

CODE SWITCHING IN HAWAIIAN CREOLE

Robert N. St. Clair
University of Louisville

Harold M. Murai
California State University - Sacramento

The speech community of the Hawaiian Islands is of theoretical interest to both the sociologist and the linguist. The reasons for this are clear. In the first place, it has a linguistic repertoire which is characteristic of multilingual societies. This is a direct consequence of the influx of immigrant labor from China, Korea, the Philippines, Okinawa, Japan, and Portugal and their social and linguistic contacts with the native Hawaiians and the English speaking colonialists. Hence, Hawaii is a veritable laboratory for sociolinguistic research. Secondly the varieties of speech range extensively and in accordance with the social demands of solidarity and status. This is particularly evident in the phenomenon of code switching where a native speaker of Hawaiian Creole can either shift towards a dialect of English, or towards a variety of immigrant speech when the social context of the situation demands it. Finally, the study of Creole languages such as the one to which this paper is directed has some very interesting implications for the "sociology of knowledge" because a Creole speaker attributes a different cognitive saliency to the lexical relations "push/pull," "bring/take," and "come/go" when he speaks Hawaiian Creole, than when he switches to standard English. These sundry concepts and their relevance to the field of sociolinguistics are the central topics of this paper.

Multilingual Societies

The multiplicity of languages in Hawaii is one of its most prominent characteristics. This situation is the result of two major influxes of immigrant labor into the plantation systems of Hawaii (Reinecke, 1935; Tsuzaki, 1959). The native Hawaiians formed the basic labor force when the sugar plantations were first established in 1835. But this force was soon found to be inadequate, and it was supplemented by an ingress of labor from China in 1852. These first immigrants were the Hakkas, Yup, and Chung Shan of the Kwangtung province. They were followed in 1872 by the Portuguese who came from the islands of Madeira and Sao Miguel in the Azores. By 1884 the first major wave of immigrants culminated with the Japanese from Honshuu, Kyuushuu, and Okinawa. Later, however, the pineapple plantations that were established in 1903 created a new demand for labor, and as a consequence, a second major wave of immigrants began in 1910. This second

influx included the Koreans, the Puerto Ricans, and the Filipinos. This last group was also comprised of some Tagalog speakers, Bisayans, Ilocanos, and Pangasinans.

It should be noted that although these languages actually co-occur in Hawaii, they are by no means equally accessible to all of its inhabitants. The linguistic repertoire which one commands is contingent upon the ancestral language of one's parents, the immigrant languages of one's neighbors, and the quality of the educational system in which one participates. Hence, it is not surprising for one to have a productive command of such languages as English, Portuguese, and Creole, but only a receptive competence in Hawaiian and Japanese. Evidently the languages of one's peer group constitute a major factor in establishing one's communicative competence.

Diglossia and Code Switching

In an insightful sociolinguistic article, Charles Ferguson (1959) wrote about the phenomenon of diglossia. This refers to a situation in which several languages or varieties of speech are available to the members of the speech community, but not all of these linguistic codes have the same social value. At one end of the spectrum of speech is the official language of the government, and at the other end is the vernacular of the common people. In the case of the speech of Hawaii we find that English is the official language which is employed by the media, the educational systems and the government. The common speech, on the other hand, is not so readily discernable. It may range from any one of the immigrant languages (Knowlton, 1960; Nagara, 1972) to Pidgin English (Hawaiian Creole) or to some other version of English (Carr, 1972).

The method by which native speakers of the Creole language of Hawaii transverse from one end of the speech spectrum to the other in the course of their daily communication is known as "code switching." Along the Hawaii language continuum, numerous codes are available, but not all of them command the same level of productiveness. For example, it would be more difficult to give explicit technical instructions in some codes than others. The selection of a code is contingent upon the social situation and considerations such as the desire for maintaining in-group status, presenting oneself as educated or making oneself understood with a speaker of a different code.

One common device for code switching is that of intonation. If in the course of speaking English one wishes to express his allegiance to the in-group of Creole speakers, he may do so by means of imposing one of several intonational patterns on his English dialogue. He may choose the stacatto effect of such syllable-timed languages as Hawaiian and Japanese, or he may impose the rhythmical and melodic intonation of the Azores dialect of Portuguese, or he may impose the pitch pattern of the language of the Philippines. The choice of which intonational patterns that one employs is dependent, in part, on the language background of the speaker, and the linguistic background of the other members of the group who are participating in the speech act.

A second device for code switching involves the lexicon. In the course of a conversation one may choose to employ words from English, Japanese, Portuguese, Chinese, Korean, Puerto Rican, and Hawaiian. This is evident in the following semantically equivalent sentences.

NEGATIVE TAGS

You didn't see John, did you?

When one switches from English to Creole he replaces his English tag questions with those of the Portuguese and the Puerto Rican patterns.

AFFIRMATIVE TAGS

You went stay see John, eh?

NEGATIVE TAGS

You never stay see John, eh?

Another Portuguese influence which is evident in the process of code switching can be seen in the following semantically equivalent sentences.

STANDARD ENGLISH

John went to the store in order to buy some bread.

HAWAIIAN CREOLE

John stay go store for buy bread.

The preposition "for" in Hawaiian Creole is a relexification of the Portuguese form "para" and it means "in order to." It is important to note that when one switches from English to Creole the grammatical functor "to" of English is disambiguated.

STANDARD ENGLISH

John promised to make her happy.

HAWAIIAN CREOLE

John stay promise to make her happy. (what)
John stay promise for make her happy. (why)

In English the form "to" can either mean "what" John promised, or "why" he promised it. In Creole the former is expressed by the functor "to," and the latter by "for." Since this distinction also occurs in Puerto Rican Spanish and Portuguese, this suggests that these languages may have been the source for the distinction in the Creole language of Hawaii via the process of relexification.

PUERTO RICAN SPANISH

Juan ha prometido de hacerla contenta. (what)
Juan ha prometido para hacerla contenta. (why)

Another syntactic device employed in code switching is the deletion of the copula. In Standard English the auxiliary verb "to be" cannot be deleted in an independent sentence.

STANDARD ENGLISH

David is happy.

HAWAIIAN CREOLE

David happy.

In Hawaiian creole the copula need not be lexically overt, and it appears that this could be an influence from Hawaiian, as the examples below further illustrate.

STANDARD ENGLISH

Davis is a good man.

HAWAIIAN CREOLE

David good.

HAWAIIAN

Kawika maikai.
(David good)

What these linguistic variations demonstrate is not only that Hawaiian Creole has a wide range of speech varieties in its repertoire, but also that the phenomenon of code switching is contingent upon the social context of the speech act. Such a process of code switching is not unique as it also occurs in English. It is only because of the multilingual nature of the speech community of Hawaii that code switching is so clearly apparent.

Lexical Relations

The fact that the lexicon of a language is structured is not new to linguists and lexicographers. They have always known that words have synonyms and antonyms. What is new, however, is the linguistic insight that the lexical items of a language are transformationally derived.

CAUSATION

John caused Mary to die.
John killed Mary.

INCHOATIVES

The metal came to be liquid.
The metal became liquid.
The metal liquified.

SEMANTIC NEUTRALIZATION

John cracked the egg.
 John snapped the twig.
 John tore the paper.
 John broke the record.

versus

John broke the egg.
 John broke the twig.
 John broke the paper.
 John broke the record.

CONVERSE LEXICAL RELATIONS

John sold a book to Mary/Mary bought a book from John
 John pulled the straw out/John pushed the straw in

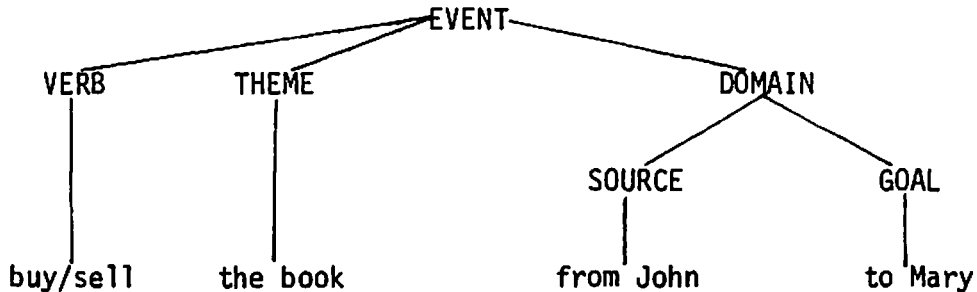
The concepts of semantic neutralization and converse lexical relations are of special interest to our explication of Hawaiian Creole. In the case of the former, one finds that where Standard English has such lexical contrasts as "break," "crack," "tear," and "snap," Hawaiian Creole only has one lexical form, viz. "break." It would appear from this fact that this singular lexical item is inadequate to convey the numerous nuances of expression available to the speaker of Standard English. This line of reasoning, however, is deceptive because both languages share the same semantic domains, and hence their differences are superficial. At an abstract level of analysis the lexical items "break," "tear," "snap," and "crack" all share the same meaning, viz. "break," but in Standard English the material nature of the object which is broken requires a special verb form. Hence, if a paper is broken, then the verb "tear" must be used. Similarly, if an egg is broken, then the verb "crack" must be used. The concept of semantic neutralization is important because it provides counter evidence to the claim that if the lexicon of a language differs substantially, then the cognition of the speakers of this language would also differ. This cannot be the case because such lexical differences are rather superficial.

The converse lexical relations are also important to our discussion of Hawaiian Creole in that such lexical pairs as "push/pull" and "come/go" frequently present difficulties for the native speaker of the Creole language of Hawaii. But the confusion of lexical relations is not unique in the experience of the speech community of Hawaii. When children acquire their first language they frequently confuse converse lexical relations. Similarly, when students learn another language, they encounter this same problem. Furthermore, converse lexical relations are combined in some dialects of English, as well as in the standard dialects of the language. The former occurs in the conflation of "teach" and "learn," and the latter can be found in the conflation of "rent to" and "rent from." In some languages these are different words.

An interesting theoretical proposal of the concept of converse relations can be found in the writings of Gruber (1965). In his theory of lexical relations, the verbs "buy" and "sell" are considered to be mere surface variants of a more abstract verb which we shall represent as "buy/sell." Hence the following sentences are derived from the same abstract underlying structure.

John sold the book to Mary.
 Mary bought the book from John.

Note that in both cases the object which is transported, viz. the book, is the same object. In both cases the source of the movement, is John, and the goal is Mary. Gruber derives both of these sentences from the following deep structure.



If the goal of the sentence is moved towards the front of the sentence by the syntactic process of topicalization, then the following derivational history takes place.

DEEP STRUCTURE

buy/sell the book from John to Mary

TOPICALIZATION

to Mary buy/sell the book from John

PREPOSITION DELETION

Mary buy/sell the book from John

VERB SELECTION

Mary bought the book from John.

When the source of the deep structure sentence is topicalized, then it will have the following derivation.

DEEP STRUCTURE

buy/sell the book from John to Mary

TOPICALIZATION

from John buy/sell the book to Mary

PREPOSITION DELETION

John buy/sell the book to Mary

VERB SELECTION

John sold the book to Mary.

What is interesting about Gruber's analysis of "buy" and "sell" is not only that it adequately accounts for the verbs and their associated prepositions, but it also provides insight into the general problem of lexical relations. The problem appears to be one of directionality. The object is transported from the source to the goal, and this fact is clear when the prepositions "to" and "for" occur in the sentence. This means that directionality is recoverable from the surface structures. When these prepositions are missing, on the other hand, it presents a problem in data processing. The distinction between the lexical items now carry the burden of directionality. Hence, the meaning of "rent" is clear in the expressions "rent to" and "rent from," but when the prepositions are missing it is not at all clear whether "rent" means the former or the latter. It is this same problem of directionality that explains why native speakers of Hawaiian Creole confuse, for example, the lexical relations of "push" and "pull." If when approaching a door which is clearly marked "push in" or "pull out," then no difficulty in interpreting the correct meaning of these forms should occur. But if only the words "push" and "pull" are written on a door, then there is insufficient information provided to recover the intended meaning of the lexical items. Hence, one resorts to trial and error in the hope that he may achieve the desired outcome.

Conclusion

Code switching is a common phenomenon in language, but particularly obvious in the Creole language of Hawaii where the linguistic repertoire is broad in its range of speech varieties. Numerous linguistic devices are employed in carrying out this function. They include intonation, the lexicon, and grammatical rules. The context in which such functions occur is sociolinguistic. An interesting aspect of the role that the lexicon plays in code switching is observed in the areas of semantic neutralization and converse lexical relations.

References

- Carr, Elizabeth B.
1972 Da kine talk; from Pidgin to Standard English in Hawaii. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Ferguson, Charles A.
1959 Diglossia. *Word*, XV: 325-340.
- Gruber, Jeffrey.
1965 Studies in lexical relations. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Knowlton, Edgar C. Jr.
1960 Portuguese in Hawaii. *Kentucky Foreign Language Quarterly*, VII: 221-228.

Nagara, Susumu

1972 Japanese Pidgin English in Hawaii; A bilingual description.
Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Reinecke, John E.

1935 Language and dialect in Hawaii. Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Hawaii.

Tsuzaki, Stanley M. (ed.)

1969 Language and dialect in Hawaii. Revised and edited version of Reinecke, 1935. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.