



Publisher homepage: www.universepg.com, ISSN: 2663-7782 (Online) & 2663-7774 (Print)

<https://doi.org/10.34104/bjah.02101640170>

British Journal of Arts and Humanities

Journal homepage: www.universepg.com/journal/bjah

British Journal of
**Arts and
Humanities**



Pidgin and Creole: Concept, Origin and Evolution

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ABSTRACT

Every language has a history, and, as in the rest of human culture, changes are constantly taking place in the course of the learned transmission of a language from one generation to another. Human culture and animal behavior contain differences. Language changes in all their aspects, in their pronunciation, word forms, syntax, and word meaning (semantic change). These changes are mostly very gradual in their operation becoming noticeable only cumulatively over the course of several generations. Pidgins and creoles (p & c) are not different- They are also undergoing different types of changes. This paper tries to investigate the concepts of p & c by analyzing different linguistic views and tracing back the origin of these contact languages with the help of different theories. This study throws some light on the evolution of p & c and aims at attaching proper value to them.

Keywords: Pidgin, Creole, Language, Difference, History, Concept, Evolution, Origin, and Change.

INTRODUCTION:

The study of p & c languages is not new. References to their existence go back to the Middle Ages; p & c languages have always arisen when unintelligible languages have been come into contact through speaking (Todd, 1990). What earlier generations thought of p & c languages is all too clear from their very names: broken language (Bolton, 2000) bastard language (Bickerton, 1981), nigger French, isikula (coolie language). This contempt often stemmed in part from the feeling that p & c were corruptions of 'higher', usually European languages. The speakers of such languages were often perceived as semi-savages and those speakers of creole languages who had access to education were duly convinced that their speech was wrong, and they often tried to make it more similar to the standard. Even linguists thought of p & c languages as 'aberrant' (Bloomfield, 1933), defective and in-

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appropriate for any serious study. According to linguists, it is realized that p & c are not wrong versions of other languages but rather 'new' languages. In academic circles, especially in recent years, attempts have been made to remove the stigma so frequently attached to them, by pointing out that there is no such thing as a primitive and inferior language. The following discussion will unravel the idea gradually.

Definition of P & C

While scholars have increasingly come to recognize the importance of p & c languages, there has been considerable debate and disagreement over definition and meaning of the terms. Linguists agree neither about the precise definition of the terms p & c nor about the status of a number of languages that have been claimed to be p & c. According to Goodman, (1967) "A pidgin is a set of linguistic practices or a

special language developed out of components of their own languages by two or more peoples who speak different languages, usually for purposes of particular kinds of interaction (Hossain and Akter, 2020).

According to standard (yet much debated) definitions (e.g. Bloomfield, 1933; Hall, 1962; Valdman, 1978) Pidgins (*p*) (and Jargons) are elementary, reduced, simplified systems, without native speakers, and used in functionally restricted contexts of inter-ethnic communication, whereas a creole is ‘a *p* that has become the native language of a speech community.’ (Hall, 1962), By definition, a *p* language is a language which is not native to any of the people using it to intercommunicate with each other, and which is greatly reduced in grammar and vocabulary when compared with the language or languages from which it has been derived (Wurm, 2019).

A creole (*c*) language is a *p* language which has become the native language of a speech community. (Wurm, 2019), According to Loreto Todd a *p* is a marginal language which arises to fulfill certain restricted communication needs among people who have no common language.” “A *c* arises when a *p* becomes the mother tongue of a Speech community” According to Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org>). So it can be said that *p* is a type of simplified language as a result of contact between two or more languages in order to find a means of communication and *c* is a naturalized stable language that came into existence through mixed parent languages. *P* is auxiliary languages which can be characterized as either “restricted” or “extended”. A restricted *p* that serves only this limited purpose and which tends to die out as soon as the contact that gave rise to it is withdrawn is one which arises as a result of marginal contact such as for minimal trading. Here is a good example of *p* is what has been called ‘Korean Bamboo English’. It was a restricted form of English which obtained a limited currency between Koreans and Americans during the Korean War. It has by now almost disappeared, as has a similar variety which developed in Saigon during the Vietnam War. An extended language is a language that, while it may not become a mother tongue, becomes vitally significant in a multilingual environment, and is expanded and used beyond the original limited role that led to its creation.

C is the mother tongue of a speech community. *C* has native speakers, unlike pidgin; it is the first language to children of the community where it has been spoken. A *c* is impossible without an antecedent *p*; a uniform, systematic *p* is the immediate ancestor of a *c*.

Example of Pidgin Languages

Some of the *p* languages are discussed below which are still in use.

Chinuk Waka

Spoken in parts of the Pacific Northwest, including Alaska, British Columbia, Washington and Northern California. Chinook Waka is based largely on Chinook language, along with a fair smattering of French and some English loanwords.

Nefamese

Also called Arunamese, Nefamese is a *p* language spoken in Arunachal Pradesh, India.

Liberian Pidgin English

Referred to by its speakers as Kolokwa and Liberian Kreyol, this English based *p* is spoken extensively in Liberia as a second language

Nauruan Pidgin English

Derived from the now-extinct Chinese *P* English and Melanesian-type *P*, Nauruan *P* English continues to be spoken in the tiny island country of Nauru in the central Pacific.

Hiri Motu

Hiri Motu is spoken in Papua New Guinea, where it is referred to as Police Motu. It is an interesting language to study as it is placed between *p* & *c*.

Settla

Settla is a Swahili *P* that established to promote communication between native Swahili speakers in Kenya and Zambia and English-speaking settler in Kenya and Zambia.

Fanakalo

South Africa and Zimbabwe are home to several hundred thousand Fanakalo speakers. Also known as Pidgin Zulu, the language developed during the colonial era to enable English settlers to communicate with their servants, as well as to facilitate communication between English and Dutch colonists.

Tok Pisin

It is spoken in Papua New Guinea.

Kamtok

The English-based pidgin of Cameroon.

Krio

English *c* of Sierra Leone

Differences between P & C

P is a linguistic communication that comprised of components of two or more other languages and is used for communication among people. This is called business language and not a first language. Whereas *c* is a language that was at first a *p* but has 'transformed' and become a first language.

C has native speakers but *p* has no native speaker, the former is created by adults, but the latter is invented by children. Linguistically, *P*'s form and grammar have been simplified and reduced, and it may eventually die out, while *c* has remained stable and developed into a fully functional and competent natural language. *C* often exists in Post-colonial area and it is used as a daily vernacular, while *p* mostly exists in colonial period. *C* has elaborated grammatical structures than *p*. *C* has a lot of diversity, but consistent sociolinguistic norms (of evaluation and integration) have a lot of domains and are employed a lot more for expression. *P*, on the other hand, is a product of imperfect second language acquisition, with limited core vocabulary and considerable borrowing from other languages. When compared to their lexifier, *P* has a simplified linguistic structure that includes all parts of grammar. Sebba, (1997) labels the reduced structural system into four structures in attribution to *p* grammar:

- i) There is a lack of grammatical intricacy on the surface.
- ii) Insufficiency in morphological complexity
- iii) Semantic transparency is preferred.
- iv) Vocabulary reduction

Moreover any *p* language has a phonological simplicity. *Ps* differ to creoles as they are seen as reduced. This is because they do not serve all the functions and fundamental features that a full language possesses. Halliday, (1974) and Jakobson, (1960) compiled a list of functions which a full language can

express, some of which are summarized by Muhlhausler, (1986) in his book, *p & c*. Propositional, directive, integrative, expressive, metalinguistic, poetic, and heuristic functions are listed. *Ps* are considered 'reduced' because they lack the ability to perform some of these functions. There is no morphology in *p*, which is an indication of solidarity and conformity in most languages. Because a *p* form's language capabilities are limited, it is incapable of expressing abstract thoughts and feelings. On the other hand many *c* languages provide many of the functions that "full languages" do. 'Tok Pisin' is a creole which shows many linguistic functions like the other standard languages.

The social aspect of the variation is another difference between *p* and *c*. In a *p*, social isolation between the distinct groups or substrate speakers must be maintained, or the *p* will eventually adopt the superstrate language. This means that in a transaction, the people involved are separated by a particular amount. In a language, on the other hand, morphology develops, which Hudson argues serves the secondary aim of establishing norms for speakers to follow. This fosters a sense of speaking community togetherness, making them more united than those who use the *p* form. Another distinction between a *p* and a *c* is that a *p* has no history because people who use *ps* come from various backgrounds, and the resulting variety is creating a new history. A *c* variation, on the other hand, may create a history dependent on how the *p* was generated.

As a result, a *p* variety has no history, whereas a *c* variety will create one. Another distinction between the two forms is the associations and prejudices they elicit. Because they are related with slavery and were regarded to be non-standard variants of a language, a *p* has a negative connotation. As a result, *Cs* are seen as a more prestigious language because they are more complicated, have native speakers, and a history and culture, implying that it is 'superior' to the *p* version. As a result, the variations differ in terms of their status. Another difference between the varieties is that although *ps* are developed by incomplete second language learning, *cs* are learned through first language acquisition. These are the few differences of *p & c*.

History of Pidgin

P, initially, a language that arose from intermittent and restricted interactions between Europeans and non-Europeans in places other than Europe from the 16th to the early 19th centuries, and was frequently associated with activities such as trade, plantation, agriculture, and mining.

According to Siegel, (2008) "p & c are emerging languages that serve as a means of communication among people who don't speak the same language, such as plantation laborers from different parts of the world." Indentured laborers from China, Portugal, Japan, the Philippines, Korea, and other countries were imported to work on plantations owned and run by Caucasian North Americans in the 19th century. Hawaiian was the major language of interethnic communication in schools and society in the 19th century, so Pidgin Hawaiian was the first dialect to develop on a plantation. Until allowed for a great number of Americans to do business on the islands, and during this time, the number of Hawaiians fell to under 50,000 as a result of illnesses and diseases brought in by the outsiders. Many English-medium schools were created between 1878 and 1888, and as more children of plantation workers enrolled in these schools year after year, the language of the plantations became more impacted by English, and the p changed from pidgin Hawaiian to P English. In their homes and in ethnically homogeneous communities, the vast majority of the populace spoke ethnic languages such as Hawaiian, Cantonese, Japanese, Okinawam, Tagalog, Ilokano, and Portuguese.

P English's role shifted, however, towards the turn of the century, when a second generation of locally born speakers developed, equaling the number of foreign-born speakers. The significant number of locally born Japanese who began to attend public schools in the early 1990s also expanded the use of Pidgin English. It was probably easier for Hawaiian, Chinese, and Portuguese students at schools to communicate with Japanese in Pidgin English than to learn a new language.

Pidgin English was the main language of the school, home, and community for this second generation, and as these youngsters grew older, the language evolved

into Hawai'i Creole, the language that was and still is referred to as "P" by linguists. The vestiges of the past can still be found in modern pidgin. While English provides the majority of Pidgin's vocabulary, Hawaiian has had a considerable influence on its grammatical patterns. However all the *ps* have their own separate story to tell? For example during the Atlantic slave trade in the late 17th and 18th centuries, West African P English, also known as Guinea Coast Creole English, was a language of commerce spoken along the coast. This permitted local African traders and British slave traffickers to trade. It then extended to other West African colonies, where it became a handy commerce language for people who spoke a variety of languages. In the last hundred years there have been several theories proposed in an attempt to explain the origin of *p* languages. These theories of origin can be divided into five basic, slightly overlapping theories. Theories include the baby-talk hypothesis, parallel development theory; nautical jargon theory, monogenetic theory, and Universalist theory are various theories that have been proposed. While this fundamental set of theories applies to the vast majority of pidgins, some require a combination of theories to best explain their origins, or are simply unaddressed by the current belief system.

The Baby-Talk Theory

At the end of last century Charles Leland, (1876) explains certain features of the *p* pointing out some similarities with the speech of children. He says: "What remains can present no difficulty to anyone who can understand Negro minstrelsy or baby talk." He and many other travelers who heard pidgins and creoles were struck by the similarities these languages bore to the early efforts of children. They noticed that pidgin speakers and children frequently only approximated standard pronunciation, that they both used a high proportion of content words and few function words, that morphological change was rare if not entirely absent in both, that word classes were much less rigidly established, and that pronominal contrasts were frequently reduced. Many such similarities can still be shown to exist between child language and *ps*. Jespersen, (1922) claimed that similar results sprang from similar causes: in this case, the "imperfect mastery of a language which in its initial stage, in the child with its first language and in the grown-up with a

second language learnt by imperfect methods, leads to a superficial knowledge of the most indispensable words, with total disregard of grammar.’’ Bloomfield also supported the theory (1933): ‘‘Speakers of a lower language may make so little progress in learning the dominant speech that the masters, in communicating with them resort to ‘baby-talk’. This baby-talk is the masters’ imitation of the subjects’ incorrect speech.

This theory was also supported by Wurm, (1971) and Naro, (1978). This theory reflected the observations and the beliefs of many travelers and scholars, but it has limitations. It fails to explain why *ps* are not always mutually intelligible with the languages of which they are, supposedly, baby-talk versions, more important, it fails to explain why *ps* and creoles which are related to different European languages are, in many ways, syntactically more similar to each other than they are to the languages from which lexicons derive (Akter *et al.*, 2019).

Independent Parallel Development Theory

This view maintains that the obvious similarities between the world’s *ps* and *cs* arose on independent but parallel lines due to the fact that they all are derived from languages of Indo-European stock and, in the case of the Atlantic varieties, due to their sharing a common West African substratum. This theory was first propounded by Robert A. Hall, (1966). While we cannot underestimate the validity of some aspects of this theory, it has two main limitations. In the first place, structurally as well as lexically, the Atlantic and Pacific Pidgin English’s have common features which do not occur in Standard English.

The Nautical Jargon Theory

In 1938, John Reinecke suggested that a nautical vocabulary may have influenced the formation of several *ps* and *cs*. Many nationalities were evidently represented among the crews of the ships on many of the earliest voyages of discovery to the developing world. As a result, a core vocabulary of nautical terms was developed, as well as reduced syntax. Many of these vocabulary elements are shown in later *ps*, regardless of where the language varieties are spoken. As a result, the word 'capsise' appears in both West Atlantic and Pacific Pidgins with the meaning 'turn over' or 'spill.' The words heave, hoist, hail, galley, and

freight all have the same meaning. One of the flaws in this otherwise appealing idea is that it fails to account for the numerous structural affinities between pidgins derived from various European languages.

Monogenetic/Relexification Theory

According to this theory, all *ps* descend from a single proto-pidgin, a 15th century Portuguese pidgin that was likely a relic of the medieval lingua franca (also known as 'Sabir' from the Portuguese word for 'know') that was the Crusaders' and traders' shared means of communication in the Mediterranean. The lingua franca persisted the longest on the North African coast, with evidence dating back to the 19th century from Algeria and Tunisia. According to the theory, The Portuguese would have employed their own lingua franca when they first went down the west coast of Africa in the 15th century (Sabir). Later, as Portuguese dominance in Africa diminished in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Pidgins' vocabulary would have been supplanted by that of the new colonial languages that dominated the region, such as English and French. Because the Portuguese were among the first traders in India and Southeast Asia, it's likely that a similar situation occurred: the original Portuguese pidgin's vocabulary was replaced by that of a later European language. The grammatical structure of pidgin would not have been affected by the alteration in vocabulary, according to this argument. As a result, the clear structural resemblance of all *ps* may be traced back to the grammar of a proto-pidgin from the Mediterranean region. What this explanation doesn't explain is why the structure is of this particular design. There are also a number of marginal pidgins (Russenorsk, Eskimo, Trade Jargon) that cannot be linked to Portuguese but are analytic in structure, similar to the pidgins based on the major European colonial languages.

Universalist Theory

This is the most current theory on the origin of *Ps*, and it shares some characteristics with the others. However, this theory distinguishes itself by assuming that the similarities are due to universal human tendencies to create languages of a similar type, i.e. an analytic language with a simple phonology, an SOV syntax with little or no subordination or other sentence complexities, and a lexicon that makes maximum use

of polysemy (and devices like reduplication) operating from a limited core vocabulary. To put it another way, a *c* will be expected to have unmarked values for linguistic characteristics, including all *ps* and creoles, with a positive value indicating that a rich morphology may emerge later.

Evolution of Pidgin (From Pidgin to Creole to de-creolization)

“*p* & *c* are new language varieties that developed out of contacts between colonial non standard varieties of a European language and several non-European languages around the Atlantic and in the Indian and Pacific Oceans during the seventeen to nineteen century” (Mufwene, 2015).

As a result, a language must arise that is spoken by all groups in that specific geographical area, indigenized variations known as "World Englishes". A *p* does not have native speaker as it is mentioned earlier and it is restricted in use say for example trade and work contact but within a few generations a *p* can improve and become a stable pidgin or even creole language that is nativized. According to Siegel, (2008), Improvements are made by transferring data from systems that are no longer capable of dealing with their own vocabulary and grammatical features. Then a different phase starts when the improvements are made in the vocabulary level by borrowing lexical items from the ‘dominant’ language. The example can be given with the gradually developed pidgin ‘Tok Pisin’ that is spoken in Papua New Guinea. Tok Pisin is creolizing and on its way to become the main community language in that area.

Further development of creole is found in the areas where contact between English and the related *p* or *c* is sustained and education in Standard English becomes more widespread. This process of standardization of a *c* language is called decreolization. The *c* becomes more and more influenced by the standard in phonology, lexis, syntax until we find a considerable range of English. West Africa, Hawaii, Papua New Guinea, and, fact, all anglophone places of the world where a *c* or extended *p* is an important lingua franca, all show evidence of such a continuum. *cs* absorbs more and more aspects of Standard English as they come into contact with the famed standard. This process is also

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called the post-creole continuum. But one point should be noted that there is no clear point when a phase stops and another starts. It can be finished quoting from Todd, (1990):

“It tries to make clear that there is no stage where one can say: ‘*Ps* stop here and *cs* begin.’ Sharp edges and watertight compartments are rarely found in human languages.”

CONCLUSION:

P & *C* have long been the ‘poor relations’ in the world’s language families. It was thought to be devoid of cultural potential, under-valued and inadequately understood. But Linguists and sociolinguists now agree that these new contact languages are providing insights into language change and development. They offer a new dimension in the study of linguistic history and provide data in search for linguistic enquiry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Our research article won’t be possible without contribution of few people who were involved both directly and indirectly in the preparation of this report. We are deeply expressing our respect to him for knowledgeable discourse during the class which helped us to prepare this article.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

No conflict of interest from the authors end.

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Citation: Khan IJ., and Akter MS. (2021). Pidgin and creole: concept, origin and evolution, *Br. J. Arts Humanit.*, 3(6), 164-170. <https://doi.org/10.34104/bjah.02101640170> 