

Re: Learning a language

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2004-06/0728.html>

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In article <osao8rx1xvry\$.1u7usezhqlqxb.dlg@40tude.net>, b.scott@csuohio.edu wrote:

> *On Sun, 13 Jun 2004 17:51:21 -0400 "alexB"*
> *<alex7623@hotmail.com> wrote in*
> *<news:10cpiq63qscgq84@corp.supernews.com> in sci.lang:*
>
> *[...]*
>
>> *What*
>> *Atkinson says sounds totally irrational. He says that slaves first learned*
>> *English, then after a few generations developed the Pidgin English. It does*
>> *not make any sense whatsoever.*
>
> *Of course it does. The sequence that he's envisioning is*
> *clear enough. The first slaves dealt directly with native*
> *speakers of English; some learned the language reasonably*
> *well, while others did not. Later slaves had little contact*
> *with native speakers and were therefore exposed mostly to L2*
> *speakers whose competence varied widely. From this point on*
> *there would have been little reinforcement of the*
> *native-speaker norms.*
>
> *I don't know whether this is right, but it's plausible, and*
> *it certainly makes sense.*

Elaborating their own norms for English would also have given the slaves the elements of a new social identity. Additionally, in conditions of illiteracy, with no mass communications, and most of their contact with native-speaker English being the local dialects, it seems obvious that the language of the slaves would embark on its own path of evolution.

Regards,
Eugene Holman