

Chapter 1

Introduction: The Haitian Creole Language

Arthur K. Spears

The Haitian Creole Language

This book examines Haitian Creole in its social, cultural, historical, and educational context. The other names used for this language are “Haitian French Creole,” “Haitian Creole,” “Haitian,” and “Creole” (*kreyòl* in Creole). The last three terms will be used interchangeably in this book, since it will be clear that it is Haitian Creole that is being discussed, as opposed to other languages that are also simply called “Creole,” for example the creoles of Martinique and Guadeloupe among others. The word *creole* is not capitalized when it refers to the group of languages called creoles, which are discussed below. However, when referring to Haitian Creole, it is capitalized, following the English spelling convention of capitalizing the name of a language. (Creole spelling rules use a small letter for the name of a language.)

This introduction sets the stage for the chapters that follow, providing basic information on Haitian Creole. The order of the brief discussions of specific chapters follows the topical structure of this Introduction; thus, they do not always follow their order in the book. The terms and concepts I discuss here are already familiar to linguists (language scientists), but many of the discussions contain new material for linguists who are not Haitian Creole specialists and especially for those who are not creolists—linguists specializing in creole languages.

Haitian Creole, the language of Haiti, is spoken by the entire population of just over nine million people (in 2009) and by perhaps three-quarters of a million to a million Haitian immigrants in the U.S. A very small minority of the population also speaks French.

Areas outside Haiti with sizeable concentrations of Haitian Creole speakers include the Dominican Republic (which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti), other Caribbean islands, French Guiana (South America), France, Francophone Africa, and Francophone Canada. Haitian Creole has the largest number of speakers of any creole language, an official orthography, and recognition as the co-official language (since 1987), along with French. Its use in Haitian schools has been established. However, the school system remains in disarray due to the political turmoil that Haiti has suffered during the recent past following the collapse of Jean-Claude Duvalier’s dictatorial regime in 1986, itself a continuation of his father’s (François Duvalier) dictatorship. Both the father’s and the son’s regimes received support from the U.S.

Creole is not a corrupt form of French. It is a separate language governed by its own grammatical rules, just as French is separate from Latin and other Romance languages, and has its own grammatical rules. For example, consider the following sentence in Creole:

Sa	ou	di	a	se	vwe
'What	you	said		is	true'

The English translation is one of a few that are possible. (My examples use the Haitian Creole of Port de Paix, which I know best. As I discuss below, there are different varieties, or dialects, of Creole, just as there are different dialects of virtually every language, English and French included.) Note the *a* in the Creole sentence, which has no exact counterpart in English or French, the language from which most of Creole's vocabulary came from. This determiner, as linguists call it, cannot be left out: it is required by the rules of Creole grammar. By **grammar** we mean the rules that govern how our speech is structured. These rules are essentially about how the units of a language—sounds, words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and strings of sentences—can be combined. The rules may be simple or complex, and each is structured with respect to the others. If we look at English grammar, this Creole determiner has a grammatical function closest to the English definite article *the*. The Creole determiner appears as *a* in the example sentence, but it has other forms (for example, *an*, *lan* or *nan*), whose occurrences are governed by the sound that ends the preceding word.

The Creole determiner is different, though, from the English one. To take one example, the Creole determiner follows what it modifies (in this case, a clause, *sa ou di*), while the English determiner precedes what it modifies, as in *the big blue house*. Also, the English determiner cannot modify a free relative clause like *what you said*. Thus, if one studies Creole grammar, one must master the grammatical rule for the placement of this determiner in Creole sentences. In sum, Creole, as all languages, has a grammar. Creole sentences must follow the rules of Creole grammar. With the title of this book, *The Haitian Language*, it is stressed that Creole is indeed a language. The idea many people have that Creole is a kind of “broken” or “corrupt” French is not true. This erroneous idea is the result of the centuries-long stigmatization of Haitians and other African-descent peoples and their cultures, stemming from their degradation in connection with chattel slavery and other kinds of bound labor in the Americas and elsewhere (Makoni et al. 2003). Language attitudes are almost always attitudes about the groups of people who speak them. When a people receive respect and admiration, so do their languages.

Myths about Languages

Well over a century of linguistic scholarship has established that there are no primitive languages and that all languages are equal in that they are fully adequate for the expressive needs of their speakers. Languages may differ in regard to how many words they may have for a particular subject matter (nuclear physics, for instance) or a category of entities (dreams, for example), but all languages are capable of developing words they need to talk about any subject.

Some people may think in error that Creole is simple or primitive compared to a language like French because, say, Creole does not have verb inflection suffixes for tense, person, and number (person and number as in first person singular, second person plural, etc.) However, Creole has its own way of expressing these concepts. One cannot use French grammar as a model for understanding Creole grammar. They are two different languages, each one often expressing the same or a related grammatical notion in different ways. Creole is not simple or primitive compared to French and other languages; it is merely different. A few linguists currently argue that creole languages as a group, not just Haitian Creole, are the world's simplest or most "streamlined" languages. They do not mean this in the negative sense associated with simplicity, that implying some kind of inferiority. Their idea of simplicity focuses crucially on the relative lack of "exceptions" in creole grammars, for example, exceptions to grammatical rules and items like irregular verbs. In any case, this claim of simplicity has been vigorously contested and currently probably has no more than a handful of proponents. For discussions, see DeGraff 2005 and Spears 2009.

The preceding points are especially important to make because many people, educators included, mistakenly believe that Creole, as other stigmatized languages, cannot be used in education because it has no grammar, and that it cannot be studied because it consists of nothing more than mistakes and corruptions of the related colonial language (French in the Creole case). However, as several authors in this volume observe (in particular Zéphir, Faraclas et al., Nzungou-Tayo, Dejean, Trouillot-Lévy, Joseph, and Plaisir) Haitian Creole—as other creole languages and stigmatized languages—can indeed be used as the language of instruction in schools and as a subject of study. Students can and do study Creole and Creole language arts, and Creole is used as a medium of instruction. Among these authors' major concerns is that Creole is not used enough in schooling. As Dejean observes in his chapter, research has shown repeatedly that students acquire literacy most efficiently in their **native language**, that which they have spoken since infancy or early childhood. To expect them to acquire literacy in a language foreign to them is to unnecessarily hamper their academic achievement.

Language, Dialect, and Standard

After picking up this book, some readers may be surprised to see that Haitian Creole is called a language instead of being called by other terms such as *patois*, *dialect*, and even *broken French*. This last term as others like it, as I noted above, is applied to Creole out of ignorance or simply to deride it as the speech of a people who have suffered many types of oppression throughout their history. Linguists use several terms for speech, and these terms must be explained clearly so that further reading will be on a sound basis.

Although in some language study traditions, especially in Europe, a dialect is an unwritten form of speech that does not serve as a standard language for any community. The **standard** is the dialect described in grammar books and dictionaries and normally used in education, government, and other mainstream settings. However, *dialect* as used by linguists is simply a particular form of a language, whether standard or nonstandard. Dialects show differences in everything from pronunciation and vocabulary to **morphology** (word structure—word roots,

prefixes, suffixes, etc.) and **syntax** (the linear ordering of words). Dialect is used in a totally nonjudgmental sense in linguistics, and frequently the term *language variety*, or simply *variety*, is used instead. These last two terms, however, may refer to any level of generalization with regard to speech forms (a language or a dialect).

An essential task in language standardization is creating an orthography, a writing system designed for a specific language (although in some cases orthographies are intended for use to write a group of languages). The chapter by **Faraclas, Spears, Barrows, and Piñeiro** on orthography lays out and explains the principles and sociopolitical considerations taken into account in devising orthographies. They frame their discussion of orthography creation within a broad context, discussing orthographic principles and issues as related to Haiti, other Caribbean countries, those nearby in the circum-Caribbean region (e.g., Guyana), and North America. In their discussion, they deal importantly with issues of identity, power, dominance, and equity: how orthographies can be created so that they optimize access to literacy for an intended group of users while validating linguistic diversity and promoting equality among those users. Since the official orthography for Creole has been in use only a few decades and is not yet used by the great majority of Creole speakers, the full orthography and its principles for writing are included in the chapter.

We cannot always determine where one language stops and another begins. For example, in Portugal and Spain, as one goes from Portugal east to Spain, traditional local dialects gradually change along a **dialect continuum**, becoming increasingly like Spanish the farther one goes. In Spain, close to the Portuguese border, the traditional local dialect appears to be no more like Spanish than Portuguese. It is the political border between two countries that typically causes a dialect on the Spanish side of the border to be considered a Spanish dialect and a dialect on the Portuguese side to be considered a Portuguese dialect. (In a number of areas of both countries, traditional local dialects are extinct or nearly so.) However, in these two countries, if that “dialect,” on either side is **codified** with its own orthography, grammar books, dictionaries, and a literary tradition, then it is called a language. In short, (1) *dialect* is used differently in different traditions of language study, and (2) the use of *language* or *dialect* to refer to a form of speech may depend on political and other sociocultural factors. Sometimes even psychological factors are involved, as I will discuss below.

At this point, it is necessary to emphasize that Haiti has a significant literary tradition, and its Creole literary tradition merits discussion, as done in **Nzengou-Tayo**'s chapter on the use of French and Creole in Haitian literature. There are few broad treatments of the full sweep of Haitian literature in both languages, giving due attention to the types of roles that both languages have played in literary works. Thus, her chapter has an important place not only in this book but also in the study of Haitian literature. Literary genres constitute one of the many ways that language is structured and used for particular purposes, and their study provides a revealing window to social mores, attitudes, and change.

Even a person without linguistic training recognizes that there are different ways of speaking the same way—so to speak. There are different dialects of English in Britain, in the U.S., in Australia, and elsewhere. There are different dialects of Spanish in the U.S., Latin America, Spain, and other Spanish-speaking parts of the world. There are different dialects of Creole in Haiti. The term dialect focuses more narrowly than the term language.

Consider two different ways of “saying the same thing” in Creole. In the north, in Port de Paix, one would usually say *I pale y* (He spoke to her), but in Port-au-Prince, the capital, one would usually say *Li pale l* (He spoke to her). (This translation is only one of several possible ones.)

In view of the way in which the term dialect is used by U.S. linguists and many others nowadays, everyone speaks a dialect—of some language. Everyone also speaks a language. Again, the use of one term or the other has to do with focusing narrowly or more broadly. So, for example, I speak English (the language) and dialects of English, some dialect terms having a broader focus, some having a narrower one: American English, Midwestern American English, African American Standard English, and network standard American English (usually heard in the mass media). When one speaks of the Haitian Creole language, one is speaking of the whole group of dialects that make up the Haitian Creole language.

Dialects of the same language, for example dialects of English, are often but not always **mutually intelligible**: someone speaking one dialect can understand someone speaking another. There are various social, cultural, historical, psychological, and also linguistic factors that may interfere with mutual intelligibility. Thus, for example, if a person has been exposed throughout her life to a dialect of her native language, even though the other dialect may be quite different linguistically from her native one and present comprehension problems for other speakers of her native dialect, her lifelong exposure to it will all but eliminate comprehension problems.

Language varieties that are mutually intelligible may be treated as separate languages by their speakers. Most often this is because nation state boundaries separate them. For example, Serbian and Croatian, spoken in former Yugoslavia in southeastern Europe are mutually intelligible (though different).

On the other hand, in some cases, speakers consider themselves to be speaking a language, say French, but linguists and other language scholars would consider them to be speaking another language. For example, some **monolingual** (speaking only one language) Creole speakers consider themselves to speak French, or at least some kind of French. Before I studied and learned Creole, I would sometimes ask Haitians if they spoke French (many, for example, taxi drivers, spoke almost no English, but I had to communicate with them). They would say, “But of course, I’m Haitian!” and then proceed to speak a language that I could not understand (Creole). Likewise, many monolingual creole speakers in Caribbean countries where English is the official language consider themselves to be speaking English when they are actually speaking their own creole language (Nero 2006). Maybe in some of these cases, these beliefs of speakers are more wishful and willful thinking; but, even in such cases, these stances of speakers have to be taken seriously.

There are no set linguistic criteria for dividing up the world’s language varieties into languages and dividing each language into its various dialects. Often linguistic factors are instructive, but just as often we find that political, social, historical, and psychological factors play important roles too. In regard to Haiti, we can say straightforwardly that there are a number of dialects of the Creole language.

Valdman’s chapter investigates regional and social dialects, the latter based in social

groups as determined by sex, age, socioeconomic class, and other criteria. His research is the first empirical, quantitative study of variation in Haitian dialects that notably delves into stylistic variation, which is a function, for example, of formality, politeness, and the identities of speakers as well as addressees. Included also are issues of identity and evaluation: How does the speaker calibrate her or his speech depending on the interlocutors and geographical location? Which dialects do speakers believe to be “better” and for what purposes? Valdman treats Creole dialects dynamically, how they change over time. One example of this is **dialect shift** by some speakers, which is the result of social pressures in a new residential location despite the feelings of dialect loyalty that the speaker may have to her or his native dialect.

The standard dialect of a society is usually based on, or mostly so, a particular dialect. Standard French is modeled on the dialect of the Ile de France region, where Paris is located. Standard Italian is modeled on the dialect of Florence. In Haiti, the Creole of Port-au-Prince, the capital, has been selected as the model for the standard. The word *model* is used here because standards are largely based on the dialect of a certain place (often the capital), but even that dialect has dialects. Within one city we normally find different dialects. In the Haitian capital, there are, for example, dialects having more features in common with French and those having fewer. The standard is skewed toward those having fewer common features with French. It is, in the final analysis, somewhat idealized, as are all standards. It is actually a target for speech, since throughout the world where standard dialects exist, they are not really fully spoken by anyone, except perhaps by professors of language. Moreover, standard dialects themselves have different dialects: informal vs. formal, written vs. spoken, etc.

These observations help one understand why the practice of basing the standard in developing countries on one particular dialect has increasingly been criticized over the past decades. The critics believe that, especially where there is a high level of mutual intelligibility among dialects, selecting one as the standard merely adds yet another burden to students acquiring literacy. For reasons that many of the chapters lay out, it is much more efficient to teach literacy in students’ **vernacular**, the language they speak at home and in their communities. This is a general principle whose application often does not take into account dialectal differences. Students in Haiti whose vernacular dialect is not the Port-au-Prince dialect (that is, one of those dialects) are not actually learning to read and write in their full vernacular, but in another dialect. Thus, they are put in a relatively disadvantaged learning position in relation to students whose vernacular is the same as the model for the standard.

The root issue is whether students should be allowed and encouraged to read and write in their own vernacular dialect when their vernacular has important differences compared to the standard, so they will not be learning to read and write *and* learning a new dialect at the same time. Even in developed nations, many students acquire literacy without mastering the standard. As illustration, the U.S. has a high rate of literacy, but relatively few people speak any kind of standard American English. It has been estimated that as few as 10 to 15 percent of American English speakers speak some kind of standard American English. As illustration, observe that many K-12 school teachers have not mastered standard American English past participle verb forms and utter sentences such as *He hasn’t ate yet* instead of the standard *He hasn’t eaten yet*.

Consequently, the question arises as to whether developing countries such as Haiti should

follow the standard-dialect-dominance policy that has not worked even in many developed countries. There is a real question as to whether it is worthwhile to expend resources to create, promote, and teach a standard rather than embracing dialectal diversity and promoting equality among dialects while working determinedly to raise the level of literacy. This question is all the more important in a country where most people do not even finish primary school. The compelling task is to validate students' vernacular by not encumbering their road to literacy by insisting on the acquisition of a standard as they learn to read and write.

Creole History and Sociolinguistics

Although French has always been the official language and is now co-official with Creole, French is spoken by only a tiny elite. Virtually all Haitians speak Creole. **Zéphir's** chapter provides the main discussion of the history of Creole, outlining theories on its origins in the context of what we know about the social history of Hispaniola and environs. She also presents a treatment of Creole sociolinguistics, discussing who uses which languages in Haiti and the U.S. and for what purposes. Her chapter includes a description of attitudes toward Creole, French, and—in the U.S.—English, and how speakers negotiate between/among the languages in their linguistic repertoire. She additionally provides a snapshot of U.S. Haitian communities, their businesses, their media, and language use in their social activities.

Haiti is a good example of **diglossia**, whereby a high language (H) and a low language (L) coexist. H is used largely in government and other formal domains, those normally requiring literacy. L is spoken by the majority—and often all—of the population. It is mostly restricted to informal interaction and smaller scale undertakings of local scope. With diglossia, there is a functional separation of the two languages. H is used for a certain set of purposes and L for its own set of purposes. In Haiti, there are very few bilingual speakers. (Currently, diglossic societies are considered to include those where there is very little bilingualism; besides Haiti, Czarist Russia is cited as an example [Fishman 1972]). The great majority of Haitians are disenfranchised by their lack of knowledge of French, but this situation is changing, mainly as the result of educational reform, beginning in earnest in the 1980s, intended to dramatically increase the use of Creole as a language of instruction (see the chapters by Zéphir, Dejean, Trouillot-Lévy, and Joseph).

As noted, Haitian Creole is a member of the group of creole languages. When a language is called a **creole**, linguists are referring to a new language that emerged out of a language contact situation in which the speakers had limited resources for learning each other's language(s). The most studied creole languages came out of the oppressive conditions, especially plantation slavery, created by European colonialism and imperialism. In the terminology of creole studies, the Europeans were the superordinate group, speaking the sociopolitically dominant **superstrate** language. The subordinated group was composed largely of West Africans speaking various **substrate** West African languages. Forced to communicate, they took the languages in contact and mixed and merged them, so to speak. Typically, the "mixing and merging" produced a language with vocabulary based mostly on the European colonial language while morphology, syntax, and semantics were based on the most influential West African language or languages in the contact situation.

It has been hypothesized that Haitian was created roughly between 1680 and 1740; the West Africans were primarily speakers of the Gbe languages in the Kwa language family, itself a branch of Niger-Congo (Lefebvre 1998:57-58; Zéphir, this volume). Among the grammatical similarities between Haitian and the Gbe languages is the occurrence of usually one-syllable words called **preverbal markers** placed before a verb to express tense, aspect, and mood. (For examples of these preverbal markers, see St. Fort's chapter.)

The typical language contact situations producing the creole languages of today were those involving (1) European traders and settlers with “non-Western” peoples during the European Age of Discovery (beginning in the fifteenth century) and (2) agents of European imperialism (involving political and economic domination) with non-Western peoples, often in the context of servitude and slavery. The first situation was characteristic of early Haiti, but the second situation came to be the prevailing one quite early. The indigenous population was decimated early on by the brutal practices of Christopher Columbus and other European adventurers. There followed periods of contact in the early years among buccaneers (Europeans, Africans, and “mixed-descent” persons), European colonists, and the beginning tide of West African slaves. Subsequently, the most important contact was among the French colonists, including plantation owners, and African and African-descent people. As time went on, the contact situation produced many people of mixed African and European lineage, called *gens de couleur* or *métisses* in French. In brief, there were various types of contact among groups in early Haiti that led to the emergence of Creole as a new language.

Haitian History

In discussing the Haitian language, it is necessary to discuss briefly Haitians and their history, given that very few people know that history and, unfortunately, Haitians are among the most maligned people on Earth. In Haiti today, great poverty exists alongside the near collapse of the state. In spite of this, the country is quite remarkable and has had a profound effect on modern world history. What follows is a brief sketch of some of the more important facets of Haitian history, furnishing some context for the chapters that follow. Unlike the extended discussion of **Fouron's** chapter in this book, this historical sketch highlights only key events that most non-Haitians are unaware of and that help the reader contextualize the chapters' contents.

Haitian history suggests that the West has never forgiven Haiti for mounting the world's first and only permanently successful slave revolt. It was permanent in that Haiti still exists as a country. The fruits of other successful slave revolts establishing independent countries (recognized de facto, if not de jure, by European powers), for example in Columbia and Brazil, came to naught when the countries were eventually conquered and dismantled.

The Haitian Revolution won independence from France and established the nation of Haiti in 1804, after armed struggle by the Haitian populace—slaves, mostly of African descent, and the *gens de couleur* (mulattoes) and other free Haitians. Many of the free persons, overwhelmingly mulattoes, were successful in business. This did not save them in the years leading up to the revolution from being humiliated daily by the legal strictures of a *Code Noir*

(Black Code). This group of laws became the principal vehicle for institutionalizing limits on their opportunities and behavior, even how they dressed in public. During the revolution and after Haiti's independence, many slaveowners fled Haiti with their slaves and went to the U.S., mainly Louisiana, creating what was the first wave of Haitian immigration to what is now the U.S. In 1803, the Louisiana Purchase transferred ownership of the territory, the vast middle third of today's U.S., from France to the U.S. Those Haitian immigrants' presence in significant numbers had lasting effects on popular religion (termed *Vodou*, or hoodoo, a U.S. variant of the Haitian word), cuisine, Louisiana French Creole, and other facets of culture.

The Haitian Revolution was highly disturbing to some, especially to slave societies in the U.S., Latin America, and the Caribbean, reinforcing as it did an awareness of the inherent instability of slave-holding regimes. France, involved militarily elsewhere, was able to extract burdensome reparations from Haiti in return for forswearing a reconquest attempt at a later date. The young, slavocratic American nation sought to smother news of the Revolution and to isolate Haiti diplomatically and economically throughout the nineteenth century. After freeing themselves, Haitians were invited by the grassroots into what is now the Dominican Republic (the eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola) to guarantee the end of slavery there, first abolished there by Toussaint L'Ouverture, the leading general and statesman in the Haitian Revolution. Abolition earned the lasting enmity of the very small, white Dominican elite, who, many of them slaveowners, had a vested interest in a return to slavery.

Haitians governed a unified island with slavery abolished for roughly twenty years, during which time slaves and ex-slaves in the hemisphere were invited to freedom in Hispaniola. This is why there were several African-American-descent communities in Hispaniola, most now erased through absorption into the surrounding communities, with the notable exception of that in Samaná, in the Dominican Republic, where English is still spoken. By 1844, political problems in Haiti and resistance, principally from the white, Creole Dominican elite, caused Haitian forces to withdraw. (*Creole* in this sense refers to European-descent whites born locally.) There were also Afro-Dominicans favoring the creation of the independent Dominican republic due to the Haitian government's instituting a number of ill-advised policies (Moya Pons 1995). Some key figures in the new republic of the Dominicans favored re-establishing ties with Spain. However, some Afro-Dominicans rebelled against the new Dominican Republic out of fear of re-enslavement under slavocratic Spain (Torres-Saillant 1995).

The success of the Haitian Revolution and Napoleon's travails elsewhere led him to give up on an American empire. The result was the Louisiana Purchase, the sale by France to the U.S. of not just the present-day state of Louisiana, but that state along with the middle third of today's mainland U.S., which constituted French Louisiana (some of which was claimed by Spain). This purchase was key in the westward expansion of the U.S., eventually to the Pacific Ocean, and indispensable for the rise of the U.S. to world power status.

Haitians, to their credit, promoted not only the abolition of slavery but also freedom from European imperial domination. The young Haitian nation provided strategic and material support for the Latin American liberation effort. Its support of Simón Bolívar (a mulatto in life, whitened by history) was essential to his liberation movement's success.

Haiti survived the nineteenth century—experiencing notable and continual political

factionalism but with its primarily peasant population fed. All of this was upset by the U.S. invasion and occupation from 1915 to 1934. U.S. control of Haitian financial affairs continued until 1947. The occupation was purportedly brought on by the increasing German and French economic influence and their possible occupation of Haiti. In any case, the U.S. found two possibilities too enticing to resist: (1) a local presence to protect and further U.S. economic interests and (2) the eviction of Haitian landholders from the most fertile land in order to establish rubber plantations for the coming World War I effort.

The invasion was met with determined resistance by Haitian freedom fighters. The resistance was further fed by the U.S. administration's institution of *corvée* (forced) labor for large-scale work projects. The liberation movement was eventually crushed by American forces, using some of the same brutal tactics used in the U.S. during slavery and the subsequent U.S. Reign of Terror (Jim Crow Era)—for example, lynching and dismemberment. While there, the U.S. forces stripped Haiti of its gold reserves, sending them to Fort Knox; favored lighter-skinned Haitians, producing anew the dark-skinned/light-skinned conflict that the Haitian polity had previously managed; and instituted policies that eventually devastated Haitian agriculture as a whole while modernizing plantation agriculture specifically. Additionally, the U.S. administration carried out a number of modernization projects, improving infrastructure, agriculture, education, and state administration.

During the last two decades, the U.S. has been the main actor in two coups against democratically elected Haitian governments led by Jean-Bertrand Aristide. His party's platform, initiating broad scale government involvement in spurring economic development and increasing stability, were labeled as dangerously tainted due to the populist and state-centered, i.e., socialist, content of his political discourse. External economic and political forces have worked during this period to prevent Aristide's party from regaining power. Their actions have had the distressing effect of leading to widespread social disorder throughout the country.

Relations between Haitians and African Americans, as one might expect, have been close since the eighteenth century, characterized by mutual assistance, exchanges, and marital unions with cultural and political impact. Perhaps the first event of note was Haitian President Boyer's invitation in the early 1800s to African Americans to escape racial terror in the U.S. and settle in Haiti. The U.S. has sent several African-American diplomats to Haiti, among them Frederic Douglass, the great abolitionist. However, the sphere of informal relations has been much more important. Fascinated as many before her by African elements in Haitian culture, anthropologist and choreographer Katherine Dunham, the twentieth-century pioneer in the anthropology of dance, spent time in Haiti studying and learning to perform Haitian dance and music. She later presented them in her dance troupe's performances worldwide. Lois Mailou Jones, the also long-lived, celebrated Harlem Renaissance painter and art professor at Howard University, in 1953 married the well-known Haitian graphic artist and designer Louis Vergniaud Pierre-Noël. At their homes in Port-au-Prince and Washington, D.C., for decades thereafter, they received African American and other black intellectuals and students. The Congressional Black Caucus has long worked for fair and equal treatment for Haitian immigrants to the U.S. and Haitian-heritage citizens.

The Languages of U.S. Haitians

Social and linguistic context

It is little known that Haitians have a long history in the U.S. They have immigrated to what is now the U.S. since before American independence. Indeed, the “founder” of the city of Chicago, Jean-Baptiste Pointe du Sable, was a (nonwhite) Haitian immigrant. (He was the first known nonindigenous inhabitant, establishing a homestead in the 1770s.) A contingent of Haitian soldiers fought in the American Revolution.

Creole is spoken in the U.S. principally in the New York City metropolitan area, Miami and surrounding areas, greater Boston, and Chicago. The larger Haitian communities in the U.S., as other immigrant communities, have been active in establishing businesses ranging from restaurants to shipping companies (Zéphir, in this volume).

Haitians in U.S. communities use Haitian, French, and English, though clearly not all individuals are able to use all three. The Haitian language in the U.S. as spoken by most speakers shows significant lexical borrowing from English, although the borrowing of morphological and syntactic structures appears to be minimal or insignificant at present. **Borrowing** has occurred when a word or a grammatical feature has become so integrated into the borrowing language that most native speakers would not automatically know that it has been borrowed. Borrowed items, in other words, have been fully integrated into the grammar of the receiving language. Words borrowed from English into Creole, for example, are pronounced in accordance with the sounds and pronunciation rules of Creole, i.e., its **phonology**. Lexical borrowing largely involves terms indexing differences in the Haitian and U.S. material cultures, terms such as *CD*, *cell(phone)*, *SUV*, *microwave*, and *flatscreen* (see St. Fort’s chapter in this volume). This is not to imply that all of these items do not exist in Haiti, rather, that solely in the U.S. do many have access to them.

Another phenomenon that occurs among Creole speakers who also speak English and/or French is **code-switching**, which is switching back and forth between two or more languages during the same communicative event. When someone speaking Creole code switches into English, the English segment of the speech is still classified as English. This is unlike borrowing, where the originally English word, expression, or grammatical feature has been fully integrated into Creole. (Linguists disagree on precisely what should count as code-switching, but this characterization suffices for our purposes.) Code-switching involving Haitian, French, and English is common, perhaps the normal situation.

St. Fort’s chapter deals at length with Creole-English code-switching in New York City, presenting the basics of this language phenomenon along with many examples. He interestingly notes the witticism regarding code-switching, often heard in Haiti (French in boldface): ***Je n’ai jamais commencé une phrase en français pou m fini l an kreyòl*** (I’ve never begun a sentence in French that I finished in Creole). The irony, of course, is caused by the denial of code-switching by means of a sentence that itself shows code-switching. He observes that overall the group of high school students he studied do relatively little code-switching: most of the speech they produce is monolingual. Also, when they do code-switch, they are speaking

Creole with occasional switches into English.

Another outcome of languages being in contact is **interference**. This refers to the speaker's mixing some aspect of the grammar of one language with another. Interference can occur with phonology, syntax, and other aspects of grammar. An example involving pronunciation is a Creole speaker pronouncing a Creole word with phonological interference from English, for instance, pronouncing *pale* (speak) with the English "dark /l/" (as in *holler*) instead of the Creole "light /l/" (as in *illegal*). Generally, the longer a Creole speaker has been in the U.S., the more interference there will be in his or her Creole. Also, Creole speakers who learned English as young children tend to show more interference in their Creole.

The ways in which U.S. Haitians manipulate the three languages of their community relate to their language ideologies and the social contexts they find themselves in. A **language ideology** is the ideas that people have about languages, related to all kinds of thinking about language, involving value, dominance, identity, desire, grammar, instrumentality, and much more. To explain more about language use, a comment on social context is useful. Since the majority of Haitian immigrants have ended up living in some of the lowest-income black neighborhoods and have concluded that blacks occupy the low end of the American ethnic/racial hierarchy, they have sought to a significant degree to differentiate themselves from other blacks and African Americans in particular. Other black immigrant groups have done the same (Waters 1999). Within the framework of U.S. racial symbolism, blacks and specifically African Americans do represent the bottom, but in actual material terms other groups are lower, for example, in respect to income, education, and political office holding. Although the practical consequences of such Haitian efforts remain open to question, they are of interest because they affect language ideologies in Haitian communities.

For example, Haiti is as already noted a diglossic country, but one in which there is little bilingualism. As **Zéphir** explains in her chapter, Haitians in the U.S. who are fluent in French are the issue of the very small middle and upper classes in Haiti, where a knowledge of French is common. Since in most cases they have not been able to transfer their social position in Haiti to the U.S., living in the same neighborhoods and having generally the same incomes and occupations as Haitians from humble backgrounds, they cling to French as a status marker. Thus, at social gatherings of the erstwhile elite, introductions are made and conversations with strangers begin in French. Only after some degree of social comfort has been established can a switch to Haitian be triggered. Even among French speakers, Haitian is used in most social interaction by far. Indeed, among Haitian-French bilinguals in the U.S., there is no domain in which French is used exclusively.

She observes that, to a certain extent, the Haitian-French diglossic situation in Haiti has been recast in the U.S.: it is becoming one involving Haitian and English, where English instead of French is the H (high) language. Conferences, meetings, workshops, award ceremonies, and club meetings are mostly conducted in English, even though all or almost all the participants are Haitians. On the other hand, Haitians as a group, in their search for some cultural signifier to distinguish them from African Americans and other blacks, valorize Creole as an emblem of their distinct grouphood, since too few in the community are proficient in French to use it as such. Also true is that Haitian has a higher status among U.S. Haitians than it does among the population in Haiti (see Zéphir's chapter for more discussion).

Education

The chapters on education examine it from different perspectives. **Locher** takes a sociology of education approach to the disheartening overall state of education in Haiti. His chapter furnishes a highly useful backdrop for others chapters' discussions limited to language and education. He emphasizes macro-trends and processes, and especially data on educational outcomes. Noteworthy is his forefronting of three important issues not addressed in the original Bernard Reform of 1979 (see Dejean's chapter). The first is girls' education, an important part of social development, now recognized in planning and policy circles. The second is school feeding, a high-yield feature of mass education and public health. The third is the issue of over-aged children, who now constitute an obstacle to the educational access of other children and reduce the internal efficiency of the overall educational system.

Most of the published information that we have on Haitian Creole-English bilingual education in the U.S. is for New York City, although programs have been initiated in other metropolitan areas, notably Miami-Dade County and Boston. As **Joseph** reveals in her chapter, it took a while for public school administrators to understand that the overwhelming majority of Haitian students speak Haitian Creole, a language different from French. Additionally, in too many instances Haitian students have been labeled simply as "black," obscuring their ethnicity-specific language needs. Although there were previously several bilingual programs in New York City schools, now there is only one Creole bilingual program. Thus, much of the progress made two decades ago has been lost.

Since bilingual education is among the most important concerns of the U.S. Haitian community, the more important issues in bilingual education need to be surveyed. I have already mentioned the first issue, which is that the appropriate language variety for bilingual instruction must be identified. It would seem that this does not need stating, but it does in view of past instances of using French in bilingual programs for monolingual Creole speaking pupils.

The second issue relates to determining language means and goals. In the U.S., monolingual Creole-speaking students need to have Creole as their medium of instruction, beginning the study of English at the appropriate time. In an English-dominant society, these students need to learn English. However, one question on which there is not full agreement is how long their study in and of Creole should continue. Should Creole be used only as a vehicle for transition to English? Observe that students could conceivably continue to use Creole even after they have reached sufficient proficiency in English to continue their studies in English-only classrooms. The goal of continuing in Creole would be to maintain and expand their Creole language skills in support of their Haitian-American ethnic identity.

However, the continued use of Creole throughout primary and secondary school is a more central issue in Haiti. There, the question arises as to whether attempting to teach all students French as soon as possible—or even at all—is a justifiable use of limited resources, especially in primary school, which most students are not able to finish (Dejean 2006). Given the limited time that most Haitian children spend in school, it may be better to spend all the time that is devoted to literacy acquisition in the early years of schooling on the acquisition of literacy in Creole. Apposite here is that even Haitian students arriving at university tend to

have insufficient French skills to fully understand course content (Dejean 2006). So, if literacy in French is to be *the* goal of primary through secondary education, that is, having students transition to French as soon as possible, a means for delivering this knowledge to a majority of secondary school graduates will have to be devised and implemented.

Any consideration of bilingual programs in the U.S. and other areas of the diaspora requires a careful evaluation of assessment, pedagogy, curricula, teaching materials, personnel, funding, and support by politicians and the community. The same is true of Haiti, but here I focus mainly on conditions and possibilities in the U.S. One of the key issues relating to assessment is determining whether the English of entering Haitian pupils is strong enough for them to start in all-English instruction. Even if their English is strong enough, the parents of these students may prefer for them to gain Creole literacy skills also. Ideally, the parents would have the option of deciding for Creole maintenance and development or against it.

There now exists a significant literature on bilingual education, including discussions of best practices, focusing on the results of empirical research (Baker 2006; Garcia 2008). Consequently, there is guidance for educators and policy-makers who are willing to work with specialists in the field. However, the use of bilingual education research is not as straightforward as it might seem. Baker (2006: 260) observes that research support for most of the different forms of bilingual education can be found by selecting and emphasizing particular studies, remarking further that “[n]o research on bilingual education is perfect, even totally objective” (Baker 2006: 283). Cummins enters the important point that theories of bilingual education are more important than reviews of research since it is theories that can explain and predict different bilingual program contexts and outcomes (Cummins 1999: 26). However, “[p]olicy in bilingual education is shaped by a myriad of influences other than research and theory (e.g., political ideology, pragmatism, conflicting interests and varied stakeholders)” (Baker 2006: 283).

In spite of these cautionary remarks, there are some points that bilingual researchers appear to agree on. One is that teacher attitudes are important. They must find methods for respecting and validating students’ home language and culture. Doing so requires training, hence teachers in bilingual programs must be trained in bilingual education methods. It is not sufficient that they themselves be bilingual. The student’s home language and culture can be validated via classroom use of culturally appropriate communicative events (e.g., storytelling, jokes, proverbs, and language games), narrative styles, and readings in the vernacular language (see Trouillot-Lévy’s chapters and, regarding folklore, Plaisir’s chapter). Culturally relevant material is best incorporated into a **language awareness** component in the bilingual program, whereby students are invited to reflect on, discuss, and analyze their own home language as it relates ideologically, socially, politically, and economically to other languages. Doing so has been shown to help students develop more pride in their language and to reduce the frustration and anger that can be produced by messages, subtle and not so subtle, that their language and culture are not of value. Language awareness helps create a learning ambience more like that in which two respected languages with long literary traditions such as French and English are the languages in a bilingual program. In such programs, learning the second language is not construed as a lessening of the student’s self-worth. Another term for language awareness components is “sociolinguistic component.” *Sociolinguistics* refers to the subfield of

linguistics that deals with language in society and culture.

Another method used in bilingual programs that has been shown to be highly valuable is contrastive grammatical analysis. **Contrastive analysis** involves explicit classroom work focusing on how the language varieties in the program differ. Rather than expecting students to absorb this information indirectly, the grammatical differences and the rules that account for them are gone over in detail, typically with drills, exercises, and translation back and forth between the languages. Contrastive analysis is especially important in educational settings in which the two language varieties are closely related linguistically, for example, in those dealing with African American Vernacular English and Academic Standard English (White 2008). These programs are actually bidialectal programs rather than bilingual ones, where the languages are obviously different, with it always clear which one is being used at a particular moment. Where the two varieties are largely similar, it is particularly important to focus students' attention on where the differences lie.

In theory, the most effective bilingual (and bidialectal) programs would have both language awareness and contrastive analysis components, and there is empirical research that supports this (White 2008). However, whole programs are never fully identical, and one program without language awareness or contrastive analysis may have compensatory strengths that another with both may not have.

As noted above, bilingual programs are strongly affected by factors outside the educational context per se. Among the more important "outside" factors are the level of funding for bilingual programs and the support of politicians and the community. This implies that successful bilingual education requires community activism. To wit, parents and other community members should be helped to understand their rights and define their needs. At the same time, information on bilingual education should be packaged and effective incentives should be provided to politicians to further community interests.

In his chapter, **Dejean** revisits several issues that have been among his great concerns throughout his linguistic career. With regard to bilingualism, he makes fully clear that Haiti is not a bilingual country—though there is a very small group of bilingual individuals. Also, many Haitians who have acquired a limited knowledge of French cannot be considered as knowing French. Knowing words and phrases or being able to read passages in French without knowing what they mean does not mean that one is in any meaningful sense bilingual. The crucial point is that Creole is the native language of all Haitians. This basic fact, often muddled in writing on language in Haiti, must be fully taken into account in all discussions of language in education. Concerning education in Haiti at present, he makes the essential observation that the first four years of schooling are in Creole; after that, Creole *and* French are to be on the same footing. This requires assuming irrationally that students will be competent in Creole *and* French after four years of schooling. The societies that have achieved mass bilingualism, such as those of Scandinavia and the Netherlands, have done so by using the native language as the primary one in the schools.

Trouillot-Lévy's chapter discusses the Collège Universitaire Caraïbe in Haiti as an example of a school where trilingual education has been successful. Creole and French are used as languages of instruction while English is studied as a foreign language. She reviews important issues related to teachers' attitudes and teaching strategies, teaching materials in

Creole, parents' attitudes, and the bias in learning assessment against students who are Creole-dominant or monolingual in Creole.

Madhere and **Plaisir** focus on the how-to of using Creole in schooling. Madhere is interested in how empirical studies can inform pedagogy. For example, with cognitive psychologists' increased understanding of letter perception, word recognition, and text comprehension, they are in a better position to examine reading in Creole and consequently the cognitive strategies involved in students' processing written Creole. To illustrate, consider one finding that comes out of his quantitative study of a corpus of Creole texts. He found that <n> is among the highest frequency letters in texts and has a high rate of occurrence because it occurs in many contexts compared to other letters, for example, in all nasal vowels, in first and last position in words, and as a word by itself. It occurs as a word by itself in *n* (contracted form) = *nou* (we-our-us/ you-your). Textbooks in Haiti tend to introduce the letters <p> and first, but the high frequency of <n> suggests that introducing it first would lead to accelerated word acquisition. Plaisir is concerned with using Haitian folklore as a means of making curricula more culturally appropriate. He presents a rich review of the structure and function of different genres of folklore and clarifies how they can be used to integrate writing and orality. Since Haitian children enter school with a considerable knowledge of oral traditions, it makes sense to build on that knowledge, for example, teaching literacy using the speech genres students already know and using those genres to create real communicative events, as opposed to communication exercises. This is one way to root literacy in the "real" world of social interaction and thereby render teaching and learning culturally appropriate.

Conclusion

Together the contributors have brought between two covers a range of valuable information that assists educators, linguists, policy-makers, parents, and students to understand the centrality of language in education and the importance of native-language instruction in expanding literacy. We hope that these pages will inspire others to produce additional materials for teaching about the Haitian Creole language, teaching the language itself, and teaching in the language, solidifying its too long denied role as a medium of instruction and an object of respect.

References

- Baker, Colin. 2006. *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. Fourth edition. Buffalo, New York: Multilingual Matters.
- Cummins, James. 1999. "Alternative Paradigms in Bilingual Education Research: Does Theory Have a Place?" *Educational Researcher* 28, no. 7: 26-32, 41. [Cited in Baker 2006].
- DeGraff, M. 2005. "Linguists' Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Creole Exceptionalism." *Language in Society* 34: 533-591.
- Dejean, Yves. 1980. *Comment écrire le créole d'Haïti*. Québec, Can.: Collectif Paroles.
- . 2006. *Yon lekòl tèt anba nan yon peyi tèt anba. (An Upside-Down School in an Upside-Down Country)*. Port-au-Prince, Haiti: Imprimerie Deschamps.
- Fishman, Joshua A. 1972. *The Sociology of Language: An Interdisciplinary Social Science Approach to Language in Society*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.
- García, Ofelia. 2008. *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

- Laguerre, Michel. 1998. *Diasporic Citizenship: Haitian Americans in Transnational America*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Lefebvre, Claire. 1998. *Creole Genesis and the Acquisition of Grammar: The Case of Haitian Creole*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Makoni, Sinfree, Geneva Smitherman, Arnetha F. Ball, and Arthur K. Spears, eds. 2003. *Black Linguistics: Language, Society and Politics in Africa and the Americas*. New York: Routledge.
- Moya Pons, Frank. 1995. *The Dominican Republic: A National History*. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Hispaniola Books.
- Nero, Shondel J., ed. 2006. "Introduction." Pp. 1-16 in *Dialects, Englishes, Creoles, and Education*, edited by Shondel J. Nero. Mahwah, New Jersey and London: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Spears, Arthur K. 2009. "On Shallow Grammar: African American English and the Critique of Exceptionalism." Pp. 231-248 in *The Languages of Africa and the Diaspora: Educating for Language Awareness*, edited by Jo Anne Kleifgen and George C. Bond. Bristol, U.K.: Multilingual Matters.
- Torres-Saillant, Silvio. 1995. "The Dominican Republic." Pp. 109-138 in *No Longer Invisible: Afro-Latin Americans Today*, edited by Minority Rights Group. London: Minority Rights Publications.
- Valdman, Albert. 1977. "Elaboration in the Development of Creole French Dialects." Pp. 155-189 in *Creolization*, edited by Albert Valdman. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.
- Waters, Mary C. 1999. *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*. The Russell Sage Foundation and Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass.
- White, Niesha. 2008. Increasing Efficacy in Academic English Instruction: Finding the Correct Balance between Contrastive Analysis Focus on Form and Sociolinguistic Awareness Raising. Ph.D. diss., The City University of New York.
- Zéphir, Flore. 2001. *Trends in Ethnic Identification among Second-Generation Haitian Immigrants in New York City*. Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey.
- . 2004. *The Haitian Americans*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press.