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Pidginization Exemplified in Haitian-Creole and Tok-Pisin

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## Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the sociolinguistic process of pidginization and to show how Haitian Creole of Haiti and Tok-Pisin of Papua New Guinea are living examples of this process. This will be accomplished in three ways: by giving a synopsis of both countries' histories and thus showing how the nature of contact between the European and indigenous people both initiates and shapes the process of language creation and transformation; by examining the theoretical life-cycle of pidginization and some elements of simplification still evident in Haitian Creole and Tok-Pisin today; and by discussing the current status and usage of each language in its respective country, with emphasis on its use in the realm of education.

## Pidginization Exemplified in Haitian-Creole and Tok-Pisin

### Introduction: Background

Language is always changing. Linguists coming from a biblical worldview owe this continuously-transitional nature of language to the very origin of our world's many tongues, the Tower of Babel. The more a language comes in contact with other tongues and people-groups, the more it will change and the more dialects and variations it will produce. This, too, results from the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel. Some more concrete reasons for a pattern of continual language transformation include such things as the conquest and subjugation of people groups, the size of populations of speakers, language influence, and language isolation, among others. Conquerors will impose their language upon those subject to their dominance; the sheer numbers of larger language groups will allow the language to thrive and spread, thus influencing surrounding language groups; an isolated language will receive less foreign language influence, thus preserving more of its original linguistic elements. One interesting process that results from these elements of language-change is that of *pidginization*, or the process of creating a pidgin language. A pidgin language is a language that results from two mutually unintelligible language groups needing to communicate in order to complete a certain task. In most cases the two groups involved do not have time to learn each others' respective languages, and the result is a new language formed from a mixture of the two native tongues. However, a pidgin does not always remain a pidgin; in fact, due to the constant flux of language, its very nature as a language prevents it from remaining in its original form. As a result, there exists what is known as the "life-cycle" of a pidgin language, which includes the stages of pidginization, creolization or

depidginization, and decreolization (Valdman, 1977, p. 127). Two languages that exist within the life-cycle and now find themselves in a more-stabilized form are Tok-Pisin of Papua New Guinea (PNG), and Haitian-Creole of Haiti. In fact Tok-Pisin and Haitian-Creole are prime examples of the process of pidginization as demonstrated by the history and the nature of contact between the respective people groups, the exemplification of the life-cycle and simplification throughout their development as languages, and the current status and usage of the languages in their respective countries today, particularly in the realm of education.

#### Nature of Contact

Of first importance in investigating Tok-Pisin and Haitian-Creole as examples of pidginization is an understanding of pidginization as a linguistic process resulting from contact between two language groups and the nature of that contact. One major characteristic of a pidgin that is undergoing the actual pidginization, or simplification, phase is that it has no native speakers; in other words, it is not exclusively spoken by anyone as their only common language. The authors of *Pidgin and Creole Linguistics* discuss the concept of “reduced language” as opposed to “full” or “natural language,” placing pidgin languages in the category of reduced language because they do “not serve as the normal mother tongue of a speech community” (Valdman, p. 100). Loreto Todd notes that Tok-Pisin is now the most-used language in the country (p. 65); it is “spoken as a first language by 121,000 and as a second language by 4 million speakers” (Papuan Languages of New Guinea, 2006). This is because it has completed the pidginization phase and has entered the creolization, or stabilization, phase of the life-cycle; these life-cycle phases will be discussed later. Many of the people who speak Tok-Pisin as a first

language are monolingual (SIL International, 2005). The same can be said of Haitian-Creole, which boasts over seven million speakers found throughout nine different countries (Gordon, 2005). As Valdman states in his book *Pidgin and Creole Linguistics*, “[i]t is the native language of nearly all Haitians, though standard French is also spoken by some people and is the official language, and one also hears many varieties intermediate between the standard and the creole” (p. 5).

Pidginization is really a process of language-simplification. In order to make the communication process between two mutually unintelligible languages as efficient and as fast as possible, most irregularities of the languages are removed. Any simplification will necessarily allow the speaker to be better understood by the listeners. This simplification process usually includes the removal of inflection, reduction of prepositions used, overgeneralization of rules, and making tense distinctions by markers such as “now,” and “after,” rather than modifications of the verb itself (Todd, 1984, p. 13). Comrie notes that “[w]hat arises in such a situation is, initially, an unstable pidgin, or jargon, with highly variable structure—considerably simplified relative to the native languages of the people involved in its creation—and just enough vocabulary to permit practical tasks to be carried out reasonably successfully” (1990, p. 26).

A pidgin can be thought of as a combination of simplified register, or less-formal language, and broken language, which is characteristic of the under-developed utterances spoken by a second language learner. In *Pidgin and Creole Linguistics*, Valdman summarizes this concept saying that “[s]implified registers are reductions of a source language; broken language is a reduction of a target language; and a pidgin is both...” (1977, p. 100). A pidgin is a combination of the two because it combines the use of two

languages at a lower register, so as to be understood by the respective listeners, and the broken language used by someone learning a second language. Pidginization is thus a unique manifestation of second language acquisition. An in-depth discussion of the stages of language simplification and re-establishment within the life-cycle will be discussed within the context of the two languages under consideration.

A particularly defining step in the process of pidginization is the very commencement of the pidgin; this point in time is defined by the nature of contact between the respective people groups as seen in the context of history. Recent studies in the field of pidginization show the importance of not over-generalizing the process of pidginization; the timeline of the process is completely subject to the individual context of each language. This is why pidginization is a *socio-linguistic* phenomenon. Jourdan notes in his article “Pidgins and Creoles: the Blurring of Categories” that “pidgins and creoles emerged in very diverse social conditions, and did not necessarily follow the same developmental path” (1991, p. 189).

Although many pidgins and creoles were born as a result of European colonial and imperialistic endeavors (p. 191), many pidgins and creoles can be found around the globe as a result of *indigenous* social interaction. However, “most modern pidgins are the result of colonial expansion and thus they have evolved from a master-servant type of contact between speakers of European tongues and speakers of so-called “exotic” languages” (Todd, p. 12). Pidgin languages may serve both inter-group and intra-group communication; it is also possible for these to occur simultaneously. As in the example of Papua New Guinea, Tok-Pisin was initiated to serve communication purposes between colonizers and indigenous people. However, it is probable that the indigenous peoples

found the pidgin language to be useful for communication amongst their own varying language groups and for this reason took advantage of the newly created tongue (p. 14).

## History

### *Papua New Guinea*

This general investigation of the nature of pidgin and creole languages and how they are formed leads to a better understanding of the particular pidginization process that shaped Tok Pisin and Haitian-Creole, beginning with an investigation of the history of colonization of Papua New Guinea (PNG). Today, the independent state of Papua New Guinea is located in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, just north of Australia. This country takes up the eastern half of the island of New Guinea, while the western half contains Indonesian Irian Jaya. PNG was the object of several colonial exploits prior to its official independence on September 16, 1975: “[t]he Dutch visited the island in 1606, the English in 1670 and the French in 1768, but none of these people attempted a permanent settlement” (p. 64). The British finally attempted the first permanent settlement in 1793. Then in 1828 the Dutch succeeded in claiming the entire western half of the island, present-day Irian Jaya, making it part of the Dutch East Indies. The eastern half of the island which is now Papua New Guinea was surveyed by John Moresby of Great Britain in the 1870s, and by 1884 the *southeastern* part of New Guinea had been established as a British protectorate. Australia took over administration of this portion of the island in 1906; this land became known as “Papua.” The *northeastern* portion of New Guinea was accounted for in 1884 by the claims of the German New Guinea Company although it too was later taken over by Australia as a mandate of the League of Nations in 1921, following World War I. In 1945 southeastern Papua was combined with northeastern

New Guinea under Australian administration (Papua New Guinea: Encyclopedia Britannica). These two sections of the island were appropriately known as “The Territories of Papua and new Guinea” (Todd, p. 64).

The linguistic implications of the colonial exploits of Papua New Guinea, as with any pidgin language, are found in the nature of contact between the people groups. In the case of the indigenous peoples of the island and the colonizers thereof, there existed a master-servant relationship. During the German administration, “plantations were widely established in the islands and around Madang; labourers were brought from the Sepik River, the Markham Valley, and Buka Island” (Papua New Guinea: Encyclopedia Britannica). Then in the 1930s, nearly 1,000,000 never-before-contacted indigenous people were discovered in the Highlands of the Australian mandate. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, “[a]t first, the Highlanders were utilized as a massive source of labour for the coastal plantations, a role they continue to play” (Papua New Guinea: Encyclopedia Britannica). The contact between the nationals and the Europeans was thus primarily an economic one, and one in which the native New Guineans played a subjugated role. The pidgin language thus developed out of economic need and was sustained as a lingua franca for multiple reasons. Todd explains that “[a]s soon as a pidgin developed which was sufficiently flexible to fulfill the needs of a master-servant relationship, there was little need to replace it with a variety of English closer to the mother-tongue norm. Indeed, many of the “masters” may have preferred to encourage the use of pidgin because it helped to emphasize the status quo” (p. 14). Today Papua New Guinea is extremely multilingual, with more than 850 vernacular languages; thus inter-

vernacular lingua francas are vital, as recognized by the fact that two of the three national languages of PNG are pidgin lingua francas (Litteral, 1999).

## History

### *Haiti*

Haitian history reveals a similar, if not more brutal account of imperialistic endeavor and the resulting linguistic implications. Haiti is located on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola; Haiti occupies the western half of the island, with the Dominican Republic located on the eastern half. Christopher Columbus was the first European to discover the island of Hispaniola in 1492. In typical imperialistic European style, the Spanish quickly took advantage of the existing indigenous population, enslaving them, primarily to mine for gold. Encyclopedia Britannica states that “European diseases and brutal working conditions devastated the indigenous population... by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the group had virtually vanished” (Haiti History: Encyclopedia Britannica). After depleting the gold, the Spanish left the island, which allowed for encroaching French pirates and settlers to establish themselves permanently on Hispaniola. The Encyclopedia Britannica explains that “The Treaty of Rijswijk (1697) formally ceded the western third of the island from Spain to France, which renamed it Saint-Domingue. The colony’s population and economic output grew rapidly during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and it became France’s most prosperous New World possession, exporting sugar and smaller amounts of coffee, cacao, indigo, and cotton” (Haiti History: Britannica Online). For this reason the island was known as the Pearl of the Antilles for an entire century (Key Dates in Haiti’s History).

Saint-Domingue developed a system of plantation agriculture which quickly depleted the island's resources; however, the European solution was to simply work the land harder and harder; they accomplished this by overpopulating the island with West African slaves. The island's population rose to about 556,000 in 1789; 500,000 of these were slaves, most of whom were mistreated, overworked, and abused for their labor. Various factors eventually led to uprising and to slave-revolt. In 1793 through a decree from French authorities, slaves received an offer of freedom in exchange for serving in the army (Haiti History: Britannica Online). Toussaint-Louverture, a former slave, took advantage of Sonthonax's decree and rose to the position of "governor-general for life," much to Napoleon Bonaparte's chagrin. In 1795 the remaining Spanish portion of the island was ceded to the French in the Treaty of Basel. After Louverture's eventual imprisonment, two men led a black army to defeat the French who were occupying the island. The French did not recognize Haiti's independence until 1825, and the United States did not recognize it until 1862 (Haiti History: Britannica Online).

The linguistic implications of this traumatic history have been significant and lasting. It may be assumed that due to Hispaniola's subjugation to various imperial powers, including the Spanish, British, and French over some, if not all of the island at a time, has produced a language influenced by all of these same European powers. As seen by its classification as a French-based creole, Haitian-Creole's dominant influencing factor was French (Gordon) combined with the languages of the West-African slaves. As with Tok-Pisin, Haitian-Creole was born out of a master-servant relationship so as to provide a means for intra-group communication. It then became a means for inter-group

communication amongst the slave population, continuing through Haitian independence into its present-day use as a vernacular.

### Overview of the Pidginization Process

After understanding the historical processes and conditions necessary for initiating the pidginization process, it is then vital to understand the specifics of this linguistic process before applying it to the contexts of Haitian-Creole and Tok-Pisin. The process of pidginization is commonly referred to as a *life-cycle*. The creation of a pidgin language is a unique situation in which language is born, while simultaneously acting as a second-language learning process for both language-groups involved. The life-cycle is generally divided into three phases: pidginization, creolization or depidginization, and decreolization. After decreolization there may exist a post-creole continuum, which in essence brings a pidgin increasingly closer to its mother-European tongue or standard language (Comrie, 1990, p. 27). Upon entering this portion of investigating pidginization, it is important to realize that while language is constantly changing, language samples and analyses are snap-shot images. Therefore, most language samples are of the language in its current form, not of its earlier phases. Although characteristics of the various phases of the life-cycle can still be seen in the language today, especially when viewed in comparison with the mother-European tongue, it is helpful to view the language samples from a current perspective.

### The Life-Cycle

#### *Phase I: Pidginization*

The preceding discussion of pidginization gave a general introduction to the first phase of the life-cycle. Two main characteristics of this phase, which often evoke

comparison with the second language-learning process, are that of simplification and generalization. Both simplification and generalization involve the influence of the speaker's mother tongue (Todd, 1984, p. 13). The speaker might use certain distinctions or particularities native to his or her mother tongue, while ignoring or overlooking certain distinctions made by the other language. The following are some examples of the concept of simplification from Tok-Pisin:

<i>Bai</i>	<i>em</i>	<i>i gi-im</i>	<i>tang</i>	<i>long</i>	<i>em.</i>
FUT.	<b>SG.PRO</b> .she	V.give	N.tongue	PREP.to	<b>SG.PRO</b> .he.

**They will become intimate.**  
(Todd 168)

This demonstrates that “em” is used to distinguish singular proper nouns. The following example demonstrates that “em” is also used to designate plural proper nouns, thus showing that Tok-Pisin eliminates pronominal distinction of both number and gender. If distinction is necessary, as in the following example, the proper noun or a reference to the proper noun will be included; this is manifested in the following example as- *Dispela pikinini meri* – **This child-female (girl).**

<i>Dispela</i>	<i>pikinini</i>	<i>meri</i>	<i>em</i>	<i>i no</i>	<i>gat</i>	<i>susu.</i>
Det.this	N.child	N.female	<b>PRO.</b>	NEG.	V.	N.breast milk.

**This girl has not reached puberty.**  
(p. 168)

The following example demonstrates simplification in Tok-Pisin in several ways. The first sentence within the example demonstrates the non-use of the verb “to be.” Also, this sentence once again shows the lack of plural inflection. The second sentence shows the lack of different prepositions; in fact, the same preposition, *long*, is shown here to mean both *in* and *near*. It also shows a lack of noun determiners which are present in the English translation.

*Pukpuk i no planti tumas. Ol i stap long tais long Sepik.*  
 N.crocodile NEG. many. PL.PRO V. PREP.in N.swamp PREP.near PRO.  
**There are not many crocodiles. They stay in the swamps near Sepik.**  
 (p. 175)

Haitian-Creole is similar in that the verb “to be” is generally not expressed, as seen in the following examples from Wally R. Turnbull’s book *Creole Made Easy*:

1. (p. 15)

*Machin nan gwo.*  
 N. ADJ  
**The machine is big.**

2. (p. 15)

*Mwen tré kontan.*  
 SG.PRO ADV. ADJ  
**I am very glad.**

Loreto Todd comments on the simplification aspect of the pidginization phase in her book *Modern Englishes: Pidgins and Creoles*, saying that “[l]ike children acquiring English, pidgin speakers often overgeneralise a rule, but whereas children learn their English in a society with a ready-made communication system, pidgin speakers have to invent a language for a community which has just come into being” (p. 13). This idea has contributed to the “Baby-Talk” theory of pidginization with regard to the simplification process. This theory suggests that within a master-servant contact situation, as found in the histories of both Haitian-Creole and Tok-Pisin, the “conquerors” assumed a condescending attitude toward the indigenous people and assumed they would be unable to fully learn their European tongue, “and so they spoke as if they were children, eliminating inflections and grammatical irregularities and limiting the vocabulary to a few hundred words” (p. 22). This theory results from the distinctly-simplified nature of pidgins which utilizes elements such as overgeneralization of rules that are used by

children first learning their mother tongue. However, it does not account for the fact that although pidgin-speakers are in essence learning a second language, the language is yet non-existent. Todd states that “[c]hildren progress from their early form of language to a close approximation of the adult norm because such progress is socially sanctioned. But, at least in the early stages of contact, pidgin speakers do not have the opportunity to expand their pidgin by reference to the linguistic norms of the contactors” (p. 23).

*Phase II: Creolization/Depidginization*

Following pidginization is the second phase of the life-cycle, known as creolization or depidginization. Although this phase does involve internal linguistic changes, it also demonstrates two other external characteristics. The first is the language’s acquisition by native speakers. Valdman explains that “[a]ccording to the classical life-cycle theory, a creole derives from the nativization of a pidgin, i.e., its acquisition as a first language by a new generation of speakers” (p. 155). However, this is a very general and ambiguous definition, and certainly comprises only part of the nature of the creolization phase.

Another major external aspect of the life-cycle’s second stage deals with the contexts in which the language is used or has the potential to be used. Valdman continues his explanation of the life-cycle by saying that “[p]idgins are inadequate languages... in that they lack explicitly expressed semantic distinctions...” (p. 156). In other words, although the pidgin in its pidginization phase meets temporary-contextual needs, with time new contexts inevitably arise and with them a greater population of speakers. A greater number of speakers will demand greater uniformity in the language so as to promote comprehension by an increasingly wider-spread population of speakers.

Valdman continues by saying that “[T]he difference between pidginization and creolization rests on a shift between context-bound and context-free speech, between what is linguistically implicit and explicit, between dependence on non-linguistic semiotic channels and the use of an elaborate grammatical apparatus to transmit meaning” (p. 157). An example of this concept is the increasing *inability* to rely on hand gestures and other “non-linguistic semiotic channels” to communicate meaning; during the creolization phase the language itself becomes primary in communication, and as a result it must become more stabilized.

*Phase III: Decreolization*

In final position within the life-cycle, following pidginization and creolization, is a phase known as decreolization. The duration of this phase is known as the post-creole continuum. The existence of this phase in the life-cycle of a language is dependent on one key factor—the degree of language isolation; in other words—to what extent, if at all, that the pidgin comes back in contact with one of its mother tongues. For a language to be de-creolized it must once again be exposed to the mother tongue; in the case of Tok-Pisin this would be Standard English, and in the case of Haitian-Creole it could be any of the mother-European tongues, but primarily French. This exposure might come from media influence, contact with native speakers, incorporation into the world market, or circumstances in which a mobile population is moved back into its original location (Todd, 1984, p. 17). Loreto Todd makes a comparison between this phase of pidginization and the modernization of English from Old English to today’s Standard English: “[i]f Creole Englishes had been allowed to develop in total isolation from English, it is certain that some at least would have become distinct though related

languages, as distinct as SE is from Old English” (p. 16). The term “post-creole continuum” refers to the fact that in areas where pidgin or creole is spoken there are not simply two distinct languages: Standard English/French and “standard” Pidgin; rather there exist speakers at varying levels of standardization between the two (p. 17). These language levels range from the initial or *basilect* stage, to the intermediate or *mesolect* stage, and up to the *acrolect*, or “slightly regionally coloured version of the standard language” (Comrie, 1990, p. 27). This is why Haitian-Creole is often considered a corrupt version of Standard French. Because Haitian-Creole is in contact with its mother tongue by means of native French speakers on the island, the creole-continuum is very evident in Haiti.

As was previously stated, the conditions for a language to enter the decreolization phase are largely dependent upon the context and the degree of re-introduction to the mother tongue. However, the question remains regarding what happens to a language that does *not* enter the decreolization phase. Hans Henrich Hock notes in his book *An Introduction to Historical and Comparative Linguistics* that the life-cycle may end with the creolization phase and in fact maintain the language at that level (1996, p. 445). Loreto Todd makes a point that cannot be ignored concerning the unpredictability and non-uniformity of the pidginization process as a whole:

We have spoken in terms of the processes of pidginisation, creolisation and decreolisation and we have done this to stress the fact that we are dealing with dynamic and changing systems of communication and not with static standards. And yet we have probably given the impression that there is an inevitable one-two-three-ness about these processes. This is not

so. Creolisation will not follow pidginisation if the speech community does not need or want the integration that a lingua franca can provide.

Decreolisation need not occur if the creole remains outside the sphere of influence of its lexical source language... (Todd, p. 17-18)

### Linguistic Analysis: Haitian-Creole

To better understand the two languages under consideration it is necessary to do a thorough if not comprehensive analysis of some major linguistic components. This analysis can be divided into three main linguistic categories: syntax, morphology, and phonology. Various issues or sub-categories will be discussed within each of the larger divisions. Although glossed texts will be offered as examples of both languages, only a native speaker of Haitian-Creole was available for this process. The Tok-Pisin texts were necessarily taken from secondary sources as no native speakers were available. The following Creole glossed text was transcribed from a voice-recording of a Haitian student at Liberty University. *Note: the first line of the glossed text is the phonological transcription, not the correct Creole spelling.*

#### Creole Glossed Text

moim	oili	zo-zino-zAgi.	MΛ	tsutsi	
1SG.PRO	V.call (myself)	ProperN.	1SG.PRO	V. come from	
<i>My</i>	<i>name is</i>	<i>Georges Junior Dugue.</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>come from</i>	
atsi. Mo	vali	kriol.	Muε	vli	pali
N. 1SG.PRO	V.speak	N.	1SG.PRO	V.want	V.speak
<i>Haiti. I</i>	<i>speak</i>	<i>Creole.</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>want</i>	<i>to tell</i>
yΛ-tsikras	dγ	zunε-m	du vasi	εdzia.	
“a little bit”	PREP	n.day-1SG.PRO	PST.V.spend(time)	N.today.	
<i>a little bit</i>	<i>of</i>	<i>my time</i>	<i>spent</i>	<i>today.</i>	

Moi 1SG.PRO <i>I</i>	de PST <i>woke up</i>	luvi V.wake up	mati-a N.morning-ART. <i>this morning</i>	aviwon PREP. <i>about</i>	zidʒ-ɛdnyɪ. #10-half <i>ten thirty.</i>			
Moi 1SG.PRO <i>I took a shower.</i>	bɛ V.to shower.	Mwe 1SG.PRO <i>I got dressed.</i>	mɪtɪ V.put	gat N.clothes	su PREP	mwe. 1SG.PRO		
Hapu ADV <i>After</i>	sa DEM <i>that</i>	mu 1SG.PRO <i>I</i>	ali V.go <i>went</i>	na PREP <i>to</i>	kafitiya-a N-ART. <i>the cafeteria</i>	muɛ 1SG.PRO	buɛn V.take <i>to have</i>	
dizini. N.breakfast. <i>breakfast.</i>	ipi then <i>Then</i>	a PREP. <i>at</i>	dizɪ-ɛkant ten-fifty <i>ten-fifty</i>	muɛ 1SG.PRO <i>I</i>	t-ali PST-V.go <i>went</i>	na PREP.ART. <i>to</i>	io PREP.ART. <i>a</i>	
klas N <i>math class.</i>	matɛmatsik. ADJ.	Klas N.	la DEF.ART <i>I really enjoyed</i>	muɛ 1SG.PRO <i>myself</i>	ti PST	fuiʌmɔ ADV	amizi-m V.enjoy-1SG.PRO	
na PREP <i>in</i>	klas N.	la. DEF.ART.	Abu After <i>After</i>	sa DEM <i>that</i>	mui 1SG.PRO <i>I</i>	ti-tuni PST-V.go back <i>went back</i>	na PREP <i>to</i>	ʒam N. <i>my room;</i>
wen; POSS.my; <i>I spent</i>	m-pasi 1SG.PRO-V.spend <i>a little</i>	ɛn ART.	si ADJ <i>time</i>	to N.time <i>and</i>	i and	afit-m then-1SG.PRO <i>then I</i>		
alɛn V.go <i>went</i>	mwe 1SG.PRO	tunɪ V.go back <i>back</i>	na PREP <i>to</i>	kafitiya; N <i>the cafeteria; I</i>	mwe 1SG.PRO	e FL	dsne. V.eat lunch. <i>ate lunch.</i>	
Apu-m After-1SG.PRO <i>After I</i>	fin V.finish <i>finished</i>	bwan V.take <i>having</i>	zini N.dinner <i>dinner</i>	mwe 1SG.PRO <i>I</i>	tuni V.go back <i>went back</i>	na PREP <i>to</i>		
ol ART <i>have a</i>	klas N	mo 1SG.PRO <i>class which</i>	di-ge V. to have	ki V. to be-PST	si-ti V. to be-PST	un ART	klas N	infumatsik. ADJ. <i>an information technology class.</i>
E And <i>And</i>	zunt-m N.day-1SG.PRO <i>my day</i>	na ART	ti ART	trie PST <i>was</i>	bɛl. ADV <i>very</i>	Muoi ADJ. <i>nice. I</i>	di 1SG.PRO PST	

vioma	mɪzi-m	e	konyʌ-m	tiʌm	kumtam
ADV	V.to enjoy-1SG.PRO	and	now-1SG.PRO	ADV	ADJ
<i>really</i>	<i>enjoyed myself</i>	<i>and</i>	<i>now I am</i>	<i>very</i>	<i>happy</i>

pu-m	di-pali	n	di	zune	sʌ.
PREP-1SG.PRO	PST-V.speak	PRO	PREP	N.day	DEM.
<i>to</i>	<i>tell</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>about</i>	<i>this day</i>	

mɛrsi.  
*Thank you.*

### *Syntax*

Prior to analyzing the text, a background linguistic sketch by the UCLA website, “Language Materials Project: Teaching Resources for Less Commonly Taught Languages” is helpful. It notes that “Haitian Creole preserves much of French phonological, morphological, syntactical, and lexical characteristics, but a merger of both French structural features and West African features characterizes the language. The inflectional system of French is greatly reduced” (UCLA Language Materials Project). Certain observations can be drawn from the above text concerning key linguistic elements. Creole syntax is primarily subject-verb-object, as seen in this sentence extracted from the above text:

Mo	vali	kriol.
1SG.PRO	V.speak	N.
I	speak	Creole
<b>S</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>O</b>

Adjectives seem to follow the noun, as seen in the following example:

klas	matɛmatsik.
<b>N</b>	<b>ADJ.</b>
math	class.

The following translations were completed by the same Haitian student. I gave him a series of English sentences to translate directly into Haitian-Creole; from these I drew several observations concerning aspects of the language.

**A. Present tense**

- *She goes to school.*  
Li ale lekól.
  
- *I go to the store.*  
Mwen ale nan boutik la.
  
- *You go to a church.*  
Ou ale nan yon legliz.
  
- *They go to a restaurant.*  
Yo ale nan yon restoran.
  
- *We go to the beach.*  
Nou ale nan plaj la.

**B. Past tense**

- *She went to school yesterday.*  
Li te ale lekól.
  
- *When she was young, she went to school.*  
Lé li te jén, li te ale lekól.
  
- *You went to a church last week.*  
Ou te ale nan yon legliz semén pase.
  
- *When you were young, you went to church.*  
Lé ou te jén, ou te ale legliz
  
- *I went to the store.*  
Mwen te ale nan boutik la.
  
- *They went to a restaurant.*  
Yo te ale nan yon restoran.
  
- *We went to the beach*  
Nou te ale nan plaj la.

### C. Word Order

*-He eats the cake.*  
Li manje gato a.

*-You kick the ball.*  
Ou choute boul la.

### D. Plurality

*-One pencil*  
Yon kreyon

*-Five pencils*  
Senk Kreyon

*-One car*  
Yon vwati

*-Two cars*  
De vwati

*-They have many apples.*  
Yo gen anpil póm.

### E. Possession

*-The shirt is yours.*  
Chemiz la se pou ou.

*-Your shirt.*  
Chemiz oua.

*-The car is hers.*  
Vwati a se pou li.

*-Her car.*  
Vwati li a.

*-The house is theirs.*  
Kay la se pou yo.

*-Their house.*  
Kay yo a.

-*The bag is ours.*  
Sak la se pou nou.

-*Our bag.*  
Sak nou an.

-*The blanket is mine.*  
Dra a se pou mwen.

-*My blanket.*  
Dra mwen an.

-*The dress belongs to her.*  
Wób la se pou li.

### *Morphology*

In turning to the morphology of Creole we will first look at verb inflection. First, verbs are never inflected for gender. The root verb is not inflected for tense; however, tense inflection is added as a separate morpheme *prior* to the verb, as identified with bold in the example below:

Li ale lekól.

Li **te** ale lekól.

*She goes to school.*

*She went to school.*

With regard to the topic of plurality inflection, we see that plurality is only expressed in the indication of number preceding the noun; the noun itself is not inflected:

Yon kreyon.

Senk kreyon.

*One pencil.*

*Five pencils.*

Concerning possession, we find that the article is never omitted, unlike English:

Vwati **a** se pou li.  
car **the** is hers.  
*The car (is) hers.*

Vwati li **a**.  
car her **ART**.  
*Her car.*

The following are my observations concerning Creole articles:

<u>Follows Object</u>	<u>Precedes Object</u>	<u>Follows Subject (with Possessives)</u>
(the)	(a)	(the)
-la	-yon	-la
-a		-a

Concerning pronouns, there is no difference between regular pronouns and possessive pronouns.

### *Phonology*

Finally in turning to the Creole phonology it is important to look at both the vowel and consonant systems. Haitian-Creole has a ten-phoneme vowel system, which includes: /i/, /ɛ/, /e/, /e/, /a/, /ã/, /u/, /o/, /ç/, /õ/, /wi/, /w/, /y/ (Haitian Creole: The Sound System). Creole lacks a few vowels that are present in English, and contains some sounds such as various nasals that are not found in English, thanks to the French influence. In turning to the consonant system of the language, there are seventeen consonant phonemes, which are as follows: /p/, /b/, /f/, /v/, /m/, /t/, /d/, /s/, /z/, /n/, /l/, /r/, /j/, /ch/, /k/, /g/, /h/. Concerning overall pronunciation, “[t]here is a variation between North and South, however, and Port-au-Prince pronunciation (especially of vowels) tends to be more like French, since most of the bilingual Haitian Creole-French speakers live there” (Haitian Creole: The Sound System).

### Linguistic Analysis: Tok-Pisin

The same sort of observations can be made with regard to Tok-Pisin. The following are some language samples from Loreto Todd’s book *Modern Englishes: Pidgins and Creoles*.

1. (Todd, p. 174)

<i>Kapul</i>	<i>i go</i>	<i>long</i>	<i>wanpela</i>	<i>diwai na em</i>	<i>i lukim</i>	<i>wanpela</i>	<i>kumul.</i>
N.	V.go	PREP	SG.ART	N. and SG.PRO	V.see	SG.ART.a	N.
<b>The</b>	<b>tree</b>	<b>went</b>	<b>up</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>tree</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>saw</b>
							<b>a</b>
							<b>Bird of</b>
							<b>Paradise.</b>

2. (p. 177)

<i>Tupela</i>	<i>i go</i>	<i>bek</i>	<i>long</i>	<i>haus</i>	<i>bilong</i>	<i>kandere</i>
NUM.2	V.go	back	PREP.to	N.	PREP.of	N.
<b>The</b>	<b>two</b>	<b>went</b>	<b>back</b>	<b>to</b>	<b>their</b>	<b>relatives' house.</b>

3. (p. 178)

<i>Ol</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>bilong</i>	<i>maunten</i>	<i>i mekim</i>	<i>singsing.</i>
PL.PRO	N.	PREP.of	N.	V.	N.
<b>The</b>	<b>Highlanders</b>			<b>are</b>	<b>celebrating.</b>

### Syntax

As with the Creole text, certain linguistic observations can be drawn from the Tok-Pisin text. Tok-Pisin syntax is generally Subject-Verb-Object; however, it lacks certain syntactical structures that are present in Standard English, such as the passive (p. 199).

The following is an example of the basic SVO syntax of Tok-Pisin. It also demonstrates that adjectives precede the noun.

4. (p. 175)

<i>Wanpela</i>	<i>liklik</i>	<i>trausel</i>	<i>em</i>	<i>i lukim</i>	<i>bikpela</i>	<i>hos.</i>
NUM.1	ADJ	N.	SG.PRO	V.	ADJ	N.
<b>A</b>	<b>little</b>	<b>tortoise</b>		<b>looked (up at a)</b>	<b>big</b>	<b>horse.</b>
				<b>V</b>		<b>O (PP)</b>

Another example is as follows:

5. (p. 200)

<i>Yumi</i>	<i>kaikai</i>	<i>kaukau.</i>
PL.PRO	V.	N.
<b>Let's</b>	<b>eat</b>	<b>sweet potatoes.</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>O</b>

*Morphology*

Next is the category of morphology. Tok-Pisin verbs are *not* inflected for gender or for tense, which once again demonstrates the process of simplification from English, which does inflect for tense. It's interesting to note that many Tok-Pisin verbs use the ending *-im*; this is often attached to an English root-word as seen in the following (p. 194):

<i>lukim</i> (look-im)	<i>mekim</i> (make-im)
------------------------	------------------------

Tok-Pisin does make use of one verb-phrase marker, "i." The marker precedes the verb-phrase and seems to be a reiteration of the subject, similar to "the recapitulation of "he" in such sentences as: *That big man, he's a fool.*" (p. 194). The use of this marker is seen in the preceding examples 1, 2, 3, and 4. In place of inflecting verbs for tense, Tok-Pisin does make use of certain tense indicators preceding the verb, such as *bai* for future and *bin* for past. The similarity can easily be seen between these two indicators and the English words "by," also used to indicate the future in phrases such as "by and by," and "been," which is used in the past perfect and past perfect continuous tenses.

6. (p. 203)

<i>Mipela</i>	<i>bai</i>	<i>go.</i>
PL.PRO.	FUT	V.
<b>We</b>	<b>will</b>	<b>go.</b>

7. (p. 203)

<i>Mipela</i>	<i>bin</i>	<i>go.</i>
PL.PRO	PST.	V.
<b>We went.</b>		

As with Haitian-Creole, nouns are not inflected for plurality as they would be in English.

Instead plurality is shown with the use of numbers. For example:

8. (p. 164)

<i>wanpela man</i>	<i>tripela man</i>	<i>nainpela man</i>
one man	three men	nine men

This concept is also demonstrated in the following sentence:

9. (p. 174)

<i>Ol</i>	<i>i kisim</i>	<i>tupela</i>	<i>paul</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>wanpela</i>	<i>sipsip.</i>
PL.PRO	V.	NUM.	N.	and	NUM.	N.
They	caught	<b>two</b>	chickens	and	<b>one</b>	sheep.

Neither does Tok-Pisin make use of the “s” plural marker as English does. The following example is taken from the above sentence number five.

*kaukau*  
N.  
sweet potatoes

Possession is also expressed differently than in English. There are no possessive pronouns; neither is there possessive inflection, such as the apostrophe-s construction in English. Instead, Tok-Pisin makes use of the preposition “of,” expressed in the word *bilong*, derived from the English word “belong,” as seen in the following:

10. (p. 173)

<i>Em</i>	<i>haus</i>	<i>bilong</i>	<i>waitman.</i>
SG.PRO.it	N.	<b>PREP.of</b>	N.
That’s	<b>a European’s house.</b>		

A final observation concerns the use of articles: Tok-Pisin does not use articles, neither definite nor indefinite.

*Phonology*

Concerning the category of phonology, Tok-Pisin has eight vowels, three of which are diphthongs. This creates a well-balanced phonology system of front, back and central vowels. They are as follows: /i/, /e/, /a/, /o/, /u/, /ai/, /au/, /oi/. Loreto Todd notes that “[d]iphthongs are relatively uncommon in TP, except in idiolects which have been influenced by SE. Frequently, /ai/ is realized as /e/ so that for many speakers *wel* can mean “wild” as well as “oil” and some speakers either monophthongise /au/ and /oi/ or realize them both as /ɔ/. As more and more speakers become literate, however, spelling will reinforce and possibly extend the use of the three diphthongs” (Todd, p. 162-163). Tok-Pisin is a syllable-timed language, meaning that each syllable receives the same length; one syllable will not receive a longer duration except perhaps for emphasis (p. 162). Concerning the consonants, Tok-Pisin has eighteen in all. It is telling of the decreolization phase that older-generation speakers may use only fourteen consonants, leaving out /h/, /j/, and /y/; they may also not differentiate between /p/ and /f/. This increase in phonology differentiation in younger generations is probably largely due to increased literacy; it also may be evidence of some decreolization, in conforming to the mother-tongue norms of phonology. A point of differentiation between Tok-Pisin and English is the fact that they often divide consonant clusters by inserting a vowel, usually /i/, /a/, or /u/. This is demonstrated in the following words:

*s-a-tap*— stop, stay

*g-i-rin* – green

*k-u-ru* – sprout, shoot  
(p. 163)

## Current Status and Usage

### *Overview*

A final component of understanding the process of pidginization as manifested in Tok-Pisin and Haitian-Creole is investigating these languages with regard to their current status and usage as modern-day languages. In turning to the status of Tok-Pisin, there are approximately 4,000,000 second-language speakers per a 2003 SIL report and about 50,000 monolingual speakers. It is one of three official languages of Papua New Guinea, the other two being English and Motu (SIL International). Despite the existence of these additional official languages, Tok Pisin is still “the most frequently used language in Parliament and commerce” and is also used in the public domains of schools, churches, and government (SIL International). It is important to note that Papua New Guinea is home to over 850 languages, making it one of the most multi-lingual countries in the world (Litteral, 1999). This fact is important in understanding Tok-Pisin’s use as a lingua franca. It’s not hard to imagine the indigenous people’s desire to maintain the language as a lingua franca after the pidgin’s initial creation for communicating among such a broad range of speakers

Haitian Creole is one of two official languages in Haiti, Creole and French, and is spoken by about 5.7 million speakers; it was granted this official status in 1961. Although 90-95 percent of the Haitian population are monolingual speakers of Creole, these speakers are considered socially inferior to the educated elite who are bilingual in Haitian Creole and Standard French. The inferior status of Haitian-Creole continues to be a major restriction in terms of the extent to which it is used in various spheres of Haitian society today. Creole does have a place as a language of newspapers, radio programs, and

television, and has its own dictionary, grammar, and Bible translation which was published in 1989. However, the perpetually-elite status of French is demonstrated in French being the primary language of government, business, and education (*Haiti: Creole, Literacy, and Education*, 2006).

### *Education*

One important realm of usage related to both Tok Pisin and Haitian Creole as lingua francas is that of education. It is through education and literacy that a language will be further stabilized and dispersed. Because of this, the language in which education is conducted will be a strong determining factor of a pidgin's life-cycle. If education is conducted in the European mother tongue, the pidgin is likely to continue into the decreolization phase because of the ongoing influence of the mother language. If education is conducted using the pidgin language, the pidgin will likely remain in the creolized stage. It will also become increasingly standardized as literacy spreads, and will acquire more and more vocabulary to accommodate the wider range of contexts. Viewing Tok-Pisin and Haitian Creole and their use in education will offer a more intimate understanding of the status and use of these two languages in their respective countries of Papua New Guinea and Haiti, and will help determine their respective positions in the life-cycle.

### *Haiti education.*

In Haiti, the condescending view of Creole has reverberated strongly within the educational sphere and has consequently been passed from generation to generation. Because both the upper *and* lower classes of society view the Creole language as a mere vernacular, the upper classes have generally wanted education of the masses to be in

Creole, while the poor want it in French. Because French is the language of the elite, the poor masses view learning the French language as a key to social mobility. While there was a line of thinking among the elite that education in Creole would make education more accessible to the masses, “[t]he poor tended to view education more as a means of escaping poverty than as a means for learning, so many parents were most concerned about having their children learn French” (Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress). These were two general mentalities going into the 1970s, which became the decade of trial-and-error educational reform in Haiti.

Haiti’s education reform began with establishing the orthography of Creole. Because Creole spelling rules were debated for decades prior to this time, the National Pedagogic Institute, or Institut Pédagogique Nacional, finally combined the various elements of two orthographic systems that had been used until that time. Still the new system was only given “semiofficial” status by the government at this time (Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress). Yet most students still maintained the mentality that French was their key to success. A major downfall of the 1970s reform was that Creole instruction was only mandated for primary schools: “[u]nder pressure from the public, the government declared that students would begin using French when they entered the fifth grade. Students entering fifth grade found themselves unprepared for classroom use of French...” (Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress).

Another major aspect of education is that of adult literacy. Two phases of the adult literacy movement, the first sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church, and the second sponsored by the government occurred in the 1960s and 1980s respectively. The big picture concerning development in this area can be assessed by using 2003 adult

illiteracy statistics from a U.N. Common Database. Note that “adult illiteracy” is defined as “the proportion who cannot, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement in everyday life” (Indicator: Adult Illiteracy, 2003). While adult illiteracy rates have dropped from 69.5 percent in 1980 to 47.1 percent in 2003, in the global picture Haiti ranks 20<sup>th</sup> in the world for the highest percentage of adult illiteracy; in comparison Papua New Guinea ranks 30<sup>th</sup>. The amount of literature produced and circulated in a language is a major indicator of that language’s prominence and influence. While Creole is used in the media, as previously stated, literature as such was still very scarce as Haiti moved into the 1980s.

*Papua New Guinea education.*

The scene in Papua New Guinea is much more positive with regard to the use of Tok-Pisin in education. Since 1955 the educational policy of Papua New Guinea has been one in which English was the sole mode of instruction used in the classroom (Klaus). This is certainly not unusual since English is one of the official languages; however, it was used in schools to the exclusion of the vernaculars and Tok-Pisin, one of three official languages and the lingua franca. This old system operated under the assumption that vernaculars, lingua francas and English could not function in a complementary manner. This trend began to change as a result of evaluation and proposals for reform.

The year 1986 saw the commencement of “the first attempt to develop a concept of education that was Papua New Guinean in perspective and not a revision of the colonial philosophy inherited from the Australians” (Litteral, 2001). Their hope was to intentionally integrate the use of vernaculars, including Tok-Pisin, into the classroom; their proposed method specifically suggested that the first three years of schooling be

completed in the vernacular. Then, in 1989 a national language and education policy was adopted, recognizing the “provincial, community and NGO efforts of a decade on behalf of vernacular education” (Litteral, 1999). Some restructuring reform took place in 1991. The resulting policy is not mandatory, but is adhered to on a voluntary basis; therefore, it can only “encourage” the following strategies:

1. Vernacular preparatory schools for children before they enter grade one.
  2. Vernacular literacy in grade one where there are no vernacular preparatory schools
  3. Grade one bridging classes where there are vernacular preparatory classes in which vernacular literacy continues and English is introduced
  4. The use of the vernacular in non-core subjects in grades one to six
  5. Vernacular literacy maintenance through grade 6
  6. Vernacular activities in secondary and tertiary education
  7. Vernacular literacy and basic education for adults and out-of-school youth
- (Litteral, 2001).

The policy’s major goal was to simultaneously promote literacy and multilingualism. Literacy was to be obtained first in the students’ vernacular, and then extended to include one of the national languages, Tok-Pisin or Hiri Motu, and finally English (Litteral, 1999). It is important to note stage *three* in particular because it shows how the various languages of PNG can be complementary. This stage also demonstrates the encouragement of multilingualism in a country of many languages. The policy as a whole does not entirely ignore the old English-education philosophy, which “focused on western values and used the education system and English as a means of making Papua

New Guinea into a nation that would be politically independent in the modern world” (Litteral, 2000). But it focuses on improving what the old system lacked, which was recognition of the validity of vernacular languages as a medium of education. In locations where Tok-Pisin is the main vernacular, it might be chosen as the language for instruction in schools.

Another great emphasis of educational reform was to make education relevant to the students as well as to the community. When students attend a school where they are learning in their mother tongue, the subject matter becomes more applicable to their everyday lives. The reform “seeks to make education more culturally relevant to the student in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding of the world needed to function in PNG communities today” (Litteral, 2001). This also involves a shifting of emphasis from western culture and western pedagogy to focus more on the skills and knowledge necessary to live and be successful in a Papua New Guinean community. This educational reform has been extremely relevant and beneficial for the communities as well because matters such as curriculum development, supervision, and even choosing the language to be the medium of instruction were placed in the hands of the community (Litteral, 2001). Concerning this process of choosing the language to be used, Robert Litteral notes in his article “Language Development in Papua New Guinea” that the language of choice is often the lingua franca, or Tok-Pisin. In the implementation of vernacular education, the community has been given the opportunity to be active producers of education, rather than passive consumers of western methods of education.

Much of the existing motivation to revamp the educational system stems from the need to keep Papua New Guinean children in school at all. Offering them education in

their own language makes education relevant to their lives and involves the surrounding communities in the process. Litteral shows his support for vernacular education by saying that “[T]he advantage of the vernacular for initial education will produce not only better educated, but also less alienated youth. This is good for society. Enabling the parents to understand and participate in the education of their children because the language of the community is used is good both for the student and for the society” (Litteral, 2001). Concerning the status of adult literacy in Papua New Guinea, as previously stated PNG ranks 30<sup>th</sup> in the world for adult illiteracy, which is still ten rankings above Haiti. The illiteracy rate has improved from 51.7 percent in 1980 to 34 percent in 2003 (Indicator: Adult Illiteracy).

### Conclusion

Haitian-Creole of Haiti and Tok-Pisin of Papua New Guinea serve as illuminating case studies of the linguistic phenomenon of pidginization. To gain a comprehensive understanding of this unique linguistic process it must be considered from social, historical, and linguistic perspectives. The histories of these respective countries both demonstrate a master-servant nature of contact. The degree of continuing influence from the European mother-tongue plays a defining role; not only does it determine the language’s current position within the pidgin life-cycle, but it also affects society’s view of the language which can either mobilize or stabilize the language within the life-cycle. An analysis of the syntax, morphology, and phonology of Haitian-Creole and Tok-Pisin demonstrates the existence of simplification within current language samples. It’s important to remember that these language samples are static snap-shots of a process that is continually subject to change. A discussion of the current status and uses of the

languages in their respective countries today offers a revealing glimpse at each language's current placement within the life-cycle. The degree of use within the realm of education plays a significant factor in the degree to which the language is stabilized. That degree of use in education is in turn influenced by the respective society's view of the language; this is a major difference between Haiti and Tok-Pisin. Pidginization is unique in that it is a sociolinguistic phenomenon encompassing both language creation and second language learning.

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