146. The Caribbean

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1. Introduction

Most sociolinguistic research on the Caribbean has focused on creole and non-standard varieties of European colonial languages which developed in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries through "contact between Europeans and West Africans in West Africa and in the plantation colonies of the New World" (Alleyne 1980, 21). But the ancestral languages of the colonized - of Amerindians who were here before the Europeans, and of Africans, Asians and others brought in subsequently as laborers - have also received some attention. We will cite studies in both categories, drawing mainly on Reinecke/Tszuki/DeCamp et al. (1975), Valdman/Chaudenson/Hazaël-Massieux (1983), the Carrier Pidgin and Gazet Sifon Blé newsletters, but excluding non-sociolinguistic works.

2. Creole Varieties of European Colonial Languages

2.1. English

By "English," we mean lexically based on English (so too with "French," "Spanish," "Dutch"). Most sociolinguistic work on Caribbean creole English deals with synchronic variation and its internal/external constraints. In contrast with francophone studies, diglossia and code-switching models are rarely appealed to (but see Edwards 1983; Lawton 1985; Winford 1985), most researchers con-

Studies of Caribbean speech acts and events are few, but diverse in focus (see DeCamp 1968; Reisman 1970; 1974; Cave 1976; Edwards 1978; 1979; Abrahams 1983; Tanna 1984). Rastafarian Dread Talk is an intriguing new sociolinguistic topic, addressed by Pollard (1983).


2.2. French


There is a sizeable applied sociolinguistics literature on the Francophone Caribbean, particularly for Haiti, where debate about the role of creole in educational reform, literacy spread and national development started early (see Pomplius 1952; David 1952; McKeown 1953; Pressoir 1954; Price-Mars 1959; Berry 1969; Morose 1970). The contro-

23. Spanish

Papiamentu (spoken in Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao) is an established creole with a substantial local literature; various orthographies for it have already been proposed (see Maduro 1953, 1969 for early ones). Other topics in the applied sociolinguistics literature on Papiamentu include interference with Dutch, official language of education (De Palm 1969) and means of standardizing and developing Papiamentu as an official language (Dandaré 1980, Daal 1983; Salazar 1983), being promoted by the Instituto Lingüístico Antiano. Theoretical topics of interest include the historical relationship of Papiamentu to Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch (Van Wijk 1958; Maduro 1965; Birmingham 1970; Wood 1970; Rona 1971; Andersen 1974; De Bose 1975), and its synchronic relationship to standard Spanish — to which some feel it is decolonizing (Navarro-Tomás 1953; Birmingham 1978; Andersen 1974; 1983).


For the rest of the Spanish Caribbean, the major issue is the extent to which pidginization and creolization took place, the traditional wisdom being that they didn't (Lawton 1971). Further documentary and field research is needed (see Reinecke/Tsuzaki/DeCamp et al. 1975, 125-6; De Granda 1970; Laurence 1974; Byrne 1983), but Cuba, Puerto Rico and other Spanish-speaking territories seem to lack the widespread Afro-creole varieties of their English and French counterparts, and why this should be so is an intriguing sociolinguistic research question. African (sometimes Portuguese) influences on Caribbean Spanish are explored by several researchers (Ortiz 1924; Olmsted 1953; López Morales 1971; De Granda 1978; Megenney 1981; 1985; Baird 1982). Another sociolinguistic topic of interest is the status of Spanish in such territories as Trinidad, where the official language is English (Laurence 1970; Moodie 1970).

2.4. Dutch

Until the discovery of two extant varieties of Creole Dutch in Guyana by Robertson (1979, 1983), the only undisputed Dutch creole was Negerhollands of the US Virgin Islands, now almost extinct. (See Reinecke/Tsuzaki/DeCamp et al. 1975, 316, which includes references to early studies.) Recent sociolinguistic studies of Negerhollands include: Sprauve (1976a; 1976b), Graves (1977), Williams (1983; 1984). Chavez (1979) explores a different topic: variation in the Dutch of Afro-Surinamese. An interesting issue for research — suggested by the prevalence of English creoles in Dutch territories — is the effect of different colonial language policies in the Caribbean.

3. Ancestral Languages of the Colonized

3.1. African

Although Africanisms in the creoles of the region are more common than commonly supposed, African languages as wholes or fragments are now vanishingly rare, representing either languages introduced by slaves and preserved as secret or ritual varieties among Jamaican, Surinamese and other maroons (Dalby 1971; Price 1979; Wooding 1972; 1981; Sebba 1982; Bilby 1983; Smith 1983), or languages introduced by 19th century indentured Africans, chiefly Yoruba (Warner-Lewis 1982).

3.2. Amerindian

Much of the literature on Amerindian languages in the Caribbean is purely descriptive, and thus outside this report. The major sociolinguistic focus is the effects of contact
between Amerindian and non-Amerindian populations in the region, involving pidgin or creole-like mixtures or the acquisition of European creoles (see Riley 1952; John 1973; Taylor 1977; Muysken 1980; Hutter 1982; Escure 1984; Emmerich in preparation).

3.3. (Asian) Indian
Sociolinguistic studies of local varieties of Hindi and Bhojpuri introduced by 19th century indentured laborers from India explore, inter alia, their status as koines and their relationship to standard Hindi, creole English and standard English or Dutch (Durbin 1973; Mohan 1976; Gambhir 1981; 1983; Bhatia 1982).

3.4. Javanese/Others
The language of Javanese laborers imported to Suriname to fill the 19th c. post-emancipation labor shortage has received little sociolinguistic attention, except for Vrugtink (1985), but the languages of other laboring groups introduced into the Caribbean – such as the Chinese and Portuguese – have received even less. The survival, evolution and functional relation of these to creole and other local varieties is an intriguing topic, yet another instance of the wide scope for sociolinguistic research which the Caribbean provides.

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