On Selected Origins of Contact Languages. A Socio-Historical Perspective

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Abstract: The external socio-historical factors that determine the rise of contact languages define the new varieties and decide on their form and structures. Pidgin languages arise as a consequence of many social and historical processes which involve political and economic factors in the creation of quite new and distinct social situations. William Washabaugh and Sidney Greenfield suggest that pidgin and "[c]reole languages (…) developed to provide a world of meaning for those caught in this new life situation and thus to enable them to adapt to the constrains of that situation" (Washabaugh and Greenfield 1983: 106). These are the language users who seek a common means of communication in various situations: when people from different linguistic backgrounds are thrown into a ship together they need a mutual platform of communication. Any jargon form or pidgin they come up with will be the resultant of all the languages they speak.

Keywords: pidgin, relexification, lingua franca, contact linguistics, language change.

1. On the origins of pidgins

The earliest known and described pidgin (see, *e.g.*, Hall 1966: 4, Bakker 2008: 142), said to have been used in the Middle Ages in the eastern end of the Mediterranean, was *Lingua Franca* – the language of crusaders and merchants. West Europeans used it in their dealings with the Levantines. There is not much historical documentation proving the existence and wide use of this pidgin, however from the remaining attestations it is known that "[t]he Lingua Franca was a pidginized variety of Romance speech, based on the language of the Riviera between Marseilles and Genoa, whence came a large number of ships and sailors that trades with the Near East in medieval times" (Hall 1966: 4). With time the term lingua franca expanded its meaning and started to be used to name any common language as a means of

communication among people speaking various languages. According to Robert Hall, the lingua franca "(…) served as a vehicle for the borrowing of words, particularly sea terms (…)" (*ibidem*). The sea context, the crusades and trade voyages gave rise to many jargons and pidgins. Hence, most of the pidgin varieties are of nautical origin. The nautical influence on the Atlantic varieties of the Caribbean can be traced in many elements of different English, Dutch and French-based creoles and pidgins (for an extensive analysis see, *e.g.*, Besten, Muysken, Smith 1995 or Hancock 1969). There are a number of possibilities which could contribute to the transference of this nautical vocabulary to various pidgins and creoles. Hans den Besten, Pieter Muysken and Norval Smith claim that the means of the transference of the nautical vocabulary is not thoroughly explicit. It is possible that the linguistic varieties particularly in the Caribbean were acquired by:

1) the mixed population of the Gambia- Sierra Leone coast;
2) slaves during sea journeys along the coast Africa;
3) slaves during their imprisonment in slave depots in Africa;
4) slaves during the Middle Passage (from Africa to the Americas).

These linguistic varieties were part of the vocabulary of the colonial whites, having been picked up by them during the week/month-long voyages from Europe to the colonies. (Besten, Muysken, Smith 1995: 93)

The slaves were transported to their destination places through various routes by different crews and the transport of the slaves contained Africans from diverse communities. Thus, it is possible that a combination of these factors contributed to the emergence of pidgins, some of which, later on, transformed into creoles. Certainly, the source for many of the makeshift varieties was onboard the ships, where there was a need in the multilingual crews for immediate communication. Frank Robertson (1971: 13-14, in Mühlhäusler 1986: 97) described in a somewhat comic way the formula of language creation at sea which best expresses the idea of the multi-aspectual mixture of nautical speech:

The recipe for the language is interesting: Take one sea full of British sailormen, hardy, daring, very British and profane, and leave it in a cool place for two days; extract their speech; then bring to boil and extract what speech remains. Add a coconut shell each of Chinese, Malay, German and Kanaka and bring to boil a hundred or so times, then season with a little war or two; add a few drops of Mission sauce and sprinkle with blackbirder pepper and recruiter salt. Strain through Kanaka lips and serve with beer on boat days, or with undiluted Australian any other time. (Robertson 1971: 13-14, in Mühlhäusler 1986: 97)

However, comic and ironic the recipe is, the description captures the multilingual and multicultural situation which could be observed on many vessels and ships during the colonial expansion from the 16th century. The cross-linguistic circumstances enforced the immediate emergence of new communicational means, which explain, at least partially, the structure of the contact languages. John Reinecke (1938: 107) also indicates seagoing vessels as a source where favorable conditions lead to pidgin formation:

One of the most favorable situations for the formation of such dialects is found aboard merchant vessels which ply the seven seas and ship large numbers of foreign sailors – and indeed the seaman is a figure of the greatest importance in the creation of the more permanent shift tongues. (Reinecke 1938: 107)

The time which the crew spent on the ships was enough to form at least the jargonized form of a temporary variety which could develop into a more stable form when exposed to everyday usage. The major reductions in inflection enabled learning a new language in a given context quite quickly and with little effort. The range and kind of vocabulary constituted the spectrum of words necessary to communicate within that specific context. Suzanne Romaine (1988: 96) claims that one must be careful distinguishing between the origins of pidgins and creoles because in the past the same explanations were given to the origins of both pidgin and creoles. Peter Mühlhäusler (1986) devotes a chapter of his book to the presentation and discussion of the six theories concerning the rise of contact languages. He concentrates on the question of their origin and formation and the second part explores the nature of pidgin development. There is a question he poses in his introduction that has troubled scientists dealing with the natures of pidgins and creoles: "[w]hy do pidgins and creoles exhibit structural affinities among themselves which are often closer than their affinities with their perceived lexifier languages[?]" (Mühlhäusler 1986: 96). It is debatable on which stages which constructions among languages can be traced.[1] The origins of pidgin languages might be of various kinds depending on the socio-historical embedding. The theories proposed by Peter Mühlhäusler (1986: 96-97) form three major groups:

1. Language specific theories:

a)nautical language theory

b) foreigner talk and baby talk theory

[1] *cf* Sebba 1997: chapter 3.

2. General theories:

c) relexification theory

d) universalists theories

3. Theories which stress differences between pidgins:

e) common-core theories

f) substratum theories

The idea that the maritime varieties developed onboard different ships is highlighted by Hamilton Grierson (1903, in Reinecke 1938: 108) in the description of the sailors' linguistic range of the command of English. Also the following example depicts the development of pidgin in seafaring conditions when on a single vessel many sailors speaking various languages had to find a way to become mutually intelligible:

Every sailor of any nationality knows some thirty English words, which he pronounces in such a way that after half hour you may get a rough idea of what he wishes to say. Each sailor, though, does not have the same vocabulary as the others, and hardly two have the same pronunciation of the same word. Living together and working together each sailor picks up the words of his companions, until, after two months or so, all men abroad have acquired a working knowledge of about three hundred words common to all the crew and understood by all. This lingo, of course, is enlarged by words which are brought in by sailors who, owing to their lack of the right words, have to use occasionally words of their own home-made language. These words, used over and over again, are, after a while, picked up by others and used at the proper place. (Grierson 1903, after Reinecke 1938:108)

Spending many days together the sailors were able to produce around 300 new words. Whenever a ship docked on the coast of Africa, Portugal or Asia the sailors went on dry land spreading the new words among the inhabitants of those villages by the sea. The nautical jargon theory, however widely described (Hall 1966, Mühlhäusler 1986, Reinecke 1938), does not provide much support for the main source of genesis of pidgins and "(…) there is little direct evidence of what this kind of speech was like" (Romaine 1988: 84). This theory alleges that sailors passed their nautical jargon on to other groups of people and this created the basis of a pidgin which these groups later on spread further. However, it is also noted that the seamen had "(…) a dialect and manner peculiar to themselves" (Matthews 1935: 193, in Romaine 1988: 84). The jargon used solely among sailors may have been this dialect peculiar to themselves. Naturally, some words from this jargon could have been conveyed and used by other members of the population. There is lexical evidence

which may indicate the transference of words which existed predominantly among sailors. These lexical items are to be found in such distant pidgins as Hawaii Pidgin English, Chinook Jargon, Eskimo Jargon. The term *kanaka* for "man" (Hawaiian – person, human being, man) occurs in both English- and French-based pidgins throughout the Pacific and also in Chinook Jargon. [2]

2. Baby talk and foreigner talk theories

In general baby talk is a language which adults use when communicating with young children. Charles Ferguson was the first to describe the phenomenon of baby talk. In his article "Baby Talk in Six Languages" (1964) he explains this notion: "[b]y the term *baby talk* is meant here any special form of language which is regarded by a speech community as being primarily appropriate for talking to young children and which is generally regarded as not the normal adult use of language" (Ferguson 1964: 103). Charles Ferguson and Charles DeBose (1977: 102) speak of two main streams of research contributing to knowledge of this register: *anthropological* and *psycholinguistic*. The anthropological stream consists of data elicited from adults in different societies on how they address children. This stream focuses on the phonological and lexical features of baby talk and displaced and extended uses of baby talk *e.g*. reporting children's speech, to pets,). The second area of baby talk research deals with psycholinguistic experimentation. The core of the studies is a collection of recordings of adult speech to children under controlled conditions and the comparison of such speech with adult-adult speech under similar conditions (Ferguson and DeBose 1977: 102). This talk is specific in a twofold way: syntactic and lexical. First of all it has a simplified grammar: at least one diminutive affix is used in each language, nouns and verbs are in frequent use rather than pronouns, equational clauses without verbs replace normal constructions with copula or verb, *e.g*. *dolly pretty* for *the doll is pretty*, and third person constructions replace first and second person, *e.g*., *daddy wants* for *I want*. As far as vocabulary is concerned, it is reduced to kin names, nicknames, body parts and bodily functions; also the descriptions of basic qualities like "good", "bad", "little", "dirty", the names of animals and nursery games (Ferguson 1964: 109). Despite a limited lexicon and reduced grammatical structures "(…) baby talk is a relatively stable, conventionalized part of a language, transmitted by "natural" means of language transmission much like the rest of the language (…)" (Ferguson 1964: 104). The description above refers to one side of the term baby talk.

[2] See Romaine for more evidence 1988: 85.

Another dimension of the term baby talk can be exemplified in the master – slave relation on Jamaica plantations in a context of pidginogenesis (Romaine 1988: 75-76). Adults simplify language forms when speaking to their adult slaves in order to be understood better. The slaves then acquire the redundant forms and use them as regular speech patterns. The support for baby talk in terms of pidgin origins can be found in Hugo Schuchard's writings in his article of 1909 on the lingua franca translated by T. L. Markey. The article reads:

(...) model, and we have no feeling for the fusion and obfuscations, the White was teacher to the Black; the latter repeated the former. And the White always used the most emphatic expressions, exaggerations as they occasionally occurred to him too, in communication with his compatriots. He did not say: "you are very dirty", but "you are too dirty", and thus it may be explained that 'very' in Pacific Beach-la-Mar is too much and tumussi in Sranan Black English (SBE). It is difficult for us to appraise such relationships correctly. We involuntarily regard our language as the inconsistencies and eccentricities, by which they excel all other languages; we perceive the splinter in the stranger's eye, but not the beam in our own. (Schuchardt [1909] 1979: 74)

The acute reduction of syntactical forms stemmed from the need to be understood by both sides, masters and slaves:

[t]o the master as well as the slave it was solely a matter of the one making himself understood to the other; the former stripped off everything specific to European languages, while the latter restrained everything specific to his language: they met in the middle (ibidem).

The outcome of "meeting in the middle" was a simplified version or a new variety of language, spoken by both groups. Thus, they found a platform for communication. Suzanne Romaine notices ethnocentric ideas and racist notions in Hugo Schuchardt's suggestion that "the white master acted as the teacher and simplified his language for the blacks, who were unable to acquire it" (Romaine 1988: 72). The teaching attitude of the Whites towards the African captives consisted in the Whites' idea of the Black people: in their eyes the slaves were like children and were treated like them. They were viewed as simple people who enjoyed singing and dancing. Thus, the simplifying "method" was used to communicate with the slaves, which naturally made the mutual communication easier and faster and therefore the forms were reduced by the "white masters". Moreover, Suzanne Romaine (1988: 74) sees the baby talk theory as having a two-fold nature and two intrinsic processes:

(...) one which is initiated primarily by the upper or dominant group of speakers, who simplify their language, and another which is initiated by the lower or subordinate group who simplify the language they hear while trying to acquire it. In the first case the lower

group merely imitates what they hear from the upper group. In the second case the active role is played by the lower group, and the upper group simply reinforces their errors. (Romaine 1988: 74)

The distortions stemming from constructing impoverished baby talk are strengthened by both parties, the British masters and the slaves, as the established variety with fixed errors starts to function as a common means for mutual communication. The kind of simplified register which has been most intensively studied is "foreigner talk". According to Charles Ferguson and Charles DeBose (1977: 103), *foreigner talk* is "(…) the variety of language that is regarded by a speech community as primarily appropriate for addressing foreigners" (Ferguson and DeBose 1977: 103). There are three main methods that have been used in foreigner talk research: "(a) elicitation from informants who report on how they or others in the speech community speak to foreigners; (b) experimental investigation in which investigators play the role of foreigners in selected communication situations; (c) recording of native-foreign interaction in a natural communication setting" (Ferguson and DeBose 1977: 104). Conducting research and using one of these methods one can elicit the most prominent features of this type of register. Foreigner talk is characterized by:

slow, exaggerated enunciation; greater overall loudness; use of full forms instead of contractions; short sentences; parataxis (pure or with adverbial connectives such as maybe, bye-and-bye); repetition of words; analytic paraphrases of lexical items and certain constructions; reduction of inflections (often by the selection of one or two all-purpose forms, e.g., me for I, my, mine, me in English, infinitive for all non-past verb forms in Italian, die for all forms of the definite article in German); lack of function words (e.g., articles, prepositions, auxiliaries); use of feedback devices such as invariable tag questions; avoidance of strongly dialect or slang forms in favor of more standard forms; limited number of phonological simplifications (...); special lexicon of quantifiers, intensifiers, and modal particles used in constructions not matching 'normal' language; use of foreign or foreign-sounding words (e.g., English savvy). (Ferguson and DeBose 1977: 104)

There are a number of features which are common to both "baby talk" and "foreigner talk". In both cases the notion of simplicity is involved, which, in the case of "foreigner talk", "baby talk" and pidgins, is a universal feature. Volker Hinnenkamp's research (1982 and 1983, in Romaine 1988: 78) into German and Turkish foreigner talk exemplifies the characteristic features of simplified language structures. The research material consists of everyday recordings of encounters between native-speakers of German and the Turks. On the basis of the collected data Volker Hinnenkamp lists instances of ten typical simplifications:

1) loss of pre- and postpositions;
2) loss of nominal inflection and agreement;
3) deletion of the copula;
4) generalization of the infinitive;
5) change in word order;
6) loss of overt question mark;
7) external placement of propositional qualifiers;
8) juxtaposition of subordinating clauses;
9) lexical and grammatical multifunctionality;
10) periphrasis.

(Hinnenkamp1983: 4, in Romaine 1988: 78)

Foreigner talk, like baby talk, bears similarities to a pidgin's syntactical and lexical features. The forms of these two types of speech are based on severe reductions of inflectional and morphological structures as well as the omission of auxiliary constructions. The speech addressed to small children and foreigners respectively basically fulfills the same function: to find common, new means to be able to understand one another. In order to achieve a common ground of mutual understanding the rejection of many grammatical and structural rules appears and simplification prevails.

3. Theories on the origin of pidgins

3.1. Relexification theory

It has been suggested that there existed a fifteenth century Pidgin Portuguese of West Africa – a proto-pidgin – that gave rise to all modern creole languages or as Donald Winford states "(…) there was a class of 'prototypical' creoles that could be identified on the basis of a number of shared (morpho-) syntactic properties" (Winford 2008: 20). The idea of the proto-pidgin and genetic relationships among French-, Spanish- and English-based varieties was questioned by, for example, Hans den Besten, Pieter Muysken and Norval Smith (1995: 88). The resemblances among pidgins and creoles stem from the fact that these varieties underwent a process of lexical substitution called *relexification*. Processes of lexical replacement take place all the time in all languages. However, in case of dynamic contact language

formations, especially in 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, "(…) it has been so great as to constitute a complete shift in the genetic affiliations of the language – in this case, from Portuguese to English to Dutch" (Hall 1966: 122). Thus, it is not possible "(…) to classify creole languages genetically, since they have presumably changed their affiliation one or more times" (*ibidem*). According to Peter Mühlhäusler, "[i]n its strongest form, relexification theory claims that most European-based pidgins and creoles are related via a special process involving the maintenance of grammar and the replacement of lexical units. The grammar is said to be that of sixteenth-century Pidgin Portuguese or possibly medieval Mediterranean Sabir" (Mühlhäusler 1986: 106). For Frederic Cassidy (1971: 203), the term "relexification" is clumsy and unnecessary. He accepts the previously used term "replacement". This theory is a part of a broader *monogenetic* hypothesis which claims that there is a single origin for all European-based pidgins and creoles. They are said to stem from a single fifteenth century proto-pidgin which was first used along the African coast and later carried to India and the Far East, which in turn could have been an imitation of a Mediterranean lingua franca or Sabir (Romaine 1988: 86). Ian Hancock illustrates the incorporation of vocabulary from one language to another and derivation of languages from one single ancestor:

Relexification theory maintains that all the European-language-derived creoles – even those outside the Atlantic area – originated as varieties of an earlier pidgin, itself derived from Portuguese. In the process of creolization in different settings speakers would have drawn upon different languages (English, French, etc., or in Portuguese-controlled areas, still from Portuguese), for lexicon. (Hancock 1971: 287).

The single origin theory is not convincing as there are very few traces of Portuguese in English-based creoles, the lack of which discredits the monogenetic approach. Peter Mühlhäusler (1986: 108) describes two possible scenarios of relexification process of a stable form of pidgins "(…) depending on whether a given instance of relexification constitutes an abrupt break in linguistic tradition or not" (Mühlhäusler 1986: 108). The two possible ways in which the relexification process takes place are presented using the example of *Tok Pisin*:

	***Gradual change* (*a*)**		***Abrupt change* (*b*)**
Stage 1	beten	'to pray'	'binen' 'bee'
Stage 2	beten o prea	'to pray'	
Stage 3	prea	'to pray'	'bi' 'bee'

(Mühlhäusler 1986: 108)

In the case of gradual change **(a)** continuity is maintained by the joint use of both lexical items in a synonym pair. In the second case (**b**), of abrupt change, the word for "bee" was introduced twice at different stages in the development of *Tok Pisin* by different speakers. In his further analysis of the theory Peter Mühlhäusler states that "[g]radual relexification is associated with a prolonged period of bilingualism and the simultaneous presence of more than one prestige lexifier language and (…) in many cases may have been an individual strategy for learning a more useful pidgin" (Mühlhäusler 1986: 108). Similarly, William Labov (1971: 459) highlights the fact that in the relexification phenomenon the lexicon of a given variety separates from the syntax several times, bringing modifications each time:

The relexification hypothesis requires that the lexicon of a language can be split off from the grammar – not just once, but many times, in the course of the development of a Creole. (Labov 1971: 459)

Peter Mühlhäusler's summary gathers all important aspects of the relexification hypothesis:

1. Relexification can occur at different stages in the development of pidgins and creoles.
2. Both gradual and abrupt relexification appears to have been involved in the history of many pidgins and creoles. However, there is no indication that *all* languages are related in this way.
3. Relexification appear to account for a number of cases where pidgins developed from other stable pidgins without a significant preceding jargon stage. (Mühlhäusler 1986: 113)

The process of word replacement appears to be of minimal relevance to creole formation, although it is often found in subsequent later creole development. In his concluding remarks, Peter Mühlhäusler states that "(…) the relexification hypothesis is insufficient as an all-embracing explanatory parameter for pidgin and creole formation" (*ibidem*). Yet, as a particular type of transfer it can be helpful in tracing similarities.

3.2. Universalist theories

It has been observed many times that pidgins share a number of characteristic elements with respect to their syntactic, morphological and semantic features. There seem to exist specified universal strategies for simplifying language which are part of the innate tacit knowledge of all humans actively participating in language

creation (Sebba 1997:77). The "foreigner talk" theory is one of the specific universalist theories which suggests "that the learners' input – *i.e*. model offered to those learning the pidgin by speakers of the lexifier – was a simplified foreigner talk register of the lexifier language" (*ibidem*). Hugo Schuchardt in the chapter devoted to the language of the Saramaccans evokes the notion of universal principles:

Creole dialects have not yet been fully appreciated for their general linguistic significance. They are customarily regarded as products of very peculiar or extreme mixture, but what distinguishes them is, rather, if I dare say so, their universal linguistic features. (Schuchardt [1909] 1979: 73)

The essence of universalist theories consists in the concept that human beings possess an innate system which allows them to create new languages whenever they need them and develop new varieties in different circumstances. Universalist theories can be traced back to the nineteenth century when Adolfo Coelho (1880) first considered the idea of an innate human program in stating that creoles "(…) owe their origin to the operation of psychological or physiological laws that are everywhere the same, and not to the influence of the former languages of the people among whom these dialects are found" (Coelho 1880-6, in Mufwene 2006: 320). These "psychological or physiological laws" appear to be closely correlated with the *language bioprogram hypothesis* proposed by Derek Bickerton (1981) according to which there is a regular pattern of invention which emerges whenever human beings must produce a means of communication. Derek Bickerton's hypothesis deals with well developed creole languages which have at least one generation of native speakers.

3.3. Common core theories and independent parallel development

The fact that different languages (also those which are geographically remote) have similarities in their syntactical and lexical structure has led scientists to construct a range of theories which could provide suitable explanations for the evident resemblances in contact languages. One of the theories is based on the concept that "pidgins and creoles arose independently (*i.e*,. by polygenesis), but developed in parallel ways because they used common linguistic material (…) and were formed in similar physical and social conditions" (Romaine 1988: 92). The universal element in the polygenetic theory reside in the fact that whenever language users need to communicate "(…) certain types of codes emerge in response to particular communicative circumstances" (*ibidem*). The essence of the common core hypothesis, which is reflected in the grammar of contact languages states that "(…)

the pidgin which results from contact between A and B will have in its grammar just that part of the grammar of A which is also found in B, *i.e.* the overlap between grammars of A and B" (Sebba 1997: 77-78). Similarities resulting from the grammatical overlap appear in Russenorsk, which overtly resembles Russian and Norwegian. The evidence of Robert Hall's analysis is based on the similarity of the prepositions *on*, and *in*. Robert Hall is convinced that "[f]rom this type of evidence we are justified in concluding that the source of much of the grammar and also some of the vocabulary of a pidgin languages lies in those features that the two 'ancestor' languages have in common" (Hall 1966: 61). Diagrammatically the relationship is presented in two circles each representing the totality of the structure of one of the two languages involved (*ibidem*). The common elements indicate the similarities that occur in different languages, despite their actual divergence. There exist mutual correlates among these varieties which are accounted for by a combination of historical, social and economic factors. The extra-linguistic parameters, connected with the history of colonization, its economic aspects and social results find their reflection in the linguistic systems of the contact languages shaped in periods of intense migration.

3.4. Substratum theories

Substratum theories consist in the idea that pidgin and creole languages are a blend of the dominant language (superstratum) with the grammar of some other variety spoken by the socially inferior (substratum) speech community. The combination of the two strata in the Caribbean area is in most cases the mixture of African descent varieties with European-based languages. Peter Mühlhäusler (1986: 119) notices three main reasons for the emergence of substratum theories:

1) the desire to demonstrate that there are mixed languages and that Stammbaum (family-tree) models of language relationships therefore stand in need of revision;

2) the desire to demonstrate linguistic and cultural continuity for Black Caribbeans of African origin;

3) the study of changes in naturalness and internal consistency under conditions of language contact and borrowing. (Mühlhäusler 1986: 119)

Robert Hall who is, as Suzanne Romaine says, "generally reluctant to attribute too great a role to substratum influence in the development of pidgins" (Romaine 1988: 102) claims that "a language can preserve traces, often numerous traces, of a previously spoken substratum in its vocabulary (…)" and adds "the entire

inflectional system of Haitian Creole verb with is loss of tense and person – and number – endings and its use of aspectual prefixes, is straight African" (Hall 1966: 109). The question, however, is what the extent of the substratum's influence is and what mechanisms govern the transportation of vocabulary from one language to a new one. There are three possible means of substratum transmission: (1) through physical heredity; (2) as a relic of a period of bilingualism; and (3) through a kind of mystical aura, exerting its influence without any relation to the physical world (Hall: 1966: 108). Moreover, the influence can be seen on different levels: phonological, morphological, syntactic and/or lexical. Some of the features attributed to African origins are: the copula construction, serial verbs, pronominal systems, and verb topicalization (Romaine 1988: 104). Yet, it is not a straightforward task to notice and immediately interpret the degree of influence, Robert Hall notices that "(…) it often happens that an element of the source language, used at first in a loan-translation (…) as the semantic equivalent of a native construction, may eventually be completely restructured and receive a function that does not correspond to anything in either in the source or the substratum-language" (Hall 1966: 109). Derek Bickerton (1981: 4) is of the opinion that the relation of the languages is 20 to 80 per cent: twenty per cent is constituted by substrate languages and eighty per cent is attributed to the dominant (superstratum) language. As it has been mentioned above, the substratum layer of a pidgin, its phonological, syntactic and lexical features refer to the less dominant languages (in case of Jamaican Creole the substratum constitutes West African languages). Robert Hall (1966: 111) distinguishes between the surface grammar and deep-level grammar and says that most of the linguistic structure features which are ascribed to substratum influence are superficial. The more fundamental features on the other hand come from the source language (the superstratum).[3]

Summary

It is interesting how people always seem to reach for a somewhat indirect way of communicating in a group where they do not speak each other languages. Instead of learning one of the languages that is spoken in a group, people come up with a new variety combining selected elements from the languages they speak, and thus an entirely new language emerges. This new variety – a pidgin – can further evolve into a more advanced variety and become a full fledged language. Regardless of the way

[3] See: Hall 1966: 110.

a pidgin came to being whether due to trade contact, or to foreigner simplification, its nature in all stages it undergoes, especially at the beginning, is very dynamic and changeable. As a cursory means of communication usually having between one or two thousand words, pidgin is subject to various fluctuations. The transition of a pidgin depends on the extra-linguistic conditions which influence the future form of any pidgin.

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