



PART 1

Read the text below and answer questions 1–13.

PIDGINS AND CREOLES: LANGUAGES IN THE MAKING

A

When groups without a shared tongue are forced into sustained contact, communication becomes a practical necessity long before it becomes a cultural choice. Historically, some of the most intense contact settings were created by colonial expansion, maritime trade, plantation economies, missionary administration, and extractive industries such as mining. These environments brought together speakers of unrelated languages, often under severe power asymmetries: one group controlled wages, punishment, legal access, or land; the other supplied labour and local knowledge. In such socio-historical contexts, everyday interaction—buying food, following orders, bargaining, recording debts, or reporting accidents—demanded a workable medium, even if the interaction itself was unequal and frequently coercive. Contact languages, therefore, were not “invented” for linguistic curiosity; they emerged because communication was indispensable to managing labour, commerce, and survival.

B

In many of these settings, the first linguistic outcome is pidginization: the formation of a simplified contact code that draws its material from the languages present but strips it down to a highly utilitarian core. Linguists use the term pidgin for a reduced system designed for limited functions such as trade, work supervision, or basic negotiation. Pidgins typically have a restricted lexicon, relying heavily on high-frequency words and a small set of expressions that cover recurring tasks. Their morphology is often minimal: inflections for tense, agreement, or case may be absent or expressed through separate particles rather than complex word endings. Syntax tends to be relatively simple and transparent, favouring short clauses, stable word order, and pragmatic strategies such as repetition. In short, a pidgin is best understood as a functional solution under communicative pressure, not as a “half-language” aiming to be a full one.

C

A defining limitation of pidgins is sociolinguistic rather than purely structural: they are typically nobody’s mother tongue. A pidgin is generally used as a second-language tool, acquired informally by adults and adolescents who already speak one or more other languages. Because learning occurs through fragmented exposure—on docks, in fields, in markets—forms can vary from speaker to speaker, and norms may be negotiated on the fly. This variability is reinforced by the narrow range of domains in which the pidgin is needed; outside the workplace, speakers often return to their home languages for family



life, ritual, storytelling, or community governance. As a result, early pidgins may remain relatively unstable, not because they are inherently “defective,” but because the social ecology does not require them to carry the full communicative load of a settled community.

D

Creolization occurs when the social ecology changes and the contact code becomes the primary language of a community, especially when children acquire it as a first language. When a new generation grows up hearing the pidgin regularly and begins using it with peers across a wide range of situations, the language undergoes nativization: it expands in vocabulary, develops more regular grammatical patterns, and becomes capable of expressing complex meanings, relationships, and narratives. This developmental path is often rapid because children need a fully expressive system for ordinary life, not merely for workplace transactions. Importantly, the result—a creole—is a complete natural language. It is not a “broken” European language, nor a failed attempt at the lexifier; it is a stable linguistic system shaped by contact, community norms, and the communicative needs of its speakers across everyday domains.

E

Many creoles show layered origins that reflect historical power relations. The socially dominant language often functions as the lexifier (also called the superstrate), providing much of the vocabulary, particularly for items linked to administration, trade goods, and socially prestigious domains. However, vocabulary is only one layer of a language’s architecture. Substrate languages—those spoken by socially subordinate groups—may exert substantial influence on phonology, preferred word-order patterns, strategies for marking tense and aspect, and broader ways of packaging meaning in discourse. This division is not a mechanical rule; it is a tendency that varies across settings. Still, it explains why a creole may look lexically similar to the dominant language while sounding and “working” grammatically in ways that diverge from it. Understanding creole structure, therefore, requires attention to socio-historical context as well as linguistic form.

F

Two well-known case studies show how contact codes can become institutional languages. Tok Pisin, widely spoken in Papua New Guinea, developed from earlier plantation varieties and later moved beyond labour contexts into national public life. Over time it has been standardised to a degree: it appears in public communication, including newspapers and broadcasting, and has a conventionalised spelling system, which is a strong indicator that a language is used widely enough to require agreed written norms. Haitian Creole illustrates a different trajectory shaped by French lexification and extensive contact with West African languages in the colonial Caribbean. In Haiti it functions alongside French and has recognised institutional standing, demonstrating that



a creole can operate in major domains rather than being confined to informal speech. These examples also highlight a crucial point: the status of a language depends as much on politics and education as on linguistic complexity.

G

How creoles emerge has been the subject of sustained theoretical debate. One influential proposal is Derek Bickerton's Language Bioprogram Hypothesis, which argues that when children receive limited and inconsistent input, they may supply grammatical structure by drawing on innate cognitive tendencies. On this view, creole grammars reflect, in part, a default human capacity for organising language when the available data are sparse. Other linguists emphasise different mechanisms: they argue that substrate influence, gradual conventionalisation, and the accumulation of community norms can explain creole formation without invoking a single universal blueprint. Contemporary research often treats creolization as a socio-cognitive process in which multiple forces interact: demographic patterns, education, identity, and attitudes toward prestige. Those attitudes still matter today, because stigma can restrict a creole's presence in schooling, media, and administration, while supportive policy can expand its public legitimacy and intergenerational transmission.

Questions 1–5

Which paragraph contains the following information?

- 1** Reference to a theoretical framework proposing that innate cognitive mechanisms drive grammatical structure in the absence of sufficient input.
- 2** A definition of a pidgin as a rudimentary system developed primarily for utilitarian purposes.
- 3** The assertion that creoles represent fully developed linguistic systems rather than inferior derivations.
- 4** A description of the specific socio-historical environments, such as plantations or trading ports, where contact languages emerge.
- 5** The distinction that a pidgin functions as a secondary code rather than the mother tongue of a community.

Questions 6–9

Complete the summary below. Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the text for each answer.

From Pidgin to Creole



A pidgin is distinguished by the fact that it is typically nobody's **6**; instead, it serves as a second-language tool for limited purposes such as trade or work supervision. The broader transformation of a contact code into the primary language of a community is known as **7** The non-dominant linguistic sources that can shape grammatical structure are termed **8** Bickerton's account concerns cases where children receive restricted and inconsistent linguistic **9**

Questions 10–13

Choose **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information given in the text, choose **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information, or choose **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this.

10 Pidgins are primarily characterized by their application in practical scenarios like commerce and administration.

11 Tok Pisin has developed sufficiently to be utilized in formal media, such as radio and print journalism.

12 The passage provides precise statistical data regarding the current number of Haitian Creole speakers.

13 The passage presents Bickerton's hypothesis as the only accepted explanation of creole formation.

Answer Key

1. G
2. B
3. D
4. A
5. C
6. mother tongue
7. creolization
8. substrate languages
9. input
10. TRUE



11. TRUE

12. NOT GIVEN

13. FALSE