

REVIEW ARTICLE

The Social Context of "Special" Second Language Acquisition

John Rickford

Stanford University

Ian Hancock

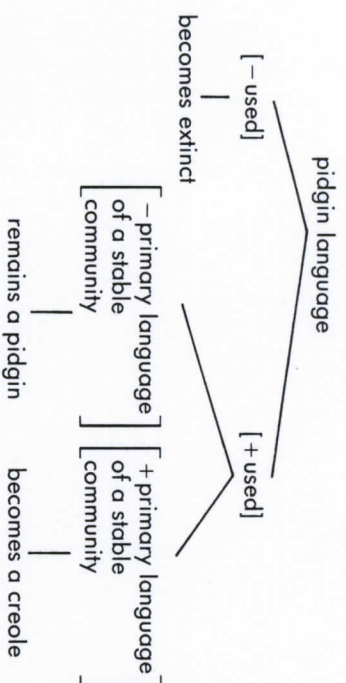
University of Texas at Austin

The social context of creolization, Ellen Woolford & William Washbaugh (eds.). Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, 1983. Pp. 149.

Although this is not standard SLA practice, we are pleased to publish these two complementary reviews of a collective volume that, while it focuses on creolization and pidginization, addresses issues relevant to the social context of second language acquisition. Seldom do we have the opportunity of having two leading specialists in a particular field apply to the same work different theoretical perspectives and varying familiarity with areas of the field.

Although there has been no dearth of socially oriented works within pidgin-creole studies in recent years the field seems to have been dominated by descriptions of individual creoles or geographical areas and by discussions of Bickerton's (1981) bioprogram hypothesis. Discussion of these latter issues is welcome and important, but there is considerable potential for mutual enrichment between sociolinguistics and pidgin-creole studies that remains to be realized. *The Social Context of Creolization* (SCC) is therefore most welcome.

Woolford's introduction is laudable for its general attempt to sketch "precise models" of the social context of pidginization and creolization, viewed as part of a larger enterprise of "discovering the relationship between social context and linguistic change." She makes two important reminders to those who would join in this enterprise: (1) that negative evidence—cases in which the social factors are present but the expected



linguistic results are not—is just as important as positive evidence, and (2) that social factors present themselves in specific situations in varying degrees rather than in all or nothing fashion. Tok Psin, for instance, is more nearly the exclusive medium of communication in some Papuan New Guinean communities than in others, and its rate of creolization (read: structural expansion) appears to correlate with this variable.

While I fully endorse the value of the enterprise to which Woolford's introduction is addressed, she could have led us even further toward its realization than she does. The diagram above is presented as one of three which represent a "replacement of prose discussions of creolization . . . with explicit models in which the hypotheses are clearly and precisely spelled out . . ." It is an excellent pictorial representation of some aspects of pivotal introductions to the field provided by De Camp (1971) and Hymes (1971), but some readers might confuse shadow with substance and conclude that tree diagrams in themselves represent an advance or that fruitful theory-building cannot be done in prose.

Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth: witness the fact that there are several valuable aspects of DeCamp's and Hymes' introductions that are *not* incorporated in the above diagram or the others like it. I will give only one example—DeCamp's (1971:25) observation that the subsequent development of a pidgin depends in part on its social status vis-à-vis the standard language of the community. This attitudinal component is not reflected in the diagram above nor elsewhere in the introduction, but appears in the papers by Clark, Dutton, and Mülhåusler in this volume, and is relevant to issues and examples within the introduction itself. For instance, the quick assimilation of slaves into the Spanish speaking community in the Spanish Caribbean is cited (p. 4) as an example of the replacement of a pidgin by another language. But given the common evaluation of pidgin and creole varieties as non-languages, or as merely deficient versions of standard languages (DeCamp, 1971; Rickford & Traugott, 1984), it is questionable whether the transition from more pidginized to more

standard varieties of Spanish (assuming that this actually happened) was regarded by either the Spanish or the Africans as a shift from one "language" to another. There are many similarities between "ordinary" language shift (as between Hungarian and German in Austria: Gal, 1979) and depidginization (see Bickerton & Odo, 1976), but the recognition of two autonomous and viable linguistic norms in the former but not the latter case may constitute one crucial difference. There may certainly be a purely linguistic dimension to this difference in recognition (the proportion of shared vocabulary, for instance), but the dimension of social evaluation looms even larger.

Not only might the introduction have utilized more of DeCamp (1971) and Hymes (1971), it might also have gone further in drawing on other works which have already helped to advance our understanding of "the relationship between social context and linguistic change." I have in mind here works like Weinreich (1953), which includes a detailed (chapter 4) examination of relevant aspects of the socio-cultural setting in which language contact and linguistic interference occur; Ferguson and Gumperz (1960), which includes several insightful studies of language and social context in South Asia; Weinreich, Herzog and Labov (1968), which separates the socially constrained aspects of linguistic change into embedding, evaluation and actuation components; Schumann (1978), with its discussion of the role of social and psychological distance in second language acquisition and "pidginization" (see Andersen 1983:23 for a summary); and Dorian (1980), with its insightful discussion of both the social context and linguistic characteristics of language death. Some of these do go beyond the frame of reference of pidgins and creoles to which Woolford admits her discussion is restricted. But unless we imagine that pidginization and creolization are exceptional processes (the opposite sentiment is expressed in Woolford's final paragraph), mining the insights of this earlier work is essential for modelling their relation to social context.

"Social Contexts of Early South Pacific Pidgins" (R. Clark) is a survey of the contact languages which developed in the South Pacific in the 18th and early 19th centuries, particularly the English-based varieties which preceded "modern" Melanesian Pidgin English (essentially established by the 1880's). Readers seeking a brief, clear introduction to the various pidgins of this area will find this paper extremely useful. It makes good use of textual material to illustrate the main features of early 19th century "jargon" as well as later, more developed "pidgin," and concludes with an excellent summary of the main developments. It also includes several fascinating observations about the relation between social types or settings and linguistic developments. For instance, 18th-century missionaries and "beachcombers" (individual Europeans who settled in island communities) both seem to have learned South Pacific languages well and to have been relatively uninvolved in pidgin formation. But the beachcombers learned the local languages as part of a more general process of "going native" (taking local wives and serving as advisors to local chiefs), while the missionaries may have avoided pidgin as a means of distancing themselves from the unsavory European characters who used it (traders, firearm dealers, and labor recruiters). The role of language as a social "act of identity" (Le Page, to appear) comes very clearly to the fore.

One of the few quibbles I might make about Clark's article is that it makes reference to many different islands in the region, but includes no map. In this respect it is similar to all the other papers in the volume except Dutton's, and readers should have an atlas handy before settling down to read this book. Another quibble is about his use of verbatim quotations from nineteenth century texts, without glosses. Since most of the lexicon is English, this may appear to be unproblematic, but it is easy to make the wrong syntactic or semantic inference and difficult to use the texts for original analyses of one's own.

"Samoa Plantation Pidgin English and the Origin of New Guinea Pidgin" (Mühlhäusler) is similar to Clark's paper in that it is concerned with the social history and development of South Pacific pidgins, and draws extensively on nineteenth century attestations and documentary evidence. It is less comprehensive in scope—restricted to Samoan Plantation Pidgin English (SPP) and the argument that SPP formed the basis for New Guinea Pidgin (NGP)—but explores its subject at greater depth. More than half of the paper is devoted to a comparison of the lexicon and grammar of SPP and NGP to establish their close relationship. This is in general a careful and revealing analysis, and one which pays as much attention to variable relationships as to categorical ones.

"Birds of a feather: A Pair of Rare Pidgins from the Gulf of Papua" (T. Dutton) is the gem in this volume. As Dutton himself notes (p. 77), what makes these trade languages interesting is, in part, the fact that they are "pidginized versions of native languages" (Eleman & Koriki). At the same time, their linguistic characteristics are similar to those reported for pidgins based on Indo-European languages, including reduction in morphosyntactic and semantic machinery when compared with the non-pidginized languages from which they draw the bulk of their lexicon, as well as a number of innovations. There are some insightful departures from the stereotypes which we have of pidgin languages, however. The observation that the small lexicon included words "for describing and inquiring about emotions aroused by trading and absence from one's village (e.g., anger, joy, satisfaction, hunger)" runs counter to the stereotype that trade pidgins are restricted to concrete items and actions. Dutton's careful ethnographic account reveals that there were stylized greetings the Motu trade partners had to be able to conduct on arrival at the Koriki or Eleman villages, and, if they felt they were not being provided with enough sago in exchange for their pots, they had to convey just the right expression of "anger" to rectify the situation and maintain prestige without offending their hosts. These are more delicate uses of language than are commonly associated with trade jargons or pidgins, and Dutton's paper (including its copious footnotes) tells us far more about the speech events and ethno-graphic contexts in which these pidgins were used than we are usually privileged to know.

Of the many fascinating points of detail in this paper, none is perhaps more so than the concluding suggestion that, for trade to develop, not only must both sets of traders speak different languages, but also "one set of traders has to be placed in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis the other." It was the Motu—far away from home on such trade voyages, outnumbered by and at the mercy of their Eleman and Koriki hosts—who

felt this vulnerability, and the fact that the bulk of the trade languages' lexicon came from these languages reflects this situation. As Dutton observes, inter-tribal trade in other parts of Papua New Guinea (between neighbours on land, for instance) did not involve this vulnerability, and similar pidgins apparently did not develop. One could extend this rich point to plantations elsewhere in the world on which pidgins and creoles have developed among indentured immigrants and slaves who were at least as vulnerable, and even more firmly and involuntarily dislocated from their native communities. We might note that in these cases (Hawaii, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean), it is the language of the less vulnerable population that provides the bulk of the lexicon and is said to be "pidginized." This original and fascinating hypothesis is well worth further investigation.

The remaining papers in the volume deal with regions other than the Pacific, but they are shorter and less rich on socio-cultural and linguistic detail. "The Development of Atlantic Creole Languages" (Washbaugh & Greenfield) suggests that the Portuguese plantations which were established with large African slave populations in the Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, and on which "creole languages and cultures are in evidence from the first," incorporate several features of plantations established earlier in the 13th century in the Eastern Mediterranean. The novel feature of the African coast plantations was "the superimposition of the nation-state and its concerns with nationalism and national identity," which translated into a mandate for the use of some variety of Portuguese, and into the development of Portuguese creoles. "The Origin and Development of Four Creoles in the Gulf of Guinea" (Ferraz) adds some valuable linguistic information about the creoles on São Tomé and Annobón, but it is very brief, and says very little about the social context in which these languages developed. The most interesting fact is perhaps that São Tomé boasts two creoles, São Tomense and Angolar, the latter having originated among slaves who had escaped from the Portuguese plantations. (It thus recalls the maroon languages and communities in Surinam and Jamaica as described by Price [1973] and Alleyne [1980].) "Creolization and Language Change" (Polome) deals with African pidgins of Bantu origin (such as Lubumbashi Swahili), and the issue of whether the Romance languages might be assumed to have undergone prior creolization. The African pidgin segment contains details about the relative prestige and use of French, Swahili, and the local vernaculars in the Lubumbashi area, and is more interesting, perhaps because Swahili is another non-Indo-European language and Polome seems more intimately acquainted with the details of how Lubumbashi Swahili developed and is currently being evaluated, spread, and used.

The one area in which this volume is most limited is first hand accounts of the social contexts in which processes of pidginization, creolization, and decreolization are currently occurring. Voorhoeve (1971) made the point that while historical reconstruction can help us to understand something of the nature of pidginization or reduction and creolization or expansion, "the main thing, if we want to understand these processes, must be to study them as they take place." Voorhoeve pointed to the ongoing creolization (nativization) of Cameroons pidgin as a case deserving attention, but the "pidginization"

of German by foreign guest-workers (*Gastarbeiterdeutsch*) and the decreolization of English-based creoles in the Caribbean are equally instructive, especially since they have been the focus of considerable sociolinguistic research.

Overall, however, the book does succeed in reminding us of the significance of social context for understanding pidginization, creolization, and their component/related processes. Other theoretical insights and case-studies could well have been included, but Woolford and W ashabaugh's great merit is to have redirected our attention to social context in the first place.

REFERENCES

- Alleyne, M. 1980. *Comparative Afro-American*. Ann Arbor: Karoma.
- Bickerton, D. 1981. *Roots of language*. Ann Arbor: Karoma.
- & C. Odo. Change and variation in Hawaiian English. Vol. 1: General phonology and pidgin syntax. Honolulu: Report on NSF Grant GS-39748.
- DeCamp, D. 1971. Introduction: The study of pidgin and creole languages. In D. Hymes (ed.), *Pidginization and creolization of languages*, pp. 13–39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dorian, N. *Language death: The life cycle of a Scottish Gaelic dialect*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Ferguson, C. & J. Gumperz (eds.) *Linguistic diversity in South Asia: Studies in regional, social, and functional variation. International Journal of American Linguistics* 26 (3): part III.
- Gal, S. 1979. *Language shift: Social determinants of linguistic change in bilingual Austria*. New York: Academic Press.
- Hymes, D. 1971. Introduction to part III: General conceptions of progress. In D. Hymes (ed.), *Pidginization and creolization of languages*, pp. 65–90. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Le Page, R. *Acts of identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Price R. (ed.) 1973. *Maroon societies: Rebel slave communities in the Americas*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Press.
- Rickford, J. & E. Traugott. 1984. Symbol of powerlessness and degeneracy, or symbol of solidarity and truth? Paradoxical attitudes toward pidgins and creoles. In S. Greenbaum (ed.), *The English language today: Public attitudes toward the English language*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Schumann, J. 1978. *The pidginization process: A model for second language acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Voorhoeve, J. 1971. A note on reduction and expansion in grammar. In D. Hymes (ed.), *Pidginization and creolization of languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weinreich, U. 1953. *Languages in contact*. New York: Linguistic Circle of New York.
- , W. Labov, & M. Herzog. 1968. Empirical foundations for a theory of language change. In W. Lehmann & Y. Malkiel, *Historical linguistics: An introduction*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

John Rickford

I wonder sometimes, when driving through this or that suburban development, how town planners manage to come up with so many new street names. To reach my own home I drive down a Forest View Drive, along a Mountain Crest and up a Crystal Creek Road, but in fact the only thing in sight is houses; no forests or mountains or crystal creeks to grace the suburban sprawl, and so it seems to be with choosing the

title for a new book in an overloaded field. The literature on Creolization has proliferated with such rapidity in the past few years that its creators seem to be similarly hard-pressed to find suitable titles. In addition, the number of anthologies exceeds the number of single-author works, so the problem is further compounded by each editor's having to coordinate the chapters in some logical way and come up with a title that adequately reflects the focus of the volume.

The editors have brought together six chapters, prefaced by Woolford's introduction that geographically encompass the Atlantic and the Pacific loci, and Africa. The languages dealt with are in particular those pidgins and creoles sharing an English-derived lexical base, with a chapter dealing with a group of Portuguese Creoles, another with two Papuan-related pidgins, and another, the last in the book, dealing mainly with Latin. But even if the title had been "Social contexts . . ." the book would still not have fulfilled its socio-linguistic promise. Only Woolford's introduction, bearing the same title as the book itself, comes close to addressing this aspect squarely. It is marred, however, by the author's apparent lack of familiarity with contemporary creole theory and introduces a number of unfereferenced hypotheses one might assume were her own, except that they have been current in the field for some time. Certainly this chapter adds nothing new to our present state of knowledge and omits altogether discussion of some of the more recent speculation in creole studies.

The first contribution to the volume, by Ross Clark, provides a useful survey, with some texts, of the anglophone pidgins and creoles spoken throughout the area. It deals cursorily with the nature of the contact between Europeans and the local people, the extent of the intimacy of that contact (rather than the traditional master/slave relationship favored by a number of creolists) being of special significance to proponents of the domestic hypothesis of creole origins.

One of the Pacific pidgins in particular is the focus of the second chapter by Peter Mühlhäusler. With characteristic diligence and attention to detail, Mühlhäusler recreates a scenario to support his hypothesis, viz. that the principal, though not the only, input into the emerging Tok Pisin of PNG was the Pidgin English of imported Samoan plantation workers. Like Clark, he acknowledges as one input into the formation of the pidgin a "jargonized English spoken on board trading and recruiting vessels" (p. 73). Tom Dutton's chapter, which follows, deals with two contact vernaculars spoken in the same country, though lexically derived from indigenous rather than European languages. The chapter's heading ("Birds of a feather: a pair of rare pidgins from the Gulf of Papua") is a little dated in its attempt at cuteness—puns on "pidgin" have just about been done to death, although they seem to have a certain attractiveness for our antipodean colleagues, but the information is extremely valuable and certainly more original than the title. One must wonder, though, about what type(s) of languages these are; there is no real evidence of drastic restructuring, or of their having emerged from a truly multilingual situation of the kind which led to the genesis of e.g. creoles in the Atlantic locus.

William W ashabaugh, co-editor of the volume, together with William Greenfield, authored the next chapter, ambitiously titled "The development of the Atlantic creoles." Their premise is summarised on the first page of the chapter (p. 106), where they state that "Atlantic creole languages are developmentally and functionally related to

the plantation as a social form . . . (and) first arose among the laborers on the earliest plantations in the Western world." They take the process back some centuries to the Mediterranean (their "Western world"), and see Portuguese involvement as an intermediate factor in the transmission to the African littoral. This approach is hardly new, being reminiscent of creole theory of the 1950s and 1960s when the works of Taylor and Whinnom were so influential; but despite the title, nowhere is any discussion given of the genesis of the Atlantic creoles of English, French, Dutch, &c., lexical base, nor has any account been taken of the work of e.g. Valkhoff, Tonkin, Rodney, Ralston, Hancock, and others who have developed an alternative to the plantation hypothesis, viz. that creoles have arisen from linguistically mixed domestic or household situations in which Africans constituted the dominant society. Unless we assume the authors have accepted the now generally-abandoned relexification hypothesis, which they don't discuss, the chapter by Washabaugh & Greenfield can only be seen as dealing with a smaller number of insular Portuguese-based creoles, and even then their actual *linguistic* connection with the Mediterranean situation described in the first half of the chapter is not clearly explained.

One of the groups of Lusitanian creoles is the subject of the next chapter by Luiz Ferraz. Ferraz is the acknowledged authority on these particular languages, and his chapter disappoints us only by its brevity. Without presenting any new data, it touches on features of their phonology, lexicon and grammar, concluding that their high degree of Africanness constitutes a significant contrast with the Portuguese creoles spoken further north in the Cape Verde islands.

The last chapter, "Creolization and language change" by Edgar Polome provides an excellent evaluation of the hypothesis that the Romance languages have developed not from Latin itself but from pidginized varieties of that language. He contrasts the sociolinguistic situation in the Roman Empire with that in eastern and southern Africa where genuinely restructured, pidginized languages (Fanagalo and Kishaba) have come into existence and, basing his approach on the traditional Bloomfieldian interpretation of what constitutes a pidgin or a creole, cautiously concludes (p. 134) that any explanation offered must remain "undoubtedly disputable."

The book contains several useful essays, is reasonably priced, and contains few misprints. But it is clear from reading these essays that there really is no single social context of creolization, and that John Reinecke, like Schuchardt before him, was right in proposing several distinct categories of reduced and restructured language, not all of which can legitimately be called pidgins or creoles. It is interesting to me that with so much work being done in this field, now into its second century, we have still adequately to define its boundaries.

This is a book worth having, and if it is true that Karoma will now be turning its attention away from publishing works of this sort—a decision perhaps whose time has come—we can at least expect to be paying more for our creole anthologies in the future.

Ian Hancock