

LINGUISTICS RESEARCH DAY 2005

DEPARTMENT OF LIBERAL ARTS, SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

Room 203–204, School of Education
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND EDUCATION
09:00 am. – 05:00 pm.

Wednesday 7 December MORNING

1. LANGUAGE AND THE LAW and DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

- 9:00 – 9:30 **Course Content for the Language of the Law and Interpretation of the Law**
Godfrey Steele, Faculty of Humanities & Education, UWI, St. Augustine
- 9:30 – 10:00 **“Brown Cow, Red Cow...” The Problem of Court Clerks as Makeshift Court Interpreters for French-lexicon Creole Speakers in St. Lucia**
Sandra Evans, Faculty of Humanities & Education, UWI, St. Augustine
- 10:00 – 10:30 **‘Here is the rightest place to live’: In Search of a Better One A Tobagonian Perspective**
Valerie Youssef, Faculty of Humanities & Education, UWI, St. Augustine
- 10:30 – 10:45 **Break**

2. IN THE MIND

- 10:45 – 11:15 **Masked Repetition Priming of Regular and Irregular Verb Forms**
Joanna Morris, Faculty of Social Sciences, UWI, St. Augustine
- 11:15 – 11:45 **All about *evri* (‘every’) in Jamaican Creole**
Michele Stewart, Faculty of Humanities & Education, UWI, Mona
- 11:45 – 12:15 **Post-Subject Adverbs in Creole**
Winford James, Faculty of Humanities & Education, UWI, St. Augustine

LUNCH (Room 130)

AFTERNOON

3. ON THE FIELD

- 1:30 – 2:00 **Indic Lexicon in the English/Creole of Trinidad**
Lise Winer, Faculty of Education, McGill University
- 2:00 – 2:30 **Patua in Paria**
Jo-Anne S. Ferreira, Faculty of Humanities & Education, UWI, St. Augustine
- 2:30 – 3:00 **Languages and Borders**
Ian Robertson, Faculty of Humanities & Education, UWI, St. Augustine
- 3:00 – 3:30 **Break**
- Poster Presentation**
The Relationship between Cognitive Styles and Achievement in Performance-Based Assessment
Keisha Evans, Faculty of Humanities & Education, UWI, St. Augustine

4. IN THE CLASSROOM

- 3:30 – 4:00 **Profiling the Foreign Language Teacher in Trinidad & Tobago**
Vanessa Williams & Beverly-Anne Carter, Faculty of Humanities & Education, UWI, St. Augustine
- 4:00 – 4:30 **A Critique of the New SEMP Language Arts Curriculum (Levels 1–3)**
Nicha Selvon-Ramkissoon, Faculty of Humanities & Education, UWI, St. Augustine
- 4:30 – 5:00 **Verbal Morphology in the Code-Switching and Code-Mixing of Creole-speaking Male Secondary School Students in Trinidad**
Dwane Garcia, Faculty of Humanities & Education, UWI, St. Augustine

ABSTRACTS

Keisha Evans

The Relationship between Cognitive Styles and Achievement in Performance-Based Assessment

Poster Presentation

Many of the theoretical assumptions on which traditional testing and assessment rely are based on behaviourist views of cognition and development. In these traditional standardized tests, only one solution is correct, and the learner practises the plan until it becomes automatic. The thinking involved is reproductive, because the learner reproduces known procedures in a static fashion.

As a corollary, there is now the increased use of alternative assessments. In such tasks, the learner cannot rely solely on the retrieval of previously learned information and, instead, must use reason and analysis to arrive at a solution. Performance- Based Assessment (P.B.A.) is one type of alternative assessment. Generally, P.B.A. tasks employ open-ended problems, which have ambiguous requirements. They are characterized by their ill- structure, authenticity, complexity, and the need for self-direction.

Extensive research has linked field dependence/ independence to more general perceptual and mental processing characteristics. The field independent style has been described as complex and individualistic. Such learners prefer tasks whose content is abstract and non-personal and are more autonomous learners. Field independent individuals have developed sophisticated learning mediators, which enable them to solve ambiguous, demanding problems. They are able to extract relevant information from a problem, are adept at reorganizing information in a problem, and are better skilled at imposing structure on the information.

In contrast, the field dependent style is less complex. These individuals use a chain- link information processing style. Field dependent learners attend to environmental features and cues that are salient but irrelevant to learning tasks, and are therefore unable to reorganize their perceptions.

Since field independent students are most judicious problem solvers, it is implicated that they will perform better on the unstructured P.B.A. tasks than will field dependent learners. Additionally, it is hypothesized that there shall be no significant distinctions in the level of achievement of the field dependence/ independence cognitive styles on standardized tests, since these are more structured.

Keisha Evans, M.A.

Assistant Lecturer in Linguistics and Ph.D. candidate

Department of Liberal Arts

Faculty of Humanities & Education

The University of the West Indies

St. Augustine

kevans@fhe.uwi.tt

Sandra Evans

“Brown Cow, Red Cow...”

The Problem of Court Clerks as Makeshift Court Interpreters
for French-lexicon Creole Speakers in St. Lucia

Session 1

St. Lucia's legal system is modelled on the British Common Law system and the official language of the law is (Standard) English. However, there are native St. Lucians who lack written and/or spoken proficiency in English. These persons generally speak St. Lucian French-lexicon Creole, which is not mutually intelligible with any form of English. Therefore, when Creole speakers appear before the court as defendants, complainants, witnesses or victims, they require the assistance of a legal interpreter to facilitate their comprehension of and participation in the court proceedings. At present, there are no trained interpreters in French-lexicon Creole in St. Lucia. Thus, as the need for an interpreter arises in the courts, in both criminal and civil matters, a regular Clerk of Courts becomes a 'makeshift' court interpreter. These Clerks play a crucial role in the proceedings, as their interpretation determines what information the magistrate records. This paper examines the implications of using Court Clerks as 'makeshift' court interpreters for French-lexicon Creole speakers in St. Lucian courts. It also highlights some of the difficulties encountered by these interpreters, resulting from a lack of training and standardized procedures.

Sandra Evans, M.A.

Assistant Lecturer in Linguistics and M.Phil. candidate

Department of Liberal Arts

Faculty of Humanities & Education

The University of the West Indies

St. Augustine

sevans@fhe.uwi.tt

Jo-Anne S. Ferreira
Patua in Paria

Session 3

Despite its categorization as a dying language, the ethnolinguistic vitality of Patua of Paria, a variety of Lesser Antillean French-lexicon Creole, appears to be relatively good. This variety, like other minority varieties of French Creole in Latin America, is spoken primarily in a border area, namely the Trinidad-Venezuela Paria area. (Other varieties in similar border situations include Haitian Creole spoken on the border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and Karipúna and Galibi-Marwono French-lexicon Creole spoken in Oiapoque, on the Brazilian side of the Oiapoque river border of French Guiana-Brazil). In Venezuela, it is spoken in two areas – Güiria on the Paria peninsula in the state of Sucre, and neighbouring El Callao in Estado Bolívar. Native speakers include elderly Venezuelans with no immediate connection to the insular Caribbean and Venezuelan children of recent Haitian and Lesser Antillean migrants. There is now growing interest in the language and culture of Venezuelan French Creole speakers, on the part of descendants of these groups, as well as on the part of other citizens of Sucre and Estado Bolívar, and researchers. This paper seeks to explore the origins of the apparent renaissance and resurgence of this dying language variety, and to place it in the context of the French Creole language family of the Caribbean.

Jo-Anne Ferreira, Ph.D.
Lecturer in Linguistics
Department of Liberal Arts
Faculty of Humanities & Education
The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine
jferreira@fhe.uwi.tt

Dwane Garcia

Verbal Morphology in the Code Switching and Code Mixing of
Creole-speaking male secondary school students in Trinidad

Session 4

This paper examines grammaticalized Tense, Mood, Aspect and Person-Number marking in a sample of the embedded codes of a group of Trinidad English Creole-speaking male secondary school students in Trinidad. The matrix code of the students is a variety of Trinidad English Creole; the embedded codes were found to be two varieties of English, called Trinidad Standard English and General American, distinguished primarily by phonology. The study attempted to use the data on the embedded codes as a measure of the students' competence in the expression of tense, mood and aspect, and in the marking of person-number in English, and began with the hypothesis that the embedded codes were in fact the products of an underlying Creole system. Code switching among the students was a means by which the speaker identified with the rights-and-obligations set associated with users of the different codes, and by which he exploited for comic effect ambiguities that arose between different codes. It was found that code switching and mixing were relatively rare, involving, when they did occur, a high percentage of formulaic expressions and a high rate of avoidance of verbal morphology. Almost all instances of code switching were intersentential, as opposed to intrasentential. The study found that, in code switching, the students remained overwhelmingly in the areas of grammatical overlap among the different codes: the TMA morphemes which are common to the codes were used and certain English distinctions were never marked. From a certain perspective, the underlying distinctions marked in the embedded codes were primarily aspectual.

Dwane Garcia, B.A.
M.Phil. candidate and Assistant Lecturer in Linguistics
Department of Liberal Arts
Faculty of Humanities & Education
The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine
dwane Garcia@hotmail.com

Joanna Morris
Masked Repetition Priming of Regular and Irregular Verb Forms

Session 2

It has been argued that morphologically regular verbs, consisting of a stem + affix, can be computed by rule, whereas morphologically irregular verbs must be stored as full forms in the mental lexicon. As a result of this representational difference, regular verbs are presumed to undergo decomposition into their constituent morphemes during processing, while irregular verbs do not. Hence, we should find neurophysiological indicators of morphological decomposition for regularly inflected past tense forms, but not for irregulars. Event-related potential (ERP) studies that have examined morphological priming effects have found that regular verbs primed with their past tense forms were associated with a reduction in the N400 but primed irregular verbs showed no N400 reduction effect (Muentz et al., 1999). In this study we recorded ERPs to regular and irregular verbs preceded by masked primes that were either (a) identical to, (b) past tense forms of, (c) orthographically, but not morphologically or semantically related to, or (d) unrelated to both regular and irregular verb targets. We found no differences between regular and irregular verbs in the N400 reduction effect; responses to regular and irregular verbs primed with their past tense forms did not differ from each other. However, both differed significantly from the responses to verb targets primed with orthographic controls and with unrelated words. These data suggest that the differences found between regular and irregular verbs in previous priming studies may reflect properties of episodic memory rather than true lexical effects.

Joanna Morris, Ph.D.
Lecturer in Cognitive and Physiological Psychology
Department of Behavioural Sciences
Faculty of Social Sciences
The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine
jomorris@fss.uwi.tt

Nicha Selvon-Ramkissoon

A Critique of the New SEMP Language Arts Curriculum (Levels 1–3)

Session 4

The Secondary Modernization Programme (SEMP) Language Arts Curriculum Draft was released in 2002 in keeping with SEMP'S overall objective to "address deficiencies identified in the Education System" (1). The curriculum design is learner-centred, founded on the Multiple Intelligences theory, with a constructivist approach to teaching. It encourages "group work, listening and speaking skills, empathy, critical thinking and problem-solving." It focuses on students' "self-esteem, empowerment and independent thinking" (2–3). It is for these reasons, among others, that the curriculum is an innovation. It moves away from the traditional modes of instruction and assessment of a teacher-centred curriculum. Although the Government of Trinidad & Tobago initiated educational reform policies as early as 1996, the SEMP Language Arts curriculum innovation for Levels 1–3 is now in its third year of existence. The Level 4 and 5 draft documents have also been released this year.

Nicha Selvon-Ramkissoon, B.A.
M.Phil. candidate and Tutor in Linguistics
Department of Liberal Arts
Faculty of Humanities & Education
The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine
nramkissoon@fhe.uwi.tt

Godfrey Steele

Course Content for the Language of the Law and Interpretation of the Law Session 1

The intersection of language and communication issues in the law has received attention in the academic literature, but decisions about the relevant curricular content are not always easy to make. Commenting on language and communication issues in the legal system, Gibbons concludes, "It is, therefore, not only the law that permeates our lives, but the language of the law, and it does so in ways that are not always problem free" (2003: 3). He adds "Legal communication includes nonverbal semiotic systems (i.e., gestures, illustrations), and a linguistic aspect" (9).

This paper reviews the suggested curricular content for an introductory course in language and the law for undergraduate students in the humanities, social sciences and law pursuing a course in legal communication as part of a communication degree or part of a programme of study in a related discipline; the course may also be suitable for graduate students pursuing courses in forensic linguistics, law, legal communication without a previous background in linguistics. Part 1 focuses on the language of the law and Part 2 focuses on the interpretation of the law. The sources for the suggested course content are derived from an analysis of ten volumes of publications in the International Journal of Speech Language and the Law and related textbooks on the subject of the language and the law. Students who have a background in linguistics may find this course an interesting complement to studies in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, and any of the subfields of linguistics. A background in linguistics is not a requirement, however.

Godfrey Steele, Ph.D.
Lecturer in Communication Studies
Department of Liberal Arts
Faculty of Humanities & Education
The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine
gsteele@fhe.uwi.tt

Michele Stewart

All about *evri* ('every') in Jamaican Creole

Session 2

Jamaican Creole (JC) *evri* in interaction with indefinites behaves quite differently from English 'every', its historical antecedent. In this presentation, I will outline these differences. For example, as seen in (1a) below, JC *evri* may have a distributive reading like its English counterpart 'every', but unlike English it also freely allows a collective interpretation, as in (1b):

- (1) *Evri bwai mek wan tiebl.*
every boy make INDEFINITE table
a. 'Every boy made a (potentially different) table'
b. 'All the boys (jointly) made one table.'

Existing accounts of quantificational interaction in English call on Scope. I show that a scopal account is inadequate as an explanation of quantification in JC, and briefly introduce my own suggestion for a solution based on the possibilities which event structure makes available.

Michele Stewart
Lecturer in Linguistics
Department of Language, Linguistics and Philosophy
Faculty of Humanities & Education
The University of the West Indies
Mona
michele_stewart@cwjamaica.com

Vanessa Williams & Beverly-Anne Carter
Profiling the Foreign Language Teacher in Trinidad & Tobago
A First Look at the Results of the Foreign Language Teaching Survey

Session 4

This paper discusses preliminary data coming out of a foreign language teaching/learning survey conducted in Trinidad and Tobago in 2004/05. The survey, part of a larger initiative to promote foreign language teaching and learning was intended to serve two main purposes: to gather a broad range of data on the present cohort of school-based foreign language teachers and learners and to provide the background for the UWISTA Online Foreign Language Teaching and Learning Forum. Two types of questionnaires: a school questionnaire and a teacher questionnaire have documented student numbers, gender, languages studied and so on, as well as teacher specific information, e.g. teachers' biodata, qualifications and professional experience. Additionally, the survey sought teachers' opinion of the positive and negative aspects of teaching foreign languages in their own context. The data collected so far allow us to make some initial statements on teacher profile- the main focus of this presentation.

Vanessa Williams, B.A.
M.Phil. candidate and Tutor in Linguistics and Portuguese
Department of Liberal Arts
Faculty of Humanities & Education
The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine
dlinguist_1@yahoo.com

Lise Winer
Indic lexicon in the English/Creole of Trinidad

Session 3

This paper examines the contemporary component of the English/Creole of Trinidad that is derived from languages (almost entirely Bhojpuri) of India. It begins with an explanation of the methodology of determining the 1,844-word corpus, and a discussion of various pitfalls in determining derivations. The lexical items in the corpus are then described and categorized by sociocultural domains. The final section examines evidence for the degree to which particular words have been mainstreamed within the non-Indian population of Trinidad.

Lise Winer, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Faculty of Education
McGill University
Montréal
lise.winer@mcgill.ca

Valerie Youssef

'Here is the rightest place to live': In Search of a Better One
A Tobagonian Perspective

Session 1

This paper examines personal interviews with young men in Tobago which bring out their life perspectives, their ideologies, their aims and aspirations, through both content and language analysis. It focuses on utterances in which they subjectivize themselves in relation to others and to their immediate and larger societal contexts. Through analyzing such utterances we build up a picture of their world-view, and this, in turn, facilitates our capacity to understand their issues and to bridge gaps of understanding brought about by shifting generational circumstances.

Valerie Youssef, Ph.D.
Senior Lecturer in Linguistics
Department of Liberal Arts
Faculty of Humanities & Education
The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine
vyoussef@fhe.uwi.tt