

Simplification and minimal communication in pidgins and
constructed languages:
the cases of Chinook Jargon and Uni

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When two groups of people with different languages need to communicate, it can be difficult for them to do so without some problems. For one, learning a language is difficult. Also, it sometimes is not practical or possible to have both groups speaking the language of one group--it is both logistically and politically unfeasible. These types of situations are the breeding grounds for languages called pidgins, which combine and simplify the languages they deal with, and they also can be the impetus, in a more abstract sense, for people to create languages that attempt to bridge that gap. The processes of pidginization and language construction are somewhat parallel; they both attempt to make order and simplicity out of disorder and difficulty. However, humanity's unintentional interlanguage creations and its intentional interlanguage creations are also rather different in many ways--from their syntax to their lexicon and the way it covers the range of human knowledge and experience. How are they similar, and how are they different? And should the creators of constructed languages, attempt to emulate pidgins' simplifications of language? This paper will examine this question, but first we must define what pidgins and constructed languages actually are.

When two or more different linguistic groups are placed into certain types of close contact and into certain relationships, languages called pidgins often spring up. A

pidgin is defined by Suzanne Romaine as "a language which has been stripped of everything but the bare essentials necessary for communication."¹. They arise spontaneously when two or more groups need to communicate, often in a colonial system. Later, once children speak them as their native language, they can grow into creoles, which have the full expressive capacity of full-fledged languages. Pidgins are a condensation of the full-fledged languages that they come from--but they also have elements that come from none of their substrate languages.

Similarly, when some people see the difficulty of communication in a world with thousands of different languages, they feel the need to create their own artificial "pidgins", languages that utilize a simplified grammar and a regular vocabulary, often drawn from Indo-European root stock, to rescue the world from "Babelization" and linguistic irregularity. These languages are often referred to as constructed languages, and I will refer to them as such during the course of this paper. They are also referred to as international auxiliary languages (IAL's), to distinguish them from other types of constructed languages such as computer languages, and languages such as Loglan, an artificial language constructed to test the Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis. These languages also pare down their substrate

¹Suzanne Romaine, *Pidgin and Creole Languages* (London: Longman Group, 1988) 24.

languages--but, like pidgins, pare them down in some ways that are common to none of the languages they spring from.

This paper will examine the similarities and differences between pidgins and constructed languages by looking at examples from the worlds of constructed languages and pidgins and creoles. In particular, we will look at Chinook Jargon, a fairly simple pidgin that has a vocabulary of about 500 words, and at Uni, a very minimal constructed language. We will examine the languages' syntax, morphology, and their lexicons and semantics, looking for how they are similar and different in their reduction of full-fledged natural languages. The final part of this paper will examine why constructed languages are not the same as pidgins and creoles, and whether mankind's intentional creations should attempt to emulate its unintentional creations.

CHINOOK JARGON vs. UNI: Two attempts at simplicity.

The two languages that I will discuss here are very different, varying not only in their timeframes but also in their functions. Although they certainly are not perfectly representative of their classes, a close examination of each language will reveal how each language reduces the number of elements needed to allow communication.

Chinook Jargon (CJ) was a trade language that was spoken by members of several Native American tribes from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. It drew from Chinook,

English, French, Nootka, and Salish², although its vocabulary was primarily made up of Chinook terms. By the time Horatio Hale published his grammar in 1890 (the grammar that this paper will work with), the language had about 500 words, and it is doubtful that it expanded much after that. Its primary purpose was to facilitate trade, although, as Hale's book proves, with terms such as *heehee house* "a bowling alley or tavern", and sermons printed in CJ, it was used for more than trade. It is notable as an example of a jargon--the developmental stage of the pidgin continuum, and as a pidgin that assimilates five entirely different languages into a concise and functional whole.

Uni (often written in all capitals), on the other hand, is a constructed language that was written by Elisabeth Wainscott and published in 1974. It never really attracted a following, and today probably has very few speakers. It is unique among constructed languages in many ways. For one, its vocabulary is highly structured, at least orthographically: for example, all singular nouns in Uni are three letters, such as *ADO* "darling, dear", and *FIS* "fish", except for common international words such as "restaurant" and proper names. This requirement makes for an interesting mixture of recognizable (though mangled) *a posteriori* roots and completely unrecognizable *a priori* inventions. Its grammar is also, in keeping with its noun structure, very

²Horatio Hale, *An International Idiom: A Manual of the Oregon Trade Language, or Chinook Jargon* (London: Whittaker & Co., 1890) 39.

structured and simple. It is composed of 10 rules, which dictate suffixes that form plurals, past and future tense, adjectives, and prefixes for "big" and "small", "not", and male/female. The original Uni book provided it with a basic vocabulary of 464 words and an advanced vocabulary of 590 additional words; a later supplement expanded this figure to 2,000 words, although many of these were compound words.

Ms. Wainscott apparently had no linguistics training apart from living in different language communities, and it shows, for some of Uni is not as linguistically sophisticated as it could be. Nonetheless, its achievements and its shortcomings demonstrate the differences between pidgins' distillation of language and constructed languages' attempts to do the same thing. This section of the paper will compare the two languages', or attempts at languages' similarities and differences in syntax, morphology, and, finally, the lexicon.

Syntax

The two languages are very similar in that neither one uses definite or indefinite articles: (Uni)

- (1) ZO-US DUH OF OST KITAT UK-US NAZ.
"Strong smell of cheese tickle (past) his nose."
(A strong smell of cheese tickled his nose.)³
- (2) Mesika kumtux kopa talkie Sunday. . .
"You know PREP sermon Sunday. . ."

³Elisabeth Wainscott, *Uni: The New International Language: Supplement, English Language Edition* (Uniline Publishers: Cleveland, Ohio, 1974)

(You know, on the sermon Sunday. . .)"⁴

Occasionally, the languages use demonstrative pronouns in the place of definite articles. CJ uses *oko*, which is its one demonstrative pronoun:

(3) *Kah oko leplet iskum muckamuck. . .?*
"Where (do) those missionaries get food?"

Uni does this as well:

(4) *KAN UKA LUM MENAT. . .ETO TIM UD DONAT PETROL.*
"When red light changed. . .that time I gave gas."

The meaning here, however, is more of "at that time" or "then". The Uni literature (which is, admittedly, very slim indeed) does not give an instance of ETO being used as a demonstrative article with another noun; while this does not prohibit this from happening, it does show that the use of demonstrative articles is infrequent.

The elimination of definite and indefinite articles in CJ and Uni shows that the two languages have something in common: both view things such as articles as something that is not essential to meaning. By not using things such as articles that provide relatively little information compared to their frequency in the language, CJ and Uni increase efficiency and shift the emphasis of sentences to the meaning conveyed by the open-class elements of the sentence.

The same phenomenon is found when one looks for instances of the copula in the two languages. According to

⁴Hale 32. A couple notes about orthography: 1) Uni is always written in all capitals. 2) In CJ, the orthography comes from Hale's transcription of a sermon; it is undoubtedly flawed phonetically (for a discussion of this, see J.V. Powell 1990), but it presumably represents the actual words that are being said, if not exactly how they are said.

Suzanne Romaine, pidgins have a great tendency to omit the copula.⁵ And, indeed, in Chinook Jargon, it is not there:

(5) *Yaka elip hia mahkook kopa konoway dolla*
"It more great bargain preposition all money."
(It is of greater price than all money.)⁶

The copula is not needed for predicate adjectives in CJ, and it is not needed to mark tense, since tense is rarely expressed in CJ (and when it is, it is expressed by an adverb preceding the verb). The copula in Chinook Jargon is omitted just as the articles are.

Uni, however, has a copula which is used sparingly. ZUZA (pleasantly enough, the last word alphabetically in the Uni dictionary) is used in some situations but is often omitted in others. It is always used in the imperative form:

(6) ZUZA GU "Be good"
(7) O ZUZA TIM-US "[Do] not be shy"

It is also necessary to separate nouns in the subject from nouns in the predicate in cases such as the following:

(8) UKI BA-SONAT IBO UKI ZUZA ERV-US FEMI.
"They yelled because they are nervous women."⁷

However, in two other situations, predicate adjectives and location, the copula can be omitted.

(9) VO RESTAURANT? UDI HUN. "Where restaurant? We hungry."⁸

⁵Romaine 29.

⁶Hale 33.

⁷Elisabeth Wainscott: *Uni, The New International Language* (Uniline Co., Cleveland, Ohio: 1974) 288. Wainscott does not explicitly state this, but the data seem to support this.

⁸*Uni* 215.

says the UNI text in a section of what seems to be very simple Uni for the traveller.⁹ And later, in "a reading exercise in Uni", we find the construction

(10) HE MOI HIS "Here [is] my story"¹⁰

which is not explicitly a location, but it does present information as being present in this place and time. The copula does not have to be omitted, however:

(11) UFI-US TIVI ZUZA BRI-US "your eyes are bright"¹¹.

This could be omitted, according to the rule established earlier, but is not. Perhaps this is because the author wishes to create a more formal tone. Or perhaps it is because this last sentence occurs in the Uni Supplement rather than in the original text--signifying a possible progression in the language itself from the time when it was written. Nonetheless, it shows that there is a tendency in more sophisticated Uni to use the copula.

The copula is generally used in Uni whenever a tense is being marked, but this too appears to be a matter of stylistic construction. Most of the time, the copula must be used when there is no marker in the sentence to show tense:

(12) TEB ZUZAT RAD-US "Bird was happy"¹².

⁹As Uni never really gained any support, its value to the traveller would be very minimal; nonetheless, Wainscott had her hopes, which are reflected in the Uni text, as well as in the texts for other constructed languages that I've seen.

¹⁰Uni 286.

¹¹Supplement 32.

¹²Supplement 32.

This is always the case in the more "sophisticated" texts found toward the end of the book and in the supplement. However, in "A letter in Uni", we find both constructions coexisting:

(13) UZO IN PARIS ZUZAT UVO "Sky in Paris was gray"¹³ appears in the text right after a short section in the future tense. However, later in the text, we find the sentence

(14) IN ITALY SEK TEM "In Italy, dry weather."¹⁴ It seems that in the condensed, letter format, once the tense has been established, the copula need be used only when there is a change in tense. More evidence would help here, but, as has been said before, there is none.

The phenomenon of shifting the meaning of function words to open-class words is also found in Chinook Jargon's, though not Uni's, treatment of embedded clauses. Uni forms embedded clauses in a manner similar to that of English, as is its tendency in many cases. The complementizer "that" is translated as KE, and it conjoins the following two sentences:

(15) UD FILA SUR KE UFI-US VOZ ZUZA AZ-GU IAN BUV OTR
TEBI IN BA-PODI.
"I feel sure that your voice is better than all other
birds in forest."¹⁵

¹³Uni 220.

¹⁴Uni 220.

¹⁵Supplement 32. Note also the spelling of OTR: barring some sort of unwritten vowel between the T and R, this word is unpronounceable, casting doubt on Wainscott's claim that Uni is "completely phonetic". But we will deal with that later.

Sentences with embedded clauses are represented fairly simply in Uni: the embedded clause is the second one in the sentence, and it is conjoined with the matrix clause by means of KE.

Chinook Jargon, however, eliminates even that simple particle. The two sentences are conjoined with no particle in between:

(16) *Nika kwass nika papa klonass mimaloose.*
"I fear my father perhaps die."¹⁶

There is nothing aside from context to separate the two clauses here; conceivably, this sentence could mean "I fear myself; father is perhaps dead." However, the context, and possibly other factors such as intonation, would seem to prevent this.

Another example of embedded clause formation in CJ is found in the sermon in Hale's book.

(17) *Kloshe nesika potlatch tenas dolla.*
"Good we give little money."¹⁷
(It is good that we give a little money.)

In this, we find a single adjective, which could be acting either as an adjective or an impersonal expression, conjoined to a sentence. The chances are good that *kloshe* is used in this case as a sentence on its own, and that therefore we are conjoining "It is good" and "We give a little money".¹⁸ Even if this is so, the economy that this method achieves is

¹⁶Hale 14.

¹⁷Hale 34.

¹⁸If we assume that it is an adjective, it has to be modifying the rest of the sentence, which would be a little far-fetched: the sentence structure A [NP VP NP] is fairly unlikely. But the thought is rather interesting.

sizable. The only closed-class word in this sentence is *nesika* "we"--all the others that English (and, to some degree, Uni) puts in are taken out.

In spite of its economy, the CJ method is essentially the same as the Uni (and English) method for forming embedded clauses, with the complementizer being implied instead of explicit. Nonetheless, the omission of this particle is interesting in its total stripping down of the language.

One area where the two languages differ strongly is in their word orders. Chinook Jargon is fixed in an SVO word order, as is typical of pidgins, even though its substrate languages, that is, the languages it draws on, have, for the most part, other word orders, such as VSO. This is, according to J. Haiman, in order to avoid allotaxy, or the use of different word orders for the expression of the same grammatical relationships¹⁹. Uni, on the other hand, goes in the opposite direction on this issue by permitting free word order. "There is no prescribed word order in Uni. Each speaker will use the same word order he usually uses. The sense of the sentence or situation will make meaning clear."²⁰ Note that this is not necessarily true, as in cases where there are two nouns capable of volition; for example, in the

¹⁹as paraphrased on Romaine 29.

²⁰*Supplement 4*. Note that this is not necessarily true, as in cases where there are two nouns capable of volition; for example, in the sentence PUHA BOB DON (push Bob Don), there is no way to tell which one is doing the pushing. Admittedly, there is no language as far as I know that uses VOS word order, so it might not even be a question for most speakers; nonetheless, this does allow for a great deal of ambiguity.

sentence PUHA BOB DON (push Bob Don), there is no way to tell which one is doing the pushing. This is one of Uni's largest flaws, for it can lead to a great deal of ambiguity.

The texts strongly tend toward an SVO order, and, in fact, use no other order, which probably reveals Ms. Wainscott's biases in that direction. Nonetheless, this distinction is very interesting. Chinook Jargon takes the distinct word orders of its substrate languages and twists them into its rigid SVO order, presumably for easy processing, even among its speakers, most of whom were not accustomed to this order. Givón asserts that SVO order is the easiest to process because it separates the subject from the object, thereby reducing the prospect of confusion between the two.²¹ Uni takes a predominantly (and perhaps entirely) SVO group of substrate languages and undoes their strict word order.

The distinction between the two tells us a great deal about the distinction between pidgins and constructed languages such as Uni and Esperanto, which are meant to be international auxiliary languages. Pidgins are made to be easily understood when they are heard, and easily spoken as well. This means eliminating redundancy, reducing the lexicon, and eliminating ambiguity. A language like CJ, with its complete dearth of inflectional morphology, will understandably be in a fixed word order to make learning easy

²¹paraphrased in Romaine 31.

for the listener. If the listener knows that the sentences always follow a certain pattern, it is easier to distinguish nouns from verbs, and other such tasks are made much simpler as well.

Uni, on the other hand, is meant to be learned by sitting down with a textbook. Since this is the case, a fluid word order is appealing to the speaker of a non-SVO language. It does not favor any strict word order, for it is intended to be an international, neutral language. Uni tries to aid learning by making the word order that with which the learner is comfortable. This is at least somewhat acceptable, since its parts of speech are clearly marked through morphology, and, therefore, nouns and verbs are easily distinguished, although other grammatical relations, as noted before, are not. Chinook Jargon has a word order that is unfriendly to most of its speakers (or at least its Native American speakers)--but that is psycholinguistically conducive to easier learning--and therefore is not so unfriendly in the long run.

A second syntactic area where the two languages differ greatly is in terms of prepositions. Uni has a sizable set of prepositions, with words corresponding to the English prepositions to, of, by, and for, among others. CJ, on the other hand, has only one preposition, *kopa*. *Kopa* is used in any situation requiring a preposition. In the following lyrics from a CJ "song of love and jealousy", it is used

three times, each time corresponding to a different English
(and Uni) preposition:

- (18) *Klonas kahta nika tumtum/Kopa Johnny.*
"I-do-not-know how my heart/PREP Johnny."
"I don't know how my heart feels toward Johnny."
(19) *Kultus kopa nika.* "Nothing PREP me." "It is
nothing to me."
(20) *Wake kul kopa nika.* "Not difficult PREP me."
"It is not difficult for me."²²

CJ's preposition system distills the many different prepositions of its substrate languages into one preposition (excepting some position words such as "above" and "below"), thereby avoiding any problems that the five different sets of prepositions could cause with their different shades of meaning. Again, we find a shift in meaning away from closed-class words. A minimal system of function words supports a more extensive system of open-class words. CJ's prepositional system is completely different from Uni's, and again we find the pidgin to be apparently more constraining and the constructed language more accommodating. CJ aims for easy comprehension, and while it may bother learners of CJ that their favorite preposition is not given its own lexeme, this fact also makes it very easy to learn.

The syntax found in Chinook Jargon and Uni is different from that found in larger pidgins and constructed languages, and radically different from that of natural, full-fledged languages. Both languages shift the emphasis of syntax away from closed-class words--articles, the copula, and

²²Hale 25.

prepositions. Each one also takes a strong attitude toward word order--in CJ's case, that it must be SVO order regardless of the word order of the speaker's native language, and in Uni's case, that limiting the language to a single word order is constraining. The two take syntax and reduce it a great deal. This reduction is inevitable with the reduction of the lexicon found in these languages, but the two reduce in fairly similar ways--to a point. CJ tends to insist that speakers adapt to its manner of doing things, while Uni provides options for speakers of all linguistic backgrounds--at least in its word order and prepositions, even at the cost of expressive capacity. Perhaps Chinook Jargon's approach is more feasible--but that will be discussed later.

Morphology

Discussing morphology in a language like Chinook Jargon is next to impossible, for there is hardly any to study, and what there is comes from Chinook and CJ's other substrate languages. However, Uni has a system of morphology, even if it is fairly simple. Several functions that Uni achieves through morphology are achieved by CJ through syntax. We will look at some of these as well as at some of Uni's peculiar morphological features.

One way in which CJ and Uni use syntax and morphology to achieve the same effect is in the formation of possessives.

Uni's formation of possessives is simple: one adds a -US suffix. This suffix also serves to form adjectives and adverbs, such as in UNK "[an] official" and UNK-US "official". While this may lead to some ambiguity, it is very straightforward and easy to understand--as Waincott intended.

Chinook Jargon, on the other hand, forms possessives in two ways, one of which employs an unusual syntactic device. Normally, CJ does not mark possessives:

(21) *Konoway halo nesika muckamuck* "All gone our food"²³.
In this sentence, *nesika*, which is used as the possessives, could also be used as a normal noun (e.g. *Nesika muckamuck klohkloh* "We eat oysters") without any change. The other method of forming possessives, however, is quite different. It involves stating a proper name and then following it with its appropriate pronoun:

(22) . . . *konoway tilikum mash Lejaub yaka owakut, pe klap Jesus yaka owakut.*
"all nations reject Satan he way, and take Jesus he way."
(All nations reject Satan's way, and take Jesus's way)²⁴

This construction is not unique to the possessive, for we find this construction elsewhere in a non-possessive context:

(23) *Kimtah Jesus yaka get-up* "After Jesus he rise".

²³Hale 24.

²⁴Hale 33.

Nonetheless, this possessive formation of three nouns in a row shows the flexibility of CJ syntax in the absence of morphology.

Another case where Uni morphology overlaps with CJ syntax is in the formation of tenses. Uni forms tense with suffixes. Its infinitival and present-tense forms have the form -A; hence, TAGA means either "to stagger" or "stagger/s". The past tense is formed by adding -AT: TAGAT "staggered". The future is formed with -AM: TAGAM "will stagger". These are the Uni tenses; they are always formed by morphology, even if the sentence already has some time marker.²⁵

Chinook Jargon, by contrast, has no morphological markings for time. Hence, *get-up* can mean either "to rise", "rises", "rose", or "will rise", depending on the context. However, "when it is absolutely necessary to distinguish the time",²⁶ as Horatio Hale puts it, CJ uses adverbs such as *alta* "now", *tahlkie* "yesterday", *alkie* "soon", and *ahnkuttie* "formerly". Although CJ tends not to mark its verbs, it is capable with marking them with a fair amount of precision when it needs to. This is in contrast to Uni, which has these adjectives (e.g. SUN "soon" and EDU "yesterday") but cannot mark tense in the same way; for example, it has no way of expressing completedness vs. a continuing act. This

²⁵This may bring up the question "where is the conditional? Where is [insert favorite other tense]?" They are not there. We will deal with that later.

²⁶Hale 14.

will be dealt with in the section on meaning and the lexicon, however. Suffice it to say for now that Uni marks tense in a fashion similar to most Western ethnic languages, through morphological endings, while Chinook Jargon does not mark tense until it needs to.

As was previously stated, neither Uni nor CJ has a very complex morphological system; CJ has almost none, and Uni's morphology can be summarized in ten rules²⁷. But what they morphologically omit is often made up for in the lexicon, which I will explore next.

Semantics and the lexicon

One of the things that makes a pidgin a pidgin and a constructed language a constructed language is lexical impoverishment; that is, the reduced language has fewer lexemes than a natural ethnic language. Lexical impoverishment makes the language much easier to learn, but it reduces the ability of the language to express subtleties or shades of meaning. Chinook Jargon and Uni's lexicons are rather different in their respective impoverishments, however, and their patterns of impoverishment tell a great deal about each language and its priorities.

²⁷Despite the fact that Wainscott calls the ten rules "complete", there are other morphological rules that Uni employs; for example, there are rules for forming numbers, month and day names, and compound words.

One barometer of "shades of meaning" is shades themselves--that is, how each language divides up the spectrum of visible light. Each one lacks not only subtle colors such as carmine and chartreuse, but some important basic colors as well. Uni has the following words for color:

Primary colors:

UKA "red"
LEM "yellow"
UZA "blue"

Secondary colors:

GAF "green"

Other and non-colors:

UPA "black"
UMA "brown"
UVO "gray"
USE "white"

This list is notable for its incomplete list of secondary colors: there is no word for "purple" or "orange"²⁸; presumably, these colors would have to be expressed as UKA-UZA or UKA-LEM, or perhaps through metaphor. Nonetheless, this indicates that, in its attempts to simplify the language, Uni has cut out some very important words. This could mean that Wainscott has resegmented the spectrum so that what we think of as orange could be seen as red or yellow, and so on, but this is quite a semantic leap for a person who is learning Uni as a second language. The spectrum in Uni is a good barometer of its arbitrary lexical impoverishment.

²⁸There is, however, a word in Uni for orange (the fruit): ORA-FUT. "ORA-fruit". ORA is not used anywhere else in the lexicon; perhaps this is Uni's example of a bound morpheme? Nonetheless, the fact that Uni has this word but no term for the color is strange.

The spectrum in Chinook Jargon, however, is segmented differently. CJ also has no words for some colors that English has words for, but it at least partially makes up for that by means of two interesting words. The spectrum in CJ is divided like this:

Primary colors

pil, "red"

kawkawak, "yellow"

Secondary colors:

pechugh, "green".

Other:

klale, "black, dark blue or dark green; dark-colored".

legley, "gray"

t'kope "white, light-colored".

Here we find the glaring omission of some colors that would seem very important: most prominently, blue, and again, secondary colors other than green. However, CJ has two words that take up a lot of semantic space: *klale* and *t'kope*. *Klale* is listed in Hale's dictionary entries for both "blue" and "black", meaning that it was probably used for both. One wonders what the word for powder blue was²⁹, but, nonetheless, CJ has covered the entire spectrum, more or less, in six words. This leads to a great loss of precision in color-naming. Subtle distinctions in color, however, were probably not tremendously important in trade, so this loss of precision is not so important.

²⁹It is highly unlikely that the speakers of CJ cared about powder blue; nonetheless, it does point to a loss of expressive capability--but not necessarily as a bad thing.

Both Uni and Chinook Jargon have terms for "light" and "dark"³⁰. However, CJ uses these terms in a much more comprehensive manner. If an Uni speaker pointed to a dark purple object and said to another Uni speaker "OSK-US", the hearer would understand but would not have the same impression than if a CJ speaker pointed to that object and said "klale". Both languages have very few words for colors; both of them would have serious deficiencies as a language for poetry (at least in the color sense; in the CJ grammar, Hale does include some hymns and "songs of love and jealousy"). But the fact that CJ covers more semantic space with fewer words shows the unique nature of pidgins: they are able to express concepts in ways that are common to none of their substrate languages.

Another place where lexical impoverishment affects the languages is in terms of sexual and excretory function, and vulgarity in general. Neither of the reference books used as the basis of this paper contain much in the way of these words: Hale's dictionary has next to nothing (in keeping with the spirit of the sermons used as the primary texts in the book), and Waincott's dictionary has a word, LUV, which means "sex", but lacks any other words that could be construed as sexual, excretory, or vulgar.

³⁰Uni's words for dark and light are, respectively, OSK-US and BLA. The latter of these is interesting, for it is defined as "pale" but lacks the adjectival suffix of -US.

Hale's account of CJ, however, does not tell the whole story. An article by J. V. Powell talks about the words that the CJ lexicographers left out: prominently featured among them are "body reference and sexual slang". CJ had several words for sexual and excretory function:

mahsh muckamuck "throw out food" (to defecate)
stone(s) "rocks" (testicles)
is "to urinate, urine"³¹

CJ, despite Hale's attempts to sanitize it, is full of these words, and these words are a necessary part of language.

Uni has a few words that refer to sex: LUV, LUVA, which represent the noun and the verb forms respectively, and a word for "toilet", DOD. However, there is no way to talk about specifics; this is a way in which impoverishment works in Uni. Esperanto, a constructed language which has been spoken for over one hundred years, has words for "excrement" (*ekskremento*) and various body parts, and, in addition, it has developed some vulgarities comparable to those of natural languages.³² Uni would almost certainly follow in Esperanto's footsteps if it were spoken for some time; however, without a community of speakers, there is no way to determine this. This lack of "profanity" shows very clearly how IALs reflect their creators and the societies in which they were created,

³¹J.V. Powell, "Chinook Jargon vocabulary and the lexicographers".
International Journal of American Linguistics, v. 56 (Jan. 1990), p. 134-5.

³²Manuel Halvelik, "Planning Nonstandard Language", in *Trends in Linguistics 42: Interlinguistics: Aspects of the Science of Planned Languages* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1989) 204. Halvelik includes such terms as *fikumini!* "fuck off", although he doesn't include any references to sexual or excretory function.

and this is a problem with a language created by one person. If that one person's vision of the international language does not contain a word for "urinate", for example, or a non-euphemistic way of expressing that concept, that person's language is going to be very unwieldy.

Another issue brought up by lexical impoverishment is the issue of tense. Neither Chinook Jargon nor Uni has a very developed tense system; CJ has none at all, expressing all of its time distinctions through aspect, and Uni has only three basic tenses: simple present, past, and future. This stripping down of the tense system does not make communication impossible, as shown by the success of Chinook Jargon as a vehicle for successful communication between groups from different language families; nonetheless, it does greatly affect the shades of meaning that can be expressed by the language. Neither language, for example, has an explicitly stated conditional tense, and neither language has any explicit provision for completed past tense versus continuing past tense. How they deal with the lack of these tenses tells us something about these languages.

Chinook Jargon has neither of these tenses because, of course, it has not explicitly stated tenses at all. This does not stop it from at least implying these ideas through an aspect system, however. In CJ, we find the idea of a conditional, or a hypothetical, expressed through the use of the words *klonass* "perhaps" and *spose* "suppose, if, when". Hale gives the following example of the use of *spose*:

(24) *Spose mika klatawa yahwa, pe nika chaco kahkwa.*
"Suppose you go there, (conjunction) I come the-same"
(If you would go there, I would come as well)³³

Although there are no explicit tenses expressed in this sentence, the *spose* gives this sentence a conditional reading. Thus, we find Chinook Jargon using adverbs to overcome its lack of tenses once again.

Chinook Jargon also uses adverbs to express a completive sense. Generally, it does not distinguish between completed actions and continuing actions: witness Hale's previously mentioned comment that adverbs are employed only when it is "absolutely necessary". Nonetheless, they are available, and the following sentence shows that they can fulfill the completive function:

(25) *Ahnkottie hyas nika kumtuks kapswalla; alta kelapi nika tumtum.*
"Formerly great I know steal; now turn me heart."
"Formerly I used to steal much; now my heart has changed."³⁴

Although one could argue that the structure of the sentence would imply that the action is completed, it seems that *ahnkottie* alone without the aid of the second clause would express completion as well.

Uni's tense impoverishment is a shaky thing. On one hand, it has words for "maybe" and "before" (VEZ-US and ERE respectively); on the other hand, it does not specify how they are used, or if they could be used to form hypothetical sentences or express completion/continuation. One can

³³Hale 14.

³⁴Hale 23.

attempt to form these types of sentences, and they make some sense³⁵:

(26) IF MADONNA ZUZAT UD-US DOV-REN, UD [?] RAD-US AS UFI.

"If Madonna cop-past me-poss love-person, I [?] happy as you."

(If Madonna were my lover, I [would be] as happy as you.)

However, the tense system does not allow the formation of hypotheticals. This sort of situation shows one of Uni's biggest flaws: its lexicon and its grammar do not cover everything. Wainscott agrees, and, in fact, she says, ". . . Uni is not a complete language. . ."³⁶ Nonetheless, something is missing here. Uni could possibly resolve this problem, but its system of impoverishment places a high premium on extra grammatical rules. Perhaps the [?] in my example sentence could be replaced by VEZ-US, which would be akin to CJ's usage of adverbs to express hypotheticals and completion, but Uni does not provide for this. It would seem that constructed languages reduce a language's lexicon in a different way than pidgins, often favoring aesthetic simplicity (e.g. the 10 rules) over ease of learning--and, often, over expressive capability.³⁷

³⁵These intuitions, of course, are only speculation, because there are no native speakers of Uni.

³⁶Supplement 1.

³⁷Another example of this dedication to aesthetic simplicity is Reverend Foster's Ro, which divided knowledge up into 25 divisions, and lexified the elements in these classes with similar roots; thus, the numerals 1-10 became "zab, zac, zad, zaf" and so on. (Andrew Large: *The Artificial Language Movement* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985) 176.) This is aesthetically and philosophically very simple--but not exactly easy to learn. Another example would be Esperanto's table of correlatives--but that is another discussion.

However, pidgins do not always have an expressive advantage over constructed languages. A good case for this can be made by the systems of prepositions found in Uni and Chinook Jargon, which were discussed earlier in this paper. While Uni has a fairly full complement of prepositions, CJ has only one, *kopa*. This does make the language much, much easier to learn, for it bypasses the arbitrariness found in many expressions using prepositions. Does one get *in line* or *on line*? In CJ, one gets *kopa line*³⁸ and there are no problems. However, this ease of learning is counterbalanced by a great loss of expressive capability. There is no way to distinguish whether one is doing something to someone or for someone; there is no way to distinguish whether someone went toward a city or around it or through it; and so on. Usually, context will determine which reading should prevail. However, the problems with this approach are shown in this line from the CJ translation of the Lord's Prayer:

(27) *Kloshe spose mika tumtum mitlite kopa illahee
kahkwa kopa Saghalié.*
"Good if you(r) will reside PREP Earth as PREP (the)
Above."
("Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.)³⁹

To the missionary's potential converts, the lack of prepositional precision here could lead to an entirely different vision than that of the missionary. The will of God could reside within the earth rather than on the earth;

³⁸There is no word in CJ for "line"--another case of lexical impoverishment taking its toll. On the other hand, there was probably no use for the word "line" in a trade jargon.

³⁹Hale 37.

in its rocks and plants rather than in the minds of the devoted, and so on. This may seem far-fetched--but perhaps not if one is not familiar with the Lord's Prayer and the basic tenets of Christianity, and especially not if one is familiar with the problems of translation in general, which CJ's lexical impoverishment could exacerbate. The missionary speaking this paternoster would probably be well enough understood--but subtleties, and potentially important subtleties--could be lost in the all-encompassing *kopa*.

This problem of highly generalized prepositions is not unique to Chinook Jargon; indeed, "the small number of prepositions or their total absence is a characteristic trait of most pidgins and creoles."⁴⁰ This trend is significant, as it shows that pidgins, as a whole, tend to eschew prepositional subtlety and gradations of meaning in the place of ease of learning. Constructed languages like Uni, however, tend to have a fairly "complete" set of prepositions. Chinook Jargon has only one demonstrative pronoun, *okoke*, which means either "this" or "that". Uni has ETO and KE for those two words. Again, we find the pidgin wandering into an area the constructed language will not touch.

A pattern seems to be developing here: Pidgins reduce the lexicon in ways that are quite different from most "full-fledged" languages, taking away closed-class words in ways

⁴⁰P. Mülhäusler, *Pidginization and Simplification of Language*(Canberra: Pacific Linguistics, 1974) 83.

that might make the speaker of an ethnic language (particularly an Indo-European language) uneasy. Constructed languages do this as well, with their omission of articles and the copula; even constructed languages such as Esperanto and Latino sine Flexione, that aim to be closer to natural languages, omit the definite article. But they tend to put away the editor's knife when it comes to prepositions, demonstrative adjectives, and the like. Perhaps this is because constructed languages are meant for a different purpose. This will be dealt with, however, in the next section.

Lexical impoverishment works differently in pidgins than in constructed languages. Constructed languages find things such as a precise prepositional system necessary, and a complex case system unnecessary for minimal communication. Pidgins, however, find prepositions and other closed-class items to be less vital, or entirely unnecessary. They also are not afraid to divide the visible and semantic spectra up in different ways from national languages. It seems that lexical impoverishment means two different things for the two classes: for constructed languages, it means eliminating redundancy: for example, cutting the vocabulary of a language down to Uni's 2,000 words. It also means cutting out some things such as the copula or indefinite articles, and not including those elements of the language that do not please the language's author. Pidgins, however, reduce the

lexicon in a more radical fashion, resulting in a language that deals with reality in fewer words.

Why do they differ? And should they differ?

Uni is hardly the greatest of all constructed languages. Nonetheless, it is representative in many ways of constructed languages in general in its alteration of the features of native languages as well as in its lofty aims. It is not, however, like a pidgin in many ways. Why is there this difference between the two? Could the difference be eliminated? And would it be good for constructed language designers to work toward eliminating this difference?

The difference is due in a large part to the fact that pidgins are created by a language community, whether a dozen people or a hundred thousand. Constructed languages are created by one person, or by a small group of people. Pidgins are slowly built up from the elements of their substrate languages and put together in a way unique to that pidgin, while constructed languages emerge from the figurative linguistic womb already grown up, and ready for consumption.

Constructed languages bear the personal and cultural biases of their creators, which, can be very distinctive but can also be, as was shown before, very limiting. Pidgins also have a sort of bias, but this bias is those things that the language community deems necessary for communication.

For example, Chinook Jargon has many different words for different kinds of fish: *pish* "fish"; *sahmun* "salmon"; *ona* "clams"; *klohkloh* "oysters". One suspects that a pidgin from the plains would not have so full a complement of nouns about seafood as a pidgin from the Pacific Northwest. One also suspects that an constructed language such as Uni, intended to be an international auxiliary language, would not have this type of diversity, and correctly: Uni's only word for water-dwelling life is FIS "fish". Both pidgins and constructed languages reflect the cultural biases of their creators/creating community, but these biases work in different ways.

A language created by one person is also much quicker to change in many ways, and constructed languages change differently than pidgins. Uni, for example, had its original grammar published in 1974, and then in 1975, when the *Supplement* was published, the language expanded dramatically, adding a marking for gender and doubling the size of the lexicon. This sort of change is much different from the gradual change found in pidgins. Their change can be quick as well, but their change takes time and requires the consensus, conscious or unconscious, of the speakers of the pidgin. If a constructed language designer finds that his/her language does not have a word for "wicked" or "knowledge", s/he can include it in the second edition. Speakers of a pidgin, however, would have to borrow or coin these words, and gradually work them into the language.

Change occurs differently in a constructed language than in a pidgin. Perhaps a community of Uni speakers, separated from the edicts of Ms. Wainscott, would eventually create words as they saw necessary, drawing on the structure of the language (all singular nouns are three letters, etc.)--but this did not happen with Uni.⁴¹ It happens with Esperanto, in a limited way--but that is outside the scope of this paper.

Another crucial difference between constructed languages and pidgins is that constructed languages are written consciously and deliberately, while pidgins are written communally and without deliberation by a language community. Pidgins are built up without thought as to what is linguistically acceptable or semantically rich. If a pidgin ends up without a copula or articles, or with only one preposition, that is fine, so long as it is mutually intelligible among its speakers. With a constructed language, it is easy to look at one's creation and decide that it needs a copula, or that it needs different prepositions for "around" and "through". This conscious design makes constructed languages different from pidgins, and makes them resemble natural languages in many ways.⁴² The

⁴¹J.L. Klein, the publisher of the Uni books, states on the back cover of the original grammar that "My own children are learning Uni as a 'secret code'". The chances are good that his children changed the language to suit their own whims, much as speakers of a pidgin would, though on a smaller scale. This, however, would not be the case with the presumably more isolated speakers of Uni (assuming there are any) scattered throughout the world.

⁴²Not all constructed languages resemble natural languages, however. The aforementioned Ro is a good example of it. There are many *a priori* constructed languages that do not resemble natural languages in their lexicon; whether they resemble natural languages in their syntax, phonology, and the

designer of a constructed language attempts to facilitate communication by emulating the languages that s/he knows to be effective for communication. The speakers of a pidgin attempt to facilitate communication by using as little as is necessary to express the ideas that they must express.

Another big factor in the difference between constructed languages and pidgins is the effect of the new languages' substrate languages. A good example of this is my naive attempt during a class in high school to construct a language for an assignment. Although its lexicon sounded somewhat non-English (with words such as [ə] for "water" and [poso kani] (a borrowing from Greek) for "how many"), the language was basically a relexified mixture of English and Spanish (the language I learned in high school). The syntax was nearly the same, with a strict SVO word order; the morphology was similar, with suffixes to express tense; and prosodic factors, such as intonation, were nearly exactly the same as those of English. There was also a copula, a more-or-less exact copy of the English prepositional and pronominal systems, and other things of the sort that make people call constructed languages "artificial languages".

While I would hardly equate the efforts of Wainscott (or, for that matter, the other creators of constructed languages) with the meanderings of a high-schooler without

like is another question. I would guess that they either resemble natural (national/ethnic) languages or that they consciously avoid sounding like them.

any linguistic training, my travails reveal something about constructed languages. Unless the creator of a constructed language deliberately sets out to do otherwise, s/he seems to follow the patterns of the creator's native language(s). Wainscott's claims of free word order notwithstanding, Uni is presented as an SVO language. Its phonology resembles that of English in most ways as well; the only letters/phonemes⁴³ she leaves out are "C, J, Q, W, X, and Y",⁴⁴ and the syllabic structure can be any number of combinations, from CVCV to VCC. Similarly, we find Esperanto phonology reflecting the Polish of its creator, L. L. Zamenhof, in its use of voiceless velar fricatives and [c] as an affricate. Constructed languages are different from the creators' native languages--no one could accuse Wainscott of recreating English, at least not without some amount of modification first. But they do reflect these languages in more ways than they seem to set out to do.

Pidgins reflect their substrate languages as well, especially in their lexicon. The vocabulary of Chinook Jargon is largely derived from Chinook and its other substrate languages, such as English and French (except for

⁴³As was stated before, Wainscott holds that in Uni, "only one pronunciation for each letter". This is open to question; for example, in the alphabet/pronunciation guide on page 2 of the *Supplement*, "U" is listed as being pronounced like the U's in the following words: "Uganda, PerU, pUsh". This is probably not intentional (although it is bewildering). For discussion's sake, I will assume that Ms. Wainscott is correct when she speaks of one letter/one phoneme.

⁴⁴*Supplement 2.*

some peculiarities and some coinings)⁴⁵; however, some of its other features go beyond the reach of any of its substrate languages. CJ has SVO word order (with a few exceptions); this is in conflict with the word order of Chinook and other substrate languages. The language has phonemes that are not found in English as well as phonemes that are not found in Chinook and other Northwestern Native American languages: thus, we find a language that has both /t/ and /b d g/, and, especially, /r/, which "is very rare indeed" among these tribes.⁴⁶ The language draws from its substrate languages, but in a different way from that of constructed languages; instead of condensing them, it builds a new language out of them, creating a language that resembles itself and other pidgins more than its substrate languages in many ways.

Constructed languages and pidgins differ because of their different methods of composition; constructed languages such as Uni are constructed deliberately by one person or a small group of people, drawing heavily on substrate languages. Pidgins are non-deliberately created by a language community, drawing on their substrate languages but also doing things contrary to them. The two are made differently and end up differently--but should they be this way?

⁴⁵Hale 7-8.

⁴⁶Sarah Grey Thomason, "Chinook Jargon in Areal and Historical Context", *Language* 59, #4 (1983): 837.

Constructed languages could learn a lot from pidgins, for they are true vehicles of international communication. There are probably some constructed languages today that draw on pidgins as their inspiration; nonetheless, even if a constructed language could resemble a pidgin (which is possible), there are reasons why they should be different, at least in some ways.

Pidgins are made to be easily learned, and they are learned easily, in contrast to some constructed languages.⁴⁷ However, they are not without their quirks that make them difficult in their own way. Their phonology and syntax, as stated before, have several quirks that make them more imposing. For example, speakers of English or most other Western European languages would have problems with the CJ phonemes /t/ or word-initial /ʔ/. These languages are not necessarily friendly to the person seeking a language for the world.

And friendliness is an important issue for constructed languages. For example, Esperanto's "unfriendly" phonemes and "unfriendly" marking of nominative case (among other things) sparked a frenzy of reformations, such as Ido, Reformita Esperanto, Esperido, and Nov Esperanto, which abolished these in favor of more "friendly" systems of

⁴⁷For example, I feel much more comfortable with CJ now than I do with Uni-- I could read the latter with a dictionary without any problem, but I feel like I know CJ's lexicon and grammar better. This is probably due in part to Uni's nonstop stream of difficult-to-distinguish three-and four-letter words, which have an effect that is somewhat akin to that of Ro, but could also be due to CJ's inherent learnability.

phonology and word order. This would seem to indicate that constructed languages that adopt more unusual constructions, such as those found in pidgins, are not taken too kindly.

Nonetheless, constructed-language designers could learn a lot from pidgins. Pidgins take elements of language that speakers of ethnic languages find essential and remove them for the purpose of simplicity, spawning reactions such as "pidgins have no grammar". If constructed language designers want to make a truly simple language, they would do well to look at those linguistic elements that full-fledged languages find necessary but pidgins do not--while noting at the same time the loss of subtlety that can come with this simplification.

Conclusion

Both pidgins and constructed languages greatly simplify the national languages they come from, reducing a language with hundreds of thousands of lexemes and a complex morphological and syntactic structure into a compact system with 2,000 words in Uni's case, or approximately 500 words in Chinook Jargon's case. They simplify them in different ways, however. Pidgins wage an all-out war on excess, eliminating or conflating closed-class words, eliminating or all but eliminating morphology, and simplifying syntax by creating a simple SVO word order, among other things. Constructed languages do these things, but to a lesser scale, preferring

to eliminate redundancy and reduce the size of the lexicon instead. In many ways, they tend to preserve the original national language(s) that they draw from--only relexified, and stripped of excess in the lexicon and tense systems, preserving prepositional and other systems that they deem necessary.

And what, finally, is necessary for minimal communication, for a language to succeed in the fewest number of words and grammatical elements? In pidgins, it seems to be a small selection of open-class words with a fairly broad semantic range, and a minimal framework of syntax and function words with which to relate these open-class words--preserving meaning, but not complexity. Constructed languages require meaning as well--but they seem to require that their words have a narrower semantic focus, and more ways to relate these words--hence the larger lexicon and larger array of prepositions. They also require an aesthetically pleasing form, and easy expandability by the creator/s, since they need to capture an audience, whereas pidgins' speakers are compelled to use them for purposes of basic communication.

If Chinook Jargon were to have been replaced by Uni, the consequences would be fairly unpleasant; besides having fewer words for seafood, Uni covers a different territory in a different way. Chinook Jargon's ultimate objective is to blend the languages of its speakers into an entirely new, and easily learned, whole. Uni's job is to do that as well, but

it needs to cover more ground in a more "sophisticated" fashion, eschewing such easily learned devices as reduplication, which pidgins use frequently. It needs to sound like a natural national language without the complexity of the national language; but in doing so, it ends up being more difficult to use than the pidgin, and having less expressive capacity despite its much larger vocabulary. Uni is very much like a pidgin in some ways--it takes word roots from existing languages and gives them a new and simple grammar--but it also is not like a pidgin, because of the complexity brought on by its aspirations to being a true international language.