

Pidgins and Creoles in Education (PACE) *NEWSLETTER*

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FROM THE EDITOR

In this issue of the newsletter, the scope is widened to include more information on African American Vernacular English and Australian Aboriginal English. Although these minority dialects are not strictly pidgins or creoles, they originate from language contact and the issues relating to their use in educational contexts are similar.

The scope is also widened to include for the first time some information on the use of West African English-lexified pidgins and creoles in education.

Unfortunately, not many reports were received for this issue. The main purpose of this newsletter is to exchange information. So if you have any information about the use of a pidgin, creole or minority dialect in education, please send it.

Please note the change of mailing address below. I'll be living in Hawai'i for a while. (It'll be tough, but someone's got to do it!)

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REPORTS

USA

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"I teach and advise on ESL students, and am now more and more being asked to work with students speaking a variety of Caribbean creoles (eg Jamaican, Haitian). I haven't found any work being done on these by the ESL community, and I am interested in creole grammars (accessible to the non-specialist) and in any work on problems faced by creole speakers when asked to communicate in standard US English."

France

from: Institut d'Etudes Créoles et
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"Nous sommes toujours intéressés (particulièrement Robert Chaudemson et Marie-Christine Hazaël-Massieux, mais aussi Daniel Baggioni, Didier de Robillard, etc) par la question de l'éducation dans les mondes créoles: travaux sur les Petites Antilles, L'Océan Indien. mais aussi Haïti."

Netherlands

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"We have two graduate students working on creole first language acquisition with an educational perspective: Rocky Mease

(Jamaica, Jamaican Creole) and Cheraldine Osepa (Curaçao, Papiamentu). They can be contacted through me.”

Australia

from: Prudy McLaughlin
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“We recently went to Canberra to the Speech Pathology Australia conference where the KRALC [the Katherine Regional Aboriginal Language Centre] was awarded the Community Contribution Award for services to Speech Pathology which was very exciting. We provided interpreters, worked on various assessment tools, plus gave cultural information about Aboriginal babies and toddlers...the entire exercise was done in Kriol.”

Here is part of a transcription of the award presentation, held in March 1977:

This year the award goes to the Katherine Regional Aboriginal Language Centre which has assisted the NT [Northern Territory] Speech Pathologist (Merryn Philpott) to achieve culturally appropriate service delivery for Aboriginal people.

This has been achieved through the provision of lectures and workshops specifically designed for speech pathologists, collaboration on the development of clinically useful tools such as the Kimberley Early Language Scales, the Kriol articulation word set and the Kriol adaptation of the Reynell....

The achievements and learning from this alliance are being presented at state and national conferences including the conference here this week.

Over the last 4 years, the Centre, which includes linguists, language workers, Kriol/English interpreters and support staff, has provided support, guidance and expertise to assist the NT branch in achieving a major strategic goal of providing culturally appropriate service delivery.

from: Joseph Blyth
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“In February 1997 KLRC linguists Joyce Hudson and Joseph Blythe ran a series of Kriol workshops in Halls Creek. We had a one day introductory workshop that was open

to Kriol speakers and non-speakers. We looked at how Creoles grow out of Pidgins. We then looked at some of the features of Kriol grammar and how it differs from Standard English. We also looked at how Kriol words can have different meanings from their Standard English equivalents. Then we had two days of workshops that were open to Kriol speakers only. At these workshops the orthography was introduced that has been used widely in the Northern Territory and transcription assignments were set. Everyone who successfully completed all their assignments was given a certificate to say they can read and write in Kriol. We had 5 graduates. The workshops were well received. In the past Kriol has not enjoyed the prestige of either traditional languages or Standard English. People became quite enthusiastic about reading and writing Kriol. Being able to read and write one’s first language is empowering. We wanted to find out if people were happy with the orthography used in the NT, which they were, and whether it was suitable for the variety of Kriol spoken in Halls Creek. The orthography was quite suitable but perhaps there are a few more symbols required for some of the long vowel sounds.”

FROM OTHER NEWSLETTERS:

from: *Interpreter Training in Aboriginal Languages Newsletter* (Feb 1997)
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“A Skills Maintenance Workshop was held 20-21 November 1996 at the KLRC [Kimberley Language Resource Centre] in Halls Creek. For some time now there has been concern about follow-up support for accredited interpreters so this workshop was organised for the six graduates from Fitzroy Crossing and the seven from Halls Creek and Balgo courses. [See *PACE Newsletter* 6.] ... Margaret Sefton and Eirlys Richards led the sessions. The agenda included sharing interpreting experiences and a review of ethics issues arising from the discussion. The main focus was on medical situations, focussing on eyes and diabetes. Time was spent on reviewing information, terminology and equivalents in Kriol and Jaru followed by relevant role play...”

from: *Diwurruwurru-jaru Nyusleta*
(Aug 1997)
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This is the newsletter of the Katherine Regional Aboriginal Language Centre, which has recently been renamed the Diwurruwurru-jaru Aboriginal Corporation. It contains a lot of news about the many recent developments in interpreting in Aboriginal languages, including Kriol. One development was the making of a video called "Nomo Humbug", showing people and organizations how to use the interpreting service.

This issue of the newsletter also contains a report and an article by Barbara Raymond, a language worker and interpreter, which are both written in Kriol with an English translation.

from: *FELIKS News* (Sept 1997)
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This issue starts off with a brief review of the FELIKS approach which is "NOT about teaching Kriol or Aboriginal English (AE) in schools but uses the home language as a jumping off point for teaching SAE [Standard Australian English] more effectively. It emphasizes the following (p.1):

- accepting and validating the students' home languages whether they are Kriol, Aboriginal English or one of the traditional Aboriginal languages
- making explicit to students that their English-based home language (whether Kriol or AE) and Standard Australian English are different; discovering differences with them
- increasing the teachers' knowledge of the differences between SAE and Kriol or AE so they can identify potential area of difficulty for their students
- providing specific strategies for teaching Standard English as a second dialect

There is also an emphasis on appropriate code choice and the need for code-switching in real life.

An article headed "Growing interest in teaching standard English as a second dialect" reports on packages (video and text) produced by education departments in two states to provide teachers with useful information on

Aboriginal English: *Deadly Eh, Cuz!* in Victoria and *A Place of Belonging: Working with Aboriginal English* in New South Wales. A similar package will be released by the Queensland Education Department later this year. Also, reported (p.2):

A unit of the Department of Social Security in Canberra is planning a video called *Talkin Our Way* about Aboriginal English, aimed at increasing the awareness of staff in government departments working with Aboriginal clients.

The article also notes one reaction to the packages for teachers:

there was an article printed in the Brisbane *Courier Mail* headlined 'How to pick a ninny' which said the idea behind the package was 'just a lazy way of perpetuating a second-rate pidgin language that will be about as useful as spear throwing in modern society'! OF course there were a number of indignant letters to the editor in rebuttal but we need to realise that attitudes to bidialectal education are not necessarily positive. And we need to counter such arguments, citing the work of linguists, educators and personal knowledge and experience.

The issue contains several articles on games and "awareness" and "separation" activities for use in the classroom and with parents.

PACE IN WEST AFRICA

This is a special report on the use of English-lexified pidgins and creoles in education in four West African countries: Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria and Liberia. It is based on reports from people who answered a call over the CreoList, and from published sources.

Reports:

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Except for Sierra Leone, I think it is safe to say that the official policy is not to allow P/Cs to be used in the classroom. I know more about the anglophone West African countries, but the situation in the former French colonies must be pretty much the same, the French certainly having a prescriptive tradition as far as language is concerned and many former

colonies still entertaining much closer relations with France than former British colonies with Britain.

SIERRA LEONE: in a pilot project, Krio as a subject was first introduced in 10 schools in 1985. And it was as late as 1993 that Krio was made a core subject at the junior secondary level. It is not, however, used as a medium of instruction, English being the teaching language (Shrimpton 1995:219-20).

GHANA: there have been complaints about the falling standard of English in Ghana since at least the 1960s. Boadi (1971:56) writes:

There is a general demand from all quarters for improvement in the standard of written and spoken English in the schools and universities. University teachers, finding their freshmen insufficiently equipped to understand and write English at the level required for advanced work, blame the low standard on the secondary schools. [...] Teachers in secondary schools, on the other hand, admit that something radically wrong is happening to the teaching and learning of English, and that this is adversely affecting standards at all levels. But they see the cause of all this in the handling of the subject in the primary schools.

The reason for the decline in the students' performance in English seems to have been the Accelerated Education Development Plan, embarked upon in the early 1950s. The number of primary school children rose sharply, and to satisfy the demand in teachers so-called 'pupil-teachers', ie primary-school leavers, were recruited as teachers. These did then pass their errors on to the new generation of pupils, and so on. Since about the mid-60s, this problem has acquired a new dimension:

It is probable that pidgin in Ghana spread from the uneducated section of the population to the literate strata: whereas in the army and the police force PE [Pidgin English] seems to have fulfilled basic communication needs it acquired a new function when, in the middle of the 1960s, it entered institutions of secondary education and subsequently the universities.

In these institutions pidgin today is the main informal register in use between male students and is often (though not exclusively) used even if the communicants share the same mother tongue. It may be because pidgin in Ghana is still associated with the illiterate classes that female pupils and students are rarely observed to speak it,

preferring Standard English or a local language instead. Especially with the older generation, but with the young as well, pidgin has the stigma of showing lack of womanliness and education. Therefore, although many young educated women have a passive command of pidgin, they rarely use it actively. Very often males switch from pidgin to Standard English when a woman joins the conversation.

Teachers at both secondary schools and the universities are concerned about the harmful effect the use of pidgin may have on the students' Standard English. However, it has not yet been demonstrated that pidgin impairs the students' command of the standard (cf. Dolphyne 1995:32); my impression is that students are very well aware that the two are different language systems used in a diglossic situation, pidgin being exclusively in spoken form and reserved for informal situations. Although it is banned from the classrooms (the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Science and Technology Kumasi, officially prohibited the use of pidgin on its precincts in 1985) pupils and students continue to use pidgin among themselves, so that an increasing proportion of educated Ghanaians actively use pidgin. (Huber 1995:228).

The educationalists' reaction to pidgin being used by students in secondary schools and universities are quite violent at times: "The indiscriminate use of pidgin English is leading the nation towards illiteracy" (Egblewogbe 1992:1).

In sum, pidgin in Ghana is highly stigmatized although it enjoys covert prestige as an in-group language among educated male Ghanaians. Because of its social stigma, it is improbable that Pidgin will be used as a medium of instruction in Ghanaian schools in the near future. The low performance in English of school leavers is probably due more to the perpetuation of L2 learner's errors (teachers pass these on to students, who in turn pass them on to the next generation, in a self-enhancing process) than to the use of pidgin among the students.

NIGERIA: Nigerian Pidgin has not yet officially been recognized as a local language of Nigeria (Elugbe 1995:287). The educational policy in Nigeria is that children should be taught in their mother tongue up to the third year in primary school. Where this is impossible, the dominant language of the community may be used. Elugbe (1995: 292) thinks: "It therefore follows that Nigerian

Pidgin can be used in teaching many Nigerians where many local languages would have been required.”

Agheyisi (1988:230) says that Nigerian Pidgin is used “as an unofficial medium of instruction at the primary level in some urban schools”.

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“In the Liberian case, all English-lexifier varieties are referred to as English. Officially, Standard English is the language of all formal education at all levels, from kindergarten on. Since Standard English is the official language and since all English-lexifier varieties are called ‘English’, there’s no place in the curriculum for pidginized or creolized English. The reality is that pidginized features are common in the English of the Liberian classroom, but that reality is not acknowledged.

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I did a lot of work studying theatre in Freetown, and I am of the opinion that theatre artists are the largest segment of the population that is literate in Krio. Here is a little blurb on the state of Sierra Leonean theatre that I wrote circa 1990. It is more relevant to Krio literacy than Krio education, but I include it just as an FYI. (It is also interesting to note that many if not most Sierra Leonean playwrights are (or were) also secondary school teachers.)

Between 1930 and 1970 Sierra Leone produced only six playwrights, eight drama groups, and fifteen plays including Decker’s translations of *Julius Caesar* and *As You Like It*. The forty year period was a long dry season, but Juliana John Rowe, a member of *Julius Caesar*’s original cast, marks the beginning of the theatre boom. With her new drama group, The Liberals, she staged original plays about Sierra Leonean life written in Krio. Her second play *I Dey I Noh Du* (‘What’s here won’t due’) had a record run of eighteen performances, and Spencer says Rowe’s first two plays ‘were probably the first really popular plays in Sierra Leone’ (1988:33).

By the end of the eighties there were at least 14 different groups operating outside of the Western Area. Each Province’s capital had at least one group and 8 of the 12 districts were represented. In the Western Area, Waterloo now boasts of Leona Theatre. Wellington has 4 drama groups, Kissy has 8, and Freetown proper has 30. All told Sierra Leone has 64 functioning drama groups.

There are now 8 times as many groups as there were in 1967, and probably more than 18 times as many playwrights. While I was in Sierra Leone, I was able to gather the names of 108 playwrights, 327 plays, and collect 214 manuscripts from 79 different playwrights. (The manuscripts in my possession are scripts rather than transcriptions of performances.) Out of the 214, 140 plays are in Krio and an additional 15 have scenes in Krio and English.

Publications:

Krio in Sierra Leone:

“Official and unofficial attitudes and policy towards Krio as the main language of Sierra Leone” by C. Magbaily Fyle appears in the book *African Languages, Development and the State*, edited by Richard Fardon and Graham Furniss (Routledge, London, 1994), pp.44-54. The author points out that even though Krio is the mother tongue of only 2% of the population, it is an important lingua franca in the country. A brief history of Krio society and the origins of Krio is given. It is pointed out that Krio has no official status, even though it is the language used 90% of the time in public speeches by heads of state. It is also used unofficially in the schools (p.47):

In many schools in the main towns and the provinces and also in Freetown, Krio is used to introduce pupils to English, the official language in Sierra Leone. Phrases are rendered in Krio with the English equivalent simultaneously presented for repetition by children beginning to learn English. Thus it is often seen as ‘essential’ to know Krio to get into the modern education sector for schooling.

Nevertheless, there are typical negative attitudes towards the language – even by Krio speaking people themselves (p.48):

But the opposition to speaking Krio is based partly on the conviction that Krio is a bastardized form of English, a ‘patois’ or, as some older Krio call it, ‘broken English’, which will present a worrying distortion of the English being taught at school.

The author describes two varieties of Krio: Freetown Krio, used by native speakers, and “up-line” Krio, used in more rural areas. These have influenced each other in different ways.

In broadcasting, the policy since the 1960s has been to utilize Krio, along with the largest indigenous languages (Mende, Temne and Limba), for the evening news.

With regard to education, in 1978 the Indigenous Languages Education Program (ILEP) was launched, with the aim of teaching indigenous languages in early primary schools. A pilot project was started in 1979. It received enthusiastic support from local communities, especially when it was realized that children at the pilot schools did better in the end-of-year exams.

In 1979 the National Planning Committee was set up by the Ministry of Education to promote the program and workshops were

held. The author notes (p.52):

Even though the terms of reference of the Planning Committee did not include Krio, a decision was taken at these workshops to standardize orthography, and other matters, in Krio. This was a recognition of the prominent role Krio could play in literacy. But since that time, no one in officialdom has taken seriously the issue of introducing Krio in schools.

A more recent publication, “Standardizing the Krio language” by Neville Shrimpton in *From Contact to Creole and Beyond* edited by Philip Baker (University of Westminster Press, London, 1995), pp.217-28, reports on changes in attitude towards Krio in Sierra Leone so that “it has come to be accepted as a language in its own right” (p.217). The author describes efforts to promote Krio through drama and the important publication of a Krio-English dictionary in 1980.

A pilot project using 3 indigenous languages in 26 schools began in 1979, and 1985, Krio was added in 10 schools. The author notes (p.219): “The experiences gained from this experimental scheme were later used for curriculum development and were also to be very important for discussions about standardization and the sort of Krio that was to be taught in schools.”

After the coup in 1992 and the introduction of the new school system in 1993, Krio was formally introduced as a core subject at the junior secondary level, along with three other indigenous languages. However, it was not used as a medium of instruction. The author notes (p.221): “There is little chance at present that Krio will be used extensively in writing for official purposes.”

Shrimpton describes the variability in Krio ranging from what speakers consider a “deep” or genuine form to a heavily anglicized form. Most people are promoting a deeper form of the language as the standard. However, there is a dilemma with regard to using Krio in schools. Education is still only for the privileged few, who already know a great deal of English and will therefore find it easier to assimilate English words into Krio. If the standard is likely to be defined by its use in the classroom, then it will move away from the non-anglicized form spoken by the majority.

Some other practical problems are a lack of guidelines for teachers, a shortage of teachers whose mother tongue is Krio and classes

with pupils with many different first languages. However, it is significant that many speakers of other languages are choosing to study Krio (although the opposite also occurs). It may be that Krio will emerge as the national language and then have a special place in the curriculum.

Also of interest is *Reading and Writing Krio: Proceedings of a Workshop Held at the Institute of Public Administration and Management, University of Sierra Leone, Freetown, 29-31 January, 1990*, edited by Eldred D. Jones, Karl I. Sandred & Neville Shrimpton (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, *Studia Anglistica Upsaliensia* 77, Uppsala, 1992). The paper "Problems relating to the publication of Krio Materials" by Eric Johnson (pp.55-60) mentions that six Krio workshops were conducted for primary school teachers and Freetown Teachers' Training College lecturers. One of these was for textbook writing and another for the writing of supplementary materials. The author writes (p.59): "The only works printed from these activities are the *Mi Fos Ridin Buk* series, Books I and II, now in use in pilot Krio teaching schools. This is grossly inadequate."

"The Uppsala-Umeå-Freetown Krio Research and Publications Project" by Karl I. Sandred & Neville Shrimpton (pp.61-72) describes six works produced in the *Krio Publications Series* and other efforts which have been aimed at "the spread of knowledge about Krio culture and the linguistic and literacy expression of this culture" and ultimately, perhaps, "to the spread of Krio literacy" (p.71).

Nigerian Pidgin:

In *Language and the Nation: The Language Question in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh Press, 1991), Ayo Bamgbose writes (p.29):

Pidgin is an attractive candidate for national language status. It does not suffer from the elitism associated with English... It has major drawbacks, however. First, its language development status is almost non-existent (there are no serious books, for instance, written in pidgin and even the writing of the language is still subject to a great deal of inconsistency as well as confusion with English orthography). Second, there is no large population to back it. (In Nigeria, for example, pidgin is the unofficial language of the armed forces and the police; it is also spoken in the coastal areas as well as in some urban centres, but it is virtually unknown in

large areas of the country.) Third, due to its restricted use it is likely to be unacceptable. Fourth, since English is still required for nationism, and pidgin cannot function in that role, it is often argued that English might as well be retained rather than exchanged for an English-based pidgin.

"Minority language development in Nigeria: A situation report on Rivers and Bendel states" by Ben Ohi Elugbe is another chapter in *African Languages, Development and the State* (mentioned above), pp.62-75. The author notes (p.65):

As for Nigerian Pidgin, it has no official status whatsoever and is seen as debased version of English so that its possible role in national development is for now not appreciated.

He also observes (p.65) that in Rivers State, "Nigerian Pidgin is used in radio news under the title 'News in Special English'".

THESIS

Last year, Dicks Raeparanga Thomas was awarded an MA in Linguistics at the University of Papua New Guinea. His thesis, *Sotpela Grama bilong Tokpisin* ('A Short Grammar of Tokpisin'), was written in Tokpisin (or Tok Pisin, the PNG dialect of Melanesian Pidgin). Two external examiners of the thesis also wrote their comments and recommendations in Tok Pisin. [This is probably a first for a pidgin or creole!]

Here is the abstract of the thesis in Tok Pisin and English:

Tokpisin em i wanpela long tripela dailek i stap ananit long bikpela tokples Melenisien Pijin. Narapela tupela, em Bislama long Vanuatu na Pijin long Solomon. Planti save manmeri bin wokim na raitim wok painaut long dispela tripela dailek. Tasol planti long ol dispela wok, ol i raitim long Tokinglis o long narapela tokples bilong ol waitman. Planti manmeri bilong Papua Niugini, Vanuatu na Solomon i save popaia long ol dispela samting long wanem tokples ol i bin raitim wok painaut, em i tokples ol asples manmeri i no save long ol. Mi gat bikpela tingting se sapos yumi laik manmeri save long grama bilong tokples, yumi ma yusim long tokim grama bilong tokples.

Olsem na dispela wok painaut, mi raitim ol samting long Tokpisin. Mi yusim Tokpisin long wanem, mi laik ol manmeri bilong

Tokpisin bai ritim grama bilong Tokpisin long Tokpisin.

Namba tu as bilong dispela wok painaut, em long rait long Tokpisin bilong kamapim grama wod na tokim grama bilong Tokpisin long Tokpisin. Olsem na long dispela wok painaut mi lukluk long: (a) wod na hapwod bilong Tokpisin, na (b) ol kain sentens long Tokpisin.

Tokpisin is one of the three dialects of Melanesian Pidgin. The other two are Bislama in Vanuatu and Pijin in the Solomons. Many scholars have done research and published their work on these varieties of Melanesian Pidgin. But much of this work was done and written in English and other metropolitan languages. Consequently many people in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomons have not been able to read these published works because they were written in languages the people do not understand. It is my view that if we want the Melanesian people to study the grammar of their language, the language that is going to be used to describe the grammar of the language must be the language per se. In other words, we must develop a metalanguage for use in describing the given language.

Given the above facts, this research and findings on Tokpisin is written in Tokpisin so that the person who speaks Tokpisin can read the grammar of Tokpisin in Tokpisin.

The other reason for this research is the pressing need for us to write in Tokpisin and to create grammatical terms to be used to describe the grammar of Tokpisin. Hence the main focus of the endeavour at this point in time is on: (a) the morphology, and (b) types of Tokpisin sentences.

ARTICLE

[Most readers are probably aware of the "Ebonics" debate that took place in the USA earlier in the year. This arose from the December 1996 decision by the Oakland [California] School Board to recognize Ebonics, also known as African American Vernacular English (AAVE), as the home language of a large proportion of the school district's students. The purpose is not to teach this variety or to validate it as the school language. Rather it is to use the students' home language as a basis for learning standard English.

There is a great deal of information on the internet about the issues surrounding the debate. One valuable website with many links to others is John Rickford's: <http://www-leland.stanford.edu/~rickford/ebonics/>

Here is a piece John Rickford submitted to the *New York Times* in January 1997 (but, like other pieces favourable to the decision, it was not published). This is taken from the website with the author's permission. }

The Evolution of the Ebonics Issue

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In the month that has elapsed since the Oakland School Board passed its original Ebonics resolution on December 18, 1996, public discussion of the subject has evolved in several respects. Particularly since the Board's recent revisions of its wording, more people now realize that the School Board's goal is to help vernacular speakers master Standard English, so the holiday party jokes and the editorial fulminating about limiting students to the vernacular seem somewhat passé.

Some people – most of them bereft of linguistic training and unaware of relevant linguistic research – are still knotted up over questions of whether Ebonics is a language or a dialect, or the extent to which its features can be attributed to African languages, English dialects, or pidgin-creole influences.

But many of us, although intrigued by these sidebars, have come to realize that the central issue is the limited success which schools across America have had in educating African American youth from the working and under-classes, particularly in the curriculum-central areas of reading, writing and the language arts. These devastating failures were the starting point for the Oakland task force's deliberations, and their causes and solutions have become the focus of many recent editorials...

In one respect, however, discussions of Ebonics have NOT evolved. Whether pro or con, most commentators have failed to consider research evidence on the value of recognizing the vernacular in teaching the standard, the kind of evidence which California Superintendent of Education Delaine Eastin called for one month ago.

Such evidence is not that easy to come by, since experimental programs of this sort (for instance in Chicago, Washington DC, Hawaii and Toronto) have either not lasted long enough to produce measurable results, or they have been conducted over several years without the rigorous experimental methods, including control and experimental groups, pre and post tests, that would make assessment possible.

But by scouring the library and sending out research queries to cooperative colleagues worldwide, I have been able to locate several relevant studies, six of which I will briefly mention – two from Europe, and four from the United States.

One perhaps unsurprising finding of this research is that, almost universally, students who speak non-standard or vernacular varieties of a language tend to do relatively poorly in school, especially in reading, writing, and in subjects which require competence in the standard variety. More surprising, however, and of relevance to the Oakland School Board's proposal, is evidence that taking students' vernaculars into account can facilitate their development of reading and writing skills as well as mastery of the standard variety.

One of the earliest relevant studies is Tore Osterberg's 1961 book, *Bilingualism and the first school language* – an educational problem illustrated by results from a Swedish dialect area. It documents an experiment in which an experimental group of dialect speakers (D) in the Pite district of Sweden was taught to read first in their nonstandard dialect, and then transitioned to standard Swedish, while a parallel control group (R) was taught entirely in standard Swedish. After thirty-five weeks, Osterberg reported that the "dialect method showed itself superior both when it was a question of reading quickly and of rapidly assimilating matter ... The same applied to reading and reading-comprehension" (p.135).

A recent replication of Osterberg's approach in a Norwegian dialect context was provided by Tove Bull, in a 1990 article entitled "Teaching school beginners to read and write in the vernacular" (in *Tromsø linguistics in the eighties*). In her research project, ten classes of beginning students, including nearly 200 students each about 7 years old, were taught to read and write either in their Norwegian vernaculars (Dialect group) or in the standard language (Control group). After assessing their progress on several measures, Bull concluded that, "With respect to reading and reading abilities, the results ... show that the vernacular children read significantly faster and better than the control subjects. It seems as if particularly the less bright children ... made superior progress during the year compared with the poor readers in the control group" (p.78).

The US study most similar to these European studies was described in Gary Simpkins and Charlesetta Simpkins' 1981 article entitled "Cross-cultural approach to curriculum development" (in *Black English and the education of Black children and youth*, edited by Geneva Smitherman). Their *Bridge* readers, published by Houghton Mifflin in 1977, provided reading materials in three varieties: AAVE, a transitional variety, and Standard English [SE]. They were field tested over a four-month period with 417 students in 21 classes throughout the United States. A control group of 123 students in six classes was taught using "regularly scheduled remedial reading" techniques. After four months, scores on the Iowa test of Basic Skills indicated that students taught by the *Bridge* method showed an average gain of "6.2 months for four months of instruction, compared to only an average gain of 1.6 months for students in their regular scheduled classroom reading activities" (p.238). Despite this success, the experimental program was discontinued because of hostile attitudes towards the use of the vernacular in the classroom, attitudes not dissimilar to those which have been expressed across America over the past month. (See John and Angela Rickford, 1995, "Dialect readers revisited," in *Linguistics and Education* 7/2, for discussion of other experiments and the attitudinal issues.)

It should be noted that while these studies all suggest that teaching initial reading in the dialect and then transitioning to the standard is an effective technique (note that far from "dumbing down", it represents a considerable challenge to students, who have to negotiate through at least two varieties, but seem to do so successfully), this is NOT what Oakland has so far proposed to do. Oakland appears to have more in mind an extension of the contrastive analysis techniques used in California's "Standard English Proficiency" program, in which students are taught explicitly the differences between vernacular and standard features.

One US study which suggests the value of this approach is reported in Hanni Taylor's 1989 book, *Standard English, Black English, and Bidialectalism*. Taylor tried to improve the Standard English writing of inner-city Aurora University students from Chicago using two different methods. With an experimental group of 20 students, she raised

students' metalinguistic awareness of the differences between Ebonics and Standard English. With a control group of another 20 students, she did not do this, but simply followed "traditional English department techniques". After nearly three months of instruction, the experimental group showed a 59% REDUCTION in the use of Ebonics features in their SE writing, while the control group, using traditional methods, showed a slight INCREASE (8.5%) in the use of such features.

One of Taylor's points was that students were often unaware of the precise points on which AAVE and SE differed, and that raising their awareness of this difference through contrastive analysis helped them to limit AAVE intrusions and improved their language skills generally. Bull's explanation for the superior progress of the Norwegian vernacular group was similar: "... the principle of vernacularization of the medium of initial teaching may have made illiterate children more able to analyze their own speech, thus increasing and improving their metalinguistic consciousness and phonological maturity" (p.78).

Even more recently, Doug Cumming, writing in *The Atlantic Constitution* on January 9, 1997 (p.B1), reported on a program that has been going on for the past ten years in DeKalb county, Georgia in which fifth and sixth grade students in eight schools are taught to switch from their "home speech" to "school speech" at appropriate times and places. The program, originally emphasized differences between AAVE and SE, but now stresses bidialectalism more generally, taking into account the international backgrounds of many students. The program, which is similar to Taylor's, and to the methods followed in California's "Standard English Proficiency" program in some respects, has produced excellent results. According to Cummins, "The program has won a 'center of excellence' designation from the National Council for Teachers of English. Last year, students who had taken the course had improved verbal test scores at every school. At Cary-Reynolds, their scores rose 5.2 percentage points."

Finally, there is a wonderful 1973 study of 208 African American first grade children in Oakland itself which has escaped the notice of everyone. Ann McCormick Piestrup, in her

UC Berkeley dissertation, *Black dialect interference and accommodation of reading instruction in first grade*, showed first of all the typical relationship in which children who used more AAVE features also had lower reading scores. What was more interesting, however, was the relationship between teachers' teaching styles – the way they responded to their pupil's language – and the children's success in reading. The LEAST successful teachers were those in the "Interrupting" group, who "asked children to repeat words pronounced in dialect many times and interpreted dialect pronunciations as reading errors" (p. iv). They had a stultifying effect on their students' reading development, reflected not only in lower reading scores, but also in the fact that some children "withdrew from participation in reading" (ibid).

By contrast, teachers in the "Black Artful" group, the MOST successful of Pielstrup's six groups, "used rhythmic play in instruction and encouraged children to participate by listening to their responses. They attended to vocabulary differences of Black children and seemed to prevent structural conflict by teaching children to listen for standard English sound distinctions". Not only did children taught by this approach participate enthusiastically in reading classes, they also showed the highest reading scores.

These studies, although varying to some extent in philosophy and method of implementation, all demonstrate that the vernacular variety which children bring to school IS relevant to their scholastic success, especially if teachers recognize and use it creatively to build bridges to the standard variety which everyone agrees is vital. Although some commentators have rightfully pointed to the importance of school facilities, teacher training and other factors which retard the progress of children in inner city and low income schools, the experimental evidence suggests that when these factors are controlled for, approaches which take the vernacular dialects of students into account are more likely to succeed, in general, than those which do not.

Once we recognize that we agree on the ends, and that there IS evidence in favor of the means which Oakland and other educators have attempted/are attempting, then we can take the discussion of this Ebonics issue to a higher and more fruitful level.

PUBLICATIONS

Pidgins and creoles in education

The recent *Sociolinguistics and Language Teaching*, edited by Sandra Lee McKay and Nancy H. Hornberger (Cambridge University Press, 1996), contains an excellent chapter on "Pidgins and creoles" by Patricia C. Nichols (pp.195-217). The chapter is a comprehensive but very accessible introduction to P/Cs and some of the educational issues concerning them, and makes important reading for any educator. As the author points out (p.196), "The consequences of teachers' and school administrators' ignorance of pidgin and creole language varieties can be enormous for children who enter school speaking them." An interesting theme of the chapter is that students are quite adept at distinguishing differences between teachers' and students' ways of speaking, and that teachers should be as well.

The chapter defines pidgin and creole languages in general and describes common negative (and uninformed) attitudes towards them, especially in school settings. Then it goes into more detail about the origins of these languages. A brief history of the study of pidgins and creoles is given and some theoretical and methodological issues are outlined.

Nichols mentions some of the creoles likely to be encountered in contemporary English-speaking classrooms. Using Gullah as an example, she illustrates some structural, functional and pragmatic differences to more "standard" varieties of English in order to give teachers an idea of what to look for in their students' language.

The author advocates the use of pidgins and creoles as resources in the classroom and stresses the importance of teachers at least knowing something about the languages and cultures of their students. (She even includes a plug for the *PACE Newsletter*!)

The chapter concludes with a call for research into discourse-level differences between home and school languages. A list of suggestions for further reading follows the text.

A slightly older, but also very useful book chapter is "Teaching speakers of Caribbean English Creoles in North American classrooms" by Lise Winer in *Language Variation in North American English: Research and Teaching* edited by A. Wayne Glowka & Donald M. Lance (Modern Language

Association of America, New York, 1993), pp.191-98). Here is the introduction (p.191):

This article is a guide for teachers and teacher trainers about Caribbean English, Caribbean English Creole, and the special needs of students whose first language is a variety of Caribbean English Creole. It briefly discusses some of the basic knowledge of Caribbean culture and language that teachers should have, and provides information from which both teachers and students can learn about language use in situations in which a creole language is in contact with its lexically related standard language: in this case, where English Creole speakers are in North America.

Winer points out how Caribbean students are sometimes perceived as having "language problems" and are placed in ESL or speech therapy classes. She then gives a clear summary of the characteristics of varieties of Caribbean English Creole, describing their enormous variation, their low prestige and their relationship with standard varieties of English. She notes (p.195):

Any approach to the teaching of students whose first language is English Creole, recognized or not, must include knowledge about and acceptance of the language and its culture, contrasted specifically with English language and culture varieties. Without an awareness, on the part of teachers, administrators, and others, of the validity of creoles and an understanding of their relationship with English, the students' progress will be continually short-circuited.

The author gives many suggestions and resources for the study of the social, cultural and political background and for the study of the language. She doesn't suggest that teachers become fluent in English Creole – rather, that teachers work with their students to figure out cultural and linguistic differences and whether these might be the basis of difficulties students are facing. She recommends two guiding principles (p.198): "(1) *respect* the student, the student's culture, and the student's language; and (2) *suspect* language to be involved in apparent non-linguistic problems."

Another recent book has two chapters relevant to PACE: *Caribbean Language Issues Old and New* edited by Pauline Christie (The Press of the University of the West Indies, Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, 1996). This is a collection of papers in honour of Professor Mervyn Alleyne on the occasion of his 60th birthday.

In "Language policy (1): Towards a

rational approach for Caribbean states” (pp.112-19), Ian Robertson takes the position that “any language policy must be premised on its potential to contribute to the wider goals of education” (p.114) – that is, to prepare people to function effectively in their society. He describes the sociolinguistic situation in Caribbean countries, where the creole languages are generally used for informal functions in everyday interaction and the standard languages used for official functions in education, public communication, the courts and the church. Robertson points out that contrary to popular belief, there is actually quite a bit of overlap in use of the creole and standard languages in the various functions. Nevertheless, because of persisting negative attitudes, creoles have basically been considered irrelevant to formal education.

Although there have been some changes in these attitudes, they have been slow, and vary from country to country in the region. Some important factors relevant to language policy in the different countries are the official language of their neighbours (eg French or Spanish) and the presence of large populations of people of South Asian origin (ie in Trinidad and Guyana).

With regard to specific languages used in the education system, Robertson mentions arguments for the use of English because it is an international language and against its use because very few will actually be involved in international communication. Rather, it is argued, using the first language would lead to better educational results and a more positive linguistic self-concept.

The author also distinguishes between language teaching and language education. Students need to be competent in the language used as the medium of instruction and in an international language, but they also need to know about language as a human social phenomenon and about all the particular languages which are relevant to their society.

In “Language policy (2): The case for creole in formal education in St Lucia” (pp.120-42), Hazel Simmons-McDonald considers the question of “whether or not creole ought to be used as a language of instruction within the formal education system” (p.121). She starts off by presenting some of the arguments on both sides, and then describes learners in St Lucia as falling into one of three groups on the basis of their first languages: French Creole (Group A), English Creole (Group B) and St Lucia standard English, the official language (Group C). After

reporting some literature about the effects of using the first language in education, the author describes her own research in St Lucia showing that after 2.5 years of formal education, Group A speakers lagged behind their counterparts in the other groups. However, Group B speakers still did not acquire the proficiency in standard English needed for formal education.

Considering the work of Carrington, Craig and others on models and factors involved in language planning in creole situations, Simmons-McDonald proposes (1) that French Creole be used as a language of instruction for Group A speakers while at the same time English is taught as a second language. (2) that methods of teaching English as a second dialect be implemented for Group B speakers, while French Creole is taught as a second language, and (3) that standard English be used as the language of instruction for Group C students, while they are also given exposure to both French and English Creole. The goal is therefore bilingualism and bidialectalism. In order to determine the economic costs of such a policy, she recommends a carefully researched pilot program and a detailed survey of the number of speakers in each group who will be attending school and their geographic distribution.

Language Reclamation: French Creole Language Teaching in the UK and the Caribbean by Hubisi Nwemely (Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, 1996) is a very informative book on Kwéyòl, the French Creole of St Lucia and Dominica. Large numbers of Kwéyòl speakers migrated to the UK in the 1950s and 1960s, but within a generation language shift to English was nearly complete within the community. According to the author (p.1):

However, many second- and third- generation children now express unhappiness at their limited proficiency in Kwéyòl and some have taken positive steps to reclaim their linguistic heritage. For them Kwéyòl is a symbol of distinctive cultural identity which sets them apart not only from white Britons, but also from other Black British groups, such as Barbadians and Jamaicans. This book attempts to document the efforts of students and tutors in Kwéyòl classes in various parts of London to assert their cultural identity.

After the introduction, Ch.2 of the book presents a discussion of various general language-related issues such as attitudes, identity, maintenance and shift, and policy and planning. Then Ch.3 gives some historical and

sociolinguistic background about Kwéyòl in the Caribbean, including information about its use in education. In Ch.4 the focus shifts to Britain, describing the patterns of settlement of Kwéyòl speakers, changing patterns of language use and the current Kwéyòl community in London.

Ch.5 discusses methodology and argues for the use of a “critical ethnography” which draws on a variety of sources and employs various methods of data collection. Then the next three chapters concern the classes that were set up to teach Kwéyòl. Classes are of two types: the language course, which aims to teach people how to speak Kwéyòl, and the literacy course, intended for people who know how to speak Kwéyòl but not how to read and write it. These chapters give background on their formation, discuss associated resources such as standardization and materials production (in the Caribbean as well as the UK) and describe efforts in assessment and accreditation. The final chapter draws together the various themes of the book and discusses wider implications.

An article that should stir up some controversy is “Attitudes to literacy in the pidgins and creoles of the Pacific Area” by Peter Mühlhäusler, published in *English World-Wide* 16/2, 1995 (pp.251-71). The main theme is that “the idea that pidgins and creoles of the region could and should be reduced to writing originated with expatriate outsiders; it neither reflects the socio-economic realities of the main user groups nor necessarily their aspirations” (p.252). The author gives a history of official and unofficial attempts by colonial governments and missions in Papua New Guinea (PNG) to provide literacy for varieties of Tok Pisin (Melanesian Pidgin). According to the author, these were for one or more of the following purposes: to communicate with the extremely multilingual population, to “civilise” the indigenous population, to keep them at the bottom of the social ladder, or to promote political and economic development leading to independence. With regard to the attitudes of the indigenous population towards these efforts, he points out that little is known.

Mühlhäusler says that “English is catching up with Tok Pisin as the main language of wider communication and that English, but not Tok Pisin, is becoming the dominant mode of expressing oneself in writing” (p.259). He mentions recent government emphasis on vernacular literacy, but says that its effects on

Tok Pisin literacy remain to be seen. [However, see the *PACE Newsletter* 3, p.3, where it is reported that Tok Pisin was the third most widely used language in vernacular literacy programs.]

Some historical background is also given for Melanesian Pidgin in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and for Northern Australian Kriol and Torres Strait Creole. The role of expatriate linguists and missionaries is again emphasized for each [despite recent local developments, as reported in the *PACE Newsletter* 5 and 6]. Finally, a comparison is made with Caribbean creoles.

Mühlhäusler concludes that creole literacy can only be transitional, since it is English literacy that gives people access to jobs.

Two recent articles in *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* are relevant to PACE. The first, by Anna Shnukal, is “Language in learning at Thursday Island High School” (Vol.24 no.2, 1996, pp.42-52). It is a report of a study done for the high school on the major linguistic differences between Standard Australian English (SAE) and Torres Strait Creole (TSC), the language of the majority of the students. Shnukal points out that Islander culture is predominantly an oral one, using the three Islander languages; written communication, when it is used, is predominantly in English. TSC has become the young people’s lingua franca, and is an important marker of Islander, as opposed to European, identity. However, with the exception of some minor opposition, most people support the continued use of SAE as the language of education.

Shnukal describes contemporary TSC and language mixing with English and then outlines some formal and rhetorical differences between TSC and SAE. She also presents some important observations of Torres Strait Islander society that are relevant to classroom management. Like some of the other publications mentioned above, Shnukal advises teachers to encourage students to discuss differences between TSC and SAE structures and meanings.

Christine Turner’s article is “The Injinoo Home language Program: A positive community response to marginalisation and institutional racism” (Vol.25 no.1, 1997, pp.1-9). It describes the marginalisation of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia and how both groups have been disempowered and “constructed” as non-achievers. In reaction, the Injinoo community

in North Queensland started their own Home Language Program, using Torres Strait Creole. [This program was described in *PACE Newsletter* 6, p.15.] The author points out (p.7):

It is important to look at the Injinoo Home Language Program in the context of power, identity and resistance; power in terms of the community taking control of education, and countering hegemonic control; identity and resistance being stated through the use of a language other than that of the majority [of the country].

Minority dialects in education

Language and Communication Enhancement for Two-way Education by Ian G. Malcolm (Edith Cowan University, 1995) is a report on a project conducted for the Australian government's Department of Employment, Education and Training. The project was undertaken in response to demands from teachers and from indigenous students who speak Aboriginal English as their first language.

Aboriginal English (AE) is defined as a nonstandard (ie not codified) dialect of English spoken by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people in Australia. It consists of a range of varieties, differing in systematic ways from Standard Australian English and used for distinctive speech acts, speech events and genres. It also serves as a marker of indigenous identity (p.19). The report gives the historical origins of AE, distinguishing it from pidgins and creoles, but showing some possible connections. The linguistic features of AE are outlined and the discourse and sociolinguistic features as well. Then its various functions are described.

This project promotes a particular type of bidialectal education as an appropriate basis for the education of speakers of AE. It involves "two way" or "both ways" education. This is described by the author as follows (p.39):

The emphasis in two-way schooling...is not simply advocacy of bilingual schooling, but a desire for biculturalism. It is about a sharing of knowledge, and of the power linked in with that knowledge, both in terms of what is taught and how it is taught, as well as ensuring that Indigenous communities and parents have more control over what is happening in their children's schools.

The aims of the project were (pp.13-14):

(1) To help teachers better to understand Aboriginal English and to see, through it,

distinctively Indigenous ways of approaching experience and knowledge.

(2) To help teachers, through the principle of two-way education, to develop the capacity to provide learning experiences which exploit Indigenous ways of organising and expressing knowledge while also promoting the appropriate use of standard English as a second dialect by Indigenous learners.

The project involved two phases: (1) research including a literature survey, data gathering from interviews at 9 schools and analysis of the data; and (2) mentoring teachers, focussing on two intensive in-service courses for teachers from these schools. The outcomes were the development of two course modules, one on Aboriginal English and one on Bidialectal and Two-way Education. These will be offered in association with several different degrees at Edith Cowan University.

Two recent publications discuss African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in education.

The first is by William Labov: "Can reading failure be reversed: A linguistic approach to the question" in *Literacy among African-American Youth* edited by Vivian L. Gadsden & Daniel A. Wagner (Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ, 1995), pp.39-68. Labov describes the general failure in teaching reading to African American children in inner-city schools and then reviews the history of research on AAVE that might be relevant to the problem. He starts off by looking at research up to the end of the 1970s and notes that despite earlier controversy, it was then generally agreed that AAVE had creole origins but has been gradually converging with (ie becoming more similar to) other dialects. Labov lists several differences between AAVE and standard classroom English (SCE) that might interfere with success in reading, and also discusses the underlying cultural conflict that may contribute to the problem.

Next, the author describes in detail the *Bridge* program, as described above in the article by John Rickford. Labov analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the *Bridge* program, both linguistic and sociolinguistic, and concludes that its approach "appears to be

the most powerful way of attacking simultaneously the cultural and linguistic conflicts between AAVE and SCE" (p.56). The problem is that this approach is not suitable for ethnically mixed schools. He then

makes some useful suggestions for language arts in the integrated classroom.

Finally, Labov reviews research since the 1980s which seems to question the creole origins of AAVE and to show that rather than converging with other dialects, AAVE is diverging from them. The educational consequences are that the conditions which have led to the problem of reading failure are getting worse, the need for programs such as *Bridge* is even clearer and the necessity of developing language arts in the integrated classroom is much greater.

This article is available on William Labov's Web site:
http://www.ling.upenn.edu/phono_atlas/RFR.html

“Unequal partnership: Sociolinguistics and the African American speech community” by John Russel Rickford appeared in *Language and Society* 26/2 (1997), pp.161-97). This article has the following starting point (p.161):

American quantitative sociolinguistics has, over the past quarter century, drawn substantially on data from African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and the African American speech community for its descriptive, theoretical, and methodological development, but it has given relatively little back to that community in terms of representation or practical application.

After describing the particular contributions the African American community has made to linguistics and sociolinguistics, the author discusses what has been returned. Rickford says the community has been underserved by sociolinguists in several ways. First, very few African Americans have been brought into the field of linguistics. Second, the representation of the community in writings about it has been very negative because of the kinds of example chosen. Third, socio-linguists have done little to counteract the racial discrimination and injustice suffered by the community in the legal system and employment.

The focus, however, is on contributions (or the lack thereof) sociolinguists have made to the teaching of reading and the language arts in elementary (ie primary) schools. Rickford presents some grim statistics about the performance of African Americans in the school system. Then he describes some of the efforts sociolinguists have made to deal with the educational roots of these problems. These include documenting the systematicity of AAVE, rebutting misconceptions about the cognitive limitations of its use and noting the unfair disadvantages IQ tests pose for its speakers.

However, Rickford notes that sociolinguists could have done more in some areas, such as studying the use of “dialect readers”, as in the *Bridge* program (which he describes in detail), as a way of teaching reading to AAVE speakers. He proposes that sociolinguists give back more to the community and train our students to do the same – with all kinds of activities and not only those that draw on linguistic expertise. The concept of “service learning” is also mentioned – where community service is integrated into academic work. And there is some discussion of how theoretical and descriptive research can be used to help communities.

Finally, it is noted that researchers should be committed to ethics, advocacy and empowerment not only because “we owe it to the people whose data fuel our theories and descriptions” but also because “there are good things for us to do... [to] help us respond to the interests of our students and the needs of our field” (p.186).

In Melanesian Pidgin

An important new educational resource is the *Melanesian Trust Awareness Packets Manual*, published by the Melanesian Trust (with member organizations in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu). Written in the three dialects of Melanesian Pidgin, as well as in English and Motu, the book has questions for group discussion and other ideas for community awareness work. The topics covered are:

Development	Education
Land registration	Custom
Government	Debt crisis
Law and order	Logging
Mining	Dynamite fishing
Racism	West Papua
Kanaky	Bougainville
Women and men	Alcohol and drugs
Dumping	AIDS

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