

From Pidgin to Caribbean Creole in Naipaul's Works

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Abstract

The English speaking Caribbean countries were former British colonies with a polyglot past. Along with the Standard English co-exist the dialects of languages such as Hindi, Spanish, French Creole and other Caribbean Creoles. The Caribbean countries use a range of varieties known as Creole Continuum. This links the Standard English of educated speakers to the Creole speech of the working class. Both the groups use partially language overlapping forms. As a boy V.S. Naipaul was exposed to this scenario. He had a detached attitude and critical eye towards contemporary reality. He presents this culture in his formative fictional works where he presents Trinidadian dialect as a comical language of limited expressive power. Here he contrmesasts his Standard English narration with character dialogue. Naipaul seems to be motivated by what Jan Mohamed calls a fetishization of the other. In the formative fictions and non fictions the superior status of the colonizers could be observed.

Key Words: Pidgin, Creole, Standard English

Pidgin languages are simplified link languages. They are concomitants of situations where we had languages in contact. There may be contact. There may be contact between the languages of two groups of people coming together for trade and commerce. When a Pidgin becomes the mother tongue of a speech community it is called a Creole. Pramod K Nayar speaks on the speaks on the genesis of pidgin creole. He says:

The Caribbean pidgin languages French, English, Spanish with Yoruba, Ibo and other African elements. Creole is a slightly different version of Pidgin. While Pidgin is marked by a smaller vocabulary, Creole is a distant variety of English spoken as their mother tongue by native speakers. Much of the Caribbean populace uses Creole. Pidgin, used for a sufficiently long periods of time, becomes Creole (252).

Scholars have attempted to explain the genesis of Creole as a consequence of languages in contact. One of the scholars, L. Todd postulates four hypothetical phases by which a Pidgin develops into a Creole. These phases could be illustrated at every point from the Atlantic and Pacific areas, there was a casual contact between speakers and the local people. From such a contact a marginal pidgin evolves, capable of communicating needs. This hypothesis is called a Marginal Contact. The second theory is called as Period of Nativization. It is facilitated by two factors. It developed in a multilingual area and in a non-native to native contact. Todd also says "it is theoretical possible that Pidgin English could be expanded in English-to-native contact situations" (Priya Hosali:23). In this case it is likely

that the marginal pidgin would become more and more like the form of English used by English speakers in the contact situation.

Initially Pidgin is inadequate to express the wide range of human emotions and experiences. But as it gets more and more widely used, the vocabulary expands by the use of reduplicated forms, by the use of a word or phrase from the mother tongue and by the use of calques. Calques are loan translation which use words from pidgin or it is a direct translation from the vernacular.

The next phase is called as Influence from the Dominant Language. At this phase it is capable of being used as another tongue. Here it becomes difficult to distinguish between Creole and Pidgin. The Pidgin's expansion is mainly associated with the dominant language.

The last phase is called as The Post-Creole Continuum. The Pidgin and Creole English's have been in contact with some form of non-Creole English for over years. And this has influenced to varying degrees in the Standard form. It is only in the recent past, with the introduction of formal education in English that people become aware of the different varieties of English. The spoken form had maximum variations. The spoken form had maximum variation. The process of decreolization is mostly seen in the New World varieties English education was made compulsory in The West Indies. With the process of decreolization, it has been soon that the Creoles of English have been absorbed more and more features of Standard. This analysis gives us some idea about language in contact in Caribbean islands. We often observe in Naipaul's early works where the non-Standard English variety is used by less literate.

The English speaking Caribbean countries were former British colonies with English as the official language of legal documents, text books, and public use. But it is not only language used in culture, Code-existing with Standard English are dialects of languages such as Hindi, Spanish, French Creole and other Caribbean Creoles. The polyglot past had yielded many language varieties of the present. The Caribbean countries use a range of varieties known as Creole Continuum which links the Standard English of educated speakers to the true creole speech of the working class. Both groups use partially overlapping forms. The structure of Creole differs from that of Standard English stock. So the Caribbean speakers have with them two ranges of vocabulary. This tension allows complex rhetorical effects as writers and speakers who code-switch between levels of continuum.

The Mystic Masseur is a perfect example of Naipaul's use of Creole in fiction. The use and abuse of language is a recurrent theme. The Trinidadians are viewed as ignorant and unimportant. The lexical items are peculiar to Indian culture, and the syntax is not in conformity with Standard English. There are some variations on the levels of syntax, lexis and occasionally phonology between the languages of the narrative passage and that of the dialogue. Creole is signified with ignorance, backwardness and distance from Metropole. Naipaul uses this Creole in the *Miguel Street*, *The Mystic Masseur*, *Suffrage of Elvira* and *A House for Mr Biswas*. In these early fictions we observe that Trinidad English as a heterogenous language made up of borrowings from many other languages of which Hindi is one of the contributor.

The names of many Indian foods, kitchen items have been entered in general Trinidad usage. Words from the kitchen and costumes are dahl, roti, challah, karhee. Words from costumes are saree, and dhoti. Many of the common words that remain in kinship terms are bhai, baiyaa, diidi, bhawjii, bahooni, maa, baap, kaaki, and many other words. There are various loan words in Trinidad speech. Various abusive words like gaddha(donkey),

gatchu(stupid), kulachari(destructive), terhee(fuzzy), koorhi(lazy) etc have been incorporated. This has been survived because they felt that English cannot catch the essence of these words. With translation the charm would be reduced and they could not, carry the same connotations as the original. These words are used inspite of the Christmas and the upper class Indian distance from the culture from which they have sprung.

The English spoken by the East Indians in Trinidad has some influence of code mixing which can be observed in the first and second generation people. In *The Suffrage of Elvira*, Naipaul quotes,

Mrs Bakshi said, 'But if a stranger hear this little boy talk they go believe I starving him.

You ain't eat this evening, Herbert?'

'Yes, Ma',

"You ain't eat one whole roti?

'Yes, Ma.'

'Yes, Ma.'

You ain't eat bhaji?

Yes Ma"(57)

It is also interspersed with Hindi words like baba, pundit, rishi, maharajin etc. The vocabulary is very specific to Indian Hindu culture. This forms an integral part of the Trinidad dialect of English. Words like Ma, roti., bhaji, etc are typically Indian. The morphological features of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar's Hindi into Trinidadian English are observed in some of the sentences. There is suffixation of "wa" morpheme to noun, common or proper. Leela in *The Mystic Masseur* addresses her husband as, "Eh man| Eh manwa"(52). The addition of wa or "a" to the end of the words could mark particularly uneducated people. Later in the novel, we hear Ganesh Ramsumair's aunt calling him 'Ganeshwa'. Naipaul in *The Middle Passage* says, "the Indians proved to be the most suitable,' and, with a few weeks... 134,000 Indians came to Trinidad; most of them were from the provinces of Bihar, Agra and Oudh (48-49).

The language of the narrative passages and the language of the dialogues are colloquial. Let us observe in one of the narrative passage, "like, father and son left Fourways that Sunday and took the bus to Princes town. The old man wore his visiting outfit: dhoti, koortah, white cap, and an unfurled umbrella [...] They knew they looked important when they got into the train at Princes Town" (*The Mystic*:19). In the dialogic passage, "I don't even know if I want to get married. Ganesh rose from the table, rubbing his belly until hr belched his appreciation of Ramlogan's food" (*The Mystic* : 46-47).

Both the passage carry Indians sensibility and comic sense. The feelings and sentiments are very much Indian. Simplicity and ignorance of Ramlogan is mocked. In the character dialogue of Ramlogan, Leela's father, we see the clumsiness of the people of villages Ramlogan says:

It ain't dirty [...] "It just look dirty. Sit down, sit down. You ain't have blow any dust on anything away. You just sit down on that bench against the wall and let we have good chat. I is not a educated man, but I look to hear educated people talk' [...] Your father, sahib, was a goodsman' "(23).

In certain places in A House there is usage of dialect by educated people. The solicitor clerk said, "I can't tell you sad it make me to leave this house"(10). Here dialect is used as an exaggerated accent to express frankness and cordiality. Among the younger generations today, Hindi is confined to the exchange of ritual greetings and to the issuing of short requests and instructions.

Almost all speakers of Hindi were of Indian descent but some Africans who grew up in the community could speak as well. The majority of the Indian speakers used various dialects of Bhojpuri. These were not partially homogenous. In this encounter a koine (lingua franca) variety of Bhojpuri developed in the sugar estates in Trinidad which is referred to as plantation Hindustani. Trinidad plantation Hindustani later came to be known as Trinidad Bhojpuri, the ethnic language of the Trinidad Indian community. This dialect got modified and amplified by words in English, French and Spanish. The dialectical renderings are brilliant gems of characterization. They are repeatedly used to showcase characters' ignorance and imply backwardness of the entire Trinidad society or culture.

Code switching is another mode to express secrecy, Bipti, Mr Biswas's mother uses Hindi as a secret language by less or uneducated women folk in public. During her stay at Short Hills, his mother Bipti comes to stay with him. Generation gap is painfully evident when children try to communicate with their maternal grandmother. Though the children understood Hindi, they could no longer speak it and had limited communication between them and Bipti, Biswas's mother in law. Hindi was mainly spoken by the elders and the younger generation used it to communicate with their elders. Naipaul in some places leaves foreign words (Hindi) untranslated. However he never uses words that would be difficult for the European and American audience.

In some places we find instances of idiosyncratic pronunciations like "antheology", "antology", "gimme", "lemmese", "woulda", "mischeevyus", "lesshego", nah etc. Apart from pronunciation we also observe deletion of verbs. In the expression "two-three," the conjunction is missing. The omission appears to be interference form of Hindi "do-tin". In many other sentences the progressive "be" and the apostrophe, the marker of possessive is missing.

Another linguistic deviation from the Standard is deletion of verbs. This makes dialogues short. Let us observe some of these dialogues:

It go learn people a lot, 'Ganesh encouraged.

Is just what I was thinking. It go learn people a lot.

But you think people want to learn?

'They aint want to learn?

'Look, Ganesh. You must always remember the sort of people it have in Trinidad (94).

Some other deviations are there from the Standard English. A large number questions, particularly the yes/no questions, do not have their usual grammatical structure like. 'They ain't want to learn? "On the very first page of *The Mystic*, "I know the sort of doctors it have in Trinidad, " the writers mother used to say and they nothing two three people before breakfast" are deviations from the Standard English. In *Miguel Street*, duplicative words like Man-Man, big-big etc are profusely used. This repetition functions as intensifier in the dialect. The quantifier "much" is used at several places instead of "many".

In several other places "go" is used for the future auxiliary will. These linguistic features and many others are peculiar to the dialect.

Using Hindi words in English makes the Indian communities in Trinidad speak a brand of English which is clumsy. But various colonial and post-colonial writers Indianize their English. This Creole form tends to be strange to speakers from other areas. But the Standard English is a powerful means of international communication. This Creole English represents the complexities of plural culture with a polyglot past.

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