

PIDGIN AND CREOLE GERMAN, RELEXIFICATION

AND BIOGRAMMAR

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1) Introduction

I was prompted to write this paper by an observation Hymes made at the St. Thomas Conference:

'In 1968...it seemed inevitable that attention to pidginization and creolization would unite the linguistic and social in a specially revealing way. How we underestimated the resourcefulness and creativity of linguists and psychologists. After a decade, the inescapable embedding of pidgin and creole languages in social history remains a theme to be argued for, a topic to be rediscovered.'

The ahistorical nature of pidgin and creole studies is in evidence in much of what has been written about German-derived pidgins, in particular Gastarbeiterdeutsch. Most studies ignore not only the numerous overseas varieties of pidgin German but also the fact that pidgin and creole German in Germany and Europe has a long tradition. A full account of pidginized forms of German is given in Mühlhäusler (forthcoming).

In almost all cases that have come to my attention Pidgin German has been an urban phenomenon limited either to towns and large industrial settlements on the European continent or to the main centres of administration in the German colonies. Nowhere has it been used as a regional or inter-regional lingua franca or indeed by a significant number of non-urban persons. However, had Germany remained a colonial power after World War II, the various urban pidgins may well have spread into many rural areas of Africa, South East Asia and the Pacific. As it is, we can only speculate about the linguistic consequences of, for example, the colonization of Portuguese Goa or the implementation of the artificial Pidgin German Kolonialdeutsch devised during the war years.

The linguistic data I want to discuss here are related to German colonization of the Far East and Pacific, a brief enterprise lasting from 1884 to 1914 in the Pacific and even shorter in Kiautschou. They are pidginized varieties of German in Kiautschou and the Creole German of Rabaul in former German New Guinea. These two varieties represent the two endpoints on the developmental continuum ranging from rudimentary jargons and incipient pidgins to fully fledged creoles. I singled them out because of their linguistic topicality, Kiautschou Pidgin German because it throws light on the process of relexification, Rabaul Creole German because it seems to provide crucial counter-evidence to Bickerton's bioprogram hypothesis (Bickerton 1981).

2) Pidgin German and Kiautschou

Kiautschou is the name of an area of about 500 square kilometres situated in the Bay of Tsingtau in central eastern China. It was declared a German protectorate in 1898 and a German colonial presence lasted until 1914 when the territory was occupied by Japanese troops. Unlike other German colonies in Africa and the Pacific, Kiautschou became urbanised within a relatively short period of time. Between 1898 and 1914 the population of its main centre, Tsingtau, grew from about 1,000 to 35,000, the total population of the protectorate being in excess of 180,000. There were more Germans in Kiautschou than in any other Pacific German colony, and the proportion of Germans among the European population was also significantly higher, as can be seen from the following figures (quoted from Schnee 1937):

	number of Europeans	Germans	Germans serving in 'Schutztruppe'
New Guinea	970	750	20
Micronesia	460	260	
Samoa	550	330	2
Kiautschou	4,500	4,300	2,632

Whereas the majority of the indigenous population did not know any European language, some of them had a knowledge of Pidgin English. In the first years of German colonisation English and Pidgin English appear to have played an important role and German observers representing the home lobby deplore that many Germans prefer English. The promotion of German was given considerable attention by the government, however. It was taught in the German Government School as well as in three mission primary schools, and one mission secondary school. A number of observers remark on the strong position of the German language in later years; Friederici (1911:97) writes:

During the campaign in China, the Chinese 'boys' of my cavalry regiment spoke a smattering of German, in spite of the fact that no one had made an effort to teach them this language. When I was last in Tsingtau [= Kiautschou, P.M.], quite a few Chinese spoke German. I understand that nearly all Chinese who are in touch with the Germans speak the language of the latter [author's translation].

Similar remarks also appear in an editorial of the *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* of 24 May 1913:

In Kiautschou, much has been done in recent years in the field of instructing the Chinese in the German language. We do not know to what extent English is used in everyday communication. However, judging from the attitudes of the 'Tsingtauer Neuesten Nachrichten', it would seem that the role of German as the everyday language of Kiautschou is quite satisfactory [author's translation].

The development of Pidgin German in Germany's Chinese possession illustrates the complexities encountered during the formative years of pidgins. Most prominent to contemporary observers appears to have been the gradual replacement of Pidgin English by Pidgin German, a process involving a

considerable extent of relexification. Thus, Von Hesse-Wartegg (1898:10) remarks on the language used by the proprietor of the Hotel Kaiser in Kiautschou:

The proprietor with his friendly smile had already learned German. "Ik sabe Deutsch," he addressed me while making deep bows. "Gobenol at gebene pamischu open Otel, Kommen Sie, luksi, no hebe pisi man, no habe dima, bei an bei." Since this Spanish-English-German-Chinese dialect differs from native to native, I want to add the German translation: "Ich kann Deutsch, der Gouverneur hat mir Erlaubnis gegeben, ein Hotel zu eroeffnen, kommen Sie, besehen Sie es; ich habe noch keinen Gast, weil ich keine Zimmer habe, aber nach und nach." The words pamischu, luksi, lisi, and bei an bei are not German, but belong to the lingua franca used between the Chinese and the Europeans, the so-called Pidgin English. Pamischu is 'permission', luksi means 'look see', lisi stands for 'piece', for the Chinese do not say "one man, two men" but one piece man, two piece man; bei an bei is English 'by an by'. [author's translation]

Another example of this mixed relexifying pidgin was found in the Kiautschou-Post (1911:24): 'Deutschland master in schipp plenti make make bumm' ('the Germans in their man-of-wars'.)

The process of relexification appears to have been particularly in evidence among coolies from other parts of China who already had a knowledge of Pidgin English. Many of the German sailors and traders associated with the colony also had a smattering of some form of Pidgin English, including possibly Samoan and New Guinea varieties.

Next to relexified Pidgin English there are signs of an independently developing Pidgin German. With the exception of 'chinaboi' which was current usage in standard German as spoken in the colonies, no lexical influence from Pidgin English is found in the following sentence quoted by Kueas (1915:134): "Esselenzy nich wollen mehl Schampin, chinaboi gehen flotti" ('Excellenz wollen keinen Champagner mehr, der Chinesische Diener wird fortgehen' 'Your Excellency does not want any more champagne, the Chinese servant will go away' - author's translation).

Finally, one also encounters, in the literature I have screened thus far, examples of imperfect German acquired in a more formal second-learning context. This is illustrated by the following extract from a letter presented in a court case dealing with a written insulting proposition to a German lady (quoted from Kiautschou-Post 1912:119):

Bei gestern abend schamte ich auf der Strasse gegenueber ihre Veranda nach Sie zu schauen da viele Leute mehr fuerchte ich sie mich verspoten. 'Last night I was ashamed to watch you sitting on your veranda from the street opposite because there were lots of people and I was afraid they would ridicule me.' [author's translation]

This kind of evidence suggests that, in the typical multilingual context in which pidgins develop single cause theories of origin are inappropriate. Further, such contexts (and there are many reported cases of Germans attempting to learn Chinese and vice versa), particularly when another pidgin is involved, tend to favour relexification of an existing pidgin over new pidgin formation. With comparative data on relexification available (i.e. for the Surinam Creoles (Voorhoeve 1972), for Police Motu (Mühlhäusler & Dutton 1979)) it would seem desirable that someone should devote a solid data-based study to this topic.

3) Rabaul Unserdeutsch and Bickerton's bioprogram

Bickerton's Roots of Language (1981) has had a considerable impact on creole studies in recent years, notably regarding the methodological issues involved as well as his views on child language acquisition and the origins of human language. However, because of his rather narrow definition of the class of languages, that would be permitted as test cases for a human bioprogram, creole studies have provided little evidence against his claims. These derive from his observation of significant structural differences between Hawaiian Pidgin English and the Creole English spoken by the next generation. He argues that a language such as Hawaiian Pidgin Creole English is most suited as a test case in the debate of innate language structures since it developed:

- i) out of a prior pidgin which had not existed for more than a generation
- ii) in a population where not more than 20% were native speakers of the dominant language and where the remaining 80% was composed of diverse language groups.

A comparison of New Guinea Pidgin German (see Mühlhäusler 1977) and Creole Unserdeutsch suggests a similarly interesting testcase. Let us consider the twelve candidates for bioprogram features suggested by Bickerton:

Feature	Hawaiian Creole	New Guinea Pidgin German	Unserdeutsch
i) movement	+	-	+
ii) def. article	+	-	-
iii) Tense etc.	+	-	-
iv) Complements	+	n.a.	?
v) relativization	+	-	-
vi) negation	+	-	-
vii) existential	+	+	-
viii) copula	+	0	-
ix) adjectives	+	-	-
x) questions	+	n.a.	+

Feature	Hawaiian Creole	New Guinea Pidgin German	Unserdeutsch
xi) question words	+	-	+
xii) passive equivalent	+	n.a	-

n.a. = not applicable, no evidence

+ = categorial presence

0 = variable presence

- = absence

One can see that Unserdeutsch is considerably more grammaticalized than previous pidgin forms of German and that in a number of cases its grammar differs.

Let us now turn to the question whether Unserdeutsch meets the previously-mentioned social criteria. It appears that it does. As regards the former condition, it arose in the context of the establishment of a school and orphanage for mixed race children in the late 19th century. It is interesting to note that these children appear to have possessed no full knowledge of any language on their arrival. Janssen (1932:150) reports:

The mission could not remain indifferent to the sad plight of these children. It began to collect them and, when their numbers continued to grow, it founded its own institution in 1897 where they were to be educated by the sisters. Now that was a really difficult enterprise. The whites are generally ignorant of the natives' language and in conversation with them make use of Pidgin English, the workers' language, which is a mixture of corrupted English and native dialects. The halfcastes mostly speak only this Pidgin English with a few bits of native language heard from their mother, which of course differs according to the home. On their arrival at the mission station they are therefore hardly able to make themselves understood. [author's translation]

This 'Pidgin English' refers to Tok Pisin which at the time was still a very rudimentary language.

What does not emerge from this quotation is that the children were not only of mixed German-Tolai and other New Guinean parantage but also of Trukese, Chinese, Guamese and Filipino origin, among others. At the mission school the students were taught High German, and must have acquired at least its rudiments. It is very difficult indeed to find fluent speakers of High German among the mixed race community. Rather, High German appears to have remained a functionally and structurally restricted school language, comparable to English in many Papua New Guinea classrooms. In the dormitories, on the other hand, a pidginized German began to develop among the pupils. It has a predominantly German vocabulary and its close structural similarity with Tok Pisin suggests that, as Volker (1982) suspects, some relexification was involved. The Australian occupation of Rabaul and German New Guinea in 1914 caused a number of changes at the Vunapope school and mission settlement, among them the serious weakening of German as a target language. These

changes are characterized by Volker (ibidem : 11) as follows:

'In the mid-1920s, at the same time as the school was absorbing a large number of these new students, the new government complicated the linguistic situation by decreeing that the Vunapope school would have to switch from using German as a teaching medium to using English. This change was hard for the German teachers as it was for the students, as many of them knew only school English. German was therefore still used for many years as an emergency language when an English explanation was not understood or proved to be too complicated. In some subjects, such as mathematics, explanations were normally in English, while the textbook was in German. At this time the students were divided into two groups, those of mixed-race European background and those of other backgrounds. All students received one lesson of German grammar and handwriting a week. Special emphasis was placed on this lesson with the part-European group. Outside the school German was used nearly always; "Unserdeutsch" among the students and with the now adult former students and their families, who tended to settle near the mission, and "Normaldeutsch" with the missionaries. German was also used in many church activities (even some Tolai choirs were taught German Christmas carols!) and in the work shops where the teenage boys were apprenticed. English was rarely used at the mission outside the classroom.'

The last passage suggests that Unserdeutsch had indeed become the home language of a small community within a single generation. It also underlines the continued existence of an Unserdeutsch-Normaldeutsch (the latter used for speaking with missionaries and religious purposes) diglossia, comparable to a pidgin/creole-superordinate language diglossia in many similar settings (e.g. Afrikaans of Rehobot Bastards vs. official Dutch, creole vs. French in Haiti and Reunion).

With regard to Bickerton's second social condition, it must be borne in mind that the mission, administration and plantation area of the Gazelle Peninsula was a linguistically highly mixed community composed of the indigenous Tolai, Samoan-English mixed race people, Germans, black workers from many parts of German New Guinea, English, Australians, Chinese, Malay and others. Speakers of German certainly never came near the 20% threshold stipulated by Bickerton and the diversity of speakers of other languages can be in no doubt. It should also be noted that, within the period in which Unserdeutsch arose, official and semi-official language policies changed a number of times. Both German and Tolai were used in official functions by the German colonial administration and the various missions operating in the area.

Plantation owners, traders and settlers, on the other hand, supported the use of Tok Pisin and it was also used by government officials and missionaries on occasions. Even English was at times used for official government business. Next to Melanesian Pidgin English (Tok Pisin), Chinese Pidgin English was also used in the Gazelle Peninsula. A detailed discussion

of language policies in this area is given by Mühlhäusler (1979).

According to Bickerton, condition i) would ensure that the pidgin model was highly impoverished whereas condition ii) would ensure that no other single language could serve as an important model for the regrammaticalization of the developing creole.

As has already been suggested in the above table, the linguistic evidence suggests a rather poor fit between Bickerton's universal creole structures and Unserdeutsch. This is all the more surprising since, as shall be demonstrated in the next table, such structures were available for borrowing in Tok Pisin, the second language of many Unserdeutsch speakers.

Before considering possible reasons for this I shall discuss, as much as this is feasible in view of my restricted data, the various constructions singled out as diagnostic by Bickerton:

(i) Movement

Rules moving focussed constituents to sentence-initial position. Such rules are found both in Tok Pisin and Unserdeutsch, e.g.

Nur ein Name i konnte ni finden
Only one name I could not find

(ii) Article

Definite article for presupposed-specific NP; an indefinite article for asserted-specific NP; and zero for nonspecific NP. Unserdeutsch does not appear to follow this system (nor does Tok Pisin), as can be seen from the following utterance:

I lesen Buch I read a (particular) book

According to Volker (1982:37) "reflecting perhaps the lack of articles in Tok Pisin, the use of either article is optional and in many sentences, Vunapope Germans omitted an article where this would not have been possible in English or Standard German."

(iii) Tense-Modality-Aspect System

Neither Tok Pisin nor Unserdeutsch appear to fit into Bickerton's suggested universal framework for creole languages. Like southern dialects of German (spoken by the majority of the German mission workers) Unserdeutsch has only one past tense, next to present and future tenses. Like Tok Pisin and English, but unlike High German, it signals the distinction between durative and non-durative aspect. The important distinction in Tok Pisin between inception and completion, on the other hand, is not found in Unserdeutsch.

In spoken discourse differential intonation patterns are often used to distinguish questions from statements.

(xi) Question words

Whereas question words are typically polymorphemic in the creoles considered by Bickerton as well as in Tok Pisin, Unserdeutsch has a mixed system. Compare:

Standard German	Unserdeutsch	Tok Pisin	etymon gloss
warum	was, warum	wa(t)nem	why?
welche	was fuer	wa(t)nem	what (e.g. time)?
wieviel	wieviel	hamas	how many?
wer	wer	husat	who?

(xii) Passive equivalents

Unlike virtually all other known creoles, including Tok Pisin, Unserdeutsch has a fully developed passive construction. It is basically the same as that found in English, using the formula copula + past participle + bei, as in:

Der Chicken was gestohlen bei alle Rascal.	The chicken was stolen by the rascals.
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We have now surveyed the twelve diagnostic areas of grammar identified by Bickerton. It would seem useful to give a brief summary of their presence or absence in Unserdeutsch and its contact languages as well as a comparison with Hawaiian Creole as described by Bickerton:

Feature	(Hawaiin Creole)	Tok Pisin	German	English	Unserdeutsch
i) movement	+	+	+	+	+
ii) def. article	+	-	-	-	-
iii) tense etc.	+	-	-	-	-
iv) complements	+	-	-	-	?
v) relativization	+	+	-	?	-
vi) negation	+	-	-	-	-
vii) existential	+	+	+	-	-
viii) copula	+	+	-	-	-
ix) adjectives	+	+	-	-	-
x) questions	+	+	-	-	+
xi) question words	+	+	+ -	+ -	+ -
xii) passive equivalent	+	+	-	-	-

This table clearly demonstrates that Unserdeutsch drastically differs from Bickerton's ideal creole whereas Tok Pisin, as used by second language speakers, exhibits considerable overlap with Bickerton's

creole grammar.

I am not in a position to propose a full explanation of these differences, but I would like to offer some suggestions:

- i) It seems fair to conclude that Bickerton's social conditions for the development of a true creole are seriously deficient. Of the many social factors that may promote or block the emergence of bioprogram grammar they may not even count among the more important ones.
- ii) The influence of formal schooling in High German appears to be reflected in many areas of Unserdeutsch grammar, such that it must be regarded as a creole which became a post-creole continuum before stable creole norms could establish themselves. The problem facing the investigator of Unserdeutsch is not different from Bickerton's problems of obtaining pure creole data in Hawaii. As pointed out by Bickerton and Odo (1976:20 ff) "Persons without schooling appear to be non-existent in Hawaii, and every native-born speaker can shift lects to a greater or lesser degree." and "There will thus, in any such community, be a varying number of speakers who, at least with respect to their outputs, never even approach the basilectal level... In Hawaii, the number of such speakers is extremely high, and their distribution is by no means limited to the middle classes."

It appears that Volker's data were elicited, in most instances, in a relatively formal context and I hope to be able to obtain more informal data on Unserdeutsch in the near future. However, even then I do not expect anything like a 'typical' creole to emerge.

- iii) The data discussed in this paper suggest that Unserdeutsch borrowed constructions from a number of contact languages, even those which were only imperfectly mastered by its speakers. Tok Pisin, German and English were the principal sources of grammaticalization, though the influence of Tolai has not yet been studied in any detail and could also prove to have been important. Unserdeutsch shares a number of constructions with Tok Pisin, strongly suggesting a fair amount of relexification during the preceding pidgin stage, including the use of alle 'all' as plural marker (Tok Pisin has ol), a distinction between inclusive (uns) and exclusive (wir) first person plural pronouns, and, for some speakers, an additional dual pronoun iundu (I and you). On the other hand, some very prominent areas of Tok Pisin grammar such as multiple word class membership of lexical items, its aspect system and the grammar of embedding are not shared. This is in part due to the fact that Tok Pisin had not developed all these constructions at the time when Unserdeutsch became a creole.
- iv) Unserdeutsch may to some extent be an artificial language invented in the dormitories of the Vunapope orphanage, and thus it exhibits much cultural grammar. However, such invention and conscious

borrowing may also play a part in other creole languages.

- v) The historical context in which Unserdeutsch developed virtually exclude the possibility of relexification. This is less so with Bickerton's Hawaiian Creole and its similarity to other creoles spoken in the New and Old World may indeed be partly due to shared linguistic traditions. It should be noted that languages such as Papia Kristang share most of Bickerton's bioprogram features in spite of their not meeting his social conditions (cf. Baxter 1982).

The issues raised by this paper can only be dealt with once much more is known about the socio-historical background of the languages used in arguing for or against a bioprogram view of creolization. At this stage, the available evidence appears to point against such universals and in favour of historical links among creoles. The eventual answers are likely to come from languages such as Unserdeutsch and even more likely from creoles which developed outside the context of European colonization and the displacement of large-scale populations by the colonizers.

Oxford and Toowoomba
August and December 1983

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