

Chapter 1

Introduction to the study of pidgins and creoles

In his speech to the English-Speaking Union Conference in Ottawa (29 Oct. 1958) the Duke of Edinburgh made reference to Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin English), in observing that 'I am referred to in that splendid language as "Fella bilong Mrs Queen"' (Cohen and Cohen 1971:67). This book will deal with a group of languages which linguists call pidgins and creoles, and some of the issues arising from their study.

It would be logical to begin a book on pidgins and creoles by offering definitions of these languages; however, this is easier said than done. Although all scholars would agree that there is such a group of languages, perhaps one of the biggest disputes at present among those who study them centres on how they are to be defined, how they originated and what their relationship is to one another. It is partly for this reason that research in this area is at the moment one of the most exciting and rapidly growing fields of linguistics. Indeed, some now refer to a field of study called creolistics (cf eg Mühlhäuser 1985d).¹

Although pidgins and creoles were long the neglected step-children of linguistics because they were thought to be marginal, and not 'real' full-fledged languages, they have now emerged as the centre of attention for a number of reasons. In fact, one creolist, Bickerton (1981a) believes that creoles hold the key to understanding how human languages originally evolved many centuries ago. But even as early as 1914 Schuchardt (who is regarded as the founder of the field of pidgin and creole studies cf 1.2) noted that the significance of creoles for general linguistics was not fully appreciated.

If we pause to think for a moment of the circumstances in which pidgin languages arise, (by comparison with so-called

'natural' languages) very suddenly in contact situations, where they are used by speakers with different language backgrounds to fulfill certain basic communicative functions (eg trade), it is not hard to imagine that their rise, spread and development should reveal things of interest for linguists concerned with language acquisition, language change and universal grammar.

Hymes (1971:84), for example, describes pidginization and creolization as complex processes of sociolinguistic change. Pidginization involves reduction of linguistic resources and restriction of use, while creolization involves expansion along both these dimensions. Bickerton (1977a) has more recently characterized both pidginization and creolization as processes of acquisition under restricted conditions. In pidginization the acquisition process involves the learning of a second language by speakers of different language backgrounds who have limited access to the language of the dominant group. In creolization the restricted input occurs as part of the first language acquisition process. Bickerton's (1981a) hypothesis is that under such conditions children have recourse to innate universals which govern the process of expansion of the pidgin into a fully adequate native language. Thus, one can justify treating both pidgins and creoles as related phenomena. Both involve developing systems which arise in different contexts of language acquisition (cf Chs 6 and 7)

Another kind of link between these languages is historical. Hall (1966), for instance, includes a pidgin origin as an essential feature of creoles. He elaborated the notion of a linguistic life cycle, discussed in Chapter 4, linking the development of pidgins and creoles. Others such as Bickerton, however, have been concerned to identify creole features which have no origin in a prior pidgin stage (cf Ch. 2) My discussion in Chapter 2 of various attempts to define and type pidgin and creole languages in terms of shared features shows that there is a great deal of overlap between the two. Chapter 3 treats theories of origin, while Chapters 4 and 5 illustrate the dynamic nature of developments which characterize the pidgin-creole life cycle.

1.1 Some introductory issues and problems

My introductory anecdote about the Duke of Edinburgh's encounter with Tok Pisin serves as a convenient point of departure for some of the theoretical issues to be dealt with in subsequent chapters. There is some truth and falsehood in his remarks.

Elsewhere in his speech the Duke wrongly includes pidgin as a dialect of English. In doing so, however, he touches on some issues of interest to those who study pidgins and creoles: namely, whether these languages are to be regarded as dialects (ie socially and linguistically subordinate varieties) of the language which appears to contribute most of their lexicon (ie the superstrate, lexifier language or lexical base). In this case, for instance, the question would be whether Tok Pisin is a dialect of English, on a par with say, Scottish English, or whether it is a language in its own right (cf eg Chambers and Trudgill 1980 on the problem of defining the terms language and dialect). From a linguistic point of view part of the problem in coming to a decision on this matter lies in the fact that the vocabulary of a pidgin is usually drawn primarily from the prestige language of the dominant group in a situation of language contact. Its grammar, however, retains many features of the native languages of the subordinate groups. The prestige language which supplies the bulk of the vocabulary is the one which is usually thought of as being pidginized, hence, the name Pidgin English for Tok Pisin and Chinese Pidgin English etc. (cf 1.3).

The process of pidginization, as I will argue, involves some universal principles by putting together linguistic material of different origins by speakers trying to communicate over linguistic barriers. Schuchardt addressed these and other questions fairly early, but concluded that in the case of creoles we are dealing with independent systems. Questions about the relatedness of creoles, in particular, to their superstrate languages are still a concern of the field, eg in the debate about Black English in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s (cf 5.4). Schuchardt included Black English in the category of creole languages.

Thus, the Duke is right in this quotation to refer to Tok Pisin as a language. He is, interestingly, wrong about his designation; he would be referred to as man bilong (misis) kwin.

There is, however, still a bit more I can add to the anecdote at this stage, and that is to note the increasing anglicization of some varieties of Tok Pisin through renewed contact with English. Thus, it is probably more likely that the Duke of Edinburgh would be referred to in this kind of Tok Pisin as the Duke of Edinburgh or perhaps the Duke bilong Edinburgh. In fact, Hall (1966:45) noted the 'weird mixture' in the following report of the Duke's arrival in Rabaul:

Today i bikpela de bilong ol i welcomim Duke of Edinburgh i kamap long aerodrome bilong citi Rabaul.

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(McElhanon 1975) devoted to Tok Pisin, in which some of the articles are written in that language.

DeCamp (1971a:14) says that since the Second World War, and especially in the 1960s, the nature of pidgin and creole studies has changed radically in several ways. For one thing, the field has become unified. Before the 1950s few linguists dealt with both pidgins and creoles; and few studied more than one geographical area or more than one language. Each language was treated as a separate sphere of interest. One can compare this state of the field with that of the more general state of enquiry into language before concepts such as the general theory of grammar, universal grammar, the logical problem of language acquisition and so on became central to linguistic theory (cf eg Smith and Wilson 1979).

Secondly, DeCamp cites the fact that pidgin-creole studies have now become a respectable academic field. In 1969 the Modern Language's Association annual bibliography groups pidgin-creole studies in a separate section rather than treating them as appendages to other languages such as French etc. DeCamp (1971a:14) dates the true birth of the field to 1959 when the first international conference on creole language studies was held in Jamaica. The proceedings of the conference (Le Page 1961) have formed the basis for much discussion and research since. For example, the Portuguese origin hypothesis had been advanced some 60 years earlier by Hesseling, but not until the 1959 conference were its implications discussed seriously from a general perspective, and the possibility of a monogenetic theory of pidgin-creole origin considered (cf Ch. 3). DeCamp singles out as the greatest contribution of this conference the fact that a group of scholars recognized that they were 'creolists'.

The second hallmark in the development of the field was the second international conference held nine years later in Jamaica (cf the papers in Hymes 1971). There some of the topics raised at the previous conference were considered again, this time by a wider range and larger number of scholars. Other issues were treated such as the possibility of prior creole origins for Black English in the United States and Marathi. The emergent field of pidgin-creole studies benefited from the growing interest in sociolinguistics, and contributions from other fields such as historical linguistics. In fact, DeCamp (1971a:14) says that 'if a genuine sociolinguistic theory ever does appear, it will certainly be indebted to pidgin-creole studies'. Hymes (1971:5) has remarked that pidginization and creolization represent the extreme to which social factors can go in shaping the transmission and use of language. Due to this and also to the fact that

He says that in 'normal' Melanesian, this should be:

Tude i bikpela de bilong ol i heloim Dyuk bilong Edinboro i kamap long ples balus bilong siti Rabaul.
'Today is the big day for all to welcome the Duke of Edinboro to Rabaul airport.'

Hall remarks (1966:45-6) that:

Dyuk 'Duke' and Edinboro 'Edinburgh' would presumably be inevitable loanwords in any case, but the phrase *Duke of Edinburgh* is a crass Anglicism, as are also *welcomim* for normal *heloim* 'to greet', and *aerodrome* for *ples balus* 'airport'; and *today* and *city* are Anglicised spellings for normal *tude* and *siti*.

These kinds of developments will be discussed in Chapter 4.

1.2 Early studies in pidgin and creole languages: a brief history of the field

The study of pidgin and creole languages goes back more than a century. DeCamp (1971a:31) and others recognize Schuchardt as the greatest of the early scholars and the founding father of the field. Schuchardt (1842-1927) is more generally known for his contributions to Romance philology and Basque studies, but within the field of pidgin and creole studies he is known for a series of papers entitled *Kreolische Studien* published in the 1880s. Significant studies have continued to appear since that time. For example, Hesseling's (1897) controversial study of Afrikaans, which claimed creole ancestry for the language, deals with issues which are still being debated today (cf eg Markey 1982, and 2.9). Linguistic descriptions of Capeverdean Crioulo also date from the latter part of the nineteenth century, when Coelho published a series of three articles on what he called the Romance or Neo-Latin dialects of Africa, Asia and America. This study inspired two further descriptions by native speakers, also published at the end of the century (Costa and Duarte 1886 and Brito 1887). Brito's study is actually written in Capeverdean Crioulo with an accompanying translation into Portuguese. Studies of pidgin and creoles written by native speakers of these languages are rare today (cf however, Silva 1985 and Rickford 1979 for two examples). As far as I know, no scholarly treatments have been written by native speakers in their own languages except for Brito (1887) and Veiga (1984) on Capeverdean. One volume which deserves mention, even though it is not written by native speakers, is the special issue of Kivung

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languages. Children's language was even recently seen as an imperfectly-learned or lesser version of the parent's language. Similarly, until systematic research was undertaken into second language learner systems (cf eg Klein and Dittmar 1979), these too were viewed as imperfect versions of the target language.

Despite the progress made in the field of pidgin-creole studies many still believe that pidgins and creoles are parasitic rather than independent linguistic systems, which are the result of random mixing (cf the discussion of the notion of system in Labov 1971a). Part of the problem in this attitude has been the lack of descriptive models for dealing with highly variable and rapidly changing systems. The existing categories of linguistic analysis are biased towards the description of autonomous, discrete language systems. Moreover, there is no neutral way of recognizing a linguistic entity as a language or a system in its own right rather than as parasitic on or derivative of another.

The majority of early studies of pidgins and creoles, which go back as far as the early sixteenth century, tend, as Mühlhäuser (1986) notes, to be limited in scope and of little relevance to the aims of theoretical linguistics. Some of the earliest reports, and in some cases the majority or only reports, we have for pidgin and creole languages come from gentlemen travellers, administrators and missionaries. Many of their accounts are written to amuse others of languages which were regarded as bastardized versions of civilized European tongues. In the preface to one of the first accounts of Jamaican Creole (Russell 1868, cited in Mühlhäuser 1986:25), the author writes: 'This little work was never intended originally to meet the eye of the public; the writer merely prepared it as a source of social amusement to such of his friends as are of a literary turn.'

Others however, are written with the explicit aim of teaching Europeans something about the structure of the pidgin or creole because it serves as a useful or sometimes the only means of communication between the indigenous and expatriate population. Lloyd (n.d.) prepared a small grammar and vocabulary of what has been called Kitchen-Kafir, a contact language used by speakers of Bantu languages to communicate with the Dutch, Portuguese and English-speaking Europeans whom they worked for. The aim of the book was to allow the European to 'satisfy his immediate needs' and 'cease to trouble about learning Zulu'. Another example of this kind of description can be found in Berrenger (1811:ii) who writes of the creole Portuguese spoken in Sri Lanka that 'it is the common vehicle of intercourse with the inhabitants'. There is 'no other mode of communicating with

pidgin-creole speaking communities usually display a considerable range of varieties of speech, these languages have occupied an important place in sociolinguistics, particularly within that area often referred to as variation theory (cf eg Bailey 1973). A number of important methods of analysis, such as implicational scaling (cf 5-3) have been introduced into the study of variation by those working with data from pidgin and creole languages.

Since that time conferences in the field of pidgin-creole studies have become regular events (cf eg Day 1980; Valdman and Highfield 1980; *York Papers in Linguistics* 1983); and the number of collections of papers and books on pidgin and creole languages continues to increase. At the beginning of the 1980s the field derived new impetus from Bickerton's bioprogram hypothesis (cf Ch. 7), and the study of scholars from fields such as first and an even wider range of scholars from fields such as first and second language acquisition. (cf eg the papers in Andersen 1983).

Having given this brief synopsis of the growth of the field (cf also Hellinger 1985:1-3-4 and Mühlhäuser 1986:Ch. 2), let us now consider some of the reasons why it took so long to become established as a respectable academic discipline. In order to understand them, we have to consider the historical context in which the field of linguistics became established, and how various ideas about language influenced its development. (Robins 1967 provides a useful historical overview.)

The earliest grammarians regarded the so-called classical languages, such as Latin and Greek, as the only ones deserving study. Languages without highly developed inflectional morphology such as modern English or French, were thought of as 'grammarless'; and therefore by definition they fell outside the scope of the study of grammar as it was conceived in earlier centuries. The notion that there were developed and undeveloped languages gave way largely in the late nineteenth century, partly due to the finding that the languages of so-called 'primitive' people turned out to be very structurally complex. Modern linguistics was founded on the principle of descriptivism, which held that languages should be studied on their own terms without reference to externally defined standards of correctness. Mühlhäuser (1986:24) notes that the status of 'true language' was denied until relatively recently to a number of linguistic phenomena, eg child language, pidgins and creoles, and second language learners' systems. The study of language systems undergoing development has generally remained marginal to the concerns of mainstream linguistics. Pidgin languages, for example, were regarded as corrupt, simplified versions of donor

natives and conducting political negotiations [sic] with the Court of Candy'. It is condescending in tone, as can be seen even from the title, where the Portuguese is referred to as corrupted. Its intended audience is 'the English Gentleman in the Civil and Military Service'. In the preface Berrenger (1811:i) writes that the corrupted Portuguese is:

no longer that impressive and melodious medium by means of which the genius [sic] of Camoens has immortalized the enterprising spirit and intrepid valour of his countrymen. It has sunk into a barborous Jargon, scarce intelligible to a native of Portugal, which hitherto no one has dared, or deigned to reduce to grammatical form.

He adds (1811:11) that 'the facility with which this dialect may be acquired is a most inciting advantage it possesses in a climate so discouraging to mental exertion'.

Often such accounts contain a number of real or concocted fragments of the language, which get handed down from one generation of amateur linguists to the next as part of the folk wisdom—concerning the speech in question. For the most part attempts to explain aspects of the structure of Pidgin English are confused by the resemblance between English and pidgin words. Pidgin expressions are seen as clumsy, but often amusing and descriptive. Collinson (1929:21), for instance comments:

That word 'stop' is rather a puzzler until you get used to it. It means 'is present' and not 'finish'. Here is an illustration. If you lost your pencil you would probably mutter to yourself, 'Now, where's that pencil of mine?', but a Solomon Islander would say, 'My gracious, where pencil belong me he stop?' It sounds rather difficult, but in time this curious phrasing comes naturally.

Another example can be found in Collinson's (1929:22-3) observations on pidgin English wanem [*<what name>*], a general interrogative marker meaning 'which' or 'what':

We use the phrase 'What name?' a great deal. It is a sort of general query meaning 'Well, what is it?' If a native came into my store and wandered vaguely about, staring and goggling, I should rap out sharply, 'What name?' meaning, 'Well, young-feller-me-lad, what do you want?'

The *Pacific Islands Monthly* carried the following examples supplied by readers (cited in Mühlhäusler 1985b:17):

A European lady: 'Big fella missus he put water belong stink along him.' In other words, the average white woman is best remembered by the natives owing to her use of perfume. A piano:

'Big fella bokus (box) you fightem he cry.' This is highly ingenious—particularly the description of keyboard action. (*Pacific Islands Monthly* 16 Sept. 1930)

A resident of Townsville sends me more lively examples of 'pidgin'. This is how a New Guinea boy says: 'You're bald': 'Grass belong coconut he no more stop.' 'Picaninny' is a 'baby'; 'deewhy' is a 'tree'—'picaninny belong deewhy' is therefore 'hand', 'Copper' is a covering, such as a roof; therefore 'copper belong "hand"', for 'fingernail', is quite ingenious. 'Lik lik' is 'small'; 'lik lik too much' is 'smaller'; 'lik lik plenty too much' is 'very small'. (*Pacific Islands Monthly* 16 Dec. 1930)

The various circumlocutions reported for piano are part of the mythology about Pacific Pidgin English. Collinson (1929:21), for example, cites the South Sea Islands version of it as **This fella box you fight 'im he sing-out-out**. Mühlhäusler (1986:26) adds the following form from Baron von Hesse-Wartegg (1902:53):

big fellow box spouse whiteman fight him he cry too much.

In the same year Daiber (1902:255) writes:

All in all the black does not lack a certain sense of humour. His description of the first piano brought to the German South Seas is also delightful. It was a Papuan who, horrified, told of big fellow box, white fellow master fight him plenty too much, he cry (of the big box which the white man beats so much that it screams). Since that time the piano has been called in Pidgin-English box belong cry, that is, 'screaming box' or 'screaming trunk'. (translated by Mühlhäusler 1986)

Hall (1943:82-3) cites a tale which he entitles 'The piano arrives' (as described by a 'boy'), which probably explains how such circumlocutions were invented and then passed on:²

Wantela bigfela bakis i-kam long sip. Nau masta i-tok: 'Hariap yufela kisim i-go antap.' Orait. Mifela pulim i-go antap, nau masta i-tok: 'Kisim tamiak i-kam.' Orait. Mifela kisim tamiak, nau brokrim bakis. Godamn noderfela bakis i-stap insaid. Nau mi kisim tamiak, mi laik brokrim nambatu bakis. Nau masta i holim fas han bilong mi. Bel bilong em i nogud finis. Em i-tok: 'Yu longlong man but Yu laik brokrim samting bilong misis, a?' Nau mi lukim bakis. I gat tit. Plentifela tit i-stap. Nau masta i-singautim misis, nau masta i kisim sia. Nau misis i-kisim liklik bakis. Masta i-faitim tit bilong bakis. Godamn! I save kraiaut. Nau misis i faitim liklik bakis long stik-liklik haf stik, i olsem banara. Godamn! Disfela i kraiaut olsem pusi!

[Gloss: A large box arrived on the ship. Then the master said: 'Hurry up, you and bring it up.' Very well. We pulled it up, and

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then he said: 'Bring me an axe.' Very well. We took an axe and broke the box. By heck! There was another box inside. Then I took the axe and started to break the second box. Then the master held back my hand. He was thoroughly angry. He said, 'You crazy man, you! You want to break something of the mistresses, do you?' The master called to the mistress and the master got a chair. Then the mistress took a little box. The master hit the teeth of the box. By heck, it could cry out. Then the mistress hit the little box with a stick - a little piece of stick, like a bow. By heck! This [box] cried like a cat!

Mühlhäusler (1986) adds a few more circumlocutions to the list:

big fellow bokkes, suppose missis he fight him, he cry too much (Friederici 1911:100)

big fellow box, stop house, suppose you fight him, him cry (reported for Samoan Plantation Pidgin by Neffgen in the *Samoan Times* 27 March 1915).

fight im bokis moosik - 'to play the piano' (Shelton-Smith 1929).

him big fella box, suppose you fight him, he cry (Mihalich 1969:39)

bikpela bokis bilong kraik taim you paitim na kikum em (Bálint 1969).

Mühlhäusler observes that none of these sources has the same 'name' for a piano.

Other accounts of pidgins and creoles are more outspokenly pejorative and negative. Silva (1985:48-50) for example, cites the following collection of reports on Cape Verdean Crioulo:

A governor arriving there [Cape Verde Islands] in 1801 wrote in dismay of the 'ridiculous language of the natives'. Chelimi in 1841 found a general preference for Crioulo and disdain for Portuguese; he was shocked to find even continental residents accustomed themselves to Crioulo rather than trying to overturn that 'pernicious practice'. In 1844 Lima described the language as a ridiculous slang, a monstrous composition of Old Portuguese and the languages of Guinea.

In the same vein an editorial in the *Rabaul Times* (16 Oct. 1925) deprecates Tok Pisin (cited in Mühlhäusler 1985b:16):

The pidgin English as spoken in these days is about the most atrocious form of speech perhaps one could find in any corner of

the globe. It is neither one thing or the other. Consisting of a mixture of Samoan and Chinese here and there, with an occasional word of Malayan, it is conglomeration truly worthy of the Tower of Babel.

It can be seen that many Europeans commonly make the assumption that pidgins are just a special form of their own language. Most often they regard it as a debased and bastardized one. Serious misunderstandings can arise from the assumption that words which look like English ones have the same meaning. Hall (1955a:18-19) cites the following case:

I was in a certain New Guinea hotel, and witnessed the following scene between the assistant manageress (recently arrived from Australia) and a Papua house-boy. She had not seen him all afternoon, and thought that he had only just come in, so she began to scold him:

Manageress: Why you no come this afternoon? [One would never say 'why' in Pidgin, but *bilong wonem*? Still, the house-boy got her drift, and answered:]

House-boy: No, missis, mi kam long belo kaikai. (*On the contrary*) *madam, I came at noon.*) [Belo kaikai is a phrase meaning the *bell for food*; originally a term used on the labour lines in copra plantations, it has now become the general expression in Pidgin for *noontime*.]

Manageress: Belly kaikai! That's all you niggers ever think of, is filling your bellies with kaikai.

House-boy: Tasel missis, mi stap long haus kuk. (*But madam, I was in the kitchen.*) [Haus kuk is a phrase of the same structure as *belo kaikai*, with two nouns, the second telling of some characteristic or purpose of the first; it means *room for cooking*, and therefore, *kitchen*.]

Manageress: Nonsense! You're not the cook of this house.

Mühlhäusler (1985a:246) notes some other lexical items that are reported to have led to some confusion, eg *baksait* interpreted as *backside* rather than *back*, *kilim* interpreted as *to kill* instead of *to hit, strike*, and *pusim* to *push* instead of *to copulate*. Murphy (1966:16-17;43) gives a list of pitfalls or *faux amis* for expatriates, and notes too that it is commonly believed that any English word can be translated into Tok Pisin by adding *-fela* or *-im*. He stresses, however, that 'there are no such words as *Whysat, gotim, wantim, tellim, broke, broke'im, callim* (meaning *to call*), *cryout*'. A misunderstanding arising from the similarity between English and Tok Pisin with more serious consequences is reported in Nelson (1972:170-1), in which a Papua New Guinean stumbled against a white woman coming out of the

ness'. According to others it could be a Chinese corruption of Portuguese *ocupação* - 'business', or is from Hebrew pidgin meaning 'exchange or trade'. Another possible source mentioned is that it is a South Seas pronunciation of English beach as beachee. And still another is that it comes from Yago, a South American Indian language spoken in an area colonized by Britain, which has a word *pidian* meaning 'people'. In popular accounts some of these (and other sources) are given, as in Collinson's (1929:20) remarks about South Sea Island Pidgin:

Pidgin English! Now in the first place the word 'pidgin' has nothing whatever to do with pigeons.³ It comes from China, and represents John Chinaman's best attempt to pronounce our word 'business'.

So pidgin-English simply means business-English - the queer sort of language used between white men and natives which enables them to understand each other and do business together.

Still another possibility not mentioned by Mühlhäusler is the one noted in Knowlton (1967:228) attributed to Professor Hsi Ti-san at the University of Hong Kong. Ti-San received a copy of Leland's (1924) book on Chinese Pidgin English and on page 3 he has written in the margin that the term *pidgin* may be derived from two Chinese characters, *pei* and *ts'in*, which mean 'paying money'. This would be consistent with the function of pidgins as trade languages.

It is as well to dispel at the outset of this book the view that pidgins are simply corrupt versions of the superstrate languages with no grammar. As recently as 1986 the *Times Higher Education Supplement* (17 Jan. 1986) carried a report from a newspaper in Ghana complaining about the use of Pidgin English on Ghanaian campuses and recommending that stern measures be taken against it. The report notes that in no other case do the future leaders of the country talk a 'mixture in which all the tenses are thrown to the wind, and words are picked from far and wide, making no sense to the listener'. It is true that pidgins are 'makeshift' languages in the sense that they make do with a minimum of grammatical apparatus. Wurm (1985) comments that any language which is closely related to another in a portion of its vocabulary or structure could, when looked at from the perspective of the other language, be said to be a debased, corrupt or ridiculous version of the other language. One point of consensus reached by those who study pidgins is that they have a recognizable structure of their own independent of the substrate and superstrate languages involved in the original contact. The degree of stability of this structure varies, depending

theatre. When questioned by a man about what had happened, the Papua New Guinean replied: 'Mi putim han long baksait bilong misis.' - 'I touched the woman's back with my hand.' The answer, however, cost him half a tooth, his job and three months in prison, due to the confusion between the meaning of Tok Pisin *baksait* and English *backside*.

Mühlhäusler (1981b) has described in detail the features of the variety of Tok Pisin called *Tok Masta* (ie European talk). This variety differs from Tok Pisin in a number of ways. Mühlhäusler (1985a:246) illustrates this with a sentence taken from a radio talk on the BBC (15 May 1970):

Im fellow Matthew e got im three fellow egg.

'Matthew has three eggs.'

He points out three typical European misconceptions about the structure of Tok Pisin:

1. It is not the case that each noun is preceded by *fellow*. Contrary to what is claimed by many European writers, *-pela* [*<fellow*] is used as a suffix with monosyllabic adjectives, eg *blakpela pik* - 'black pig'.
2. *Em* [*<him*] serves as a third person singular pronoun and as an emphazier when preceding nouns. The suffix *-im* [*<him*] marks transitivity and causativity with verbs. It is not sufficient or grammatical to sprinkle a sentence with *-im*. The first *-im* in the text is ungrammatical because it is not followed by a noun; the second is unacceptable because *gat* is one of the verbs which do not take *-im*.
3. Many Tok Pisin words, especially those referring to aspects of flora and fauna, are not of English origin. The word for egg is *kiau* [*<Tolaj*].

Thus, in ordinary Rural Pidgin, the correct version of the sentence would be:

Matthew i gat tripela kiau.

Even a consideration of the origin of the label *pidgin* for these kinds of contact languages is revealing of some of the characteristics of these languages, as well as of the prejudices of some Europeans towards them (cf Hancock 1979b). Mühlhäusler (1986:1) lists five plausible etymologies for the term *pidgin* and concludes that they are equally likely to be genuine. It is in the nature of a pidgin language that multiple or convergent etymologies can be found for a number of its lexical items (cf 3.4). The OED says that *pidgin* is a 'Chinese corruption of English busi-

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on the extent of internal development and functional expansion the pidgin has undergone at any particular point in its life cycle (cf Ch. 4).

1.3 Present distribution of pidgin and creole languages

It would be impossible in a single volume to do justice to the 100 or so pidgin and creole languages spoken in all parts of the world. Inevitably, our knowledge of some of these languages is better than others. Mühlhäusler (1986:19) has noted that research on creoles in the Pacific region of the world is less advanced than it is in the Atlantic regions. This is true, despite the fact that English-based pidgins and creoles have been used in the South Pacific for nearly 200 years (cf Clark 1979:3). The study of at least one of these goes back 100 years (cf Schuchardt 1883 and 1889), and two of them, Tok Pisin and Hawaii Pidgin English are among the best known and most studied pidgins in the world. At the other end of the extreme, however, is the case of pidgin and creole languages of Australia, which are the least researched (cf however, Harris 1984; Dutton 1983b; Mühlhäusler (forthcoming) for an overview of the state of research in this part of the world). Muysken (1980) observes that although there are numerous references to Spanish-based Amerindian pidgins spoken in the upper Amazon, there have been no detailed studies of them. The bias towards the study of Caribbean pidgins and creoles in the field as a whole and their connection with the slave trade, has resulted in a distortion of the historical perspective on pidgins and creoles in general (cf Thomason 1980:168).

One can only hope to sample widely from typologically different and historically distant languages so as to obtain adequate coverage and representation. In doing so, the aim of the typologist is to pinpoint certain similarities and differences. The question which must then concern us is how to account for the similarities. A number of possibilities arise: One is that they are due to:

1. shared historical links
 2. simplification of the same source language, eg Portuguese or English
 3. linguistic universals, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic
 4. accidental factors
 5. shared function
 6. a combination of these factors.
- I discuss these and other possibilities in Chapter 3.

In his survey of pidgin and creole languages of the world, Hancock (1971:510-11) provides the map shown in Fig. 1.1, on which he locates 80 pidgin and creole languages. In a later count, he (1977) gives the number as 127. In his preface to a collection of papers published in 1979 Hancock says that Meillet and Cohen's (1978) *Survey of Languages of the World* lists 200 pidgin and creole languages. A list of the languages mentioned by Hancock in 1971 and 1977 is given in Appendix 1 to this book.⁴ Another indispensable reference source for the field is Reinecke *et al's* (1975) bibliography of research on pidgin and creole languages. The exact number of such languages is difficult to establish for a number of reasons. One is simply that the number depends on our definitions of what counts as a pidgin or creole. Hancock (1971:520), for instance, wrongly includes Babu as a rudimentary pidgin employed during the British rule in India. He equates it with Hobson-Jobson and Chee Chee (cf however, Schuchardt 1891). As Widdowson (1977) has pointed out, Babu is a variety which shows the reverse development to a pidgin in that it represents an elaboration of the expressive component of language. In Chapter 2 I discuss some of the reasons why these languages are hard to define. Hancock (1977) adds a number of new languages to his original list, such as Gastarbeiter Deutsch, *ie* the varieties of German spoken by migrant workers, and reclassifies and omits others. The addition of Gastarbeiter Deutsch can be justified on the basis of the discovery of a number of pidgin-like features in the language of adult foreign workers. In drawing attention to these in 1968, Clyne referred to this variety as Pidgin German (cf also 3.1 and 6.3). This idea and term were subsequently taken up by a research group in Heidelberg (cf the study described in Klein and Dittmar 1979). 'New' pidgins and creoles are continually being 'discovered'. Hancock could have added Middle English to his list (cf eg Bailey and Maroldt 1977); and even more recently, it has been argued that sign languages are creoles (cf eg Fischer 1978; Deuchar (1986; and 7.5). In both these cases it has been argued that there has been a disruption in the transmission of the language sufficient to justify calling them creoles (cf Ch. 7).

Other reasons which make counting more difficult are illustrated in Mühlhäusler (1986:15ff). ~~He observes that pidgin and creole speakers are often at the bottom of the social scale, and are frequently pushed aside or ignored. It is commonly believed even sometimes by the speakers themselves, that they speak the same language as that which is recognized as the standard or official one in a particular country. Thus, often there is no~~

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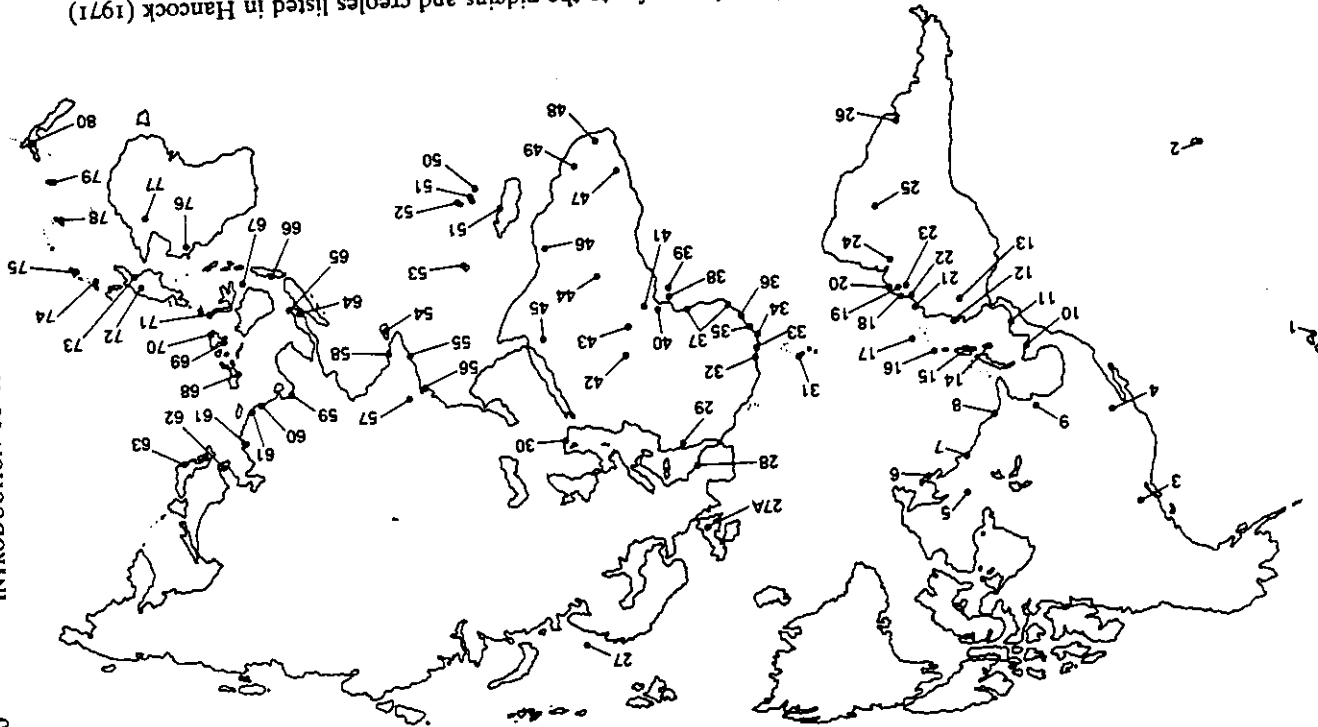


FIGURE 1.1 Map of Pidgin and Creole Languages. Numbers refer to the pidgins and creoles listed in Hancock (1971) and Hancock (1977), given in Appendix 1, pp 315-25.

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recognition of a pidgin or creole as a separate language. In the case of Papuan Pidgin English discussed by Mühlhäusler, informants claim to be speaking English not Pidgin. The term 'pidgin' has only recently become known to Pacific Islanders. Mühlhäusler obtained samples of New Guinea Pidgin German by asking his informants to speak German.

Even where a pidgin or creole has a name and is recognized as a separate language or variety, its speakers may be reluctant to admit that they speak it. This reflects the low prestige which these languages very often have.⁵

Mühlhäusler also points out the drawbacks in the customary practice of labelling pidgins with a formula which includes their location and their principal lexifier language, as in the following examples:

- (a) Chinese Pidgin English
- (b) New Guinea Pidgin English
- (c) New Caledonian Pidgin French

This formula is used in textbooks such as Hockett (1958:424). Schuchardt (1891) raises the issue of terminology in connection with his typology of what he called Indo-English, but does not resolve it adequately. These labels are misleading for a number of reasons (cf eg the discussion in Walsh 1984). From a linguistic point of view one objection is that such labels imply that the lexicon is separate from the syntax and that the lexicon is more important in deciding relationships among languages. Taylor (1971:293) objects to these labels because they minimize structural similarities between lexically unrelated creoles.

A more sociolinguistic objection is that the first term in such labels can be ambiguous as to whether it specifies a language, a group of speakers or a geographical location. For example, in the case of Chinese Pidgin English the label is now taken to refer to the pidgin spoken by speakers of Chinese origin rather than the kind of pidgin spoken along the China coast. In the case of Hawaiian Pidgin English the adjective Hawaiian is ambiguous because it could refer to the geographical location of Hawaii, to the people of Hawaiian ethnic descent or to the Hawaiian language. I will use the terms Hawaii Pidgin and Creole English here rather than the customary adjectival form Hawaiian in the designation of these varieties following the practice of Sato and others. There is a strong local reaction from people of native Hawaiian background to the traditional labels due to concern in the community that outsiders may think that it refers to a

pidginized (and therefore stigmatized) form of the Hawaiian language.

As speakers of these languages are becoming aware of the negative connotations of the term 'pidgin', new names have been introduced for some of them, such as Tok Pisin, officially recognized in 1981 as the name for New Guinea Pidgin English, or Broken for Torres Strait Pidgin English.⁶ Other names have often been invented by linguists, such as the use of the term Neome-lanesian for Tok Pisin by Hall (1966).

Another problem is the high geographical mobility of the speakers of these languages. For example, Mühlhäusler (1986:14) says that what is called Pidgin Fiji appears to be Kanaka English transported from Queensland. Baker and Corne (1982) show that the label *Indian Ocean Creole French* is a misnomer because the social and linguistic histories of Mauritian and Reunion Creole French are separate. Mühlhäusler concludes that it is inadvisable to associate pidgins and creoles too closely with a single location.

A further complication arises from the fact that a pidgin may change its lexical affiliation at different stages of its development. This is referred to as *relexification* (3.3). Present day Hiri Motu may be partially relexified Papuan Pidgin English (cf Dutton and Mühlhäusler 1979). This poses a further question of historical continuity and identity over time, which is discussed in more detail in 3.4.

There are of course no doubt a number of extinct pidgin and creole languages for which we have no evidence. There are also a number of nearly extinct ones which are in great need of research (cf eg Urry and Walsh 1981 on the Macassarese language in Northern Australia). For the moment, however, I will note a few things about the present distribution of these languages. They are spoken all over the world, but particularly in tropical and subtropical regions of West Africa, the Caribbean and the South Pacific. Most of these languages are European-based, ie have a European language as their main lexifier language. Hancock (1977) lists only 37 non-European based pidgins and creoles.

As far as numbers of speakers are concerned, DeCamp (1971a:17) makes the following estimates. He says that two to three million speakers probably use some form of pidgin daily in at least some situations. Creoles are spoken by more than six million persons. Given all the difficulties mentioned previously, these estimates can only be rough indicators, but world-wide, it is certainly true that there are more speakers of pidgin and creole languages than there are speakers of Swedish.

DeCamp (1971a:17) says that *French-based creoles claim the largest number of speakers, probably around 45,000,000*. There are four major dialects of French Creole in the Caribbean: Haiti, French Guyana, Louisiana and the Lesser Antilles. It is also spoken on the islands of Reunion and Mauritius in the Indian Ocean. There is some dispute as to whether French-based pidgins exist; much more research needs to be done in the Pacific (cf eg the discussion by Reinecke 1971 of Tây Bôi spoken in Vietnam). The status of French-based Bichelamar and its relationship to other pidgins in New Caledonia and the New Hebrides is disputed (cf eg Hollyman 1964 and 1976). Valdman (1978) provides a good introduction to the study of French-based creoles (cf also Green 1987).

English-based creoles are used in West Africa, the Cameroons and Sierra Leone, and throughout the Caribbean and the Pacific. Spanish- and Portuguese-based creoles are widely used in Asia. Three Portuguese creoles are in use on islands off the West African coast, ie Cape Verde, Annobon and Saõ Tome. Papiamentu is the only such creole in the Caribbean spoken by the inhabitants of the Southern Caribbean Dutch-owned islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao. A Dutch-based creole is spoken by a few speakers in the Virgin Islands; and if one includes Afrikaans as a Dutch-based creole (cf eg Markey 1982, and 2.9), then another three million or so speakers can be included for Dutch-based creoles. Non-European based creoles can be found in Africa and the South Pacific, eg Swahili in parts of Africa, and Hiri Motu in Papua New Guinea.

1.4 The scope and structure of this book

It is perhaps easiest to explain the scope and structure of this book by comparing it with the other available introductions to the field. Hall's (1966) work constitutes what would probably be called the *first major attempt to treat pidgin and creole languages from the perspective of modern descriptive linguistics*. His book did much to put the field on the map, and also to define the kinds of languages which were taken to be within its scope. The three sections of Hall's book give us an overall view of the main areas he was interested in: (i) nature and history; (ii) structure and relationships; and (iii) significance. Hall (1966:xi) argued in his introduction that pidgins and creoles were of major importance. He writes (1966:xv) that from a scientific point of view one can learn a great deal about language history from the origins of pidgins and creoles; the study of their structure is of great value

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and creolization. He argues, for example, that the structural viability of a creole is dependent on its social viability (cf Ch. 3). He stresses (1986:94) that pidgins and creoles can be understood only if they are seen as social solutions to discontinuities in social and linguistic traditions. Since the social pressures to develop cross-linguistic communication differ from case to case, this makes it very difficult to establish a coherent definition of these languages.

Mühlhäusler also attaches a great deal of importance to the role of universals rather than influence from substratum and superstratum languages in pidgin development. Despite the renewed interest in creoles raised by Bickerton's bioprogram hypothesis, Mühlhäusler chooses to mention it only in passing and does not discuss it in detail. In this book I have devoted a chapter to this topic and related issues.

Another difference in emphasis between this book and Mühlhäusler's is my concern to relate the study of pidgins and creoles to the more general study of acquisitional processes, and to a lesser extent (due to limitations of space), historical change. Mühlhäusler (1986:261-5) devotes only one section of his Chapter 6 on the relevance of pidgins and creole studies to linguistic theory to a discussion of some of the implications for language learning. He comments (1986:261) that 'pidginization and creolization can be regarded as the unmarked case of language acquisition and should therefore be studied before acquisition in contextually more complex situations'. Wode (1980:21-2), however, says that man's capacity for language acquisition can only be characterized if the various types of language acquisition are brought within the scope of one integrated theory that describes both the similarities and differences between various acquisitional types, *ie* first and second language acquisition and pidgins and creoles. He argues that the commonalities which recur across all these types are due to non-age specific, non-language specific, and hence universal strategies of language acquisition. Because there are such regularities which apply to all acquisitional types, pidgins necessarily have specific properties which they share with all developing systems.

Notes

1. It is interesting that this term subsumes the study of pidgins, creoles and much more. Markey (1981) recognizes three basic processes: (i) diffusion; (ii) fusion (between two languages); and (iii) pidginization and creolization.

for the general theory of language. Hall, however, treated pidgins and creoles as self-contained wholes, and adhered strongly to the genetic model of historical relationship in accounting for the origins of pidgins (cf 3.3). By using the family tree model Hall was able to establish the fundamental structural similarity of pidgins and creoles to their related European lexifier languages.

The next major book in the field is Todd's (1974), an extremely useful introduction, which treats issues such as the origin of pidgins and the process of development from pidgin to creole (cf Rickford's 1977 review). Todd's (1984) more recent work is restricted to English-based pidgins and creoles (as is Hellinger 1985). It contains detailed descriptions of the lexicon and grammar of two pidgins, Cameroon Pidgin English and Tok Pisin and allows us to make some comparisons between the two.

One respect in which the treatment of pidgin and creole languages I will offer here is distinctive lies in the attention I will give to language acquisition, language change and universals (cf Chs. 6 and 7). Jespersen noted some time ago the similarities between language learning and pidginization. His book on *Pidgins and Congeners*. In commenting on the status of Beach-la-Mar (now Bislama, a variety of Pidgin English spoken in Vanuatu), Jespersen (1922:225) says that it is 'English learnt imperfectly, in consequence partly of the difficulties always inherent in learning a totally different language, partly of the obstacles put in the way of learning by the linguistic behavior of the English-speaking people themselves'. Jespersen (1922:233) saw parallels across acquisition, loss of language and pidginization in attributing the results to the 'same mental factor . . . imperfect mastery of a language'. A more recent statement is made by Samarin (1971:126) to the effect that 'there is something in pidgin languages, imperfect learning of a second language, loss of one's own language and restricted codes that is common to them all'. Given the rapid growth of the field of pidgin and creole studies and second language acquisition there is now a sufficient number of studies, emergent theoretical consensus and models to allow us to make comparisons between the two (cf especially the papers in Andersen 1983).

The most recent book on pidgins and creoles is Mühlhäusler's (1986) *Pidgin and Creole Linguistics*. Its aim is (1986:xi) to clarify what constitutes the dynamic character of pidgins and creoles and to isolate the most important forces underlying it. He pays attention to the social forces which are constitutive of pidginization

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2. I have transliterated this text into normal orthography from Hall's phonemic transcription.
3. The similarity between the two words pidgin and pigeon does, however, have some interesting consequences, as shown in 3.6.
4. I am grateful to Fiona Wright for making this comparison.
5. A similar situation is true of many minority languages which are not pidgins or creoles.
6. The name Tok Pisin is not universally used by its speakers. Children whom I interviewed in Lae did not use this term, but referred instead to the language simply as pidgin.

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