational clauses; use of verbs indicating motion instead of special adverbs of place) occur in widely separated places and times, without any demonstrable relation having existed except through the European language involved. Thus, many phenomena found in the French-based creoles of the New World recur in those of the Indian Ocean (as discussed by Goodman 1964): e.g., a number of special vocabulary items; aspect- and tense-prefixes from Fr. *été* (past), *va* (future), *après* (present progressive); or functors such as forms from Fr. *plus* 'more' and *pas* (negativiser). Yet there is no possibility of tracing the Creoles of Mauritius or Réunion to a West African substratum. Similarly, MPE has such features in common with Sranan and other New World English-based creoles as the construction verb + verb, with the latter indicating motion in a given direction: e.g., Sranan *yu mu-tyári yu gón kóm* 'you must carry your gun [so that it] comes, you must bring your gun'; MPE /brɪŋɪm kɔjkɔj i-kəm/ 'bring the the food [so that] it comes, bring the food here'. This type of construction in Sranan and other African-related creoles has often been traced to a West African model; yet it occurs also in MPE and in CPE, which have no historical connection with any West-African-related pidgin or creole.⁹

Descriptively, the theory of relexification is tenable only on the doubtful and unproven assumption that syntax is the central part of linguistic structure, to which all other aspects of language are subordinate, and that therefore language consists only of syntactic structures and vocabulary. On the contrary, the grammatical core¹⁰ of any language includes its part-of-speech-system, its grammatical categories, its functors, and its construction-types and constructions. (These last-mentioned are, it will be noticed, only one out of a total of four major groups of features.) Under its functors are to be classed¹¹ all substitutes, all grammatical markers, all inflectional affixes, and (I would add, going somewhat beyond Hockett's formulation), all pure-relational elements, in Sapir's sense.¹² In other words, the morphology (inflectional and derivational features) of a language are fully as important as its syntax in determining a language's structure and its relationships; they are not mere lexical items, nor are they features determined by and dependent on syntax alone.

In the case of any European-based pidgin or creole, it is immediately evident that its functors, its grammatical categories, its part-of-speech-system, and a large part of its syntactic structures are shared with the European language involved English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, as the case may be. The pronouns and demonstratives of the English-based creoles and pidgins go back to English *me* (*my*), *you*, *he* (*him*), not to any African or other native language; the French Creole pronouns reflect, similarly, French *moi*, *toi*, *lui*; and those of Papiamentu reflect Spanish *mi*, *él*, *nos*, *vos* /*bos*/. Typically African grammatical characteristics, and particularly complicated verb-forms and numerous grammatical genders (concordance-classes) such as are found in

the Bantu languages,¹³ are notable by their absence from all African-related pidgins and creoles. On the contrary, the grammatical categories and part-of-speech-systems of these latter show remarkable closeness to Indo-European structure. This closeness is not the result of a European approach being imposed on these languages from without, but is inherent in their own structure.

When we look at syntax, too, we find that the essential combinations of elements characterising pidgins and creoles show more in common with the European languages on which they are based than they do with the native languages involved. The only statistical study of syntactic features to date has been Hooley (1962/63); he found that MPE shared a greater number of transformations, and more essential ones, with English than with Melanesian-type languages. It is particularly important to note that all European-based creoles and pidgins show the fundamental Indo-European major clause-type (subject +) predicate, a type which is by no means universal in all the languages of the earth.

In historical linguistics, the criterion by which languages are classified as related is not merely — *pace* Sylvain (cf. the quote in fn. 5) and others — syntactic similarity, but the existence of systematic correspondences on all levels of grammatical structure.¹⁴ (Not of lexicon alone, since on this level the correspondences can be obscured by all types of borrowing, learned and other.) It is essential, in order to consider two or more languages as having developed out of a common source, to establish correspondences among all the elements comprising their grammatical cores: phonology, morphology, and syntax. If this is done, we see that every European-based creole and pidgin points in one direction only: towards a European language as its source.¹⁵ What remains is undoubtedly to be ascribed, in most instances, to a native substratum (e.g., the wide-spread use of constructions involving verbs meaning 'pass, surpass' to indicate comparison, in WAPE¹⁶ and many African-related American creoles); but it is simply a far less systematic carry-over from previously existing speech-habits, i.e., from a substratum,¹⁷ and in most instances not even traceable to one specific substratum-language.

What, then, must we consider the situation as having been if a given pidgin or creole was replaced, in any one locality, by one of a different origin, such as happened in Surinam, where a Portuguese-based creole was replaced by an English-based one? No different, in its essentials, from any other instance of language-transfer. If we regard such a substitution as involving 'relexification', we must admit that it also involved 'regrammaticalisation', since the items that were replaced included not only contentives but functors and all the other elements of the grammatical core of linguistic structure. But regrammaticalisation is the essence of language-transfer. Without it, no change of genetic affinity has taken place: Chamorro is none the less Malayo-Polynesian for having something like 98 percent of its vocabulary of Spanish origin, nor is English any the less Germanic on account of its 75 percent or more of Graeco-Latin and French lexicon. Contrariwise, when a speech-community goes over to speaking a new language, both relexification and regrammaticalisation take place. French, for instance, is not merely Gaulish spoken with Latin words; it is a modern development out of Latin, even though it has some lexical and even grammatical survivals (e.g., remainders of a vigesimal system of counting) from Celtic. From this point of view, when a pidgin or creole of one origin replaces one of

another origin, there has simply been a break in continuity, even though some elements of previous usage may survive (e.g., Portuguese words like *grandi* 'big' in Sranan).

The theory of relexification, as applied to pidgins and creoles, has too limited a base in the facts of linguistic structure and history to afford a satisfactory insight into the development of these languages. We may safely continue to speak of those which have developed structurally out of European languages as being 'European-based', and may profitably use formations in *-related*, e.g., 'African-related', to indicate their connections with native languages or language-groups. This approach will prove the most profitable, as it has done to date, in further study of the history of pidgins and creoles.

Notes

¹ Cf. Hall (1955: 33-34). Abbreviations used in our discussion are: APE = Australian Pidgin English; CPE = Chinese Pidgin English; HC = Haitian Creole; JC = Jamaican Creole; MPE = Melanesian Pidgin English (Neo-Melanesian); PE = Pidgin English; WAPE = West African Pidgin English.

² Examples from Hall (1944).

³ The term 'measure' and the Chinese examples are from Hockett (1958: 224). In nineteenth-century CPE, there were two numeral-suffixes: /-fɛlə/ referring to animates (as in /túfɛlə mɛn/ 'two men', but /-pisi/ for inanimates (e.g., /túpisi tɛbəl/ 'two tables'). Nouns thus fell into two 'covert' classes, according to the suffix taken by a modifying numeral. The existence of two, rather than one, numeral-suffixes made earlier CPE even closer to the Chinese situation, in which there are a number of different 'measures'.

⁴ For examples of the extremes to which obloquy directed against pidgins, on the grounds of language-mixture, can go, cf. Hall (1955: 14, 41-42, 44-45, 77, etc.).

⁵ A conception repeated even by Sylvain (1936: 175 "Nous sommes en présence d'un français coulé dans le moule de la syntaxe africaine, ou, comme on classe généralement les langues d'après leur parenté syntaxique, d'une langue éwé à vocabulaire français.").

⁶ As is generally recognised, the terms *genetic relationship* and *genetically related*, as applied to languages, are purely metaphorical; cf. Hall (1958), or the discussion of diachronic linguistics in almost any reliable manual, such as Bloomfield (1933) or Hockett (1958).

⁷ Even going so far as to set up a comparative table of correspondences between various types of PE and English-based creoles, so that we could set up a Proto-PE (cf. Hall 1966: 118-120 for a brief discussion and sample table).

⁸ Especially by Taylor (1960, 1961, 1963); Thompson (1961); Whinnom (1965).

⁹ CPE has no demonstrable relation with Africa at all, or with any other variety of pidgin. MPE of course has some relationship with the other English-based pidgins of the South Pacific, such as APE and the pidgins spoken in earlier times in Micronesia, Polynesia, and New Zealand. (For Beach-la-Mar in general, cf. Churchill 1911.) Even here, this relationship came about through the contact between various groups of speakers of English in this part of the world, rather than through there having been any common native linguistic substratum, or through any relexification of a West-African-related pidgin imported from outside.

¹⁰ Hockett's term (1958: 265).

¹¹ Cf. Hockett (1958: 264-265).

¹² Sapir (1921: chapter 6).

¹³ Cf. Jespersen (1922: 352-355); Bloomfield (1933: 192); and, for exemplification of the concordial system of a specific Bantu language (Chichewa), Watkins (1937: 22-43).

¹⁴ Best formulated by Kent (1931: 15).

¹⁵ Cf. Schneider (1966: 108).

¹⁶ Goodman (1964) has made an extensive comparative study of the French-based creoles; a similarly extensive study remains to be done for the pidgins and creoles of English origin.

¹⁷ Cf. Hall (1964: 370-375).

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