

# TOEFL Listening Lesson 6

**Setting:** A lecture in a Linguistics class

## Questions

### **1. What is a pidgin language?**

- A) A fully developed native language
- B) A simplified form of language used for basic communication
- C) A dialect of a dominant regional language
- D) A language created through formal education

### **2. What typically happens when children grow up speaking a pidgin?**

- A) The language dies out
- B) The language reverts to the original lexifier language
- C) The pidgin develops into a creole
- D) The pidgin becomes less structured

### **3. What is decreolization?**

- A) The simplification of a language into a pidgin
- B) The merging of two creole languages
- C) The process of a creole becoming more like its lexifier language
- D) The creation of a completely new language

**4. Why do linguists no longer view creoles as "broken" versions of European languages?**

- A) Because creoles have limited vocabulary
- B) Because creoles are now written languages
- C) Because creoles have fully developed grammatical systems
- D) Because creoles only survive in isolated communities

**5. Why might creoles that developed under similar historical conditions still look different from each other?**

- A) Because of differences in the original pidgins
- B) Because of varying local languages and social influences
- C) Because one creole was officially recognized earlier than others
- D) Because some creoles never underwent decreolization

## Script

### **Professor:**

When we study how languages develop, one particularly fascinating area is the evolution of pidgin and creole languages. These forms of communication typically emerge in environments where speakers of different native languages need to interact but have no common tongue. Trade ports, colonized regions, and plantation economies were common places where such linguistic developments occurred.

A pidgin is the first stage in this process. Pidgins are simplified languages that develop quickly, drawing vocabulary mostly from one dominant language — called the "lexifier" — while the grammar tends to be influenced by the other native languages of the speakers involved. These languages are no one's native tongue at first. They're very utilitarian, stripped down to basic structures needed for communication. A pidgin might omit articles, use simple verb forms, and rely heavily on context.

Importantly, pidgins arise out of necessity. In the Caribbean, for example, European colonizers and enslaved Africans often needed to communicate, leading to the development of various English- or French-based pidgins. Over time, if a pidgin becomes stable enough and a new generation of children grows up speaking it as their first language, it evolves into a creole. This process is known as "creolization."

A creole language is significantly more complex than a pidgin. Creoles have fully developed grammatical systems, capable of expressing nuanced ideas just like any other natural language. In fact, creoles often expand on the simple structures of the pidgin stage, adding tenses, grammatical markers, and more sophisticated vocabulary.

Let's take Haitian Creole as an example. It developed primarily from French lexicon, but with considerable influence from African languages. It now has its own grammatical rules distinct from standard French, and it serves as the first language for millions of people in Haiti.

Interestingly, linguists used to think of pidgins and creoles as "broken" versions of European languages. Today, we recognize that creoles are fully legitimate languages with rich structures. In fact, the way creoles rapidly develop grammatical features offers valuable insights into how humans acquire and build language itself.

Another important point is that not all creoles necessarily look alike, even if they have similar historical backgrounds. Jamaican Patois, Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea, and Cape Verdean Creole all arose under broadly similar conditions but evolved differently depending on local factors such as the languages spoken by the population and the social status of the creole relative to other languages.

There is also a phenomenon called decreolization, where a creole gradually becomes more similar to its lexifier language over time, usually due to social pressures and contact with the standard form. For example, in some English-speaking Caribbean nations, the local creole

and standard English exist on a continuum, with speakers often code-switching between them depending on formality and context.

In short, the study of pidgin and creole languages provides crucial insight into language innovation, contact, and evolution. These languages demonstrate the creativity and adaptability of human communication in the face of challenging circumstances.

## Answers

### 1. What is a pidgin language?

**Correct Answer:** B) A simplified form of language used for basic communication

### 2. What typically happens when children grow up speaking a pidgin?

**Correct Answer:** C) The pidgin develops into a creole

### 3. What is decreolization?

**Correct Answer:** C) The process of a creole becoming more like its lexifier language

### 4. Why do linguists no longer view creoles as "broken" versions of European languages?

**Correct Answer:** C) Because creoles have fully developed grammatical systems

### 5. Why might creoles that developed under similar historical conditions still look different from each other?

**Correct Answer:** B) Because of varying local languages and social influences