

Pidgins and Creoles in Education (PACE) NEWSLETTER

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SHORT REPORTS

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“On February 5 [2002] Viveka Velupillai defended her thesis in Nijmegen on the Tense-Mood-Aspect system of Hawai’i Creole English. Supervisors were Bernard Comrie and Pieter Muysken. The thesis was based on a rich corpus of newly collected data on HCE. Viveka concludes that the TMA system of HCE is rather different from the way it is portrayed in earlier descriptions, and presents many typologically unmarked features.”

From Suzanne Evans
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“The Norfolk Island language is traditionally an oral one and is a creole established by the mutineers of “The Bounty” and their Tahitian companions. We are looking at revitalizing the language on Norfolk Island through the community and particularly the school. I have just had an opportunity to complete a Graduate Certificate in Linguistics at Adelaide University with Professor Peter Mühlhäusler

where I was able to discuss and consider many issues in regards to the Norfolk Island language and views of methods we could apply to revitalize our language. I would be interested to hear from readers with examples of introducing their language within the school, creation of resource material, training native language teachers, etc.”

PUBLICATIONS

Journal articles

In “Confronting local dialect and culture issues in the classroom” (*Language, Culture and Curriculum* vol.12, no.1, pp.31-41, 1999), Valerie Youssef and Beverly-Anne Carter describe the experience of preparing Spanish-speaking Venezuelan EFL students to perform a play in Trinidad Creole. The students were enrolled in a short course in Trinidad at the Lower Intermediate level. According to the abstract of the article (p.31):

The exercise was used to teach local culture in relation to the native culture of the students and also to teach functional and grammatical relations between the local Standard and Creole varieties. It also served to enhance a focus on pronunciation, stress and intonation. The process was enthusiastically pursued by the entire group, bringing them to a greater communicative awareness than might have been achieved by other means in equivalent time. The use of local drama for the purposes outlined is recommended in the broader context of a need to equip 21st century students with the tools to manipulate the international variety(ies) most pertinent to their specific situation and needs.

In the same journal is: “A case study of the sociopolitical dilemmas of Gullah-speaking students: Educational policy and practices” by Meta Van Sickle, Olaiya Aina and Mary Blake (*Language, Culture and Curriculum* vol.15, no.1, pp.75-88, 2002). The article starts out with the statement (p.75): “Early research in

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reading comprehension has supported the belief that divergent language usage has a negative impact on the visible demonstration of academic achievement.” However, they put forward the alternative point of view that lower comprehension scores “may be more a function of teachers not accepting a reader’s particular dialect than an actual lack of comprehension”.

To investigate this question with regard to knowledge of science and mathematics, the authors conducted an in-depth qualitative study, over 3 years, of 12 students on Johns Island (South Carolina) who speak a negatively valued creole language, Gullah. This involved working with the students, listening to their stories, and discovering their own knowledge and world view. Then they did content-specific language development with the students to enable them “to communicate their knowledge to the outside world” (p.81). The authors noted:

Because our goal was definitely not to eradicate their native language and culture, we focused on code switching as a means of preserving their heritage while giving them two ways to communicate about the same topics. In addition, the alternative terminology that we used with the students was designed to stretch both their thinking and their precise use of words... (pp.81-2)

This resulted in the following (p.82): “While maintaining their ability to describe a ‘right’ answer in a holistic manner (as is typical in the Gullah language), they have become more precise and detailed in their writing (more typical of Standard English).” The authors report that all students seem to have benefited as a result of the project, in terms of being released from the Special Education Program, passing the South Carolina Exit Exam, or graduating with a diploma. The article concludes with the following suggestions (p.87):

1. teachers must learn enough about the culture and language of the children to be able to find the right answers in what the students do say.
2. Schools must develop a local curriculum that builds on the students’ strengths and gives them options for communicating the knowledge they possess. It is necessary to understand the life experiences that the students have in order for the teacher to use relevant examples.

Book chapters

“Linguistics, education, and the Ebonics firestorm” by John R. Rickford is a chapter in *Linguistics, Language and the Professions*, papers from the Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics 2000, edited by James E. Alatis, Heidi E. Hamilton and Ai-Hui Tan (Georgetown University Press, Washington DC, 2002), pp.25-45. The author presents disturbing statistics showing how K-12 schools have been failing African-American students, and describes how the 1996 resolution by the Oakland School Board attempted to take corrective action. He illustrates how the goal of the nine recommendations was basically to use the students’ home language – African-American Vernacular English, or Ebonics – as a bridge to learning standard English. The goal was not to teach Ebonics to African-American students, as was falsely portrayed by the media and most commentators.

The chapter goes on to present four arguments for the Contrastive Analysis (CA) approach advocated for use by the Oakland School Board resolutions: (1) The approach proceeds from a position of strength, using a valid, systematic variety that the students are already competent in. (2) It is likely to have positive effects on both teachers’ expectations and vernacular-speaking students’ self-identity and motivation. (3) Other alternatives, such as ignoring or constantly correcting students’ vernaculars, simply do not work. (4) Several empirical studies demonstrate that CA really works. Finally, the author refutes several arguments against the CA approach.

The book *Literacy in African American Communities* edited by Joyce L. Harris, Alan G. Kamhi and Karen E. Pollock (Erlbaum, Mahwah NJ, 2001) contains a chapter by Noma LeMoine entitled “Language variation

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and literacy in African American students” (pp.169-94). This chapter examines “the implications of language variation for teaching SAE [Standard American English] and school literacy to African American children for who standard English is not native” (p.170). It starts out with background information about the origins of what she calls “African American Language” and about the “deficit” and “difference” perspectives towards the language. Then the author describes six approaches used by effective teachers of African American SELLS [Standard English Language Learners] (pp.176-87):

1. Build knowledge and understanding of non-standard languages and the students who use them.
2. Integrate linguistic knowledge about African American language into instruction.
3. Use second language acquisition methods to support acquisition of school language and literacy.
4. Use a balanced approach to literacy acquisition that incorporates language experience, whole language/access to books, and phonics.
5. Infuse the history and culture of SELLS into the curriculum.
6. Consider the learning styles and strengths of African American SELLS in designing instruction.

The remainder of the chapter lists important features of the classroom environment and several kinds of instructional strategies that foster literacy acquisition in African American SELLS.

Report

The author of the book chapter just described, Noma LeMoine, is director of the Los Angeles School District’s Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP), designed to serve the language needs of students who are not proficient in Standard American English (SAE). A comprehensive evaluation of this program was conducted in 1998-99. The report of this evaluation, prepared by Ebrahim Maddahian and Ambition Padi Sandamela, was published by the Program Evaluation and Research Branch of the Research and

Evaluation Unit of the Los Angeles Unified School District in 2000 (Publication No. 781).

The main purpose of this evaluation was to determine the effectiveness of the Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP) in increasing students’ general and academic use of Mainstream English Language (MEL) as measured by the Language Assessment Writing and Speaking Measures. A pretest-posttest control design was used to examine the impact of the AEMP over time. The pretest-posttest condition allows measuring student academic gain influence by confounding effects of maturation (time) and program effect. A control group was selected to isolate program impact from the maturation effect. (p.vi)

The most important finding of the study was:

There was a statistically significant and educationally meaningful difference between experimental and control groups at the end of the program as measured by the Language Assessment Writing Test. AEMP program participants outperformed those who did not participate in the program. (p.vii).

The authors concluded that the AEMP is “an effective program in improving academic use of English language for speakers of non-mainstream English language” (p.vii) and recommended that the program be continued and expanded.

Resources for teachers

The Department of Education in the state of Western Australia has just published a useful resource kit about Aboriginal English called *Ways of Being, Ways of Talk* (2002). It is the result of a collaborative project between the Department of Education, Western Australia, and the Centre for Applied Language and Literacy Research, Edith Cowan University. The materials comprise four videos and a booklet including information about using the materials, a glossary of terms, scripts and background papers for each of the videos, and information on other related resources, readings and websites. The videos are: “A shared world of communication”, “Now you see it, now you don’t”, “Two-way learning and two kinds of power” and “Moving into other worlds”.

CUTTINGS FROM NEWSPAPERS

Papua New Guinea Post Courier,
3 April 2002

Cultural practices: A link to formal learning

by Patricia Paraide

The development of elementary literacy and numeracy skills using the children's own language allows them to make linkages between the traditional world which they understand and the formal learning of new concepts.

Parents, teachers, and the public in general have assumed that children who have completed three years of education in English perform better in school than those who did their elementary education in another language. However, data from a study of English, Tok Pisin and Tok Ples [indigenous language] elementary graduates suggest that there is no marked difference in the cognitive development of any of the children. They have the same strengths and weaknesses. These data also suggest that there are differences in the mastery of some language and mathematical concepts.

Many of those children who did their elementary education in English had some difficulty when identifying colours. They only pointed to the dark shades of the colours. However, those children who did their elementary education in a language that they know best were aware that colours have different shades. Also, they could point out any shade of most colours.

Many children in the sample schools had difficulties with the concepts of $2+0=2$ (they multiplied and wrote 0 as the answer), $2 \times 0=0$ (they added and wrote 2 as the answer), $2-0=2$ (they divided and wrote 0 as the answer), and $0 \div 2=0$, (they added and wrote 2 as the answer). The average students, and those who need special assistance in all sample schools had difficulties in adding two-digit numbers. Some of the mathematical exercises showed that Grade 3 children were already doing two and three digit addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

However, many children were having difficulties, as shown by the number of mistakes in the exercises that they did in class. This is of great concern because the children

obviously have not mastered these basic concepts, and cannot apply this knowledge to more complicated concepts. Despite this, teachers are already introducing more complex mathematical concepts.

This has implications for the training of elementary and lower primary teachers, who teach these basic concepts. Elementary and lower primary teachers can relate mathematical concepts to traditional counting systems so that they can help the children to better understand these concepts. Teachers at the elementary level are supposed to be people who can competently speak the children's first language. Basic Papua New Guinean mathematical concepts can be strengthened in formal language learning.

However, those children who live away from their parents' traditional homes may not know the traditional counting systems, unless their parents reinforce this knowledge in their present locations. Many children who did their elementary education in English are weak in sounding letters and words. The spelling errors which they made indicate that they rely mostly on memory. They have yet to learn to sound words and write them accordingly.

Those children who start learning in a language they know best can sound the letters in the English alphabet, sound basic English words, and write them as they pronounce them. They are beginning to master the correct spelling of common English words. Some can already spell some simple English words. With increased exposure to English in primary school they should be able to learn the correct spelling of more simple English words. Many of these children are beginning to comprehend simple English text. This is encouraging, as it indicates that these children are beginning to transfer their Tok Ples and Tok Pisin literacy skills across to the English language.

It is a great concern that some children who did their elementary education in English cannot, as yet, read simple English text. These children just copied phrases from their test papers, as their answers. When they were asked to read what they had written they stated that they could not read. Although these children's first languages were Tok Pisin or Tok Ples, English was the elementary language of instruction for three years.

The actual cause of this problem was not established in this study, but it could be attributed to teacher training. ... There are

weaknesses in linking formal lessons with the knowledge that the children already have.

Teachers need to develop mathematical, science, and physiological concepts by using Papua New Guinean languages, and apply such concepts to classroom teaching. Some teachers are already doing this. However, there is room for improvement in the linkages between traditional concepts and what the children already know, and formal learning.

There are also weaknesses with the interpretation and implementation of policies concerning the use of language in elementary education in the provinces. Some elementary schools use Tok Ples in Elementary Prep, then Tok Pisin in Elementary 1, then English in Elementary 2. Some use both English and Tok Pisin in all elementary grades, as is the case with some schools in the provinces. However, this practice may affect the mastery of reading, writing, and numeracy skills in the languages of instruction. As a result, children may have difficulties in transferring these skills when learning English.

This practice is common in many elementary schools because of pressure from parents and primary school teachers to introduce English as the language of instruction. They believe that children will learn better, if English is used in elementary schools. The data collected during this study do not support this view.

New York Times, 10 April 2002

W.A. Stewart, Linguist Who Studied Ebonics, Dies at 71

by Wolfgang Saxon

William Alexander Stewart, a Hawaiian-born Scot who grew up multilingual in California and became an authority on creole languages, in particular Gullah, the West African-flavored speech of the Sea Islands off South Carolina and Georgia, died on March 25 at Columbia-Presbyterian Center in Manhattan. He was 71 and lived in Manhattan.

The cause was congestive heart failure, according to the City University of New York Graduate Center, where he had been on the faculty since 1973.

A professor of linguistics, he was an early scholar of what has come to be known as ebonics, the nonstandard English many African-American children hear and learn at home. He explored its grammatical differences and

how these can lead to misunderstandings in the classroom.

Professor Stewart examined and wrote widely about how this creates testing problems for such children. He argued that certain grammatical peculiarities of the dialect, like "he busy," meaning "he's busy right now", and "he be busy," meaning "he's always busy", make nonstandard English into a separate language.

Asking its young speakers to express these ideas in standard English simply could not reflect what the pupils intended to say, Professor Stewart argued. He demonstrated that speakers of nonstandard English were, in fact, speaking the remnants of a creole, melding languages of African slaves and the English of American settlers.

Creoles are languages resulting from contact between two different tongues, one of them usually being English, French, Spanish, Dutch or Portuguese. Professor Stewart's particular fascination lay with Gullah, the speech of a dwindling number of rural African-Americans along the Carolina coastal delta, down to the Florida border.

The Gullah "I en bin dey, yall know," for example, translates to "I have not been there, you know." Gullah, a word derived perhaps from Angola, draws to some degree on a mix of West African languages like Ewe, Ibo and Yoruba.

Born in Honolulu to Scottish immigrants, William Stewart grew up speaking four languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese and Hawaiian. He was an Army translator in Frankfurt and Paris in 1952 and graduated in 1955 from the University of California, Los Angeles, where he also received a master's degree in 1958.

After study as a Fulbright scholar at the University of Pernambuco, Brazil, he was recruited as a staff linguist by the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington in 1960, a job entailing much travel in the Caribbean and Africa. By then he was fluent also in German, French, Dutch, Wolof, Haitian, Papiamentu and Gullah, a dialect born in 16th-century Barbados.

In 1965 he proposed that it was not the vocabulary or pronunciation of the African-American vernacular but its grammar that stumped some children with reading problems. Three years later, he became co-director of the

Education Study Center in Washington, which helped ghetto children with their reading.

Early in his career, he lectured on Portuguese and Spanish at Georgetown University, taught at Johns Hopkins University and joined the faculty of Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1968.

He started teaching at CUNY in 1973. The Graduate Center named him a full professor in 1984. At CUNY he taught pidgins and creoles, phonetics, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics and forensic linguistics.

Professor Stewart leaves no immediate survivors.

Adelaidian, July 2002

Norfolk Islander to teach threatened language in school

by Ben Osborne

The fight to revive Norfolk Island's [creole] indigenous language has received another boost from the University of Adelaide – but this time through an island native.

Ms Suzanne Evans, a schoolteacher on the island, completed a Graduate Certificate in Applied Linguistics under the Head of Linguistics, Professor Peter Mühlhäusler, during the first semester of 2002.

She has since returned to Norfolk's sole school to add the Pitcairn-Norfolk language to the curriculum and help it propagate through the latest generation of islanders.

The language dates back more than 200 years, when mutineers from *The Bounty* founded a new community on Pitcairn Island in 1790, which transferred to Norfolk Island in 1854.

Professor Mühlhäusler, internationally regarded for his work in Pacific Islands languages, has been visiting Norfolk since 1997 to work with locals to try and halt the language's decline (only 500 islanders speak the traditional form of Pitcairn-Norfolk, out of a population of 2000). He said it was an important step for a local teacher to become directly involved in the revitalisation process. "It's part of the overall plan for the Government to give the language official recognition," he said.

"To set up a language revival program associated with that, you need to have the school involved, and Suzanne is a big part of that. I'm very confident that children on

Norfolk will now have much easier access to the language through her work at the school."

Before returning to Norfolk, Ms Evans spoke with the *Adelaidian*. She said her first task was to prepare a syllabus for use at the school, which caters for 300 students from Reception to Year 12. "Studying at Adelaide opened my eyes and helped me to look at new ways of doing things," she said.

SPECIAL REPORT

Valuing Jamaican Patois/Creole

by Mark Sebba

A conference on the theme "Valuing Jamaican Patois/Creole" was held on 29th May 2002 at Newman College of HE in Birmingham, England, under the auspices of Jamaica 2K, a British based organisation which amongst other things, supports the development of Community Learning Centres with Basic Skills and ICT across Jamaica.

The conference was billed as being "for educational professionals to explore the language and literacy continuum between Jamaican Patois/Creole and Standard English", with its main aim

to provide a forum [...] to gain a better understanding of the importance and status of Jamaican Patois/Creole, to discuss issues and share ideas to move forward understanding of the importance of recognising Jamaican Patois/Creole as a language, or way of speaking, to be valued in its own right. This understanding is crucial to the development of effective teaching strategies when working with Jamaican Patois/Creole learners studying in a Standard English speaking learning environment.

The conference was attended by around 40 people representing primary, secondary, further and adult education, ethnic minority achievement units, higher education and other sectors. The conference heard three keynote addresses.

- Prof. Gus John, Visiting Professor of Education and formerly Director of Education for the London Borough of Hackney, recalled the early days when Caribbeans were classed as "educationally subnormal" because of a lack of awareness about Creole. He brought copies of Cassidy's *Jamaica Talk* and the first (1967) edition of the *Dictionary of Jamaican English* by

Frederic Cassidy and R. B. Le Page, and spoke about how important these books had been in the 1960s in establishing the right of Jamaican Creole to be considered a language.

- Clement Lambert from the Institute of Education at the University of the West Indies outlined three options relating to the role of Creole and Standard English in education.
 1. Develop Creole as a language of instruction, with the accompanying resources which will be required to enable children to become bilinguals in Creole and Standard English.
 2. Recognise that many children entering school have Creole as a first language, support and value it, and then “move aggressively” towards acquisition of the target language, Standard English.
 3. Pretend Creole does not exist, and treat the children as first-language speakers of Standard English.

Of these the third had been tried and failed; and the Jamaican education system had now accepted (2). Option (1) was ruled out due, amongst other things, to lack of resources.

- Mary Nelson (Ethnic Minority Achievement manager, Wolverhampton Local Education Authority, West Midlands) talked about her work with new arrivals from Jamaica and longer established children in schools in her area. There are in fact a substantial number of children arriving from Jamaica (in spite of a widespread perception that migration is now the other way, if any) with obvious language issues. She brought along a document produced by the Education Service called *Meeting the needs of new arrivals from Jamaica: information and advice for schools*. This was developed as a resource for teachers and other education professionals working with new arrivals.

A personal reflection on the conference

It was good to find a large number of people interested in issues to do with Creole, and for them to have a chance to meet and talk to each other. On the other hand, there was something a bit depressing about the impression that in 20 years, little had changed, with few new resources having been created,

and some of the main sources of support and development, like the Inner London Education Authority, having been abolished.

It seems to me that future meetings need to decide what the priorities are and focus on specific issues. Different people have different agendas and there are a variety of actual or possible goals: for example, to integrate children from Jamaica, support their language development, and help them to speak and write Standard English; to encourage adult learners of Caribbean heritage and to help them to write Standard English; to motivate British-born African-Caribbeans to use and appreciate Patois (either for its own sake or as a means to help them develop their writing skills in Standard English).

One thing was little touched on, but I think it may be significant. Unlike other minority languages, Creole/Patois actually has high, though often covert, prestige among adolescents of all races. The associations of Jamaican Creole with music and dance make it popular well beyond the boundaries of the Caribbean community. This fact should provide a way of both promoting Patois as a language of culture (enabling it to be taken ‘seriously’ as a language) and making it interesting to adolescents. What we need to develop is a strategy for doing this.

CONFERENCES

Past Conferences and symposia

The National Foreign Language Resource Center at the University of Hawai‘i held a summer institute titled: “Heritage Learners and National Language Needs” from 17-19 June 2002. This included a workshop on “Unstandardized Varieties as a Classroom Resource”, conducted by Terri Menacker, Kent Sakoda and Jeff Siegel. Here is a description:

For many people in the world, their heritage language is an unstandardized variety, such as Chicano Spanish, Louisiana French, or Hawai‘i Creole English. Such varieties are usually seen as obstacles to educational advancement, and are thus banned from the classroom. But the theme of this workshop was that such stigmatized varieties can be an important educational resource. Participants learned about the various contentious issues surrounding the use of unstandardized varieties in the classroom, and then got involved in some innovative classroom activities

which do focus on these varieties. These included sociolinguistic awareness, basic linguistic analysis and contrastive studies. Such activities aim at valuing and validating the students' home language while at the same time helping them to acquire the "standard".

The 14th Biennial Conference of the Society for Caribbean Linguistics was held at the St Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies in Trinidad & Tobago, 14-17 August 2002. The theme of the conference was Caribbean Linguistics: Theory and Application". Several papers were on the topic of creoles in education. Some of the abstracts are given below.

Making Language Visible: Language Awareness in a Creole-speaking Environment

Beverley Bryan

Language awareness, as an essential component in language learning/teaching, has been variously defined and discussed in the literature on Language Education. This paper will explore some of these meanings and present the case for language awareness as a particularly useful and innovative concept for enriching language teaching and the teaching of English in a Creole-speaking environment. With a specific focus on using Jamaican Creole (JC) to teach English, this paper will take the form of a multi-media presentation foregrounding instances of good classroom practice in Jamaican schools.

/laik yu nu waan mi pikni fi laan di waitmaan langwij !/ or Creole, without Controversy, in West Indian Education

Dennis Craig

Linguists have often assumed the role of activists for creole-language literacy. The justification for such activism is examined. In this context, the growth of tolerance for cultural, including linguistic, differences has to be taken into account. Is the self-identity and self-esteem of the Caribbean creole speaker still under threat, as it was, say, fifty years ago? Undoubtedly there is still a need for continued public education in the latter respect, but is it possible that linguistic activism has served its purpose? The attitudes of homes and communities are seen as determinants of the kinds of educational action that are possible. These attitudes have to be currently evaluated against the background of relatively rapid linguistic change in contemporary times, globalisation, and the individual's ever-increasing need for literacy in a world language. In this context, while continuity of cognitive growth in one's first language remains critically important, the use of one's first language in education can justifiably assume different forms. This fact has been known for

some time, but it has a new urgency in the present-day world. For Caribbean creole-speaking populations, what continues to be appropriate is that primary and secondary schools should have a range of creole-utilisation procedures, from which selection can be made, and that can be used flexibly and in varying ways, depending on sociolinguistic conditions, to optimise children's education. The paper concludes with an outline of some creole-utilisation possibilities.

Bringing Language Awareness into the High School Curriculum: The Opportunities Offered by CAPE Communication Studies

Silvia Kouwenberg

The introduction of the CAPE syllabus "Communication Studies" in Jamaican high schools has been greeted with mixed reactions. In many schools, the course is taught by teachers who are either not qualified to teach all aspects of the programme and/or not interested in doing so, but even those teachers who like the course, have pointed out that they need support and possibly retraining for the "Language in Society" module. This module focusses on aspects of grammar of Creole vernaculars as compared to English on the one hand, on the linguistic situations in Caribbean territories and their historical background on the other hand.

An invitation extended to final year linguistics students in L32B *Creole Linguistics* at UWI Mona during the second semester of 2000-01 to assist in filling this gap was enthusiastically taken up. It resulted in four groups of three students each developing a lesson plan for a topic in the comparative analysis of Jamaican Creole and English and piloting their lessons at a Kingston high school. After compiling and editing the material, it was distributed to high schools across the island, and used as a basis for training high school teachers, both in individual schools and in a training session at UWI which involved teachers from schools island-wide. An evaluation form came back with positive feedback and requests for further training. The lesson plans are now used in schools across Jamaica, and teachers have generally expressed appreciation for the material, in particular for its explicit guidance through the topics.

The topics covered in the material are: (1) the comparative analysis of the vocabulary of Jamaican Creole and English; (2) the comparative analysis of pluralization in Jamaican Creole and English; (3) the comparative analysis of consonants and their combinations in Jamaican Creole and English; (4) the comparative analysis of tense marking in Jamaican Creole and English. Each lesson plan contains a background section which aims to familiarize the teachers with the topic at hand, a step-by-step lesson plan, and worksheets intended for reproduction and distribution to students.

We see this development as a prime opportunity for developing language awareness issues which are specific to the Caribbean situation in the high school curriculum. It is important that this opportunity be used properly, so as not to give high school teachers, many of whom are not devoid of the common prejudices towards Creole vernaculars, a chance to perpetuate inappropriate attitudes among their students.

This paper will present an overview of the material which we developed. The aims of the presentation are to initiate a discussion on the appropriateness of the material for high school use, its possible expansion to include other topics for which lesson plans can be produced, and the possibility for the development of similar materials for use in different situations across the Caribbean territories in which CAPE Communication Studies is taught.

Bringing Creole into the Classroom: Views from Outside the Caribbean

Jeff Siegel

Until fairly recently, creole languages have had no official place in the formal education systems of the countries where they are spoken. While this situation has been changing in several areas, the status quo seems to remain in most of the standard English/Creole-speaking parts of the Caribbean region. This paper examines developments in the use of creole languages in formal education in other areas of the world. First, it outlines the usual arguments for keeping creoles and nonstandard dialects out of the classroom – especially the fear of interference. Then, it presents three types of education programs which actually utilise these varieties – instrumental, accommodation and awareness – and describes examples of each from Australia, the Seychelles, Hawai‘i, Britain and other parts of the world. The paper goes on to discuss evaluations of some of these programs, which show that they are successful in improving overall academic achievement as well as performance in the standard dialect. The paper concludes with some possible explanations for the success of these programs from the perspective of research in second language acquisition.

The Effects of Vernacular Instruction on the Development of Bi-literacy Abilities of Native Speakers of French Creole

Hazel Simmons-McDonald

Research on vernacular literacy using native speakers of a pidgin as subjects (e.g. Siegel, 1997, 1999) shows that the use of vernacular can be a help and not a hindrance to the development of literacy in Standard English. The use of Creoles and vernaculars as media of instruction has been resisted in the Caribbean for several reasons, a primary one being the fear that such instruction might simply reinforce the Creole without

necessarily resulting in the development of proficiency in Standard English. Findings such as those reported in the Siegel studies are unlikely to have been reproduced in sources that are accessible to policy makers or teacher educators. As a consequence, they have not been considered in discussions on this issue locally, and they have had no influence on educational policy or pedagogical practice in the Caribbean.

This paper presents the results of one component of a preliminary pilot study which implemented a model for developing multi-literacy among first language French Creole and English-lexicon vernacular speakers in St. Lucia. The sub-sample on which this report is based comprises three children, two boys and one girl, from Grades V and VI of a primary school in St. Lucia. At the start of the study one boy (Grade VI) was found to be reading at an early Grade I level, while the other boy and the girl (Grade V) were beginning readers with minimal decoding and fluency abilities. The three children had received six (in the case of the 5th graders) and seven (in the case of the 6th grader) years of instruction at the primary school where the study was conducted.

The “preliminary pilot” study implemented a slightly modified version of the first component of the model, which was designed to develop bi-literacy in French Creole and Standard English. The time which the full-scale model required was reduced to the equivalent of a four week long intensive course with sessions conducted at different periods to facilitate application of the intervention by the researchers. A single subject research design was used for the study to control for intervening variables that might have influenced the outcomes. The findings from the first phase of the study showed that all the children in the sub-sample were reading at least one grade level higher (in Standard English) than at the start of the study. All the children also learned to read French Creole during the intervention and their comprehension of texts in English was much enhanced by their developing abilities in reading French Creole. The study found a positive transfer of reading abilities from the native to the second language. It therefore corroborates findings of studies done elsewhere, namely, that instruction in the child’s native language can be a help and not a hindrance to the development of literacy in the L2. The results of this experiment will be discussed within the broader context of the multi-literacy model and its implications for policy as well as its potential usefulness for pedagogical practice will be explored.

The NAWAV 31 conference (New Ways of Analyzing Variation) took place at Stanford University 10-13 October 2002. John Rickford and Angela Rickford presented a paper entitled: “Updating contrastive analysis: Extending students’ linguistic versatility through literature and song”. Here is a slightly edited version of their abstract:

Contrastive Analysis (CA) remains a powerful tool for the language arts teacher seeking to increase the standard English competence of vernacular-speaking students. In the US, it has been endorsed by variationists for over thirty years, and widely used (in California, Illinois and Georgia) with speakers of African American Vernacular English [AAVE], more so than “dialect readers” (Rickford & Rickford 1995). Where data on its effectiveness has been available (this has not always been the case), they have been positive, with students in experimental CA programs showing greater improvement than students in control programs which do NOT take their vernaculars into account.

But traditional CA programs do have weaknesses too. Most of their exercises involve translation only from the vernacular to the standard, not in both directions. This undermines proponents’ claims about the integrity and validity of the vernacular, and it runs counter to the underlying ideology of bidialectalism. Traditional CA is also too dependent on boring (“drill and kill”) pattern practice exercises, and some students may be hostile to the message that standard English is the only variety worth emulating. Traditional CA also focuses too narrowly and myopically on language forms, as though “good language use” involves nothing more than pronouncing *think* with a theta, and having an *-s* on the end of third person singular present tense verbs.

We advocate instead an updated CA that would remedy the weaknesses of traditional CA by affirming the validity of students’ ethnic identity and extending their linguistic versatility through literature and song. (We view extending versatility as the applied counterpart of the theoretical/descriptive study of sociolinguistic variation.) We would expose students to models of writers and singers who look like them (e.g. African American, West Indian, Chicano, or Asian American) but express themselves powerfully and effectively both in vernacular and standard varieties of English, as well as other languages. Using samples from writers and singers as well as the students, we would explicitly teach about language variation and train students to extend and exploit their linguistic

versatility, in vernacular and mainstream English, in Spanish and Swahili, in exposition, fiction and poetry, in the sonnet and the haiku, and in rap as well as the blues.

The second annual Bamboo Ridge Writers Institute took place at the University of Hawai‘i on 25-26 October. It kicked off with readings in Pidgin (Hawai‘i Creole English) by two well-known authors, Lee Cataluna and Lois-Ann Yamanaka. One of the panel sessions on the program was on the topic of “The art of authentic dialogue”. The panel included five local playwrights – Tammy H. Baker, Lee Cataluna, Yokanaan Kearns Victoria Kneubuhl and Edward Sakamoto – and there was a lot of interesting discussion on the role of Pidgin in Hawai‘i literature.

Forthcoming conference

The summer conference of the Society for Pidgin and Creole Linguistics will be held 14-17 August 2003 at the Imin International Conference Center at the University of Hawai‘i in Honolulu. This is the first SPCL conference to be held in the Pacific region! In addition to the usual papers on the linguistic aspects of pidgins, creoles and other language contact varieties, SPCL ’03 will feature special sessions on creole literature and applied issues, such as pidgins and creoles in education. Other highlights include cultural and scenic tours, Asian-Pacific food and entertainment and the chance to hear Hawai‘i Creole English (locally known as “Pidgin”).

The call for papers and information about accommodation can be found on the SPCL ’03 web site: <http://www.hawaii.edu/spcl03> Or email: spcl03@hawaii.edu