Creole and continua in the diaspora: A review of language variation among Caribbean English Creole Speakers abroad

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This paper is a review of the literature on phonological variation and change in Caribbean English Creole (CEC) varieties spoken in large metropolitan cities in the US, UK and Canada (Blake & Shousterman 2010; Pratt-Johnson 2007; Winer 2006). It is not clear what differences exist between/among these different expatriate varieties given differences in their individual ecologies of contact with different varieties of English (Mufwene 2001). The linguistic ecology of urban centers is quite different from that in rural Caribbean locations and so the linguistic implication for CECs will be different in each.

Expatriate varieties spoken in these large cities are undergoing change, but to date there is no log of how these changes in the varieties in individual cities compare to each other. Further, it is not clear to what extent have these varieties have accommodated to the local English varieties or retained features of the Caribbean varieties.

As new migrants to these communities, it quite likely that CEC speakers simply adopted the speech pattern established by founding populations (Mufwene 2001). However, Hoffman and Walker (2010) suggest that visible minorities might accommodate less than less/non visible minorities. Their work suggests that in these large cities, linguistic variation might have less to do with non accommodation to the majority language than with the way speakers actively construct and express ethnic identity. Thus, a necessary part of this review is language attitudes towards CEC varieties as this too has been shown to be undergoing rapid change both in the Caribbean and abroad (Beckford-Wassink 1999; Mühleisen 2002, Jamaica Language Unit 2005). Varieties spoken in Britain for example have been shown to bear strong sociolinguistic significance as a marker of identity (Sebba 2007, Sebba & Dray 2013) even when these variants have been historically stigmatized in the Caribbean (Beckford-Wassink & Dyer 2004).

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