

Review of Aceto, M. & Williams, J. P. (Eds.). (2003). *Contact Englishes of the Eastern Caribbean*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. In *Sargasso, 2004-5 (1)*, 155-158.

This collection of twelve articles presents recent work on the often ignored speech communities of the Anglophone Eastern Caribbean. Its primary goal is to stimulate further fieldwork in neglected areas in order to enrich current understanding of the historical foundations, dialect variation, usage patterns, performance, and structure of the English-derived varieties of the region.

In addition to presenting much needed field data for the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, the Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Barbuda, Dominica, St. Lucia, Carriacou, and Barbados, the contributors engage themes perennially debated among creolists, like the definition of creoles based on structural vs. historical criteria and the validity of the creole continuum and decreolization, as well as more cutting-edge topics like the emergence of restructured varieties in non-plantation settings, the role of second language acquisition in creole genesis beyond a strict substratist approach, and the distinction between creolized and dialectal varieties.

Childs, Reaser, and Wolfram (1-28) compare the realization of phonological variables in the speech of black and white communities in the Bahamas. The data are drawn from interviews with 83 speakers of all ages, and preliminary VARBRUL analysis of representative speakers is presented. While their hypothesis of accommodation on the part of white speakers is not fully substantiated, major strengths are the rich description of the sociohistorical background of the two groups and the discussion of data collection, extraction, and analysis. Their phonological findings are neatly complemented by McPhee (29-49) who sets forth an amply-illustrated analysis of tense, mood, and aspect in Bahamian Creole English.

Cutler's pioneering overview of the English of the Turks and Caicos Islands (51-80) is based on data extracted from 13 hours of interviews of 15 informants, ages 18-104. She concludes that the variety is mesolectal to acrolectal in nature and more akin to African American Vernacular English (AAVE), Gullah, or Bermudian than to other West Indian varieties. Among many interesting points are the identification of local residents as "Americans" by other Caribbeans and the local use of the verb "Yankin" to refer to "talking like an American." Cutler calls for more research on the differences between Turks and Caicos and the relationship between Turks Island English and AAVE.

Sabino, Diamond, and Cockcroft (81-94) examine plural marking in the Virgin Islands in two sets of folk tales recorded in the 1930's for outside researchers, another set of tales recorded for local residents in 1984, and a fourth corpus of

political commentary broadcast in 1982. VARBRUL analysis reveals that plural marking is least present on the poorest island (Anegada) and most present on the richest (St. Thomas), and while 80% of the plural nouns are marked for plurality, discourse directed at local audiences (whether formal or informal) shows less marking.

A very readable account of an Anglophone white community in Anguilla is presented by Williams (95-119). The “clear-skinned” residents of Island Harbour, descendants of three Scottish brothers Webster, have a distinctive dialect that reveals Scots/English influence along with creole features. Williams documents the linguistic peculiarities and concludes that the Webster dialect functions as a boundary-maintaining mechanism in the predominately dark-skinned society. Currently spoken only by elderly speakers, it is destined to disappear as younger speakers move increasingly toward Anguillan Creole English, a still unresearched variety.

Aceto (121-140) addresses the thorny problem of defining creoles and proposes an innovative typology which does not rely on the alleged creole continuum or decreolization. The typology convincingly groups varieties according to the historical, demographic and sociolinguistic conditions under which they emerged into Autonomous Creole Varieties, Immigrant Creole Varieties, and Dialect Creole Varieties. It successfully includes varieties resulting from post-emancipation social development and intra-Caribbean migration and is bound to stimulate considerable discussion among creolists.

The role of teachers as agents for language development is explored by Bryan and Burnette (141-153) in Dominica, a linguistically complex society in which Dominican Standard English, Kwéyòl, Dominican Creolised English (acquired in school), and Kokoy (an English-based creole) are all utilized with extensive code switching. Eighty teachers were surveyed regarding the languages of Dominica, their mother tongues, and the languages used at home, in the classroom, with friends, and with co-workers. The authors conclude that all teachers are at least bilingual, Kwéyòl is the most common mother tongue and used in informal settings as well as the classroom despite English as the official language of instruction, and Dominican Creolised English is gaining ground. They also state that “the teachers’ own background reflects ...positive attitudes towards vernacular languages” (p. 152), a somewhat surprising claim given that their questions dealt strictly with usage patterns and not attitudes.

Garrett (155-210) examines another island in which an English-lexified vernacular is in contact with Kwéyòl--St. Lucia. Garrett maintains that the Vernacular English of St. Lucia (VESL) is not a creole but rather a stabilized interlanguage learned in school, heavily influenced by Kwéyòl, unevenly distributed, and only very recently reproduced across generations. He analyzes historical accounts, census data, school inspectors’ reports, and migration statistics to demonstrate that Kwéyòl (not Bajan) is responsible for most of VESL

grammar and many structural similarities between VESL and the Caribbean English Creoles are pan-creole features.

Two articles deal with Carriacou. Fayer (211-226) describes in ethnographic detail the performances of speeches from “Julius Caesar” during pre-Lenten competitions involving ritualistic male combat. She establishes the recitation challenges as a local manifestation of the Caribbean appreciation of “talking sweet” and musters historical evidence that the “Shakespeare Mas” is a “syncretic artifact” combining elements of European carnival with West African stick fighting. From another angle, Kephart (227-239) catalogues the linguistic characteristics of Carriacou Creole English in order to show that CCE is highly variable and contains basilectal features. He questions the presumed process of decreolization and emphasizes that significant divergences from Metropolitan English in the treatment of tense, mood, and aspect cause learning difficulties for children and recommends initial literacy in CCE.

The last two articles deal with Barbadian Creole, hardly an ignored variety; however, they approach it from fresh perspectives. Van Herk (241-264) analyzes informal conversations and recorded interviews with 9 informants, ages 17-80, and finds that Bajans of all classes switch to more acrolectal forms when recorded. The article focuses on the basilectal features of the oldest speaker and considers how such features became stigmatized in Barbados. In another vein, Sutcliffe (265-296) explores the suprasegmental patterns of Bajan, Trinidadian, and Guyanese and demonstrates how their tonal systems probably developed from the reinterpretation of English stress as high tone by West African slaves. Employing recordings from a wide range of speakers painstakingly transcribed and analyzed tonally, he situates these three creoles (along with Gullah, Bahamian, Jamaican, and Haitian Creole) as Intermediates in a continuum ranging from Full Tonal varieties (like Saramaccan, Ndyuka, Kwinti, Krio, and West African Pidgin) to Residual Tonal varieties (like 19th and 20th century AAVE). He takes an Africanist view of the origins of these patterns, but signals that an Anglicist view might yield interesting insights into how English speakers interpreted the African tonal systems during creole formation.

Editors Michael Aceto and Jeffrey Williams have organized a compelling and highly varied volume that will prove thought-provoking to creolists of different persuasions. It should be considered as a mandatory addition to any library purporting to deal with creolistics.

Dr. Alicia Pousada
University of Puerto Rico
Pousada.a@gmail.com