

Abstract

Asian Contact Languages in APiCS

Scott Paauw
University of Rochester

APiCS Conference
Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology
Leipzig, Germany
November 11-14, 2010

Most research on Pidgin and Creole languages and indeed on contact languages in general has concentrated on languages lexified by European languages. This phenomenon may be due to the fact that these languages arose relatively recently, during the period of European expansionism and colonialism, and are therefore relatively accessible, with known historical developments, and may also be due to the fact that researchers on contact languages are primarily speakers of European languages themselves, and have more knowledge of the lexifying languages and more familiarity with the linguistic environments existing in the development of these languages.

Research on contact languages outside of those lexified by European languages has been limited, and has consisted of work on some African contact languages, a couple of north American contact languages, and a very few Asian contact languages which have developed from non-European lexifiers. This is despite the intuitive fact that contact languages have undoubtedly always existed in all parts of the world, and continue to exist today, to varying extents.

This study looks at the Asian (non-European lexified) contact languages included in APiCS, with special emphasis on the three Malay-based languages (Ambon Malay, Singapore Bazaar Malay, and Sri Lanka Malay), but also including the other Asian languages without European lexifiers (Pidgin Hawaiian and Pidgin Hindustani), as well as one language with a European lexifier which does not align with other European-lexified pidgins (Chinese Pidgin Russian). The features of these languages are related to what Creolists have come to consider “typical” creoles, and makes the case that what appear to be features of a typical creole are the result of coincidental typological similarities between substrate languages, and that the true definition of a creole may relate less to typological properties than to similarities in the socio-historical factors involved in language contact.