Language Variation in Caribbean Creole/Non-Lexifier Contact Situations: Continua or Diglossia?

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This paper surveys those Caribbean creoles in contact with non-lexically related national languages and discusses why the post-creole continuum model may be inappropriate for explanations of contact-induced language variation and change in this type of speech community. A consideration of the language contact between the English-based creole spoken on the Panamanian island of Bastimentos and the national language of Spanish suggests the relatively stable coexistence of two discrete systems where diglossia obtains. A discrete diglossic model is proposed as a provisional alternative for studies of language variation on the island of Bastimentos and in other stable Caribbean creole/non-lexifier contact situations.

1. Introduction

In its ideal form, the phenomenon of the post-creole continuum as originally described by DeCamp (1971) and Bickerton (1973) may be understood as a result of the process of decreolization that occurs wherever a creole is in direct contact with its lexifier. This contact between creole languages and the languages that provide the majority

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of their lexicons leads to synchronic variation in the form of a continuum that reflects the unidirectional process of decreolization. The resulting continuum of varieties ranges from the "basilect" (most markedly creole) through intermediate "mesolectal" varieties (less markedly creole) to the "acrolect" (least markedly creole or the lexifier language itself). The continuum model represents a continuous spectrum of varieties where there exists "no sharp cleavage between creole and standard" (DeCamp 1971:350).

In its ideal form, the phenomenon of diglossia as originally described by Ferguson (1959) refers to that language situation in speech communities where two or more varieties of the same language are specialized by function and are used by some speakers under different conditions. The stable coexistence of distinct varieties in diglossic situations means that a sharp "cleavage" or separation *does* exist between the varieties and that variation is therefore not continuous, but relatively discrete.

The issue of variation between a creole language and the standard language it is in contact with is "ultimately a question about the degree of discreteness between linguistic systems" (Romaine 1988:177). The continuum model has proved to be a powerful and popular theoretical construct for coping with the question of whether variation between creole and standard is continuous or discrete in situations where creoles are in direct contact with their lexifiers. Indeed, as will be demonstrated below, the continuum model has proved to be so popular that it has frequently been applied to situations where creole languages are in direct contact with national superstrate languages other than their lexifiers.

The notion of diglossia has been far less popular with variationists working in Anglophone Caribbean creole speech communities, and has been applied almost exclusively in Francophone creole speech communities (see Ferguson 1959; Holm 1989; Lefebvre 1974; Rickford 1987; Winford 1985). Outside of Francophone areas, the notion of a discrete diglossic model has rarely been used in discussions of synchronic variation in Caribbean creole speech communities since it was rejected as a possible model for Jamaica by Cassidy (1961) almost forty years ago. (See, however, Holm 1989 for references to diglossia in Colombia (p. 311) and the British Virgin Islands (p. 455) and Devonish (p. 1991) on the possibility of diglossia in Guyana.)

The concept of diglossia has been applied even less frequently to those situations where Caribbean creoles are in contact with languages other than their lexifiers. Hymes (1971) and Westmaas (1982) suggest that the relationship between Sranan, an English-based creole, and the national language of Dutch in Suriname may be diglossic. Snow (in press) claims that diglossia obtains on the Panamanian island of Bastimentos where an English-based creole is in contact with the national language of Spanish.

The aim of this paper is to survey those Caribbean creoles in direct contact with national superstrate languages other than their lexifiers in order to systematically examine language variation in creole speech communities where the unidirectional process of decreolization and the resulting continuum model do not obtain. A consideration of the nature of the language contact on the island of Bastimentos reveals the absence of a continuum and suggests instead the relatively stable coexistence of two discrete systems where diglossia obtains. I propose that discreteness and stability are the two most important factors contributing to diglossia on Bastimentos and suggest that a discrete co-systems approach to language variation in other Caribbean creole/non-lexifier contact situations may reveal further instances of diglossia.

2. Toward a Re-Classification of the Caribbean Creoles

The classification of creole languages in the Caribbean has, it seems, largely been one of convenience. Caribbean creoles have typically been classified according to the European languages that provide the majority of their lexicons (e.g., Arends, Muysken, & Smith 1995; Holm 1989; Romaine 1988). Thus, Caribbean creoles are typically categorized as being Dutch-based, English-based, French-based, or Spanish-based. While such a classification may be convenient, it is not particularly useful for studies of language variation and change in that it fails to demonstrate that many Caribbean creoles are currently in contact with national languages other than their lexifiers. Hymes points out that "perhaps the most vital thing for the future of a pidgin or creole is whether or not it continues adjacent (and subordinate) to a major source" (Hymes 1971:299). A more useful classification of Caribbean creoles for language variation studies considers whether the national language of the country where the creole is spoken is also the lexifier of the creole.

A classification such as that in Table (1) reveals fourteen Caribbean creoles currently in contact with national languages other than their lexifiers:

(1) Caribbean creole/non-lexifier contact situations

Country	National Language	Creole Language
Nicaragua	Spanish	Miskito Coast Creole English
Colombia	Spanish	Providencia/San Andrés Creole English
Costa Rica	Spanish	Costa Rican Creole English
Panamá	Spanish	Panamanian Creole English
Suriname	Dutch	Sranan Creole English
Suriname	Dutch	Saramaccan Creole English
Suriname	Dutch	Ndjuka Creole English
Netherlands Antilles[a] (Dutch Windward Islands)	Dutch	Dutch Windward Islands Creole English
Netherlands Antilles[b] (Dutch Leeward Islands[d])	Dutch	Papiamentu Creole Spanish[c]
Commonwealth Windward Islands	English	Lesser Antillean Creole French
Grenada[e]	English	Grenada Creole French
Trinidad & Tobago	English	Trinidadian Creole French
Guyana	English	Berbice Creole Dutch
Guyana	English	Skepi Creole Dutch

Note:

[a] The islands of Saba, St. Eustatius, and the southern part of St. Martin.
[b] The islands of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao.
[c] Papiamentu is an Iberian (i.e., Spanish and Portuguese) based creole.
[d] The islands of Dominica and St. Lucia.
[e] Including its dependency Carriacou.
Sources: Arends et al. 1995; Holm 1989

A classification such as that in Table (2) reveals twelve Caribbean creoles in contact with national languages that are also their lexifiers.

(2) Caribbean creole/lexifier contact situations

Country	National Language	Creole Language
Jamaica	English	Jamaican Creole English
Belize	English	Belizean Creole English
Virgin Islands[a]	English	Virgin Islands Creole English
Leeward Islands[b]	English	Leeward Islands Creole English

Barbados	English	Barbadian Creole English
Commonwealth Windward Islands	English	Windward Islands Creole English[c]
Trinidad & Tobago	English	Trinidad & Tobago Creole English
Guyana	English	Guyanese Creole English
Colombia	Spanish	Palenquero Creole Spanish
Haiti	French	Haitian Creole French
French Antilles[d]	French	Lesser Antillean Creole French
French Guiana	French	Guyanais Creole French

Note:

[a] The Virgin Islands are politically divided into self-governing territories of Britain and the United States. The British Virgin Islands include the main islands of Anegada, Jost Van Dyke, Tortola, and Virgin Gorda. The U.S. Virgin Islands include the islands of St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas.

[b] The independent islands of Anguilla, Antigua, Barbuda, Montserrat, Nevis, and St. Kitts.

[c] The populations of Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are largely Creole-English-speaking, but the variety of vernacular English spoken on St. Lucia represents a distinct relexified variety of Lesser Antillean Creole French.

[d] The islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe and its dependencies of La Désirade, Les Saintes, Marie Galante, St. Barthélemy, and the northern part of St. Martin.

Sources: Arends et al. 1995; Holm 1989; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985

If the non-Anglophone creoles of Colombia (see Holm 1989:311), Haiti (see Ferguson 1959), the French Antilles (see Holm 1989:366; Rickford 1987:22) and French Guiana (see Winford 1985:355) do indeed exist in diglossic relationships with their lexifier languages, this suggests that there are currently eight varieties of English-based creoles in contact with English as possible continua situations in the Caribbean (cf. Bickerton 1980:109 for a dissenting point of view). Further, if diglossia obtains in the British Virgin Islands as Holm (1989:455) claims, this suggests that there are only seven varieties of English-based creoles in contact with English in possible continua situations in the Caribbean.

3. Research Examining Variation in Caribbean Creole/Non-Lexifier Contact Situations

There are very few studies examining language variation in the Creole English/Dutch (CE/D) speech communities on the Dutch Windward Islands of Saba, St. Eustatius, and St. Martin, but the CE/D contact situation in Suriname has been examined in some detail. Healy

proposes a "parallel continuum model" for the study of variation in Suriname where she claims there exists "a definite structural break between SR [Sranan] and SD [Surinamese Dutch]" (Healy 1993:279). It is unclear how the so-called acrolectal varieties of SR differ from the so-called basilectal varieties of SD, but Healy claims "it is obvious to the speaker and listener whether it is SR or SD that is being spoken" (280). Healy's model, while it relies on the terminology of the creole continuum, would appear to suggest the coexistence of two discrete systems.

Healy's model would seem to support Hymes's claim that "the code-switching in Surinam between a creole and an unrelated other language appears much more clear-cut than what could perhaps be called the *style-ranging* between Creole and English in Hawaii, Jamaica, Antigua, and the like" (Hymes 1971:300). Healy's "definite structural break" seems to correspond with Hymes's "clear-cut code-switching" suggesting that Sranan and Dutch are discrete systems and that Hymes's use of the term "general Dutch-Creole diglossia" (299) may indeed be appropriate.

The Creole Spanish/Dutch (CS/D) situation involving Papiamentu on the islands of Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao has also been described in terms of a continuum. Andersen claims that Papiamentu's contact with Spanish "has not resulted in the same type of full creole continuum found in many of the English creoles", yet he goes on to refer to a "continuum" of varieties of Papiamentu that "range from basilectal (and thus nonhis-panized) to fully hispanized varieties" (Andersen 1990:61). Holm points out, however, that while Papiamentu has historically been moving towards Spanish "the term 'decreolization' seems inappropriate because of the creole's long autonomy and the lack of a continuum of lects" (Holm 1989:315). While it remains unclear how, exactly, to categorize the relationship between Papiamentu and Spanish (see Aceto 1996a:46), it seems quite clear that Papiamentu and the national language of Dutch constitute discrete linguistic systems.

In the Creole French/English (CF/E) speech communities of the Commonwealth Windward Islands (i.e., Dominica and St. Lucia), Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago, language variation has been examined in some detail, particularly on St. Lucia. Le Page and Tabouret-

Keller propose a "multidimensional continuum" model to handle the situation on St. Lucia which is characterized by "the gradual shift of a population from a French-patois-like vernacular to a creolized English as their native language, via an intermediate stage of 'Standard English as a second language in the classroom'" (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985:140).

Garrett proposes a "continuum-type" (Garrett 1999:180) model to account for language variation in St. Lucia. His model demonstrates the relations between the different St. Lucian language varieties with a "'soft' lexical boundary" that indicates "the area in which the disjuncture between English lexicon and Kwéyòl lexicon occurs" (181). While Garrett's "soft lexical boundary" would seem to preclude a discrete co-systems approach, he states that "'Kwéyòl' and 'English', with their clearly differing lexicons, are regarded as 'the two languages' of St.Lucia" (178). The fact that speakers recognize two discrete systems appears to be supported by Garrett's statement that "'English'…interspersed with Kwéyòl words and phrases…is negatively evaluated (and often ridiculed), Kwéyòl interspersed with English borrowings and code-switches, even heavily so, is not" (178). This suggests that of the language varieties spoken in St. Lucia, English and French-based Kwéyòl constitute two discrete systems.

Language variation studies in the Creole Dutch/English (CD/E) speech communities in Guyana where Berbice Creole Dutch and Skepi Creole Dutch are spoken, have linked the continuum model to the notion of language death. Kouwenberg points out that "modern BD [Berbice Creole Dutch] contains many Guyanese Creole elements in vocabulary and grammar, reflecting its history of contact with Guyanese and the speakers' Guyanese dominance" (Kouwenberg 1995:234). Robertson refers to the Dutch Creoles in Guyana undergoing "a process of gradual relexification towards English" (Robertson 1979:165) and claims that the continuum model is valid because the transition from Dutch-based creole to English is gradual. In other words, he claims the transition is no more abrupt than it would be if the basilect and the acrolect were of the same lexical base.

In the Creole English/Spanish (CE/S) speech communities of Central America and the Western Caribbean, creolists who have examined variation have tended to rely on the continuum model to

account for language variation and change. Herzfeld acknowledges the influence of Costa Rican Spanish on the "lexicon, semantic range, and syntactic structures of Limón Creole, in different degrees of intensity along the creole continuum" (Herzfeld 1977:196) and proposes a model involving "second language acrolect replacement" (193). She suggests that Costa Rica's national language of Spanish "has taken over" the position formerly occupied by Standard English as the acrolect language towards which the LC [Limón Creole] continuum tends" (205).

Washabaugh (1977, 1974) relies on both decreolization and the resulting continuum model to account for language variation on Providence Island, Colombia. Unlike Herzfeld, however, he does not acknowledge the influence of Spanish. Washabaugh claims that the inhabitants of Providence Island are "generally monolingual speakers of PIC [Providence Island Creole]" (Washabaugh 1977:331) and that "Standard British RP or Standard American English is the matrilect or model toward which the entire system is moving" (Washabaugh 1974:1). According to Washabaugh, "speakers in a post-creole community are triply pressured: to avoid the basilect, to acquire the acrolect, and to vary the mesolect" (Washabaugh 1977:330). It is unclear how the situation on Providence Island has changed in the past twenty-five years, but it seems unlikely that Standard English would today be considered the "acrolect" variety speakers are pressured to acquire or that the notion of an all-English continuum would still apply.

Holm's (1989, 1983, 1978) research represents the most thorough examination of Nicaragua's Miskito Coast Creole English (MCC) and while he does not examine language variation per se, he does acknowledge the influence of Nicaraguan Spanish on the creole. Holm does not refer to the existence of a continuum in Nicaragua, but points instead to "increasing bilingualism" and how this is "beginning to affect syntax, in which Spanish constructions can be borrowed word for word" (Holm 1989:475). The relationship between MCC and Spanish appears to be characterized, at least for the time being, by the coexistence of two discrete systems.

Aceto's (1999, 1996a, 1996b, 1995) work on language variation in a variety of Panamanian Creole English on the island of Bastimentos represents a major departure from typical approaches to language variation in Caribbean creole speech communities. Aceto

does not rely on the notion of decreolization and the continuum model to account for variation in the Bastimentos variety of Panamanian Creole English, but considers instead the possibility of language-internal explanations. Aceto claims that an "'over-reliance' on decreolization may be obscuring opportunities to study other types of change which are different from decreolization, either internally motivated or even other overlooked externally motivated explanations" (Aceto 1999:99). It seems possible that a discrete co-systems approach to variation in creole/non-lexifier speech communities may be one example of an overlooked externally motivated explanation.

4. Language Variation on the Panamanian Island of Bastimentos

The Caribbean island of Bastimentos is located in the province of Bocas del Toro in the Republic of Panama. The main settlement on the island of Bastimentos is known as Old Bank and consists of approximately 600 people, the great majority of whom are Afro-Panamanians of West Indian descent, living along a stretch of shoreline less than a mile long. Perhaps three percent of the population is comprised of indigenous Guaymí families that live on the fringes of Old Bank and Hispanic persons introduced into the community through exogamy. The island is remote and roadless and accessible only by boat.

In the community of Old Bank, the first language of all Afro-Panamanians is a variety of Panamanian Creole English first documented by Aceto (1996a, 1996b, 1995) and referred to by him as Bastimentos Creole (BC), although locally the creole is known as *guari-guari*. The national language of the Republic of Panama is Spanish and as a result the island's one primary school utilizes Spanish as the medium of instruction as though it were the students' first language. The stable coexistence and functional compartmental-ization of Spanish and BC on the island of Bastimentos suggest diglossia according to Snow (in press), and provide an exemplary opportunity to consider the role of discreteness in language variation studies of creoles in contact with non-lexifier national languages.

A classification of the relationship between Spanish (H) and BC (L) in terms of Ferguson's (1959) nine original defining features of diglossia reveals that all of the sociocultural features (specialization of function, prestige, literary heritage, standardization, and acquisition) and some of the linguistic features (stability and relative complexity of

grammatical structure) are present on the island of Bastimentos. The two linguistic features that appear to be problematic for a consideration of diglossia in creole/non-lexifier situations pertain to the shared lexicon and phonological structure of H and L.

Ferguson states that one of the most important features of diglossia is "the specialization of function for H and L" (Ferguson 1959:328) and that "the importance of using the right variety in the right situation can hardly be overestimated. An outsider who learns to speak fluent, accurate L and then uses it in a formal speech is an object of ridicule" (329). The day before I left Bastimentos after a two-year stay, teachers from the school and parents from the community jointly put together a *despedida* or going-away party in my honor. The setting was informal—the waterfront *cantina*—and everyone conversed casually in BC. When it came time to stand up at the microphone and give our speeches, however, we all—students, teachers, friends, and myself—spoke in Spanish. At the conclusion of our speeches we sat back down and continued talking in BC.

Ferguson's second defining feature of diglossia concerns the prestige of the codes involved: "In all the defining languages the speakers regard H as superior to L in a number of respects…there is usually a belief that H is somehow more beautiful, more logical, better able to express important thoughts, and the like" (329-330). On Bastimentos, BC speakers frequently refer to their native tongue as "bad English" or "broken English". Some native BC-speakers insisted on speaking to me in Spanish for the duration of my two-year stay on the island. This was, perhaps, partly a result of my perceived position as a *maestro* in the island's primary school, but it demonstrates a widely held belief that Spanish is somehow more prestigious and thus more appropriate to use with "officials" from "outside".

BC is an oral language with no standardized orthography and, as a result, no literary tradition. Ferguson's third defining feature of diglossia is the existence of a literary heritage for H that includes "a sizable body of written literature…[that] may either have been produced long ago in the past history of the community or be in continuous production in another speech community in which H serves as the standard variety of the language" (330-331). This is certainly the case on Bastimentos where the national language of Spanish

is recognized as the language of literacy and is acquired solely through formal education.

The acquisition of H and L is Ferguson's fourth defining characteristic of diglossia: "The grammatical structure of L is learned without explicit discussion of grammatical concepts; the grammar of H is learned in terms of 'rules' and norms to be imitated" (331). On Bastimentos, BC is acquired "naturally" in the home while Spanish is learned—to the degree that it is learned—off the blackboard in the school and, perhaps, from Panamanian Spanish language television and radio broadcasts.

When considering the role of standardization, Ferguson notes that for H "there is an established norm for pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary which allows variation only within certain limits" (332). This is in contrast to L where descriptive studies are virtually nonexistent or, when they do exist, "have been carried out first or chiefly by scholars OUTSIDE the speech community and are written in other languages" and, partly as a result of this, "there is no settled orthography and there is wide variation in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary" (332). This is certainly the case for BC where the only existing studies have been carried out by Aceto (1999, 1996a, 1996b, 1995) and Snow (in press).

Ferguson notes that the borrowing of lexical items from H to L contributes to the stability of diglossia, his sixth defining feature. This phenomenon is certainly widespread on Bastimentos, particularly when speakers are discussing activities related to the one domain where Spanish is formally used on the island—the school. It is not uncommon to hear children say things like, "*Me no got tarea*" or "*For who dem cuaderno*?" (cf. Garrett 1999:181 for an analysis of the phenomenon on St. Lucia). Lexical borrowing is also prevalent in those cultural activities, particularly music and sports, which are reinforced through exposure to Spanish media. This also seems to be the case in Nicaragua (see Holm 1983:98).

Ferguson points out that while "it is always risky to hazard generalizations about grammatical complexity" (Ferguson 1959:333), the seventh defining feature of diglossia is based on the notion of differences between the grammatical structures of H and L. In Ferguson's

defining languages of diglossia "there are always extensive differences between the grammatical structures of H and L" (331) and that typically "the grammatical structure of any given L variety is simpler than that of its corresponding H" (334). This would certainly seem to be the case not only for BC and Spanish, but for all creoles in contact with non-lexifier national languages.

Ferguson's (334-335) final two defining features of diglossia appear, at first, to be problematic for a consideration of diglossia on Bastimentos and in other creole/non-lexifier contact situations. The fact that the majority of the lexicons of BC and Spanish are not shared and that the sound systems of BC and Spanish do not constitute a single phonological structure would appear to eliminate the possibility of a diglossic relationship. In fact, the differences in lexicon and phonology actually contribute to the discreteness of the systems involved. The discrete coexistence of BC and Spanish suggests that the continuum model is inappropriate for language variation studies on the island of Bastimentos. The stability of the relationship between BC and Spanish, with each occupying its functionally allocated niche on the island of Bastimentos, would appear to suggest diglossia. It may be a matter of some debate among typologists of diglossia how to classify the relationship between BC and Spanish—whether by degree of structural relatedness (or lack thereof) or degree of social compartmentalization—but the fact remains that all residents of Bastimentos learn Spanish—a highly codified, grammatically more complex, superposed language with a large body of literature—through formal education and use it only on formal occasions and never for ordinary conversation.

5. Conclusion: Toward a Discrete Co-Systems Model For Language Variation Studies in Caribbean Creole/Non-Lexifier Contact Situations

It seems clear that a creole language in contact with a language other than its lexifier represents a case of two discrete systems in contact. The use of the continuum model or, in some cases, simply the use of the terminology of the continuum model (e.g., the labels basilect, mesolect, acrolect) seems, therefore, inappropriate. Aceto points out that in continuum situations "most often the verb complex is used to identify features associated with each of these labels" (Aceto 1999:109). In Caribbean creole/non-lexifier situations, however, the

impact of the national metropolitan variety on the non-lexically related creole is most apparent and, not surprisingly, most frequently demonstrated in the existing research, in the shifting lexicon of the creole. While assertions have been made regarding the impact of the national language on the syntax of the non-lexically related creole (e.g., Herzfeld 1977:196; Holm 1989:475) this impact has not been clearly demonstrated and further research is needed in this area. One example from BC demonstrates the potential for examining the on-going "metropolitanization" (to adapt Hancock's 1987:268 term) of creole syntax in creole/non-lexifier contact situations and the inadequacy of the notion of "decreolization" to deal with it:

(3) di daag **don** ded
di daag ded **aredi**
ya di daag ded
'The dog (has) already died.'

This would appear to be an example of what Bickerton refers to as "nonspontaneous" (Bickerton 1980:112) or contact-induced change. The introduced Spanish adverbial past marker *ya*, however, is no "closer" to English than either of the forms (i.e., *don, aredi*) it may be in the process of supplanting. Thus, the idea that a creole in contact with a non-lexifier could be said to be "decreolizing" in the direction of an unrelated standard seems inappropriate. The term "metropolitanization" (Hancock 1987:268) would seem to be preferred to "decreolization" in this case.

In conclusion, it seems clear that while neither the post-creole continuum model nor the diglossia model is a perfect fit for language variation studies in Caribbean creole/non-lexifier contact situations, a discrete diglossic model is valuable in that it helps to clarify and define the asymmetry in prestige between the codes involved. Further research will reveal the extent to which a refined diglossic model (i.e., that takes into account the on-going metropolitanizing influence of the non-lexifier standard on creole syntax) contributes to our understanding of language variation in this type of speech community.

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