DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 159 921 FL 009 773

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TITLE Bilingual Instability as a Result of Government Induced Policies.
PUB DATE Aug 78
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the World Conference of Sociology (9th, Uppsala, Sweden, August 14-19, 1978) ; Best copy available

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Acculturation; Biculturalism; *Bilingualism; *Creoles; Cultural Interrelationships; Cultural Pluralism; English (Second Language); *Language Attitudes; Language Maintenance; *Language Variation; *Linguistic Borrowing; Official Languages; Political Attitudes; Political Influences; Political Socialization; Public Policy; Sociocultural Patterns; *Sociolinguistics; Spanish
IDENTIFIERS Costa Rica; Jamaica; *Limon Creole

ABSTRACT

Limon Creole, spoken on the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica, Central America, descends from Jamaican Creole and is similar to it in many respects. While Jamaican Creole is undergoing a process of decreolization (i.e. the speech community has reached a post-creole status, in De Camp's terminology), Limon Creole exists in the context of a prestige language, Spanish, the national language of Costa Rica, which is not related to Limon Creole. Although English remains as the standard of the acrolect variety, Spanish, as the official language effectively reinforced by the government of the country, affects the creole, particularly the basilect-mesolect variety. The specific aim of this discussion is to suggest some ways in which Costa Rican Spanish exerts influence on the lexicon, semantic range, and syntactic structures of Limon Creole. Since "native" white socio-cultural pressures are such that immediate acculturation of the Negro Limon Creole minority to the Spanish majority is politically desirable, the government has not made any efforts to foster bilingual education. Thus, while Limon Creole is now interspersed with Spanish loans, a prediction can be made as to how this on-going process might affect the future of this unstable bilingual situation. (Author/NCR)

BILINGUAL INSTABILITY AS A RESULT OF GOVERNMENT INDUCED POLICIES

Costa Rica, one of the five republics of Central America, has harbored a Negro minority for over 400 years. This now protestant and, since the 1800's, English-creole speaking population has lived mostly on the lowlands of the Atlantic coast (Limon Province) while Costa Rican society and culture--white, Catholic, and Spanish-speaking--tends to be considered as existing only in the highlands (Meseta Central). While the African Negro of the colonial period (1570-1870) disappeared by miscegenation, the West Indian Negro of the late XIX and early XX centuries (mostly Jamaican peasants) settled in Costa Rica to work for the United Fruit Co. Their acculturation to Costa Rica was slowed by the de facto control of English-speaking foreign investors who, in order to strengthen their own power, preferred to foster separatism of their plantation and railroad workers from the rest of the country. English, had, therefore, a prominent position in the life of the region, and Jamaican Creole was the communicative medium in family and communal life of the greater part of the black population of Limon. This gave rise to a local creole continuum of variation, Limon Creole. However, after the Company withdrew from the Atlantic Zone, and as a result of the 1948 Revolution, the unity of the Limon Creole-speaking Negro community starts to break down giving way to a rise of native Costa Rican prestige and power groups. Once outside the plantation system the Negro began slowly to adopt Costa Rican customs; he became a citizen of the country, sharing national sentiments, and he learned to speak Spanish.

Limon Creole can be best described as a creole language-standard language continuum, with Limon Creole (LC)--which originally developed from Jamaican Creole--at one end, and Standard Limon English (SLE) at the other, existing in the midst of a Spanish-speaking population. What this means is that the creole and standard "poles" are not separate languages but reference points of the same system, against which language variability can be assessed. Speakers can manipulate their speech so that it becomes more formal (and closer to Standard English, SE) or more informal (and therefore closer to LC). In other words, although social conditions have changed since the times of plantation agriculture and African slave importation (for Limon, via Jamaica, especially), the creole language is still socially stigmatized while the standard toward which it tends to decreolize enjoys social approval and prestige. However, the Costa Rican linguistic situation differs from the Anglo-West Indian pattern, where the target language of the majority of the population is English . Because the official language of the country is Spanish (S), SE has begun to lose its place in the acrolect of the creole continuum and it is slowly being replaced by Spanish.

Today, as strong feelings of nationalism permeate the country to oppose "imported cultural dominance," there is a greater influence of Costaricanization in Limon than ever before. At the same time, the commercial vacuum created by the Company's demise , the opening of some new employment opportunities,and the completion of the first San Jose-Limon

highway have drawn numerous contingents of Spanish-speaking whites to the region.[1] Consequently, Limon Creole has undergone an impressive delimitation of its social and communicative functions. Although almost everybody who is black speaks LC-SLE, many Negroes also speak Spanish. (It depends upon, among other variables, the age of the speaker.) If one considers that the creole speaker is a kind of multilingual community in himself, the Limon Creole-speaking minority of Costa Rica is especially interesting as an instance of multilingualism. Besides differing from the non-creole bilinguals in that Limon Creole speakers use the two component structures (Creole and Standard English) in a more concurrent and mixed, less sequential and discrete way, their sociolinguistic diversification is further complicated by the newly-acquired command of Spanish. Since exposure to the latter has only occurred in the last 30 years, this multilingual situation could prove to be a valuable test-case for observation of the process of language-maintenance or language-shift, as the case may be.

Perhaps one could accept the finding of Bryce Laporte (1962:6) that three generations operate in Limon: the first is Jamaica-oriented, speaks English and is highly agricultural; the second speaks some English and some Spanish, and is engaged in widely varying occupational patterns. The third generation is Costa Rica-oriented; Spanish is the language of prestige, but LC continues to be its mother tongue. Nowadays the presence of loans from Spanish into LC and from LC into Spanish is quite noticeable. LC speakers are in the process of restructuring their rules, incorporating more and more elements of the prestige language into their grammars.[2] What the implications are for the future of LC is hard to predict. Might it be that LC will undergo an intensive Spanish relexification thus giving rise to another pidgin/creole? Or will LC speakers shift to Spanish altogether? Only a systematic outlook that takes into consideration purely linguistic factors on the one hand, and various measures of the socio-cultural processes associated with habitual language use on the other (both aspects based on theory tested on hard data) will establish the future degree of LC maintenance or the shift to Spanish in the Limonese situation.

As generally supported by sociolinguistic theory and as most successfully proven by Labov (1966), some of the elements that trigger variation, i.e., the choice of alternative linguistic forms, come from conditions external to the speaker and others from internal states.[3] It is likely that speech content and variation is almost totally the result of an interaction between the intent of the speaker, the strategies he adopts to attain his goals, the demands and requirements of his "conditions of state" and the social situation (Edwards, 1970:235). This means that a linguistic analysis, in order to delineate the significantly related features that trigger variation, should be linked to an integrated theory of cultural behavior. By the same token,

> Just as an understanding of social-behavior-through-language must depend upon a general

> theory of society so the understanding of language maintenance or language shift must depend upon a theory of sociocultural contact and sociocultural change.
>
> Fishman, 1972:122.

The interaction of many ambivalent factors (e.g. urbanization or ruralization, nationalism or de-ethnization, religious revitalization or secularization, among many others) determines the stability or change in language behavior. Their contributing presence is so complex that a typology of contact situations may also be required before greater regularity among such factors can be recognized (Fishman, 1972:123). Only then will the most relevant processes in a particular contact situation be determined not just by mere impressions but by theoretical backing.

In Fishman's classification of societal bilingualism, the study of multilingual instability, such as the Limonese (LC-S), exemplifies a situation in which bilingualism obtains, whereas diglossia is generally absent.[4] He characterizes the situation as transitional (1972:102-3), and proceeds to explain how changes are achieved through industrialization. His comments apply to the history of the bilingual case under consideration here as well:

> members of the speech community providing productive manpower rapidly abandoned their traditional sociocultural pattern and learned (or were taught) the language associated with the means of production much earlier than their absorption into the sociocultural patterns and privileges to which that language pertained.
>
> Fishman, 1972:104.

Consequently, the massive dislocation of traditional values and norms resulted in a meshing of the home-domain language and school and work-domain language. What has happened to the LC speaker is that the impact of the new model (Spanish, in this case) has been such that the languages and varieties he formerly kept apart--maintaining these roles compartmentalized--have now come to influence each other with different degrees of interpenetration. Basically, then, the systematic study of the LC-S-speaking population, which uses more than one speech variety for out-, of, intra- and inter-group purposes, requires that we establish the relationship between degree of change or stability in language-usage-pattern on the one hand, and of ongoing psychological, cultural, and social processes on the other.

Of the two topical subdivisions mentioned above, the first one, linguistic usage, constitutes the basic datum to be analyzed towards determining the drift of the languages. As linguists, we believe that a language is a system made up of a series of subsystems, such as the phonemic, morphological, and syntactical; an examination of the changes in the subsystems of the language under the influence of the corresponding subsystems of another language should yield information about the relative stability of the language under consideration. This is not enough, however, to arrive at full proof conclusions regarding language maintenance or shift. Sociolinguists are just now beginning to make available instruments to measure the "degree of bilingualism" and the "location of bilingualism" (to use Fishman's terminology) along sociologically relevant dimensions. Until they are effectively applied, we can only engage in mere speculation. However, even though a solid theoretical framework for assessing multilingual contact situations is yet to be developed, enough is known to usefully speculate on the LC situation and its possibilities in the future. Such speculation can identify the more likely results of the LC-Spanish contact and, perhaps, suggest some directions for building the desired theory.[5]

In a study of linguistic interference and code switching, I have discussed elsewhere (Herzfeld, 1978 b) what usually happens to plurilingual speakers: their grammatical choices are made at the start of a sentence. The use or lack of use of many items, the application or suspension of many rules depends on linguistic choices which account for interrelationships in underlying rules (Bickerton, 1975:135), while socio-cultural pressure and rhetorical devices account for surface forms. In the Limonese situation, if the bilingual speaker speaks Spanish, most of the borrowed rules from English are phonological and syntactical: few are English lexical items. If the grammatical choice is English, this choice will determine the language of inflections and function words, while the bilingual speaker will clutch at lexical similarities, even to "false friends," and to syntactic similarities between the two languages, even though they may mask deeper level differences. Semantic segregations do not show any structural break between LC and S, since the source and target grammars do not differ much. The speaker starts by introducing formatives that are similar in both languages. While the basic grammatical choice is LC-SLE, Spanish formatives are mostly introduced at sentence or lexeme boundaries. As the dependency on Spanish grows stronger--particularly for today's mesolect members of the continuum--Spanish forms are added while SE forms are dropped or distorted into patterns closer to S.

Adopting a format suggested by Fishman, Table I summarizes the source of variance in the habitual use of languages by a LC-S speaker. While prior to 1948 most production and comprehension ratings register communications in LC and a few in SE (employer-employer relationships; religious exchanges) and Spanish was absolutely ignored by the black minority, after 1948 the ratings show a high encroachment of S in most situations, except

those that age and ethnic composition of the group, as well as solidarity of religious beliefs would have otherwise. Reading and writing, on the other hand, which were only done in SE before 1948, have now completely given way to reading and writing in Spanish by the younger generations, while SE is reserved exclusively to middle-aged and older people's ability.

A few more observed generalizations can be provided although they would require stricter presentation in the future. Children typically become bilingual at a very early age. They learn LC at home and S from their white friends in the neighborhood and in kindergarten. They play in LC if they are all Negro, and in Spanish if there are white, or other minority children, in the group.[6] At home, conversations are usually held in LC. However, S borrowings and even dialogs are frequent under certain circumstances. Schooling calls for a strictly Spanish-speaking situation during its entire duration (primary and secondary levels), with the exception of English as a Second Language classes (which meet three times a week, for 45-minute periods, at high school level only). Breaks, however, are conducted in the language dictated by the ethnic composition of the group. Although SE is still the predominant language used at Protestant church meetings, all churches nowadays have at least one celebration in Spanish as well: and vice versa, the Catholic church which traditionally holds mass in Spanish, provides daily English mass too. Meanwhile, Spanish is the language of instruction, mass media, trade, official and legal business, public service, politics. Official transactions are always began in Spanish (at the bank, town hall, courts of justice, government agencies) but if there is any need to explain, speakers will lapse into LC if they are both black.

As to the second topical subdivision, the psychological, social and cultural processes that are associated with ascertained changes in habitual language use, further refinement in cross-cultural perspective is also required to posit valid diachronic relationships. A few points may be made, however, at this time. "One result of century-old oppression of linguistic, ethnic, racial or religious minorities is that the minorities internalize the bad connotations imposed on their group."(Dressler.Wodak-Leodolter, 1977:6). As a result, LC speakers' attitudes toward their own language is negative (as shown by the results of a questionnaire administered in the field in 1974), and they often avoid admitting membership in the LC speech-community. On another order of things, the economic and social forces of industrialization and the national ideology of a steady burgeoisie have resulted in promoting the standardization of socio-economic conditions and civilization. These developments go hand in hand with the expansion of the national language and probably with disfavoring the use of minority languages--unless government policies expressly defended their existence. I have already mentioned the change undergone by the Atlantic region from the time in which English was favored by the

TABLE 1

SOURCES OF VARIANCE

INTRAGROUP LC - S USAGE

MEDIA	OVERTNESS	DOMAINS	ROLE RELATIONS	SUMMARY RATINGS Prior to 1948	After 1948
Speaking	Production	Family	Husband-Wife	LC	LC-S
			Parent-child	LC	LC-S
			Grandparent-grandchild	LC	LC
			Other:same generation	LC	LC
			Other: different generations	LC	LC-S
		Neighbors	Friends	LC	LC-S
			Acquaintances	LC	LC-S
		Work	Employer-employer	SE	S
			Employer-employee	SE	S
			Employee-employer	LC	LC-S
		Religion	Priest/minister-congregation	LC	LC
			Congregation-minister	LC	LC
	Comprehension	Family	Husband-wife	LC-SE	LC-S
			Parent-child	LC-SE	LC-S
			Grandparent-grandchild	LC-SE	LC
			Other: same generation	LC	LC-S
			Other: young generation	LC	LC-S
		Neighbors	Friends	LC	LC-S
			Acquaintances	LC	LC-S
		Work	Employer-employer	SE	S
			Employer-employee	SE	S
			Employee-employer	LC-SE	LC-S
		Religion	Priest/Minister-congregation	LC-SE	LC-S
			Congregation-minister	LC-SE	LC-S
Reading	Production	Home	Father	SE	SE-S
			Mother	SE	SE-S
			Grandparents	SE	
			Child	SE	S
		School	Father	SE	SE-S
			Mother	SE	SE-S
			Grandparents	SE	
			Child		S
Writing	Production	School	Father	SE	S
			Mother	SE	S
			Grandparents	SE	
			Child		S

Code: SE= Standard English
S = Spanish
LC= Limon Creole

United Fruit Co.--it was then taught in small private English schools staffed by Jamaican teachers--to the emergence of centralization of state authorities, which brought about an intensive acculturation campaign of minorities to the functional expansion of the national norms, including the standard language. All innovations introduced, reinforced by mass media and related to the new standards (political power, social advance associated with power groups, mixed ethnicity behavior) are imbued with prestige only to be obtained by acquiring the " new" cultural traits and by abandoning local traditions and languages. All of these facts need to be considered by further sociological studies. Counting on systematized knowledge of this sort, the challenge of predicting the direction of language change would be met on a less impressionistic basis.

Studies along the lines suggested here could provide an interesting set of hypotheses which can be tested in the context of dying languages. Interestingly enough, LC is, in a sense, in a privileged position, different from other English creoles whose superstrate language is SE (as was mentioned earlier). Unlike Jamaican Creole, for instance, which is being decreolized (gradually losing its creole character and coming to resemble the standard language of the acrolectal end, SE), LC could survive as such, at least for some time to come. If LC were restricted to be used in very specific domains, the loss of functions and of diversification could reduce it to a state of functional monostylism (Dressler, 1972:454ff; Dressler and Leodoloter, 1973:346 ff.), i.e., to a state where other languages start. In this case a situation of diglossia would prevail and the minority language would cease to be utilized for primary socializations. Eventually, it would be on the way to become a dying language. Another possibility would be the development of a new pidginization/creolization process, as a result of intensive Spanish interference, thus maintaining the LC basis. According to Bickerton (1975:164-200), what would happen is that a constant process of restructuring would be present throughout generations: a gradual transmission of surface forms, with constant restructuring of the original system, establishing an unbroken chain at the underlying semantic level. On the other hand, a unitary system of this sort could also lead to the total adoption of Spanish, i.e., language shift, whether or not LC is given up altogether at the same time.

It would seem that in the Limonese case, if SE remains the acrolect live relexifier of LC, the latter will not die. That is, however, not an easy accomplishment, particularly because of the growing impact of Spanish civilization in the Limon region. It is likely that if it comes to a point at which parents no longer consider it necessary for their children to learn LC (because it has low prestige), and the children no longer feel motivated to acquire LC because it is not related to technical skills, modernity, youth, material success , education, then LC will be on the way out. However, Weinreich states appropriately,

> Many 'obsolescent' languages have received new leases on life through a rejuvenated language loyalty among the speakers and have made the prediction of the death of language a hazardous business.
>
> 1974:108

There is always the possibility, of course, that a new government's policies might decide to establish teaching English as a Second Language to primary school children. In that case, LC might take a "new lease on life." However, if the school rejects the mother tongue of an entire group of children, this attitude can be expected to suppress their language and to seriously and adversely affect those children's concept of themselves, their parents and their homes. Therefore, academic interest in the interaction between these languages (LC and Spanish, in this case) has an importance which goes well beyond the mere perfecting of sociolinguistic theory: it is essential to the provision of guidelines for social action; more specifically, for educational action in respect to language. The LC instance could provide a magnificent laboratory experience in the years to come.

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August 17, 1978

NOTES

1. The ethnic composition of Limon Province is estimated as follows: 42 percent Negroes, 46 percent whites, 12 percent Coolies, Chinese and Indians. These figures are only approximate, however, because since the 1950 Census all data showing racial differences were omitted from official documents in Costa Rica

2. I have shown elsewhere (Herzfeld, 1978 a) that nouns are the most frequent borrowings from Spanish into ~~LC:~~ ~~next~~ come general expressions and verbs, in that order. General modifiers are the least often adopted.

3. Specifically, studies of this nature were pioneered by Parsons, 1940; Davis and Moore, 1945; later they were undertaken, among others, by Gumperz, Bright, Hymes, Ervin-Tripp, Crockett, and Bernstein.

4. Bilingualism is essentially a characterization of individual linguistic versatility, whereas diglossia is a characterization of the social allocation of functions to different languages or varieties (Fishman, 1972:102; Ferguson, 1968; Dressler, Wodak-Leodolter, 1977). Notice that the terms multilingualism and bilingualism have here been used interchangeably.

5. Dr. James Hartman (personal communication).

6. Children had a difficult time understanding me when I spoke to them in SE. It was only when I could use some LC that I could converse with them--unless I admitted that I spoke Spanish too.

7. Literacy rates in the Province of Limon are higher than in other provinces of Costa Rica.

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