Although there are many leading publications devoted to study pidgin and creole language varieties, including Hall (1966), Mühlhäusler (1986) and Romaine (1988), an accepted definition of pidgin and creole varieties remains needed. Rickford and McWhorter (2000) define pidgins and creoles as new varieties of language that are generated in situations of language contact. They hold that pidgins are those varieties that have arisen as vehicles of trade between ethnic groups who speak different languages, whereas creoles are more complex and structurally developed than pidgins. Holmes (2001) describes a pidgin as a variety that is not spoken by anyone as a mother tongue. He concludes that a pidgin is understood to be a simplified language with a vocabulary that is mostly drawn from the lexifier language. In his view, a pidgin evolves into a creole when it becomes the native language of a new generation of children.

**Pidgin and Creole Varieties**

As we can see, **pidgin** and **creole** are technical terms used by linguists to refer to the varieties that are created and used by groups of people with different languages for the purpose of communication in specific contexts. A pidgin, in particular, is considered to be a new variety that develops in situations in which speakers of different languages need to communicate but do not share a common language. The vocabulary of a pidgin comes mainly from one particular language, which is called the ‘lexifier’ language (Fasold 1993; Rickford 2000). Pidgins do not have a stable or well-developed grammatical structure as they are often only used for a limited period of time and for specific social functions, such as mercantile transactions. Nonetheless, adults who learn pidgin usually speak it for the rest of their lives. A creole, on the other hand, is a pidgin that has been systematized with a fully functioning grammar, and is usually developed by the children who are exposed to the
pidgin (Fasold 1993; Rickford 2000). When children start using a pidgin as their first language and it becomes the mother tongue of their community, it can then be classified as a creole (Fasold 1993).

**Brief Background**

Migration, slavery, trade, colonization, and an internationally mobile workforce are all factors that have influenced the formation of pidgins and creoles around the world. These varieties first developed between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries as a result of contact between colonial nonstandard varieties of a European language and several non-European languages around the Atlantic and in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Pidgins, as explained above, are reduced in structure and grammar. Some pidgins, such as Bislama and Tok Pisin (in Melanesia), and Nigerian and Cameroon Pidgin English were used specifically in trade contexts and initially served as a non-native lingua franca. Creoles developed in settlement colonies whose primary industry consisted of sugar cane plantations or rice fields, and where non-European labourers were employed extensively. Examples include Cape Verdian Crioulo (lexified by Portuguese) and Papiamentu in the Netherlands Antilles (apparently, Portuguese-based but influenced by Spanish); Haitian, Mauritian, and Seychellois (lexified by French); Jamaican, Guyanese, and Hawaiian creole, as well as Gullah in the USA (all lexified by English); and Saramaccan and Sranan in Surinam (lexified by English, with the former heavily influenced by Portuguese and the latter by Dutch) (Keesing 1988).

The terms creole and pidgin have also been extended to some other varieties that developed during the same period out of contacts among primarily non-European languages. Examples include Delaware Pidgin, Chinook Jargon, and Mobilian in North America; Sango, (Kikongo-) Kituba, and Lingala in Central Africa, Kinubi in Kenya and Uganda; Juba Arabic in Southern Sudan and Hiri Motu in Papua New Guinea (Fasold 1993; Rickford 2000). Ki-Nubi and Juba-Arabic are considered as pidgin-creole having Arabic as a lexifier (or Arabic-based contact language as put by Owens 1997). Details about the development of Arabic-based pidgins and creoles in Southern Sudan, Chad and East Africa are provided by Owens (1997). He gives the historical background in two periods; the early Islamic period (ca. 700–1000 A.D.) and the 19th century.