



THE RISE AND FALL OF FRENCH CREOLE IN TRINIDAD WITH SPECIAL MENTION OF PATOIS RETENTIONS

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Abstract

French Creole is a language that has been widely studied in the Caribbean by scholars such as Mervyn C. Alleyne and Michel DeGraff (Reid 2012). Many countries such as Trinidad & Tobago, St. Lucia and Haiti have their own distinct variety of French Creole with the language being an official language in the Haitian territory. However, unlike St. Lucia and Haiti where French Creole is thriving, the language is severely endangered on the island of Trinidad. French Creole was once the lingua franca of the island, so why is this language now endangered? Over time from the mid twentieth century to present day, the language has lost its prevalence in society. This research project aims to investigate two main research questions: – How or why the language lost its status as a language of wider communication on the island as well as if there are any lexical retentions from the Patois language known to the younger generation aged 18-40.

In the small coastal town of Cedros, the language of Patois was once spoken as the common tongue for many of the town's inhabitants. Today, only a handful of elderly population have retained the language, many choosing not to share or transmit the language with their children and grandchild due to negative attitudes towards the language which emerged even more in the mid-twentieth century. For this research project, the researcher was fortunate to interview a pair of siblings who shared their knowledge or lack thereof of the Patois language.

This study follows a mixed methodology as interviews and questionnaires were used to gather data. The interviews provided insight into language attitudes whereas the questionnaires provided insight into language retention. It should be noted that this study does not provide any solutions to language preservation or revitalization. This study falls

under the category of sociolinguistics and focuses mainly on language retention and language attitudes.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank those who participated in the research of this project and the dearly departed Mrs. Bravo who made me fall in love with Patois at an early age.

Key Terms

Anglicisation Policy – a policy whereby rights and privileges would only be afforded to those who spoke English and practiced

Cedros – town located in South Trinidad

Language Attitudes – a persons or societies opinions, ideas and prejudice towards language.

Language Retention – the ability to hold onto or know lexical items from a language

Lexical Items – words belonging to a language.

Patois – Trinidadian French Creole

TrinEC – Trinidadian English Creole

TFC – Trinidadian French Creole

TSE – Trinidadian & Tobagonian Standard English

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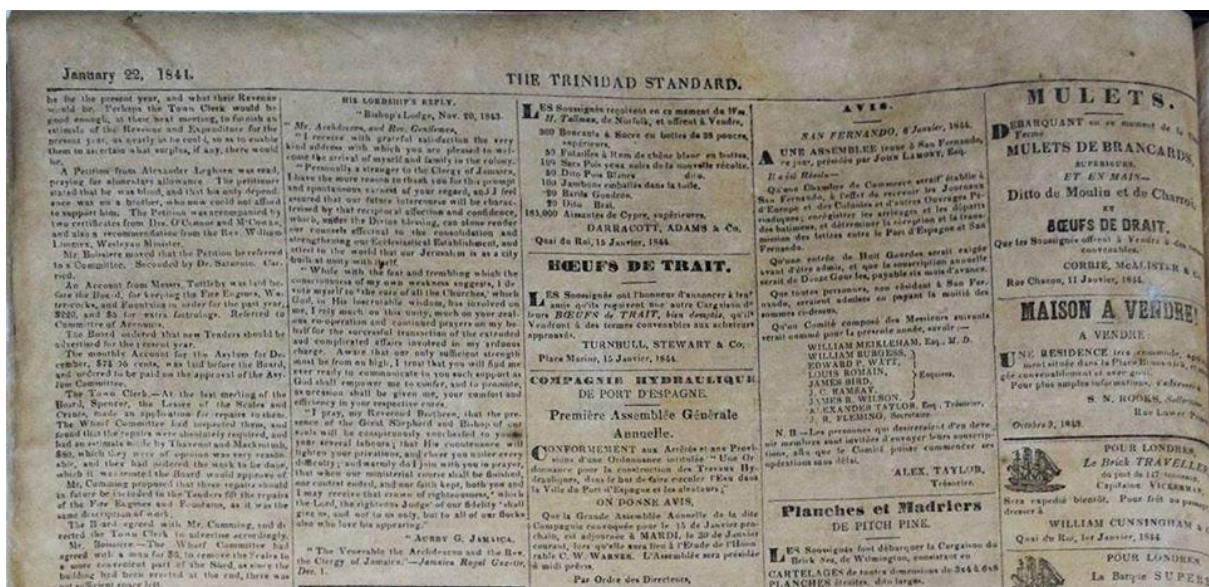
Chapter One

Introduction

In recent years, Linguistics researchers have been conducting language preservation and language conservation projects throughout the Caribbean for endangered languages. One such language where works have been conducted would be Trinidadian French-Lexicon Creole (Ferreira and Holbrook 2002, Ferreira and Braithwaite 2013, and Ferreira 2015). Patois, to its native speakers, is an endangered language on the island of Trinidad in the Caribbean. Woodberry defines an endangered language as one which is likely to become extinct in the near future. However, that was not always the case as Trinidad was once a predominantly French Creole and French-speaking territory.

Even though the island was never officially governed by the French, there was a vast French influence on the island. The French arrived on the island in two waves, the first in 1777 and the second in 1783 via the *Cedula de Población* (Cedula of Population). The Cedula was a Spanish act (as Trinidad was a Spanish colony at the time) which allowed the French planters and merchants to not only to settle on the island but also cultivate the land. They brought with them their language(s), culture, religion and most importantly, enslaved workers. It was from the enslaved workers of the French planters that Trinidad would be introduced to the language of French Creole (Patois). Patois comes from a French word traditionally meaning “rough or uncultivated speech”, but here the name refers to a language that is a product of contact among various African and European languages. Planters and the enslaved population created this language somewhere during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade as a means of communication.

Studies conducted by researchers have shown that there was a negative stigma attached to the language during the late 19th and early 20th century (hence the use of the word *patois*), which ultimately led to its decline. Researchers such as Ferreira and Holbrook agree that language shift as well as attitudes towards language resulted in this stigma being attached to Trinidadian French Creole. During the mid-nineteenth century, the education system in Trinidad was established and for a period of time, the denominational secondary schools in Trinidad such as St Joseph's Convent and St Mary's College (CIC) were taught in both French and English, much like the newspaper at the time *The Trinidad Standard* which was published in both languages. During this time period Trinidadian French and Trinidadian English would have been the language of the upper-class elite population and the educated population in Trinidad. To have spoken Patois, one would have been viewed and uneducated. For all intents and purposes, French was used as the official language in Trinidad up until 1823.



Picture 1 (a) Showing *The Trinidad Standard* in 1841.

In this study, the researcher used personal interviews with native speakers of TFC in the hopes of investigating why their language was not passed on amongst the generations. Additionally, their attitudes towards the language were recorded and a table of common French Creole terms which we all unknowingly utilise in our everyday speech will be illustrated in the form of a chart. For this study, the personal interviews focus on elders from Cedros, a small coastal village located on the south-western peninsula of the island. Cedros is a quiet fishing village with an even smaller population of native French Creole speakers as compared to the hillside village of Paramin. Additionally, I used questionnaires filled out by my peers with the hope to investigate whether or not persons in my age group are aware of common TFC terms.

It should be noted that this study does provide some solutions to help revitalise the language, but the main objective is to bring awareness to the fact that it is an endangered and dying language of the island. This field of Linguistics is referred to as Historical Linguistics which can be defined as, “the study of the history and development of languages” (Oxford Online Dictionary). According to UNESCO, an endangered language can be defined as a language that is “in use in fewer domains, use fewer of its registers and speaking styles, and/or stop passing it on to the next generation” (UNESCO 2017 qtd. in Kapashesit). It is also noted by UNESCO that there is not one particular factor that results in a language becoming endangered but rather a cumulation of multiple factors, which will be highlighted in this research paper in regard to the fall of TFC. UNESCO lists nine major factors which result in language endangerment (UNESCO 2003), all of which can be used to describe the fall of Trinidadian French Creole.

Chapter Two

Socio-Cultural, Political and Economic Background of Trinidad in the 1800s

The socio-cultural and political situation of the island during the 1800s was summed up nicely by Dr Eric Williams in his book *The History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*, where he noted that Trinidad was “governed by the Spanish but ruled by the French.” What was once the lingua franca of the island, TFC (Trinidadian French Creole) is now barely spoken by elders in the rural communities of the island such as Paramin, Blanchisseuse and Cedros (Ferreira and Holbrook 3). This research project aims to highlight the rise and fall of Trinidadian French Creole from the early years of the Cedula to the present time.

Once the lingua franca of the island TFC is no longer the most used language on the island. It is no longer the common tongue used for business such as market vendors, fish vendors and small business owners such as mini marts for everyday speech or the language or the main method of communication amongst Trinidadians. While the language is not considered to be extinct in Trinidad, it is severely on the brink of dying. With fewer native speakers and with cultural stigmas attached to the language, it is not being passed on from generation to generation. It will, if nothing is done to help further the current revitalization efforts, fall prey to language death adding to the amassing “graveyard for languages” that is present in the Caribbean (Alleyne).

One main reason for the negative attitudes attached to the language of Patois would be the Anglicisation Policy of 1845 where Charles Warner, a former attorney general of Trinidad, declared in the Legislative Council (the governing body for Trinidad at the time) that “English rights and privileges should only be given to those who would take the trouble

to learn English and to bring up their children in an English way” (Wood 1968). The main aim of this policy was to undermine the French upper class in Trinidadian society. Warner wanted to eliminate the ‘Frenchness’ that plagued a British territory. Therefore, in order to have received an education in Trinidad after 1845, one would have been taught in English and would have been expected to have a grasp of the English language to use at public facilities such as at the hospital and in the courts of law. Ferreira noted that there were Trinidadian French Creole texts (books, newspaper articles) from as early as 1869. A pioneer in this regard was John Jacob Thomas who wrote the first Trinidadian French Creole Guide in 1869.

What is noteworthy is that many, if not all, of the native speakers for the language are well into their seventies and beyond. It is important for linguists to continue to document the language urgently due to the fact that many of the elders of the communities where the language can be found, such as along the coastal regions of the island as well as the hidden hilltops of the northern and central ranges, have not passed on the language to the current generation. Thankfully, for this study, we were able to interview two native speakers of the language from the small coastal town of Cedros and we were able to enquire as to why they did not pass their children the language. It is my hope that this research will provide insight into why this language is dying on the island and how we can stop the language from fading completely out of existence from the use of simple everyday phrases, names, and sayings.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

This project seeks to answer the questions of “how and why did French Creole in Trinidad fall.” Once the lingua franca of the island, meaning that it was the most spoken language amongst all, it is now classed as an endangered language variety. While many linguists have conducted research on endangered languages, in the Caribbean, research on endangered languages is still in the relatively early stages, with very few linguists having had the opportunity to document and preserve Caribbean-based languages. With many Amerindian ethnic groups located deep within the Amazon rainforest, accessibility in terms of transportation to those tribes is limited and expensive. In addition to accessibility, many tribes are wary of outsiders and their motives for linguists attempting to document their language. It is important to know what causes a language to become endangered and eventually extinct.

Ferreira and Holbrook noted that while Trinidad never belonged to the French Crown, during the late 1700s, the population of the planter class was majority French. This meant that in order for the planter class to communicate with the enslaved Africans, a Creole language had to be utilised and, over the course of approximately 120 years, Trinidadian French Lexicon Creole or Patois was used to communicate. Today, fewer than 3% of the population speak TFC. However, the number of French Creole speakers in Trinidad is larger than 3% as there are other speakers who converse in regional varieties of the language such as St. Lucian, Dominican and Haitian French Creole. Furthermore, in a 1997 article also written by Ferreira entitled, “A brief overview of the sociolinguistic history of Trinidad and Tobago,” the breakdown of the island’s linguistic history is presented stating that the island

was, “socially and culturally dominated by the French Creole speakers.” It was only after Spain conceded the rights to Trinidad over to the British did the attitudes towards the language become negative, as the British tried with all their might to oppose the French and French Creole languages, with French being relegated to the home, some businesses, education and print media, and Patois, already stigmatised vis-à-vis French, became viewed even more negatively. It should be noted that a vast majority of the research compiled and published for TFC has been conducted in Paramin. For this project, the researcher ventured to the coastal village of Cedros to conduct interviews with native speakers of the language as there was very little information about that area of Trinidad and their attitudes towards TFC.

While conducting this research project, it was important to conduct research on what makes a language endangered and also what causes a language to become endangered. The 2003 UNESCO document on endangered languages speaks about the causes of language endangerment such as cultural and educational subjugation from internal forces such as the community and one’s family which directly relate to the question as to why TFC has become endangered. Further research showed that it is of the view of many sociolinguists that speakers of the minority language for a particular place would be pressed into learning and speaking the regionally or nationally dominant language as to not be looked down upon by their peers. For example, persons of the minority language would choose to learn the socially dominant language so that they would not be viewed as uneducated or of a lower social class. Both this article by UNESCO and Mesthrie 2002 were very important while conducting research as both provided insight as to why a language could become endangered.

Further readings suggested that in order to better understand why the language became endangered on the island one would have to understand the historical,

socio-economic and socio-cultural landscapes of the island, particularly in the early twentieth century. During the early twentieth century in Trinidad, there were education movements for people of colour. Education was no longer limited to the “white-man’s child” but to those who could afford it. English was and still is the official language of education in Trinidad. To be able to speak and write English in the early twentieth century meant that the person was educated. To speak the language of Patois, in the view of many, meant that one was uneducated thus parents ensured their children learnt English over Patois. Therefore, while this research essay is from a linguistic perspective, there will also be various themes of history in the form of societal values, norms and traditions presenting themselves.

Chapter Four

Methodology

This study aims to answer the fundamental question as to why French Creole has become endangered in Trinidad. Throughout this research, various methods of both qualitative and quantitative data were used to gather data for analysis. Methods such as one-on-one interviews, use of records and recordings from previous studies conducted and case studies were implemented to answer the research question. With respect to the one-on-one interviews, the researcher sourced two willing participants, both of whom speak TFC and have been living in the general area of Cedros village for their entire lives. These interviews were conducted with the intention of understanding why TFC was not passed on to their children. Notably in this family, the researcher wanted to investigate why all the males of the family learnt the language, but the females were barred from speaking the language. Additionally, to this, the researcher wanted to investigate what impact speaking TFC had on their lives. A questionnaire, consisting of mainly open-ended questions (see Appendix 1), was developed and utilised in order to ensure the appropriate questions were asked of the interviewees.

4.1 The Researcher's Interest in the Language

Having spent a semester studying St. Lucian French Creole at The University of the West Indies the researcher as well as Endangered Languages of the Caribbean, the researcher was given two opportunities to divulge into the culture of French Creole where her interest into why this language became endangered was ignited. In one visit to the hills of Paramin on a class field trip, the researcher was immersed in the countryside lifestyle for a day. The church of Our Lady of Guadeloupe was packed with visitors for Sunday morning church

service, and at the entrance was *Bien vini (Welcome)* adding to the church's steep culture in Patois.

4.2 Language Interviewees and Data Collection

The main interviewees for this research project were a pair of siblings who lived in a home for the elderly in Cedros, Trinidad. Due to the distance and then ultimately COVID-19, the data for these interviews were collected via telephone and Skype conversations. The interviews began with the interviewer asking simple demographic questions such as age and gender. The questions which followed were simple open-ended questions which allowed the siblings to discuss their experiences using the language, language attitudes as well as whether or not they have noticed TFC words being used by the younger generation. The elder of the two knew the language fluently while the younger, his sister, only knew bits and pieces: words and phrases. She was not able to conduct a full conversation in the language as she had not been taught the language while growing up. She was able to retain the bits that she knew from listening to her brother speak with their father and uncles. For the purpose of anonymity, the brother in this research project would be referred to as Paul and his sister as Marie.

4.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis for this research project began with reviewing the interviews conducted. Two interviews were conducted via telephone conversation and the final was conducted via a Skype call with the help of Paul's grandson. These interviews were meticulously recorded and transcribed in hopes of answering the research questions. The researcher's insights were noted after each interview. For the second research question, "Are people aware of Patois

words in everyday speech?”, the data collected were tabulated and graphed for easier analysis.

4.4 Sample Size for Investigating Language Retention

While interviews would help to understand a person’s feelings and thoughts on the topic of TFC and most importantly the language attitudes they were faced with, the researcher also looked towards common names in the domains of culture, flora and fauna which have their root in TFC to investigate language retention. The researcher would like to highlight that while the language is endangered, aspects of it are still very much used in our society today. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, the language is ingrained into the very fabric of our society, from the names of common dishes to music, art and culture. Thus, it is the researcher’s aim to construct a table with the most common sayings and words which she would have come across during this study. Further to this, the researcher shared this list with some of her peers via a Google Questionnaire (see Appendix 2) to investigate whether they knew these words belonged to the French Creole language. This allowed the researcher to answer the question of “Do people know that we use Patois words in our everyday speech?”. For this section of the case study, a sample group of ten people between the ages 18 to 40 were chosen.

Chapter Five

Findings

The findings conducted from this research are split into two parts, the first – social attitudes and language attitudes, the second – language retentions amongst the younger generation ages 18 to 40 (those chosen were younger than our interviewees ages 72 and 75.) Winer and Boos noted in their article *Agouti to Zandoli: Fauna in the Dictionary of Trinbagonian* that the linguistic heritage of many words from the Trinidadian vernacular was via enslaved Patois-speaking people from Haiti, Martinique and other predominantly French Caribbean territories. As such, speakers of St. Lucian French Creole and Trinidadian French Creole share similarities in words and meanings.

5.1 – Language Attitudes towards Patois

Peter Garrett defines language attitudes as, “the study of how people judge and evaluate themselves and others based upon usage of different varieties.” In relation to Patois, researchers agree that the shift in attitude towards the language was a gradual shift. It did not occur overnight. For approximately four decades after the arrival of the French to Trinidad, French was used as the primary language for education and law (Ferreira “Trinidad’s French Creole”). It was not until 1814 that the British Governor to Trinidad started advocating for English to be used in the courts and as the official language of education and political policies. In 1851, with the official introduction of English into the public-school system the decline of French and as a result, Patois began to occur (Ferreira *idem*).

Paul noted that while growing up his father and uncles would encourage the boys of the village (mostly his cousins) to speak Patois. It was the language they would use when

fishing and liming with each other; however, once a woman entered the room the men would switch from Patois to Trinidadian English Creole. His father and uncles often referred to Patois as the language of the men. When asked why the language was not taught to the women of the family, he responded that the women of the family needed to portray education and elegance in order to marry into the 'right kind of family'. Marie commented on this when the topic was brought up in her interview. She laments the fact that her mother placed emphasis on learning child-rearing and domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning and learning to plant a garden. She was never given the opportunity to learn the language and was only able to pick up words and phrases which were most commonly used amongst the women such as *shado beni* and *topitamboo*. The words which she was able to pick up were words which we still use today for various flora and fauna.

Patois is a language that is deeply embedded in our culture. We use words which have originated from this language when telling stories of folklore, celebrating Carnival and making national dishes. There is no doubt that when the interview was conducted with Marie that she resented the fact she could not learn the language. When Paul was asked whether he taught his children the language the answer was no; he explained that during the 1960s when his children were going to school, their mother placed great emphasis on learning Trinidadian Standard English. Paul explained that some of his friend from the village did pass on the language to their children when they were young but years of not speaking the language have rendered them unable to carry on conversations like they once were able to with the elders of the community

5.2 Language retention amongst the generations aged 18–40

Since the age brackets for this project were defined, the researcher split the age groups of the respondents into two categories for easier analysis 18–29 and 30–40. There were five (5) respondents in each category. An equal ratio of 5:5 for male and female split into both age groups. This cross-generational study allows for simple analysis into language retention. Researchers have noted that older generations are more likely to use the Patois word as opposed to the Trinidadian English or English Creole word. By analysing the answers provided, the researcher can determine if there is language retention across the age categories.

5.2.1 Age Group One (18–29)

Within this age group, four out of the five respondents were noted to have a tertiary level of education with the fifth having attained secondary level education. They declared themselves to be of Indo-Trinidadian descent (80% - 4 persons) and one person was of mixed heritage. One male respondent stated to have not known what Patois was; however, when he completed the questionnaire, he was able to identify 40% of the words from the questionnaire (as shown in Appendix One). The respondents in this age group knew between 40% and 95% of the lexical items.

| Respondents | Number 1 | Number 2 | Number 3 | Number 4 | Number 5 |
|------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| % of Patois Retentions | 40% | 50% | 95% | 50% | 55% |

Table 5(a) Percentage of Patois Retentions for the age group 18-29

Respondents numbers 3, 4 and 5 were all female and showed a greater understanding of the Patois words but not by much as numbers 2 and 4 were able to state an understanding of 10 words each. There was no notable difference from the Indo-Trinidadian respondents as compared to the respondent with mixed heritage. Respondent number 3 showed the greatest understanding of Patois and acknowledged that she knew someone who spoke the language. The only word she was unable to recognise was *Mama Glo*. For this project, the researcher used words taken from Winer's *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad and Tobago*. The lexical items were chosen from the broad categories of Folklore, Mas, Flora and Folk Medicine and Fauna.

| Domain | Folk Lore | Mas | Flora & Folk Medicine | Fauna |
|------------------------|-----------|-----|-----------------------------|-------|
| % of Patois Retentions | 80% | 95% | 56.6% | 46.6% |

Table 5(b) Percentage of Patois Retentions for the age group 18-29.

In the Mas category, all respondents had a very good grasp of the lexical retentions and their meanings with only one male being unable to identify the word *Ramajay*.

| Domain | <i>Jab Molassie</i> | <i>Fete</i> | <i>Santimanitay</i> | <i>Ramajay</i> | <i>J'ouvert</i> |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| % of Patois Retentions (Mas) | 100% | 100% | 100% | 80% | 100% |

Table 5(c) Percentage of Patois Retentions in the Category ‘Mas’ for the age group 18-29.

The second highest ranking was the category Folklore for which the researcher chose two main lexical items. Respondents were all able to acknowledge knowing the term *Papa Bois* but fell short in knowing the folk character *Mama Glo*. While *Papa Bois* is still widely spoken of in terms of folklore in Trinidad, stories are rarely being told about *Mama Glo*. The respondents were able to identify *Papa Bois* as being portrayed as the protector of the forested areas in Trinidad but were unable to identify *Mama Glo* as the protector of the rivers. Three of the participants in this case study were able to identify *Loup Garou* as the man-wolf, when the other two participants were told the secondary name for the *Loup Garou* was *Lagahoo* they also expressed knowing what the lore was but they were unaware *Lagahoo* and *Loup Garou* were one and the same. *Soucouyant* and *Douen* were also easily recognised by this age group as an ‘old lady-looking vampire’ and ‘possessed lost children’, respectively.

| Domain | <i>Papa Bois</i> | <i>Mama Glo</i> | <i>Soucouyant</i> | <i>Douen</i> | <i>Loup Garou</i> |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| % of Patois Retention (Folk Lore) | 100% | 20% | 100% | 100% | 60% |

Table 5(d) Percentage of Lexical Retentions for Folklore in the 18-29 age group.

Following Folklore, Flora and Folk Medicine was the third highest ranking category. In this category, everyone was able to identify *Shado Beni* as a type of seasoning used when preparing meals. The lexical item which gave participants the most difficulty was *Cinnamon Leaf* or more commonly known as *Bay Leaf*. After they answered the questionnaire the

researcher informed the participants of the common name for which they all showed recognition. *Topitamboo* is a fruit which is boiled before being eaten, and 40% of the participants were able to recognise this word as either something they have heard about or have eaten in the past. Both *Shandilay* and *Zebapeak* are traditional folk medicines for fever and cough, and over 50% of the participants recognised both these words and knew what they were used for.

| Domain | <i>Topitamboo</i> | <i>Shado Beni</i> | <i>Cinnamon Leaf</i> | <i>Shandilay</i> | <i>Zebapeak</i> |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| % of Patois Retention | 40% | 100% | 20% | 60% | 80% |

Table 5(e) Percentage of Lexical Retentions for Flora and Folk Medicine in the age group 18-29.

Following Flora and Folk Medicine was Fauna which showed that many persons were not aware of the Patois word for some animals. *Jep* was the most recognised lexical item in this category with 4 out of the 5 participants being able to identify it was a flying insect. Only one person out of the five participants was able to successfully identify *Zandoli* – big garden lizard, *Jangi* – water snake or freshwater eel, *Mapepire* – venomous snake. This showed a general lack of knowledge amongst this age group for the Patois lexical domains for animals.

| Domain | <i>Zandoli</i> | <i>Jep</i> | <i>Shinny</i> | <i>Jangi</i> | <i>Mapepire</i> |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
| % of Patois Retention | 20% | 80% | 40% | 20% | 20% |

Table 5(f) Percentage of Lexical Retentions for Flora and Folk Medicine in the age group 18-29.

5.2.2 Age Group Two (30–40)

This age group was easily the most challenging to get participants for the questionnaire. However, the researcher was able to find two males and three females to participate. Three of the participants had attained tertiary level education while two of the participants attained secondary school education. All participants were of Indo-Trinidadian descent. In this age group, the researcher noticed a significant increase in the number of times a participant was able to rightfully identify a lexical item. Across gender, it was noted that females in this age group knew more Patois words than the males who were able to identify between 65–80% of the words.

| Participant | Participant (Male) 1 | Participant (Female) 2 | Participant (Female) 3 | Participant (Male) 4 | Participant (Female) 5 |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| % of Patois Retention | 80% | 95% | 95% | 65% | 90% |

Table 5(g) Percentage of Patois Retentions for the age group 30 – 40

With regard to the various domains of Folk Lore, Mas, Flora, Folk Medicine and Fauna, it is easy to see that this age group knew significantly more Patois words than the previous age group 18-29. Mas, Flora and Folk Medicine tied for the most noticeable category each attaining 92% with fauna being the least recognisable category at 80%.

| Domain | Folk Lore | Mas | Flora & Folk Medicine | Fauna |
|------------------------|-----------|-----|-----------------------------|-------|
| % of Patois Retentions | 88% | 92% | 92% | 80% |

Table 5(h) Percentage of Patois Retentions for the age group 30-40

In the Mas category, two persons indicated they did not know the word nor the meaning of *Santimanitay* and *Ramajay*, whereas everyone in this age group was able to clearly identify *Jab Molassie*, *Fete* and *J'ouvert*, compared to the previous age group 18–29 where four of the participants were able to identify five out of five lexical items.

| Domain | <i>Jab Molassie</i> | <i>Fete</i> | <i>Santimanitay</i> | <i>Ramajay</i> | <i>J'ouvert</i> |
|------------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| % of Patois Retentions | 100% | 100% | 80% | 80% | 100% |

Table 5(i) Percentage of Patois Retentions in the Category 'Mas' for the age group 30-40

On the same level with the Mas category for this age group it was noted that Flora and Folk Medicine was at 92% as compared to 56.6% of the previous age group. In this age group, all participants were able to define *Topitamboo* as a root crop to be boiled before eating. This is significant as compared to the 40% who were able to recognise the fruit/crop from the previous age group. This age group showed significant retention in this category. In this category when asked if they knew the meaning of the words *Shandilay* and *Zebapeak* the

participants spoke fondly of memories where their mother would often make ‘bush tea’ for them to drink when sick. Only one person did not know the meaning of either *Cinnamon Leaf* or *Shandilay*.

| Domain | <i>Topitamboo</i> | <i>Shado Beni</i> <i>/ Jardin</i> <i>Benit</i> | <i>Cinnamon</i> <i>Leaf</i> | <i>Shandilay</i> | <i>Zebapeak</i> |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| % of Patois Retention | 100% | 100% | 80% | 80% | 100% |

Table 5(j) Percentage of Patois Retentions in the Category ‘Flora and Folk Medicine’ for the age group 30-40

Following Flora and Folk Medicine, Folklore was the third highest category for lexical retention. In this section it was clear that once again *Mama Glo* and *Loup Garou* were the odd ones out. However, as compared to the age group 18-29, two more persons were aware of the folklore surrounding the *Mama Glo*.

| Domain | <i>Papa Bois</i> | <i>Mama</i> <i>Glo</i> | <i>Soucouyant</i> | <i>Douen</i> | <i>Loup</i> <i>Garou</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| % of Patois Retention | 100% | 60% | 100% | 100% | 80% |

Table 5(k) Percentage of Patois Retentions in the Category ‘Folklore’ for the age group 30-40

The least recognised lexical group in this age group was fauna. In this section, all five participants were able to correctly identify the words *Zandoli* and *Jep* with four persons being able to recognise the word *Jangi*. With regard to the word *Mapepire*, they were able to

identify it was a venomous snake with one participant even providing the more common name for the animal the *fer de lance*.

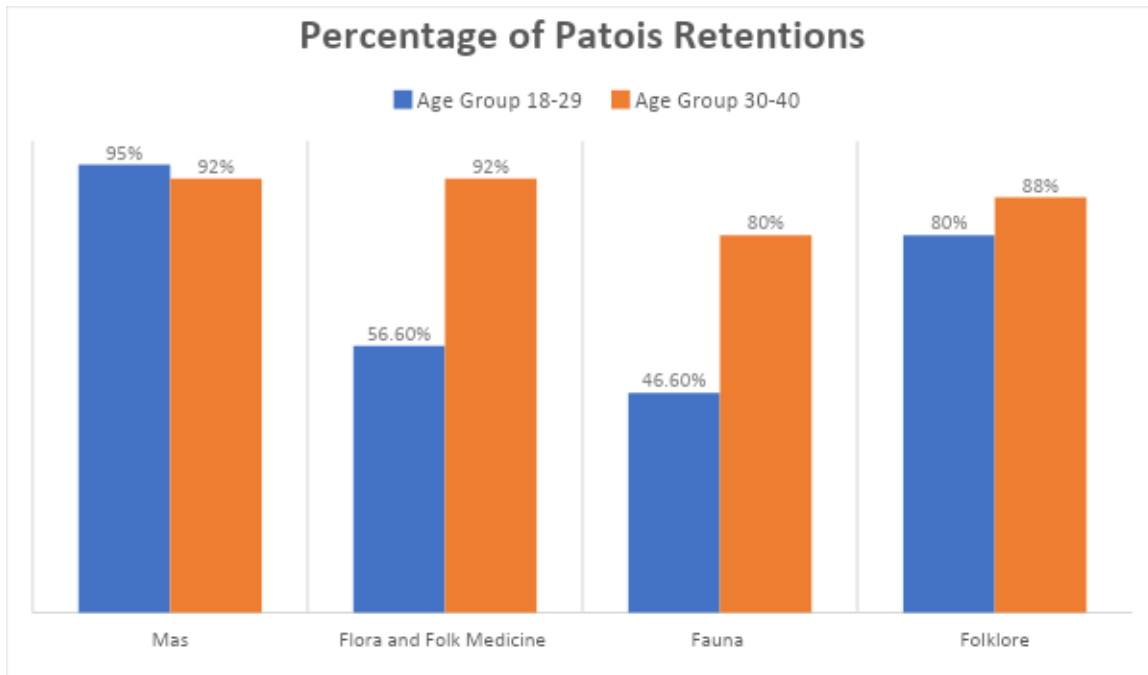
| Domain | <i>Zandoli</i> | <i>Jep</i> | <i>Shinny</i> | <i>Jangi</i> | <i>Mapepire</i> |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|
| % of Patois Retention | 100% | 100% | 60% | 80% | 60% |

Table 5(l) Percentage of Patois Retentions in the Category 'fauna' for the age group 30-40

Chapter Six

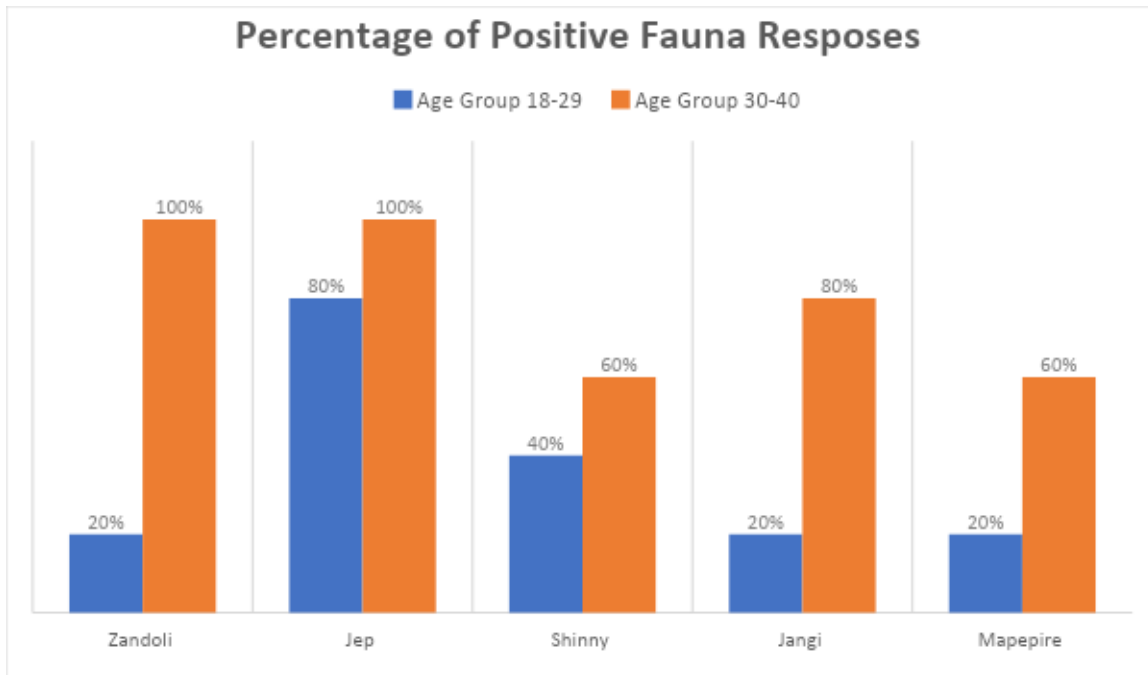
Discussion

The first part of the discussion for this research paper is focused on the lexical retentions of the studied age groups as presented in the tables 5 (a) to 5 (l) with the aim of drawing parallels between the age groups. In chart 6.1, one can note that the category of ‘Mas’ held the highest number of positive responses. The culture of Trinidad is one referred to as a ‘Mas Culture’. Carnival was introduced to the island's shores via the French planters and their enslaved workers. The very essence of Carnival was born from the French and their enslaved workers. Knowingly or unknowingly, when Carnival time comes around, Patois words and phrases are most noticeable in the Trinidadian lexicon. From *Dimanche Gras* to re-enactments of the *Canboulay Riots*, Carnival-based Patois words will live on for years to come. Following the Mas category was that of folklore with 80–88% positive responses acknowledging that the participants are aware of the lore surrounding the names of *Papa Bois* and *Loup Garou*. For the flora and fauna of Trinidad, it was noticed that the lexical retentions for certain plants and animals were not known. This could suggest that these lexical items are fading out of use.



Bar Graph 6.1 – Percentage of Patois retentions for both age groups

From the data provided in graph 6.2, it is evident that the Patois language is fading out of use. These words would have once been the main lexical items used when referring to the animals. Only one person from the age group 18–29 was able to identify the words *Zandoli*, *Jangi* and *Mapepire*. This was the same person for all three words, and she noted that she was in contact with Patois speakers and knew nineteen out of the twenty words which were asked in the questionnaire.



Bar Graph 6.2 – Percentage of Positive Fauna Responses

In addition to language retention, the researcher noted from the interviews conducted that there were negative attitudes towards both speaking and not speaking the language of Patois. Marie, in particular, showed a level of resentment having not been able to learn the language whereas her brother and male cousins were allowed to learn Patois. She deeply regrets the missed opportunity and noted that sometimes when her brother is conversing with old friends, she is taken back to her childhood remembering when her father would speak Patois to her uncles. She is able to understand most of the common words and can speak simple sentences but cannot conduct a full conversation in the language.

Paul mentioned he did not pass on the language to his children because his wife insisted they get a “proper” education and by that he meant that they were to converse in Trinidadian English. He also noted that when he was a young boy, the women of the village would encourage him to not speak ‘pig Latin’ as it would have made him look uneducated and therefore undesirable for marriage. Now that he is older, he wishes to pass on his

education about the language and will willingly speak to anyone that is interested in the topic.

He spoke very fondly of the language and with nostalgia as he remembered his childhood days.

Chapter Seven

Limitations

When research for this project began, it was originally Paul being the primary interviewee. However, in February 2020, Paul suffered a minor stroke and lost some speech functions. He can still carry on conversations. However, his speech was slurred and his son who was the researcher's primary contact for this project gave full permission to use existing materials which he had recorded when his father was in better health. This impacted the second telephone interview the researcher conducted. Marie became the primary focus of the second interview. The distance from St. Augustine to Cedros made it difficult for the researcher to meet the interviewees in person; however, Paul's son was very helpful and made plans for the telephone and video calls as neither Paul nor Marie were able to operate the technology.

With regard to the questionnaires for lexical retentions of Patois, some persons admitted to having Googled some of the words they did not know. This impacted the validity of the results. In addition to this, the age group 30–40 was very reluctant to partake in the exercise. Originally, the researcher intended to use a sample size of twenty; however, the researcher only managed to collect six questionnaires for the 30–40 age group.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

There is no doubt in the researcher's mind that Trinidadian French Creole is a dying language. This language, much like other languages in the Caribbean, faces extinction due to aging populations, negative attitudes towards the language and most importantly, community pressure to assimilate into mainstream language. As noted in this research project, the main interviewee Paul, did not teach his children the language in hopes they would have got a better education by speaking Trinidadian Standard English and to an extent Trinidadian English Creole. Words derived from Patois are fading out of use and being replaced with English lexicon. While many Patois words are thoroughly embedded into Trinidad's culture in terms of Carnival, food and topography it is evident to the researcher that if nothing is done to preserve the language, it will die.

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Appendix One

Hello Good Day

My name is Rashtee Amelia Bridgemohan and I am a BA student at the University of the West Indies. I am currently pursuing a double major in Linguistics and History. This questionnaire is part of my final year project where I am to investigate if you know any Patois words!

1. Age:

20-29 30-40

2. Ethnicity:

Mixed 2 African Indian Chinese Caucasian Other

3. Education:

Primary Secondary Tertiary Other _____

4. Gender:

Male Female

1. Do you know what is Patois? If yes, how would you describe Patois?

2. Do you speak Patois? How would you describe your proficiency?

3. Do you know anyone who speaks Patois?

4. Do you think Patois is important in Trinidad culture?

5. Do you know any of the following words? If yes, please give what you think would be the meaning of the following words.

| Category | Word | Meaning |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|---------|
| Folklore | <i>Loup Garou</i> | |
| | <i>Papa Bois</i> | |
| | <i>Mama Glo</i> | |
| | <i>Douen</i> | |
| | <i>Soucouyant</i> | |
| Mas | <i>Jab Molassie</i> | |
| | <i>Fete</i> | |
| | <i>Santimanitay</i> | |
| | <i>J'ouvert</i> | |
| | <i>Ramajay</i> | |
| Flora & Folk Medicine | <i>Topitamboo</i> | |
| | <i>Shado Beni</i> | |
| | <i>Cinnamon Leaf</i> | |
| | <i>Shandilay</i> | |
| | <i>Zebapeak</i> | |
| Fauna | <i>Zandoli</i> | |

| | | |
|--|----------|--|
| | Jep | |
| | Shinny | |
| | Jangi | |
| | Mapepire | |

6. Are you surprised by knowledge (lack) of certain Patois terms?

Appendix Two

Glossary for words in Questionnaire

| Category | Word | Meaning |
|--------------------------|--------------|--|
| Folklore | Loup Garou | A werewolf – half man, half wolf. |
| | Papa Bois | Protector of the forested regions and all its wildlife. |
| | Mama Glo | Protector of the rivers and waterways found in Trinidad – Wife of Papa Bois |
| | Douen | The spirit of a child who died before being baptised |
| | Soucouyant | An old hag like a vampire |
| Mas | Jab Molassie | one of several varieties of devil mas played in Trinidad Carnival |
| | Fete | To party |
| | Santimanitay | Last word in extempo compositions of old-time calypsonians, often full of picong |
| | J'ouvert | Monday morning mas often played with mud and paint |
| | Ramajay | To party and dance |
| Flora & Folk Medicine | Topitamboo | Edible white-fleshed tubers, white flowers, long greyish leaves |

| | | |
|-------|---------------|--|
| | Shado Beni | Culantro, a medicinal herb used to cure gas pains, sprains, colds and fevers. / Also used for seasoning meats and fish |
| | Cinnamon Leaf | Also known as Bay-Leaf it is a spice often used in making cocoa tea. |
| | Shandilay | A herb often used for tea when one has a cough. |
| | Zebapeak | Medicinal herb with a bitter taste juice from crushed leaves are used to cure fevers also known as 'Wonder of the World' |
| Fauna | Zandoli | A large ground lizard |
| | Jep | A small flying insect |
| | Shinny | A type of caterpillar which is hairy, if the skin comes into contact it can cause irritations to the skin |
| | Jangi | A water snake (eel) |
| | Mapepire | A venomous snake found in Trinidad, also called Fer-de-lance |

Appendix Three

Oral Interviews via Telephone

Paul

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. Where do you live?
4. Did you always live in Cedros?
5. How did you learn Patois?
6. Do you have children? If yes, did you teach them Patois?
7. Why didn't you teach them Patois?
8. Do you have siblings?
9. Does your sister speak Patois?
10. Why didn't your sister learn Patois?
11. Do you regret not having taught your children the language?

Marie

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. I was informed by your brother that you never learnt Patois, do you regret this? If yes, why?
4. Do you know any Patois words, phrases?
5. If you had the chance when you were younger would you have learnt the language?