

Pidgins and Creoles in Education (PACE) *NEWSLETTER*

Number 4

October 1993

FROM THE EDITOR

The network of information about the use of pidgins and creoles in education is widening. This issue includes for the first time detailed reports about the use of non-English-based creoles in education in various islands in the West Indies.

We have also made contact with the Institut d'Études Créoles et Francophones in France, which does a lot of work in the PACE area concerning French-based creoles.

The article in this issue is about the Portuguese-based creole of Guinea-Bissau in Africa. A related creole spoken by immigrants to the USA is the subject of a report.

This issue also contains a special report on creole and education in Canada.

There was actually too much information to include here, especially on creoles and education in the UK. So this will be covered in another special report in the next issue.

Thanks once again to all the contributors. Please keep sending in information or short articles for future issues and passing the word (and the newsletter) on to others who may be interested.

Jeff Siegel
Linguistics Department
University of New England
Armidale, NSW 2351 AUSTRALIA

e-mail address: jsiegel@metz.une.edu.au

REPORTS

Netherlands Antilles (Dutch West Indies)

from: Marta Dijkhoff
Instituto Lingwistiko Antiano
Schouwburgweg 26
Willemstad, Curaçao
DUTCH WEST INDIES

“The institute where I work (Instituto Lingwistiko Antiano, ILA) is a governmental institution. We provide the government of the Netherlands Antilles with advice on language matters. And we also are responsible for research on language, and language programs which the government considers to be of importance. One of our ongoing projects is the standardization project [for the local creole, called Papiamentu], which has been going on since 1983.

“This project was started in order to provide the government and all other interested institutions such as schools, writers etc. with a body of standardized words. In Papiamentu there are sometimes many variants for one and the same word e.g. *asepta*, *aksepta*, *apsepta*, *apseta*, which are all variants for the English word ‘to accept’. The Standardization Committee, a body of 30 with representatives from Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire, has already standardized a body of 6000 words and the next project at hand is a dictionary in the native language to describe their meaning.

“I myself am involved in research for this committee (morphology). I am also responsible for the publication of a grammar of Papiamentu, of which the first volume has already been published. Three other volumes are already on paper but they are not yet available in print...

“As our institute does not work for one particular island, we are not directly involved with schools or teaching. We are, however, involved in the design of curricula for the

IN THIS ISSUE

	<i>page</i>
Reports	1
Special report	4
Article	5
Publications	6
Conferences	9

Papiamentu language for the upgrading courses of teachers of primary education. We are also involved in the design of a curriculum for the teaching of Dutch as a foreign language.

“The role of Papiamentu in education is a complicated issue. Since 1982 the Netherlands Antilles have a law that allows Papiamentu as a language of instruction in the first and second grade of primary schools. But this law was never implemented. Many schools could not implement it for there were no teaching materials available. There was also a lot of opposition outside the government, and the minister himself did not enforce his decision. The situation in the schools continued as it has always been. Papiamentu was used unofficially by some teachers in some schools, whereas Dutch kept being the official language of instruction.

“In 1983 Papiamentu was introduced as a subject in all schools and all grades. Many teachers received upgrading in the native language (a process that is still going on at this moment). Since then Papiamentu has to be taught half an hour each day in all grades. But the language of instruction of all subject matters in primary school is still Dutch. And children still have to acquire their writing and reading skills through Dutch. Many schools, moreover, still boycott this decision, by arguing that they do not have the necessary amount of trained teachers (upgrading was voluntary) and they use this half hour for other subjects.

“The fact that many children (more than the expected average) fail to pass their exams at the end of their sixth year in primary education, prompted the Minister of Education to reopen the discussion to introduce Papiamentu in primary education as a language of instruction. He then went a step further and proclaimed in 1990, that Papiamentu should be the language of instruction during all six years of primary education. The government is preparing a project now, which has to result in this ultimate goal.

“As history showed us, decisions about the native language do not always result in concrete measures. The big problem is that many decisions are not followed by concrete plans and the necessary means (money) to implement the programs we wish to be effectuated.

“It seems that the present Minister of Education is serious in his endeavours. I am directly involved in the process this time, and maybe this once we will make a real breakthrough.”

St Lucia and Dominica

From: Jeff Allen
6, mail Victor Jarra
93160 Noisy-le-Grand FRANCE

“The following is a report on literacy for the French-lexicon Creole (Kwéyòl) of St Lucia and Dominica.

“There are basically two institutions and two other individuals involved in such work in St Lucia. The first is the Folk Research Center (FRC) which coordinates and authorizes all cultural research for the island. Between 1983 and 1991 the FRC contributed to 15 issues of a bilingual Creole/English newsletter called *Balata*. At present, a bi-annual brochure called *Bulletin* is put out by the FRC.

“SIL [Summer Institute of Linguistics] is the second institution active in linguistic fieldwork and literacy work, with a presence in St Lucia over the past 8 years. They have produced numerous publications of moralistic folktales and of Bible stories.

“Dr. Didacus Jules of the International Literacy Support Service has conducted a number of literacy projects in St Lucia in the past. [One of these is described in *Education as conscientization: a case study of a prison literacy project in St Lucia* (Folk Research Centre and University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, 1978).]

“Dr. Lawrence Carrington of the University of the West Indies in Trinidad initiated the Creole Discourse and Social Development project for St Lucia. However the lack of funds has not allowed the project to move on as hoped.

“As for Dominica, literacy work is primarily being done by the Folk Research Institute of Dominica, the project headed up by Marcel Fontaine in collaboration with the British linguist Stephanie Stuart. Their ongoing work has led to the publication of *Dominica's Diksyonnè Kwéyòl - English - Creole Dictionary* [Folk Research Institute, the Konmité Pou Etid Kwéyòl (KEK), and the Department of the Use of English and

Linguistics, University of the West Indies, Dominica and Barbados, 1991]. The University of Amsterdam is also taking part in the Dominican context with the participation of Jonathan Leather [see Publications section].

“A significant amount of literacy work is currently being done in the UK by Ms. Husibi Nwenmely, a native St Lucian. She teaches a beginner’s course in St Lucian Creole at the Tower Hamlets Institute of Adult Education and an advanced class at East London Black Women’s Organisation. There are hopes of beginning a new Kwéyòl class at the Booker T. Washington Centre in the North Westminster Community School. Nwenmely is currently a research assistant in the Reading Centre at the University of Reading where she is writing her PhD dissertation on Kwéyòl literacy in the UK.”

France

From: Marie-Christine Hazaël-Massieux
Institut d’Études Créoles et
Francophones
29 Avenue R. Schuman
13621 Aix-en-Provence FRANCE

[This description of the Institut d’Études Créoles et Francophones (IECF) is a rough translation from French.]

Our institute, the centre for research on French creoles, is particularly interested in linguistic, sociolinguistic and anthropological issues. Educational questions have an important place, in particular the question of teaching creole in French creole-speaking countries. This was the subject of several papers given at the 7th International Colloquium of Creole Studies, held in Mauritius 30 September to 5 October, 1992 [sponsored by IECF with the theme “Languages, education and development in the creole-speaking world”, one of institutes research priorities].

[The editor was lucky to spend two days at IECF in June. The library contains an outstanding collection of books, articles, reports, papers and theses on pidgin and creoles languages, in both French and English. See “Publications” for a description of the institute’s own newsletter.]

Vanuatu

From: Enikelen Netine
World Vision
PO Box 247
Port Vila, VANUATU

“The Melanesian adult literacy project [teaching literacy in Bislama, the Vanuatu dialect of Melanesian Pidgin] began in 1989 in the northwest area of Malakula. It began with one adult literacy class and one preschool. From then it has increased in number of classes each year. This year we have 21 adult literacy classes.

“The initial phase of the Vanuatu Melanesian literacy project has accomplished a great deal, given the challenging nature of the project and the limited resources. The lack of teaching materials, initial suspicion of the people and the limited official attention being given to Bislama literacy were critical difficulties which the project has had to address. Although only a small project, with a limited current budget from AIDAB through UNESCO for a period of two years, the project has made steady progress since its inception...The project now has been established on four islands. Hopefully, we will take in one more island this year.”

Solomon Islands

From: Jack Rekzy, Co-ordinator
Literacy Association of the Solomon
Islands
PO Box 604
Honiara, SOLOMON ISLANDS

“With the formation of LASI (Literacy Association of Solomon Islands) in July 1992, a boost has been given to using Pidgin in educational work, especially to teach literacy and reproduce materials which can be used by a number of groups of people.

“With assistance from LASI, a highly successful text book *Hao fo ridim an raetem Pijin* has been reprinted as a request from many people. This book can teach people, who can already read, to read Pidgin in a week’s course. These books are on sale and will help a Printing Fund which has been set up in order to do further printing.

“Small reading books have also been produced in Pidgin. These can readily be

bought by people to improve reading skills. These have been cyclostyled, but the printing is sufficiently large to allow easy reading. The topics include religious, social and cultural areas and have been prepared by local village people to make sure that the appropriate level of literacy is reached.

“The co-ordinator of LASI attended a Regional Conference held in Fiji in October 1992 and jointly sponsored by the Commonwealth Youth Program and the Bahai International Community.

“Later on in December, a meeting was held between people who are funded by the Canadian Organisation for Development through Education (CODE) and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF), involving Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Solomon Islands.

“Through this we were able to see that we are making progress in getting people to use Pidgin to teach literacy in relation to the more frequent use of Tok Pisin and Bislama programs in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.”

Mauritius

From: Philip Baker
137 Queen Alexandra Mansions
Judd Street
London WC1H 9DL UK

“There is absolutely no sign of Kreol being written in schools, and publications in Kreol are becoming less frequent. However, the volume of spoken Kreol used in radio and TV has increased enormously. This is partly because there are now two TV channels (not counting the French only transmissions beamed from Réunion) and two radio stations – instead of only one each. There are various phone-in programs in Kreol...In TV, there are programs which switch between Kreol and French.”

Cape Verdean Creole in the USA

From: Georgette Gonsalves
New England Multifunctional
Resource Center
University of Massachusetts/Boston
Wheatley Hall 1-77
Boston, MA 02125 USA

“The status of the implementation of the Cape Verdean creole in classrooms in our schools has unfortunately not changed. Despite its being officially recognized as a ‘legitimate

modern language’ by Massachusetts Law, its use by teachers is still as an instrument of translation ‘while one is on the road’ to learning the second language, in this case the English (American). There continues debate in the Cape Verde Islands regarding a fixed agreed upon orthography. US advocates have, however, gone ahead and developed some literacy level materials because of the immediate needs of older students who have little or no schooling. The results have been successful, particularly at Madison Park High School here in Boston. There continues to be resistance by many Cape Verdean teachers to the use of the language as an effective means for language development. My own sense is that many years of colonial indoctrination hampers their vision of what is possible in the formal education of the people. Old habits and ‘more’ die hard, even after nearly twenty years of political independence from Portugal.

“Those of us who see the possibilities wish to express our interest in collaborating with you in our joint efforts to open doors to opportunity for our language minority students. We see this as an issue not of language per se but as an issue of social justice.”

SPECIAL REPORT:

PACE in Canada

According to the 1981 census, over 143,000 Caribbean born people were living in Ontario, and in some Toronto schools in the 1980s, 10 percent of the students were of Caribbean descent. Thus, there was a need for Canadian teachers to become more familiar with the cultural, linguistic and education background of these students. Some teachers took a course taught in Toronto in 1983 by Lawrence Carrington of the University of the West Indies, and it was decided to form a committee to produce a Caribbean Student Resource Book for teachers. A large two-day symposium was held in 1986 to gather more information from participating educators and linguists, such as Lise Winer. The result has been the publication of two valuable books written by Elizabeth Coelho in collaboration with the Caribbean Student Resource Book Committee:

Caribbean students in Canadian schools, Book 1 (Carib-Can Publishers, Toronto, 1988) presents background information on the history of the Caribbean and on

contemporary life, including the economy, education system, and family structure. Immigration to Canada is described, as well as associated problems, especially with language, for example (p.144):

Divergence from Standard English usage by Caribbean students is usually not regarded with the same tolerance as errors made by students who are learning English as a Second Language, because Caribbean students are generally not regarded as language learners. They are regarded as English speakers who are careless with the language.

The book discusses the implications of this background information for the development of an educational program to meet the needs of both children of Caribbean origin and their parents. The goal of such a program is (p.146):

... to extend students' range of competence in Standard English. At the same time, it informs the students and their teachers about the validity of Creole languages and different varieties of English. The students' task is to add to their existing linguistic repertoire, rather than replace it. The teachers' task is to become more knowledgeable about the language background of their students, to understand the important link between language and identity, and find ways to assist students to become aware of language difference without loss of self esteem."

Caribbean students in Canadian schools, Book 2 (Pippin Publishing, Toronto, 1991) gives detailed information about creole languages, designing an integrated language program, assessment of Caribbean students, and bringing creole into the classroom. For example, the following advice is given (p.94):

One of the best ways of affirming the validity of Creole is to bring it into the classroom. This will accord it the status conferred on everything that is seen as part of the curriculum, something that is important to know about, something that is worth class time to consider and explore.

Resources mentioned include Caribbean literature and music and recorded interviews with people in the community. The book also has chapters on language across the curriculum and cooperative learning.

Unfortunately, according to latest information, funding for special programs for Caribbean students in Canada has been cut. However, both of these books remain as an excellent resource for anyone teaching creole-speaking students, from the Caribbean or elsewhere.

ARTICLE

Kriol, Multilingualism, and Education in Guinea-Bissau

by: Hildo Honório do Couto
Department of Linguistics
Universidade de Brasília
70.910 Brasília, DF BRAZIL

Guinea-Bissau covers an area of 36,135 square kilometres. Its population of less than one million inhabitants speak over 15 languages. Fula, Balanta, Mangingo and Pepel are some of the most important ones. Kriol is spoken by about 75% either as a vernacular or as a vehicular language. Portuguese is the official language, although it is spoken by less than 2%, and as a second language.

Kriol is the only language that unifies the country. Almost all children that grow up in towns learn it as their main language, even when they first learn one of the native languages with their parents at home. As soon as they begin to play with other children in the streets they pass to Kriol. In rural areas native languages predominate, but even there everybody has at least a passive knowledge of it. In spite of this linguistic situation, the whole educational process is done in Portuguese, a foreign language. Thus, as F. Schnoor said, 'Guineans speak a language that they do not write (Kriol) and write a language that they do not speak (Portuguese)'.

Ever since the Liberation War (1960-1974) there has been a continuous discussion about the use/non-use of Kriol in schools. The founding father of the nation, Amílcar Cabral, was clearly favourable to the use of Portuguese. He used to say that languages are instruments like any other. It does not matter if one uses a tractor made in Russia, England or the USA. In the same way it does not matter if one uses the language of Portugal or that of France if it is the best one for the development of the country. But he was aware of the fact that nobody in his country spoke Portuguese as a mother tongue. Therefore he defended the use of Kriol as a bridge to reach it (Cabral 1990).

The subsequent discussion revolved around the same theme. In a round table in the INDE (National Institute for the

Development of Education) in Sept./90, whose aim was to evaluate what was going on in rural schools, more often than not the discussion turned to the use/non-use of Kriol. Most discussants defended its use at least in the first two years of schooling, seeing in it a bridge to Portuguese, exactly like Cabral more than 20 years before. In 1990 the Min. of Education suggested its use in the first 3 years for the “umpty-first” time (Quadé 1990). But, as usual, Guinean politicians discuss too much and act too little. The radical proposals of the pedagogue Paulo Freire were never taken into consideration. He was for the adoption of Kriol as the official language of the country and, consequently, as the language of education, from the first to the last grade, along with Portuguese as a privileged foreign language (Freire/Faundez 1985). Experience has shown that this is difficult to be implemented. There is no teaching material, and no teacher is prepared for that purpose, although Kriol has no problem with graphization: the use of a phonemic writing is almost unanimous in the country.

The consequences of the above picture for Guinean children are disastrous. According to the statistics of 1984-5, only one out of 5,000 goes from first to the last grade (11th) successfully. As a rule they repeat one or more years. At the elementary level, only one out of 400 follows from the first to the sixth grade with success. 41% of the children inscribed in the first grade are not admitted to the second. Besides all that, one must keep in mind that only 40% of Guineans go to school at all. Thus, it is no surprise that illiteracy amounts to above 80% of the whole population (for more statistical details, see Lepri 1986).

As regards adult education, Kriol, Balanta and Fula have been used since 1988. The previous use of Portuguese simply did not work. However, up to now there are no results available.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cabral, A. 1990. A questão da língua. *Papia* 1(2), 59-61.
- Couto, H. H. do. (to appear) Kriol as a bridge to Portuguese in Guinea-Bissau. In *Language Reform: History and future, Vol. VI*, ed. by I. Fodor and C. Hagège (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag).
- Freire, P. and Faundez, A. 1985. *Por uma pedagogia da pergunta*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

Lepri, J.-P. 1986. Análise das estatísticas escolares do ano lectivo 84-85. *Boletim de informação sócio-econômica* II/3, 50-57.

Cedo, F. 1978. A educação na Guiné-Bissau. *Itinerarium* XIII(96/97), 7-12.

Quadé, P. 1990. O crioulo nas escolas. *Nô Pintcha* 17/2/90, p.8 (newspaper).

PUBLICATIONS

Three publications in French deal specifically with the issues of using French-lexifier creoles in formal education.

Du créole opprimé au créole libéré: Défense de la langue réunionnaise by Axel Gauvin (L'Harmattan, Paris, 1977) illustrates that Réunion Creole is a language in its own right and argues that its repression is associated with continuing French dominance of Réunion people. The author advocates a “true bilingualism” and the right of all creole speakers in the world to use their language as part of the struggle against colonialism.

A work in a similar vein is *La langue créole force jugulée: Étude socio-linguistique des rapports de force entre le créole français aux Antilles* by Dany Bebel-Gisler (L'Harmattan and Nouvelle-Optique, Paris and Montreal, 1981). The author gives a sociohistorical description of the development of French creole in the West Indies, and shows the relationship between linguistic and political subjugation.

Créole et éducation (Espace Créole No.7, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1990) is a collection of articles published by the Groupe d'Études et de Recherches en Espace Créolephone. Most of the articles have to do with writing and standardizing creoles or teaching French in a creole-speaking environment. However, one article deals with the issues of using creole in formal education: “Contribution à l'analyse des échecs scolaires: Compétences des élèves en lecture et en expression écrite et représentations sociales de l'école aux Antilles françaises” by Michel Giraud and Danièle Manesse (pp.31-48). It reports on a study done in Martinique and Guadeloupe on achievement in reading and writing and on attitudes towards using creole in formal education.

Also in French, *Gazet sifon blé / Lavwa ka bay* is a newsletter published four times a year by the Institut d'Études Créoles et Francophones in France (see “Reports” for

the address). It contains information about research, conferences and publications concerning pidgin and creole languages, especially those related to French.

Kwéyòl usage and attitudes of Dominican second-formers by Marcel Fontaine and Jonathan Leather (published by the Folk Research Institute, Old Mill Cultural Centre, Canefield, Dominica, 1992). This is the report of a survey of over 300 high school students in second form at eight schools in four different locations in Dominica, an island in the Caribbean where English is the official language but a French-based creole (Kwéyòl or Patwa) is widely spoken. The survey investigated students' acquisition of Kwéyòl, their proficiency in it, in what circumstances they use it, and their attitudes towards it.

With regard to the use of Kwéyòl in education, the majority of students (67%) believed that speaking Kwéyòl has no effect on learning in schools; 12% believed that it has a positive effect, and 20% believed it has a negative effect. An even higher majority (73%) were in favour of teaching reading and writing in Kwéyòl in the schools. However, a smaller majority (51%) were in favour of using Kwéyòl as a medium of instruction to teach school subjects.

The summary preceding the text of report outlines the following overall results:

The results indicate that Kwéyòl has an important place in the lives of most pupils.

The majority would like to learn to read and write the language, and believe it could play more of a part in the educational process. They acknowledged the importance of Kwéyòl to the Dominican national identity, and wished its position to be safeguarded.

In *Haitian Creole literacy evaluation study: Final report*. (Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC, 1985), Michele Burtoff describes a study done to examine the following research question: "Do subjects who receive prior native language (Haitian Creole) literacy instruction develop greater proficiency in the second language (English) than those who receive only second language instruction when total instruction time is held constant?" (p.3). The study was done in the New York City area with illiterate adult immigrants. Two groups were compared: those who had ESL (English as a second language) instruction only for 24 weeks (control) and those who had ESL instruction for 12 weeks plus HC (Haitian Creole)

literacy instruction for 12 weeks (experimental).

There were some problems with the research design and the low number of subjects, but some interesting results. First of all, on the basis of scores in the Basic English Skills Test (BEST), the ESL only group performed better than the HC literacy group in oral skills. However, despite having only half the amount of ESL instruction, the HC literacy group performed better in English literacy skills in the same period of time (but the difference was statistically non-significant). At one particular centre where the study was done, the HC literacy group developed ESL proficiency comparable to that of the ESL only group, as well as greater literacy skills. The author's conclusion is as follows (p.14):

Therefore, it appears likely that students in an ESL program containing a native language literacy component could attain a comparable level of ESL proficiency *in addition to* better literacy skills when compared to students in a regular ESL program (i.e. one without a native literacy component), during the same period of time.

There was also another important spinoff of the program which could not be quantified. On the basis of questionnaires and informal conversations, some anecdotal evidence was gathered indicating that the program led to increased self-confidence, cultural pride, and motivation.

Atlantic meets Pacific: A global view of pidginization and creolization, edited by Francis Byrne and John Holm (Amsterdam John Benjamins, Amsterdam, 1993) has two relevant chapters.

In "Haitian Creole as the official language in education and the media" (pp.291-8), Kate Howe presents some historical background and then some information about the current linguistic situation in Haiti. She notes that while less than 10 percent of the population speak French fluently, it has been, until recently, the only language of government and education. However, in 1982 the Ministry of Education issued a decree making Haitian Creole the language of instruction and an object of study in a reorganized educational system. In the 1987 constitution, Creole was made an official language of the republic along with French. Nevertheless, negative attitudes towards Creole have persisted and debate continues about the use of Creole versus French in education. However, the

status of Creole has increased since the President Astride made his inauguration speech in Creole in 1991.

“Pidgins and creoles in education in Australia and the Southwest Pacific” (pp.299-301), by the editor of this newsletter, was originally given as a paper to the first conference of the Society of Pidgin and Creole Linguistics in 1989. It describes the origins of the PACE project and gives some information on programs found in the earlier issues of this newsletter.

“Stage, transfer, and academic achievement in dialect-speaking Hawaiian adolescents” by Carol Fleisher Feldman, Addison Stone and Bobbi Renderer, published in *Child Development* 61, 1990 (pp. 472-84) reports on a study done in an isolated, multiethnic rural community in Hawaii where Hawaiian Creole English is spoken. Many students in this community are similar to those of other nonstandard English-speaking communities in that they perform poorly in high school even though they appear quite intelligent. The study examined the relationship between stage of cognitive development, transfer ability, production ability in Standard English, and school achievement. The results of the study show strong correlations between transfer ability and school achievement in reading and mathematics. Thus, students who do not perform well in school are those who do not have this ability.

Here “transfer” refers to the discovery or recognition by a learner that abstract reasoning processes learned with regard to materials in one context can be applied to different materials in a new context. For this to occur, new materials must be talked about, described and encoded propositionally. The problem is the lack of a language children feel comfortable to use in formal education. They don’t speak the language of the school system, Standard English, and their own nonstandard dialect is conventionally not used in school. Even if Hawaiian Creole English were allowed in classroom, there would still be problems of “children’s own sense of inappropriateness about speaking it in school” (pp.484-5). The article ends with the question of how to encourage children to use their own language in problem solving.

A survey of literacy and language, March - November 1991 (National Literacy Committee and Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, Honiara, 1992) is the

report of a large-scale survey done in the Solomon Islands. The objectives of the survey were to determine usage of languages throughout the country, attitudes to languages, and literacy levels. In addition, the survey was to investigate relationships between literacy and language and to identify a suitable location for a pilot literacy project. The report came up with some interesting findings with regard to the use of Solomon Islands Pijin in education.

With regard to teaching literacy, the report gives the following account (pp.6-7):

The first attempt to use Pijin as a medium for literacy instruction was with the Pijin Literacy Project coordinated by SICA [Solomon Islands Christian Association] beginning in 1978. The project produced a number of readers and a text for converting literacy in English to literacy in Pijin. Although SICA continue to be active in Pijin literacy, by the ongoing translation work, there is currently no specific Pijin literacy project. During the past 10 years or so, Nazareth Apostolic Centre (NAC) have trained students to teach reading and writing skills. These students return to their villages and are encouraged to undertake literacy work there. NAC have also produced a number of Pijin books. USP [University of the South Pacific] have contributed with the publication of *Taem bilong faet* and *The big death*; They hope, in 1992, to publish a series of Pijin course books to teach reading and writing to those who have never learned to read in any language.

With regard to formal education, while English is the official language of instruction in the education system, it was found that Pijin is the de facto medium of instruction in most schools (p.28). The report makes the following suggestion (p.43):

78% of schools use a mixture of English and Pijin, with or without a vernacular, as the medium of instruction. A less confused learning environment for students could be created by the adoption of a single language as the medium of instruction. In view of the large numbers of people who understand Pijin, the most effective language in this respect should be Pijin on a national basis...English should be taught as a subject using tried methods of TESL teaching.

The report contains three important recommendations with regard to the use of Pijin in education:

- Recommendation No.3 (p.3): “Pijin should be adopted as the national language of the Solomon Islands.”

- Recommendation No.6 (p.5): “All educational establishments should examine the possibility of offering courses in vernaculars and Pijin. The medium of instruction at all levels should be that language which offers maximum understanding, ie Pijin.”

CONFERENCES

A workshop on creole writing in education and literature was held at the conference of the Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics in Amsterdam in June, 1993. Two of the papers discussed pidgins and creoles in education.

Peter Roberts (University of the West Indies – Barbados) presented a paper entitled “Affective factors in the use of creole in the classroom: the resolution of a paradox”. This paper points out that it is often impracticable to carry out the UNESCO resolutions that children’s mother tongue should be used for teaching literacy in formal education. This is especially true in Creole-speaking countries where the use of the creoles as the language of education is prevented by political and economic factors, persisting negative attitudes toward creole languages, and the desire to learn the international language of the former colonial power, as a key to entry into the middle class. The paper outlines other difficulties as well with regard to using creoles in education, including lack of standardization and lack of trained teachers. Nevertheless, the paper notes that creole languages have always been used unofficially in the classroom by teachers to explain things to students, but never as an end in itself.

The paper goes on to advocate an “integrative approach” to the use of creoles in the classroom, making the following proposals:

- use of creole in the classroom to promote confidence and understanding
- allowing for the emergence of ‘norms’ in the creole though written literature and public discussions
- providing teachers with knowledge of the creole and techniques of teaching in a quasi-bilingual situation
- production of folk literature in the ‘original’ or ‘natural’ variety of language
- promotion of creative work in the creole inside and outside the school system to which meaningful (achievement, status, money) reward is given...

This editor’s paper “Pidgins and creoles in education: an update” presented findings made since the paper presented at the 1989

conference (see “Publications”) about the use of pidgin and creole languages in formal education systems. It covered three aspects: programs using a pidgin or creole as the medium of instruction, “awareness” programs using aspects of pidgins or creoles as topics of study, and evaluations of programs of both types. The languages covered included Melanesian Pidgin and varieties of creole spoken in the Caribbean and by immigrants in North America. Findings were as follows: (1) there is increasing use of pidgins and creoles in formal education, (2) studies show that the use of pidgins and creoles to teach literacy has no negative effect on the subsequent acquisition of the standard form of the lexifier language, and (3) positive effects are greater feasibility of education programs as well as increased motivation, cultural pride, and sense of self-esteem.

At the First International Conference on Oceanic Linguistics, held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, in July 1993, Heather Lotherington-Woloszyn (University of the South Pacific) gave a paper entitled: “Starting from somewhere: entering school-based literacy through Pidgin”. Part of the abstract is as follows:

This paper argues that children in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are working at a remediable disadvantage in attempting to achieve school-based literacy through the medium of English, which, as a colonially introduced language, is used primarily for official, administrative purposes outside the school environment and has little currency in community level discourse, where emergent literacy begins. The paper argues that a vernacular literacy bilingual education program, using Pidgin to introduce initial literacy where it is impracticable to use the vernacular, would promote language development and facilitate literacy acquisition for children of multilingual backgrounds by ensuring that early primary school learning is not discontinuous with community learning.

Pidgins, Creoles and Nonstandard Dialects in Education

(described in the last issue)
is now available for Australian \$10.00 from:

Richard B. Baldauf, Jr.
National Literacy and Languages
Institute of Australia
2/6 Champion Street
Deakin, ACT 2600 AUSTRALIA
FAX: (61) 6 281 3096