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'Me Tarzan, you Jane!' Adequacy, expressiveness, and the creole speaker[1]

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1. Introduction

Although linguists like to claim that all human languages are equal in a general sense, differing from systems of animal communication in possessing 'design features' like arbitrariness and productivity (Hockett, 1958), they sometimes join non-linguists in expressing the view that some languages are inadequate with respect to the cognitive or expressive resources which they offer their speakers. In the Middle Ages, this charge was commonly levelled against the European vernaculars, and it was sometime before Spanish and Italian were recognized as having autonomous grammatical and lexical resources comparable in regularity and power to classical Greek and Latin (Scaglione, 1984). By the middle of the twentieth century, following on the descriptive work of Boas, Sapir and others, the notion that the languages of 'primitive' peoples were fundamentally inadequate had also been eroded, at least in linguistics, anthropology, and other academic circles (Kay & Kempton, 1984:65). Yet, as Hall (1966:106) notes, there is still one group of languages which constitutes the 'last refuge' of the concept of inadequate grammatical or lexical resources: pidgins and creoles.

PIDGINS are contact vernaculars – native to no one – used for communication between speakers of different native languages, for instance the Chinook-based jargon used for trade among American Indians in the Northwest (Thomason, 1983), or the pidginized varieties of English which developed on Hawaiian sugar plantations for communication between workers from different countries (Bickerton, 1981:7). Pidgins usually involve admixture from the native languages of their users and appear reduced in comparison with their source languages. CREOLES are pidgins which have been functionally extended and structurally expanded, either through acquisition as a native language by children born and reared in the contact situation, or through use

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as a primary language by adults who originally learned it as a second language. The French-based vernacular of Haiti and the English-based vernacular of Jamaica are examples of such creoles.

Although they are important as means of intercultural communication and symbols of social solidarity, pidgins and creoles are usually less prestigious than their lexically related standard languages (Rickford & Traugott, 1985). Their low status is in part a reflection of the low social status of their speakers (Hymes, 1971a:3), but reservations about the systematicity or scope of their linguistic properties have also been expressed by linguists and non-linguists alike.

This is particularly so in relation to pidgins.[2] Linguists generally regard the resources of creoles as richer and more adequate to the communicative needs of the communities which use them as primary or native languages. DeCamp (1971:16), for instance, claimed that a creole is 'inferior to its corresponding language only in social status', and this view is echoed by Mühlhäusler (1979:45) and others. However, Jourdain (1956) claimed that Haitian creole was unsuitable for literature because it lacked abstract nouns, and Whinnom (1971:110) – in the strongest academic critique of creole languages to date – suggested that:[3]

> ...modern linguists may have been dangerously sentimental about creole languages, which, with only a few notable exceptions, constitute in most communities a distinct handicap to the social mobility of the individual, and may also constitute a handicap to the creole speaker's personal intellectual development....linguists do not have the evidence to assert with confidence that speakers of these languages are not handicapped by their language, and should not, while any doubt remains, make supported assertions to the contrary.

One possible response to claims of this type is simply to invoke a strong version of the 'equality of languages' postulate which has been a fundamental principle of twentieth-century linguistics. A recent version occurs in Gumperz (1983:28):

> ...all speech varieties, regardless of the extent to which they are socially stigmatized, are equally complex at the level of grammar...There is thus no academic justification for the educator's contention...that certain

[2] And particularly so in relation to the early stages of pidginization in contact situations, before relatively autonomous and stable pidgin norms have crystallized (see Hymes, 1971b:67–8; Mühlhäusler, 1980:37–8; Bickerton, 1981:9ff). Traugott (1977:153) describes the unstable pidgins characteristic of such early stages as 'approximative and extremely inadequate languages'.

[3] Whinnom (op. cit., 110) appears to be most concerned about the adequacy of 'recently creolized' pidgins, but the distinction between new and old creoles is not maintained throughout his discussion, and is usually ignored when others address this issue. Bickerton's (1981) bioprogram hypothesis makes the distinction even weaker.

urban residents are linguistically and culturally or perhaps cognitively deprived.

But although linguists still agree that there are no 'primitive languages', that standard forms are not inherently more logical than non-standard ones, and that all languages are POTENTIALLY equal, many now concede that ACTUAL equality of languages is a myth, and that the relative adequacy of different languages or linguistic repertoires for their users' communicative needs is a matter for empirical research (Ferguson, 1968; Haugen, 1962; Hymes, 1964, 1973; Mühlhäusler, 1982; Hudson, 1981, 1983).[4]

Investigating claims about the adequacy of pidgins and creoles, instead of side-stepping them, may contribute to the more general reexamination of received tenets about the nature of linguistic competence, linguistic relatively and linguistic equality. The investigation should also enrich our understanding of pidgins and creoles as linguistic types, including what they share (or fail to share) with human languages beyond the basic 'design features'. The potential benefits are not only theoretical, however. On the practical side, it is important to remember that pidgins and creoles are important instruments of daily communication for several million speakers around the world. Objective assessments of their resources, including recommendations for standardization and corpus planning where necessary, may be useful to those who formulate language policy with respect to the use of pidgins and creoles in the media, the schools and other public institutions.

Despite its potential theoretical and practical benefits, a systematic empirical investigation of the adequacy of pidgins and creoles has not been attempted by anyone to date. Claims about the relative adequacy of these languages – whether negative or positive – are usually presented as matters of common knowledge or individual conviction, with little or no supporting evidence. This point has been made by Mühlhäusler (1982: 106) in relation to Tok Pisin, but his remarks apply equally to other varieties.

How can systematic empirical investigation of the 'adequacy' of pidgins and creoles be carried out? I believe that two primary approaches to this issue are possible: (1) macro-surveys of the linguistic resources of a variety of pidgins and creoles; (2) micro-analyses of samples of pidgins and creoles in use. In what follows, I will outline some of the possibilities and problems of each approach, and then go on to exemplify the latter approach through detailed analysis of several creole samples.

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[4] The equality of language view has also been challenged from a variety of 'universalist' perspectives in recent years, with languages being differentiated in terms of logical expressiveness with respect to relativization (Keenan 1975:407) and development from a linguistic bioprogram (Bickerton, 1981:299f).

2. MACRO-SURVEYS OF RESOURCES

Comparative surveys of pidgin-creole resources are necessary to begin addressing the reservations which are commonly expressed about the adequacy and adaptability of these languages, but there are no readily available nor universally accepted criteria for the assessment of adequacy in a language. It is difficult to develop such criteria without appearing to be ethnocentric, viewing other languages through the spectacles of one's native language, but I think we can be guided by the very parameters which have been referred to in prior discussions of this issue. Part of the difficulty of isolating relevant criteria is answering the prior question: adequate for what? Twentieth century linguistic tenets about linguistic relativity are so firmly rooted within us that we balk at the very question, but a very general and preliminary answer is possible: for the range of cognitive, expressive and communicative needs of an adult human being. Although these vary according to culture, community, the nature of individual personality and occasion, the incidence of individual multilingualism and societal diglossia, it does not seem impossible to specify minimal functions and features which all normal adult human beings might require of their languages, and some interesting proposals along these lines have already been made.

One of the most interesting proposals in this regard is Slobin's (1978: 186ff, 1979: 188ff) suggestion that there are 'four basic ground rules to which a communicative system must adhere if it is to function as a fully-fledged human language'.[5] These ground-rules are stated as charges to Language:

1. Be clear.
2. Be humanly processible in ongoing time.
3. Be quick and easy.
4. Be expressive.

Slobin's first charge refers to the directness of the mapping between underlying semantic structure and surface form. Minimal derivational machinery and maximal rule generality – both said to be characteristic of pidgins, and to a lesser extent, creoles (Kay & Sankoff, 1974; Naro, 1978; Corder, 1981: 151; Mühlhäusler, 1982: 106–107) – are plusses with respect to this criterion. His second charge is similar to his first, but refers more specifically to the extent to which surface cues facilitate the perceptual or productive

[5] Although Slobin's proposal is accepted as a working base for the discussion in this paper, it is clear that further empirical work is necessary to refine our understanding of the minimal functions and features shared by human languages beyond Hockett's 'design features'. Such work might involve, among other things: consulting native speaker intuitions, studying the divergent fuctions served by fully functioning adult languages, attending to the successive enrichment of children's grammars during language acquisition and the successive impoverishment of adults' grammars during language loss and language death, and noting the kinds of ambiguities and weaknesses for which functionally motivated linguistic changes compensate.

processing of sentences. Slobin (1979:190) uses as his example the recent development of explicit relative clause markers in Tok Pisin (Sankoff & Brown, 1976), but the superiority of marking relative clauses by lexical and syntactic means rather than by intonation or tense was challenged at a recent meeting of the Linguistics Association of Great Britain whose proceedings are summarized in Hudson (1983).

Slobin's third charge refers to the rapidity with which information can be communicated in the language, but as Slobin himself (1979:191) points out, is often opposed to the first two principles. On the basis of (3), synthetic structures would be preferred to analytic ones, and morphophonemic condensation or reduction processes – characteristic of creoles and creole continua (Labov, 1971; Sankoff & Laberge, 1974; Rickford, 1980:81) – would be positively valued (contra 1). Slobin's fourth charge involves both semantic and rhetorical expressiveness. Since these are the fulcra on which allegations of the inadequacy of pidgins and creoles usually turn, they are worth discussing at greater length, and with respect to observations and examples which others interested in this general issue have introduced.

By SEMANTIC EXPRESSIVENESS Slobin means the language's capacity for conveying propositional and referential content. He suggests (1978:197) that there is 'a universal set of basic conceptual categories which must be expressed in every language' and 'a hierarchy of increasingly complex notions' beyond these. Our knowledge of what this universal core of salient concepts includes is still limited, although it is being jointly enriched by studies of first language acquisition (Slobin, 1978) and pidgins and creoles (Kay & Sankoff, 1974; Bickerton, 1981). However, comments about the limited semantic expressiveness of contact vernaculars have been made often enough to give us some idea of the kinds of the lexical and syntactic resources to which attention should be given in a survey.

One is simply the size of the lexicon, and the areas in which it provides or lacks semantic elaboration (Hymes, 1973:63). Dutton's (1983:94–5) description of the vocabularies of the Eleman- and Koriki-based trading languages used by the Motu in the Gulf of Papua parallels what is often said about English, French and other pidgins:

> In both HTL's [Hiri Trading Languages]...there was a common core of specialized vocabulary that everyone knew. This was probably in the region of 300 words...Generally speaking, however, one did not know what Motu informants call 'the little words' – that is, the more technical or detailed vocabulary – in Eleman and Koriki but only 'the big ones'or the most general terms. Thus one knew the main body parts, but one would not know such basic but particular items as 'chin', 'throat',...'fingernail', or 'navel'.

Whinnom (1971:109) notes that he is less concerned about the adequacy of pidgins and creoles in relation to the naming of objects than he is about their

stock of abstract terms, 'in which it is notorious that pidgins and creoles are deficient'. He argues that this deficiency is an intrinsic and not an accidental one, since pidgins and creoles generally do not have productive derivational prefixes and suffixes, and periphrasis is less effective for coining abstract neologisms than concrete ones. This discussion of course ignores other word-forming devices actively used by pidgins and creoles – Hancock (1980) discusses reduplication, semantic extension, tonalizing, and nine other such devices, and Allsopp (1980) lists six more – but it serves to remind us that we should look not only at each variety's stock of words, but at its resources for forming more.

A macro-survey of semantic expressiveness in pidgins and creoles needs to pay particular attention to elements which lie on the boundary between lexicon and syntax, like the language's stock of conjunctions and adpositions and its devices for marking distinctions of tense, aspect, and mood. Whinnom (*ibid.*) argues that medieval Spanish was impoverished in comparison with Latin insofar as it had an 'enormously less flexible and subtle repertoire of subordinating conjunctions', and pidginized varieties of English (Hall, 1966:86; Traugott, 1976:62), French (Reinecke, 1971:54) and Eleman/Koriki (Dutton, 1983:90) are all reported to employ parataxis or conjunction rather than subordination for combining or linking different propositions. Insofar as tense and aspect are concerned, creoles typically employ tense-aspect auxiliaries or pre-verbal markers while pidgins depend more on context or adverbial specification (Labov, 1971; Sankoff & Laberge, 1974; Bickerton, 1981). While we need confirmation of these findings for other pidgins and creoles, and information on other grammatical subsystems for all of them, we also need a clearer idea of whether varieties which lack subordinating connectives, tense-aspect markers and the like are ultimately unable to express certain kinds of meaning, or whether they do so less effectively in some verifiable sense.

Slobin (1979:193) defines RHETORICAL EXPRESSIVENESS as follows:

> In order for Language to be rhetorically expressive, it must be possible to present information in a variety of ways, by focusing on one aspect or another, by guiding or checking the listener's attention, by distinguishing between what is new or old information, expected or unexpected, and so forth.

The primary vehicle for this kind of expressiveness is the syntactic machinery of the language, the richness of its options for relating different concepts and propositions (see above) and the diversity of its alternatives for 'saying roughly the same thing' (Slobin, 1979:70). Slobin notes that pidgins which have a very limited range of functions have an extremely limited 'range of surface expressions for each underlying semantic configuration' (1979:193). Bickerton (1981) argues that in Hawaii and elsewhere, early pidgin speakers tend to be restricted by minimal vocabulary and limited structural options,

but that creole speakers have greater syntactic options and semantic distinctions at their disposal. These include means of encoding distinctions between non-specifics, definites and indefinites in the noun phrase, movement rules like constituent fronting for focussing or topicalization, and mechanisms for relativization and subject copying in complex sentences.[6] These are the kinds of discourse structuring devices which Labov (1971), Sankoff & Brown (1976), Wurm (1980), Slobin (1979) and Mühlhäusler (1982) have found to be characteristic of the development of Tok Pisin and other Pacific contact languages over time.

A related aspect of rhetorical expressiveness is the existence of different registers and styles within the language, making it adaptable to different purposes, participants, keys, settings or genres, to mention only some of the relevant external parameters of linguistic variation within ordinary speech communities (Hymes, 1972). Samarin (1971:122) suggests that 'when a person is speaking a pidgin he is limited to the use of a code with but one level or style or key or register', but whether this is true of all pidgins is one of the tasks which a macro-survey should undertake. There are certainly different 'sociolects' of Tok Pisin, the most important being the urban and rural varieties (Mühlhäusler, 1979), and the increasing rhetorical and creative use of Tok Pisin to which Wurm (1980:243) refers seems to reflect a degree of stylistic flexibility which is probably being augmented in the process. Samarin (1980:223) suggests that even creoles 'do not have as full a repertoire of functions as 'normal' languages do'. This is equally worth investigation, but creoles appear from the existing literature to have means of expressing relative formality (Rickford, 1981:206; Winford, 1980) and deference (Patterson, 1967:169–170), and in general to be much more like regular languages, particularly where (as in Haiti and Suriname) they are being employed in literature and/or education.

There are other dimensions of 'adequacy' besides those mentioned above – like graphization and standardization (Ferguson, 1968; Ray, 1963) – which one could fruitfully include in a survey of pidgin-creole resources. But despite their limitations, Slobin's four charges represent the primary dimensions on which issues of linguistic adequacy have been argued in the past, and many alternative dimensions are relatable to these.

Beyond the question of WHAT to include in a survey of pidgin-creole resources is the question of HOW to conduct it, and here several difficulties emerge. To a large extent, one must rely on available grammars and

[6] Stewart (1974:25) notes the existence of the distinction between non-specifics, indefinites and definites in 'pidgin and creole forms of English' as spoken by West Africans. This reference is noteworthy not only for being one of the earliest to record this distinction, but also for suggesting that it might have been equally true of pidgin and creole varieties. Of course the situation in much of West Africa is like that in New Guinea, with 'pidgin English' being the general term even though it has both native and second language speakers, but Stewart's observation merits further research.

dictionaries, but we have to be careful not to confuse their contents with actual native-speaker competence, as Mühlhäusler (personal communication) points out:

> The fact that comprehensive dictionaries of English contain more than 250 terms for parts of the body and Tok Pisin only about 60 does not mean that the average speaker of the two languages differs: Both groups are competent in about 60 terms in everyday language and only a small group of medical specialists knows any additional ones.

This issue raises a larger one: whether it is possible to talk about the resources of linguistic varieties apart from the competence and performance of individual speakers. Some language users, for one reason or another, have less than ordinary control of their language's resources; others, like Dante and Petrarch and Boccaccio, use their language's resources extraordinarily well, extending and enriching them in the process. However, I think it is possible to recognize individual variability of this type – and we do so to some extent in the micro-analyses of Guyanese Creole samples in the next section – while recognizing that there are limits to this variability, limits which define whether we are speaking variety X or Y and are seen by others to be doing so. I do not think that this issue is itself controversial – it is certainly basic to virtually all of linguistics since de Saussure. The contents of grammars and lexicons may represent abstractions to some extent from the intuitions and performances of the individual speakers on which they are based, but such abstractions are not *a priori* invalid.

One relevant point about existent grammars and dictionaries of pidgins and creoles is that since many of them have little to say about modality, complementation, stylistic variation and other relevant features, we will need to work with native speakers and the linguistic 'experts' on each variety even more so than might be necessary with well-described languages. Speakers' intuitions about the relative strengths and weaknesses of the language as they themselves use it, should be particularly valuable, but this kind of data is entirely absent from discussions of adequacy to date.

Another aspect of the issue of HOW a survey of pidgin-creole resources should proceed is the question of how to avoid the extremes of relativity, on the one hand, and absolutism, on the other. At the relativistic extreme, it is easy to conclude that every language is adequate 'in its context'. But this conclusion is uninformative and open to charges of circularity, and it would clearly be useful to work with 'a less restricted scale' (Whinnom, 1971:109–110). On the other hand, the assumption that the structures or discourse styles of English or other major world languages are best in an absolute sense is equally untenable, given what we know about the diversity of human language.

One way of avoiding these extremes of relativity and absolutism is to evaluate the resources of each pidgin or creole against a common but

non-objectionable set of criteria like Slobin's four charges, but to attend simultaneously to local factors which might qualify this general picture. One factor of this type is local opinion that one variety is superior to another for some but not all functions (see Hymes, 1973:59).[7] Of course the suitability of a variety for a particular set of functions may derive not so much from its intrinsic formal properties, as from its conventional association with particular social groups, relations or attitudes (Sankoff, 1976). Two actual examples involving pidgins and creoles are provided by Haiti, where creole is preferred over standard French for the constellation of diglossic 'L' functions identified by Ferguson (1959), and Papua New Guinea (PNG), where, according to Brennan (1983:5), Tok Pisin is capable of but not preferred for the direct questioning required by the judicial system.

A final problem is whether it is possible to total up the strengths and limitations of a language with respect to specific subsystems and come up with an overall index of 'adequacy'. This seems difficult if not impossible at this stage. However, the diversity and nature of the resources which pidgins and creoles offer their speakers in relation to specific subsystems and domains of use can be investigated,[8] and by comparing them with the resources which other languages offer their speakers in comparable subsystems and domains, it may be possible to assess whether pidgins and creoles offer their speakers more 'problems' than ordinary languages do in fairly specific respects.[9]

One final aspect of the macro-survey approach which needs to be discussed before we consider the micro-analysis approach is how much the information which it yields about the LINGUISTIC resources of pidgins and creoles might tell us about COGNITIVE and INTELLECTUAL consequences for their speakers.

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[7] Given this specialization of language by function, issues of linguistic equality or adequacy might be considered in relation to individual or community repertoires instead of single varieties, as was noted in the LAGB forum discussion summarized by Hudson (1983).

[8] In a project sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, and following the guidelines suggested in this paper, I am currently conducting a macro-survey of specific resources of a number of different pidgins and creoles world-wide, including: Hawaiian Pidgin/Creole English, Tok Pisin (Papua New Guinea Pidgin/Creole English), Guyanese Creole English, Krio (Sierra Leone Creole English), Haitian Creole French, Tay Boi (Vietnamese Pidgin French), Chinook Jargon (Amerindian Pidgin), Russenorsk (Russo-Norwegian Pidgin), and Zamboangueño (Phillipines Creole Spanish). Micro-analysis of the type exemplified below will also be conducted on samples from some of these varieties.

[9] As Richard Hudson (personal communication) has noted, no language is absolutely adequate to the needs of its speakers:

> it's very easy to point to point to inadequacies that haven't been fixed in English and have been around for a long time. E.g. no ordinary word for 'brother or sister' (problem: how to ask if someone has any siblings); no way of neutralising tense distinctions (problem: how to refer to the height of two people, one of whom is dead and the other alive);...

The point of this, as he notes, is that we shouldn't be asking whether pidgins and creoles are adequate in any absolute sense, but whether they pose more problems of this type than ordinary languages do.

Whinnom (1971:110) assumes a strongly deterministic role for language in each of these domains, for his claim that creoles might be intellectually limiting for their speakers is made on the basis of their alleged linguistic inadequacies alone, considered in relation to 'what we know of the role of language in intellectual development...' Unfortunately, the relevant knowledge about the role of language which is being appealed to here is not made explicit, so it is difficult to be convinced on this point. Whinnom's argument is similar to that of Roy (1960:112, cited in Sankoff, 1976), who argues that a diminished language ('une langue amoindrie') produces uncultivated minds. In both cases a highly deterministic relation between language and thought is assumed, but neither the putative linguistic causes nor the putative intellectual effects are described in precise terms, and the theoretical and empirical justification for linking them is unspecified.

To the extent that there were grounds for accepting a strong version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis – according to which the lexical and grammatical categories of one's language act as an insurmountable filter for the perception of reality – Whinnom's conjectures about the intellectual consequences of pidgin-creole features might receive some support. But experimental evidence over the years (see most recently Au, 1983; Kay & Kempton, 1984) has not provided this kind of support. Furthermore, the assumption that all natural languages are ultimately intertranslatable (Katz', 1971:20, 'effability') has been accepted by many linguists and philosophers in recent times. In fact it is usually considered a major argument against a strongly deterministic version of the Sapir/Whorf hypothesis (Slobin, 1979:174 ff), and we would need evidence that certain propositions were ultimately inexpressible in pidgins and creoles before assuming that they were cognitively limiting along the lines suggested by Whinnom.

Finally, in order to avoid circularity, it would be important to specify the kinds of cognitive abilities (such as perception, comprehension, memory, problem-solving) which might by affected, and evaluate them independently before linking them to alleged linguistic 'causes'. For instance, Labov (1969) demonstrated that working class black youth were fully capable of abstract syllogistic reasoning, and that their non-standard vernacular dialect was not 'a basically nonlogical mode of expressive behavior' as some psychologists had alleged. The linking of cognitive or intellectual abilities to linguistic 'causes' should also take into account the repertoire of language varieties controlled by each speaker (Hudson, 1983), as well as the effects of age/maturation, the environment, the kinds of literacy experiences which speakers have had, and their socialization and schooling (Slobin, 1979:162; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Heath, 1983). In the light of these varied considerations, it is clear that while accurate data on the linguistic resources of pidgins and creoles is necessary for investigation of their alleged cognitive and intellectual effects (see Singler, 1983, for the confounding effects of linguistic inaccuracies), other non-linguistic kinds of data are also required. A linguistic macro-survey

of the type proposed would set the stage for a substantive investigation of the cognitive adequacy of pidgins and creoles, but would not in itself constitute it.

3. Micro-analysis of sample texts

In addition to surveying the resources of pidgins and creoles by means of a general, macro-level survey of the type proposed above, we should also investigate the adequacy of these languages by micro-analysis of specific samples in use, for, as Hymes (1973:56) has noted:

> We have had a great deal more study of means than of meanings. There appear to be many more books on the alphabet than on the role of writing as actually observed in a community; many more pronouncements on speech than ethnographies of speaking;...

While micro-analysis of an individual text will not offer as comprehensive an overview of a language's resources as a macro survey based on grammars and dictionaries, it will offer a better picture of how those means serve (or fail to serve) in the expression of their users' meanings.

The kinds of sample texts which we might use for this kind of analysis can be classified into three broad categories: (1) translations of literary classics into pidgins and creoles; (2) original works by outstanding pidgin/creole writers or recording artistes; (3) the recorded 'everyday' discourse of ordinary speakers. I will discuss each of these in turn, dealing most extensively with the last.

3.1 *Translations of literary classics*

Pidgin/creole aficionados frequently translate literary classics – usually Western – into pidgin or creole as a means of establishing the adequacy of the language; the unspoken argument is that if it can be successfully used for such creative heights, it can be used for anything. The material translated runs from *Antigone*, through portions of the Bible, through selections from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and poetry and verse of various kinds. The most popular material is Shakespeare. We reprint here extracts from Mark Antony's rabble-rousing speech in *Julius Caesar* as translated into Sierra Leone Krio (Decker, 1965) and a pidgin variety of Tok Pisin or New Guinea Pidgin English (Murphy, 1943):

> Padi dem, kohntri, una ohl wey deh
> na Rom. Meyk una ohl kak una yeys.
> A kam ber Siza, a noh kam preyz am.
> Dem kin memba bad wey pohsin kin du
> lohng tem afta di pohsin kin dohn dai.
> Boht plenti tem di gud wey pohsin du
> kin ber wit im bon dem....(Krio)

Pren, man bilong Rom, Wantok, harim nau. Mi kam tasol
long plantim Kaesar. Mi noken beten longen. Sapos
sampela wok bilong wanpela man i stret; sampela i no 10
stret; na man i dai; ol i wailis long wok i no stret
tasol. (Tok Pisin)

'Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones.' (Eng. original)

As we look more closely at these translations of Shakespeare's original text, we notice that the Tok Pisin and Krio versions differ with respect to several morpho-syntactic features. Krio, for instance, has an explicit relative pronoun, unmarked for animacy (*di gud* WEY *pohsin du*), while the Tok Pisin version has no equivalent relative pronoun, employing prepositional phrases rather than relative clauses for modification (*sampela wok* BILONG WANPELA MAN *i stret*). By contrast Tok Pisin uses prepositional *long* to introduce a purposive complement while Krio does not (*kam* ...LONG *plantim Kaesar* vs. *kam ϕ ber Siza*), and – apparently on the model of Austronesian languages – employs particles which explicitly categorize surface forms or strings as transitives (*plantIM*, line 9), adjectives (*sampELA*, line 10) or predicates (*I dai*, line 11), unlike Krio and English. In the spirit of Slobin's charges to Language, one could argue that the Tok Pisin version is clearer and more processible than the Krio version, or that the Krio version has more expressive variety than the Tok Pisin version.

One could also argue that the absence of derivational morphology for conveying the meaning 'resident or citizen of' in both the Tok Pisin and Krio versions make them slower and longer than the English original (compare 'ROMANS' with *una ohl weh dey na Rom* and *man bilong Rom*). But regardless of the relative strengths and weaknesses of each translation, it is clear that, on the one hand, both convey the basic propositional content of the original, and, on the other, that both lack something of the spirit of the original – the combination of metaphor, diction, rhyme and rhythm which makes it an effective and memorable whole. This is true even of the Krio version, which adheres to the imagery and iambic pentameter of the original fairly closely.

Interestingly enough, Strehlow (1947) had produced a Pidgin English synopsis of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* precisely to emphasize that translation often involves losses of this kind:

Long time ago ole feller Donkey him bin big feller boss longa country. Alright. By an'by another feller – him name ole Muckbet – bin hearem longen three feller debbil-debbil woman: them feller debbil-debbil woman bin tellem him straight out – 'You'll be big feller boss yourself soon'.

However, what he was emphasizing was not the danger of translation *per se*, but the danger of translation into Pidgin English. Strehlow's primary interest

was actually the Aranda language, which, like pidgins and creoles, had been accused of being primitive and inadequate. In defending the Aranda and other Australian aborginal languages from these charges, Strehlow argued that the problem was that people had been introduced to these native languages through the medium of Pidgin English, which he describes as 'this ridiculous gibberish'. Referring to the Pidgin English synopsis above, Strehlow comments that it:

> reveals the injustice and the insult that is done to any story told in this medium. The old tale immediately becomes utterly childish and ridiculous. All details are omitted. Even the general outline of the story is by no means accurate....

But of course this is unfair. Some degree of loss is always possible in translating creative works from one language to another, and the danger is maximized when, as in this case, the translator intentionally omits details and takes other deliberate steps to create a caricature.

In any case, translations – whether benevolent or malevolent – are less than ideal samples for micro-analysis, not only because they are constrained by the content and structure of the foreign source, but also because they fail to reveal the kinds of content with which pidgin/creole speakers and writers normally deal and the nature and range of the expressive devices which they employ.

3.2 *Works of published writers and poets*

The works of published writers and poets – and of calypsonians and other local artistes – is another source of data on pidgins and creoles in use. Creative work in these varieties, particularly in pidgin, is usually considerably less than in the corresponding standard varieties, but it is growing, and being used now for serious and tragic themes as well as comedy, their traditional forte (James 1968: 13–23; Todd, 1974: 79).

Voorhoeve (1971) has provided an insightful analysis of a poem in Sranan (Suriname creole) written by the Surinamese poet Trefossa. I will reproduce the first two stanzas here, and summarize some of the observations which Voorhoeve makes about them, but interested readers should refer to the original article for the entire poem and discussion.

The poem deals with the poet's return to his home country after having visited/resided in Europe. Its theme is the relative merits of the metropolitan countries and the poet's home country – a common source of conflict for Caribbean and third world intellectuals. The title contains a 'subtle change of tense' – from perfective/anterior for the first verb (*go*) to continuative/non-anterior for the second (*e kon*) – which suggests a past attempt on the part of the poet to escape the home country, but a current homecoming, an ongoing embracement of and readjustment to his roots. As Voorhoeve notes, the title line refers to a traditional Surinamese song used at fairs 'to advertise a popular skeleton–show... It suggests the spell visitors are in after witnessing

the show: they go away, but they must come back to see the next performance'.

One of the striking elements in the poem to which Voorhoeve draws our attention is its complex song-like structure, according to which lines 1, 3, 4 and 5 of the first stanzas are symmetrically repeated throughout the poem. Lines 1 and 3 represent the words of the dry season wind in the role of soloist and lines 4 and 5 the answer of the poet in the role of chorus (the words *trotji* and *pitji* in the first stanza are technical Surinamese terms for 'soloist' and 'chorus' respectively). The repeated question *krioro fa?* is, as Voorhoeve notes, a common and usually meaningless Surinamese greeting. But 'in asking repeatedly "how" he is, the wind also asks about the place where he really belongs. Therefore he has to affirm three times: I am here, I belong in this country'. The variant lines in each verse – 2, 6, 7 present subtle comparisons between Europe and Suriname, emphasizing the positive associations of the latter: 'life as a small boy, listening to the old stories of his granny' (verse 1); 'the cotton trees, lively with spirits, as against the dead technical miracles of Europe' (verse 2).

mi go – m'e kon	*I've gone – I come*
te dreeten winti sa trotji	if the dry season wind starts singing
na Mawnidan:	in Mahogany Street:
– krioro fa?	– Creole, how?
m'sa pitji:	I'll answer:
– dja mi de,	– here am I
– banji fu ba-m'ma seti keba:	– granny's bench has been set ready
– ertintin...ertintin...	– once upon a time...once upon a time...
te dreeten winti sa trotji	if the dry season wind starts singing
na kankantri:	in the cotton tree:
– krioro fa?	– Creole, how?
m'sa pitji:	I'll answer:
– dja mi de,	– here am I
– Eifeltoren hee pasa,	– Eifel Tower is much higher,
– m'a n'a jorka, a n'a jorka...	– but has no spirits, has no spirits...

Overall, as Voorhoeve's commentary helps us to appreciate, this poem provides a fine demonstration of the success with which Sranan can be used for sensitive philosophizing and reflection. But it is possible to attribute this success too considerably to the greatness of the poet – as if Trefossa were a Chaucer, at once employing and elevating Middle English in poetry, or an

Alfonso X, at once drawing on and creating thirteenth century Spanish in prose. We certainly must include the work of literary leaders like Trefossa in our investigations of the adequacy of pidgins and creoles, but we also need to go beyond these acknowledged pioneers in the artistic and cultural revolution, and consider as well the voices of ordinary men and women using their language in everyday ways.[10]

3.3 *The discourse of ordinary speakers*

Texts of this type are potentially the most important for us to consider, for they are oral rather than written, and representative of the vast majority of language users rather than a literary elite. One caution to be borne in mind about spoken discourse, however, is that if it is recorded in contexts in which the speaker is uncertain about the addressee's fluency in the pidgin or creole, or in which the speaker is overly uncomfortable or suspicious, the sample may be a poor reflection of the speaker's verbal abilities and the language's linguistic capacities. The classic example in this regard is Labov's (1969) transcript of a young black child being interviewed in a schoolroom by 'a large, friendly white interviewer' using a toy as the conversational stimulus. As Labov notes (*ibid.*), the defensive monosyllabic behaviour which is produced in such situations gives no indication of the verbal fluency and complexity which children display in natural interaction with their peers.

That this might be a lesson for us is shown by the remarks of Whinnom himself (1971: 103–104), who notes that although Chinese servants and shopkeepers are able to handle Chinese Pidgin English 'with fluency, with unhesitating command of its limited resources', they are 'able to deploy the full battery of its resources and make no allowances for difficulties of comprehension only with *other Chinese*'. When these same Chinese pidgin-speakers are addressing 'the newcomer from England', their performance is quite different:

> [they] adopt precisely the same measures as in the alleged behaviour of master to slave, i.e. they speak slowly and distinctly, repeat carefully phrases and sentences obviously not understood, seek periphrases, resort to gestures, etc.

Pidgin-creole samples of this latter type would obviously be more likely to qualify as 'inadequate', but since linguists studying pidgins and creoles are often newcomers to the communities in which they work, and not all of them utilize techniques to minimize the constraining effects of the recording situation, they may sometimes emerge from the field with samples of this type.

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[10] This is not to suggest, of course, that differences of individual skill do not exist also in the discourse of ordinary speakers (some speakers make better narrators than others, some better preachers, or conversationalists). But such differences seem to loom larger at the level of published literature.

The samples of ordinary discourse which will be analyzed in this section all involve Guyanese Creole speakers in interaction with family members, close friends, or fellow villagers, and were all recorded by me, a native member of the Guyanese speech community. While it is difficult to claim that any one sample from a speaker's repertoire of styles is most 'natural' (Wolfson, 1976), or that one has managed to isolate his or her truest 'vernacular' (Macaulay, 1980; Romaine, 1984), the samples below are relatively free of the formalizing effects of recorded interviews (Labov, 1972), and are representative of the varieties which their speakers use in spontaneous everyday interaction.

The first text should help to dispel any misconception that creole speakers are limited by their language to propositions involving concrete entities in the here and now, i.e., to gesture-supported propositions of the 'Me Tarzan, you Jane!' type. The discourse does not involve simple labelling or description of the immediate physical environment, but abstract argumentation about a supernatural entity – the Ole Higue. According to Guyanese folklore, this is a living, vampire-like old woman who sheds her normal skin, moves through the air as a bright light or ball of fire, and mysteriously enters homes in search of victims, particularly children, whose blood she can suck. It is probably true that people everywhere conceive of abstract or supernatural entities and have lexical means for referring to them. What is striking about the sample below is that it involves a fairly complex form of logical argument about this supernatural entity on the part of the two principal discussants, Irene (I) and Mindy (M). These two women, now in their forties, are weeders on a sugar-estate and had had the opportunity to go no further than third-grade in primary school. They are clearly enjoying the process of argumentation for its own sake,[11] Irene forwarding her logically-argued 'opinion' in rhetorical terms to the delight and commendation of the local dispenser (A) (and fellow villagers waiting outside the dispensary), and Mindy trying to cap this insightful suggestion with a hypothetical proposition of her own:[12]

M:	mii na biiliiv pon hool aig....	343'
I:	mii – ga waan oopinyan, dat, az dem se hool aig a livn piipl,	344
	wai shud piipl kyaan set op an kech waan?!	345
M:	ye-e.	346

[11] This kind of argumentation is common in Guyanese rum-shops and wherever people congregate to *gyaaf* ('shoot the bull, exchange small talk'). In this respect Labov's (1969:217) remark about Black English Vernacular (BEV) speakers applies equally well to Guyanese speakers:

> It is often said that the nonstandard vernacular is not suited for dealing with abstract or hypothetical questions, but in fact speakers from the BEV community take great delight in exercising their wit and logic on the most improbable and problematic matters.

[12] Line numbers in all texts in this section are those used in Rickford (to appear), which includes other GC samples.

A:	gud pOint. veri gud pOint.	347
I:	set ap an kech waan!	348
M:	kyar if – ?i hool aig soo greet, kyan kom in yu hous an sok	349
	piknii, wai den kyaan gu in di bangk an jraa monii?	350
I:	wel a da! a da wa mii se!	351
O:	so hool aig na de.	351'

'I don't believe in Ole Higue....
I have one opinion, that, since they say Old Higues are living people,
why shouldn't people be able to set up and catch one? 345T
Yeah.
Good point. Very good point. Very good point.
Set up and catch one.
If Ole Higues are so great that they can come in your house and suck
children, why can't they go in the bank and withdraw money? 350T
Well, that is it! That's what I say!
So there's no such thing as Old Higue.'

The complex sentences of Irene and Mindy which begin in 344 and 349 respectively are very similar in structure, each challenging one of the central qualities attributed to *Ole Higues* by a chain of logical argument: if p is true (if these Ole Higues are living people, if they have the power to enter people's homes invisibly and suck the blood of children), then q should be true (then people should be able to set up and catch them, then the Ole Higues should be able to withdraw money from the bank). In addition to the iconic (cause-effect) ordering of the antecedent and consequence clauses in each case, and their linking by a rising, list-like intonation at the end of the antecedent which signals that the proposition is not yet complete, the antecedents are clearly identified in each case by the particles which begin them (*az*, *if*). Note that the consequence clauses in each case are not simple statements that q should be true, but rhetorical wh-questions (involving negatives and modals) which ask why it is that q is not true, suggesting within their own structure the final step in the deductive argument: p itself must not be true. This kind of argument, which has the following abstract structure, is of course familiar to logicians as *modus tollens* (see Allwood, Anderson & Dahl, 1977: 101):[13]

[13] In discussing an example of *modus tollens* drawn from English, Allwood, Anderson and Dahl (1977: 105) note that it is common to find in everyday reasoning that not all steps in the reasoning are explicitly given in the discourse. In their example, $\sim p$ is affirmed right at the beginning, but it is not reintroduced as the final step in the argument after $p \rightarrow q$ and $\sim q$ are presented. In the deductive arguments of Irene and Mindy, both $p \rightarrow q$ and $\sim q$ are given in the consequence clause, but $\sim p$ is suggested by the rhetorical question rather than explicitly stated. M's statement in 343' is, of course, roughly equivalent to an affirmation of $\sim p$ at the very beginning, but note that O's comment in 351' is a more direct statement of $\sim p$, and coming as it does after Irene's and Mindy's arguments, serves to make the final link in their chain of logical reasoning explicit.

$$\begin{array}{l} p \rightarrow q \\ \underline{\sim q} \\ \sim p \end{array}$$

In addition to these conditional expressions, this sample also illustrates several features of creole morphosyntax which are commonly misunderstood, or erroneously said to show that creoles cannot express distinctions made by their lexically related standard languages. For instance, the creole pronominal forms in 344 (*mii*, *dem*), unlike their standard English equivalents ('I', 'They'), carry no morphological case marking to show that they are subjects. This is also true of possessive *yu* in 349 (prenominal). Note, however, that the English morphology is syntax-dependent in most modern grammatical analyses, and the preverbal and prenominal positions of the creole pronominal forms render their grammatical functions unambiguous.

Note, too, the systematic basilectal distinction between copulative *a* before noun phrases (*a livn piipl* 344), ϕ before adjectives (ϕ *soo greet* 349), and *de* in existential and locative expressions (line 351' above, *de bakdam* in line 556 of the next sample).[14] The common misconception that English-based creoles have no copula is true only to the extent that they don't have 'be'; as the preceding examples make clear, they in fact make finer copulative distinctions than SE does (compare Bickerton, 1973). Finally, note Irene's use of the nominal copula *a* for pseudo-clefting or topicalization of the demonstrative in 351, yielding *a da wa mii se* instead of the neutral *mii se da* or *da a wa mii se*. Although one could emphasize the demonstrative pronoun in these latter structures by means of primary stress alone, the use of pseudo-clefting in addition to primary stress is more emphatic, and its availability extends the rhetorical and stylistic expressiveness of the creole.

My second example is from Granny, a retired sugar estate weeder who was fifty-eight when I first interviewed her in 1975. Like Irene and Mindy, Granny has received little formal education, and uses a fairly basilectal variety of creole in everyday interaction. But like them, she is not limited by this language to propositions of the 'Me Tarzan, you Jane!' variety. Here, speaking softly and reflectively in her home, she draws on her creole resources to produce this eloquent evocative description of the fatigue and frustration experienced by the sugar estate worker:

somtain you fiil wan fiilinz, ar yu get – yu de bakdam,	556
yu faal dong, yu se, gaad! i beto yu ded,	557
hou haad yu a wok, hou yu gatu ponish. "i beto	558
mi ded!" (s)ontai yu wok, wok, hou di wok	559

[14] Basilectal variants and varieties in a creole continuum are those most different from the lexically related standard language, while mesolectal ones are closer to the standard language, but still recognizably nonstandard or creole.

ha – haard ya. hou di wok soo haad, yu f – chro dong yuself a 560
di bangk an you se, "laad, a wen dis kotlis a gu kom out a mi 561
aan? i beto mi ded, bifoo mi a liv!" 562

'Sometimes you get nausea, or you get – you are at the backdam,
and you fall down, you say, God! It's better you were dead,
how hard you have to work, how you have to suffer. 'It's better
I were dead!' Sometimes you work and work, because the work
is so hard here. The work is so hard that you throw yourself 560T
down on the ground and say, "Lord, when will this machete
come out of my hand?! It's better I die than live (like this)!"'

Some of the creole means which serve Granny's meaning so well in this sample are lexical, like the word *fiilinz* in 556. At the basilectal level, the English pluralizing suffix is not used productively, and the voiced sibilant at the end of this word identifies it as a shortened form of the creole idiomatic expression *bad fiilinz*, which means 'nausea' but without the clinical associations of the latter. This reading is reinforced by the accounts of sugar-estate labour given by other sugar-workers, who speak of taking salt tablets to prevent or relieve cramps caused by excessive perspiration in the hot sun, of stomachs and livers feeling as though they were about to burst, and of vomiting and faintness in the fields. But *fiilinz* in the sense of 'nausea' is normally used without an article; its use here with the singular indefinite article *wan* ('a') allows it to simultaneously mediate the more abstract meaning of 'a feeling', a sentiment or conclusion about one's life situation which creeps across one's mind. The content of this sentiment is identified a few moments later as despair ('i beto mi ded!'), but reference to it right at the beginning of this account of sugar-estate labour is a signal that the account will deal not only with the physical (nausea, stumbling in the fields) but with the emotional and reflective – what the sugar worker thinks and feels as he or she is working in the *bakdam* behind the village. In content and structure, Granny's sample recalls the following passage from Selvon's (1952) novel, *A brighter sun;* a physical situation of a certain type is identified, the speaker (Sookdeo) suggests that the situation leads him to become reflective, and the desperate, despairing content of those reflections is then revealed in the form of an inner dialogue:

It have a time, wen it ain't have no rum for me to drink, and I start to tink. Ah tink: 'Sookdeo, is wat yu do wid yuh life at all? Is wat going to happen to yuh? Who go bury yuh wen dead? Boy, time like so, wen no rum to drink, I does want to dead.

Ponish (558) is another creole word which works effectively in Granny's extract. Here it is used intransitively, in the sense of SE 'suffer'. But while 'suffer' might have suggested equally well the hardships involved, the normally transitive reading of *ponish* hovers in the background, hinting at

an agent or perpetrator of this suffering which 'suffer' ignores, and more forcefully conveying the image of the sufferer as patient or victim. There is no suggestion that the persons being 'punished' are guilty of any wrongdoing, except for being born into the ranks of the labouring class, and the identity of those responsible for the punishment is not made clear. (Is it the estate management, the higher-ups and better-offs more generally, or an even higher authority?) But in the powerful image in the final lines – of the labourer throwing herself down on the bank and crying out to the heavens for relief – the agent of relief is identified as God, and the depiction of the sufferer as hapless and helpless victim is reinforced. She is portrayed as being unable to perform the simple action of releasing the *kotlis* ('machete') from her grasp. The physical implement serves as a metaphor for the hard lot of the field labourer, from which outward or upward socio-economic mobility is well-known in this community to be extremely difficult, and for those with limited education, almost impossible.[15] The final sentence is composed of two clauses, each five syllables long, dramatically counterposed: *i beto mi ded* (the sentiment echoed twice before in this brief sample), *bifoo mi a liv* (that is, before I continue to live the kind of life which the preceding images evoke).

In terms of morphosyntax, note how the shift from impersonal *yu* to personal *mi* transforms the common sentential frame *i beto PRO ded* from indirect (557) to direct speech (558–9, 562), effectively moving the listener from the objective viewpoint of the observer to the subjective viewpoint of the speaker, repeating these words to herself as she bends over her work in the fields. Note too the simple but effective use of repetition (*yu wok, wok*, 559) to convey the seemingly interminable nature of estate work. This device is commonly employed – and in my experience almost always effectively so – in creole exposition and narrative, as in Reefer's account of how one cane-cutter massages another's muscle-bound foot to relieve his cramps:

ii gu rob, ii gu rob, ii gu rob, ii gu chrai pul,
ii gu pul, ii gu pul, yu noo? pul an rob an pol.
'He'll rub, he'll rub, he'll rub, he'll try to pull (it),
he'll pull, he'll pull, y'know? Pull and rub and pull.'

The repetition of lexical items or phrases to signal the repetition or protraction of events in real time is a kind of iconicity which is common in oral literature (Gray, 1971). But Granny's causal constructions with *hou* (559, 560) warn us against any facile assumption that iconicity is a dominant organizing principle of creole syntax. Although GC has a causal construction with *mek* in which the clause specifying the cause must always iconically precede the clause specifying the effect (as in *di wok so haad mek yu chro dong yuself a di bangk*),

[15] Statements about this limited mobility occur often in my interviews with members of this sugar-estate community. Seymour, a former cane-cutter, now a contractor, described sugar-workers as 'marking time all the time – one spot and they can't move!'.

it can also mark the cause clauses with *hou* or *bikaaz* and allow it to come either before or after the effect clause. In the two complex sentences which begin in lines 559 and 560 respectively, Granny varies the order of the *hou* clause from second position in 559 to first position in 560, and its effect is cohesive, the latter sentence reiterating the cause with which the former sentence ends and building on it to introduce another effect. This is rhetorical expressiveness of a relatively complex kind, the more noteworthy because, although the speaker may have expressed similar sentiments before, she has to reformulate and produce these sentiments in the stream of speech, unlike a writer who has more freedom and time to plan and integrate and revise (Tannen, 1982).

My final example is an extended narrative from Lohtan, a farmer and cattle-rearer who was forty-nine when I interviewed him in 1975. He had had the opportunity to go no higher than second grade in primary school, and his language was markedly basilectal. In this narrative, he exemplifies the basilectal encoding of a pronominal object/non-object distinction in the third-person forms *am* (object in 1058) and *ii* (subject in 1060, possessive in 1062), both of which are unmarked for gender (*ii* in 1060 refers to the male watchman, in 1061 to Lohtan's daughter, and in 1077 to impersonal 'it'). Other basilectal features which occur in the text below include: the use of preverbal *a* (1061) as a continuative aspect marker, completive *don* (in its relatively rare clause-final use in 1082), the deployment of preverbal invariant *no* both as a negative (1087) and emphatic positive particle (1099, with rising sentence intonation), and the use of various serial verb chains (directional in 1100, purposive in 1105). Some of these features occasionally vary with their mesolectal equivalents (for instance, *komin* instead of *a kom* in 1080), but this does not detract from the overall impression that we are in the presence of someone who is competent at the basilectal end of the continuum, someone who, in the words of Thomas 1869 (quoted in Todd 1974:88) 'is master of, and understands how to manage' the creole's resources.

Lohtan is not only a competent basilectal speaker, but a first-rate narrator. In this sensitive portrayal of his daughter's death, he strikes us, not as someone handicapped by his language, but as a thinking, feeling, poetic human being, skilfully marshalling the resources of his language to let us know what happened, how he and his wife felt, and what larger moral he wants us to derive from this narrative.

Before presenting the narrative itself, I should say a word about the setting. Lohtan and his wife are sitting at the top of the stairs outside their home talking to two of my students (both of whom grew up in the area and were acquainted with the family) and myself. They are taking turns in telling us parts of this narrative and others. (The recording session went on for nearly four hours.) Their children are inside the house, working, playing, and talking. In the middle of this narrative (where the ellipsis points come in 1072), an old woman enters the yard and begins a noisy tirade about the

Lohtans' goat having strayed into her garden and eaten up her green vegetables. Lohtan's wife excuses herself from our company and goes downstairs for a heated, high-pitched argument about whether it was her goat or someone else's which had done the damage. The house itself is virtually emptied as the children stand around downstairs and on the steps as witnesses and contributors to the argument, but Lohtan himself remains upstairs with us, listening, occasionally making comments on the incident, and resuming his story once the old lady had stormed out of the yard. A little later his breathless wife returns upstairs, and after a few explanatory remarks about the goat incident, continues interweaving her contributions to the story of their daughter's death. Her contributions cover a lot of the same ground, but also include other details (like the daughter's request for some of her favourite foods before going to the hospital – a harbinger, in retrospect, that her death was near). We could analyze the composite narrative which results from their combined contributions, but this would be too long for this paper, and in any case, either's contribution could stand on its own strength. We will therefore look in more detail at how Lohtan structures his portion of the narrative, represented as the text below.[16]

The death of Lohtan's daughter (PM4: 351–64, 428–65)

L:	mi goo bot – aa pas eet. yu noo, mi wachman am	1058
	aspital. wel mi aaks o – ?a? – ?a? – ?a geetmaan, se,	1059
	'le mi goo in lil bit, no maan?' wel ii lou mi fu goo	1060
	in. wel wen mi gu mi shi di – di piknii a sliip, ii shot	1061
	ii ai. wel mi hool ii yam, mi fiil o ii aan stee,	1062
	yu noo – if ii a biit....seem taim mi o – mi o sh – mi o shub	1063
	mi an andaniit dii batii, yu noo? wel shi pii seem taim.	1064
	?a pii hat laka faiya, maan. a yuurin hat laka faiya. mi	1065
	sta – mi ge – mi a taak in mi hoon main see,	1066
	'is piknii gu ded'. mi de de til nain a klak a nait....	1067
	til nain a klak a nait mi de de. el, notn na	1068
	rang. el, wan chap neem baka, wel hii granpiknii bin aspital	1069
	tu. su mi tel ii se, 'aarit, ma gu oom. an, iif yu	1070
	de li bit moo leet an if eniting rang yu sho kom tel	1071
	mi.' yu noo? wel mii mos lef bo aaf paas nain an ting....	1072
	el abii neebo marid di nait. yu no onstan,	1073
	di bin marid di – am – di in pleeyin myuuzik a di nait.	1074
J:	di seem nait do di chail ded?	1075

[16] In the spirit of the poetic interpretation of oral discourse which characterizes recent work by Dell Hymes, Dennis Tedlock and herself, among others, Virginia Hymes has sent me a division of this text into lines and stanzas which I found very revealing. The basis for her divisions, which space does not permit me to reproduce here, are the patterning of temporal markers, clauses, phrases like 'you know' (which seems to close major sections) and particles like 'well' (which opens minor ones).

L: ye-e. di seem nait chail ded. wel, mi tel di – am – mi 1076
fren baakaa, see, wen ii kom maanin taim, if eniiting otaal 1077
ii mos ron kom tel mii. wel mii gid op bout – 1078
tuu o klak a maanin. mi wash mi mout an ting...an mi – de 1079
pon wash mi mout. wel mi sii wan lait komin bai – 1080
bai awii schriit. wen di lait komin nou, mi wash mi 1081
mout don. wel a chap kom....mi se, '?a piknii ded.' chap 1082
kom, ii tel mi se – am – 'do piknii ded, bai. ton, mi 1083
si di piknii ded'. wel, mii na taak notn. di mischris 1084
a kuk a kichin. dem a kuk. 1085
J: ii na heer yet? 1086
L: no, ii no hee, bigaa gu – gaan bak kwik. mi 1087
no mek ii sii yam. ii...gaan bak kwik. wel mi 1088
wash mi mout an ting kli – don. el mi kom iizii, 1089
mi tel am se, 'yu noo apm? lagoo sii a piknii.... 1090
oniihou mi biliiv si di piknii ded'. yu eer?... 1091
?el – ?el, shii tel mii see ii sii wan lait kom. sii won lait 1092
kom antil wen ii ton bak. ii se ii sii dii 1093
lait. se, 'piknii ded fi chruu'. ii jom rait 1094
owee, e, 'piknii ded fi chruu!' wel ii staatu halo – 1095
shout n ting. el ii staatu shout, an wel – aal di pii – 1096
wel di myuuzik stap rait owee. dem se, 'wo hapm?' 1097
el – aal – mi tel am se, 'piknii ded.' wel di myuuzik 1098
stap. wel di bai no ga fi marid maaning taim? 1099
goo an ori bring di piknii kom. aada kaafn n 1100
ting, faas, yu noo, n wii berin am jes nain o klak, 1101
bikaz di piipl ge weding, yu onstan? yu noo, az di 1102
piknii ded, wi kyaan ombog di wedin, yu 1103
onstan? an aal abi liv neebo, yu onstan? su – 1104
mi see, 'di piknii ded aredii. le wi kyar bering 1105
am'. bo di piipl dem – noo myuuzik dee na plee no moo. dem 1106
stap, yu noo? 1107

Translation:
I went at about half past eight. You know, I was watching over her at
the hospital. Well I asked that – that – that – that gateman, I said,
'Let me go in for a little while, please'. Well, he allowed me to go 1060T
in. Well when I went I saw that the – the child was sleeping, she'd shut
her eyes. Well, I held her arm, I held her hand to see how it felt,
you know – if it was beating. At the same I–I–I shoved my hand
underneath her behind, you know? Well, she peed at that very moment.
That pee was hot like fire, man. That urine was hot like fire. I 1065T
sta–I got–I kept thinking to myself ('talking in my own mind'),
'This child will die'. I stayed there until nine o'clock at night....
Until nine o'clock at night I stayed there. Well, nothing went

wrong. Well, a chap named Baka, well his grand-daughter was in hospital
too. So I told him, 'Allright, I'm going home. And, if you're 1070T
here a little longer and anything goes wrong, you must come and tell
me'. You know? Well, I must have left about half past nine or ten....
Well, our neighbour got married the (same) night. You understand,
they were married the–am–they were playing music that night.
The same night that the child died? 1075T
Yeah. The same night that the child died. Well, I'd told the – am – my
friend Baka that when morning came, if anything at all (was wrong),
he must come and tell me. Well, I got up at about –
two o'clock in the morning. I rinsed my mouth and so on...and I – was
in the process of rinsing my mouth. Well I saw a light coming up – 1080T
up our street. As the light was coming now, I finished washing my
mouth. Well, the guy came....I said, 'The child is dead'. The guy
came and told me – am – 'The child is dead, boy. (When I) turned, I
saw the child was dead'. Well, I didn't say anything. The wife
was cooking in the kitchen. They were cooking. 1085T
She hadn't heard yet?
No, she hadn't heard, because – go – he'd gone back quickly. I
didn't make her see him. He...went back quickly. Well I
finished washing out my mouth and so on, clean. And I came in quietly,
I said to her, 'You know what? Let's go and see that child.... 1090T
Anyhow, I believe the child is dead'. You hear?...
Well – well, she told me that she'd seen a light coming. Seen the light
come and seen it turn back. She said that she'd seen the light. She
said, 'The child is dead – for real!' She took off right away,
shouting, 'The child is dead – for real!' Well she started to holler – 1095T
shout and carry on. Well, she started to shout, and well – all the
pe(ople) – well the music stopped right away. They said, 'What happened?'
Well – all – I told them, 'The child is dead'. Well the music
stopped. Well, the boy still had to get married in the morning.
We hurried and brought the child home. Ordered a coffin and 1100T
so on fast, you know. And we buried her at nine o'clock,
because the people had a wedding, you understand? You know, as the
child was (already) dead, we shouldn't humbug ('spoil') the wedding, you
understand? I mean, we all lived as neighbours, you understand? So w–
I said, 'The child is dead already. Let's carry her and bury 1105T
her'. But the people – no music did they play any more. They
stopped, you know?

In discussing this text, I will concentrate less on individual aspects of the grammar, some of which have already been identified, than on the larger elements in the construction of the narrative which make it an effective and moving whole.

Dell Hymes (1982) has pointed to the significance of three in the organization of Chinook narratives (in the American North-West). In the case of Lohtan's narrative, two is the significant structural number. There are two

main scenes: the hospital in the night, and Lohtan's home, early the next morning. There are two primary characters within each scene: the watchman and Baka in the first, Lohtan's wife and his neighbours (as an undifferentiated group) in the second. Baka also enters into the second scene, but he serves primarily as a pivotal connection between the first and second scenes, providing the complication which allows the second to unfold. Two households are juxtaposed in this narrative, each with activities which keep them busy at a time when most people are sleeping, but of a very different sort: against the unfolding of the death news in Lohtan's home, the hysterical reaction of his wife and their hasty preparations for burial, are juxtaposed the wedding eve festivities in the neighbour's home, with its loud music and merriment.

Even more pervasive is the repetition of propositions in pairs throughout the narrative.[17] Sometimes this involves a slightly different rephrasing (as in *mi hool ii yam, mi fiil o ii aan stee* 1062, or *mi de de til nain a klak a nait.... til nain a klak a nait mi de de* 1067–68); in other cases, the exact wording is repeated (*gaan bak kwik*, 1087 and 1088). The overall effect of this repetition is to slow down the pace of the narrative, letting the individual events sink into consciousness slowly and in elaborate detail, as they have a way of doing when tragedy is unfolding.[18] At some critical points – like the moment just before Lohtan gets the news from Baka, and the moment when his wife reacts – the repetition is increased from twos to THREES (the mouth-washing in 1079–82, the wife's shouting and the references to the *piknii* being dead in 1092–98), slowing us down even more. All of this is in contrast to lines 1100–1102, where the repetition of clauses and the use of introductory *wel*[19] (which occurs twenty-four times in the preceding lines) are abruptly arrested, and contrary devices – like the piling up of predicates in the serial verb construction (*ori bring di piknii kom*), and the omission of subject pronouns where they are normally required (*ø aada kaafn*) – are deployed to convey the speed with which arrangements for the burial were executed.

Although educated members of the general public usually recognize the artistic structuring of experience represented in the novels and short stories of writers, they are usually less prepared to recognize it in oral narratives, particularly those dealing with personal experience (as against the more obviously ritualized oral genres, like Brer Rabbit stories or origin myths). It

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[17] I am grateful to Elizabeth Closs Traugott for first drawing my attention to the existence of these paired structures.

[18] Those of us who have experienced the death of someone close might remember the consciousness-elevated sensations sometimes experienced in slow motion at the climatic moments: the beating of our heart, the smell of the bedsheets, little bumps on the wall above a dying relative.

[19] Macaulay (1986) refers to 'well' and other clause initial narrative forms like 'and,' and 'I mean' as *introductory features;* they occur frequently in the narratives of the Scottish coal miner whom he interviewed.

is important to remember, however, that while the events leading up to and immediately following the death of Lohtan's daughter are given from raw experience (a matter of history), this experience is filtered through his sensibilites, and becomes, for him as for other oral narrators, a matter of art. Lohtan's verbal craftsmanship is evident, not only in the paired structuring discussed above, but in his selection of just the right points of detail for elaboration. For instance, in lines 1062–1065, the details about shoving his hand underneath the child and feeling her pee hot as fire highlight his relationship to the subject of his narrative as parent to child, privileged and unhesitant to interact with her in this private way. On the most literal level the heat of the urine is simply a physical by-product of her fever, but it also serves as a metaphorical symbol of her struggle against the forces of death, in Dylan Thomas' words, a struggle to 'not go gentle into that still night/ Rage, rage against the dying of the light'. By contrast, details are omitted, just as effectively, in 1098, where the neighbours are told simply, *piknii ded*, and their reaction is conveyed, not in long quotations of their verbal expressions of sympathy, but in one brief statement of what they did: *wel di myuuzik stap*.

This statement in fact encapsulates the theme of the story: cooperation and mutual consideration among neighbours and human beings. Despite the argument which Lohtan and his wife have with their neighbour about the goat (providentially occurring as counterpoint in the middle of this story), the fundamental principle illustrated in this narrative is the importance of interpersonal cooperation and consideration. Note that the watchman allows Lohtan to go in although it is apparently after visiting hours; that Baka agrees to come and tell Lohtan about his daughter if and when anything further develops; that the neighbours halt their music as soon as they get the news of the girl's death;[20] and that Lohtan, in return, hurries to bury his daughter and not interrupt the wedding next door. The proliferation of *yu noos* and *yu onstans* in the last seven lines of the narrative represent direct, insistent appeals to the listeners to understand why the narrator acted as he did in real life (burying the child so quickly), and to grasp and be guided by the larger thematic significance of the narrative. As Broderick (1977) has noted in his analysis of Krio oral narratives:

> ...inextricably tied to the entertainment value is the educative process. The narratives are the tools by which the society reflects and comments upon itself, the means by which it philosophizes on those aspects cherished by the people, the process by which behavior is shaped and order maintained.

In this narrative, Lohtan succeeds both in informing and educating us, and in conveying the texture and feel of the personal tragedy which he and his

[20] Note how the cessation of the music is emphasized in 1106 by the fronting/topicalization of the object and the triple negative: *noo myuuzik dee na plee no moo*.

wife have experienced. Contrary to what Whinnom (1971) fears, this creole-speaking cattle-rearer shows no intellectual handicap from his language, but the ability to work it masterfully for effective rhetoric and poetics.

4. Summary and conclusion

Pidgins and creoles are a prime focus of discussion and debate about the relative adequacy of human languages. In this paper I have argued that their adequacy as expressive instruments requires systematic empirical investigation, and that it might be theoretically and practically beneficial to proceed with such an investigation rather than side-stepping the issue by appealing to traditional notions about the equality and contextual adequacy of languages.

Two methods of proceeding with such an investigation have been elaborated in this paper: *macro-surveys* of pidgin-creole resources, based on information derived from existing grammars, dictionaries, elicitation and native-speaker intuition, and *micro analyses* of pidgin-creole samples in use. Problems and possibilities of both approaches have been identified. In the case of the macro-survey, the use of general criteria like Slobin's (1979) charges to Language – in conjunction with relativistic considerations like the functions for which the varieties are to be used in the local context – seems to provide a reasonable framework for evaluating the linguistic resources of pidgins and creoles. It is argued, however, that this will take us only part of the way in understanding the adequacy of these languages as cognitive/intellectual instruments, and that additional non-linguistic data will be required to address this latter issue adequately. In the case of micro-analysis, it is argued that samples of everyday language used by ordinary speakers offer a better perspective for investigating the adequacy of pidgins and creoles than do translations of literary classics or the original work of distinguished writers or artistes, once cautions about the context in which such samples are recorded are observed.

In each of the three Guyanese Creole samples subjected to micro-analysis in this paper – one argumentative, the second descriptive/expository, the third a narrative of personal experience – the expression of speakers' meanings appears to be innervated rather than enervated by their means. Whether this will continue to be the case with other kinds of discourse only further research will tell. What these samples make clear is that the study of the adequacy of language – like the analysis of language more generally – needs to take into account not only the formal or abstract properties of language, but the way in which these are functionally and concretely used in daily life. Here is yet another theoretical implication of language adequacy research, for this conclusion is increasingly being reached by philosophers of language and discourse analysts as well as sociolinguists.

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