

## LANGUAGE VARIATION AND LANGUAGE CURRICULUM MATERIALS

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Some of the findings of the work relevant to the morphology and syntax of the speech of Jamaican children are evidenced in Craig (1975) and Roberts (1975). In the latter articles it is shown that some of the basic characteristics of creole speech, such as those described in Beryl Bailey's *Jamaican Creole Syntax* (Cambridge U.P. 1966) form a background for very complex variation in the speech of school children. In many cases, specific characteristics of creole do not necessarily emerge in the children's language as basilect creole forms, but emerge instead as tendencies that create new language-forms within the continuum that can be observed between creole on the one hand and English on the other.

For example, in Jamaican Creole, the equivalent of the English verb 'be', in some environments, has no overt representation; also, certain types of activity or performance abstract nouns like 'medicine, law, teaching...' and so on, have no similarly abstract creole equivalents. These two characteristics of creole combine to produce in children tendencies that result in one set of phrases such as the following:

1. /.....waan tiicha /  
"want (to be) a teacher"
2. /.....waan dakta /  
"want (to be) a doctor"
3. /.....stodi dakta /  
".....study medicine"
4. /.....torn taipis /  
".....turn a typist"
5. /.....duu taipis /  
".....do typewriting"

In Craig (ib id.) some examples such as the latter are discussed to show that the children producing the examples, and at the same time comprehending, as they do, the Standard-English equivalents, have created a blend of tendencies from both creole and English, and that this kind of blend cannot be adequately described within conventional grammatical notions. There are many other types of examples that illustrate the same process of the merging together of creole and English tendencies, like, for example, the disappearance of the creole negative particle / na / and its replacement by the English 'never' instead of the Standard-English negative form 'do/does/did not'; the gradual interposing of the Standard-English 'and' between linked verbs like / ron go bring di buk kom / '....run and go and bring the book' which in creole would have no overt coordinate link; the replacement of the creole

/ tek / + NP by the Standard-English instrument phrase 'with' + NP in some environments and its retention in others: and so on.

Language behaviour such as that referred to provides a rationale for reformulating the notion of first-language interference with the learning of a second language, so as to include cases where it cannot be said that the second language is in any sense 'acquired', but a new language, intermediate between the first and the second, is created. This kind of process was commented on as early as Craig (1967) and has since been noticed within the notion of 'interlanguage' (Selinker 1972, IRAL, 10,3).

## STANDARD-LANGUAGE TEACHING

In a morpho-syntactic first-language context such as that just explained, it has for some time been recognized that the straight teaching of Standard-English as a second language, i.e. by conventional second-language methods, would not be completely appropriate. The author has elsewhere (e.g. Craig, 1966, 1971) explained this in terms of a 4-level stratification of the learner's linguistic repertoire. However, the more recent studies of morpho-syntactic variation earlier referred to add a new dimension by dealing with the morpho-syntactic results of the learner's creativity in the relevant situation.

As an offshoot of the research programme to which this report refers, practical activities with teachers in workshops led to a development of strategies in classroom teaching and in the construction of language and early reading materials that take into account this morpho-syntactic creativity of the learner. Between 1973 and the present (1975) sets of English-language materials and teachers guides (Language Materials Workshop, U.W.I.) have been prepared at four separated grade-levels as an emergency measure (since material cannot be simultaneously prepared for all grades) for use in Jamaica. The grade-levels concerned are as follows: grade one, the beginning of the primary school (children 6½-7); grades 6-7, the top of the primary or the beginning of the non-selective secondary school (children 12-13); grades 10-11, the top of the non-selective secondary school (youths 16-17); the first year of teacher's college.

These materials, except for grade 10-11 materials which are printed by the Jamaica Ministry of Education, are at present in mimeograph form. They have not yet been used in controlled experiments that would rigorously test their efficacy, but they have been tried out in schools or teachers' colleges and evaluated in terms of teachers' opinions of their value. The indications are that they are meeting long-felt needs.

Different teams of persons, to whom acknowledgement is due, have worked (in addition to the author) to develop the materials.\* Some general principles which run through all of the materials are as follows:

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\* For grade one, the following individuals have shared in the work at different stages and at different times: Dennis Craig and Don Wilson of the School of Education (University of the West Indies), Peggy Campbell, Sybil James, Ann Jaansalu, Joyce Thompson, Betty Wilson and Pam Mordecai. For Grade 6-7 (Language 101/102) the team has been Dennis Craig and Grace Walker with assistance at different times from Winnie Carby, Jill Debenham, Marilyn Duchesne, Ralph Boyce and Moyra McDonald. For grade 10-11, the team has been Dennis Craig, Pam Mordecai, Kathryn Shields and Jill Debenham. The teacher's college preliminary language course (Language 20) was developed by Dennis Craig, Don Wilson, Pat Morgan and Lena Wright.

1. The materials provide for learners to receive concentrated practice in the use of each single morpho-syntactic element of English that contrasts with their habitual first-language usage. The techniques employed are the usual ones in second-language teaching methodology.
2. Simultaneously with 1 above for dialogue interchange and the active use of language in narrating, reporting and so on, learners are kept within a specific tense and aspectual usage of verbs at successive stages of their learning until they seem proficient in producing the forms of that tense and aspect.
3. There is constant reinforcement of previously learned elements at each successive stage, and the learner is forced by structured activities to combine learned elements into creative syntheses.
4. Because learners are accustomed to existing in a variation language-situation and therefore possess a passive control of many language-forms that they cannot produce, and because of the tendency earlier described whereby the learner created new language out of contrasting tendencies, teaching procedures combine a minimum of imitation and repetition with a maximum of forced choosing of a correct alternative.
5. In receptive activities, the learner is immersed as much as possible in language which is of interest because of content and which is not in any way controlled in vocabulary and structure.

These general principles are modified or added to depending on the grade-level for which materials are designed. At the early primary level, for example, teachers are given guidelines and resource materials for activities that will help the child to continue the normal development of his home language which is either creole or a form of mesolect; concurrently, the teacher is given guidelines and materials for an English-language programme that embodies the stated principles, except that principle no. 4 above has to be modified to ensure that the learner at this stage gets an adequate amount of imitating and repeating; reading is part of the latter programme, but the reading materials are morpho-syntactically controlled in order to use only such English as is actually being taught to the child. The latter is a radical departure from existing practice in which reading materials for the relevant children take no special account of their language situation.

The secondary-level materials embody the stated principles with less modification or addition, and it is not necessary at this level to have the same degree of a biloquial approach that is implied in the teaching methodology at the primary stage. It is at this level too that principle no. 4 above, which is modified for early-primary learners, becomes very important. It is by this principle that the teaching methodology is enabled to counter against the learner's habit of merging morpho-syntactic tendencies from both creole and Standard-English, as earlier discussed. By being exercised in operating within the context of language activities controlled as suggested additionally in principle no. 2, the learner is forced to choose between limited sets of alternatives at a time until the habit of such choosing internalizes a target element and frees the learner from the habit of merging different language systems.

Further necessary investigation related to these materials should involve controlled experimentation and comparisons of effectiveness, as well as some study of relationships between language-form and conceptual content or framework in the learners involved.

#### REFERENCES

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