

The Developmental Status of West African Contact Languages: the case of the so-called Cameroon Pidgin English

(Guest lecture to be delivered at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt on October 25, 2016)

By

Aloysius Ngefac, PhD

(Associate Professor, University of Yaounde I)

(Alexander von Humboldt Fellow, University of Regensburg)

Resumé

The question of whether West African so-called Pidgin Englishes are pidgins or creole is a heated debate in creolistic literature (see, for instance, Winford 1997, Mufwene 2001, Egbokhare 2003, and Ngefac 2016). Two schools of thought characterise the field of pidgins and creoles on this issue. There are those who believe that creoles were never created in West Africa, implying that the so-called Nigerian Pidgin English, Ghanaian Pidgin English, and Cameroon Pidgin English are, in fact, pidgins. But another school of thought (e.g. Egbokhare 200 and Ngefac 2016) considers these contact languages as creoles. But there cannot be a consensus on the developmental status of these West African contact languages, if there is no unanimity on what should be considered a creole. In this lecture, three issues will be addressed. First, there will be some reflections on what a creole should actually be, as opposed to the views of some scholars of pidgins and creoles. Second, the developmental status of the so-called Cameroon Pidgin English will be assessed in terms of its sociolinguistic and structural characteristics. As concerns its sociolinguistic aspects, there will be a focus on its history and the impact of the large scale plantations created during the German colonial rule, its L1 status, and its role as a major medium of communication in urban areas. With regard to its structural aspects, we shall focus on its verbal system, coordination strategies, and its sentence structure. By the end of the lecture, we should be able to carry out a self-assessment of the developmental status of the so-called Cameroon Pidgin English.