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978-0-521-10890-4 - Pidgin and Creole Languages: Selected essays by Hugo Schuchardt

Edited by Glenn G. Gilbert

Excerpt

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## I

## Introduction

Hugo Schuchardt (born in Gotha, Germany in 1842 and died in Graz, Austria in 1927) is noted for his work in both Romance linguistics and general linguistics. He studied under Diez at Bonn, was *Privat-dozent* at Leipzig (1870), and professor at Halle (1873) and at Graz (1876–1900). He remained in retirement in Graz for the last twenty-seven years of his life, choosing to stay in the isolated southern Austrian city rather than to return to his native Germany.

Regarding Schuchardt's relationship with linguists in Germany, Meillet (1936: 158–9) writes:

Without doubt, Germany has adopted rather quickly most of these new ideas in linguistics. However, the initiative has almost always come from the outside. Of course one might cite by way of exception the name of Hugo Schuchardt, a scholar of the first rank, at once Romance specialist and general linguist, indefatigable tiller of new ground and inventor of general ideas. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Schuchardt, teaching at a university in the remote Austrian city of Graz, never belonged to the circle of those who exercised a controlling influence over the profession. He remained a distinguished but isolated figure whose influence was transmitted more rapidly and often with greater impact to areas outside of Germany. (original in French)

Schuchardt is best known for his brilliant historical (especially phonological and lexical) studies of Vulgar Latin and the Romance languages, and for his detailed and knowledgeable criticism of the doctrine of the immutability of the sound laws, as proposed by the neogrammarians. Others remember him for insightful work on a variety of languages ranging from English and Slavic to Georgian, Hungarian, Basque,

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Berber, Arabic, and Nubian. Greenberg (1971: 432), for instance, rates his 1912 article on the relationship between Dinka (Nilotic) and Bari (Nilo-Hamitic) as still well worth reading, saying that it displays 'keen critical abilities'. The only mention of Schuchardt in the current *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is for his work on Basque. Lafon (1972: 1745–6) praises a four-line comment buried in Schuchardt's 1893 *Baskische Studien* as 'one of the most profound ever made on the structure of the Basque verb system', but goes on to say:

Its significance has not however been fully appreciated . . . because of typographical considerations; it does not stand out and is lost in the middle of a list of forms . . . His memoir, which is very important, has not been read or utilized as it deserves, for it is too compact, and the reader, overwhelmed by the richness and the variety of documentation, sometimes finds it difficult to follow the author's argument.

And along the same line, Iorgu Iordan says more generally of Schuchardt:

His work is indeed remarkable both for its complete continuity and for its entirely fragmentary character. It is as [if] it were inspired with the same conception as his attitude towards language, which to him was a continuous entity in process of unceasing development and elaboration. Thus the last word was never spoken on any question. He realized that the phenomena of language are too complex, too protean, to be enclosed, much less to be finally tabulated, in any set formula. He frequently reverted to the same problem with fresh material and a changed point of view, arguing not only with those whom he had not succeeded in convincing, but also, and even more readily, with himself. (Iordan, Orr, and Posner, 1970: 50)

And finally:

'the real treasure is work' . . . This motto can be considered as Schuchardt's legacy to science. He was faithful to it throughout his whole life. It is this which, in a large measure, accounts for the extreme wealth of ideas contained in his works; for ever seeking, enquiring, investigating, he became the greatest linguist of his day. (Iordan, Orr, and Posner, 1970: 61)

Although a moderate amount of attention has been paid to his studies of linguistic borrowing, languages in contact, language mixture, and pidginization and creolization of language, his impact on later scholarship in these areas has been far less than one might have expected. It is true that his writing style leaves much to be desired; the syntax is convoluted, he bogs down in an overabundance of examples, and he frustratingly refuses to take sides on general questions to which it is only

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human to fervently wish for solutions. However, it has become increasingly clear that the anthologizing and interpretation of his work by others, as for example Leo Spitzer and Iorgu Iordan, has resulted in a systematic neglect of certain aspects of his work.

Despite the approximately seven hundred printed pages that issued from Schuchardt's pen on the topic of pidgin and creole languages, the subject was hardly touched on in Spitzer's all-important anthology, *Hugo Schuchardt–Brevier* (1st edn, 1922, 2nd edn, 1928); the same is true of the numerous obituaries that appeared upon his death in 1927 (see bibliography in Iordan *et al.* 1970: 49–50, fn. 1). His contemporaries in those years were still too much preoccupied with the prolonged controversy surrounding Schuchardt's attack on the neogrammarians' claims concerning the sound laws (1885), and the subsequent aesthetic extremism of such Romance idealists as Croce and Vossler.

In recent years, Romance scholars have continued to praise Spitzer for his judgment in the selection of Schuchardt's writings for the *Brevier* (e.g. Rohlfs, 1950: 1, 25; Malkiel, 1972: 852). Others, such as Robert Hall, Jr, apparently deceived by the negative and fragmentary tone of the *Brevier*, have gone to the opposite extreme, to the extent of accusing Schuchardt of being 'an enemy of science':

It will be noticed that Schuchardt's criticisms were all negative; he had no positive principles to offer in place of the Neo-Grammarian hypothesis of regular sound-change. All that he could propose was detailed observation of minutiae, with arbitrarily chosen points of reference for, as it were, purposes of triangulation . . . This approach is not only non-scientific; it is completely anti-scientific, denying even the possibility of classification, which is always the first step in any scientific analysis. This is essentially the aesthetic, unanalytic point of view expressed by Goethe in 'Parabase', in which the observer of nature is reduced to a passive, helpless admiration which excludes any positive, constructive scientific study:

'Immer wechselnd, fest sich haltend,  
Nah und fern und fern und nah,  
So gestaltend, umgestaltend,  
Zum Erstaunen bin ich da.'

[Ever changing, tightly holding  
Near and far and far and near,  
Thus creating, recreating,  
Astounded I stand here.]

(Hall 1963: 13–14)

Malkiel comes closer to the immense positive qualities in Schuchardt when he calls for a re-evaluation:

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Given the protean variety and diversity of Schuchardt's interests, there might be a point in preparing a radically different selection [in contrast to the one chosen by Spitzer in the *Brevier*] at present, taking into account the current canon of taste: there is room, in 1970, for neo-Schuchardtian no less than for neo-Humboldtian scholarship. (Malkiel, 1972: 852)

Clearly, any future selection of Schuchardt's writings should, among other things, contain pertinent passages from his articles on pidgins and creoles. They represent some of his most exciting and eminently positive and scientific work.

This book contains an English translation of all that Schuchardt wrote on pidgins and creoles that are *English-based*, plus his celebrated essay on the Italo-Spanish-based Lingua Franca. This represents scarcely 13 per cent of his total output on the subject. If both book reviews and articles are counted, Portuguese-based studies amount to twenty items and 507 printed pages, French-based ones to ten items and 36 printed pages, Spanish-based ones to three items and 45 printed pages, and Dutch-based ones to two items and 25 printed pages. A complete bibliography of his work on pidgins and creoles is included in this volume. The *Brevier* lists all of his published works.

Schuchardt first became interested in pidgin and creole languages around 1880. Initially, he published book reviews of Baissac's work on the French creole of Mauritius (Indian Ocean) and Coelho's grandiose plan for the study of Portuguese creoles in Africa, Asia, and America (Schuchardt, 1881). He had high hopes for Coelho's undertaking and tried to encourage him where possible. The two corresponded for many years, but little came of it as most of Coelho's plans for further research went unrealized.

Schuchardt's health left much to be desired, or so he thought, which may account for his reluctance to travel to the tropics to study the 'trade and slave languages' at first hand. Instead, he relied on a vast network of correspondents who relayed texts and sociological background information to him in Graz. The correspondents ranged from trained professional ethnologists and linguists, to missionaries, diplomats, military men, adventurers, and travellers generally.

Schuchardt's ultimate goal was to collect sufficient textual materials on a variety of pidgins and creoles to allow for a comparative study which would establish the outlines of CREOLE, a predictable set of structures which emerge when languages are radically simplified under intense

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pressure (Schuchardt used the metaphor of smashing a language into smithereens on a wheel of torture) and then re-complicated as they assume their full sociological function once again. Following his usual method, he was very careful not to engage in speculation not warranted by – or too remote from – his data. At the outset, he was inclined not to go along with the extreme position taken by Coelho (1880–1: 195):

The Romance-language-based creole dialects, Indo-Portuguese, and the like owe their origin to the operation of psychological or physiological laws that are everywhere the same, and not to the influence of the former languages of the peoples among whom these dialects are found . . . the essential traits of these dialects are everywhere the same, notwithstanding differences of race, climate, geographic distances, and even the period of history involved. Thus, for example, one would look in vain within Indo-Portuguese for any influence whatsoever of Tamil or Singhalese. In the Portuguese Creole of Macao the formation of the plural by reduplication of the singular *could* be attributed to Chinese influence, but this process is so rudimentary or basic that no conclusion whatever can be drawn from it. In the dialect of the island of Sant' Iago *muito muito* is a superlative.  
(original in Portuguese)

The idea is that the formation of the plural and of the superlative is semantically related; thus it is no surprise that reduplication, a feature of universal grammar, expresses both.

In the process of pidginization, the source language or languages (abbreviated  $L_s$ ) are those spoken natively by the lower caste in an emerging relationship of slavery, indenture, contractual labor, or commercial transaction. The target language or languages ( $L_t$ ) are those spoken by the dominant elite, who are directly or indirectly responsible for the social upheaval which resulted in  $L_t$  (or a foreigners' talk meta-version of  $L_t$ ) becoming a model for second language learning by a newly forming lower caste. In terms of these language labels, Schuchardt's procedure for studying the effects of the  $L_s$  substratum (an alternative explanation to Coelho's universal psychological and physiological laws) was approximately as follows:

(1) Identify  $L_s$  and  $L_t$ . Labels for specific languages or language groupings may then be used as a compound designation of a pidgin or creole.  $L_s$  is the first term of the compound,  $L_t$  the last. For example, *Anglo-Indian* would mean that English is the source language and one or several Indic languages the target. *Indian-English* would mean the opposite. Similarly, the term *Tagalo-Spanish* means that Spanish is the target; in *Hispano-Tagalog* the reverse holds true (Schuchardt 1891: †39 ff.)\*

\* The dagger indicates page number in this book.

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(2) Analyse and compare  $L_s$  and  $L_t$  for identification of patterns of errors or interference which constrain the process of simplification. As far as possible, simplification is to be attributed to specific language interference. Schuchardt identifies three levels of interference: (a) the superficial level (simplification of pronunciation); (b) the mechanical level (simplification of lexicon); (c) the mental level (simplification of inner form) (Schuchardt 1883b: 125).

Schuchardt then proceeds to set up a hierarchy of difficulty based upon the inner form of  $L_s$  and  $L_t$ . Thus, for example, if  $L_1$  has  $Y$  rules and  $L_2$  has  $Y + 1$  rules, the result of any process of pidginization composed of  $L_1$  and  $L_2$  will favor the inner form of  $L_1$  for this feature. An illustration given by Schuchardt is the passive rule of Philippine Creole Spanish, where Tagalog (and Ilocano) are  $L_s$  and Spanish is  $L_t$ . Tagalog has a rule which requires passivization of an active sentence when the object NP is definite. Spanish has no such rule:

... a Spaniard says *mata (tú) esta gallina* ['kill this chicken!'], just as he says *mata (tú) una gallina* ['kill a chicken!'], and this will not be difficult for a Tagalog to learn; it would be much harder for a Spaniard to distinguish between the Tagalog equivalent: *pataín mo itóng manúc* ['let this chicken be killed by you'] and *matáy ca nang isáng manúc* ['you kill a chicken']. (Schuchardt, 1883b: 130)

Phenomena which Coelho regards as psychological and physiological universals of pidginization, Schuchardt generally tries to account for on a case by case basis. Reduplication and lack of copula are characteristic of Tagalog and thus of Philippine Creole Spanish. Schuchardt sees no need of further explanation despite the occurrence of these characteristics in many pidgins and creoles worldwide, a fact which he was surely aware of (Schuchardt, 1883b: 136–8). With regard to Pidgin English in the southwest Pacific, he is more cautious (1883c: †20–1). Although he demonstrates the likelihood of grammatical transfer from the source languages, he hesitates to draw any strong conclusions; the evidence is merely suggestive. Phonological transfer is easier to show and he is able to present convincing evidence of its existence (1883c: †22–3). The same is true of Tamil phonological influence on the Butler English of Madras (1891: †48–9).

(3) After all such explanations are exhausted, step three is finally invoked. This involves what are currently called 'developmental errors' in second language acquisition. Schuchardt terms them 'phenomena which accompany the acquisition of every foreign language' (1883b: 142). An example is the tendency for enclitics and proclitics of  $L_t$  to disappear

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in  $L_p$ , the pidginized product. Thus, we find Philippine Creole Spanish *¿cosa?* for Standard Spanish *¿que cosa?* ‘what?; what do you say?’; or the elimination of the weak stressed reflexive particle *se* in a sentence like *ya conservá este lengua* ‘this language has been preserved’ (1883b: 142). More generally, Schuchardt explains the tendency for articles and prepositions to disappear in pidginization as a developmental error.

Nevertheless, time and again he was struck by grammatical similarities in geographically widely separated pidgins and creoles, especially in the verb system. He compares the tense formation and verb auxiliary system of American Indian English with ‘Negro Portuguese’, but is reluctant to draw any conclusions, preferring to leave the problem for his successors (1889b: †36–7). He notes that the simple present is replaced by a form of the durative present in the Butler English of Madras, Cape Verde Portuguese Creole, Sino-Portuguese, and Tagalo-Spanish. The *done* marker of completive aspect in the Negro English of Joel Chandler Harris’ Uncle Remus stories is compared with a similar construction in Butler English (1891: †49), and the *per* marker of the direct and indirect object in the Lingua Franca is likened to parallel constructions in Indo-Portuguese and Cape Dutch (1909a: †71).

In these and other cases he prefers to avoid, if at all possible, the assumption of historical or genetic relationship. Nevertheless, as one case study followed another, and the same phenomena continued to appear, he was driven to find a better (or supplementary) explanation for these remarkable similarities. By 1909, the year his monograph on the Lingua Franca was published, he had moved closer to Coelho’s position; but instead of putting the emphasis on the learner (in the form of developmental errors), he now placed the onus on the ‘teacher’, who appears to simplify his native language ( $L_i$ ) in patterned, predictable ways.

All radical simplification (Schuchardt’s term, *Radebrechen*, literally means ‘breaking on the wheel of torture’) of a language is a product of its native speakers; it is very similar to the way child language is based upon the simplifications which adults use when speaking to children (*Ammen-sprache*, lit. ‘nursemaid talk’). ‘Or if I may use a metaphor, it is not the foreigners who chip out single stones from a nice, tight building in order to build themselves miserable hovels, but it is the building’s owners themselves who hand them the pieces for this purpose’ (1909a: †69).

He now approves of Coelho’s statement that ‘a people of whatever country, finding itself in contact with strangers who do not speak its language, reduce it too (*tambem*), so to speak instinctively, stripping it of



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its grammatical forms in a way characteristic of the creole dialects' (Coelho, 1880-1: 67; original in Portuguese).

Realizing the limits of *ex post facto* studies of pidgins and creoles as a source of evidence bearing on such speculations, Schuchardt urges linguists to undertake research, observational or experimental, on foreigner talk (1891: †53), baby talk (1909a, fn. 7, †70), situations of intense language contact leading to a 'mixed product' (1891: †64), and structural similarities between planned international auxiliary languages (such as Volapük, Neolatin, or Novilatin) and pidgins, especially the *Lingua Franca* (1909a: †73-4; 1914c: †91). Needless to say, this ambitious program was hardly begun during his lifetime; those who thought they understood him best (e.g. Spitzer, Meillet, Iordan) had other interests. Many of the problems identified by him as early as 1891 still await a solution.

The common use in  $L_p$  of an invariable infinitive for the verb and an invariable singular for the noun, Schuchardt sees as the doing of the European teachers. Because of the various grammatical differences among the pidgin and creole languages known to him, he conceived of the simplified register of a language as representing a selection from a given range of possibilities (1909a: †70). He left open the problem of whether all languages have a simplified register and what fixed and variable constraints might operate in and on this register.

In his 1914 monograph on Saramaccan English Creole in Surinam, he again touched on the problem. Here, he edges still closer to Coelho by making teacher and learner jointly responsible for simplification. The language learning frames or 'scenarios' are very different in the genesis of a pidgin as contrasted with tutored or untutored second language learning, proceeding in a normal manner. There is an overwhelming and immediate need to communicate. The European teacher strips the functors (*alles Besondere*) from the European language, and the non-European learner disregards or suppresses them. The two meet on a middle line (Schuchardt, 1914c: †91-2).

For Schuchardt, the Negro creoles with Dutch, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish  $L_c$ 's are similar not because of a common genetic origin, but because of a *parallelism* due to the similar social and psychological frames of language teaching and learning. The same processes also account for the similarities of the Negro creoles as a group as against the non-Negro creoles.

there exists no common Negro creole . . . We have no divergence, but rather a



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parallelism. They are fashioned out of the same material according to the same plan, in the same style. The intrinsic relationship which exists within the Negro creoles is repeated between these and the other languages we have called creoles, to a weaker degree. But that is not due to the difference of mother tongues, but to the difference in language instruction. A Berlitz School was present in both cases; but the one for the slaves was very peculiar . . . (1914c: †95)

Despite his lengthy analysis in 1909 of all that he could discover about the Lingua Franca, it never occurred to him to claim for it the honor of being the ur-pidgin, that chameleon-like, ill-defined entity from which all modern European-based pidgins and creoles are supposed by some to be derived. Similarly, although he never doubted the chronological priority of the Portuguese sailors and the broken language they brought with them to the coasts of Africa and Asia, and even into the southwest Pacific, the Portuguese pidgins were by no means viewed as a link in a chain of relexifications stretching from a monogenetic Lingua Franca ancestor to the myriad European-based pidgins and creoles of the last five hundred years.

In India, for example, the Portuguese used broken language spontaneously ‘for the sake of the natives’ and ‘for easy communication’. No mention is made of the sailors’ following in the tradition of the Lingua Franca (1909a: fn. 6, †69). He generally regards the ubiquitous Portuguese lexical items in non-Portuguese-based pidgins and creoles as *borrowings* into these languages, via general maritime transmission, rather than as a *residue* of items that have escaped relexification.

In his discussion of Portuguese words in the English-based pidgins of the southwest Pacific, Schuchardt hazards a guess that Portuguese *sabe* ‘savvy’ and *calabouço* ‘calaboose; jail’ were transmitted along the sea routes from the Pidgin English of the South China Sea to the Beche-le-mar of New Guinea and surrounding islands. Such words are not remnants from an earlier time, but borrowings that were spread from one place to another (1883c: †21).

The Portuguese word *pequenino* ‘very small’ presents more of a problem, not only because of its widespread use, but because it appears to have spread in the opposite direction to *sabe* and *calabouço*, namely from east to west. Schuchardt is not sure how to explain it:

Chamisso also cites the Hawaiian borrowing *pikenene*, Spanish *pequeño*, for *kaēa* ‘little’. Astonishingly, the word can be found not only in New Zealand . . . , but even among the supposedly Greenlandic words reported by . . . d’Oreilly . . . Most likely, this word, Portuguese *pequenino*, did not penetrate into the whalers’

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jargon from the west, but rather from the east. In Anglo America, *pickaninny* is widespread. (Schuchardt, 1883c: fn. 10, †21–2; 1889b: †24)

Turning to India, Schuchardt mentions that Portuguese is the fifth most frequent source of loans (after Aryan, Dravidian, Persian, and Malay) into Indo-English, the English spoken by the Indians. This is not surprising since the Portuguese were ‘the first European rulers in India’ (1891: †41). He observes that although the English started to communicate as early as the seventeenth century with their slaves in English rather than in Indo-Portuguese, Indo-English has always lacked the wide distribution and stability of Indo-Portuguese (1891: †47). The substitution of one  $L_i$  by another paved the way for an indirect lexical influence of Portuguese on English, as for example in the Indo-English word *boy* ‘native servant’, which Schuchardt believes is modeled on Portuguese *moço* ‘boy, servant’. It is a far cry from ‘lexical influence’ to relexification, however, and Schuchardt goes no further.

To be sure, the apparently mixed Portuguese–English heritage of Saramaccan is troubling. He considers English to have preceded Portuguese on the coast of Surinam. The latter language was introduced by Jewish (Portuguese) planters with their ‘Negro Portuguese’-speaking slaves (1914c: †104). The Portuguese creole was then ‘metamorphosed like a will-o’-the-wisp into an English one’ (1909a: †73). As was the case in the Lingua Franca, the successive European  $L_i$ ’s came to overlies each other like the growth rings of a tree. The peculiar aspect of Saramaccan is that the two ancestral creoles – one with an English  $L_i$  and one with a Portuguese  $L_i$  – seem to have gradually merged, with the English one predominating (1914c: †116 ff.). The inner grammatical core remains English (1914c: †118–19). (In other places, Schuchardt talks about ‘inner form’, a concept borrowed from the writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt, who influenced him more than he knew.) It is a product of a ‘coalescence’, not of a replacement (1914c: †119). This is as close as Schuchardt ever got to relexification. Nearing the end of his life – he was seventy-two when the Saramaccan monograph was published – he was well aware that the final word on the recalcitrant language was yet to come; a better resolution was needed. And, as it turned out, there the matter rested for fifty years.

Schuchardt recognizes the many creole-like characteristics of Standard English. ‘... English itself is much closer to creole than the Romance languages’ (1914c: †97). Thus it is no accident that the language has proved a suitable vehicle for a whole range of Black creoles