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Pidgins and Creoles

LINGUISTICS 101
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Language Creation: Creoles

- *Creoles*: Languages created, often in contact situations.
- In some cases creation has been witnessed (e.g., Nicaraguan Sign Language).
- Creoles created by children from innate grammatical knowledge?

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Pidgins

- *Pidgin*: Rough means of communication between speakers of different languages.
- Pidgins are not natural languages: do not have fully developed syntactic rules.
- NOTE: Dividing line between pidgins and creoles not entirely clear. (Cameroonian Pidgin is actually a creole.)

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Pidgins

- (1) And a too much children, small children, house money pay.
'And [I had] too many children, small children, [I had] to pay the rent'
(Hawaiian pidgin speaker of Korean origin)

Common Features of Pidgins

- Syntactic rules tend to be individual: Japanese workers in Hawaii put the verb at the end; Filipino workers put the verb first.
- (What rules there are come from *substrate* languages.)
- Simple phonology: no consonant clusters, prefer simple CV syllables.
- Lack of morphology.
- Few subordinate clauses; mostly use conjunction.

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Some Contact Pidgins

- Trade Languages
 - West African Pidgin English (developed into Krio, official language of Sierra Leone);
 - Melanesian Pidgin English (developed into Tok Pisin);
 - Pidgin Arabic developed recently among immigrant oil workers in the Middle East;
 - Chinook Jargon: trade language in the Pacific Northwest, based on Native American languages.

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Forced Labor Pidgins

- Slave Communities
 - 1500–1900: England, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain establish labor-intensive agricultural colonies in isolated locations.
 - Colonies depend on cheap labor (slavery) imported from around the world.
 - Workers come first from West Africa, later East Africa, India, and the Orient.
 - Workers speak a variety of mutually incomprehensible languages.
 - Very few speakers of the colonial language.
 - Workers communicate via pidgin based on colonial language.

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Birth of Creoles

- Children born into a community whose means of communication is a pidgin.

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Some Creoles

- English as *lexifier* language (or *superstrate*)
 - Australian Kriol
 - Tok Pisin
- Dutch lexifier/superstrate
 - Berbice (Guyana, extinct)
 - Negerhollands (US Virgin Islands; extinct)
- Portuguese lexifier/superstrate
 - Saramaccan (Suriname)
 - Upper Guinea Crioulo

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Some More Creoles

- Spanish lexifier/superstrate
 - Chavacano (Philippines)
 - Palenquero (Colombia)
- French lexifier/superstrate
 - Haitian Creole
 - Louisiana Creole French
- Arabic lexifier/superstrate
 - Nubi (Kenya and Uganda)
 - Juba Arabic (Southern Sudan)

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Example: Hawaiian Creole

- 1876–1900: Boom in sugar production leads to importation of multinational workforce.
- By 1900 indentured laborers from China, the Philippines, Japan, Korea, Portugal, Puerto Rico outnumber other groups in Hawaii 2-1.
- After annexation of Hawaii in 1898, pidgin based on English becomes lingua franca.
- Children born after 1905 speak a full-fledged creole.

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Hawaiian Creole

- Hawaiian Pidgin: no subordinate clauses, no auxiliary verbs, few prepositions or articles, often no verb.

Pidgin

Good, this one. Kaukau [food] any kind this one. Pilipin island no good. No more money.

Hawaiian Creole

Hawaii more better than Philippines, over here get [there is] plenty kaukau, over there no can, bra [brother], you no more money for buy kaukau, 'a'swhy.

Hawaiian Creole Auxiliary System

Rules are uniform from speaker to speaker:

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| (2) I walk.
'I walked.' | <i>Completed</i> |
| (3) I bin walk.
'I had walked.' | <i>Anterior</i> |
| (4) I go walk.
'I would walk.' | <i>Irrealis</i> |
| (5) I stay walk.
'I am walking; I walk habitually.' | <i>Nonpunctual</i> |

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Hawaiian Creole: Purpose Clauses

- Non-English feature: must distinguish purpose clauses that have been accomplished from those that have not.
- (7) John bin go Honolulu go see Mary.
'John went to Honolulu to see (and did see) Mary.'
- (8) John bin go Honolulu for see Mary.
'John went to Honolulu to see Mary (but didn't, or don't know).'

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Hawaiian Creole Auxiliary System

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| (5) I stay walk.
'I am walking; I walk habitually.' | <i>Nonpunctual</i> |
| (6) If I bin get car, I go drive home.
'If I had a car, I would drive home.' | |

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Hawaiian Creole: Articles

- (9) I stay go da store for buy shirt.
'I'm going to the store to buy a shirt/shirts.'
- (10) I stay go da store for buy one shirt.
'I'm going to the store to buy a (specific) shirt.'
- (11) I stay go da store for buy da shirt.
'I'm going to the store to buy the shirt.'
- Even if all features of creole could have been borrowed from the substrate languages, how did children decide in a single generation on which ones to use?

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Common Creole Features

- Creoles around the world share the same features:
 - Word order almost always SVO;
 - Same distinction between specific/nonspecific nouns;
 - Same distinction between accomplished and unaccomplished purposes:

- (12) Im gaan fi bied. *Jamaican Creole*
 'He went with the intention of washing.'
- (13) Im gaan go bied.
 'He went to wash and did.'

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AAVE Aspectual System

- He tired. 'He is tired (right now).'
- He be tired. 'He is habitually/usually tired.' or 'He will be tired.'
 (e.g., He be tired tomorrow.)
- He been gone a year.
 He done been gone a year. 'He has been gone a year.'
- I done my homework today. 'I did my homework today.'

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Creole Features: TMA

Same type of auxiliary system expressing same tense, mood, aspect distinctions:

	Anterior	Irrealis	Nonpunctual
Hawaiian	bin	go	stay
Haitian	té	av(a)	ap
Sranan	ben	sa	e

- Strict order: Ant Irr Nonpunct

- (14) A ben sa e waka. *Sranan*
 'He would have been walking.'

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Compare Hawaiian and AAVE

	Unmarked	Anterior	Irrealis	Nonpunctual
Hawaiian	Ø	bin	go	stay
AAVE	Ø	been, done	be, gon'	be, be steady
Gullah	Ø	bin, did	gə, gwajn	də, dəz, bi

- The homeboys be steady rappin'.
 'The homeboys rap all the time and they do so vigorously.'

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The Bioprogram Hypothesis

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- Derek Bickerton: children are genetically programmed to learn language.
- Analogy: children are genetically programmed to learn to walk.
- Further: features of creoles are programmed into our heads before birth.
- Usual: alter pre-programmed grammar given input (English, French, etc.).
- Pidgin situation: no need to alter, just take the words that are used.

The Bioprogram Hypothesis

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- Predicts: children learning English will make mistakes on features that differ from creoles, and will make no mistakes on features that are found in creoles.
- “Nobody don’t like me.” (*nowan no kən bit diz gaiz*, Hawaiian)
- Progressive -ing: acquired very early, and not incorrectly applied to stative verbs (*I am liking him).

Common Error: Double Negation

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- Child: “Nobody don’t like me.”
- Italian:
 - (15) Non ha visto nessuno.
not have seen no one
'She hasn't seen anyone.'
 - (16) Nessuno è venuto.
No one is come.
 - (17) Non è venuto nessuno.
Not is come no one.
 - (18) *Nessuno non è venuto.
No one not is come.

Non-occurring Error: -ing

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- I'm biking, I'm sitting, I'm reading a book
- *I'm liking soup, *I'm knowing French