

The University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus

Faculty of Humanities and Education

Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics

LING 3099 Special Project in Linguistics

COVER PAGE

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St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION

LING 3099 SPECIAL PROJECT IN LINGUISTICS

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An Examination of the Effectiveness of Songs in the Process

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Deadline Date: 2 May 2017

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Introduction

The motivation for conducting a research project investigating the effectiveness of the use of songs in a community-based approach to revitalize Patois, one of Trinidad and Tobago's heritage languages, arose because it is an endangered language that is still part of life of the elders in various communities including Paramin, Talparo, Morne Cabrite and Blanchisseuse. All languages are important; they are a part of the culture of the people. Language death in the Caribbean is an unfortunate reality as the Caribbean "has been a graveyard for languages" (Alleyne 2004), leaving only a few of the original languages still in use today (Ferreira 2001). Happily, there is a beacon of hope in language documentation which can lead to revitalization. Language endangerment and death is a worldwide issue that sees UNESCO's involvement and acknowledgment that most of the world's languages will soon be extinct and the expectation remains that revitalization efforts, including songs, will continue to retain and even recover the Patois voice and that pride will be enkindled in nationals and the negative stigma associated with Patois will be finally removed.

The research matters because the language is moribund with a few elderly speakers left, in real danger of disappearing despite revitalization and awareness efforts. Ethnologue.com has classified it with a "developing" status "in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable". The research is relevant because of the pace of the language loss by the death of the linguistic community, and will be a great loss of a link to the past. The contribution that it will make to language documentation includes the historical accounts, and adds to the recordings of the last few remaining speakers and users of Patois like Theodora Wahid 95 years old, Augustine "Fairy" Fournillier who is 101

years old and Mr Francis “Attiman” Felix at 111 years.

Research about the use of specific methods based on the level of language vitality that may be useful in the revitalization of Patois in Trinidad is not readily accessible and appears to be lacking, specifically studies that tailor revitalization methods to the EGIDS assessment of the vitality of the language. Patois is dying partly due to the lack of investigations into the actual components that might work, and the research investigates and highlights successful revitalization methods and models. Accordingly, one anticipates that this research will bring about an awareness that the imminent death of Patois is looming in the not too distant future and the immediate intervention of Government and other interested parties is needed for researchers to be successful in their efforts.

“When each of you was born, there were six thousand languages spoken on earth. A language isn’t just a body of vocabulary or a set of grammatical rules, it’s a flash of the human spirit; it’s a vehicle through which the soul of each individual culture comes into the material world. Half today are not being taught to schoolchildren”. (Davis 1)

Thus, herein lies the crux of the matter: the language was forbidden from being spoken, and the parents did not see any economic value in the need to teach it to their children for continuity. English soon became the preferred language.

Tragically, the linguistic diversity is being condensed and eroded. The role of the language in the cultural milieu seems to be forgotten and the language is “not being whispered by mothers to children” (Davis 20) and “there is indeed a fire burning over the Earth, taking with it plants and animals, cultures, languages, ancient skills and visionary wisdom.” (Davis 20) “Quelling this flame and reinventing the poetry of cultural diversity is probably the most important challenge of our times” (Davis 20) And all this started with Trinidad’s Anglicisation

policy under Attorney General Charles William Warner, who wanted to eradicate French in Trinidad. Patois eventually disappeared as the lingua franca soon after 1823 when English was made the official language, thereby commencing the end of multilingualism in Trinidad, leading to the eventual demise of many heritage languages on the island.

Efforts

John Jacob Thomas, a Trinidadian intellectual, wrote the first and only Trinidad Patois grammar book in 1869. This treasured book is still in use today and is the prized possession of many a person, from academics, historians and the random Paramin resident with whom the researcher shared a taxi during one of the field visits.

The Maraval Folk Choir in collaboration with Jackie Creft Montano compiled a music record in 1975 entitled “Patois People are Alive”.

Augustus “Junior” Howell compiled a songbook entitled *Patois and English Folksongs of Trinidad and Tobago* (2003). He believes that his book would help with the preservation efforts of both the language and the folk traditions of the Trinidadian culture, since it includes a lesson plan, thus it will be an indispensable tool for choir groups, for use in the classroom and by some communities.

Hubert Devonish, Caribbean Linguist and Coordinator of the Jamaican Language Unit has done research and produced a video on Patois with another Linguist Nicole Scott who wrote her PhD thesis on Trinidadian Patois. Dr. Jo-Anne Ferreira, Linguistics Lecturer at UWI, makes extraordinary use of social media to ensure that there is an awareness of Patois, along with Nnamdi Hodge and Marvel Alves. Holly Betaudier used a radio programme “Toute Bagai” to support his Patois outreach efforts, since it was his first language, until his death in 2016. In

2016, Martinique 1ère, uploaded a YouTube video entitled “Les Derniers Créolophones” to “inform, communicate and educate people on the richness” of the language.

In Paramin, Mass is held in Patois at the Our Lady of Guadalupe RC Church on Dimanche Gras (the Sunday before Carnival) and worshippers along with the Paramin Folk Choir sing in Patois with the aid of a songbook. The translation of the songs into Patois was done by Jane Fournillier. Mrs Claudette Sinnette teaches Patois to children at the Paramin RC School and it well received, as young Jeremiah explained “we even stay back in class during lunch time to use the books and practise”. The Lloyd Best Institute of the West Indies hosted “a week-long exploration of Caribbean knowledge” event Convois 2017, which featured speakers of the Caribbean’s Languages including Patois.

Current efforts are well in progress to revive the language by Dr. Jo-Anne Ferreira and Nnamdi Hodge, advocates in their passion for the revival of Patois. Hodge has been working for well over twenty years as a Patois researcher and educator with some of the little-known communities of Patois speakers. He started with Merle Hodge’s School of Alternative Education in 1995 because he was aware of Patois’ status as an endangered language which is “in our head, our spirit”, on its way to death. Ferreira and Hodge have decided to document the language as part of their language preservation efforts and Hodge teaches the language at the Caribbean Yard Campus and to students in the communities where it is still spoken and/or remembered such as Paramin and Talparo. He recently co-compiled a Patois songbook (2009) and is actively teaching the language using a variety of methods. Hodge’s class structure includes the teaching of proverbs, speaking, listening to his recordings of the elderly Patois speakers from the speech community in the country and field trips to meet and interact with other Patois speakers in

person. At the Annual UWI Inter-Campus Foreign Language Theatre Festival in 2016, he wrote and directed a play in Patois. This was the first time that a play was performed in Patois by the University students at the St. Augustine Campus, after 17 years of the Annual Festival taking place.

Hodge's and Ferreira's promotion of the language has inspired Ms. Michelle Mora, teacher at Talparo RC, to commence her own Patois classes with the full support of the Principal. It has been a rewarding experience thus far, as she feels a sense of satisfaction when she passes through her village and hear the children playing games and singing in Patois.

Literature Review

Language is an important identity marker, with which cultural experiences and folk songs among others, may be associated. Identity is "the linguistic construction of membership in one or more social groups or categories" (Kroskrity 2000, 111). Language defines a group and may be associated with the ethnic background of the speech community. It is a socio-cultural phenomenon and involves the study of both social and cultural usage of languages in society.

Trinidadian French Creole also known as Kwéyòl, French Creole, French-lexicon Creole, Creole, Patois and Patwa (hereinafter referred to as Patois) belongs to the Lesser Antillean French Creole family of languages and is an endangered national heritage language, spoken in small pockets around the island of Trinidad. Recent estimates as of 2004 state that there 3,800 speakers and Patois is a developing language (*Ethnologue.com*).

The first Calypso songs were rendered in Patois by Lovey's String Band around 1912, then by Iron Duke two years later, Roaring Lion and Attila the Hun in 1934 and Sparrow in 1956. Today Calypso is sung in English, since the English language has effectively sent Patois to

its endangered status (Gittens).

When we observe the development of Trinidad's folklore and oral history, we see traditions being pushed to one side, with English as the language of choice and prestige that dominates the classrooms, the workplace and the media. One must bear in mind that the language is a link to the past and can mould the future. Trinidad's Folk Tales were originally in Patois. Many informants for this research project fondly recall hearing the elders in their community sing the songs and tell stories in Patois; even Cristo Adonis, peyai of the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community, admitting to hiding outside room and listening to elders speak Patois. His other memories include being beaten to learn a language, firstly his indigenous language, then Spanish and finally English. Patois is often sadly labelled "broken French" and seen as a weak language, one that lacks prestige, with no social mobility offerings. However, despite the forced migration of persons into slavery and negative attitudes about the language, many of the lexical items have survived and are in the use of the everyday speech of the average ethnically diverse Trinidadian. Trinidad continues with historical cultural expressions such as the annual re-enactment of the ritual of resistance, the Canboulay (Cannes Brulées) Riots of 1881, where the struggle for emancipation and the resistance to British rule provide an important link to our cultural and linguistic loss in the past.

Ethnolinguistic minority

Patois is an ethno-cultural language that played a pivotal role during the 18th and early 19th centuries. Its former importance as Trinidad's lingua franca in commerce and daily speech is being lost and regrettably, it will become extinct in the next few decades. Tracing the rise and fall of Patois, one observes that Patois is often overlooked in Trinidad's education system.

Intervention is needed urgently by Government with input from the Patois speech community, as Trinidad does not have clear language planning nor a policy to address the use and revival of Patois in Trinidadian schools. For a successful revitalization effort to occur there must be a balance of support from the government and the Patois speech community, as Patois was never used or taught in schools; along with a sufficient number of native Patois speakers. Further, language rights and language status are not mentioned in Trinidad and Tobago's Constitution, except to state that "fundamental human rights and freedoms are to be enjoyed by all regardless of race, colour, sex, language". In Jamaica however, the people were adamant about being able to use their Patwa and lobbied that the Constitution be amended because they felt a certain amount of discrimination based on the language they spoke, Patwa. This led to the creation of the Jamaican Language Unit at Mona, University of the West Indies, which designed a Patwa writing system; helps in educating the public on Patwa and ensures that nationals can access public services in both Patwa and English. Additionally, the Bible Society in Jamaica has translated the Bible into Patwa.

Knowledge acquisition

There are various ways to acquire knowledge. Indigenous persons know that music embodies the rich cultural heritage of a people and thus music is a way to teach lessons, impart knowledge and pass on the cultural riches (Dunn 2). Songs teach about culture, folklore, festivities, food and the language learner can recall the song's content easily because of the rhythm and repetition. Traditional folk songs expose students to a variety of topics and the associated vocabulary. It also helps to strengthen a community, as it is an art form that belongs to the community. This type of knowledge will have a positive and lasting impact on students

of all ages who decide to learn a language.

Second language acquisition can take place formally or informally. In the formal domains of schools and universities, the educational system facilitates the learning. Informal domains are usually at home, where the language might be transmitted intergenerationally, imparted from the elders to the younger generation.

Motivation is another factor that influences one's decision to learn a second language, and the issue of language prestige is taken into consideration. One usually uses a particular variety of language or learns a foreign language because of the overt prestige it has, that is, if one can eke some economic benefit from the use of the standard language.

Another point worth discussing is that some of the informants admitted that they learn a song and perform songs in a foreign language, but actually do not speak nor write the language. Teachers, students, Parranderos and Choir members alike, all admit to some level of disengagement in the learning process by engaging in learning by rote, that is memorizing the foreign language words on the sheet provided and do not dedicate much effort to the meaning of the words. Some persons who sing Parang in Trinidad do not speak Spanish, but render beautiful Parang songs. Similarly, in Patois, some young informants of the Paramin Folk Choir admit that they do not know the language; they learnt the words to the songs and sing it.

Song is a literary form and one of Trinidad and Tobago's most popular art form is that of Calypso. Other genres are Bel Air or Bèlè (performed as recent as August 2016 at a Tea Party in Talparo), bongo, cocoa dancing songs, folk songs, game songs, kalenda (stick fighting) songs and Christmas Crèche (Kwèch). Music can actively help to revitalize a language and makes students actively engage their imaginations and participate in class. As part of the real heritage

of Trinidad and Tobago, the lexical repertoire in these songs can assist with the teaching process and by extension the efforts to preserve Patois.

Hodge takes the culture beyond the traditional classroom and uses folk songs to teach Patois, with a highly interactive style to facilitate learning, where the students actively participate in the learning activities, since the focus is on the students. His approach is community-based language learning with a view to revitalization. On a recent visit to Talparo, one of the teachers Miss Michelle Mora explained that for her, the Patois learning experience with Hodge was an enriching one and has a lot of potential because the young persons in her area can really relate to and learn anything via song, dance and the playing of games. She is of the opinion that using traditional academic methods do not impact her students, due to their attitude and inability to write and laments that the Ministry of Education does not use an alternative to the traditional teaching methods. “The importance of active experience and meaningful engagement with sound to stimulate changes in the brain” (Locker 1) highlights the benefit of Hodge’s method in the classroom. Thus, the use of repetition when singing a song repeatedly enhances a person’s literacy and language performance.

The Gap Between

A study in Trinidad on the use of Community Language Learning, including folk songs to teach and revive the dying language of Patois is noticeably absent. As such, YouTube videos and research papers done by scholars and linguists on Patois and language revitalization in general were accessed for this literature review. The research was sociocultural and looked at language, culture, identity and society.

Research has not yet been done on the cultural aspect of the language revitalization, only

on the linguistic features of Trinidadian Patois, thus making this research unique due to the absence of the analysis of a specific revitalization method targeted to revitalize a language in the Trinidadian society based on its vitality status. The questionnaire used helped the researcher to understand how and why the Patois language is at a critical stage of endangerment, and since many previous studies focus on language vitality, this research zooms in specifically on Patois.

In looking at the current literature available, which is scarce, the only and most comprehensive work on Patois grammar is that of John Jacob Thomas in 1869. It is the earliest such study and still very relevant today and further work must be done in this area. Other literature include studies done on the revitalization of languages in Africa, Australia, Europe, the Americas, the Navajo Nation, the Pacific (Fishman) and Cambodia. Dr. Jo-Anne Ferreira has produced a plethora of research on Patois, and the language has been the subject of final year research projects, yet there remains a definite absence of study in the Caribbean area, specifically Trinidadian Patois.

In reviewing additional material from YouTube videos, Merle Hodge recalled that “British, Irish, Scottish songs” were taught in schools. They were songs that had no relevance at all to Trinidad. There was no room for Trinidadian French Creole folk songs. She also reminisced that her schoolteacher, her mother and her father spoke Patois and used many Patois expressions. However, the song learnt in school particularly “Manngo Vè” was translated from Patois into English, and the students learnt the song in English.

The research investigated the use of songs with a community-based language learning method in the revitalization of Patois; is it indeed effective in the revitalization efforts? Undoubtedly, Patois is threatened and the Patois speakers have linguistically assimilated as they

speak a variety of English mainly due to negative language attitudes. Some elders like Augustine “Fairy” Fournillier (born in 1916) and Kenneth Romaine of Paramin try to maintain their use of Patois and some elders have expressed regret that they did not teach Patois to their children when they were growing up. They do engage in some degree of effort is being made to do so now, possibly because of the positive awareness brought about by the community visits and efforts of Researchers.

Research Questions

The research will uncover answers to the methods used by Hodge with his near native proficiency in Patois.

1. What is the linguistic situation of the Patois language in Paramin and Talparo?
2. Are songs an important ingredient for success in revitalizing Patois?
3. For the past students, do they still use that language skill?
4. How useful was the music?

Methodology and Research Design

An ethnographic framework was used for the research since it is a qualitative design which explores cultural themes allowing for the investigation of Patois and for linguistic information to be collected on a small-scale basis. This framework encompasses conducting interviews and making observations in a natural manner, then documenting and analysing the findings via thematic analysis. This framework can be further narrowed down to a critical ethnography, investigating the reasons for language loss and interpreting the reasons for negative language attitude.

“Ethnographic approaches are particularly valuable when not enough is known about a context or situation” (Mackay & Gass 169). It is a research strategy which involves the

ethnographer collecting data by conducting interviews of a research group and observations are made about a community to facilitate the research process, allowing for a natural, “objective, unmediated reality” (Alsop 112). Clifford recognises ethnographic research as “inventions of cultures” (Clifford 1986:6). The research process continues with the writing up of a report.

The qualitative method uses narrative identity analysis; it is “research that examines the qualities of communication phenomena whereby data tend to be continuous rather than discrete and the emphasis is on description and explanation more than on measurement and prediction (Fitch, 1994 a p.32)”.

The quantitative method makes use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviewing techniques to get an in-depth understanding of what the language consultants think can be done to revitalize Patois, thereby describing and explaining their response in this first phase, rather than the use of measuring and predicting. The researcher will then analyse and measure the results by charting the responses. Thus, the research paper will use a mix of both qualitative and quantitative data. Observations and casual conversations also provided some useful insight. YouTube provided numerous of recordings of native patois speakers.

For this study, in-depth personal interviews with native speakers and both past and present students were held. A qualitative research design was used since it allowed the researcher to make independent observations and allowed for the participants’ free expression and personal perspectives. To suit the research purposes, this study was both a quantitative study using simple random sampling as well as a qualitative study incorporating in-depth, face-to-face interviews with open-ended questions to allow respondents to be free with their answers and not be limited.

As the research progressed, it became evident that there needed to be a broader focus to

the research as the preliminary interviews highlighted that songs on their own would not work as a revitalization tool, and the questionnaire was amended accordingly.

Sampling Method

The sampling method and techniques used to collect data were interviews with the language community and past students of Patois to obtain a result that would represent the situation accurately. Data collection was done during a series of field visits.

Respondents

Some of the respondents came one from one single location, Paramin and range in age from 7 to 95 years old. Some of the past students reside in various parts of Trinidad.

Timeline

The data was gathered principally on the weekend, since Hodge's class at Talparo took place on a Saturday from 3:00 to 5:00 pm and he visits Paramin occasionally on the weekend. Appropriate and convenient meetings times were scheduled with the past and current students bearing in mind people's schedules. For some of the past students, they preferred to complete the questionnaire online or via e-mail.

Analysis of data took place immediately after the meeting, interview or observation period.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was the tool used to gather answers on the socio-economic and demographic background of the informant, and individual opinion on their proficiency of Patois.

Data Collection

With a focus on the maintenance and use of Patois among the pockets of speakers and selected learners of the Patois courses offered by Hodge, the study was both a qualitative and a quantitative study of how Patois can be successfully revitalised by engaging a community-based approach with folk songs. The primary data source was in-depth one on one personal interviews. The interviews were recorded and the researcher used semi-structured questions.

Ethics approval was taken into consideration as the researcher engaged the principle of informed consent whereby all the informants were provided with a consent form, in recognition that “the speakers themselves maintain proprietary rights over their own linguistic and cultural data” (Austin 36). The participants were provided with a consent form, which is presented in the Appendix of the research paper.

Secondary data included books written on language revitalization, journals, conference proceedings and papers written by linguistics scholars and others.

Oral history was another data source, since many details have not yet been documented and there is a distinct need to continue efforts that document Patois’ past.

The data form was organized along thematic analysis.

For the research to represent as accurate a picture as possible of the linguistic situation of Patois, ethnographic data collection involved the election of data from oral interviews. The researcher played a double role as both the emic and etic, living at her home and shadowing and interacting with native speakers in their language. The emic role helped the researcher balance the immersion experience since as an etic or outsider, the researcher perspective was preserved,

whilst simultaneously being an emic or insider, speaking the language and engaging the speech community, with the help of the gatekeepers.

The language communities from which the researcher elicited data were made up of the persons who have a knowledge of the same language, Patois. They include past students of Structure and Usage of French Lexicon Creole at University of the West Indies and at the Caribbean Yard Campus, current students of Patois in Talparo, various members of the speech community in Arima like Cristo Adonis, peyai of the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community along with children and the elders of the agricultural community of Paramin.

The aim was to gather their thoughts, personal experiences and best memories of Patois language learning and to investigate the effectiveness of the use of songs by Hodge.

The students who completed the course at UWI and at the Caribbean Yard Campus are from different social backgrounds. Their ages vary from 29 to 70, both males and females and include, a kalenda fighter, a Faculty Dean, a person who does volunteer work, unemployed persons and University students. They possess varying degrees of abilities and motivation: some were dedicated and did not miss a class, while others were absent from many classes due to work and personal commitments.

The choice was made to study the past students who completed the entire course and the researcher has maintained regular contact with them. With their participation, gaining their personal experiences and understanding their language attitudes and how they will continue to preserve the linguistic aspect of their culture and their motivation as a current or past learner of Patois prove to be a valuable to the research project.

To be eligible, the participant had to be a fluent, native speaker of Patois or one of

Hodge's current or past students, as described above. Participants were recruited by various means and with the hope that one student will encourage another. An announcement inviting students to participate was made during Hodge's class and the researcher identified a gatekeeper (Giner and Kenneth Romain and Ms Mora) – “an individual who has an official or unofficial role at the site, provides entrance to a site, helps researchers locate people, and assists in the identification of places to study” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). The researcher was still considered an outsider to the community, despite past visits, thus the use of the gatekeepers Ginger Lopez and Kenneth Romain and Ms Michelle Mora provided the researcher with easier access to the research community, thereby gaining the community's trust and agreement to be interviewed and observed, since this can be complex and challenging at times. Unethical recordings did not take place, as permission was always obtained.

Data collection procedures included member checks using face-to-face in-depth interviews and video recordings of cultural informants and students. The sample size was nineteen persons, comprising a wide age group – from an eight year old to an eighty year old. The researcher has visited and interacted with the Paramin, San Rafael and Blanchisseuse communities starting in 2014 and Talparo was visited in Semester 1 to observe Hodge's class. The data collection took place at the beginning of and during Semester 2.

Data Analysis and Findings

Patois still manages to engage the interest of persons at Talparo and the linguistic community of Paramin despite their having to speak in Trinidadian English Creole and English, since they were not encouraged to use Patois in the past. The researcher has personally completed one such course and investigated if the Patois songs and associated vocabulary and meanings impacted other students' memories and lexical retention.

All respondents assessed their proficiency in Patois as "not spoken", implying no self-confidence and maybe even shows a low measure of ethnolinguistic vitality due to the inherent stigma that devalues Patois as the language of the poor and the uneducated. Kenneth Romaine was the complete opposite and always said "mwen enmen pale patwa" and he is sorry that he does not have many persons to talk with, especially since it is a dying language.

The findings show that the hypothesis of the research that the use of songs in a community-based approach as used by Hodge can help in the revitalization of an endangered language Patois which is in declining use. However, songs on its own will not be as effective. An elderly man, identifying himself as Victor, a retired English Language teacher, approached the researcher because of the Patois T-shirt she was wearing. He enquired about the Patois revitalization efforts and is of the opinion that learning a language from a book is too time consuming and not efficient and thinks that Patois should have been transmitted to the younger generation by the elderly speakers in the community. He hopes that Patois will be preserved, as it is important to Trinidad's history, culture, food and festivities and that it will not be lost.

It uncovered that another approach should be used in the revitalization process, one that targets the state of the vitality of the language. If anything, the use of songs solely could possibly lead to language fossilization given that many lexical items are still in use by the speakers of Trinidad English Creole. Additionally the Patois hymns sung during the Patois Mass are the result of the members of the Paramin Folk Choir learning the words of the songs; they are not competent in the language. Boisselle and Lopez admitted that they learn the words by rote.

Merle Hodge, in a YouTube interview is of the opinion that songs are retained and stated, “Sometimes you hear one and you know it’s been there all along” because “it is in our psyche somehow. It is embedded in the English Creole we speak... It is in our consciousness.” (Hodge YouTube).

These findings also highlighted that the younger participants are monolingual, but the elders were either monolingual or are bilingual. It was also noted that men are the majority of language informants and they are the bilingual speakers.

Intergenerational differences among language habits and practices, given that the younger generation thinks differently, are more curious and that the elders represent the old way of thinking because some of them still have some element of shame about Patois highlight the negative language attitudes and today’s observations show that Patois was reserved for use at home only, whilst English is used in formal domains.

Ms Jane Fournillier is of the opinion that Patois represents a reunion with the spirits and is a connection to her ancestors. As one of the translators of the songbook used during the Dimanche Gras Mass, she completely agrees that given the state of Patois, the studies must be furthered.

Discussion

Patois, a community-based language with 20,000 speakers around 1797 (Ferreira), has been part of the linguistic landscape of Trinidad since 1783, with its origins in the days of slavery and colonization. Ever since colonial days, language has been under threat, specifically Creole languages. Peter Mühlhäusler is of the opinion that “Linguists hide behind the shield of scholarly objectivity whilst the linguistic diversity that has been in existence for tens of thousands of years is being eroded at an alarming rate...” (Mühlhäusler 1996: 337-338). This heritage language is in limited use today and there has been language shift towards English, more specifically Trinidad English Creole.

In pursuit of the Patois Language and in trying to research how can it be revitalized, some light was shed on the negative attitude to Patois. One linguistic myth echoed by Kenneth Romain, one of the language informants, was that long ago, Patois was not considered a language, thus it was not worthy of being spoken or even learnt. Then there was a certain degree of linguistic shaming as it was said that Patois was a “cochon” or “hog” language, imparting a dismissive, negative attitude towards the language, seeing it as inferior, the language of the slaves, the uneducated and the poor and of no real economic benefit or providing any chance of advancement. A common view is that the negative view arose during the colonizer’s presence, where the use of their mother tongue, the Creole language of the slaves who were the minority group was suppressed and completely invalidated. This prohibition led to the reduced use of the language and the negative stigma associated with Patois; and this was encouraged by the

educational policy makers in Trinidad, since Trinidadian English Creole was suppressed at school.

This is exactly what happened with Patois and the Anglicization policy that nullified any chances of bilingual education to help maintain the use of Patois. In the context of language contact there is usually language shift that could result in the death of one of the languages. And in the case of Patois, this evidence of language shift is quite obvious, making language death the next logical step. Podesta Constantine, one of the informants, said that she does not speak the language, however, if she hears it spoken, she will understand what is being said. Additionally, evidence of language death was observed on various field trips when the driver could not remember the Patois word for child and even as the informants sometimes struggled to recall a Patois word. It is dying due to the lack of awareness, the lack of it being passed on to the younger generation and the lack of pride in the language. “Learning dominant languages additively, including English for everyone, is OK. It is subtractive dominant language learning (where for instance English is learned at the cost of the mother tongues, not in addition to them) that kills other languages”. (Skutnabb-Kangas 44)

We need to revitalize Patois. However, any revitalization initiative involves additional steps. It has already been established that the language is being documented and a low-key national awareness is coming of age, the community awareness in both Talparo and Paramin exists, living native speakers are well known to researchers and extensive material has been developed to teach the language and is in current use. All that remains is to determine precisely the language situation in terms of its level of vitality and then to develop a method (s) of revitalization or awareness according to the specific state of Patois in Trinidad.

The research highlighted that the songs are maybe reducing Patois to a ceremonial or a ritual language, since the speech communities identify with Patois because of their ancestors. Father St. Rose echoed this by stressing “Patois is the voice of your ancestors; you are the hope of your ancestors.”

Patois is mostly used during a cultural performance or religious setting and it was observed that the language is spoken by a few elders when they gather to chat outside the churchyard after Sunday morning mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe church, during funerals (*chanté pou moun ki mò*) when some Patois songs can be heard, during the *Dimanche Gras* Catholic Mass, during Carnival celebrations of Blue Devils, during Christmas when *Crèche* music is heard and when researchers visit the area in search of documenting the ever reducing native speakers. Some men gather at the *Kool Breeze* bar and chat in Patois also.

Hodge’s techniques including his use of folk songs will help to engage the learners more. His use of a community-based approach has promoted successful language learning and by extension assist in raising a national awareness of Patois. Moreover, it has produced an improved retention of the language, but as with any second language acquisition, more classes are needed to increase the numbers of speakers of Patois and to improve their proficiency in the language to revive this endangered language, undeniably on its way to inevitable death.

Another observation made that is worth mentioning is that more men spoke the language than women did and the role that women have in Creole languages. Women, as the up keepers of the household speak the standard variety of the language.

The elders are the speakers of the language that represent the old way of thinking and the youth think differently. Whilst it is true that the majority of the speakers are elders, the language

is not yet dead and there are some youth learning the language. One young man, 16, said that he can read the language and has learnt the prayers and songs, but he is not interested in learning Patois since he is too busy with secondary school studies.

Most people have fond memories of hearing the elders speak Patois and based on the results of the study, the Patois language revitalization could occur with the use of songs as a tool, but not on its own. There should be a website with audio recordings to help preserve the language, as Hodge does with YouTube. The audio recordings of native speakers will provide a lasting and easily accessible record of the language in its natural state. These and other all essential steps in the process of attempting to revitalize any language will be beneficial, including cultural performances and shows. Some informants were not overall too concerned with how it was done, but that it be done.

In April 2017, during a talk on the French-Lexicon Creole of Grenada, Marise La Grenade-Lashley echoed the sentiment that realistically, with less than 15 speakers alive in Grenada, the last custodians of the language, there might not be any hope of Patois being revitalized, but at least there will be a general awareness and the language will be documented since there is a website that accompanies her book with many video recordings of native speakers.

Marise La Grenade-Lashley sums up the situation concisely, by saying two factors are crucial to any language revitalization efforts, a corpus of speakers of the language and the support from a county's government.

Eintou Pearl Springer, former Poet Laureate and cultural activist is of the opinion that folk songs are secular and explains from her perspective that we have a “disconnect from our

language”.

It can be concluded that the same applies to Patois in Trinidad, given that both countries share a cultural, linguistic, political and historical ties and the language is disappearing as the number of native speakers die and the language is not passed on to the youth.

Conclusion

The research project had two objectives. The first was to contribute to the documentation project of Patois at the University of the West Indies via native speakers’ voice recordings and the second was to research if the community-based method using folk songs would be best suitable to help raise awareness with a view to revitalizing Patois. I was also able to gather some data on past and present language attitudes toward Patois.

It is evident that there is a heightened awareness of language endangerment and death and “the growing threat to the world’s smaller languages is real” (Fishman). This issue is echoed by both SIL and Fishman, so the time is right for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to take on the task of contributing to the preservation of Patois, thus “giving the language the respect it deserves” (Ferreira 2016). We live in a country where historically, languages have come in contact with each other, creating diverse ethnic backgrounds that exist harmoniously in an island that is just over 5,100 square meters. The dominant group of British colonizers has defined and imposed their own English language as the norm, as the symbol of status of prestige, while ridiculing Patois. They compounded the issue of weakening the language prestige of Patois by making English the official language in 1823. The consequences of this treatment is that the speakers are left with memories of Patois as a “cochon” (Peter Tardieu YouTube) or pig language, one that not worth speaking, leading to its eventual death since the

speakers did not see the need to pass the language on to the younger generation. Linguistic homogeneity was promoted, not linguistic diversity and one certainly saw traits of linguistic intolerance leading to death of the language.

Words in use in Trinidadian speech are of Patois origin such as toponyms, proverbs, idioms, lexical items during Carnival celebrations continue to be in use, but it appears from evidence that language shift is occurring at a faster pace as many Patois words and expressions are slipping away from the younger generation. Linguist Hubert Devonish, in a documentary on Trinidadian French Creole - *The Flavour of a Fading Creole*, leaves viewers wondering what will happen to Patois and if what lies ahead is a grim future for Patois. Maybe the future generations will ask “What is Patois”?

New research builds on work previously done by other researchers and thus it is hoped that when Patois is added to the extinct languages listing, at least some lexical and cultural traces will survive. The chance of reviving the language to a full stage of vitality is admittedly a remote possibility; nonetheless, it is a language worth saving and the efforts must continue to maintain Patois’ use, albeit limited.

Let us hope for this dream to come to fruition and that Patois will be revived, as happened with Hebrew in Israel, or that the low prestige associated with Creole languages will be done away with, as has happened with the official status of the languages of Ayisyen in Haiti and Papiamentu in Curaçao.

We are in the digital age, where the age of globalization and elevated consciousness dictates that we break down language barriers, where bilingualism is the norm and one hopes that the efforts and hard work of the interested parties, researchers and the speech community

will not be brought to nought. WE must use the Language. As Michel De Graff said at the 2016 SCL Biennial Conference, “Black Languages Matter, because all languages deserve respect”.

“If you lose your language, then you lose your identity” (Tulloch 7). You lose your cultural identity. Both identity and language are linked and language is an important factor to mark identity. If nothing is done, the language will be lost, because it is at a vulnerable stage presently. We as a nation must be proactive in promoting the language starting from the policy makers in the educational sphere, the linguists and the general population. As Michelle Mora explained, she will not wait for approval from the Ministry of Education to conduct her Patois classes at Talparo RC School. She is aware of the acute urgency to teach the younger generation the language and is successfully doing just that.

Patois, an endangered language, can be revitalized with the use of a community-based teaching method. However, further work certainly needs to be done with a sense of urgency because the speech community is quickly dwindling. The imminent language death is looming and all linguists, scholars, researchers, teachers and the linguistics student body must act now.

The researcher believes that Trinidad’s Patois will benefit from the establishment of a Language Planning Unit similar to the Unit in Jamaica to bring an awareness of Patois to Trinidadians and Tobagonians. So as we reflect on our past, let us make a plan to move ahead and to move forward to ensure Patois’ continued awareness and existence to defer its inevitable fate of death. We must all continue to research, document and spread the awareness. In the words of Marise La Grenade-Lashley, “Be proud of how you speak.”

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Appendix –Language Survey

The Role of Songs in Language Revitalization

Your name

Occupation

- 1) What is your primary language?
- 2) If a language other than English is your primary language, was this the language spoken to you by your grandparents or parents when you were younger?
- 3) Do you consider yourself fluent in any other languages? If so, which language(s)?
- 4) By fluent do you mean you can:
 - a) Speak and be understood by other speakers of the language?
 - b) Easily understand other speakers of the language?
 - c) Read and understand the language?
- 5) What is the country of your birth?
- 6) When were you born?
- 7) How long have you lived in Paramin (if born elsewhere)?
- 8) Have you lived anywhere else (apart from the country of your birth), and for how long?
- 9) Was music an important aspect of your home or school life as a child?
- 10) If yes, what type of music (for example lullabies, singing with family members, listening to radio or the gramophone, traditional folk songs, calypso, parang, singing in the church choir, taking music lessons etc.)?
- 11) Do you still listen to or participate in musical activities (study or perform) in your primary language? In any other language?

12) Do you participate in any other types of activities (view movies/ videos, teach, etc.) in any of these languages?

13) What do you think can be done to revitalize the language of Patois?

Please take a few moments to jot down any thoughts you have on the role of music in language learning, retention or revival.

Any input is appreciated as they will be of great benefit to my research.

Appendix 2 – Informant Consent Letter

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENT RESEARCH

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I, the undersigned, am invited to participate in a study entitled **Patois Revival Project**, which is being conducted by Dr Jo-Anne Ferreira and Linguistics colleagues¹ and students² of the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics (DMLL) of the University of the West Indies (UWI), St Augustine, and that the purpose of this research is to investigate and document Trinidadian Patois (also known as French Creole).

I understand and agree:

- that my participation in this study will entail interviews and recordings of reading and translating lists of words, and trying to recall as many as possible.
- that my participation in this study is voluntary, and that each participant will benefit from personally contributing to national heritage, that there will be no disadvantage to me for non-participation.
- that the project is of benefit to linguistics, cultural studies and oral history.
- that I may withdraw from the study at any time, and may refuse to answer any question I am asked.
- that I may participate anonymously or under a pseudonym. No record will be kept of my name if I wish to remain anonymous.
- that copies of my interview CD or DVD will be made for me as a participant.
- that portions of my interview may be played in linguistics classes or conference presentations, or transcribed in written reports, for demonstration purposes connected with linguistic analysis.
- that small 10-15 minute portions of my interview may be placed on YouTube (with subtitled translations into English where possible) and other social media for the benefit of the public, especially school children and university students.

Appendix 2 – Informant Consent Letter

- that additional copies of my interview CD or DVD may be made for back-up purposes.
- that the original recording and all copies of it will be accessible only to the DMLL team of investigators, will be used only for linguistic analysis (including in presentations as mentioned above), and written transcriptions may be made for teaching purposes or for linguistic analysis. Data from this research project may be published in future.
- that the original recording and all copies of it will be kept in Room 322 of the DMLL, which is locked when the DMLL team of investigators is not present, and will be available only to the present investigators.
- that I may contact Dr Ferreira at Jo-Anne.Ferreira@sta.uwi.edu or 662 2002 Ext 82036 if I have any questions or concerns relating to this project or to my participation in it.

By signing below, I certify that I have read and understood the above terms and conditions, and that I agree to participate in the Patois Revival Project.

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE

DATE

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

INVESTIGATOR SIGNATURE

DATE

TEAM LEADER

DATE

*Appendix 3 – Excerpts from Interview Transcripts***Kenneth Romain Age 75 - 12 March 2017**

I speak English, but when I was young, I used to speak Patois. Everyone in Paramin used to speak Patois.

Priest Father Lambert St. Rose – 26 February 2017 voice recording

You Creole speakers are an encouragement that there is still a deep fidelity among you as a children. Your tradition is the faith of the living dead. As Justoff Jean Pelligon says, “you have shown great resilience in keeping the voices and the souls of your forefathers alive and well. You have kept the faith and you the lives. You must never allow the faith and struggle of your ancestors to die in vain you will not silence their voice.

The Creole you speak today is not your voice; it is the voice of your ancestors resonating through you. You are the hope of your ancestors. Through you, I can still hear the echoes of the distant past in the hills of Paramin. They are alive in you. The songs that you sing. The dances that you dance. The colour of your skin. Are gifts that you received from them. There are gifts of onwards transmission for subsequent generations in which your ancestors will live.

You are today the stewards of yesterday’s generations the young ones today will be the stewards of your experience and your life. But if you let modernism belittle your heritage, then know that your generation, know that this generation will be held accountable for the death and the demise of the spirit of the ancestors. It is said, the colonizers initiated the destruction but you will complete it if your silence the voice of patois forever. Pass it on for it is your voice and I can hear the footsteps of your ancestors still walking, working, striving, suffering, rejoicing and praying in the hills of Paramin. Young people do not let anybody fool you and tell you that Patois is a derogatory language. It is the soul of your ancestors.

Andy –What should be done to revitalize Patois

The language of patois was once one the basic language of communication amongst colonies that had/have relationship with the period of French colonization. Patios as I know it was not a language to communicate directly the French but rather used as a communication tool (as a hybrid of French and the local vernacular) amongst locals. In this sense a new language was formed which was distinct to the region. The language had cultural, norms and other essential aspects in shaping the culture and lifestyles of Franco and Anglo Caribbean. Since the decline of French as a world language and the rise of English, the patios language has lost its foothold on many French influenced territories and an English based creole was preferred. Patios holds many discoverable mysteries within its syntax which, if not discovered can be become extinct as the language itself . Therefore, in order to prevent the rate of extinction overtaking the rate of discovery (of those mysteries), the language should be preserved. Several mechanisms can be use to do this. First, educate the public about the language. Second allow for the subject to be

compulsory as part of local school curriculum to introduce the language as part of its syllabus . Offer courses in conjunction with tertiary level institutions to allow for the study of the language. Also, awareness campaigns can be established with various activities that contribute to fun and learning of the language. Also the government should decide to fund traditional patois singing competitions with a huge prize money to encourage the participation and education of the culture.

Soyini

I think Government support to introduce Patwa classes in primary & secondary schools. Use of media to reinforce the language, sort of like what the late Holly Betaudier used to do on i95.5fm. Perhaps a more modern, youth oriented programme, especially if it can normalise the language for Trinbagonians of all ages.

Music can be a great tool in language learning, especially with repetition and demystification. So using Patwa lyrics in popular songs, as well as using music to help teach the language may be of great benefit

Alisha

Have festivals and more shows creating more awareness

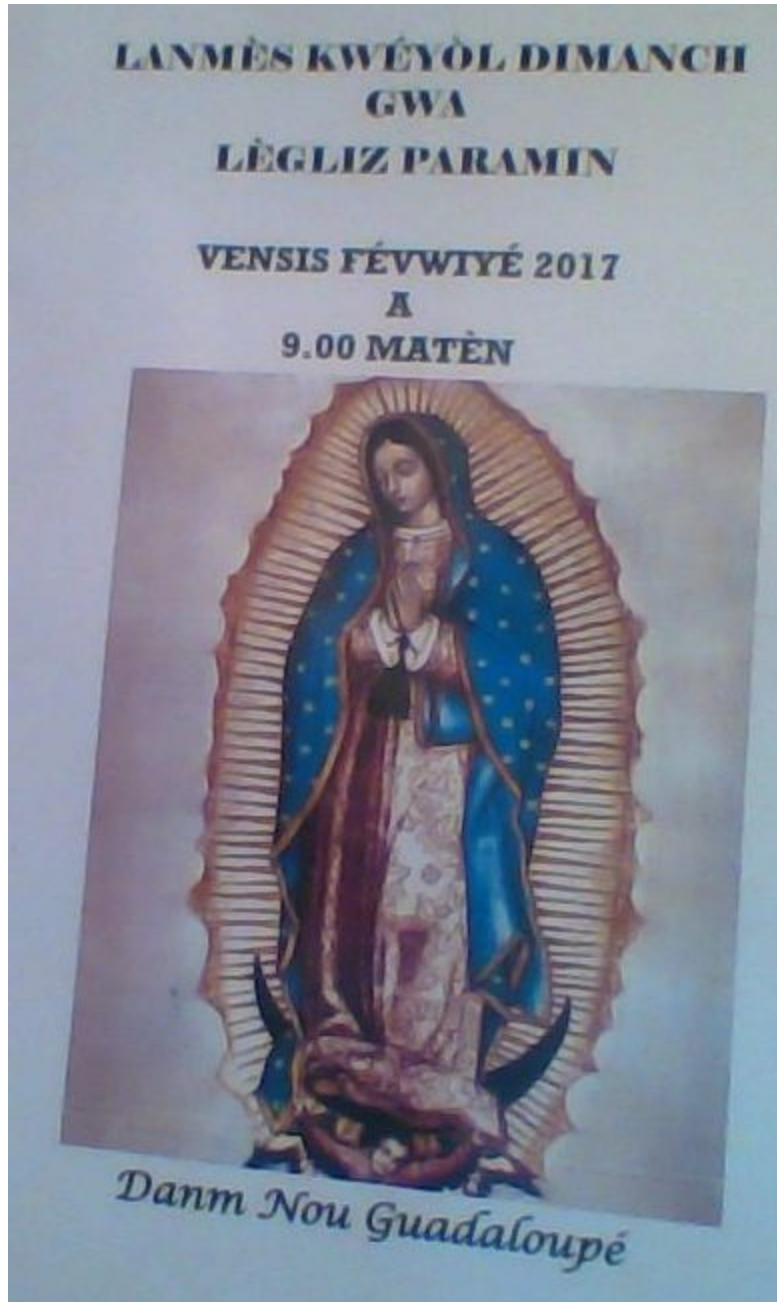
Sarah

I believe that influence is a strong strategy to employ in cases like these. If popular local artistes can begin singing in Patois (especially if the song is a hit), the wider public (and world at large in the case of internationally known local artistes) will regain that exposure to and knowledge of the language. Also, tv6 if they can do a news special on the Patois language, that can help, I believe. Plenty people watch tv6. (If it's happening, it's on 6!) Next idea, introducing it in the primary schools to be part of the curriculum. And in secondary schools as well. At this point, I don't think many people are interested in learning it, and some may discourage others from learning it, so I think at least with the music, don't tell the public what you're trying to do. Just do it and see the results. I also think a good strategy would be to implement the music idea first, and when people are warm to it, then introduce it in schools. However, it may not be a good idea with regards to time, considering that the language is endangered.

Another idea, jail people for stigmatizing the Patois language and discouraging others from learning it ☺ (joking)

Music is a sure way to popularize things, especially if a well loved artist sings about a particular thing/issue, egs: The Black Eyed Peas – Where Is The Love?, Marvin Gaye – What's Going On?, Michael Jackson – Man In The Mirror, Ras Shorty I – Watch Out My Children, and many other songs provoked people to think about their actions and mindsets. Music is a powerful instrument that can be used when trying to provoke the minds of citizens. I believe the use of music in teaching/reintroducing people to language can be VERY effective.

Appendix 4 – Song Book



Appendix 4 – Sample page from Song Book

Damn Nou Guadalupe
Our Lady of Guadalupe

You are the fountain of my life

Ou se lasous de laví mwen

Under your shadow and in your protection,

Amba lonbraj`w épi protèksyon`w

I fear no evil, no pain, no worry

Mwen pa pé mal, non doulè, non kèsote

CHORUS:

O Maria, O most merciful mother,

O Mawi, Mama de anpil lapé

Gentle Virgin, with the name Guadeloupe

Lavieg afab, avek non GUADELOUPÉ

On a mountain, we find roses in winter

Ah la mon, nou touvé wose a livé

All the world, has been touched by your love

Toute la mondla, touché pa lanmitye`w