

The Reception in Jamaica of Non-native Speakers of Jamaican Creole

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Abstract

This study examines how non-native speakers of Jamaican Creole, including Christian and other foreign English teachers, are received by the Jamaican speech community. One way for foreign Christian English teachers to establish mutuality and interdependence, or *accompaniment* (Padilla, 2008, p. 87), that can counteract the historical instruction that resulted in a superior/inferior relationship between the expatriate teacher and the English learner is to have a working knowledge of Jamaican Creole, a source of identity and culture for Jamaicans. However, a survey of upwardly mobile Jamaicans suggested that some 30% of respondents believed that the Jamaican language should not be shared with speakers outside of the Jamaican/African diaspora. A focus group of long-term professional expatriates in Jamaica indicated that most had not become fully bilingual in Jamaican Creole and English. A second focus group of Jamaican students and professionals implied that Christian English teachers who want to achieve *accompaniment* need to respect the historical memory of colonialism and exploitation that is embedded in Jamaican Creole. They need to be aware of possible negative interpretations that their use of Jamaican Creole might incur. Yet if Christian and other foreign English teachers employ Jamaican Creole only at the initiative of their students, resistance to learning English will be lowered and the goal of *accompaniment* more nearly achieved.

Key words: accompaniment, colonialism, identity, imperialism, Jamaican Creole

Introduction

Teachers who travel from North America and Great Britain to teach English in countries that were formerly or are presently colonized by English speakers face the consequences of colonialization, oppression, and cultural hegemony. Pennycook (1998) claims that English is a product of colonialism in the sense that teaching it was essential to the colonial enterprise (p. 9).

Further, Pennycook (1998) states:

Colonialism and postcolonial struggles . . . are also the ground on which European/Western images of the Self and Other have been constructed, the place where constructions of Superiority and Inferiority were produced. Within this context, ELT needs to be seen not only as a tool in service of Empire but also as a product of Empire. (p. 19)

deKlerk (1996, p. 114) claims that Phillipson (1992) sees the spread of English “as evidence of (not so) subtle linguistic imperialism, occurring at the expense of the local languages, stabilizing hierarchical structures and reinforcing existing status differentials.” Thus, English teaching is tainted with negative aspects of the colonialism that brought the language to places under its control.

Christian English teachers who come to the Caribbean, where the economic system of the colonizers was supported by slavery, find circumstances even more complicated. Early missionaries to the Caribbean were concerned only for the souls of the slaves. They accepted the colonial plantation system as a political given and owned slaves themselves (Turner, 1982; Dunn, 2014; Furley, 1965). Yet Dunn (2014) claims that many of the slaves were deeply affected by their conversion to Christianity (p. 227). Although at first “the Moravian doctrine of heavenly salvation [was] combined with passive obedience to earthly masters” (Dunn, 2014, p. 31), eventually it “opened the way for the slaves to question. . . why Christian values were not practiced in the society they knew” (Turner, 1982, p. 94) and drew them into a campaign for emancipation (p. 95). This is the history foreign Christian English teachers confront when they arrive in the Caribbean. Teaching English in the Caribbean in general, and in Jamaica in particular, is therefore from the outset fraught with political and religious undertones, especially for foreign Christian teachers.

Accompaniment

As a partner in mission in Jamaica, sponsored by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), I taught English language and communications at the United Theological College of the West Indies and at the Vocational Training Development Institute, the tertiary arm of HEART, Jamaica’s training organization that educates skilled workers, i.e., upwardly-mobile Jamaicans. The theological college serves undergraduate and graduate students, mostly from the Caribbean mainline denominations. The majority of the theological students are Jamaican.

The ELCA, well aware of the history of missionary efforts in formerly colonized countries, has developed a policy called *accompaniment* for its missionaries, under the guidance of Director of Global Mission, Rafael Malpica Padilla. Padilla (2008) argues that missionary activity in the past often became an “instrument of colonial and cultural expansionism” (p. 89). *Accompaniment* attempts to defuse the stereotype of the missionary that connects mission work

to colonial activity and the self-denigrating effects it had on the colonized.

Accompaniment is walking together in solidarity which is characterized by mutuality and interdependence. The basis for this accompaniment, what the New Testament calls *koinonia*, is found in the God-human relationship in which God accompanies us in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Accompaniment pushes mission into a relational mode. (Padilla, 2008, p. 88)

Accompaniment thus emphasizes *relationship* as its goal, not leadership. It is a horizontal connection between persons that does not allow for superiority of one person over another. Just as Christ became human, taking the form of a servant, so do those Christians who live and work outside their own culture try to share the sufferings and joys of others, helping when possible, and receiving help when necessary. Walking together, or “*acompañar*” implies proximity to the walking companion; it implies accepting the invitation to accompany the other” (p. 88). It asks us “to cross our own borders. . . a *border* implies an exchange, a going back and forth, a permeable membrane that fosters movement and facilitates communication” (Padilla, 2008, p. 89). In other words, it involves receiving as much as giving.

Accompaniment is not the same as cultural intelligence (CQ), which Earley and Ang (2003) define as “a person’s capability to adapt effectively to *new cultural contexts*” (p. 58). It can, however, benefit from Livermore’s (2009) perspective on CQ as a “journey toward viewing and relating to the Other in ways that are respectful and loving” (p. 242). *Accompaniment* enhances CQ by emphasizing the long-term walk together, suffering and rejoicing with partners in mission, sharing equally with each other, and working together with the help of and for the sake of Jesus Christ. Both *accompaniment* and CQ “must be seamlessly connected to how we follow Jesus and represent him to others” (Livermore, 2009, p. 244).

In the foreign academic situation, *accompaniment* implies that the Christian English teacher learns from the students at the same time as the students learn from the teacher. Cultural material included in lessons must relate to the environment and culture of the students who are learning English, so as not to alienate them from their own culture while learning the language. The teacher must deeply know and validate the culture of the students to avoid the pitfall of unconscious superiority that seems to cling to English.

The best and perhaps the only way to understand fully the environment and culture of the people we teach is to know their own language. McWhorter (2002) claims that the “job of school is to *add a new layer* to a child’s speech repertoire, *not to undo* the one they already have” (p.

15). “In some senses [the language] is the factor that supercedes race, culture and sometimes class” (Bryan, 2004, p. 650). According to Ramirez (1985), teachers’ proficiency in the home language of their students significantly correlated with the students’ improved performance in English (p. 149). Brown (2009) proposes that “In human communication, the sender’s use of the receiver’s heart language is a sign of love and respect, and it is an essential (and humbling) element of incarnational ministry” (p. 85). He goes further to say, “Use of a people’s heart language affirms their personal worth and opens hearts and minds to hear the message” (p. 85). It seems clear that effective Christian teachers who strive for mutuality (*accompaniment*) with their students need to learn the students’ first language. However, mastering and using the home language of English learners in Jamaica is more complex than it appears; it is hindered by threats which can make full *accompaniment* a frustrating process.

The question of how speakers of Jamaican Creole today respond to foreigners who attempt to speak the language arose from informal observations of Jamaican speakers when strangers to the country spoke the language in the public arena. When a foreign speaker used a Jamaican phrase or two appropriately in a speech, there was general laughter and approval, but when in a bank a stranger grumbled in Jamaican Creole about the long wait, the response ranged from amusement to ridicule or even hostility, although the Jamaican speakers themselves had used those same words. The fact that there were no language schools in Jamaica fully dedicated to teaching Jamaican Creole to foreigners also reflected this ambivalence. Although the language was taught abroad, expatriate Jamaicans who wanted to solidify their identity were the target population (Murphy, n.d.). In general, the only way for foreigners to learn Jamaican Creole was by immersion in Jamaica. These observations led to the following study that explores the question: how does the Jamaican speech community respond to foreigners, including Christian English language teachers, who attempt to speak the Jamaican language?

Literature Review

Jamaican Creole

Although English is the official language of Jamaica and is still claimed by most as the home language, in reality many Jamaicans speak Jamaican Creole as their home language (Devonish, 2012; Bryan, 2004; Christie, 2003). A creole is a language that usually stems from a pidgin, a “makeshift speech variety encoding only those concepts fundamental to basic

communication” (McWhorter, 2005, p. 11), which is used to communicate among people who do not share a common language. The language that develops is native to neither group; there are no native speakers of a pidgin (Nero, 2006, p. 5). The creoles that arise from pidgins are spoken as a native language by the next generation (Nero, 2006).

Creoles come into existence at a time that can be determined more or less accurately by historic events surrounding it (Muysken & Smith, 1995). The language spoken by the ruling group, in Jamaica’s case, the English of Great Britain, usually provides the lexicon for the creole, but the grammar and syntax are derived from or influenced by the ethnic languages (Nero, 2006, p. 5). Nero supports Mufwene’s (1994) contention that indigenized Englishes and creoles “emerged from language contact situations. . . that they all arose from exploitive situations and are primarily spoken by non-Europeans” (Nero, 2006, p. 5).

The creole spoken in Jamaica (and in other Caribbean countries) developed under extreme oppression when slaves originating in different regions of Africa needed to communicate with each other and the European masters (Christie, 2003; Cassidy & LePage, 2003; Turner, 1982; Bryan, 2004; Frank, 2007). Like other creoles, Jamaican Creole, popularly called *Patois* or *Patwa*, has suffered from low status. Not only the colonizers, who considered it “malformed speech of the slaves, which was attributed to Africans’ alleged lack of intelligence,” but Jamaicans themselves denigrated it as ‘broken English’ (Christie, 2003, p. 2). Speaking Jamaican Creole was associated with crude behaviour, poor moral standards, and lack of proper upbringing. Jamaican Creole was not recognized as a language at all by some, reflecting the “context of domination,” in which the colonists considered Jamaican Creole “a jargon of a language,” used by the poor and marginalized (Bryan, 2004, p. 646). Christie (2003) quotes a columnist in a prominent Jamaican newspaper: “Jamaicans have no language because they stubbornly refuse to master Standard English” (p. 4). Today, there is still no standardized system for writing Jamaican Creole, although in 2001 a recommendation was made to the Jamaican Parliament to establish one (Christie, 2003).

The Jamaican Creole situation today stymies adherents to DeCamp’s (1971) theory of a language continuum that begins with Jamaican Creole as the basilect, moving to a mesolect that eventually arrives at the acrolect, Standard English, effectively decreolizing the basilect (Bryan, 2004, pp. 647-648). Jamaican Creole has not shown signs of dying out; instead, it has “become a stronger and more vibrant language, used in many more domains” (Bryan 2004, p. 648). This is

not to say that there are not still forms of Jamaican Creole that are considered basilectal or mesolectal. Bryan (2004, p. 649) relies on Pollard (1983, 1994) in reference to the development of Dread Talk [DT], which, although it began as the basilectal Rastafarian language of the poor, has moved into mesolectal Jamaican Creole. There is constant movement back and forth among the levels in Jamaican Creole.

For decades Jamaican Creole has been rising in status (Wassink, 1999; Christie, 1998, 2001, 2003; Bryan, 2004). Mair (2002) describes it thus: “From being considered a despised corruption of the colonial language its (Patois’) status changed into something more ambivalent – a symbol of powerlessness and degeneracy on the one hand, and a symbol of solidarity, truth and connection to the Afro-creole folk tradition, on the other” (p. 31). One of the early catalysts to the rise in status was Jamaica’s political independence from Britain in 1962. Winer (2006) states,

Along with formal independence arose nationalism identified by and through culture and language. Vernacular language forms that were earlier scorned, even by the speakers themselves now became a badge of pride and identity. Caribbean linguists pushed for recognition of the creoles as legitimate languages. (p. 106)

To name Jamaican Creole as a language is, according to Sebba (1995), a political, not a linguistic question, for “‘language’ always has connotations of statehood or nationhood” (p. 2). Just as English was used in service of the colonial enterprise, naming Jamaican Creole the language of the people of Jamaica could add political power to its speakers. Devonish (2012) furthers this view by declaring that Jamaican Creole has already become the Jamaican language, even if not officially.

Among the highly educated, who generally speak only English in formal situations, there is a great deal of code-switching, that is, shifting briefly into Jamaican Creole, in order to establish a sense of solidarity with the audience, to clarify a concept that otherwise might be unfamiliar to the audience, or to create humor (Christie, 2003; Bryan, 2004).

Nevertheless, Mair (2002) and Christie (2003) agree that even though not “a typical English-speaking society, Jamaica will continue to be an English-using one” (Mair, 2002, p. 31), and that the relationship between Patois (Jamaican Creole) and English will remain to some extent an antagonistic one. Speakers of Jamaican Creole with limited knowledge of English “are debarred from full participation not only in events and activities outside Jamaica but in the life of their own country as well” (Christie, 2003, p. 8). Thus, Jamaican Creole speakers need to acquire

enough English to manage their lives in Jamaica.

Jamaican Creole Identity

Norton (1997) defines identity as “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand the possibilities for the future” (p. 410). Indeed, “language and social identity are extremely complex, inevitably involving emotive value-judgements as well as practical concerns” (deKlerk, 1996, p. 126). Thiong’O (2004) views language as a culture-carrier that reflects “the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world” (pp. 406-407). He claims that as a community of human beings with “a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world” (p. 407), language is an integral part of who we are. With the support of Norton (2000), Bryan (2004) asserts that speakers construct their identity through their use of language:

The ‘becoming of the language’ relates not only to the structure of the language but also to the way the speakers see, use and construct themselves through the vernacular voice. So questions of attitudes and identity are, inevitably, foregrounded as central to this discussion about language. (p. 642)

Joseph (2004, p. 13) goes so far as to say that language and identity are inseparable, writing, “I am asserting that the entire phenomenon of identity can be understood as a linguistic one.” Pao, Wong, and Teuben-Rowe (1997) indicate that identity is contested, and that a “shift in language results in a shift in one’s identity” (p. 623). According to Ogulnick (2000), there is a “dialectic between language learning and identity that is inextricably linked to our historical experiences and the socio-political contexts in which we find ourselves. . . language learning entails a process of fitting into one’s place in society, or rather, one’s imposed place” (p. 170). Relying on Winford (1994), Morgan (1994) suggests that although English reflects educational achievement and high social status, creole languages embody culture and reflect personal relationships. For this reason, “creole languages will continue to be preserved because of their importance in the identity of the Anglophone Caribbean” (p. 3).

In Jamaica, language and identity are complicated by the fact that to a certain degree, Jamaicans claim both languages, English and Jamaican Creole, as their own. According to Christie (2003, p. 4), “Jamaicans . . . resent any suggestion that the language we speak is not always English or that our spoken English differs in some respects from what would be heard in

other parts of the Anglophone world.” Nero (1997) reinforces this with, “Although the majority of Anglophone Caribbean people actually speak some variety of English-based Creole, they continue to label their language as English, at least in public domains” (p. 587). Two basic issues on which Christie (2003) claims general agreement in Jamaica are:

1. English is an important language in Jamaica and we should keep it so.
2. The Creole vernacular is used by the vast majority of persons in Jamaica at some time or other and by a large number of them as their sole or principal means of communication. (p. 37)

Cliff (1988) explains: “In my current work-in-progress, a novel, I alternate the King’s English with *patois*, not only to show the class background of characters, but to show how Jamaicans operate within a split consciousness. It would be as dishonest to write the novel entirely in *patois* as to write entirely in the King’s English” (pp. 59-60). The Jamaican identity, then, may shift as a choice of language is made. In formal, English-speaking situations, the identity may be aligned with Western expectations that accompany the use of English in school. In informal circles of friends and family, Jamaican Creole will likely be used, and the identity will rest on the history of slavery and exploitation.

Attitudes Toward Jamaican Creole

It is not easy to define attitude, because of the “latent nature of attitudes” (Garrett, 2006, p. 2). Yet Garrett argues that “a person’s behavioural consistency or society’s stability depends on admitting them” (p. 3). Attitudes to language varieties and those who speak them help us to map the social world, whether or not they are positive or biased. Garrett (2006) also argues the controversial position that attitudes tend to endure because they are acquired at an early age.

Understanding attitudes is complicated, though, because as Rickford (1983) maintains, “language attitudes frequently have a multi-dimensional character,” and “standard language varieties tend to be favourably evaluated along the status or power dimension, and non-standard varieties along the solidarity or friendship dimension” (p. 8). Preston and Robinson (2005) suggest that language attitudes are tied to beliefs about certain groups of people. If some groups of people are believed to be “decent, hard-working, and intelligent,” their language or variety is considered to be of the same quality. In reverse, if groups are believed to be “lazy, insolent, and procrastinating,” then their language or variety seems to reflect those characteristics (p. 1).

Alleyne (1994) claims that creoles have been the “most stigmatized of the world’s

languages,” and that this stigma has not allowed the languages to enjoy a rise in their status by being standardized (p. 8). Winford (1994) argues that even though creoles are valid linguistic systems, the public derogation of them prevents them from being used officially. “Members of Caribbean communities continue to see creole vernaculars as barriers rather than potential avenues to educational achievement and social opportunity/advancement” (p. 55). Winford describes a tension between Standard English, the publicly affirmed language of education and government, and creole, which is spoken privately with pride even though it is still often regarded as a corrupt form of English (p. 55). Muyskin and Smith (1994) point out that a dualism in language attitudes often occurs during the process of decolonization. Societies that were eager to replace the colonial language soften their attitudes and are slow to prefer the local language to the extent of enacting new language laws. This seems to have happened in Jamaica since independence. The efforts of Devonish (1986, 2012) to recognize the regional creoles, especially Jamaican Creole, as official languages have had little effect (Winford, 1994).

Bryan (2004) makes clear, however, that political changes, the decreasing number of native speakers of English, and the increasing use of Jamaican Creole in schools as well as homes, has begun to lift the status of Jamaican Creole. Winford (1994) concedes that “Some softening of the older hard line [refusing to legitimize creole as a language] is slowly emerging in communities such as Jamaica” (p. 56). As Jamaica moves forward with a distinct cultural identity to present to the larger world, Jamaican Creole speakers, especially young ones, are eager to use the language in a variety of formerly frowned-upon circumstances (Wassink, 1999), for example, in the classroom with Jamaican or other Caribbean teachers, with other educated Jamaicans, in advertisements, and in poetry and novels (Christie, 2003).

This rise in status can be seen in Jamaica’s response to a Volkswagen ad aired in the United States during the 2013 Super Bowl football game, in which Caucasian and Asian men used Jamaican Creole to imply the good-natured, fun-loving, laid-back qualities of a new Volkswagen car. In the United States, there was public outcry implying that the ad derogated the Jamaican language and thus the Jamaican people (Horowitz, 2013). However, in Jamaica this ad was generally well received, as an editorial later noted:

Our issue here is the flap being caused by one of the television ads to be expensively aired during the Super Bowl – the one for the carmaker Volkswagen in which white males and an Asian mimic an exaggerated Jamaican accent and talk Patois . . . Critics say it is racist, caricaturing black people as happy-go-lucky and lazy. We say to the

oversensitive, lighten up. We see it as the power of Jamaica's national brand and time on TV for which we couldn't pay. (Irie, Mon, 2013, p. A8)

According to Cooper (2009), "Pauline Christie's version [*sic*] of 'a language is a dialect with an army and a navy' has become 'a language is a dialect spoken by Bob Marley and Usain Bolt'" (p. A9). Jamaica's power lies not in its political might, but in the culture that it offers to the world, a culture expressed in the Jamaican language. Thus while "English, which can be 'shed like a skin' is 'a special coat' that provides 'access to education, access to knowledge. . . access to the money market'" (Bryan, 2004, p. 652), "Jamaican Creole, instead of withering away with greater prosperity and education of the people, has instead strengthened and broadened its scope" (Bryan, 2004, p. 648). The "social and linguistic inequalities" found in creole communities (Morgan, 1994, p. 5) and the "asymmetrical power relationship (that) is the essence of imperialism" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 3) between English and Jamaican Creole are beginning to become less distinct as Jamaican Creole gains status.

It is clear that Jamaican Creole is approaching the point where its speakers claim it is not just a language, but *their* language. However, are non-native speakers welcome to speak it? This background and question led to the current study.

Research Questions

The present investigation of how non-native speakers of Jamaican Creole, including Christian English teachers, are received in the Jamaican speech community is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Jamaicans themselves characterize their reception of speakers of Jamaican Creole?
2. Do long-term expatriate professionals in Jamaica experience resistance when they attempt to use the Jamaican language?
3. What are the underlying assumptions and reasons for Jamaicans' preferences for including/not including non-native speakers of Jamaican Creole in the Jamaican speech community?
4. What practices can Christian English teachers implement to move toward *accompaniment* in their English teaching, in light of Jamaicans' reception of non-native speakers of Jamaican Creole?

Methodology

The investigation of the above questions involved three phases: a survey determined adult students' attitudes towards Jamaican Creole and their preferences regarding who should speak it,

with some of the results compared to a larger Language Attitude Survey of Jamaica (LAS) of 1000 Jamaicans done by the Jamaican Language Unit of the Department of Language, Linguistics, and Philosophy at the University of the West Indies (2005). A focus group then investigated how expatriate professionals, including Christian teachers, perceived the reception of their use of Jamaican Creole. Finally, a second focus group clarified how Jamaican graduate and undergraduate students perceived foreigners' use of Jamaican Creole. This was a small exploratory, qualitative study that was intended as a preliminary investigation in this area.

Survey

Dörnyei (2003) was most helpful in structuring the questionnaire (reproduced in Appendix A). Creswell (2014) and Maxwell (1996) were also consulted during the research.

Without a budget for the study, it was necessary to find an accessible cross-section of the Jamaican population that corresponded to the academic and social population that most non-native, Christian English teachers would meet. The Vocational Training Development Institute at that time was training adults across the country to become assessors in occupations such as nursing, teaching, tourism management, auto mechanics, housekeeping, beauty services, and the Jamaican military. Classes were held in Kingston and at satellite sites across the island. Although not a random sample, these students seemed to represent a fair cross-section of adults having or acquiring tertiary education. Also, since they were established enough in their professions to become assessors, they varied in age and professional responsibility. Their educational backgrounds ranged from high school to graduate level, and they resided in almost every area of Jamaica. Although most of the respondents considered themselves to be in the professional class of workers, their high schools indicated that few of them had attended the most prestigious schools in Jamaica. In other words, many had grown up in less privileged circumstances and risen in social status as they acquired more education; thus, Jamaican Creole was likely their first language.

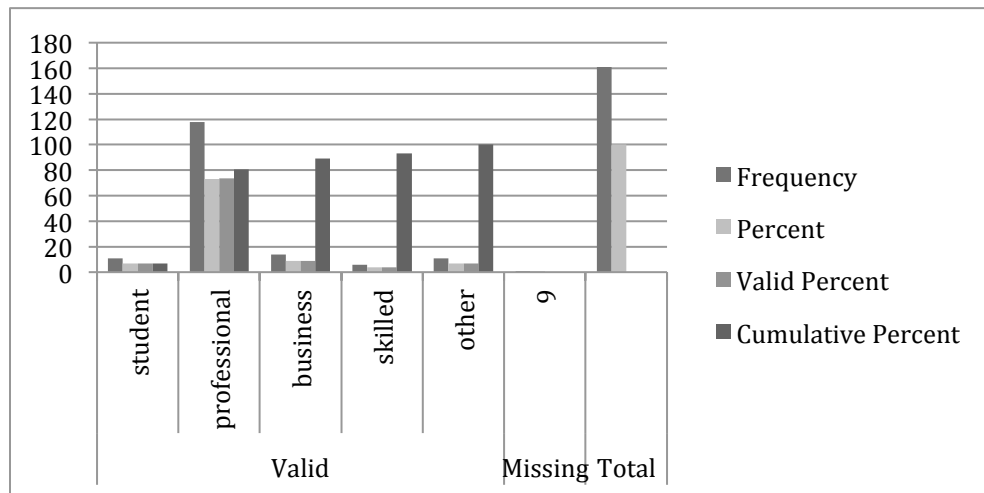
The sample size was relatively small (161 respondents); for validity, the results of some questions on the survey were compared to results of similar questions on the above-mentioned LAS. The present survey asked whether the respondents valued Jamaican Creole as a language, whether they considered it as valuable as English, and which non-native speakers, if any, were welcome to speak it. After being piloted at the United Theological College, wording and format

were adjusted. The complete survey was distributed over a six-month period by Jamaican lecturers in their classes at the Vocational Training Development Institute in Kingston and the satellite sites. The first section of the survey established demographics. The second section provided the respondents' attitudes toward Jamaican Creole and explored their responses to strangers' attempts to use it. Responses were entered into the SPSS for tabulation and analysis.

Survey Results

Figure 1 below highlights the range of occupations of the survey respondents. It shows that most respondents belonged to the professional category, with very few respondents identifying themselves as students, even though they were participating in assessor training. Those in the 'other' category were the second highest number, many of them belonging to the Jamaican military force. The third highest category was skilled workers, with business people following close behind.

Figure 1. *Survey Respondents' Occupations*



The professional category included such occupations as physician, attorney, clergy, public servant, teacher, lecturer, musician. Business was identified as a career in tourism, management, banking, sales, and promotion. Skilled occupations included secretary, cosmetologist, electrician, plumber, mason, mechanic, seamstress, scuba diver. The LAS survey categorized the occupations differently, so it was not possible to compare those results to the present survey.

Table 1 indicates that most of the respondents were educated beyond high school; this was important because the starting point of the study was the investigation of possible reluctance of some people in academic situations to admit strangers to the Jamaican speech community. There was no corresponding question on the LAS survey.

Table 1. *Respondents' Levels of Education*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
high school	10	6.2	6.2	6.2
Tertiary	33	20.5	20.5	26.7
University degree	80	49.7	49.7	76.4
postgraduate	38	23.6	23.6	100
Total	161	100	100	

Table 2 indicates the respondents' demographics in the present study compared to the LAS one. The present study's male-female and age ratios were not as balanced as the LAS survey; the geographic spread, however, was comparable. A slight majority of the participants in the present study lived outside urban areas; in the LAS study, a bare majority lived within the urban areas. This geographic spread helped to indicate that the preferences of the respondents were not limited to urban residents with more contact with strangers to the island.

Table 2. *Respondents' Demographics: Present Study vs. the LAS Study*

	Present Study %	LAS Study %
Demographics		
Male	40.6	50.1
Female	59.4	49.9
Age		
18-30	37.9	33.4
31-50	54	33.4
51+	3.7	33.2
Urban	48.1	51.9
Other	51.9	48.1

Tables 3 and 4 indicate that the respondents of the present study affirmed that Jamaican Creole is a language, and that it should be an official language alongside English. These results corresponded positively to the results of similar questions in the LAS survey and confirmed the rise in status of Jamaican Creole.

Table 3. *Language Attitudes – Creole: Present Study vs. the LAS Study*

	Present Study %		LAS Study %	
Is Jamaican Creole a language?				
Jamaican Creole should be both a written and a spoken language:	Yes	68.6%		
	No	31.4%		
Do you think that Patwa is a language?			Yes	79.5%
			No	20.5%

Table 4. *Language Attitudes – Official Language: Present Study vs. the LAS Study*

	Present Study %		LAS Study %	
Jamaican Creole as an official language				
English should be the ONLY official language of Jamaica	Yes	31.8%		
	No	62.8%		
Should Parliament make Patwa an official language of Jamaica alongside English?			Yes	68.5%
			No	26.5%

The LAS did not ask who the respondents perceived to be preferred speakers of Jamaican Creole. In the present study, the majority of respondents claimed to want the whole world to be able to speak it. Nevertheless, there was a contingent of approximately 30% who wanted the Jamaican language to be restricted to certain speakers.

Table 5. *Language Attitudes – I prefer that Jamaican Creole be spoken. . .*

	Column2	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Only by Jamaicans	33	20.5	20.9	20.9
	Only by speakers of Caribbean/African origin	17	10.6	10.8	31.6
	Anyone	108	67.1	68.4	100
	Total	158	98.1	100	
Missing	9	3	1.9		
Total		161	100		

Most respondents (68%) believed anyone should be able to speak Jamaican Creole, but a significant minority (32%) indicated a preference that only Jamaicans or others of Caribbean or African descent speak the language. A *t*-test performed with the help of the SPSS software determined that this difference was statistically significant ($X^2=89.63$, $p<.000$).

Discussion Part 1: Survey Results

The survey results reinforced the contention that Jamaicans consider Jamaican Creole to be a language, and that it should be recognized as an official language of Jamaica. It also indicated that most Jamaicans in this group wanted to share their language with strangers to the country. The approximately 30% who did not want outsiders to speak Jamaican Creole was statistically significant. However, more important is the implication that in any given class of twenty-one students, six or seven may prefer not to include the non-native teacher in the Jamaican speech community. This has significance for the Christian teacher who is hoping to develop mutuality in the classroom in accordance with the *accompaniment* model. If one-third of the students in a classroom resists the efforts of their English teacher to use their first language, how will the teacher be as effective as desired, both academically and relationally?

Focus Group 1

To address Research Question #2, a focus group methodology was employed. According to Pao, et al. (1997), the focus group is suited for qualitative research because it is planned and structured, yet provides a relaxed setting that encourages dynamic interaction among participants (p. 624). In this environment it is possible to probe issues more deeply than with a written survey. The focus group is a familiar methodology in Jamaica; an outline for its conduct is given in Boxill, Chambers, and Wint (1997, pp. 60-83).

Seven long-term expatriates who had lived more than ten years in Jamaica were invited to participate in the focus group. This was a convenience sample of professionals, all of whom had some contact with United Theological College. Four of the seven participants had come from the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, countries that are considered Western and have been in one way or another a part of the colonizing enterprise. The other three were from Nigeria, Guyana, and Haiti, non-Western, or developing countries that have a history of colonization. These three were chosen to see if their language experiences in Jamaica differed significantly from those originating in Western countries. The first focus group participants' occupations were

physician, businesswoman, pastor, and teachers of adults on various levels. The teachers were selected because their academic experience would correspond with the purpose of the research. Those from other professions were chosen to balance the experience of teachers. There were three males and four females; four were or had been married to Jamaicans, so they were fully immersed in the Jamaican community.

The interlocutor was a Jamaican teacher and graduate student familiar with focus group methodology. Using English, the expected academic language, she moved through a series of predetermined questions (included in Appendix B). Rather than inhibit the group by videotaping the conversations, two recorders, a graduate student and the researcher, took notes. To prevent bias, we compared notes following the conversations and confirmed that our records of the responses agreed.

Results of Focus Group 1

There was consensus that Jamaican Creole was dynamic, colorful, and poetic. The Nigerian respondent mentioned similarities to languages spoken in Ghana and Nigeria. Participants believed that the Bible in Jamaican Creole was a positive development. They agreed that during the previous decade the Jamaican language seemed to have changed to a more urban, counter-cultural way of speaking, and it was more difficult to understand. In response to how well respondents understood the language in general, only one person claimed to understand everything. Most participants reported understanding about 80% of what was communicated to them in Jamaican Creole. All agreed, however, that if the Jamaican speakers did not want them to understand, they would not be able to. One respondent related an experience in which the speakers suspected he was a CIA agent. He knew the topic of the conversation, but could not understand anything at all. The Guyanese participant said he did not think the speakers deliberately tried to confuse the foreigners, but said his Caribbean identity might have influenced his answer. Only this comment indicated that any non-Western group members' language perceptions differed from those of the Western countries. Most respondents said they did not understand jokes in Creole, but found the body language of the jokes entertaining.

Regarding their own use of Jamaican Creole, respondents claimed to use it when exasperated, when there was no equivalent English word, or when they wanted to make the listener laugh. No one could carry on a full conversation in Jamaican Creole. One attributed their

lack of fluency to the whole group's membership in the middle class, which would naturally speak English, not Jamaican Creole. One respondent claimed it was not 'natural' for non-Jamaicans to speak Jamaican Creole. Some claimed never to use Jamaican Creole because it seemed phony – different from using Spanish or French – or because they teach and are expected to speak English at all times. One insisted that everyone uses Jamaican Creole sometimes, even if unconsciously. Two participants did not feel the need to be able to speak Jamaican Creole at all, and one wanted to understand it but not speak it. The others wished they controlled it better: "I would love to [speak it] because I love it." "There are some places you cannot be effective if you can't speak the language." "I wish I could speak better because for some people this is the only way to touch their hearts as a pastor."

Participants attributed their lack of fluency in Jamaican Creole to their age ("it is hard for an adult to acquire a language"), a lack of close Jamaican friends, their social class, or the lack of a place to study the language formally. Although all claimed to be comfortable in a group where everyone was speaking Jamaican Creole, the participants insisted that when they tried to speak the language themselves, the Jamaican response was almost always laughter. Some said they stopped trying to speak it immediately when listeners laughed at their accent. Most did not see the laughter as anything more than fun, although some admitted that it could occasionally be mockery or an attempt to squelch their use of the language. A teacher said, "They enjoy the fact that they know something I don't know." It was agreed that in some circumstances it might seem patronizing or condescending to use Jamaican Creole when English was an obvious possibility. All insisted on English in the home and allowed Jamaican Creole outside the home.

Discussion Part 2: Focus Group 1 Results

The conversation in Focus Group 1 revealed that respondents did not speak Jamaican Creole fluently but used it sporadically for particular effect. Their perception that the language had changed in the last decade may be related to the Dread Talk influence that developed in the basilect and has risen to the mesolect, which they as professionals would hear more often. They felt there was a social barrier that prevented them from speaking the language: it was not 'natural' for non-Jamaicans to speak Jamaican Creole; it seemed phony to speak it; they had no need to speak it. Their social status seemed to make it unnecessary to speak it. These results are in line with the expectation that professionals, Jamaican and foreign alike, will speak English in

formal situations. Participants also recognized that their use of Jamaican Creole might presume that the Jamaican conversational partner was not fluent in English, the higher status language, and that they needed to ‘talk down’ to the Jamaican Creole speaker.

Some respondents were hindered from speaking Jamaican Creole by laughter. They may have been responding unconsciously to a societal effect of laughter as a “separation, excluding, and conflict device” (Hertzler, 1970, p. 85). Or they may have felt excluded by an effect of laughter that enhances cohesion and a sense of identity – we speak the language, but you don’t (Martin 2007, p. 122). In any case, the laughter seemed to shut down the respondents’ attempts to speak Jamaican Creole.

The statement “They enjoy the fact that they know something I don’t know” indicated the power relationships inherent in language choice: when speaking English, strangers or more educated Jamaicans hold the power; when speaking Jamaican Creole, creole speakers hold the power, especially if the English speaker cannot fully understand it.

Most respondents wished they could speak the Jamaican language, but after many years, they still could not. The reasons, they said, included a lack of close Jamaican friends, the only ones who could pass the language on to them, since the language is rarely taught formally. However, even those married to Jamaicans were not fluent, although they understood the language most of the time. They did not seem to use Jamaican Creole habitually with their spouses. Perhaps this was because all of them insisted on English in the home to assure their children would be English speakers.

Most participants recognized the benefits of being able to speak Jamaican Creole, such as being more effective if they could speak the language, or being able to touch people’s hearts through it, as Brown (2009) suggested with regards to communicating in one’s heart language. It was clear that most of these expatriates, even those from other parts of the Caribbean and Africa, experienced frustrations in their attempts to acquire Jamaican Creole, barriers to the mutuality and interrelatedness they hoped to achieve in their relationships.

Focus Group 2

A focus group was again assembled to investigate Research Question #3. A convenience sample was invited to participate, this time selected from students at the Vocational Training Development Institute and the United Theological College. The group comprised eight adult

Jamaicans ranging in age from 19 to 60+. Two members were enrolled in graduate education while working in other professions, one of them as the principal of a school. The other four were full-time students on various levels of undergraduate and graduate education. There were equal numbers of males and females. The same methodology was used as for Focus Group 1, with the same interlocutor, though the questions were different (see Appendix C).

Results of Focus Group 2

The purpose of Focus Group 2 was to determine the Jamaicans' attitude toward Jamaican Creole and to investigate how they responded to non-Jamaicans who speak it. All participants responded positively toward Jamaican Creole, saying that it represented their culture and identity. Although most respondents said they could not read and write it (creoles are generally unwritten), they still took pride in it as their home language. They agreed that when a stranger to Jamaica spoke it, they would laugh in amusement. Most denied, however, that the laughter was instigated by a conscious desire to hinder the foreigner's participation in the Jamaican Creole language community.

When shown the Volkswagen ad where American and Asian actors used the Jamaican language, the reactions varied, but one speaker said, "Some people say the Jamaican language is just for us; no one else should use it. This shows it is for everyone." However, another comment: "The man is piggy backing on our language" [meaning that he was gaining fame and fortune by using Jamaican Creole] implied the ad was a negative cultural appropriation.

In response to a stranger who code-switched between English and Jamaican Creole, most respondents said they didn't mind, as long as the code-switching wasn't too persistent; one respondent said she would be proud to hear it. Another participant reinforced this with, "I think it is rubbish to hug up [keep for ourselves] the language." Still another participant responded: "I would feel vulnerable. I don't want to share it."

Respondents were upset by Jamaican words in British or American music: "Foreigners want to study us. They will learn our language and know its nuances better than we do. They will use it to their economic advantage. They want to learn the language to exploit us." "I get angry when people use our words and don't give acknowledgment to Jamaica. If you take an international song as yours, you will be sued. Is it ok to use JC [Jamaican Creole] in songs

without giving credit?” “I find that foreigners want to understand us and they go into the language and then use it as an economic advantage.”

The response to being overheard and understood by a stranger in a foreign airport ranged from being proud that others understood the language, to indifferent, to “I would feel like it was an intrusion,” or “I would feel violated. When we speak it abroad it’s so they don’t understand.” Most participants felt comfortable in a group of non-Jamaicans speaking fluent Jamaican Creole, but one respondent said: “I would not be comfortable. I would fear they would be mocking me. They would have no other reason to be speaking it.”

Most responses to teaching Jamaican Creole in special language schools were negative. One said, “I hope we don’t allow foreigners to use the language.” Another: “I think they are trying to rob us. I don’t want everyone to speak Jamaican.” Yet a third person said, “There is a threat that the more educated can come in and know the language better than we do. They can use the language to outsmart us and control us.”

Discussion Part 3: Focus Group 2 Results

The members of Focus Group 2 reflected the rise in status of Jamaican Creole by emphasizing the pride they took in it, and by claiming that it was a source of their culture and their identity. Most admitted they could not read and write the language. This is unsurprising because there is not yet a standard orthography. The various names for the language (Patwa, Patois, Jamaican Creole, Jamaican) are indicative of the situation. In fact, however, in a variety of orthographic representations Jamaican Creole is used in advertisements and at dramatic points in literature, which this group would read without difficulty.

Jamaicans’ laughter at a stranger’s attempt to speak the language, they said, was not intended to exclude the speaker from the speech community, even though some speakers in Focus Group 1 had indicated that was the effect. Was the exclusion unconscious, or were the foreigners being too sensitive?

At first responses to whether the language should be shared with strangers were mixed; several really did want to share it. But as the conversation continued, more negative comments arose. Mistrust of those who wanted to speak the language was an underlying theme. Respondents feared being mocked by speakers who did not respect the culture, and thus the people the language represented. They felt vulnerable and even violated when an stranger

understood them in a conversation outside the country. An unspoken, invisible barrier had been crossed – some speakers use Jamaican Creole when they want to be understood only by Jamaicans. This was also reflected in Focus Group 1: when Jamaican Creole speakers did not want to be understood, they could modify the language to bring about that result. There was a fear that foreigners would learn the language and exploit it to Jamaicans' economic disadvantage in songs and other venues. Finally, they feared that those who learned the language would be able to outsmart and control them. Language issues are closely related to power. The use of English in colonial and post-colonial societies to control the distribution of social benefits such as jobs and political position was well known to these respondents. They wanted to ensure that outsiders did not use Jamaican Creole for similar exploitation.

Many speakers of Jamaican Creole saw their language as a key to a new cultural and economic power in the world – the Jamaican culture expressed in music, advertisements, and tourism. That power would be threatened if the speech community were opened to strangers. These fears necessarily pose threats to the use of Jamaican Creole by foreign Christian English teachers in the classroom.

Conclusions

The historical memory of slavery and colonialism is never far from those who have been dominated. Many of the themes regarding non-native speakers' use of the Jamaican language in Focus Group 2 reflect the consequences of these earlier circumstances: humiliation, vulnerability, violation, exploitation, suspicion, and lack of power and control. These issues permeate the language as well as the culture, and consciously or unconsciously affect the acceptance of strangers into the speech community. Thus, to establish mutuality with students by using the language of family and intimacy seems a distant goal. This does not mean that acceptance is not possible. It does mean, however, that those who aspire to belong to the Jamaican speech community must gain the full trust of the speakers.

Inclusion in the speech community means inclusion in the intimate lives of the people who speak the language. If a Christian English teacher is to *accompany* students in the language effort by learning their language while they learn English, the teacher needs to live and struggle along with the speakers, identifying with their past as well as their present as it is expressed in the Jamaican language. The historical barriers erected by past enslavement, colonial oppression,

and present economic and cultural hegemony hinder attempts by Western strangers at full participation in the language and culture of Jamaican Creole. The association of English with the Jamaican middle economic class, to which educated Jamaicans as well as Christian and other foreign English teachers are automatically assigned, presents a further threat to their inclusion in the Jamaican Creole speech community. Thus full *accompaniment* with Jamaican Creole speakers may not be possible, as was implied by members of both focus groups.

This is not an argument that foreign Christian and other English teachers do not need to *know* Jamaican Creole. It remains true that their teaching will be more effective if they understand how Jamaican Creole interacts with and differs from English (Kuck, 2009). Also, for communication purposes they need to understand as well as possible the Jamaican Creole spoken by their students. The argument here is that foreign Christian and other English teachers need to be careful how they *use* Jamaican Creole themselves, so that they do not cross over into the intimate, friends-and-family-only Jamaican Creole without the permission of its native speakers.

Foreign Christian and other English teachers can follow the practice of educated, middle class Jamaicans. They can code switch with Jamaican Creole vocabulary and phrases when they fear they might be misunderstood, or when they want to establish community with their audience. They must, however, be aware that their use of the language in certain circumstances may be interpreted as patronizing, mocking, or exploitive. Thus, the foreign teacher must weigh carefully the possible consequences of using Jamaican Creole in the classroom, allow the students to share their knowledge of the language at their own initiative, and then use what they all learn about the language to enhance their English lessons. In this manner, the teacher's use of Jamaican Creole can be sensitive to the occasion and useful for understanding English, but it will not overstep the boundaries created by historical oppression, colonialism, and cultural and economic hegemony.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the help of the participants in both the survey and the focus groups, as well as Sarah Jalbert, for her help in data analysis, and my husband David for his support.

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Appendix A

Survey

Jamaican Creole Spoken by Non-Jamaicans

This questionnaire will collect data for research regarding Jamaicans’ attitudes toward the use of Jamaican Creole by non-Jamaicans. Your responses will remain anonymous, and you will be given the opportunity to see the results of the research if you so request in writing. Submitting your completed questionnaire indicates that you give the researcher permission to use it for this study.

I. Personal Information

1. Where are you originally from?
 - Kingston corporate area
 - Montego Bay, Mandeville, Ocho Rios
 - Other (in Jamaica)
2. Present residence
 - Kingston corporate area
 - Montego Bay, Mandeville, Ocho Rios

Other (in Jamaica)

3. Gender

Male

Female

4. Age group

12-18

18-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

61+

5. Highest level of education

Grade 6

High school

Tertiary (certificate or diploma)

University degree

Post-graduate degree

6. Name of high school attended _____

7. Occupation

Student

Professional: physician, attorney, clergy, public servant, teacher, lecturer, musician, etc.

Business: tourism, management, banking, sales, promotion, etc.

Skilled work: secretary, cosmetologist, electrician, plumber, mason, mechanic, seamstress, scuba diver, etc.

Other (Please name) _____

II. **Language Questions**

8. Jamaican Creole (Patois) and English are two separate languages.

Yes

No

9. Jamaican Creole (Patois) should be the ONLY official language of Jamaica.

Yes

No

10. Jamaican Creole should be ONE of TWO official languages of Jamaica.

Yes

No

11. English should be the ONLY official language of Jamaica.

Yes

No

12. Jamaican Creole (Patois) should be both a written and a spoken language.

Yes

No

13. Jamaican Creole (Patois) should be taught in schools just as we teach French and Spanish

Yes

No

14. Tick the answer(s) most often true for you (you may choose more than one):

When I hear strangers from outside Jamaica speak Jamaican Creole (Patois), I

Get angry

laugh

feel irritated

feel proud

wish they would stop

feel embarrassed for them

It depends on the person speaking it. Please explain:

15. Tick the answer(s) that most often apply (you may choose more than one):

When I speak Jamaican Creole to another Jamaican and a stranger understands, I am

Surprised

Glad

Slightly uncomfortable

Unhappy

It depends on which stranger understands it. (Please explain)

16. I would prefer that (choose only one)

Jamaican Creole be spoken and understood only by Jamaicans.

Jamaican Creole be spoken and understood only by people of Caribbean or African origin.

All people in the world have a chance to speak and understand Jamaican Creole.

Appendix B

Questions for Focus Group 1

1. What do you think of Jamaican Creole?
2. How has your opinion or attitude toward the language changed over the years you have been in Jamaica?
3. How well do you understand Jamaican Creole?
4. When someone tells a joke in Jamaican, do you understand it well enough to laugh? Why?
5. When do you use Jamaican Creole?
6. If you do not use Jamaican at all, why don't you?
7. Do you wish you could speak Jamaican better than you do?
8. Why do you think you have not become fluent in the language, if you are not?
9. How do Jamaicans respond when you use Jamaican?
10. Why do you think you get this response?
11. Some experts on humour believe that laughter is a form of social control. It helps to keep people in their expected place in the social order. Do you think this is at play here? Why?
12. How do you feel when you are in a group where all are speaking Jamaican? Why?
13. If you have children, do they speak Jamaican? How do they respond when you use the Jamaican language? Is it the same response that Jamaicans exhibit? Why?
14. How do you think you could learn to be more fluent in Jamaican?

Appendix C

Questions for Focus Group 2

Question #1 is a warm-up question only. Do not let the conversation go more than a few minutes on this – otherwise it might take up the whole hour. The questions in bold *must* be answered in depth. They encapsulate the purpose of the focus group. If we can get to some of the others, however, I will be very happy.

1. What are your thoughts and feelings about the Jamaican language? Do you like to speak it? Do you like to hear it? Do you like to read it? Why?
2. **You are standing in line at the bank. Several persons ahead of you is a man who is clearly a stranger in Jamaica. His blue eyes, light hair and informal clothing suggest that he is American. When the line has not moved for about fifteen minutes, he turns to the man behind him and says in a loud voice, “Nuttin naah gwan!” What is your response?**

If you said you would laugh, why would you laugh?

Do you think you would have responded differently if this had been a woman, not a man? Why?

Would you have responded differently if the man/woman had been African American? Why?

What if the man/woman had been Japanese? British? Haitian?

How might your response be coloured by history?

- 3. Some scholars suggest that laughter is a form of social control. It keeps people from crossing socially drawn lines; for example, we laugh when a child says something inappropriate to shame the child so it doesn't happen again. Do you think that this comes into play when you laugh when you hear strangers speak Jamaican? How or why?**
- 4. Show Volkswagen commercial. What do you think about this foreigner speaking Jamaican? Why? Is it different from the foreigner standing in line at the bank? Why? Would the commercial have been more effective if a Jamaican had been speaking? Why?**
5. You are attending a speech by a foreigner who has been invited to your institution to speak. The speaker spices up his/her speech now and then with a Jamaican phrase. How does this affect the way you receive the message?
6. You are listening to American/British music and notice that many of the words come from Jamaican Creole. How does that make you feel?
- 7. You are in an airport in Chicago talking on the phone in Jamaican to one of your friends. The person, obviously not Jamaican, indicates that she understood what you were saying. How does that make you feel? Why?**
- 8. Have you ever used Jamaican to avoid being understood by others around you? When and why? What was the outcome?**
9. How do you respond when tourists speak Jamaican at the beach or in hotels? Is this different from your response in work/personal situations? Why?
- 10. Would you be comfortable in a group of foreigners who were all speaking Jamaican fluently? Why?**
- 11. Do you prefer that only Jamaicans speak Jamaican? Why? What about other Caribbean nationals? People of African descent?**
- 12. Why do you think there are no schools in Jamaica that have regular classes to teach Jamaican to foreigners?**
- 13. Do you think that attitudes among Jamaicans toward strangers speaking Jamaican are changing? How and why?**

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