HUGO SCHUCHARDT'S VIEW OF SIMPLIFICATION IN PIDGIN AND CREOLE LANGUAGES

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The origin and nature of pidgin and creole languages has been subjected to more or less intense investigation since the 1880's by linguists and other social scientists. Almost everyone who has worked with these languages has been struck by their typological similarity to each other and by the predictable grammatical alterations they show with respect to the grammatical structures of the languages involved in their formation.

Thus, phonologically they tend toward a CV(CV) syllable structure, tend to avoid consonant clusters, prefer a single r/l liquid, etc. Lexically, the total roster of items is greatly reduced, with compensating polysemy. Syntactically, the functors of the target languages tend to disappear, the role of the contentors being augmented. Thus we see the articles, prepositions, and particles of various types in the target languages being eliminated and nouns, verbs, and adjectives gaining in syntactic importance by assuming functions of deixis, case relationship, and verbal auxiliary.

In the process of pidginization, let us define the source language or languages (L_s) as those spoken natively by the lower caste in an emerging relationship of slavery, indenture, contractual labor, or commercial transaction. The target language or languages (L_t) are those spoken by the dominant elite, who are directly or indirectly responsible for the societal disruption which caused L_t (or a pidginized meta-version of L_t) to become a model for second language learning by the lower caste. In this context, the term simplification will be defined as those typological similarities which characterize pidgin and creole languages as a group, and which contrast them with both L_s and L_t.

Since the 1880's, it has been recognized that the typological similarities in pidgins and creoles are explicable either by assuming 1) genetic relationship, whether in the traditional family-tree model or, more recently, by the interbranch magic of relexification, or 2) parallel development circumscribed by
universal physiological, psychological, or societal constraints. These constraints have been variously termed the rules of contrastive and interference linguistics, universals of language contact, the "simple register" of a language (Todd 1974 46, Ferguson 1971 143), the "inner form" of a language (Wilhelm von Humboldt, Schuchardt), the deep-structure-recovery hypothesis (Bickerton 1975 170), and so on.

The great flare up of interest in pidgins and creoles in the 1880's and 1890's was partly in reaction to the absolutist position in diachronic phonology maintained by the Neogrammarians. One of the most severe critics of the Neogrammarians was Hugo Schuchardt, an extremely industrious and insightful author whose works can still be read with profit today. Schuchardt wrote extensively on pidgin and creole languages in the 35 years preceding World War I. Aside from the 9 Creole Studies of the 1880's and 1890's, he wrote penetrating analyses of the Lingua Franca (1909) and Saramakkan English Creole in Surinam (1914). He was one of the few creolists who studied the problem of simplification from a broad, comparative point of view—something which might be called today a "social ontogeny" of pidginization. He assembled a large number of case studies available either in print or in manuscript, or for which data could be obtained through correspondence. The findings from these studies exercised considerable influence on the work of such scholars as Herskovits, Reinecke, Valkhoff, Hall, and Bickerton.

Schuchardt was always careful not to engage in speculation not warranted by (or far removed from) his data. From the outset he rejected the extreme position taken by Adolfo Coelho

"The Romance language based creole dialects, Indo-Portuguese, and the like owe their origin to the operation of psychological or physiological laws that are everywhere the same, and not to the influence of the former languages of the peoples among whom these dialects are found. The essential traits of these dialects are everywhere the same, notwithstanding differences of race, climate, geographic distances, and even the period of history involved. Thus, for example, one would look in vain within Indo-Portuguese for any influence whatsoever of Tamil or Singhalese. In the Portuguese Creole of Macao the formation of the plural by reduplication of the singular could be attributed to Chinese influence, but this process is so rudimentary or basic that no conclusion whatever can be drawn from it. In the dialect of the island of Sant'Iago muito muito is a superlative" (Coelho 1880 195)
Schuchardt’s procedure was approximately as follows

1) Identify $L_s$ and $L_t$. Labels for specific languages or language groupings may then be used as a compound designation of a pidgin or creole. $L_s$ is the first term of the compound, $L_t$ the last. For example, Anglo-Indian would mean that English is the source language and one or several Indic languages the target. Indian-English would mean the opposite. Similarly, the term Tagalog-Spanish means that Spanish is the target, in Hispano-Tagalog the reverse holds true (Schuchardt 1891 286 ff.).

2) Perform a comparison analysis of $L_s$ and $L_t$ for identification of patterns of errors or interference which constrain simplification. As far as possible, simplification is to be attributed to specific language interference. Schuchardt identifies 3 levels of interference:

   a) the superficial level (simplification of pronunciation),
   b) the mechanical level (simplification of lexicon),
   c) the mental level (simplification of inner form)

(Schuchardt 1883 125).

Schuchardt then proceeds to set up a hierarchy of difficulty based upon the inner form of $L_s$ and $L_t$. Thus, for example, if $L_1$ has $Y$ rules and $L_2$ has $Y+1$ rules, the result of any process of pidginization composed of $L_1$ and $L_2$ will favor the inner form of $L_1$ for this feature. Schuchardt illustrates this in the passive rule of Philippine Creole Spanish, where Tagalog (and Ilocano) are $L_s$ and Spanish $L_t$. Tagalog has a rule which requires passivization of an active sentence when the object NP is definite. Spanish has no such rule. Thus, "a Spaniard says mata (tú) esta gallina ['kill this chicken'], just as he says mata (tú) una gallina ['kill a chicken'], and this will not be difficult for a Tagalog to learn, it would be much harder for a Spaniard to distinguish between the Tagalog equivalent pataín mo itáng manúc ['let this chicken be killed by you'] and matáy ca nang isáng manúc ['you kill a chicken']" (Schuchardt 1883 130).

Phenomena which Coelho regards as universals of pidginization, Schuchardt tries to account for on a case-by-case basis. Reduplication and lack of copula are characteristic of Tagalog and thus of Philippine Creole Spanish. Schuchardt sees no need of further explanation despite the occurrence of these characteristics in many pidgins and creoles worldwide, a fact which he was surely aware of (Schuchardt 1883 136-138). Nevertheless, he maintains that "it is an entirely different matter when a German [trying to talk Italian] says questo non è bono 'this not good',
as opposed to a Tagalog [trying to talk Spanish] no bueno ese; in the former case the copula will appear in the second dozen vocabulary items, in the latter case it will still be missing even in the most fluent speech" (Schuchardt 1883 142).

3) After all such explanations are exhausted, step 3 is finally invoked. This involves what more recently have been called "developmental errors" in second language acquisition. Schuchardt calls them "phenomena which accompany the acquisition of every foreign language" (1883 142). By way of illustration, he cites the tendency for enclitics and proclitics of L1 to disappear in Lp, the pidginized product. Thus, we have Philippine Creole Spanish ¿cómo? for Standard Spanish ¿qué? ¿qué? 'what?, what do you say?', or the elimination of the weak stressed reflexive particle se in a sentence like ya conservé este lengua 'this language has been preserved' (Schuchardt 1883 142). More generally, Schuchardt explains the tendency for articles and prepositions to disappear in pidginization as a developmental error.

(Incidentally, a recent study of pidginization involving Foreign Workers' German as spoken by Southern Europeans and Turks in Germany showed that even in those cases where both the target and source languages possessed definite and indefinite articles, the articles failed to appear in the pidginized product, evidence which supports Schuchardt's "clitic theory" (Gilbert and Orlovic, ms.).)

As Schuchardt continued his detailed case studies of Romance and Germanic-based pidgins and creoles, he was driven to find a better (or supplementary) explanation for the similarities of simplification in pidginization. By 1909, the year his monograph on the Lingua Franca was published, he had moved closer to Coelho's position, but instead of putting emphasis on the learner, he now concentrated on the "teacher".

"All radical simplification (Radebrechen) of a language is a product of its native speakers, it is very similar to the way child language is based upon the simplifications which adults use when speaking to children (Ammensprache). Or if I may use a metaphor, it is not the foreigners who chip out single stones from a nice, tight building in order to build themselves miserable hovels, but it is the building's owners themselves who hand them the pieces for this purpose" (Schuchardt 1909 443). He now approves of Coelho's statement that "...a people of whatever country, finding itself in contact with strangers who do not speak its language, reduce it too (também), so to speak instinctively, stripping it of its grammatical forms in a way characteristic of the creole..."
dialects" (Coelho 1881 '67).

The common use in L₉ of an invariable infinitive for the verb and an invariable singular for the noun, Schuchardt sees as the doing of the European teachers. However because of the various grammatical differences in the pidgin and creole languages known to him, he conceived of simplification as representing a selection from a given range of possibilities. He left open the problem of whether all languages have a simple register and what the constraints on this might be (Schuchardt 1909 444-445).

In his 1914 monograph on Saramakkan English Creole in Surinam, he again touched on this problem. Here he edges still closer to Coelho by making teacher and learner jointly responsible for simplification. The language learning frames or scenarios—to use Fillmore's terminology—are very different in the genesis of a pidgin as contrasted to tutored or untutored second language learning, which proceeds in a "normal manner," (whatever that means). There is an overwhelming need to communicate, and fast "[The European teacher] strips the functors [alles Besondere] from the European language, and the non-European learner disregards or suppresses them. The two meet on a middle line!" (Schuchardt 1914 II).

For Schuchardt, the Negro Creoles with Dutch, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish L₉'s are similar not because of a common genetic origin—he was well aware of the considerable differences between the African L₉'s—but because of a parallelism due to the similar social and psychological frames of language teaching and learning. The same processes also account for the similarities of the Negro Creoles as a group as against the non-Negro Creoles (Schuchardt 1914 V).

On the whole, Schuchardt continued to favor culturally transmitted mechanisms of simplification (if one views foreigners' talk registers as being largely particularistic, not universal). The framework of inquiry and the approach to research that Schuchardt had established by 1914 has characterized most pidgin and creole studies since that date. The many new case studies with large amounts of published data (see for example Hancock 1971, and now Reinecke et al. forthcoming) and more sophisticated theoretical frameworks provided by various linguistic theories have contributed disappointingly little toward an explanatory theory of simplification. Derek Bickerton, for example, in what is surely one of the most insightful books on pidgin and creole languages to appear in many years, describes the simplifications observed in the
English Creole of Guyana as "...owe[ing] their nature to the distance between the polar grammars of the continuum [the basilect and acrolect]... the remoteness of the underlying basilectal grammar from standard English could derive from one of two origins either the retention of at least part of a pan-West African or at least pan-Kwa underlying system [the African-base hypothesis, and the one which Schuchardt surely would have supported, given the nature of Bickerton's evidence], or the surfacing of some yet more abstract system from a level at which Kwa and English (or, perhaps, any pair of languages) would be indistinguishable" (Bickerton 1975 167).

This second explanation, the deep-structure-recovery hypothesis, fits very nearly with what Coelho suggested as early as 1880, and it most probably would have been rejected by Schuchardt. To the end of his life he continued to advocate the strictly empirical approach of interference and developmental error analysis, followed by teaching and learning frame analysis, to use current terminology. Similarities of simplification in situations where genetic relationship is highly unlikely are seen as parallel development, which may rest ultimately on some kind of universals, but this must be shown empirically.

Bickerton goes on to say that despite the massive amount of data so far collected, "...the evidence for either hypothesis is extremely scant" (1975 167), although he then presents some considerations which incline him "slightly" toward the African-base hypothesis.

The case studies which underlie the work of Schuchardt, Coelho, Bickerton, and many others are all concerned with developing what could be called a "social ontogeny" of pidginization. A promising new line of research concentrates more on the individual or on small groups, on longitudinal studies of untutored second language learning, especially when such learning leads to pidginization (e.g., Milon ms, Schumann 1975). Pioneering work done by Charles Ferguson has shown that the simple register of English can be studied empirically and experimentally (Ferguson 1971, ms). These and other approaches now need to be extended to target languages other than English.

Although the tradition established by Schuchardt has been essentially preserved, we now need to go beyond it—a development which he himself would probably have welcomed. After all, his over-riding concern was a better understanding of the nature of language, and that, presumably, is our goal also.
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