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Secret speech is a traditional part of many Melanesian societies. Sometimes this has led to the creation of virtually entirely new languages which are used to hide information from members of the opposite sex, the uninitiated, foreigners, or spirits. Two examples are given of pidgin languages developed at Papua New Guinean boarding schools which exhibit many of the social characteristics of traditional secret speech. One of these, Rabaul Creole German, has become the native language of the descendants of its first speakers.

The Relationship Between Traditional Secret Languages and Two School-Based Pidgin Languages in Papua New Guinea

Craig Volker

Craig Volker is a degree participant from the United States with the Institute of Culture and Communication, East-West Center. He is a doctoral student in linguistics at the University of Hawaii.

All languages have metaphors, slang, and inside jokes to keep information hidden from certain persons in a society. In Papua New Guinean languages this is also true, but in many cases information is in an entirely different language as well, not mutually intelligible with the ordinary language of the community. The fact that there are so many secret languages in so many widely separated societies made at least one early researcher to postulate that all Papua New Guinean languages are composed of a "straight language" component and a "secret language" component (Anfinger, 1947).

In at least two situations in Papua New Guinea, new pidgin languages have developed in the multilingual environment of boarding schools. In each case, one of the reasons given by the speakers of these new pidgin languages for their creation or maintenance has been that speakers wanted both to be separate from another group

at the school and to be able to speak about certain things in private in the presence of that group. Schools are, of course, a relatively newly introduced institution in Melanesia, but because secret languages have existed for so long in so many Papua New Guinean societies, the question arises whether these new secret languages are a continuation of that tradition rather than a completely new phenomenon of the modern world.

As Laycock (1977) reports, different Melanesian societies use secret languages for different purposes. The most common one is to create a feeling of solidarity when forced to deal with outsiders. Often an entire language community will change the lexical items or simplify the grammatical structure of ordinary speech whenever speaking with foreigners. In some societies, such as the Tolai, a secret language can be used among initiated men, to the exclusion of women, children, and uninitiated men of their own society. Secret languages can exist to hide a conversation from the ears of nonhumans as well, so that animals or birds being hunted will not be able to eavesdrop (Laycock, 1977), or so that people can speak without being understood by evil spirits (Franklin, 1972).

All secret languages are created by various processes of lexical change. In some cases, words from a foreign language are inserted into sentences constructed according to the rules of the "straight" variety of the language. In at least one area in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, the same secret language is used by speakers of three different languages (Franklin, 1972). In some cases both the grammatical structure and the vocabulary are changed, with the grammatical irregularities becoming regularized and the meanings of words becoming much broader.

This regularization of the grammar and broadening of the meaning of the vocabulary is similar to what has been observed in the process of pidginization, not only in the nation's two major *lingue franche*, Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin English) and Hiri Motu (Police Motu), but also in two pidgin languages used only among boarding school students. The earliest known school-based pidgin language in Papua New Guinea was the language now known as Rabaul Creole German or Unserdeutsch (literally "our German"). This language developed in the orphanage opened in 1898 by Catholic missionaries at Vunapope, near Rabaul on New Britain, for the mixed-race children of indigenous mothers and fathers from Europe, Asia and

Micronesia. At first, the school served only abandoned or unwanted children brought in by village leaders. With the Australian invasion in World War I and the subsequent repatriation of German nationals, however, the number of students increased, as many German men who had been living with indigenous women left their children at the orphanage and returned the women to their home villages before they themselves were repatriated. After establishing control, the early Australian administration also often forcibly removed mixed-race children who were being raised with their mothers' clans in traditional villages to the school.

The prepubescent children were brought to the school speaking a number of different languages. Many spoke the language of the Lolais. Others spoke other indigenous languages or one of several immigrant languages, such as Amboinese, Cantonese, Tagalog, Trukese, Malay or German. Most had a reasonable knowledge of the early form of Tok Pisin. There were, of course, many children who were still toddlers when they were brought to the orphanage. Within the school, the language of instruction and communication with the German and Dutch teaching and mission staff was German.

When the orphanage first opened, all three of the conditions for the establishment of a pidgin language mentioned by Hymes (1971) were present: a confluence of different languages with one, German, dominating; distinct boundaries between the languages; and, given the authoritarian pedagogical practices of the time, considerable social distance between the students and staff. Thus, a pidgin German (*Unserdeutsch*) developed among the students which seems to have at least initially been a relexified form of Tok Pisin; i.e., Tok Pisin with most of the English words replaced by German words learned in the classroom. This can be seen in the following equivalents of "Where are you running?"

STANDARD GERMAN: "Wohin laufst du?"
(literally "where-to run you?")

TOK PISIN: "Yu ran i go we?"
(literally "You run go where?")

UNSERDEUTSCH: "Du laufen geht wo?"
(literally "You run go where?")

Great emphasis was placed on learning standard German and most students educated before the end of World War II (when formal instruction in German came to an end) were for all practical purposes virtually on a par with nonacademic native speakers in Germany. This did not mean that they abandoned their pidgin German. Among the school children, both new arrivals and the descendants of the first intake of orphans, the new language enabled them to speak among themselves without worrying about the prying ears of the teaching brothers and sisters.

Since the students married each other and used Unserdeutsch at home it became creolized in one generation. Even today, when most have emigrated to Australia and changes in social attitudes have allowed many to marry outside the mixed-race community, all middle-aged and older "Vunapope Germans" and many younger persons (who have usually grown up with native fluency in Tok Pisin and English) will speak Unserdeutsch when other Unserdeutsch speakers are present. The reason given by many speakers for using Unserdeutsch is that by using this language they set themselves apart from both indigenous Papua New Guineans and Australians. It is also used as a secret language in business negotiations or in mixed social situations when something (usually gossip or rude remarks) needs to be expressed that would embarrass or upset an outsider present. Younger speakers will do this, even if they do not know the language well, by using common formulaics. As one speaker said, it is a "fun language, something just for us" (Volker, 1982, p. 12).

A second school-based pidgin language is Camron Pidgin English. This pidgin was developed by a group of boys in the 1970s at Camron High School, an English-medium mission boarding school near Alotau, in the Milne Bay Province of Papua New Guinea. This language was a conscious development by the teenage boys. Female witchcraft is common in Milne Bay and they were afraid that some of their female schoolmates might have already been initiated as witches. To avoid being overheard by the girls, they decided to "speak Dobu with English words". What developed was a language in which English words, without any morphological affixes such as "un?" or "ness", are used in sentences according to Dobu syntax, which has been regularized and simplified by ignoring exceptions to various rules. It is not clear to what extent the girls at the school knew this language. Certainly both they and the teachers at the school knew

of its existence, but it is unlikely that girls would have had the opportunity to find out what the principles were upon which the language was based. When girls from the school heard the language as adults, they said they could only follow it when the speakers (now men) spoke slowly.

When the boys left Camron and went to a senior high school outside the province or on to the university, the language developed a new role. It allowed the male Milne Bay students to speak among themselves in the dormitories or playing fields while nominally following the senior high school rule that one should not speak a language not understood by others who might be in earshot; if challenged they could always say they were just speaking "funny English". While girls were still not taught the language or expected to understand it, as the boys grew older and more confident, they became relaxed enough not to be frightened if overheard by the girls and even used it once in a local adaptation of Shakespeare's *Tempest*.

The similarities between the school-based secret languages and traditional secret languages are striking. Like many secret languages, Unserdeutsch is used to express feelings of ethnic solidarity and to discuss private matters in the presence of outsiders. Similarly, as in some traditional secret languages, the elements of male-female tension, witchcraft and magic play a large part in Camron Pidgin English. Both of these languages also allow their speakers to keep a psychological distance from the foreign missionaries in their midst who have a good knowledge of the language of everyday use. As pidginized languages these two languages exhibit many of the grammatical forms of traditional secret languages. Like them, relexification of a previous language was used to create most of the lexicon. Similarly the vocabulary was reduced. The grammar of both languages has been simplified by avoiding the irregularities in the parent languages, as is the case in traditional secret languages.

Thus we can see that, far from being isolated examples of pidginization, Unserdeutsch and Camron Pidgin English simply follow in the Melanesian tradition of secret languages. This leads one to wonder whether our usual model of pidgin languages developing because of a desire to facilitate communication between different language groups might need to be revised. Perhaps instead, one of the factors leading to the creation of pidgin languages in at least

some multilingual situations might be the fear of strangers and the concomitant desire to have a secret language. Another factor may occur when individual members from different language groups want to establish a new in-group with psychological distance from those around them.

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