



Department of Liberal Arts

Linguistics Section

LINGUISTICS CAREER

&

RESEARCH DAY

“Lining with Language”

Thursday 25th March 2010

1:00 – 5:00 P.M.

FHE SB 3

Programme

1:00 – 2:00 Where to Go? Way to Go!

1. Jairo Sánchez – Translator
2. Gerard Best – Marketing and Communications
3. Mark White – CMB Creative (Advertising)
4. Amina Ibrahim-Ali – EFL
5. Maria Landa – CLL

2:00- 2:30 Questions and Answers

2:30- 3:00 Where We Came From – Interviews with Our Professors

3:00- 3:20 Issues in the Documentation and Revitalisation of an Endangered Heritage Language

Jo-Anne S. Ferreira

3:20- 3:40 Literary Linguistics: Exploring the Interface of Language and Literature

Nicha Selvon-Ramkissoon & Ryan Durgasingh

3:40- 4:00 Linguistics in the Speech Clinic

Kathy-Ann Drayton

4:00- 4:20 Palm up in the Sign Language of five deaf speakers in Trinidad & Tobago

Kesica Brewster

4:40- 5:00 Investigating Sign Language in Trinidad & Tobago

Ben Braithwaite & Leslie Ali

CHEERS!

Linguistics Career and Research Day
2010

“Liming with Language”

ABSTRACTS

Investigating Sign Language in Trinidad and Tobago

Ben Braithwaite & Leslie Ali

This paper describes work of an ongoing project which aims to provide the first detailed description of the linguistic situation amongst the Deaf Community of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). The project is being carried out by a team of Deaf and Hearing researchers based at the University of the West Indies. The paper describes (1) the context and aims of the project, (2) the methodological approach taken, (3) some of the problems and challenges we have faced and (4) some initial findings.

Very little research has been done previously on sign language in T&T. amongst the Deaf Community, Trinidad and Tobago Sign Language (TTSL) and American Sign Language (ASL) are both recognized, though there is currently no substantial research into the degree to which these two codes constitute separate and mutually unintelligible languages. The extent to which the language used by signers in Tobago differs from that used by those in Trinidad is also unclear.

The project has begun making video recordings of deaf signers from around T&T. these recordings are being edited, compiled and annotated to produce a corpus using the ELAN software. Signers from all areas in Trinidad are being recorded. So far, the age of signers ranges between 18 and 67, with males and females equally represented. At the time of writing, over 50 signers have been recorded, and we plan to record an additional 30 people. The design of the data elicitation procedures follows similar projects on British Sign Language (BSL) and Dutch Sign Language (NGT).

Whilst findings are at this stage preliminary, it is clear that the linguistic situation is complicated, and many signers have some competence in both ASL and TTSL. It also appears that some signers prefer ASL, whilst others prefer TTSL, though the differences between these codes is still not yet entirely clear. Signers distinguish between systems used in North, East and South Trinidad. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago’s Ministry of Social Development recently produced a short Dictionary of Trinidadian Sign Language and projects of this kind may lead to a greater degree of standardization. In educational contexts, Signed English (SE) is often used, in addition to ASL.

Palm up in the Sign Language of five deaf signers in Trinidad and Tobago
Kesica Brewster

This paper presents an account of the use and distribution of the question particle **PALM UP** in the Sign Language of five ‘Trinbagonian’ deaf signers. It adds to ongoing sign language research in this country, by providing a first description of this feature. The function of **PALM UP**, in the speech of these users of Trinidad and Tobago Sign Language (TTSL), as in other sign language like American Sign Language (ASL), is to suggest that for interrogative statements, some bit of information is unknown. The manual sign for this sign **PALM UP** takes various forms. It is phonologically similar to the TTSL sign ‘WHAT-’, (identical to its counterpart ‘-WHAT-’ in (ASL)). ‘-WHAT-’ is articulated normally with both palms open, turned upwards, from a previous orientation. It is frequently accompanied also by a hand shake from side to side.

The extent of the similarity of the indefinite particle to the [+WH] sign ‘-WHAT-’, is questioned. Work on the indefinite particle in ASL by authors Conlin et al. (2003), stated that there is clear distinction between ‘WHAT’ [+WH], and ‘WHAT’ [indefinite particle]; the differences exist in their articulation, function and distribution.

PALM UP is used in isolation, as well as alongside other WH- words. Two such examples are:

1. HOW MUCH **PALM UP** SAVINGS BANK YOU HAVE
‘How much do you have saved in the bank?’
2. YOUR HOME **PALM UP**
‘Where do you live?’

The paper, also compares the structure of interrogative sentences containing this **PALM UP** feature in the sign language of these informants with question particles in spoken languages. Carnie (2007) discusses question particles in Irish, where the [+Q] particle ‘a’ co-occurs with a +WH- word. He proposes that the +WH- word appears in the Specifier of the Complementizer Phrase CP (Spec CP), whilst the question particle occupies the Complement (C) position.

Ultimately, this research hopes to advance the study of Sign Language in the Caribbean region by adding a descriptive analysis of interrogative questions in the sign language used by deaf individuals of Trinidad and Tobago.

Linguistics Career and Research Day 2010
“Living with Language”

Linguistics in the Speech Clinic
Kathy-Ann Drayton

Clinical linguistics involves the application of linguistic theories and procedures to the study and treatment of communication disorders (Cummins 2008). Communication disorders include disorders of hearing, speech and language, and the cognitive linguistic systems that underlie these. Clinical linguistics therefore engages linguistic study with clinical practice in speech-language pathology. In the assessment and treatment of the various types of disorders, the speech-language pathologist requires knowledge of normal language acquisition, especially developmental norms for syntax, morphology and phonology. The Speech-language pathologist is also required to understand and apply psycholinguistic theories of how humans learn language and how this language is processed in the brain. (ASHA 2009).

This presentation examines the application of linguistic knowledge to speech-language intervention for three clients currently seen at the Speech Clinic. The first client is a 5 year-old child who has a moderate articulation disorder with mild apraxia. Therapy for this client involved knowledge of the processes of speech articulation and the normal sequence of phoneme acquisition. A second client is a 65 year-old man with aphasia and apraxia following a stroke. Therapy for this client has included word retrieval practice for his lexical deficit and motor programming for his speech production difficulties. A third client is a 5 year-old child with Cochlear Implant following profound hearing loss intervention for lexical and morpho- syntactic deficits.

Linguistics Career and Research Day 2010
“Liming with Language”

Issues in Documentation and Revitalisation of an Endangered Heritage Language
Jo-Anne Ferreira

Trinidadian French Creole (TFC), or Patois, is an endangered heritage language which is central to the historical formation of both Trinidadian and Venezuelan (Pariano) cultures. This paper discusses some of the issues in language documentation and revitalisation of this endangered language on both sides of the Paria border; in the case of Trinidad, language revitalisation and revival, and in the case of Venezuela, language reclamation. The paper surveys the whole process of language documentation, using a cross- and multi- disciplinary approach. The focus of the paper is the identification and use of Trinidadian French Creole texts as just one formal data source in the move towards language revitalization. Most of the extant Patois texts represent a wide range of genres (including original and translated narratives, tales, songs, proverbs and riddles which have been recorded and collected since the start of the 19th century). Considering the awakening that has been taking place over the last ten years in both Trinidad and Venezuela, formal language documentation efforts will be key in managing informal language revitalization efforts thus far, and will be of benefit to language custodians, those who identify with the language, as well as well known members of academic and other circles.