Pidgins and Creoles: Birth of Languages

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Abstrak: *Tulisan ini menjelaskan sepintas tentang bahasa Pidgin dan Creole. Bahasa Pidgin dan Creole adalah dua jenis bahasa yang digunakan di dunia dan para penggunanya adalah komunitas tersendiri yang ada di berbagai belahan dunia. Pembahasan dalam artikel ini dimulai dengan pemaparan sejarah atau latar belakang timbulnya bahasa Pidgin dan Creole dan mulai digunakannya kedua bahasa tersebut di dunia. Penjelasan tentang definisi kedua istilah tersebut juga dipaparkan dengan jelas dengan tujuan agar lebih mudah dipahami. Tulisan ini juga membahas beberapa persamaan antara bahasa Pidgin dan Creole serta perbedaan keduanya beserta contoh-contoh kosa kata yang digunakan dalam masyarakat penggunanya. Lebih lanjut juga dideskripsikan secara detail tentang masyarakat yang menggunakan kedua bahasa tersebut di dunia. Di akhir tulisan, artikel ini membahas tentang beberapa alasan mengapa Pidgin dan Creole terlahir sebagai bahasa yang digunakan beberapa komunitas di berbagai belahan dunia.*

Kata Kunci: *Bahasa Pidgin; bahasa Creole; terciptanya bahasa*

Abtsract: This article presents an outlook of pidgins and creoles starting from the background of the arise of the using of pidgins and creoles in the world. To have a clear understanding of what pidgins and creoles are the definition of both terms are explained briefly here. This article also discusses some distinctions or distinctive features of pidgins and creoles and the community using pidgins and creoles in the world. At the end of the discussion, this article describes some brief discussions related to some reasons stating that pidgins and creoles are born as languages.

Keywords: Pidgin; Creole; birth of languages

Introduction

Language is a means of communication. There are some living languages in the world. Some of the languages dissappeared when the reason for communication diminishes. Some others, however, developed very differently from their related languages. Other were influenced by the neighbouring languages, taking on different grammar and vocabulary, to diverge into varied dialects or even completely new languages. Among the languages of the world are pidgins and creoles.

Researchs related to pidgins and creoles have been conducted by some researchers years ago. Musyken and Smith state that the earliest written source for many creoles date from the 18th century, when missionaries started writing dictionaries and translating

religious texts into the languages of the slaves. The term 'creole' was first applied to a language in 1739 in Virgin Islands when the very youthful Ducth-lexifier crede Negerhollands was referred to a carriolsche by a Moravian missionary.[1]

In line with what have been stated by Musyken and Smith, Vicente also adds that studies on pidgin and creole language date from before he ninetienth century, however, as academic discipline it was not established until 1950s and early 1960s.[2] In addition, Bickerton (1990) and Givon (1998) are among those who wrote about pidgins and creoles. For what reason and consideration that pidgins and creoles are said as born languages ?. In this article, the writer will describe some experts findings of why pidgins and creoles are considered as born languages.

What are Pidgins and Creoles?

There may be several different origins for the 'pidgin'. It may come from Chinese pidgin English where it means 'business' or Hebrew "pidjom" which means ' barter'. The term "pidgin", sometimes spelled "pigion", originally referred to Chinese Pidgin English. After English came to Chine in the 1630s, a need for a shared language arose in order to conduct trade. Local workers communicated with their English-speaking counterparts through broken English, which developed its own patterns and forms. Most likely, the word is the Chinese pronunciation of the English word "business". Eventually, the term became used for all pidgin languages.[3]

The most basic definition of a pidgin is "a simplified form of speech formed from one or more existing languages, used by people who have no other language in common". As was mentioned above, the original pidgin languages was developed out of the need for two groups of people to communicate. This is most commonly used for business and trade purposes, when it is beneficial to both sides.[4]

Thus, Pidgin is a language that arises when people that do not have a common language, when they have to come into contact with each other but it is not used by any community to communicate among themselves. One of famous pidgin language is Tok Pisin in New Guinea which developed between the English speaking administrators and the local population. Some words of Tok Pisin quoted from Bolinger in Hudson can be seen as follow. The words in brackets indicate the English source that explain the preceding Tok Pisin word.

Bimeby (by and by) leg belong you he-all-right gain (again).

'Your leg will get well again'

Sick he-down-im(him) me.

'I am sick'

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[1]Musyken, Pieter and Smith, Noral. *The Study of Pidgin and creoles Languages.*.1995. P. 7-8

[2]Vicente, Veruska Salvador. "English-Based Pidgins and Creoles: From Social to Cognitive Hypotheses of Acquisition." *Revista Virtual de studos da linguagem_ReVEL*, Vol 5, n 9 agosto de 2007, ISSN 1678-8931 (www,revel.inf.br). P.1

[3]Erick Zidowecki, Parrot Time. *The Thinking of Speaking. Extras Of Pidgins and Creoles. A Look at How some Languages are Born.* www.parrottime.com/index.php?i=15&a=153. Retrieved on February 20, 2017

[4]*Ibid*

Me like-im saucepan belong cook-im bread.

' I want a pan for cooking bread'.[5]

The term Creoles, however, come from the French *creole* which means "indigenous" that was borrowed from Spanish *criollo* which means " native ". It is commonly known as a one-time pidgin which has become the mother tongue of a community.[6] It means creoles are the languages that are developed by the children of pidgin speakers. When the children of the adults speaking the pidgin start learning it as their first language, it has proven itself to be a stable language. Then, as the children grow up, they expand the vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar.

Distinction between Pidgins and Creoles

As has been explained previously that pidgin is the language used as a contact language when people originally speaking different languages use when they come in contact. This language can develop to become creole languages. This requires the pidgin to be learned as mother tongue by children who then generalize the features of the pidgin into a fully-formed and stabilized grammar, but there is a case that not all pidgin becomes creole as it can die or obsolete. The following discussion will describe some main distinctions between pidgins and creoles.

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[5]Bolinger, D. *Aspects of Language,* 2nd ed. New York. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 1975. P. 356. In Hudson,R. A.Sociolinguistics. 1985

[6]Pidgins and creoles. Retrieved from http://homepage.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/silke.Hoeche/aspects%20of%20Language%20Change/Pidgins%20and%20creoles.doc. On February 20 2017

The main distinction is that from a social point of view that creoles are of more interest than pidgins.[7] The reason to say this is that there are more speakers of creoles than of pidgins, One of the most spoken creoles is *Tok Pisin*. It is spoken by over five million people, primarily in Papua New Guinea, where it is the official language. Over one million people are taught it as a first language. Most people there speak it to a certain degree, but not necessarily fluently. Tok Pisin can be easy for a native English speaker to understand with many of the words being simplifications, such as *gohet* (go ahead), *hariup* (hurry up), *kamaut* (come out), and *sidaun* (sit down).

a. The characteristics of Pidgins

Here are the important defining features of a pidgin language that distinguish it from other variety of language.

1. The most distinctive feature of pidgins is the lack of morphology.

2. A pidgin based on variety X is not just an example of bad X as one might describe the unsuccesful attempt of an individual foreigner to learn X. This is because pidgin is developed by both sides of communication gap as the main reason of creating this language is to help bridge the gap.

3. A pidgin is not simply the result of heavy borrowing from one variety into another, since there is no pre existing variety into which items may be borrowed. It is reasonable to say this

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[7]Hudson, R.A, *Sociolingustics*, 1985, Cambridge Univ Press. P. 66

since pidgins are formed from some of their own language, some from other language.[8]

4. A Pidgin is a language variety that arises from contact between two or more languages with complementary distribution.

5. In the context of European colonialist expansion these languages were the languages of the European colonizers and the non-European indigenous language(s) of those being 'colonized' around the Atlantic and in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, e.g. West-African languages.

6. Languages involved in the formation of pidgins and creoles are also referred to as superstrate and substrate. The dominant language in contact situations constitutes the superstrate. The indigenous non-European languages are the substrate which is the less dominant language in a contact situation. The speakers of the substrate languages were regarded socially inferior to the European colonizers.

7. the process in which a pidgin develops is referred to as pidginization.

8. A pidgin do not have native speakers. It is used as a consequences of the fact that it is used only for communication between members of different communities.

9. Pidgins usually draw most of their vocabulary from one language, the lexifier. The lexifier is usually the language of the European colonizer, e.g. English, Spanish, French or Dutch (= the superstrate).

10. Pidgins are not mutually intelligible with these languages eventhough they are lexically and grammatically influenced by their input languages.

11. The grammars are simpler and reduced than the grammars of their input languages.[9]

b. **The characteristics of Creoles**

A creole is usually defined both with reference to and in contrast to pidgins. Here are the important defining features of a creole language:

1. Unlike pidgins which have no native speakers, creoles have native speakers. A child born into a pidgin-speaking community will acquire this pidgin as a first language. Thus, the pidgin will be turned into a creole by the process of nativization.

2. Creoles always develop out of a pidgin. (some experts have different opinion toward this).

3. The process whereby a creole develops and a pidgin acquires native

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[8]Hudson, R.A, Sociolinguistics, 1985, Cambridge Univ Press. P.65-66

[9]Language Birth: Pidgin and Creole languages. ELLO (English Language and Linguistics Online. adapted from Sebba , 1997)   Retrieved from WWW.ello.uos.de/field.php/sociolinguistics/Languagebirth on February 23, 2017.

4. Creolization may occur at any of the developmental stages of a pidgin. Depending on the developmental stage at which creolization starts to happen, there is either gradual creolization or abrupt creolization.

5. Gradual creolization occurs in the extended / expanded pidgin stage. In other words, creolization starts at a stage where the pidgin is highly developed. It is already characterized by established linguistic norms of usage.

6. Abrupt creolization describes the process before a stable pidgin could emerge. Here, the process of creolization occurs at an early developmental stage of the pidgin. At this point, it is still characterized by a lack of stable linguistic norms of usage.[10]

One of the most famous creole language is Tok Pisin. An interesting aspect of Tok Pisin is its usage of *inclusive* and *exclusive* forms of pronouns. Western languages normally just have a singular and plural forms (I, we), while Tok Pisin also has a dual and triple form, which are used to define exactly who is involved. They are constructed by adding the words "tu" and "tri" into the pronoun forms. Tok Pisin also utilizes *reduplication*, mainly to distinguish between different words. For example, the word for "ship" is "sip", but since that might also sound like a corruption of "sheep", it is doubled, so "sheep" is "sipsip".[11]

To have a better understanding of the meaning of pidgin and creole, let us take an illustration of Rohingya people coming to Aceh. To have a communication with Acehese people, certainly, they can not since they do not understand Acehnese language. Acehnese people, on the other side, do not understand Rohingya's language either. In fact, they need to communicate since daily routinity demands so. Therefore, the Rohingya people might create some vocabulary that derive from their own language mixed with Acehnese people language. This is what it is called pidgin. If this kind of mixed language used by the children of Rohingya as their first language, then it becomes creole.

There are, however, some experts who claim that creoles do not derive from pidgins. Chaudenson (2001) and Mufwene (2001) are among those who debated the theory that state that creole derived from pidgins since they believe that creoles developed independently from pidgins, the former in plantation settlement colonies and the latter in trade colonies. Both developed gradually, from closer approximations of the initial targets to varieties more and more different from them. The writer, however, takes a simple conclusion that whether a pidgin becomes a creole, we have to trace back where the geographical distribution of the creole itself.

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[10]Language Birth: Pidgin and Creole languages. ELLO (English Language and Linguistics Online. adapted from Sebba , 1997)   Retrieved from www.ello.uos.de/field.php/sociolinguistics/Languagebirth on February 23 2017.

[11]Zidowecki, Erick. Parrot Time. The Thinking of speaking. Extras of pidgins and Creoles. A Look at how some languages are born. Retrieved from www.parrottime.com/index.php?i=15&a=153   on February 23 2017

Pidgins, Creoles and the Community

Every languages has its own features and characteristics that make it different from other languages. One of the central characteristics of pidgins and creoles is their highly simplified grammatical structure compared to the structures of their source – or input – languages. Though grammatically highly simplified, they are from a linguistic standpoint not inferior language varieties but separate languages on their own fulfilling the communicative purposes of their speakers. Outside linguistics, the general attitude towards these languages is nevertheless often rather negative even among their speakers. What is the hidden perception toward the community using pidgins and creoles in the world?.

One of the perception is Pidgins is lack of prestige. This is because the development of pidgins and creoles is not exclusively but closely connected to European colonialist expansion and its accompanying slave trade. This is the reason why we find so many pidgins (and creoles) located along former trade routes.[12] Pidgins became very closely associated with slaves, and acquired a poor reputation.

Another perception is that those who speak pidgins and creoles get the reputation of being stupid since they could not speak a proper language.

Those perception, however, can not be taken as general perception accepted generally by all people in the world since some pidgins and creoles were born because of the immediate necessity. Most slaves had little opportunity to learn the ordinary language of their masters. In addition, when pidgins become creoles (not all pidgins), and becomes their first language, it shows us the complexity of a language. This certainly reveals the properties of the human mind which created language.

The following figure is presented to have a clear district in the world which pidgins and creoles used.[13]

Thus, it can be seen that there are many languages named pidgins and creoles in the world that are used by thousands of people around the world, some still pidgins but many are creoles since they have got the proccess of creolization. Some are born from the proccess of slavery, some other are from trade while others are from bussiness as in chinese language derived its term pidgin which means bussiness. Most pidgins are concentrated on the Atlantic coast of the African mainland and on Pacific islands, whereas most creoles are concentrated on Atlantic and Indian Ocean islands and on the Atlantic coast of the Americas.
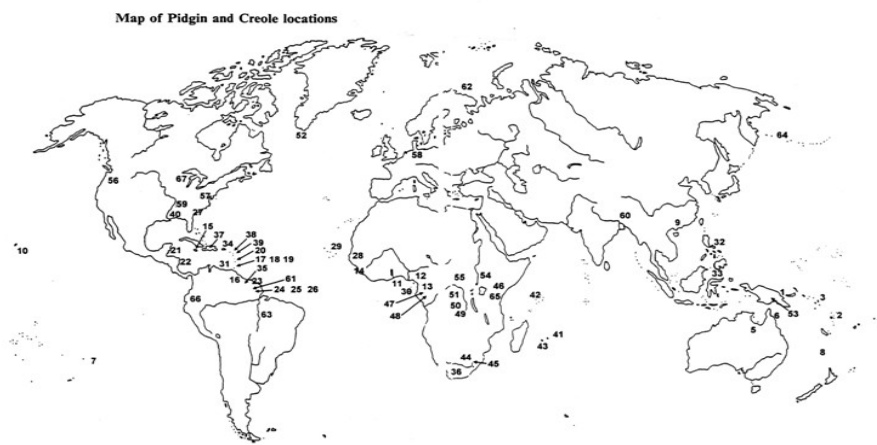
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To have a clear understanding of the

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[12]Language Birth: Pidgin and Creole languages. ELLO (English Language and Linguistics Online. adapted from Sebba , 1997) Retrieved from www.ello.uos.de/field.php/sociolinguistics/Languagebirth on February 23 2017.

[13]Language Birth: Pidgin and Creole languages. ELLO (English Language and Linguistics Online. adapted from Sebba , 1997) Retrieved from www.ello.uos.de/field.php/sociolinguistics/Languagebirth on February 23 2017

Map of Pidgin and Creole locations

36	Afrikaans
5	Australian Pidgin English
20	Barbadian Creole
21	Belizean Creole
35	Berbice Creole Dutch
2	Bislama
25	Boni
13	Cameroonian Pidgin English
29	Cape Verde Crioulo
22	Central American Creole
9	Chinese Pidgin English

56	Chinook Jargon
64	Copper Island Aleut
57	Delaware Jargon
26	Djuka
52	Eskirno Trade Jargon
44	Fanakalo
45	Fly Taal
58	Gastarbeiterdeutsch
18	Grenada Creole
38	Guadeloupe Creole
28	Guiné Crioulo

27	Gullah
16	Guyanese Creole
37	Haitian Creole
10	Hawaiian Creole English
53	Hiri Motu
15	Jamaican Creole
54	Juba Arabic
50	Kituba
14	Krio
51	Lingala
40	Louisiana Creole

41	Mauritian Creole
65	Mbugu
66	Media Lengua
67	Michif
59	Mobilian Jargon
60	Naga Pidgin
61	Ndjuka-Trio Pidgin
34	Negerhollands
12	Nigerian Pidgin English
8	Norfolk
31	Papiamentu
32	Philippine Creole Spanish

47	Pidgin A-70
48	Pidgin Ewondo
49	Pidgin Swahili
7	Pitcairnese (Pitkern)
43	Réunionnais
62	Russenorsk
4	Samoan Plantation Pidgin
55	Sango
30	São Tomé Crioulo
24	Saramaccan
42	Seychellois
46	Sheng

3	Solomon Islands Pijin
23	Sranan
39	St Lucia Creole
19	St Vincent Creole
1	Tok Pisin
6	Torres Strait Broken
17	Trinidad Creole
63	Tupi (Lingua Geral)
11	West African Pidgin English
33	Zamboangueño

existence of pidgin and creole languages in the world, we may look back at the history taking place in the nineteenth century. One of the reasons of the arise of pidgin and creole is the coming of slaves from Africa to North America to work on plantations. They had to mix with people from other communities. Unfortunately, they could not communicate by using the language of their bosses and peers. This situation had brought a fact that they had to create their own language in order to be able to communicate with those people who do not understand the slaves' language. The created language is then called "pidgin". Thus, one fact said that pidgins arise because of colonization.

Another thought said that pidgins is a Trade Language. This is referred to the fact that the reason for wanting to communicate with members of the other communities is often trade. This can be seen in the north west Amazon area that Tukano is the language of one of the twenty-odd tribes but is also used as a trade language by all the others.[14] However,

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[14]Hudson,R.A, *Sociolinguistics*, Cambridge. 1985. Univ Press. P. 61

most said that pidgins come from the English word *bussiness.* as pronounced in the pidgin English which developed in China.[15]

Pidgins and creoles are said born as languages. This is reasonable since Pidgins and creoles arise because of some conditions that make the speakers must create a language in order to be able to communicate. Both typically referred to as contact languages because they arise from contact between two or more existing languages. More precisely, such languages develop in areas where speakers with different native languages who can not speak and understand each others' languages have contact to each other. In specific social situations there is a fundamental need for communication between these speech communities for example trade. We say that their languages are complementarily distributed. In such situations a common means of communication, a common language, is needed.

This situation has brought a result. The result is the development of a language that has not existed before: a pidgin or jargon respectively. This new language functions as a lingua franca, a language to communicate, for its speakers: a language which is used as a means of communication between speakers who do not share a native language. Pidgin languages do not have native speakers. The development of pidgins and creoles is not exclusively but closely connected to European colonialist expansion and its accompanying slave trade. This is the reason why we find so many pidgins (and creoles) located along former trade routes.[16]

A pidgin will develop its own basic vocabulary and grammar, but in rather simplified ways compared to the "parent" languages. Normally, the majority of the vocabulary is from the target or larger language (often English), and most of the sounds, grammar, and syntax comes from the local language. Most pidgins remain small and specialized, being called "trade languages". Pidgins do not normally arise just from two languages existing next to each other.

The writer gave an example of a pidgin that become creole beforehand, and here, another example of pidgin is displayed to have a better understanding toward it. Let us look at *West African Pidgin English*. It was developed during the late 17th century, when the British were running a slave trade in the Atlantic. The sailors and slave traders spoke English between themselves while being in constant contact with African villagers, who spoke a number of West African Niger–Congo languages. Since both sides needed to communicate for business purposes, they started trying to learn each others language and met in the middle. Once a basic system was developed and became adopted, it spread to other areas needing it for the same purposes. As the British travelled inland, the pidgin spread and developed.[17]

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[15]Hudson, P. 61-62

[16]Language Birth: Pidgin and Creole languages. ELLO (English Language and Linguistics Online. adapted from Sebba , 1997) Retrieved from www.ello.uos.de/field.php/sociolinguistics/Languagebirth on February 23 2017.

[17]Zidowecki, Erick. May/June 2015.The Thinking of speaking. Extras of pidgins and Creoles. A Look at how some languages are born. Retrieved from www.parrottime.com/index.

Then it started to diverge and become more specialized, like regular languages do, depending on which languages were mixing with the English. These became *Gambian Pidgin English* (Aku), *Sierra Leone Pidgin English* (Krio), *Liberian Pidgin English*, *Ghanaian Pidgin English*, *Nigerian Pidgin English*, and *Cameroon Pidgin English* (Kamtok).

When using a pidgin, it is often rather simple to understand what is being said if you already know the stronger language, like English. You just simplify your hearing on it, looking for the most basic words and elements. An example in *Nigerian Pidgin English* would be the question "How you dey?", which can easily be understood to mean "How are you doing today?". The words are the same or shortened, making them easier to learn, and the extraneous ones are removed. Spelling can also be simplified, such as "I no no" for "I do not know". The first "no" is used to imply the negative with the second one being a phonetic spelling of "know".[18] A few more examples are:

> "Gi mi." = "Give it to me."
> "I dey fine." = "I'm fine. I'm doing well."
> "I no sabi." = "I don't understand."
> "Wetin dey happen?" = "What's going on? What's happening?"
> "Listen well well" = "Pay attention"
> "Troway" = waste, throw away"[19]

The most obvious change from English to the pidgin here is how some sounds are simplified. "Give" is shorted to just "gi". "Throw away" gets compressed and the "th" sound is shortened to a "t" sound.[20]

While pidgins are often limited to a vocabulary of around 300 words, creoles typically have at least 1000 to 3000 words. In a sense, the young language grows up along with the children. We consider this generation to be native speakers of the creole language. This process is called *nativization*.[21] There is no widely accepted theory on how or why this happens. One theory is that the formation of creoles reflects the most basic grammatical structure the human mind can invent, so they are all going to be developed with that baseline. More elaborate grammars takes a much longer time to develop, being influenced by the situation of the speakers and the older languages nearby.[22]

Eventhough there are some contradictive opinions of the experts writing about whether or not creoles in the world have experienced the evolution, here, the writer come to the conclusion that the existence of pidgins and creoles is a proof that a language is born.

In conclusion, pidgins and creoles are born because of necessity and raised among human children, both are fascinating creatures. Pidgins and creoles not only act as a bridge between languages and cultures, but they also give us insight into how languages develop, since they are created and brought to adulthood in a relatively short time.

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php?i=15&a=153 on February 23 2017

[18]Zidowecki, Erick. May/June 2015. Parrot Time. The Thinking of speaking. Extras of pidgins and Creoles. A Look at how some languages are born. Retrieved from www.parrottime.com/index. php?i=15&a=153 on February 23 2017

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