



The Role of Second Language Acquisition in the Genesis of Pidgins and Creoles:

Typological parallels and disparities

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Sandra Götz,
Magnus Huber & Viveka Velupillai

Justus Liebig University, Giessen



1. Context

- Pidgins/Creoles characterized by a certain degree of “formal simplicity - that is, simplicity in the quantitative rather than psycholinguistic sense. In other words, one variety is considered simpler or less complex than another if it has fewer components and fewer rules, but it is not necessarily easier to process.” (Siegel 2008: 189):
- Simplification as a universal process of SLA
- Transfer from substrate languages



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1. Context

I. Parallels of SLA and P/C (e.g. Schumann 1974, 1978; Wode 1981)

- “Imperfect learning theory”: Simplification as a result of imperfect learning of the lexifier language (cf. Siegel 2008)
- Pidginization resembles early SLA processes
- Creolization late SLA processes
- Study of Schumann (1978) showed parallels of SLA and P/C features



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1. Context

II. Disparities of SLA and P/C (cf. Siegel 2008)

- Pidginization does not necessarily include processes of simplification
- No definable process of simplification exists
- Clear presence of substrate features in many creoles
- Pidginization as a process that results in a new language and not a simplified superstrate language



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1. Context

III. Research Question

***Can features typical of language acquisition processes be found in Pidgin/Creole languages?
If so, do these features exist in other languages as well?***



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2. Pilot Study: Database & methodology

I. Methodology

- Step 1: Collect features typical of SLA**
- Step 2: Check if these features are present in Pidgin/Creole languages**
(Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures; APICS; Michaelis et al. forthcoming)
- Step 3: Compare to other languages of the world**
(World Atlas of Language Structures; WALS; Haspelmath et al. 2005)



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2. Pilot Study: Database & methodology

II. Database

Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures (APICS; Michaelis et al. forthcoming) <http://lingweb.eva.mpg.de/apics>

- covers 76 pidgin and creole languages
- comparable synchronic data on the grammatical and lexical structures
- 120 investigated features
- contains the most widely studied Atlantic and Indian Ocean creoles
- but also less well known pidgins and creoles from Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Melanesia and Australia, including some extinct varieties, and several mixed languages.

2. Pilot Study: Database & methodology

II. Database



Figure 1: Map of languages included in APICS (Michaelis et al. forthcoming)

2. Pilot Study: Database & methodology

120 Features in APICS by feature area (Michaelis et al. forthcoming), e.g.

Phonology (A)

Syllable Codas (Feature 119)
Syllable Onsets (Feature 118)

Morphology (B)

Functions of Reduplication (Feature 26)

Nominal Categories (C)

Nominal Classifiers (Feature 36)
Vocative Marker (Feature 107)

Nominal Syntax (D)

Nominal and Verbal Conjunction (Feature 72)
Pronoun Conjunction (Feature 20)

Verbal Categories (E)

Tense-Aspect Systems (Feature 49)
The Prohibitive (Feature 56)

Word Order (F)

Order of Adjective and Noun (Feat. 3)
Order of Adposition and Noun Phrase (Feature 4)

Argument marking (G1)

Ditransitive ('Give') Constructions (Feature 60)
Going to Named Places (Feature 80)

Valence and voice (G2)

Reciprocal and Reflexive Constructions (Feature 89)

Negation and questions (G3)

Polar Questions (Feature 103)
Position of Standard Negation (Feature 101)

Predication (G4)

Comparative Adjective Marking (Feature 41)
Comparative Standard Marking (Feature 42)

Complex sentences (H)

Direct Object Relative Clauses
Subject Relative Clauses (Feat.92)

Lexicon (I)

Hand and Arm (Feature 112)
Hear and Smell (Feature 115)

2. Pilot Study: Database & methodology

II. Database

online-version of the **World Atlas of Language Structures** (WALS; Dreyer & Haspelmath 2011); <http://wals.info>

- covers up to 2678 languages in 510 genera and 212 families
- 192 investigated features; A WALS feature has between 2 and 28 different values

2. Pilot Study: Database & methodology

III. Investigated features typical of SLA processes

- Negation is realized by one single word/particle
- Placement of a negative particle in preverbal position to indicate negation
- Reduced or absent nominal plural marking
- Minimal distinctions in pronouns to refer to speaker/hearer/third person
- Deletion of subject pronouns
- Rarely distinct use of demonstratives
- No numeral classifiers
- No inversion of word order in questions

(Schumann 1978; Klein & Perdue 1997)

3. Findings

I. Negation is realized by one single word/particle

Negative Morpheme Types (Feature 100)	APICS	WALS (N=1159)
1) Negative affix	8%	34%
2) Negative auxiliary verb	8%	4%
3) Negative word (unclear if auxiliary verb or particle)	17%	6%
4) Negative particle	87%	79%
5) Double negative marker	8%	10%

3. Findings

II. Placement of a negative particle in preverbal position to indicate negation

Negative Morpheme Types (Feature 100)	APICS	WALS (144)
1) The negative marker precedes the verb	83%	50%
2) The negative marker immediately follows the verb	5%	4%
3) The negative marker follows the verb plus a postverbal object	6%	0.2%
4) A bipartite negative marker precedes and immediately follows the verb	--	14%
5) bipartite negative marker precedes and follows the verb plus a postverbal object	6%	n/a
6) other	--	30%

3. Findings

III. Reduced or absent nominal plural marking

Feature Options	APICS	WALS
1) The language has no nominal plural at all	9.5%	9.6%
2) Plural only in human nouns, variable	4.1%	6.9%
3) Plural only in human nouns, invariant	0.01%	13.7%
4) Plural in human and inanimate nouns, variable in both	62%	18.9%
5) Plural in human and inanimate nouns, variable in inanimates	0.03%	5.2%
6) Plural in human and inanimate nouns, invariant in both	20.3%	45.8%

3. Findings

IV. Minimal distinctions in pronouns to refer to speaker/hearer/third person

Feature Options	APICS	WALS (N=378)
1) No gender distinctions	79.2%	67.2%
2) Gender distinctions in 3rd person singular only	16.7%	16.1%
3) Gender distinctions in 3rd person non-singular only	--	0.3%
4) Gender distinctions in 3rd person only, but in both singular and non-singular	4.2%	18.9%
5) Gender distinctions in 3rd person plus 1st and/or 2nd person	--	4.8%
6) Gender distinctions in 1st and/or 2nd person but not 3rd	--	0.5%

3. Findings

V. Person Syncretism

Person Syncretism in Independent Personal Pronouns (Feature 16)	APICS	WALS 41 (N=198)
1) No syncretism	89%	40%
2) 1st/2nd person plural syncretism	4%	30%
3) 2nd/3rd person plural syncretism	7%	
4) Other type of syncretism	--	30%

3. Findings

VI. Rarely distinct use of demonstratives

Distance Contrasts in Demonstratives (33)	APICS	WALS 41 (N=234)
1) No distance contrast	19%	3%
2) Two-way contrast	64%	54%
3) Three-way contrast	15%	38%
4) Four-way contrast	1%	3%
5) Five (or more)-way contrast	--	2%

3. Findings

VII. No numeral classifiers

Numeral Classifiers (Feature 36)	APICS	WALS (55) (N=400)
1) The language has no numeral classifiers	95%	80%
2) The language has numeral classifiers	5%	20%

3. Findings

VIII. No inversion of word order in questions

Polar Questions (Feature 103)	APICS	WALS (116A) N=954
1) Initial question particle	19%	62%
2) Final question particle	28%	
3) Interrogative verb morphology	1%	18%
4) Question particle and interrogative verb morphology	--	18.9%
5) Interrogative word order	5%	1%
6) Absence of declarative morphemes	--	0.4%
7) No special marking apart from interrogative intonation	93%	18%

3. Findings

Summary of findings

- Investigated SLA features are present in P/C languages and show parallel patterns;
 - However, they are also parallel to the majority of the languages of the world represented in WALS
 - Parallels rather reflect elements of **language universals**
- P/C languages show similar patterns to the languages of the world represented in WALS
 - P/C languages show less variation in realization of the features
 - P/C universals across different languages with different developmental processes?

4. Caveats and outlook

- Non-exhaustive list of SLA features; very small number of analyzed features
 - Tendencies observable that warrant future investigations
- Various prototypical SLA features not annotated/found in APICS and/or WALS, e.g. Siegel (2008):
 - No inflection
 - No/only few quantifiers used
 - No/only few prepositions
 - Use of temporal adverbs rather than grammatical Tense/Mood/Aspect markers
- Taking into consideration substrate **and** superstrate languages to explain emerging patterns and characteristics

Thank you very much...

... we are looking forward to your questions and comments !



Sandra.Goetz@anglistik.uni-giessen.de
Magnus.Huber@anglistik.uni-giessen.de
Viveka.Velupillai@email.de

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