

TRADE LANGUAGES IN THE STRAIT OF BELLE ISLE

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates early language contact and the resulting contact languages on the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador in the Strait of Belle Isle region. The jargons and pidgins which arose between Native peoples and Portuguese, Breton, Basque and other European traders are traced and documented, and a possible case of relexification is briefly examined.

LANGUAGE CONTACT AND CONTACT LANGUAGES

Numerous studies have been made about the contact between cultures. Strangely enough, many of these omit, and often do not even mention, one of the most important aspects of this contact – the language gap. The language gap is the first barrier to be overcome in the contacts between foreign nations. What can you do when you want to communicate with people if you don't have a language in common?

In this paper different possible ways of solving these communication problems are outlined, and in particular the way in which people in the Strait of Belle Isle and immediate vicinity tried to bridge the communication gap, from the earliest European-Amerindian contacts to this century.

The most obvious way of solving the communication problem is the use of gestures and signs. This strategy has been used by traders and explorers all over the world.¹ It is possible for this gestural language to develop into a fully fledged sign language, a complete communication system like the sign languages used in deaf communities.² This happened in the Southern Plains of the United States, where a sign language was used until recently for intertribal communication. The impetus for this sign language was probably the invasion of the New World by the Europeans.³

It is possible for people, after repeated contacts, to start to use words they picked up from other groups they were in contact with. In this way a trade jargon can develop. It may be rudimentary, with a very limited vocabulary, no more than expressions like 'give me this', 'what do you want?', 'a little bit'. If these trade contacts continue, this jargon develops into a slightly more elaborate language, which we could call a pidgin.⁴ Jargons and pidgins do not usually have stable vocabularies or stable grammars. A jargon or pidgin is characterized by a

1 Hewes (1974).

2 See e.g. Schlesinger & Namir (eds.) (1978) or Deuchar (1984) as examples of recent research in sign languages.

3 See Samarin (1987).

4 See e.g. Mühlhäusler (1986) for an introduction to pidgin and creole linguistics, and for the jargon - pidgin - creole cycle.

lack of morphological markers such as verb inflections or case endings. Often a series of word stems is strung together. In a pidgin, usually only a limited number of subjects can be discussed, such as trading and bartering. Often the number of words from particular languages reflects the dominance relation in these contacts: it is normal in a pidgin to find a greater proportion of words from the language of the dominant group of speakers.

Pidgins can exist for extended periods, in some cases even several centuries. Pidgins will naturally disappear when the contacts cease to exist, often without leaving a trace. A jargon or pidgin can also die out when a part of the population becomes bilingual, or it can become a mother tongue (then called a creole). A creole language always has strict word order rules (and therefore very different from pidgins, with their variable word order), little or no inflection and certain semantic differences more or less typical for creole languages⁵. If a pidgin exists for a long period the structure will also become more fixed. A creole language and some of the more stable pidgins no longer have the communicative limitations of a pidgin.

With a growing intensification of the contacts, often some people (for instance those who usually do the talking, or the offspring of mixed marriages) will become bilingual. These people can act as interpreters. When there are no bilinguals, traders sometimes train interpreters. The Portuguese used to take West Africans to Portugal even in the Middle Ages, where they taught them Portuguese.⁶ On subsequent voyages, they took these Africans back to Africa with them as interpreters.

The French also used this strategy in their early contacts with the Micmacs in Canada. Strangely enough they are reported to have used black interpreters in the early 1600s, to interpret between Micmacs and French.⁷ Apparently blacks were in high esteem for their capabilities as interpreters, even for languages outside Africa. In Jacques Cartier's time natives were taken to Europe, not only as an attraction, but also in order to learn European languages. The Iroquois vocabularies published in Cartier's travel account were probably recorded in Europe rather than in Canada.⁸ Unfortunately many of those taken to Europe died before they could accomplish such tasks.

A different strategy was used by the Basques. They are said to have left a young boy with the Micmac to get a good command of their language. It is said that the natives ate the boy in the winter.⁹

The question we are dealing with here is language contact in the North Eastern part of North America. We will deal with different European peoples chronologically. We do not mention the visits of the the English in the early contact period and the Dutch in the 17th century, because of lack of documentation on their contacts and specifically on the languages used.

5 See e.g. , Bickerton (1981, 1984).

6 Naro (1978).

7 Morison (1972) p. 95. The name of the interpreter was Mathieu da Costa, who died in the winter of 1606-1607.

8 See e.g. Hoffmann (1961), chapter 12.

9 LeJeune in Thwaites VIII:29-30. He refers to Gaspésie in the early 1600s.

NORSE

Nothing is known about the language used in contacts between the Medieval Norse and the Natives. Thalbitzer attempted to interpret the four 'Skraeling' personal names found in a Norse saga as a kind of 'pidgin Eskimo'. He interprets the names as meaning respectively 'wait a little, please', 'wait a little', 'towards the outermost part (of the land?)' and 'do you mean the outermost ones around you? Why?'.¹⁰

Some of the ritual language of the Micmacs as recorded by Lescarbot around 1600 has also been interpreted as Norse, but this theory has probably no adherents nowadays.

In short, due to lack of documentation we cannot say anything about Norse-Amerindian language contact.

PORTUGUESE

Presumably the first Europeans to frequent the Labrador and Newfoundland coasts were Portuguese cod fishers, from at least the early 1500s. During these contacts a Portuguese-Algonquian jargon or pidgin developed, as Harald Prins has discovered.¹¹

When Jacques Cartier visited the Gaspé peninsula in 1534, the natives there greeted him with the words *Napou, tou daman asierto!*.¹² He does not translate it, but he adds that he did not understand the rest of what they said – which might mean that he understood this sentence. It is known that Cartier knew Portuguese. *Napew* is an Algonquian word meaning 'man'¹³; the rest must be Portuguese *tu dameu a cierto* 'you give me for sure!'. This is the only sentence we have, apart from a few isolated Portuguese words.¹⁴

Probably this pidgin is several decades older. When Cabot visited the Canadian east coast in 1497, he called the area *Baccalaos*, the name given by the natives to a certain fish,

10 Thalbitzer (1909). See John Hewson's comment in a letter to Charles Martijn (1976) and McGhee (1984:10).

11 Prins, ms. Harald Prins and Ruth Whitehead are preparing a documented paper on this matter.

12 Different versions of Cartier's account give slightly different versions of this sentence. The Algonquinist Roy Wright seems to have a non-European interpretation of this sentence, but I could not get this confirmed.

13 *na:pe:w* is the normal Cree-Montagnais word for 'man'. In Micmac the word *napew* nowadays (and probably in the early 1600s) only refers to a male bird. It is possible that they were Micmacs using a word for male bird jokingly, or that they were using a Montagnais-Micmac trade word.

14 In many popular histories of Canada, Cartier is still considered the first European to visit more interior parts of Canada. But even from a non-Amerindian viewpoint it is clear that he can't be the 'discoverer'. This is clear for anybody reading his travel account. Nowhere does he claim to be the first. Natives are eager to trade with him – although the first discovery of these aliens on their coast would have created fear instead of eagerness to trade. Sometimes Cartier invents place names himself ('we called this place X'), but often he adopts existing place names ('this place is called Y'). Significantly, some of the place names he mentions are Portuguese, Spanish or Gascon rather than French (or Breton). The most significant fact, however, is that he writes that he meets European fishermen, one of whose name is even mentioned, Captain Thiennot.

abundant in the region.¹⁵ *Baccalaos* is the Portuguese word for cod fish. There is no Amerindian language in which the word for cod fish is anything similar to *baccalaos*.¹⁶

BRETONS

The Portuguese visits to the mainland were already less frequent in the 1530s. The Breton fishermen, who probably spoke partly French and partly Breton (a Celtic language, very different from French), were the next frequent visitors, as can be seen from the numerous Breton place names in Southern Labrador, like Belle Isle, Ile de Groix, Quirpon (from Quiberon) and Brest, all copies of Breton place names. There is no clear trace of a Breton or French pidgin in the 16th century, although there is ample evidence that the Bretons traded with the natives from the decades around 1600 onwards. Only Pehr, a Swedish visitor to Canada around 1750, said he heard that the language (if so, then a trade language) of the Inuit contained many Breton words. This will be mentioned again below.

BASQUES

Basque fishermen started to frequent the Labrador coast in the 1550s, with less frequent visits preceding. In 1542 a Basque fishermen from Bayonne, in the French part of the Basque Country, reported on the activities of Cartier and Roberval in the New World. He also made some interesting remarks about the natives residing near the Port of Brest (nowadays Bonne Esperance). Two of them referred to trading with the natives. One of them mentioned the languages used:

'The Indians understand any language, French, English and Gascon and their own tongue.'

Gascon was probably Basque rather than what is now called Gascon, the Romance language of the coast between the Basque Country and Bordeaux. The Basque language is a language isolate, which means that there are no languages genetically related to Basque anywhere in the world. Basque numerals from one to five, for example, show no similarity with, for example, French or Spanish: *bat, bi, hiru, lau, bost*.

The contacts between these fishermen and the natives were probably only seasonal, so that these languages spoken by the Indians must have been broken versions of French, English

15 Petrus Martyr Anglerius (1530). In a 1587 English translation from the original Latin we read the following: 'Sebastian Cabot himselfe, named those lands Baccalaos bycause that in the seas thereabout he founde so great multitudes of certeyne bigge fishes much like vnto tunies (which the inhabitantes caule Baccalaos) that they sumtymes stayed his shippes.' It can be found in Decade 3, book 6, chapter 29, as well as another reference in Decade 7, book 2

16 Portuguese: *bacalhau*, Basque *bakalau*, Dutch *kabeljauw*, French *morue* (also *cabillaud*), Breton *moru*, modern Spanish *bacalao*. In the Spanish state, the only dialect using *bacalao* in the early 17th century was Andalucian. In Castillia the name of the fish was *abadexo*, in Andalucia *baccalao* and in some parts *curadillo*, according to the second chapter of Cervantes' Don Quixote.

Native terms: Micmac *peju* (Deblois & Metallic 1984), Montagnais ???, Laurentian Iroquois *gadagourseré*, Beothuk *bobboosoret* (Hewson 1978), Inuktitut (or pidgin Inuktitut?) *uwat*, *uvvaq* 'dried cod', *saarullik* 'cod'. The 1605 Algonquian vocabulary in Rosier (1624) has *biskeiore* for cod fish. This must be derived from *Biskayer* 'Basque'. It should be something like 'the fish for which the Basque come here', but is certainly not an Algonquian word.

and Basque. For English and French, any supplementary evidence or material is lacking. The first indications of English pidgins date from the first decades of the 17th century,¹⁷ from New England, more than 1000 kilometers to the South. A French pidgin in the Strait of Belle Isle is attested in the 18th century. This pidgin will be discussed below.

Linguistic traces of a Basque pidgin are absent before 1600, but they abound in the first decades of the 17th century. The linguistic evidence all comes from Tadoussac, on the North shore of the Saint Lawrence, and from Nova Scotia. That these are the only sources is due to the fact that the missionaries and a traveler who visited these places wrote down some of the utterances of the natives. A number of others mention the use of the Basque words by natives in early sources, without citing them. All this indicates that pidgin Basque (with a significant Amerindian component) was in wide use from Southern Labrador to New England, and along the Saint Lawrence River even beyond Montreal.¹⁸ Marc Lescarbot remarked in 1609: 'The language of the coast tribes is half Basque.'¹⁹ I will cite one source on the pidgin from 1710, in a document²⁰ written by Basque sailors themselves in French. Although relatively late, it is completely corroborated by other sources:

'When the Basques first started fishing for cod and whales in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, they made friends with the Indians of this area, and traded with them, especially with a nation called Eskimos, who have always been hostile to all other nations. Since their languages were completely different, they created a form of lingua franca [langue franque] composed of Basque and two different languages of the Indians, by means of which they could understand each other quite well; the settlers of the French colonies in Canada and from the Northern part of Acadia, found this language already well established when they arrived.'

[my translation]

It is not hard to discover Basque words in missionary reports and travel reports from the early 17th century. Early sources (Lescarbot, Biard, Lejeune) remark that the Indians used a trade language to communicate with the Europeans and their own tribal languages when they were speaking among themselves.

Some of the words used by Indians (Montagnais and Micmac) in their contacts with Europeans that are of Basque origin²¹ are listed below. A number of these are of course borrowings from Romance languages into Basque.

17 See e.g. Goddard (1977) and Flanigan (1986) for some examples.

18 For a list of sources on the pidgin, see Bakker (1989).

19 Lescarbot ([1609] 1907-1914): II:24.

20 There are apparently two slightly different copies of the document. One can be found in the Canadian National Archives in Ottawa, C-11-C, 5 or 7, Reel F-504. A transcription of this document was kindly made available to me by Mario Mimeault of Gaspé. The other version was published and edited by Zeller (1915). This manuscript was found in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, France, nouvelles acquisitions françaises no. 10406.

21 The precise sources of the individual words are given in Bakker (1989). The sources are the relations of the Jesuit missionaries Pierre Biard (for the Micmac) and Paul Le Jeune (for the Montagnais), both published in Thwaites (1896-1901), and Marc Lescarbot (Lescarbot ([1609] 1907-1914).

PIDGIN WORDS OF BASQUE ORIGIN		CORRESPONDING BASQUE WORDS	
<i>adesquidex</i>	friend	<i>adeskide /adiskide</i>	friend
<i>atouray</i>	shirt	<i>atorra</i>	shirt
<i>bacaillos</i>	codfish	<i>bakalau</i>	codfish
<i>basquoa</i>	Basque	<i>Baskoa</i>	Basque (also <i>euskaldun</i>)
<i>canadaquoa</i>	Canadian	<i>Kanadakoa</i>	Canadian
<i>capitaina</i>	captain	<i>kapitaina</i>	captain
<i>caracona</i>	bread	?? (or Iroquois?)	
<i>chabaya</i>	savage	<i>xabaia</i>	savage
<i>echpada</i>	sword	<i>ezpata</i>	sword
<i>escorken</i>	drunk	<i>moskor</i>	drunk
<i>gara</i>	war	<i>gerra</i>	war
<i>kessona</i>	man	<i>gizona</i>	man
<i>makia</i>	stick, wood	<i>makila</i>	stick
<i>maria</i>	whale	<i>balia/balea.</i>	whale
<i>martra</i>	marten	<i>marta</i>	marten
<i>matachiaz</i>	bracelets, etc.	<i>pataka, patatxa?</i>	coin? (17 th century Basque)
<i>mercateria</i>	merchant	<i>merkataria</i>	merchant
<i>moushcoucha</i>	cake	<i>bizkotxa</i>	cake
<i>orignac</i>	moose	<i>oreiñak</i>	deer
<i>pilotoua</i>	shaman	<i>pilotua</i>	pilot
<i>praesentis</i>	Newfoundland	<i>Placentia</i>	(Basque and Nfld. Basque harbour) ²²
<i>samaricois</i>	Breton	<i>sanmalokoa</i>	person from Saint Malo
<i>souriquois</i>	Micmac	<i>zurikoa</i>	that of the whites or person from Souris (ancient Micmac place name in Cape Breton) ²³
<i>tabaguia</i>	banquet	<i>tapaki(a)</i> ²⁴	shelter
<i>tarantari</i>	Micmac	<i>tarrantari</i>	babbler, chatterer ²⁵

WORDS OF BASQUE ORIGIN USED BY THE MONTAGNAIS AND MICMAC

22 The Micmac word for Newfoundland is *Ktaqamkuk*. *Plisantek* nowadays refers only to the town Placentia. See Hewson (1981-1982).

23 I owe this information to an anonymous reviewer.

24 The fact that many of the words end in *-a* is a reflex of the Basque definite article *-a* which is placed after the word. For instance *gizon* 'man', *gizona* 'the man' (or 'man' when used in isolation). (see Bakker (1989) for details).

25 Siebert (1973).

Some sentences in Basque-Amerindian pidgin are:

endia chavé Normandia²⁶

'The French know much'

(B. (*h*)andia 'big'; Portuguese *saver*²⁷ 'to know'; B. *normandia* 'Normandy')

maloës mercatoria

'the Bretons are unfair traders'

(B. *ez* 'no?'; B. *merkatari(a)* 'trader'; *Malo* 'Saint Malo')

aoti chabaya

'the Indian way'

(Micmac *awti* 'way, path'; B. *xabaia* 'savage'; the latter only in the Northern dialects of Basque)

ania achtam, achtam

'brother, come, come'

(B. *anaia* 'brother'; Montagnais *astam* 'come')

ania kir capitana

'brother, are you captain?'

(Montagnais *kir* 'you')

ania cabana²⁸

'brother, cabin'

(B. *kabana* 'hut')

This Basque-based pidgin must have been the most important pidgin of the area. It survived at least one century in a vast area. The French who learnt it thought they were learning the Indian language and the other way around. Both were right in a way. For the French it was a language they learnt from the Indians, for the Indians it was the language of the Europeans.

INUIT FRENCH JARGON

Although already in 1542 it was said that Labrador natives understood French, the first recorded traces of 'broken French' spoken by natives in the Strait of Belle Isle (or any place North of Florida) date from the 1740s, when Jean-Louis Fornel, a French Canadian entrepreneur and trader, met Inuit saying:²⁹

26 In standard Basque one would say:
asko ba-da-ki-te Normandia-ko-ek
much AFF-it-know-they Normandy-from-SUBJ.PL.
(AFF 'affirmative', SUBJ 'subject', PL 'plural')

27 This word is used in many pidgins and creoles for 'to know', even those with a vocabulary that is not based on Portuguese.

28 In standard Basque this would be:
anaia, kabana-ra za-to-z
brother hut-to you-come-PLURAL
The other examples show a similar reduction of Basque morphology.

29 Fornel (1921). This document was kindly made available to me by Charles Martijn. Also cited in Dorais (1980).

tout camara troquo balena, non charraco

a mixture of French, Spanish and possibly Basque, probably meaning 'you (are my) friend, let's trade whales, not war.' The word *tout* is probably Spanish *tu* 'you' (or French *tu* adapted to Inuktitut phonology). The other words too can be Spanish as well as French, except for *charraco* meaning 'war' from an unknown source³⁰. This could be derived from Basque *txarra* 'bad', but in other sources it is giving as meaning 'peace'. For 'peace' another word is given: *makagoua*, possibly Basque *bekagoa* 'peaceful'? The *-a* ending of *balena* might be the Basque article *-a* added to French *baleine*, or it might be Spanish *ballena*.

That this Inuit French Jargon was widely known is clear from other sources too. The Moravian missionary Jens Haven heard 'broken French' spoken in Quirpont / Quiberon in 1764 and in 1765 his colleague Christian Drachart³¹ in Chateau Bay heard Inuit saying:

tout camerade, oui hu

also broken French. *oui hu* might mean 'Frenchman'. Some Inuktitut dialects have *uiguikkut* or *uiuimiat* 'oui oui saying people'³² as the word for Frenchman.

The Hernhutter historian David Cranz³³ describes this pidgin as having French, Inuktitut and Amerindian elements:

They [the Strait of Belle Isle Inuit] have adopted several French words in their conversation, which they repeat without knowing their meaning; and the French have collected a score or two words, which they use in trading with the savages, consisting partly of corrupt Eskimaux, and partly of unknown terms, probably borrowed from the Canadian savages [probably Montagnais meant here]; e.g. *kutta*, a knife (from *couteau*), *memek*, to drink (from *imek*, water), *makagua*, peace, probably of Canadian origin.

The word *makagua* for 'peace' might very well be Basque, derived from the Basque word *bake(a)* 'peace' with a suffix *-koa*. The change of Basque /b/ into pidgin /m/ is also seen in other pidgin words, such as pidgin *macharoa* from Portuguese *passaro-a* and *maria* from Basque *balia*. In the same way, the word *tcharakua* 'war' (but see note 30) could be Basque *txarrakoa*, (from Basque *txarra* 'bad?'). *Memek* 'drink' is a pidgin Inuktitut word said to be derived from Inuktitut *imiq* 'water' or perhaps from Cree (*minihkwe:w* 'he drinks').

An interesting 1743 document³⁴, referring to a trip in 1742, contains some more phrases in the Inuit French Jargon. Inuit in kayaks make clear by signs that they want to trade. The following dialogue was recorded (A= Inuit chief Amargo; B= French captain Le Cour).

30 Dorais (1980) lists *thou tcharacou* 'lay down arms', *tcharacou* 'peace' (1694), *characoua* 'peace' (1717), *characo* 'peace' (1720), *characo* 'war' (1743) from different sources.

31 Cited in Cranz (1820), Vol. 2 p. 290, and in Gosling (1910), p. 261, as 'Tous camarades, oui, hee!'.

32 In this the Inuit are not unique. According to Hugo Schuchardt in 1883 (in Gilbert 1980: 22 note 11) the French are generally called *wiwi* in the South Seas, for instance by the Maoris and the natives of New Caledonia. The Inuktitut phrase is from Dorais (1979).

33 Cranz (1820) Vol. II: 293..

34 François-Etienne Cugnet (1743). 'Coste de Labrador'. Fonds Pierre-Georges Roy, Ap-G 239, pp. 311-314, Archives Nationales du Québec, Québec. This document was kindly made available to me by Charles Martijn.

- A: bons camaras, tous cameras
 'good friend(s), you (or all?) friend(s)'
- B: [says nothing]
- A: Capitaine Kellanoré
 'Captain, what's your name?'
- B: [says nothing]
- A: Kellanoré [repeatedly]
 'What's your name?'
- A: Capitaine Amargo
 'Captain Amargo' [is my name]
- B: [apparently now understanding]: Capitaine Le Cour
 'Captain Le Cour [is my name]'
- A: [speaking to his tribesmen]: Capitaine le Cour [several times]
 'Captain Le Cour [is his name]!'
- A: Capitaine Amargo, Capitaine Le Cour, bons Camaras
 'Captain Amargo [and] Captain Le Cour [are] good friends'
- A: [to his tribesmen]: Tous Camaras!
 '[we are] all friends!'

Now they start bartering and leaving all the Inuit shout repeatedly:

Bons camaras, Capitaine Le Cour, Bons Camaras!
'good friend(s), Captain Le Cour, [is a? we are?] good friend(s)'

It is clear from this dialogue, that the Inuit chief knows very well what he is saying, in contrast with Cranz's suggestion cited above. Cugnet reports that, due to the shortness of the contacts Le Cour only remembered four Inuit words: *renombek* 'bead?' (F. 'rassade'), *maumek* 'file' (French 'lime'), *monkoumek* 'knife' (F. 'couteau') and *kellanoré* 'what's your name?' (F. 'comment t'appelles-tu?').³⁵ The language recorded by Cugnet seems to be a mixture of Montagnais and Inuktitut.³⁶ The first three were objects these people traded with the Inuit. The word *capitaina* has already been mentioned as a Basque pidgin word used by Micmac and Montagnais. A Dutch fisherman-trader recorded the use of this word by Montagnais in Hamilton Inlet in 1714. He attributed this to the French, since they also had French axes and hats.³⁷

³⁵ Louis-Jacques Dorais (p.c.) explains this as Inuktitut. It could be *kinaunali* 'but who's that?' or *kinauvit* 'who are you?'

³⁶ For instance *monkoumek* is very similar to the Montagnais word for 'knife' *mohkoma:n*. It might very well be a Montagnais word. Chapell (1817) gives *muck mhameek* for 'knife', and also *wauve* 'egg', probably Montagnais *uau*.

³⁷ L. Feykes Haan (1720: 39).

It is clear from the dialogue that the French captain is not used to trading with the Inuit. There had been a long term animosity between the French and the Inuit. The Inuit, however, are used to trading and speak a French trade Jargon with which the French Captain is not familiar.

The diary of the Swede Pehr Kalm, who visited Canada around 1750, repeated some information from hearsay about the language of the Inuit, viz. that it had a lot of foreign influences. If true, there must have been a pidgin with words from diverse languages: 'The French do not understand their language, but they trade with the aid of signs.' 'Their language contains French, Spanish and English words, but above all Dutch words.' 'One finds in their language a mass of words of Breton origin.'³⁸

Although English, French, Dutch and especially Basque and Breton people are known to have traded with the Inuit, apart from the words discussed here, there do not seem to be other traces of this presumably multilingual pidgin.

This pidgin or jargon must have developed especially in contacts between Breton and Basque fishermen and Inuit in the Strait of Belle Isle. It must have existed between roughly 1740 and 1760, but probably beyond these dates. Some pidgin words had already been recorded in 1694. Cugnet makes some interesting remarks on the trade contacts in which it developed. Cugnet does not doubt that the Inuit learned these words from 'Basques or from Montagnais who trade with the French on this coast'. He remarks: 'The Basques who sometimes traded with them [Inuit] assured him that they never trade their canoes.' The goal of Le Cour's next spring voyage to the Labrador coast is said to be 'trade with the Breton ['malouin'] and Basque fishermen' (he does not mention the natives). Apparently he traded with Basque and Breton fishermen (and possibly Montagnais), and Basques traded with Montagnais and, at least occasionally, with Inuit.

This is only one illustration of the fact that 'official' traders, the *concessionnaires*, often had less intensive contacts with the natives than the fishermen, in this case especially those of Basque and Breton origin. Research about the contact of the French *concessionnaires* with the natives³⁹ confirms that these Frenchmen had reasonably good ties with the Montagnais, and they had only occasional contact with the Inuit. There was a lot of mistrust between these two groups, after a period of skirmishes.

PIDGINIZED INUKTITUT

A pidginized Inuktitut from the eastern Arctic coast,⁴⁰ called Eskimo Jargon, is relatively well documented. There is evidence that pidginized versions of Inuktitut were also employed by traders and travellers to Hudson's Bay in West Greenland (Disko Island), where we also find Dutch and Portuguese words, and to Hudson Straits and probably all along the Labrador and Northern Quebec coast. In the 1820s John West,⁴¹ visiting Northern Labrador and Québec, reports that Inuit on the coast shouted to him:

38 All translated by me from the French text in Rousseau & Béthune (1977), p. 166, 227, 335. I am grateful to Charles Martijn for providing me with these references.

39 Trudel (1980, 1988).

40 Stefánsson (1909).

41 West (1824), p. 7.

chimo! Chimo! pillattaa!

about which he remarked 'expressions probably of friendship, or trade.' He apparently does not realize that these are pidgin words. Edward Chappell in 1817, however, tried to document some of the jargon words in use and he found many of the same expressions in Churchill, Churchill Factory and Hudson Straits.

Among the words he lists we find *chymo* 'barter' and *pillitay* 'give me something'. The word *saimo* with retroflex /s/ nowadays is the Inuktitut equivalent of 'Hello'.⁴² He gives so few words, that we may have to conclude that this was probably a very rudimentary jargon, with some Montagnais elements, and used in a vast region. It seems that there are relations between this jargon and the Inuit French jargon.

When the contacts between the Inuit and Europeans intensified, a more elaborate pidginized Inuktitut developed on the Labrador coast. This was characterized by the use of independent words and stems instead of morphologically complex words. In proper Inuktitut one would say for 'I see you' *takuvagit*, but in pidginized Inuktitut:⁴³

uvanga	taku	ivvit
I/me/mine	see	you

Other examples:

Inuktitut: najagauqaqtualuk

Pidgin:	uvanga	najak	nipi	amisut
	I/me/mine	sister	much	voice

English: My sister talks a lot.

This pidginized Inuktitut, which was used by Inuktitut as well as whites, was characterized by English syntax with Inuktitut roots. Inuktitut endings have disappeared.

As this pidginized Inuktitut is not reported from the Strait of Belle Isle, we will not discuss it here in depth. Pidgin Inuktitut will be subject of a separate paper.

NEWFOUNDLAND INDIAN ENGLISH

It is often hard to distinguish pidgins (which should involve larger numbers of people in contact) and an individual's imperfect learning of a second language.

For example, Edward Chappell,⁴⁴ on his way to Hudson Bay in the early 1800s, met a hunting Indian near Sandy Point, Newfoundland. This Indian, a Micmac, spoke as follows:

'Me go get salmon gut, for bait, for catchee cod. Me fire for play, at litteel bird.'

⁴² I owe this information to an anonymous reviewer of JAPLA.

⁴³ Examples from Dorais (1979:80)

⁴⁴ Chappell (1817), p. 69-72.

He remarked about his gun:

'Me no get um of Ingeles; me get um of Scotchee ship: me givee de Captain one caraboe for um.'

and about his plans:

'Me go to-morrow catchee cod: next day, catchee cod: next day come seven day; me no catchee cod. Me takee book, look up God,'

He remarks about the Beothuk:

'No lookee up God: killee all men dat dem see, Red Indian no good.'

'Me no talkee likee dem: dem talkee all same dog: Bow, wow, wow!'

It is quite possible that this was an individual's talk. It is also possible that this was a more or less established way of communication. Some of the features of these sentences point to a connection with other pidgins.

- *-um* as an object marker in e.g. *me get um* and *for um* is reported for many varieties of North America's American Indian Pidgin English.⁴⁵
- many verbs end in *-ee* (catchee, givee, talkee, talkee, killee). Exactly the same happens in Chinese Pidgin English.
- the expression *all same* for 'like' is also used in New Guinea Pidgin and Australian Aboriginal pidgins and creoles.
- the use of *for* for 'to' in infinite verb forms (*me fire for play* and *for catchee cod*) is used in almost all English-based pidgins and creole languages⁴⁶.

It is also possible that Chappell used his own knowledge of pidgins from other parts of the world to exaggerate the Indian's broken English,⁴⁷ or that he used pidgin English as a literary style form. This is sometimes used when the natives did not even speak English. W.H. Gilder, for instance, in his book *Schwatka's Search*, cites some Inuit saying:

'watcheow oounga keeseyoot amasuet'

– a pidgin Inuktitut sentence which he translates as 'by and by me cry plenty', which is close to the pidgin English of New Guinea, where *baimbai* is used to mark future. Gilder translates pidgin Inuktitut with pidgin English.

45 See Flanigan (1986), Dillard (1972, chapter 4) for a general overview and Goddard (1977) for some examples from early 17th century New England.

46 See Bakker (1987) for examples.

47 Just as nowadays, in comic books, many Indians still speak a broken language.

These Indians were Micmacs rather than Montagnais. Both were frequent visitors to Newfoundland and Micmacs also have lived in the Bay St. George area from the earliest contact times. Charles Martijn and an anonymous reviewer suggest that this was probably a Micmac, since only they had prayer books in that time and since Montagnais were seldom reported to speak English.⁴⁸

MICMAC PIDGIN ENGLISH

We also have a few examples of Micmac pidgin English⁴⁹ from the nineteenth century:

'five hundred musquash killum my father'

'long time ago, when Indian first makum God'

'always everything two ways me speakum'

What we notice here, apart from the *-um* ending we had seen above, is the unusual word order. The English words follow the Micmac word order.

Also of interest is a short, ironic letter⁵⁰ written (or dictated?) by the Micmac Peter Paul, in reaction to rumours about his death:

To all white men:

Me hear 'em one Higlisman, Glasgow, tell me dead, cause me 88 years old and 'spectable Indian. That no reason. All dead men not 88 years old – some not 88 years, long dead – some more than 88 yet 'live. Suppose 'em man 'spectable, that no reason he dead. White man tell Peter Paul dead, tell too soon. Me not believe me dead.

Peter Paul, Feb. 5, 1867

In both examples we note the *-em/-um* endings on some of the verbs. This is presumably a remnant of the English pronoun 'him'. Many Amerindian languages mark not only the subject, but also the object in verbs. This is a very widespread phenomenon, present in many varieties of American Indian Pidgin English.⁵¹

Although this pidgin has not directly to do with the Strait of Belle Isle, it is interesting to put it beside the Newfoundland Pidgin English.

48 See e.g. Martijn (ed.) 1986, especially p. 198 and the references cited there. An anonymous JAPLA reviewer identifies him as a Bay St. George Micmac, from the Seal Rocks / Sandy Point Settlement.

49 Webster (1894).

50 A typewritten copy of this letter was kindly made available to me by Ruth Whitehead, who found it in the historic files of the Nova Scotia Museum. The source is unclear. It might be a newspaper excerpt; or from a book written by G. Maclaren in 1954 called the Picou Book.

51 See e.g. Olson Flanigan (1986).

INTERTRIBAL CONTACTS

Much less is known about intertribal languages. It is certain that many of the tribes traded with the neighbouring tribes long before the arrival of the Europeans, and that this continued after the contacts with the Europeans. The Strait of Belle Isle used to be inhabited by Inuit, Montagnais, Beothuk and Micmac, all speaking mutually unintelligible languages. We don't have much information about intertribal trade contacts in this area. It is said that Inuit used sign language in this area early in this century in communication with Amerindians, but as far as I know there is no contemporary evidence for this.⁵²

It is in principle possible that, before this time, the Basque-Amerindian pidgin might have been used for intertribal contacts. According to a 1710 Basque document the trade language was based on Basque and two different languages of the Indians. It is a fact that the Montagnais also used Micmac words in their version of the Basque pidgin, like *sagamo* 'chief'.

There is some documentation on the tribes from the mainland travelling to the Island of Newfoundland for trade, and Beothuks travelling to the mainland (for Inuit, see the section on pidgin French; for Micmac and Montagnais: Martijn (1986)). Recent research suggests that the Beothuk had more contacts with the mainland tribes than was supposed.

It is possible that there was a sufficient number of bilinguals in the tribes so that pidgins were not necessary. Because of lack of documentation, we can only speculate on this.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the things that make pidgins and creole languages so fascinating is the fact that they show so many similarities in grammatical structure and the words that are used.

Creoles, and to a lesser extent also pidgins, have many structural features in common. In the past it was even thought that there was one proto-pidgin from which all pidgins and creoles had derived by a process called *relexification*: all words of that language were replaced by words from other languages. The new language now had the same structure, but a completely different vocabulary. This theory has been proven to be false for creole languages, but it seems to be possible with pidgin languages. In Hawaii a pidginized Hawaiian had relexified into an English-based pidgin, which subsequently creolized.⁵³ Documented cases of relexification are very, very rare. The area discussed here seems to have witnessed a case too: the relexification of a Portuguese-based pidgin into a Basque-based pidgin and subsequently into a French-based pidgin. Some undoubtedly Portuguese lexical items (*savi*, *passaro*⁵⁴) are used in the Basque pidgin, and some of the features of the Basque pidgin are inherited in the French pidgin (such as, possibly, *tcharacoua* and *macagoua*). There might also be a relation between Inuit French jargon and the pidginized Inuktitut, although the two seem to have little in common. It might be the case that the Southern Labrador Inuit and the Central Labrador Inuit had little or no contact with each other in the 18th century. The Southern Labrador Group had contact with the French, but in particular with Breton and Basque fishermen: They spoke a trade language with Inuit, French, Montagnais and Basque elements, and possibly borrowings from other languages.

52 This is claimed by Vinay (1964). The sources he gives refer to the sign language of the Plains that was spoken thousands of kilometers to the west.

53 Bickerton & Wilson 1987

54 as *macharoua* 'big bird'.

The Northern Labrador Inuit had contact with British fur traders' ships sailing to Hudson's Bay and spoke pidginized Inuktitut, with a little Montagnais, in these contacts.

Just as fascinating are the lexical similarities of pidgins and creoles from all parts of the world. Why are there words we find in so many pidgins and creoles? Why did the West Greenlandic Inuit use the same word for child *pickaninnee* as Guyanese, West African and New Guinea people?⁵⁵ Why is the word *savi* used in almost all creoles and pidgins in the world?⁵⁶ Why do the Indian Pidgin English sentences cited by Chappell look so much like Pidgin English from East Asia? Did sailors have a particular jargon or particular jargons to communicate with people of other language groups? Probably they did.⁵⁷ Unfortunately there is not much documentation left of these pidgins. It is only to be hoped that more sources turn up. This would enable us to get a clearer picture of the contact history of the Strait of Belle Isle, as well as possible documentation of relexification in pidgins.

Language contact studies can also be a valuable tool in historic research. The fact that a Basque pidgin was so widespread in Eastern Canada may be indicative of the importance of the Basque contacts with the natives. In other cases utterances recorded from natives may be used to identify them. For instance, the Gaspé Indians who use the Montagnais Algonquian word *napew* are not likely to be Laurentian Iroquois (as is sometimes suggested) or Micmac, who speak a completely different language. This is an area where linguistics and ethnohistory can complement one another.

In this paper it has become clear that people in crosscultural contact situations like those discussed above rarely make use of fully fledged languages. In a number of instances new languages, jargon or pidgins, emerge from these contacts. These jargons or pidgins show many fascinating similarities.

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55 It is used in West Greenlandic pidgin Inuktitut, in Californian Spanish pidgin of San Nicolas Island, Sranan in Surinam, Arctic Ocean Eskimo Jargon, New Guinea Tok Pisin, Hawaiian English, New Zealand, American Indian Pidgin English. This list is certainly not exhaustive.

56 Hall (1947-1948) lists the following pidgins and creoles with a word like *savi* for 'to know': Romance-based languages: Cabo Verde Portuguese creole *sabi*, Indo-Portuguese *sabe*, Papiamentu (Netherlands Antilles) *sabi*, Lingua Franca (Mediterranean) *saber*, North African Pidgin French *sabir*. English-based languages: Beach-la-Mar, Chinese Pidgin English, Australian Aboriginal English Pidgins and Creoles *sævi*, Tok Pisin (Papua New Guinea), Sranan (Surinam) *sabi*. *chavé* as used in the Basque-Algonquian pidgin in the early 1600s is to my knowledge the first attested use.

57 See Hewson (1983) for a discussion of nautical influence on Canadian French and Newfoundland English.

research on the Basque pidgins, especially those of them who were most sceptical, also contributed significantly to this paper.

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