Reduplication in pidgins and creoles: Illustrations from Anglo-Nigerian Pidgin

Charles C. Mann
University of Surrey

Some of the recurring, salient definitional features ordinarily attributed to a pidgin language are that “it is characterized by a limited vocabulary, an elimination of many grammatical devices such as number and gender, and a drastic reduction of redundant features” (Decamp, 1971a: 15).

This paper explores the raison d’être, nature, structure, semantics and functions of reduplication, as a morphological device for enriching the word stock of a pidgin language, using, analyzing and discussing several illustrations from Anglo-Nigerian Pidgin\(^1\) (ANP).

In analyzing the possible motivational origins and operational patterns of these illustrations, as products of the phenomenon of reduplication, the paper takes into consideration the second language acquisition processes and L1 transfer theoretical perspectives, and makes a statement on the life cycle of this morphological technique in such languages.

\(^1\) Anglo-Nigerian Pidgin (ANP), or ‘Nigerian Pidgin English’, is an endogenous, Atlantic pidgin, which evolved from contacts between the diverse tribal peoples on the coastlines of part of the then ‘slave coast’ (present-day Nigeria), and, principally, Portuguese sailors (15th century) and British traders, missionaries and colonial officials (especially from the 18th century).
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Name of presenter: Dr. Charles C. MANN.
Status: Senior Lecturer
Affiliation: English Language Institute, University of Surrey, UK.
Postal address: English Language Institute,
Austin Pearce Building,
University of Surrey,
Guildford GU2 7XH, UK.
E-mail address: charles.mann@surrey.ac.uk
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