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INTRODUCTION

New languages are continually being born to language families.

All natural languages develop from and alongside other languages to which they are closely related.

HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

English was originally a West Germanic language.

It developed directly from the AngloFrisian dialects of invaders.

It was subsequently heavily lexicalised by Norman French, then by French, Latin and Greek.

It had a few borrowings from the Celtic languages, from Spanish and Italian, and from every language in contact with the British Empire (including Persian, Hindi, Bengali and various African languages).
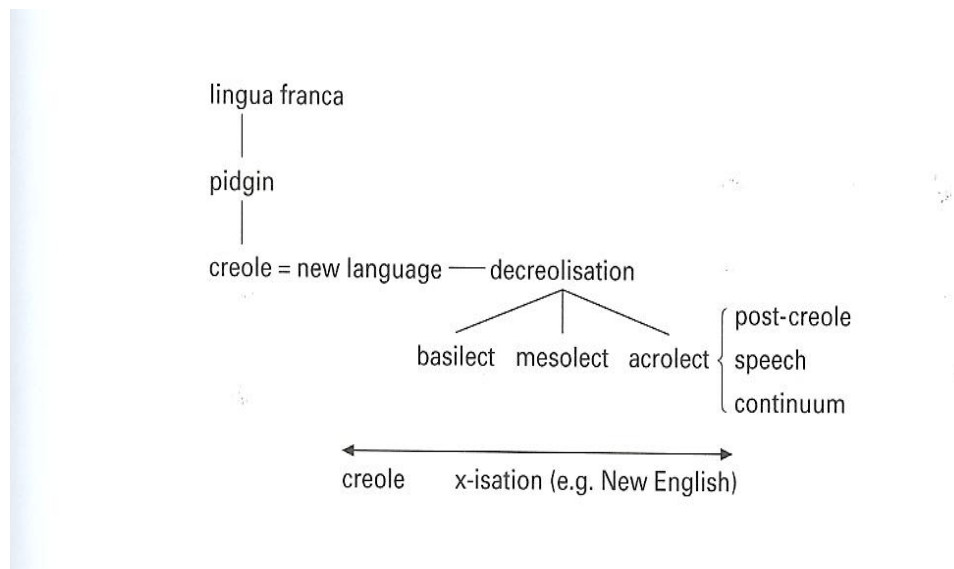
In short, English has achieved its globalisation by allowing itself to become greatly hybridized.

Though the origins of English, and most long-established languages, are lost in time and have to be reconstructed [1] from old documents and partial evidence, the process

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[1] **Linguistic reconstruction** is the practice of establishing the features of the unattested ancestor (proto-language) of one or more given languages. There are two kinds of reconstruction. **Internal reconstruction** uses irregularities in a single language to make inferences about an earlier stage of that language. **Comparative reconstruction**, usually referred to just as reconstruction, establishes features of the ancestor of two or more related languages by means of the comparative method.

of language birth and maturation can be observed at first hand through modern **pidgin** and **creole** languages.

This section gives some detail to the following diagram:

lingua franca
|
pidgin
|
creole = new language —— decreolisation
  basilect mesolect acrolect { post-creole speech continuum }

creole   x-isation (e.g. New English)

LINGUA FRANCAS

According to Wardhaugh (2006), "people who speak different languages who are forced into contact with each other must find some way of communication, a *lingua franca*."

Lingua Francas can take one of four forms:

- a contact language
- a trade language
- an international language
- an auxiliary language

Contact Languages

- The *contact language* usually dominates in situations in which the speakers of that language have military or economic power over other language users.

Examples: Greek Koiné, Vulgar Latin, and Arabic

- At one time or another, Greek Koiné and Vulgar Latin were in widespread use as a lingua franca in the Mediterranean world and much of Europe (Wardhaugh, 2006).
- Arabic was a lingua franca associated with the spread of Islam (Wardhaugh, 2006).

Trade Languages

Examples: Swahili and Hausa

- A *trade language* such as Swahili in East Africa and Hausa in West Africa often indicates a more equal relationship.
- Coastal Swahili is only used in commercial contexts.
- Whereas further west into Africa, reconstructed Swahili serves as a fully functional language, and is much more developed in complexity.

International Languages:

Examples: English, French, Spanish, Arabic, and Chinese.

- An *international language*, such as English throughout much of our contemporary world, is often used as a neutral form, as in India after independence in 1947.

- Indian English did not privilege any of the native- speaker communities, and also gave India a linguistic access to the Western world.

Other international languages have included:

- French (especially amongst the ruling class in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries)
- Spanish across South, Central & North America

- Arabic across the Middle East, North Africa and in Islamic countries.

- Chinese in both China and the headlands and islands round East Asia.

- More recently, English has ridden on the back of American economic and political influence (80% of global internet traffic is in English).

Auxiliary Languages

Examples: Esperanto, Business English, Maritime English (Sea-Speak), and Air-Traffic Control English.

- Englishes for Special Purposes (ESP) tend to have a highly restricted and technical vocabulary, and exist in a frozen, regulated form. (It would be highly dangerous for airline pilots suddenly to develop dialectal innovation in their expression!)

PIDGINS

- When the contact between groups of people is prolonged, a hybrid language can develop known as a pidgin.

- These tend to occur in situations where one language dominates, and there are two or more other languages at hand.

- According to Wardhaugh (2006):

  A *pidgin* is a language with no native speakers: it is no one's first language but is a *contact language*. That is, it is the language of a multilingual situation in which those who wish to communicate must find or improvise a simple language system that will enable them to do so. Very often too, that situation is one in which there is an imbalance of power among the languages and the speakers of one language dominates the speakers of the other languages economically and socially.

- A pidgin is sometimes regarded as a 'reduced' variety of a 'normal' language. (Wardhaugh, 2006)

- Holm (1988, cited in Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 60) defines a pidgin as "a reduced language that results from extended contact between groups of people with no language in common."

- Elements of the syntax and lexis of each language are simplified and combined as speakers struggle to make themselves understood by accommodating towards each speech community.
- Though the pidgin might have recognisable elements of existing languages, it is not simply a 'broken' form of one of the languages: pidgins have rule systems and have to be learnt.
- Nevertheless, Pidgin languages tend to:
    - be restricted in vocabulary.
    - are usually syntactically simple.
    - have a limited range of functions (e.g. trade, local commerce, marriage negotiations, land disputes).
- Anyone who uses the pidgin will always have their own native vernacular language, and will switch into the pidgin only when necessary.
- Pidgins tend to be found in coastal areas, generally around the equatorial belt in former colonial locations, and have arisen typically in time of imperialism, slavery, plantation labour migration, war and refugee situations, and around trading ports.
- For these reasons, pidgins tend to be based on the languages of the European imperial powers:
    - French (in Louisiana, Haiti, Seychelles)
    - Dutch (Afrikaans)
    - Spanish (Papiamentu)
    - Portuguese (Guine Crioule, Macau)
    - English (Melanesian Tok Pisin, West African Krio, Jamaican Patwa)
- Around a 1/4 of all pidgins and creoles have English as an element.

CREOLES

- In contrast to a pidgin, a *creole* is often defined as a pidgin that has become the first language of anew generation of speakers. (Wardhaugh, 2006)

- Holmes (1992, cited in Wardhaugh, 2006, p. 63) says that "A creole is a pidgin which has expanded in structure and vocabulary to express the range of meanings and serve the range of meanings and serve the range of functions required of a first language."

- In these circumstances, pidgins rapidly develop:

  - a wider range of phonemes
  - a larger vocabulary, more complex syntax
  - a greater range of stylistic options to the point at which the creole can be used in every context and to express every requirement of the speaker.

- However, not every pidgin becomes a creole.

Some creoles rapidly undergo standardisation:

  - pronunciations and spellings are judged 'correct' or 'incorrect'
  - law and government administration are conducted and recorded in the creole
  - newspapers, books and prestigious texts are produced in it
  - it becomes the language in which education is delivered

- Like Afrikaans, creoles can develop into fully fledged languages in their own right, with little interference from either the European parent (Dutch) or local African Bantu languages.
- However, many English-based creoles come under pressure from locally powerful English-speaking standards (American, Australian, or British textbooks).
- In these circumstances, *a post-creole speech continuum* can develop.

The Post-Creole Continuum

Different forms of the creole become socially stratified. There are three (idealized) levels or "lects" (registers)

Acrolect   (most formal and prestigious form of speech)
    |
Mesolect   (intermediate variety/varieties)
    |
Basilect   (most colloquial, least prestigious form of speech)

  - the English based fully fledged creole for example is spoken by illiterate manual workers (the *basilectal* variety)
  - a variety (the *acrolect*) closer to standard English is spoken by the social elites,
  - with a range of varieties (*mesolects*) in between.

- Any individual speaker has command of a certain segment of the continuum, (e.g. acrolect to mesolect, mesolect to basilect etc.)
- These are unlikely to be three distinct forms of speech, since variation is continuous.
- The *acrolect* can evolve into a New English, such as Singlish or Jamaican English.

- This is part of the wider process known as x-isation (for example, 'Indianisation', 'Sinicisation', 'Americanisation' and so on).

- If the pressure from the powerful local standard is sufficiently strong:

    - the creole can become *decreolised*
    - the basilectal and mesolectal varieties become stigmatised and associated with illiteracy and ignorance.

In such situations:

    - local governments often proscribe the use of the creole as 'improper'
    - schools and newspapers teach against it.
    - unless language loyalty or covert prestige sustains it, the creole can disappear and eventually lose all its speakers and die.

Section B: Patwa & Its Influence in the UK

Virginia Barnes designed a study to investigate claims by Hewitt (1986) that Patwa was becoming highly influential in Britain beyond the traditional base of its native speaker community.

Specifically, Hewitt noticed that elements of Patwa were being borrowed by young white and Asian people in east London youth clubs.

Virginia was surprised that, as a white woman, she was able to recognise and even used some features of Patwa herself.

These features tended to be lexical items rather than grammatical or pronunciation patterns.

She based her study on Hewitt's written test, and chose subjects at random but who were in their early 20s and thus had grown up in the 15 years since the original observations.

These subjects were divided into a northern, Midlands and southern group, in order to provide some guide as to the degree of diffusion of the linguistic features geographically.

Using Hewitt's work, and the contemporary glossary from Sutcliffe's (1982) British Black English, Virginia compiled a lexical list of 20 words.

She printed these in a questionnaire with two possible meanings for each item, and invited the informants to tick what they thought the word meant.

For example:

bad-mouth

    (a) to insult

    (b) ear-hole

    (c) don't know.

Wicked

    (a) excellent

    (b) old-fashioned

    (c) don't know

Findings

- She discovered a marked increase overall in the correct scores for the group.
- She suggested that many of these terms, originally Patwa words, had diffused into general British youth usage and were even beginning to lose their sense as markers of Caribbean ethnicity.
- Many of her informants were unaware of the origins of the words.
- More strikingly, the Midlands group scored highest, followed by the southern group, with the northern group least accurate of all.

If generalisable, this could suggest two possibilities:

- It could be that the words were innovative borrowings into young white speech in London in the 1980s, and have since spread out across the country.
- They have then become less used (or replaced by other words) in London.

The study is thus a 'snapshot' of geographical diffusion away from London.

Alternatively, Virginia suggests that the high numbers and integration of multi-ethnic communities in the Midlands compared with both London and the north have made the terms more current and longer-lasting amongst young people in the Midlands than elsewhere.

She optimistically suggests that this indicates the potential for the development of a modern vernacular that borrows freely from different ethnic origins and better reflects the multiracial nature of Britain.