

Pidgins and Creoles in Education (PACE)

NEWSLETTER

Number 2

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HELLO AGAIN!

The response to last year's first issue of this newsletter was encouraging. Word got around and the mailing list now contains the names of over 50 individuals and organizations.

This issue is a bit heavy on summaries of book chapters about pidgins and creoles in education. But it also contains some updates on programs described before and new information from responses to the questionnaire sent out with issue number 1. (Thanks to all those who responded!). More is included on the use of Caribbean English Creoles in education, an area hardly covered at all in the first issue.

Again, I appeal to past contributors to send in updates and to readers to ask other people working with pidgins and creoles in education to send information about their programs.

If you have any info you would like to share or you know of anyone who would be interested in receiving this newsletter, please drop me a line.

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IN THIS ISSUE

	<i>page</i>
Reports	1
Recent publications	4
Conferences	7

REPORTS

The Caribbean

from: Hubert Devonish
Department of Linguistics
University of the West Indies
Mona, Kingston 7 JAMAICA

“As part of a final year university level linguistics course in Language Planning, students produce projects using Caribbean Creole languages, mainly Jamaican Creole, in non-traditional functions. These have ranged from Creole Scrabble and crossword puzzles, through handbooks on motor vehicle spare parts terminology in Jamaican Creole, to translations into Jamaican Creole of the Constitution, the Bible, articles on fashion, etc.”

from: Valerie Youssef
Dept of Language and Linguistics
University of the West Indies
St Augustine, TRINIDAD

“A number of factors have militated against formalized usage of TC [Trinidad Creole] in education. In 1974 the Ministry of Education recognized the status of the creole as a language in its own right, but did not clarify for teachers how they should respond to it. Consequently, it is used informally, especially in early primary education, but SE [Standard English] is still taught as a native language. The situation is becoming more confused, because teachers themselves in many cases are not clear on which structures are creole and which are standard, and the mixing of contexts for usage, eg in school, is increasing...We have a language education problem.”

USA

from: Katherine Fischer
1008 Dewey Ave
Evanston, IL 60202 USA

“I teach and direct a program for high school students grades 9-12 who are immigrants to the US from the Caribbean English Creole [CEC] speaking countries. We have a population of several hundred students in this category, of whom 40-60 are in our program at various times. We use both CEC and English in our classrooms and aim at legitimizing the use of Creole and thus empowering students for whom it is their first language. Our ultimate goal is to develop bilingual students who have both a good grasp of English and a high level of linguistic self-respect.”

Hawai'i

from: Karen Ann Watson-Gegeo
(note new address)
Division of Education
University of California
Davis, CA 95616 USA

Karen reports that she and Charlene Sato “currently have two small grants to examine oral discourse strategies in Hawai'i Creole English -- specifically, narration and explanation -- towards application to public school teaching.”

(Charlene's address is Dept of ESL, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822 USA)

Australia

from: Margaret Mickan
PO Box 639
Derby, WA 6728 AUSTRALIA

“I work in Kriol (creole in the NT [Northern Territory] and Kimberley, WA [Western Australia]), being mainly involved in adult literacy in Kriol. I have also become involved in Ministry of Education in-services of teachers where I have conducted Kriol awareness sessions for teachers and Aboriginal Education Workers and begun Kriol literacy skilling with the Aboriginal Education Workers.”

from: Margaret Allan
PO Box 718
Katherine, NT 0851 AUSTRALIA

“I worked at Ngukurr School from 1987 to the end of 1989 as local education adviser, with an all-Aboriginal classroom teaching staff. The language of instruction in the classroom is Kriol; however, English is the language used for reading and writing. When I left, the staff were seriously considering some sort of formal bilingual program, including Kriol literacy skills.”

[Margaret also sent in an interesting unpublished paper she wrote on children's ability to separate Kriol and English at Ngukurr School.]

Papua New Guinea

from: Bob Litteral
Department of Education
Box 5587
Boroko, NCD
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

“This program is not in operation yet but I understand that some Catholic sisters in the Highlands are developing Tok Pisin literacy for deaf students.”

from: Joseph Nidue
Education Faculty
PO Box 320
University, NCD
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

“I have designed a Bilingual Education Program in which Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu will be used as language of instruction. I have not asked to trial it yet.”

from: Edward Wiruk
PO Box 41
Ambunti, ESP
PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In the *1990 Annual Report on the Tok Pisin Prepschool Program* (the “Feature Program” in PACE Newsletter 1), Edward includes the following new information :

“We are planning to open up seven new schools in 1991, as well as to maintain existing 14 schools. Huge number of books are to be printed to cater for 28 classes.

“Children who have attended Prep-school [in Tok Pisin] are showing well developed beginning reading skills in grade one, where the medium of instruction is English; writing skills are also developed but the quality of these skills is uneven...[T]he popularity of the preschools is mainly due to the success of their ‘graduates’ in the government schools...Therefore, the interest in preschool is growing and the demand is high.

“To meet this demand we are planning to conduct a three weeks prep-school teachers training course in January 1991...The aim of the course is to train prep-school and adult literacy class teachers and supervisors, to supervise and maintain existing schools and the proposed seven schools.”

In the *1991 Prep-school Teacher Training Course Report*, Edward included the following information:

“Seventy-two participants attended the [three]-week course. Sixteen were women. The students were from three districts (of the four districts) of the East Sepik Province... Sixty different communities were represented. Currently, thirty-two communities have their prep-schools in operation.

“The entire Ambunti community was involved in the course to some extent. A good supply of garden food facilitated in feeding 72 participants for the duration of three weeks.

“The three week course began on the 7th of January and ended on the 25th of January, 1991. The first one week was spent on materials production, as the students would need materials to be used for practical teaching. Those materials consisted of listening stories, short stories and long stories...A total of 1500 copies of books were written edited and silk-screened.”

Solomon Islands

from: Bernie O'Donnell
Nazareth Apostolic Centre
PO Box 197
Honiara, SOLOMON ISLANDS

Bernie reports that the Nazareth Apostolic Centre continued its work in using Pijin to teach initial literacy (reported in *PACE Newsletter 1*). In May and June this year, they ran a five-week training program in Pijin

for teachers of literacy. About 60-65 students attended throughout and are now working in a Literacy Program from the this centre.

Last year the Nazareth Apostolic Centre took part in the National Literacy Program celebrations, along with the Taragai Literacy Centre, in an exhibition of their work. They demonstrated teaching reading and writing in Pijin and translating customary stories and preparing books “on the spot”. They also sold many books in Pijin to the public, including Pijin Mass and prayer books which they have developed.

Vanuatu

from: Terry Crowley
(note new address)
Linguistics Department
University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, NEW ZEALAND

Terry reports that at the University of the South Pacific Centre in Vanuatu, several university courses are being tutored using Bislama, including Communication and Language, and Basic Translation Techniques (and possibly Foundation History in the future). Privately run computer classes held at the Centre are also taught by a ni-Vanuatu in Bislama. Terry also notes that contrary to what was reported in *PACE Newsletter 1*, the course, *Introdaksen long Stadi blong Bislama*, does not have a linguistics prerequisite. [Sorry, Terry.]

[Other Vanuatu news: Two important publications have recently appeared which will help promote the use of Bislama in education:

An Illustrated Bislama-English and English-Bislama Dictionary by Terry Crowley (vii + 478 pages).

Kindabuk [a collection of educational activities for young children written in Bislama for pre-school teachers] by Claudia Brown and Terry Crowley (iv + 241 pages, many illustrations).

Both books are published by and available from the University of the South Pacific, PO Box 12, Vila, Vanuatu.]

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Here is some information on several book chapters concerning **Caribbean Creole** and education in **Britain** (some not so recent):

The language of Black experience, edited by David Sutcliffe and Ansel Wong (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986) contains three chapters about creole and education.

In Chapter 6, "Creole as a language of power and solidarity", Ansel Wong describes how among Blacks in London, Jamaican Creole has "gained prominence as the most concrete expression of the community's power and sense of solidarity" (p.114). He goes on to describe the "dogmatic attitudes" of educators in the UK, keeping Creole out of the classroom and not giving it any linguistic status (p.120).

[B]y refusing to legitimize its use as a language in its own right, schools negate the black child's linguistic competence. The effect of this is that the teaching of English in most schools has become a process of dismantling the child's linguistic competence rather than adding a second language to his London Jamaican dialect.

In Chapter 7, "The language of Black children and the language debate in schools", John Richard outlines three positions concerning the education of Creole-speaking children (p. 124):

Black children must, according to one view, abandon nonstandard forms of English, at least for the purpose of education, and concentrate entirely on learning to write and speak standard English, in order to maximize their success in examinations in access to post-compulsory education, of desirable and well-paid employment. This view is optimistic about social mobility...A second position proposes the same course of action for a very different purpose. Black, ethnic-minority and white working-class children must realize their common identity as a class and must learn to write and speak standard English in order not to be divided and ruled, in order to challenge the inequalities of power, wealth and knowledge and eventually in order to transform society...A third position asserts that our language is a crucially important part of what we are, of our history and of our culture, and that schools' ignorance of, or hostility to, languages and dialects other than standard English is a form of oppression which must itself be challenged and transformed. Black children, it declares, will overcome the conditions of their oppression not by adopting the very language of the oppressor but by being strong and confident in their own voice. Their own voice, whatever it

is, has been marginalized, caricatured, insulted, declared unfit for any reputable use.

It is time that it reclaimed its authority.

The author's own point of view is a more general one. First of all, he says, we should admire children who have ability in more than one variety of language. Second, "schools and teachers have a vital responsibility to value and celebrate the dialect of a child's community and culture" (p.129). Third, "we should help our pupils towards a fluent grasp of the dialect of literacy, of written standard English" (p.130). What Richmond advocates is basically an "awareness program". He says (pp.133-4):

[T]he study of language offers us a way of giving our pupils reasons for the celebration of variety in language *and* a more objective awareness of dialect differences, a way of helping them to feel proud of their natural speech *and* enthusiastic about becoming literate in standard English. It offers us a chance to investigate together, among other things, why languages and dialects exist, the wealth of languages in the world and the connections between them, how people came to write, how English has emerged, the rise of standard English, the connection between language and class, the effect of the mass media on attitudes to language, matters like style and register... etc.

In Chapter 8, "Language attitudes: the case of Caribbean language", Petronella Breinberg deals with relationship between language attitudes and "person perception" from the perspective of social psychology. The author concludes that British teachers' negative attitudes to and stereotyped perception of black children of Caribbean background correlates with their negative attitudes toward their language in the schools.

Another point of view appears in the more recent volume, *Social anthropology and the politics of language*, edited by Ralph Grillo (Sociological Review Monograph no 36, Routledge, London, 1989). In a chapter entitled "Creole in the classroom: political grammars and educational vocabularies", Roger Hewitt shows how the approaches to the use of creole in education in the UK since the 1960s have been "shaped by a range of political 'grammars' evident in educational debates" (p.126). In the 1960s, Creole was considered to be merely broken or bad English in the context of the prevalent "deficit/deprivation" point of view and that "the business of educational institutions is to promote high standards and that the presence of Creole or other dialects in the school could

only contribute to their decline” (p.128). The 1970s brought a more “democratic” approach, emphasizing the equality of different varieties of language, from both a socialist and a liberal pluralist political point of view: “a conscious attempt was made to advance the prestige of dialect through classroom work and an emphasis on the ‘validity’ of oral forms” (p.128). In the 1980s “linguistic egalitarianism” had become well established: “It found concrete realization in what became known as the ‘repertoire approach’--an approach which emphasized the range of different kinds of language necessary for communicative competence and allowed non-standard varieties of English a place in that range” (p.129).

Hewitt goes on to describe two other positions, mainly articulated by black rather than white commentators. The first is the Marxist libertarian point of view, which stresses the avoidance of Creole in the classroom, as part of the struggle against the dominant classes in the capitalist system: “those who advocate Creole in the classroom are the unwitting dupes of the system and their educational practices serve above all to blunt what is for black youth a primary weapon of resistance” (pp.130-1). On the other hand, the black radical position, as articulated by Ansel Wong, supports the use of Creole in the classroom, not as a dialect but as a distinct language. This is part of the promotion of the linguistic and cultural legitimacy of Third World languages in reaction to the underlying racism reflected in the education system.

Hewitt then describes the actual use of Creole in south London by youth who are not necessarily of Caribbean extraction. He shows that there is a great deal of code-switching and use of mixed forms. Rather than being a community language, he says, Creole and the mixed “Creole-inflected London English” are used strategically as an “anti-language” or language of resistance against established racism. As there is no simple relationship between Creole use and ethnic identity, and the author says that “much of the political and educational debate is now misplaced” and describes “the need for a deconstruction of essential notions of ‘ethnicity’ which introduce politically contradictory elements into what were intended as liberatory education strategies and positions” (pp.126-27).

Another interesting book chapter is about the use of **Haitian Creole** in education in the Caribbean: “The use of Creole as a school medium and decreolization in Haiti” by Albert Valdman in *Literacy in school and society: multidisciplinary perspectives*, edited by Elisabetta Zuanelli Sonino (Plenum Press, New York, 1989). The author begins this chapter with the following statement (p.55), similar to Richmond’s point of view (see above) on English Creole in the UK:

Education in a multilingual context must have a dual objective: on the one hand, it must respect the dignity of the student and promote the vernacular culture by raising the status of the native language; on the other hand, it must allow students a certain level of participation in modern life and insure that they have some chance of social betterment by giving them access to their society’s dominant language to the major languages of international communication used in their region.

He goes on to say (p.55): “Recourse to the vernacular language for basic instruction and free access to the dominant language are particularly difficult to harmonize in creole-speaking communities.” This is especially true when a creole is used alongside its lexifier language--ie, the language that has provided the bulk of the vocabulary of the creole in its early stages of development. Valdman points out that in such a situation (pp.56-7):

(1) the creole language is perceived as a deviant form of the lexifier language...(2) the creole language is subject to structural pressure for the lexifier language, eventually disintegrating and thus losing its independence as an autonomous linguistic system; it ultimately forms with its lexifier a range of continuous variation called the post-creole continuum. This process, known as decreolization, makes any clear division between the creole and its lexifier impossible...

The rest of the chapter is about the decreolization of Haitian Creole (French-lexifier) since it has been used in the education system. It covers variation in Haitian Creole, various orthographies that have been proposed and other problems in standardization. The author concludes that the extension of Haitian Creole into new domains such as education has led to decreolization and has threatened its autonomy with regard to French. He recommends (p.73): “The decreolization of Haitian Creole could be checked by a vigorous program of

standardization and instrumentalization.”
Valdman concludes (p.74):

Otherwise, the written forms of Haitian Creole are apt to decreolize, becoming too distant from the varieties spoken by monolinguals. They then may begin to wonder whether their interests would not be better served by educating their children directly in the dominant language, rather than by the transitional use of a version of the vernacular language which they no longer recognize as their own.

Language planning and education in Australasia and the South Pacific, edited by Richard Baldauf, Jr and Allan Luke (Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, 1990) has several chapters relevant to pidgins and creoles in education.

In Chapter 6, “Controllers or victims: language and education in the Torres Strait”, Joan Kale discusses the potential use of **Torres Strait Creole** in the formal education system. Here is her own summary of the chapter (p.107):

[I]t is first argued that pidgins and creoles are, linguistically speaking, languages with equal status to other languages and not merely broken forms or second-rate varieties of some other language. Then it is proposed that there is no well-founded reason why a pidgin/creole could not be part of a school program, and there are probably very sound reasons why in some instances much is to be gained educationally by its inclusion. Next, information is presented about the specialized nature of classroom language required by the academic processes of mainstream schooling. Further, it is proposed that there are valid reasons why English and only English as the language of instruction in Torres Strait schools may not be an appropriate response to the intellectual and educational needs of Torres Strait children. Finally, it is argued that on the basis of all the evidence, a well-planned program of bilingual education incorporating English and TSC would be feasible for Strait schools.

Roger M. Keesing outlines his chapter (8), “**Solomons Pijin**: colonial ideologies”, as follows (p.149):

I will sketch the history of the ideology that views Pidgin [in Solomon Islands] as a debased form of English and impediment to modernity: an ideology primarily the product of decades of British colonial rule. This in turn will underline how ironic is the perpetuation of this ideology in the postcolonial period. For the denigration and misunderstanding of Pidgin English in the Solomons continues despite a sociolinguistic

situation where Pidgin has become the primary vehicle of an urban culture which increasingly reaches into the countryside...Some Solomon Islanders, and some expatriates, now realize that the colonial ideology was deeply flawed, both in misinterpreting the nature of Pidgin and in misjudging its place in the life of Solomon Islanders and its potential as a vehicle of communication in a young country; but theirs remains a minority view.

In Chapter 9, “Solomons Pijin: an unrecognized national language”, Christine Jourdan expands on some of the themes of the preceding chapter. With regard to education, she points out that “despite the fact that Pijin is the most widely spread language of the archipelago, and certainly the main language of the urban centres, it is not recognized as being an asset in the education process” (p.169). However, she describes the widespread use of Pijin among school children and its unofficial use by teachers in the classroom (p.170). Jourdan advocates the legitimization of Pijin in the Solomons and the establishment of “Pidginophony”, an association of pidgin-speaking countries in Melanesia to promote the language, analogous to Francophony (p.178-9).

In Chapter 10, “Language planning and the language of education in Papua New Guinea”, Joan Kale describes “the diversification of **Tok Pisin**” (p.187) and shows how it “appears already to be functioning as a national language, serving as a vehicle for the expression of national aspirations, promoting national unity as it provides a viable interface between the traditional culture and that of the former coloniser” (p.191). She then relates how “universal literacy through the medium of English became the goal of education” (p.192). Finally, she proposes that at present the time is right to reconsider the English-only educational policy and to think about using Tok Pisin and vernacular languages as languages of instruction, alongside English, in the education system.

In Chapter 12, “Tok Pisin at university: an educational and language planning dilemma in Papua New Guinea?”, John Swan and Don J. Lewis present the results of surveys showing widespread use of Tok Pisin by students at Papua New Guinea’s two universities.

Finally, in Chapter 13, “Language planning in Vanuatu”, Andrew Thomas outlines recent developments in **Bislama**, especially with regard to the use of the language in education. He reports (p.244):

During a debate on the question of Bislama in schools, in April 1982, a majority of members of parliament favoured introduction of Bislama as either a medium of instruction or as a subject. Support for the teaching of Bislama in schools came from government and opposition members alike.

He also reports a similar point of view from participants at the 1981 Vanuatu Language Planning Conference and the Vanuatu National Council of Chiefs (p.245):

The final resolution which the Language Planning Conference adopted showed strong support for the use of Bislama. It recommended that Bislama should be taught at least as a subject in the first four years of primary school and used as the medium of instruction for classes five and six.

But nothing came of these recommendations, and the author concludes with his own "proposals regarding a language-in-education policy for Vanuatu" (p.253-4). These include making Bislama the primary medium of instruction for the first four years of school, with the vernacular used where possible in the first two years, and joined by English or French in the fifth year.

CONFERENCES

From a report by John Holm in *The Carrier Pidgin* 18/2, May-August 1990:

The **Society for Caribbean Linguistics** held its eighth biennial conference at University College, Belize, in 22-25 August 1990. Papers relevant to pidgins and creoles in education included:

Ron Kephart: "Literacy in Creole English: why and how?"

Katherine Fischer: "Educating speakers of Caribbean English Creole in the United States" (see above)

Valerie Youssef: "The acquisition of varilingual competence" (on children simultaneously acquiring Trinidad Creole and English) [to be published this year in *English World-Wide*]

Peter Robert: "Disintangling Creole competence" (on the complex process of the acquisition of standard English by Creole-speaking children)

A workshop "Pidgins, Creoles and Nonstandard Dialects in Education" was held at the 16th Conference of the **Applied Linguistics Association of Australia** in Townsville, 29 September - 2 October. The workshop consisted of 7 formal presentations followed by a panel discussion. Presenters and papers were:

Anna Shnukal (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies): "Attitudes to the use of Torres Strait Creole in preschool and primary education"

Ian Malcolm (Edith Cowan University): "Teaching standard English as a second dialect: theory and practice"

Jeff Siegel (University of New England): "An evaluation of the Tok Pisin Pre-school Program: preliminary findings"

Joseph Nidue (University of Papua New Guinea): "Teachers' attitudes towards the use of Tok Pisin as a medium of instruction in community schools in Papua New Guinea"

Margaret Mickan (Summer Institute of Linguistics): "Kriol and education in the Kimberleys"

Gary Ovington (James Cook University): "Teaching English to Kriol speakers: the Kartiya game"

Joyce Hudson (Catholic Education Office): "An in-service program for teachers of English to Kriol-speaking children"

A full report will be given in the next issue of the *PACE Newsletter*.

From *The Carrier Pidgin* 19/1, January-April 1991:

The 7th **International Colloquium of Creole Studies** will be held in Mauritius from 28 September to 5 October, 1992. The Colloquium theme will be "Education, formation, information, et communication dans le monde créole". More information is available at this address: Ville Colloque International des Etudes Créoles, Institut d'Etudes Créoles, Université de Provence, 29 Avenue R Schuman, F-13621 Aix-en-Provence, France. FAX 42 59 42 80.