Creole linguistics

Pidgins and creoles are not as definable as other languages. Identifying both languages is based on some criteria which are often confusing themselves. Some theorists haven't been successful in their definitions because there have been contradictions when compared with other structures. For example, some of the structural features that some theorists claim that distinguish pidgins and creoles from other languages are present in other languages as well. This give rise to concerns as to whether or not, one can differentiate pidgins and creoles from other languages. One of the problems of definition stems from the way in which the languages are classified. Varieties such as Eskimo pidgin lack some of the structures and linguistic patterns of other types of pidgins.

Creole now includes a larger number of languages than before. Questions have arisen as to which groups of languages be classified as creoles or pidgins. Considerations have also been given to breaking down both languages into sub groups and sub types. One should also pay attention to the proximity to the source language. There is also the issue of the varying degrees of creoles as spoken in some Caribbean states, for example. The question as to what extent socio cultural and socio historical factors play in the development of the languages should also be considered.

Mufwene argued that the term pidgins and creoles were loosely used by European settlers and thus does not satisfy the criteria to be called languages because of the lack of certain linguistic features. He limits the term creole to those former pidgin languages in parts of the Pacific and West Africa. Thompson another writer examined the languages in terms of their historical natures. Her distinction of creoles and pidgins from bilingual mixed languages is based on social, historical, and linguistic aspects. Her claim also

presents conflict especially when one looks at languages such as Tok Pisin. Both writers agreed on the difficulty faced in categorising every language. Conflicts have also arisen in determining the nature of processes of pidgin and creoles as they relate to each other. Historically both languages have been reflective of each other. Some writers, however, view both languages as being different from each other in view of their developmental processes. Others argue that they are independent of each other in terms of formation and use.

Some scholars also look at the role children and adult played in the development of both languages. They argue that the morphology and structure differ when one examines this phenomenon. One scholar linked pidgin to adults in theorising that they evolve from imperfect second language acquisition and credit with creating creole to satisfy their innate quest for grammar.

Defining creole and pidgin is even made more difficult because of the lack of consistency in both languages. The structures and features of the languages differ based on the social, historical and cultural context. One cannot deny the value of the languages and the prevailing use but the classifying and characterising of such, will have scholars disagreeing on a number of pertinent issues.

Spears, Arthur K., Winford Donald. The Structures and Statures of Pidgins and Creoles. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1997.