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“English in Contact”: An Evaluation of Language Contact Situations of World Englishes

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Abstract

Ever since Angles, Saxons, and Jutes arrived in Britain and the English language originated, it has been a contact language. Colonial expansion, international trade, and travelling triggered this phenomenon. Looking at this spread of the English language from a contact linguistic point of view, the present paper evaluates the language contact situations of World Englishes in diverse geographic, socio-cultural, and linguistic contexts. First, the paper surveys how English is in contact in language maintenance situations, particularly through borrowing and code-mixing. Then, the paper argues that language shift in World Englishes is only partial or functional. The investigation of new contact language creation, including pidgins, creoles and their expansions, looks into the similarities and differences between these and the creation of World Englishes which are at the acrolectal end of the post-creole speech continuum. Finally, Group Second Language Acquisition is suggested as a better framework for describing the contact situations of World Englishes.

Keywords: contact situations; shift, maintenance, and creation.

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Introduction

English is ‘nothing but a contact language’. It was a contact-derived variety from its earliest (Old English) stages onwards (cf. Schreier & Hundt, 2013:1-2). English being a contact language thus became inevitable all through its expansion since then. The expansion was first to Wales in the 16th Century, and to Scotland in the 17th Century; and then to North America, to Australia, to New Zealand, and to Canada. In the next phase of its expansion, when English was brought to Asia, to Africa, to Latin America, and to the Philippines, it came into contact with genetically and culturally unrelated languages, and it was used by members of other speech communities in different sociocultural contexts and language contact situations (cf. Kachru, 1992:231-235). These different sociocultural contexts and language contact situations resulted in different outcomes, i.e. different forms of English.

Contact situations have been categorized using different criteria. I follow here Winford’s (2003:11) approach, which identifies three broad kinds of contact situations based on the outcome of contact: language maintenance situations, language shift situations, and situations of new contact language creation including pidgins and creoles. Each of these three situations is, then, sub-categorized based on factors like the nature and extent of the linguistic units transferred and direction of transfer, nature of the superstrate and the substrate, and the agentivity of transfer. I will describe the relevance of these contact situations to World Englishes where applicable. Additionally, Group Second Language Acquisition, a better framework of reference for describing the contact situations of ‘World Englishes’ or ‘New Englishes’ (cf. Shantha Kumara, MDS, 2018:30-34) such as Sri Lankan English, will also be presented.

Language Shift, Maintenance and World Englishes

In situations of language maintenance, a linguistic community preserves its native language generationally, allowing only changes due to language internal developments and minor interference from other languages to happen. Winford (2003:11-15) describes three types of language maintenance situations: borrowing situations, code-switching situations, and situations of structural convergence. I will describe only the first two here because the third has no direct relevance to the study of World Englishes. Winford follows Thomason and Kaufman (1988:37) in defining *borrowing* as “the incorporation of foreign features into a group’s native language by speakers of that language”. He uses the *recipient language agentivity of borrowing* in contrast to the *source language agentivity* of second

language learning situations which he describes under *language shift* situations. However, Thomason (2001a:68) posits that borrowers do not necessarily have to be native speakers of the recipient language, adding that interference features are introduced into the receiving language by people who speak it fluently. This is certainly true of New Englishes (NEs) or Postcolonial Englishes as Tan (2013:55) points out:

with the departure of the colonial power, and as the language they left behind became more widespread within the local community, borrowing was often undertaken by those within the community who speak English concurrently with other languages – persons who are bilingual or multilingual in English.

Although Winford describes the contact situations of NEs under *language shift* (see below), the socio-cultural backgrounds and group dynamics in these contact situations favor maintenance of languages at both ends, rather than shifting to English at the detriment of the local languages. Borrowings do occur in these situations from local languages to English and vice versa, but the ‘agents’ of borrowing may not be a homogeneous group of ‘native speakers’ of the ‘recipient language’, but they comprise bilinguals of several *mother tongue groups*.

Winford (2003:14) calls the second type of maintenance situation involving bilingual mixture of various types collectively as *code-switching* situations. He uses the term to refer to ‘the alternate use of two languages (or dialects) within the same stretch of speech, often within the same sentence’. However, other scholars such as Muysken (2000:4) avoids using the term code-switching for the general process of mixing because ‘switching is only an appropriate term for the alternational type of mixing’, which is ‘akin to the switching of codes between turns or utterances.’ Thus, he prefers *code-mixing* as a more appropriate umbrella term to refer to mixed utterances. Development of code-mixed varieties of English has been regarded as a common characteristic of the contact situations of NEs as well. Kachru (1986:53), for example, states that code-mixed varieties of English are part of the verbal repertoire of the non-native users of English and that they play an important role functionally and formally in various contexts. He further observes that such code-mixed varieties often acquire a new name which refers to its hybrid characteristics, such as Hinglish (Kachru, 1979), Singlish (Fernando, 1977), and Spanglish (Nash, 1977). Senaratne (2009) too, in her investigation of the phenomenon of mixing between Sri Lankan English and a contact language of it, Sinhala, shows how Sinhala-English code-mixing

‘reveals the ‘acculturation’ of English by the native Sinhala speaker in Sri Lanka’ (p.260).

The second broad kind of contact situations is language shift, which is ‘the partial or total abandonment of a group’s native language in favor of another’ (Winford, 2003:15). This happens either when an immigrant or other minority group shifts partially or completely to the language of a dominant majority or when invaders or colonizers introduce their language to indigenous communities. Shifting can happen with or without ‘interference’ from the native language(s) in the former situation, whereas interference is obvious in the latter situation, which Winford (2003:15) exemplifies with Indian English and Irish English. Winford (2003:15-16) believes that second language varieties like these result from untutored learning in ‘natural’ community settings. However, it should be noted that varieties of English such as Indian English or Sri Lankan English are not the result of exclusive untutored learning in ‘natural’ community settings. In fact, for New English scholars such as Platt et al (1984:2), the very first criterion of a variety of New English like Indian English is that it should have developed through the education system. In reality, however, these varieties developed both in educational settings and the ‘natural’ community settings. Additionally, as stated with regard to borrowing situations above, calling NEs language shift varieties is not generalizable. This may have led Tan (2013:135) to define the contact situation of Malaysian English (ME) as a maintenance situation and not a shift situation: ‘ME emerged from a contact situation defined by not one, but two contact phenomena-language maintenance, and group SLA (Second Language Acquisition) not leading to language shift’ (ibid). Group Second Language Acquisition and language shift will be discussed further below.

Pidgins, Creoles, and World Englishes

The third broad category of contact situations is language creation situations which include ‘new contact languages’. Winford (2003:18) presents three such contact languages: pidgins, creoles, and bilingual mixed languages. He points out that these situations cannot be considered instances of either maintenance or shift because they involve extreme restructuring and/or extensive mixture of elements from more than one language. Additionally, he observes that members of these contact languages differ both in the circumstances of their creation and in their structural characteristics. Therefore, ‘it is necessary to refer to “prototypical” examples of each category, and attempt as far as possible to relate other potential members of

² Provision of the expansion in parenthesis is by the present writer

the class to the prototype’ (p.19). Out of these three types of contact languages, pidgins and creoles are relevant to the study of World Englishes.

A pidgin is a language that arises in a new contact situation involving more than two linguistic groups who need to communicate regularly for limited purposes, such as trade, but have no shared language and yet do not learn each other's languages for some combination of social, economic, and political reasons (cf. Thomason, 2001a:159). Although vocabulary of a pidgin is drawn typically from one of the languages in contact, as in the English vocabulary source of Chinese Pidgin English, some pidgins involve more lexical mixture as exemplified by Russenorsk in which vocabulary came from languages of both groups in contact, Russians and Norwegians (Winford, 2003:20). The grammar of the new pidgin is a kind of cross-language compromise of the grammars of the languages in contact with influence from universals of second-language learning, ease of learning in particular (Thomason, 2001a:159). Thomason posits that pidgins are created by the mechanism of *negotiation*, in which speakers change their language to approximate what they believe to be the patterns of another language or dialect.

As people try to communicate with each other, they will make guesses about what their interlocutors will understand. When they guess wrong, that particular word or construction will not be repeated often; but right guesses are likely to become part of the emerging pidgin (2001a: 142).

In addition to contexts of trade, pidgins also develop in other situations such as those of military occupation as in Pidgin English in Japan during the post-war period, employer-servant communication situations as in Indian Butler English, or on plantations as in Hawai’i Pidgin English (cf. Winford, 2003:20).

Whereas prototypical pidgins are both restricted in social functions and reduced in form and structure, their more elaborate counterparts in terms of social function and structure are given other names such as extended pidgins. Extended pidgins develop through incorporation of features from both the lexifier (superstrate) language and the native (substrate) languages of indigenous groups, and they share features of creoles (see below) rather than those of prototypical pidgins both functionally and structurally(cf. *ibid*). Winford (2003:21) observes that, with this elaboration, extended pidgins become indistinguishable from other fully developed ‘natural’

languages. Tok Pisin, the official language of Papua New Guinea; Bislama, the official language of Vanuatu; and varieties of West African Pidgin English like Nigerian Pidgin English used as lingua francas in parts of West Africa are the examples of extended pidgins stated by Winford. Mufwene (2001:7) calls extended pidgins *expanded pidgins* and states that they are spoken both as mother tongues for large proportions of populations and as major lingua francas. However, not all pidgins evolve into expanded pidgins. Mesthrie (2008:265) presents Fanakalo, spoken in the South African mines, as an example of a crystallized pidgin that has not expanded because of reasons such as ethnic separation adding that ‘Fanakalo shows that a pidgin can exist as a stable entity for a century and a half without being nativized’.

Mufwene (2001:8), who presents a territorial division of labor between the places where creoles developed and those where pidgins and indigenized varieties of European languages developed, observes that best known pidgins developed in European trade colonies of Africa and the Pacific, ‘before they were appropriated politically and expanded into exploitation colonies in the second half of the nineteenth century’. During the exploitation colony period, scholastic varieties of European languages were introduced through the scholastic medium for serving as lingua francas between colonial auxiliaries and the colonizers. Appropriation of these scholastic varieties by the emerging, multilingual, local elite for communication among themselves created *indigenized*, or *new* varieties of English etc. Mufwene (2001:8) states that these indigenized English varieties and Pidgin Englishes coexisted harmoniously in places like Nigeria and Cameroon, with the former associating with the intellectual elite and the latter as an ‘indigenous’ language. An important difference between the pidgins and indigenized varieties which coexisted in these exploitation colonies, according to Mufwene (2001:9), is that the former’s lexifiers are nonstandard varieties, whereas the latter were introduced through the school system, usually through teachers who were not native speakers. Such coexistence of pidgin Englishes and NEs has important implications in the study of NEs in terms of their specific linguistic features, processes of reconstruction etc.

The second type of new contact languages is creoles. Creoles are so called because they were used by the *creole* or *locally born* descendants of slaves (as well as Europeans and other freemen) in the colonies (Winford, 2003:21). Thomason (2001b:462) sees two characteristics that creoles share with pidgins: First, groups in contact do not learn each other’s languages. Second, lexicon and structure of creoles do not come primarily from the

same source language. However, unlike the typical pidgin, the typical creole serves as the/a main language of a speech community. Thomason (2001b:462) presents three different ways of creole formation: first way is through functional and structural expansion and eventual nativization of pidgins so that they are learned as first languages by the community's children, as is the case of Tok Pisin. Second way is the creation of *abrupt creoles* without going through a crystalized/stable pidgin stage. Hawaiian creole English and Pitcairnese are candidates for abrupt creole genesis. There are two theories accounting for abrupt creole genesis: according to Bickerton (1984)'s Language Bioprogram Hypothesis, children of a new multilingual community develop universal structures in abrupt creoles. In substrate theory, the structures of abrupt creoles develop through 'negotiation' (see above). In the third way of creole genesis, 'creoles emerge through a gradual process of repeated instances of group second-language acquisition, with shift-induced interference at each stage accumulating until the result is a creole language, too distant linguistically to be considered a dialect of the lexifier language that provided the original target for language learning' (Thomason, 2001b:462). An example of a language that arose in this way is Reunionese, the French-lexifier creole of Reunion.

Mufwene (2001:9)'s view of creole formation contradicts both abrupt creole genesis view and pidgin nativization view. According to him, creoles developed in settlement colonies, or as stated more specifically by Schneider (2007:25); in plantation colonies, as opposed to the trade colonies where pidgins developed. Mufwene believes that creole vernaculars, originally confined to plantations of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean Island and coastal colonies, followed the emergence of *creole populations*, those born in the settlement colonies from at least one nonindigenous parent. Creole populations and European indentured servants had full access to the colonial koiné varieties of European languages, which they acquired through regular interactions with their native or fluent speakers 'in the homestead conditions'. Later approximations of these colonial vernaculars by non-European slaves of the plantation period produced creole vernaculars. Mufwene (2001:10) views this as a process of *gradual basilectalization*, rejecting the view that creolization process is abrupt. He does not see a difference between creole formation and the development of varieties of English in terms of rate of development. Both are gradual processes taking several generations.

In Mufwene (1994:27), Mufwene presents some similar features in English Pidgins/Creoles (P/Cs) and NEs. For example, he points out that both Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin English share peculiar

pronunciations of words like ‘earn’ and ‘birth’, usage of articles and prepositions like ‘for’ and ‘of’, and dependence on unmarked tense. He also refers to some of the syntactic examples discussed by Kachru (1986) in regard to South Asian English such as non-application of subject-auxiliary inversion in direct questions, use of an invariant tag, and use of reduplication for intensity, which are found in P/Cs as well. Further, Mufwene (1994:23) observes that both NEs and English Creoles are stable new varieties that have developed through restructuring due to the contact of British English with other, typically non-European, languages. Both in creolization and indigenization, the population of the lexifier was a minority, thus allowing ‘non-natives’ to reinforce non-native features through interaction among themselves. More importantly, he argues that ‘treating creole and indigenized Englishes as separate species does not help shed light on some aspects of language contact, such as what particular factors constrain restructuring and how’, adding that the differences between them seem to lie primarily in ethnographic status, in the nature of the lexifier, and in the medium of transmission (p.24). In Mufwene (2001), he introduces a restructuring process applicable to both of these contact situations which helps accounting for the specific linguistic features of both types of these contact vernaculars.

In addition to the similarities between P/Cs and NEs that Mufwene presents, it is also useful to consider contact outcomes in-between these two situations. Mesthrie (2008: 27), for example, reports some intermediate cases such as Creoloids and “language-shift varieties”, which fall in-between creoles and English as a Second Language (ESL) varieties. Mesthrie (2008: 272) agrees with Platt (1975) and Ho & Platt’s (1993) claim that Singapore English is a creoloid, in spite of it being targeted toward the superstrate in an educational setting and being mutually intelligible with the superstrate. Following Platt (1975:372), Mestrie reports the characteristics of a creoloid as; structural similarities to creole languages, not evolving from a prior pidgin, developed from interference from several languages in contact, having a superstrate which is an official language of the territory, and being used as one of several nativized languages, and as a medium of interethnic communication by the speech community; proposing that a creoloid prototypically be considered an L2 with significant restructuring/interference. Mesthrie (2008) uses the term “language-shift varieties” for ex-creoloids, creoloids that subsequently undergo language shift amidst limited access to the Target Language, such as Hiberno English, South African Indian English (SAIE), and varieties of American Indian English (p.273). He posits that shift-induced interference may drift generationally into a creole in the absence of the superstrate as a viable

target; or it may “relapse” generationally in the direction of the superstrate in language shift varieties, as the Target Language (TL) becomes increasingly more available (p.280). Describing the evolution and structure of SAIE, he demonstrates how the relationship between basilect, mesolect, and acrolect in SAIE is rather similar to traditional accounts of decreolization, and states that there was decreasing basilectalization in SAIE as opposed to Mufwane (2001)’s formulation of increasing basilectalization with regard to creolization.

Platt et al (1984:8-9) too show how *post-creole speech continuum* (Bickerton, 1975:24) operationalizes as education through the medium of English became available in contexts where creoles developed:

Those with little or no formal education speak the creole or a slightly modified creole. We shall refer to this as the *basilect*. The type of speech closest to Standard English is the *acrolect*. This would be spoken, at least in more formal situations, by those with higher levels of education. The types of speech between the basilect and the acrolect are referred to as *mesolects* (p.8).

Exemplifying with Caribbean English(es), they point out that the acrolect and some of the mesolects of a post-creole continuum can be considered NEs, but the creoles themselves or speech close to them at the basilectal end of the speech continuum do not qualify to be considered thus. One reason for this is the fact that the latter two situations ‘did not develop through the education system but from pidgins’. Additionally, they provide the following typology of NEs according to ‘the back ground against which they developed’, or the substrate:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Background</i>	<i>Examples</i>
1	Local language (s) usually non-English language of wider communication	Indian English Kenyan English Singapore English
2	Local language (s) English-based pidgin used as language of wider communication (in some areas)	Ghanaian English Nigerian English
3	English-based creoles	Caribbean English

Table 1.1: *Typology of New Englishes according to substrate (Reproduced from Platt et al, 1984:9)*

In a similar vein, Winford (2003:254-256) attempts to fit cases of shift into a typology of contact vernaculars by placing them on a continuum ranging from cases of native-like SLA situations at one extreme to cases of radical creole formation at the other end, based on the degree of first language (L1) influence and simplification in the contact variety as criteria for placement. He places ‘somewhat indigenized’ contact varieties like Irish English and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) next to native-like SLA, with highly indigenized varieties like Singapore English following (on the mid-range of the continuum). Intermediate creoles like Bajan (vernacular Barbadian English) are placed next, close to radical creoles at the other end where L1 retention and simplification etc. are more.

Thus, studies on creole languages and any intermediate languages on a continuum from P/Cs to NEs shed valuable insights into the study of the latter and vice versa to effectively understand the complex contact situations of both creoles and indigenized Englishes. Particularly, they show how the different manifestations of the ‘same’ superstrate language input, English, results in outcomes showing both similarities and differences based mainly on the internal and external ecologies of the contact situation, which act as ‘constraints’ on the restructuring process. Siegel’s (2003) conceptualization of a ‘pool of variants’ and Mufwene’s (2001) picture of the ‘feature pool’ are useful in understanding this restructuring process. To evaluate the two contact situations using a common formula, the following ecological factors based on Mufwene (2001) are suggested by Mesthrie (2008:269):

- Nature of superstrate dialects brought from European country;
- Co-existence of European superstrate with other languages in the colonies;
- Demographic proportions of speakers of languages in contact during critical periods of contact;
- Kinds of social contact between different social and ethnic groups;
- Structural features of the varieties in contact;
- Rate of immigrations subsequent to initial crucial contacts;
- Social background of new immigrants;
- Patterns of integration of new immigrants.”

These factors, however, seem to bias situations of P/Cs, understandably because of Mufwene’s (2001) creolistics focus. Therefore, I suggest that the following factors, among others, be added to this common formula to evaluate these contact situations:

Acquisitional contexts of the superstrate,
Functions of the new vernaculars,
Social identities of the groups concerned,
Power relations between groups concerned,
Attitude of the groups towards the new vernaculars,

The foregoing discussion on contact situations shows that these situations provide valuable insights into the study of NEs. However, none of these situations is sufficient for a comprehensive description of the contact situations of NEs because the social contexts of NEs are different. Therefore, in the following section, I will explore the possibility of using Group Second Language Acquisition for describing NE situations.

Group Second Language Acquisition (GSLA)

As NEs emerge as group phenomena dealing with the use of English in language contact situations, Winford's (2003:235) framework of 'Group second language acquisition or language shift' can be adapted to describe contact situations of NEs. This framework brings together insights from both the field of second language acquisition and the field of contact linguistics into the study of NEs. I attempt to improve this framework to describe the contact situations of NEs, with contributions from the scholarship of Contact Linguistics and World Englishes such as Weinreich (1953), Mesthrie (2006), Mesthrie & Bhatt (2008), and Schneider (2003, 2007). First, some explanations about the terminology used in this framework are necessary.

When looking at NEs from the perspectives of contact linguistics, for several reasons, the specification *second language* is used here with certain caveats. For one, as most of the situations of NEs are multilingual and multicultural, for some users, English is not the chronological second language but the third or the fourth. Secondly, there are also small groups of users of some varieties of NEs such as Sri Lankan English for whom English is a home acquired first language, at least simultaneously with another language. Thirdly, as Weinreich (1953:74) points out, what is important for every contact situation is not which of the two systems in contact was learned *first* (or *second* for that matter) by a given speaker or group of speakers, but 'which language is the source or model and which the recipient or replica, and also whether in a given contact situation, a language can be both a source and a recipient of interference'. In fact, order of learning is only one criterion among other criteria such as relative proficiency, mode of use, age of learning, usefulness in communication, emotional involvement, function in social advance, and literary-cultural value which contribute to make a

language *dominant* in a bilingual. Therefore, the perspective of the groups' dominant language is more important in describing a contact situation than the perspective of the order of acquisition alone. Nevertheless, we retain the specification 'second language' in order to distinguish these contact situations from situations like *child first language acquisition* and *bilingual first language acquisition* (Thomason, 2001:148-149).

Additionally, as already discussed with regard to borrowing situations and language shift situations, the term *shift* in Winford's (2003) Group Second Language Acquisition framework is also not fully applicable to situations of NEs, especially in its strict sense as 'the change from the habitual use of one language to that of another' (Weinreich 1953:68). However, Weinreich also makes reference to a 'partial' or 'functional' shift:

language shifts should be analysed in terms of the functions of the languages in the contact situation, since a mother-tongue group may switch to a new language in certain functions but not in others. For example, under a foreign occupation, or in migrating to a new country, the adult members of a mother-tongue group may come to use a new language in its dealings with governmental authorities, while the children use it in school; at the same time, the old language may live on in the homes and at informal gatherings of the group. In such a case we might speak of a PARTIAL rather than a TOTAL shift (p.107).

This said, this partial shift situation is also more relevant to 'migrant group' situations than to NEs because the 'shifted' language functions of situations of NEs are comparatively less and optional. For example, in the contact situation of Sri Lankan English (SLE) in Sri Lanka, the use of English in court proceedings is completely done only in the Supreme Court while in other courts both English and a local language, mostly Sinhala, are used with a higher frequency of the local language. Further, in most NE situations, socio-cultural backgrounds seem to force tendencies of *maintaining* the local languages as well, thereby opposing *shift*. In this background, perhaps, Mesthrie (2008) is right in using the term *language-shift varieties* for ex-creoloids, which are intermediate cases along the post-creole continuum, rather than to NEs themselves. Thus, as the Group Second Language Acquisition framework is applicable to all situations of NEs in general, and as there are opposite tendencies of maintenance in most of these situations, I will not call this framework *language shift*, but Group Second Language Acquisition alone.

Next, the use of the term 'acquisition' in this framework also needs a clarification because of the availability of a competing term, 'learning.' While the use of *acquisition* here does not suggest a strict opposition to *learning* in a technical sense as in Krashen's (1982:10) 'acquisition-learning hypothesis,' the former referring to a subconscious process and the latter to a conscious process, it is a better term to capture the complexities of the development of NEs. As explained already with regard to language shift, NEs developed both in educational settings and 'natural' community settings, so *acquisition* is a better term than *learning* to cover this complementary development pattern.

With regard to the similarities and differences between Individual Second Language Acquisition and Group Second Language Acquisition (hereafter ISLA and GSLA respectively), Winford (2003:236) correlates the two with Weinreich's distinction between "interference in speech" and "interference in language" respectively:

In speech, it (interference³) occurs anew in the utterances of the bilingual speaker as a result of his personal knowledge of the other tongue. In language, we find interference phenomena which, having frequently occurred in the speech of bilinguals, have become habitualized and established. Their use is no longer dependent on bilingualism (Weinreich, 1953:11).

Using Weinreich's metaphor of 'sand carried by a stream' vs. 'sedimented sand deposited on the bottom of the lake', Winford points out that 'contact-induced changes in individual production are variable and ephemeral, while such changes in language are fixed and permanent'. Thus, unlike ISLA, GSLA deals with societal establishment of language norms; GSLA framework does not consider NEs as 'learner varieties' deviant from an external norm. Another difference between ISLA and GSLA is the fact that the social and cultural dimension, which is 'noticeably absent' (Mesthrie and Bhatt, 2008:158) in *center-based* or the *inner circle* based ISLA theorising, is given prominence in GSLA.

Along this individual vs. social foci lines, concepts such as *Interlanguage* and *fossilization* used in ISLA are also used in the GSLA framework with a modified interpretation. This is important because, as Mukherjee (2010:238) points out regarding verb-complementational innovations in Indian

³ The provision of the antecedent for clarity is by the present writer.

English, ‘SLA concepts for the description of interlanguages will need to be adapted to the fundamentally different contexts of usage of institutionalised second-language varieties’. The term *interlanguage*, coined by Selinker (1972), describes that a second-language acquirer uses an intermediate system different both from the target language and from the native language in the process of acquiring the target language. Although it refers to an individual’s competence in ‘Anglo’ environments, in NEs, the concept is applied to ‘aggregates of people who would use their interlanguages with each other in certain domains’, in which process new structural, lexical and pragmatic norms stabilize (Mesthrie and Bhatt, 2008:157). Winford (2003:236) too has a similar view regarding the relevance of interlanguage to ‘new contact vernaculars’:

The creation of new contact vernaculars involves a stage of continuing interaction and competition among individual interlanguage grammars that is eventually resolved into a shared communal system. The actual resolution depends on a variety of sociolinguistic factors, including the demographics of the groups in contact, the extent of inter-group versus intra-group interaction, the length of contact, the power relationship between the groups, their attitudes towards each other, and so on.

Fossilization is a related term in ISLA, which is ‘permanent retention of linguistic habits which, when taken together, constitute a language-learner’s interlanguage’ (Bussmann et al, 1996:427). Wei (2008:127) states that group fossilization comes into being if fossilized language competence becomes pervasive in a community, often leading to a new ‘dialect’, citing Indian English and Singapore English as ‘good cases in point’. However, naming these varieties ‘interlanguages’ or ‘group fossilization’ is based on not paying attention to their complex evolution processes and internal variability. For example, Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008:158) dispute Selinker’s (1972) characterization that Indian English is an interlanguage relative to ‘English’ based on fossilization of ‘*that* complement’ for all verbs that take sentential complements. Instead, they attribute this to substrate influence which, ‘may not be evidence of a failure to learn a TL construction, but of an acceptance of an item from a pool of variants on the grounds of harmony with L1 constructions’ (2008:158), claiming that the notion of fossilisation (in ISLA) pays no respect to identity and culture. As for Singapore English, Winford (2003:245) uses the label ‘early Interlanguage fossilization’ only for ‘Colloquial Singapore English’. He also observes that different stages of fossilization may be observed in different regional or social varieties of the same contact vernacular, stating, for example, ‘Irish English really consists

of a regional continuum, with western varieties more heavily influenced by Irish than those in the East’ (ibid). With regard to Sri Lankan English (SLE) too, Fonseka (2003), who calls SLE a ‘misnomer’, ‘myth’, or ‘fallacy’, states that in Sri Lanka ‘English behaves as an interlanguage in society (p.6). However, labeling SLE an interlanguage is not generalizable to all users of English in Sri Lanka although such a labeling may be applicable to varieties of SLE referred to by labels such as “Sinenglish”, which, according to Wickramasinghe (2000:1), is a mesolect. Thus, similar to post-creole continuum, continua based on group developmental stages seem to prevail in NE situations along regional and/or social lines. In GSLA framework, the concepts interlanguage and fossilization can be used to describe such internal variation within NEs, thereby providing a broader picture of these contact situations.

When describing the contact situations of NEs using the GSLA framework, it is important to investigate how the specific features of these varieties develop in these contact situations because their features show both similarities with and differences from their historical input varieties as well as from each other. To this end, Winford (2003:243) recognizes four processes of grammar construction that result in NEs, which of course have parallels in ISLA. They are Target Language input, L1 (first language) influence, processes of simplification, and internally driven changes. I will discuss them in a future volume.

Conclusion:

English language has been displaying the features of a contact language right from its beginnings. In different geographical and sociocultural contexts, it has been facing different contact situations, resulting in different outcomes. In diverse descriptions of World Englishes, NEs have been described as language maintenance situations, language shift situations, as well as situations of new contact language creation. Out of the first two, the tendency in the NEs is to maintain both the target language and the source language, for which processes of borrowing, code-switching, and structural convergence are used. When language shift happens in NEs, it is mostly a partial or functional shift. Knowledge of the processes involved in the creation of new contact languages such as pidgins and creoles is also important in the study of World Englishes because the latter seem to operate at the acrolectal end of the post-creole speech continuum. Finally, Group Second Language Acquisition was presented as a better framework for describing the contact situations of NEs. The processes of grammar construction in NEs will be investigated using the GSLA framework in a future volume.

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