

Ralph Ludwig

Perspectives for Linguistic and Philological Research in the ‘French’ and ‘Romance’ Caribbean

In my discussion of Linguistics and ‘Caribbean-Creole Philology,’ a term I will explain in a moment, I will refer primarily (but not solely) to the so-called ‘French Caribbean.’ At the same time, I will question the restrictions to which the study of the Caribbean is so often subjected.

1 Studies on Languages, Cultures, and Media in Particular Societies

Many Caribbean languages have now been more thoroughly investigated than was the case a few decades ago. Detailed analyses, grammars, and dictionaries now exist for many languages and varieties. One well known example is the language constellation in Haiti, which was analyzed extensively by Albert Valdman (2015). A further example is the Palenquero language in Columbia: At the end of the 1960s, Creole studies discovered this language (de Granda 1968; Bickerton/Escalante 1970; Schwegler 2013). Meanwhile, quite a number of studies exist which cover various aspects (grammar, lexis, socio-linguistics) of this Creole language in great detail.

However, many areas and languages still require detailed analysis and investigation. Despite the work which has already been achieved, many individual societies have not been looked at in sufficient detail or require renewed analysis. There are three main reasons for this, which have to do with the accelerated developments of language and communication in the last decades:

- fast processes of change, e.g. changed contact processes
- processes of change in the media/changes in the relation of oral-written language/demand and reality in schools and institutions
- mobility and the diaspora, elements which affect Caribbean societies greatly

In my investigations, I focus, amongst other things, on variational linguistics in several Caribbean varieties of Spanish, French, and Creole from a Romance linguistics point of view. My colleagues and I collaborated, for example, in compiling a dictionary of Guadeloupe Creole (Ludwig/Montbrand/Pouillet/Telchid

2013) and in investigating other Creole languages (Ludwig/Telchid/Bruneau-Ludwig 2001); we analyzed several varieties of Caribbean Spanish, among them Puerto Rican Spanish, to name just one example (Deising, work in progress).

Interdependence in the archipelago and the complexity of the case under interdisciplinary investigation are, however, striking. In recent work on Spanish in Puerto Rico, the fact that language contact with English is formative, even more so than 15 years ago, is very evident. Contemporary English/American linguistic influence in Puerto Rico cannot be understood without considering two specific factors: First, the country's intra-Caribbean dissociations (e.g. from Cuba) and second, the ever-changing, macroareal influences (especially an increased influence from the US).

2 Necessity for a Broader Perspective

Therefore, the adoption of a broader perspective is imperative in various fields of research, which in turn causes us to cross frontiers in various directions – and this at a time, in which Caribbean Studies look back on several decades of scholarly investigation of various small territories, including their languages and cultures. In her dissertation, Alla Klimenkowa (2017) has defined the Caribbean as a “contact space.” The “cross-border perspective” – which was, of course, always present in Caribbean Studies but has gained in importance over the last few years – applies for various sorts of borders. The synchronic perspective must be extended in view of the diachronic cultural and linguistic processes of constitution. The various language types must be investigated along the lines of their typological contact relations. Out of this a whole complex/set of questions arises as for example: How are Creole languages related genetically to colonizing languages, and how did (and do) they compare historically with today? Can Creole languages be classified quite simply as “normal” languages? To put this claim into perspective, I would like to give a few examples.

3 Areal Crossing of Frontiers

To begin with, the above-mentioned crossing of frontiers holds true for areas. In general, a growing tendency to adopt a macroareal perspective becomes apparent; here, the Caribbean is seen as a complex communicational and cultural space. This is true for a synchronic as well as a diachronic perspective. This appears in diverse fields of investigation, and it does so beyond historical and linguistic studies; one interesting example would be the macroareal investigation of proverbs (e.g. the project *1000 Proverbes de la Caraïbe*, in which Creole

proverbs from Dominica, St. Lucia, Guadeloupe, and Haiti were surveyed comparatively as early as the 1980s). One very important contribution towards laying the empirical foundations of comparative trans-Creole studies is made by the *Apics (Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures)* under the leadership of Susanne Michaelis at the Max-Planck-Institute in Leipzig.¹

4 The Frontier Crossing of Etymological Investigations

Etymological investigations present a comprehensive perspective with regard to areal and temporal frontier crossing. This can be observed in Annegret Bol-lée’s project (2012), which aims to compile an etymological dictionary of French Creole languages in the Caribbean (cf. the *Dictionnaire étymologique des créoles français d’Amérique*, short DECA).

- This intended compilation of the existing Creole dictionaries will basically create a complex synchronic Creole dictionary for the French Caribbean in general.
- Secondly, the entries will be explained etymologically, thus shedding light on diachronic linguistic processes, such as linguistic creolization.
- Finally, this is complex cultural history in the making. For example, it is only possible to explain the Haitian word *matelotage* if we begin historically with the sailor, who had to share a hammock with his mates according to their shifts, and then move on to the first settlers, whose male representatives often shared one woman in a very particular form of settlement.²

Amongst these etymological macroareal studies, we must also include a couple of other investigations, such as Silke Jansen (2012), Alla Klimenkowa (2017), André Thibault (2012, 2015), and Jean-Paul Chauveau (2015). Historical texts (e.g. chronicles from the 17th and 18th century, which are much more easily available today as electronic data) allow an empirical investigation of earlier linguistic stages in the Caribbean and offer diachronic evidence and parameters for investigating linguistic and social creolization processes (cf. Ludwig 2017).

1 Cf. the overview of Michaelis/Maurer/Haspelmath/Huber (2013a) and the data bank of the *Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Languages* (Michaelis/Maurer/Haspelmath/Huber (2013b)).

2 For *matelotage* cf. Du Tertre 1667, vol. II, 453–454; Oexmelin [1678] 1699, I, 134–135.; Corre 1890: 15.

5 Creolistic Typology

Linguistically, the question of the degree of specificity of particular Creole languages and the question of the relationship between structural, historical, and general cognitive parameters continues to pose themselves again and again; the French Creole languages, for instance, offer such a field of investigation. They do so in relation to each other as well as in their comparison with English, Portuguese, and other Creole languages. The existence of an independent classification as “Creole languages” has recently been demanded by John McWhorter (1998, 2005), while Salikoko Mufwene (2001, 2008) has disputed this hypothesis energetically.

As far as linguistic structures are concerned, the *Apics* attempt to find an answer by comparing most of the Pidgin and Creole languages known around the world typologically. This poses a question which in the end is important for cultural and literary studies, too: What is the peculiarity of the Caribbean area and what does the particular interdependence between the Caribbean Creole world and other Creole worlds consist of?

6 Multi-Faceted Contact in Synchronic Creolistics

From a Creolist point of view, it is increasingly necessary to adopt a more and more macroareal linguistic and social perspective of contact. This means that, for example, the hypothetical scale French/Creole needs to be considered in a structural typological manner as well as through a functional discourse-analysis. In this field of investigation, the influence exercised by contact between the Caribbean and the European and North American diasporas also needs to be taken into areal account.

7 Interdisciplinarity in Linguistics-Literary Studies

Many literary studies also continue to pursue interdisciplinarity, since points of great importance would be lacking without an in-depth consideration of the linguistic aspects of a literary oeuvre. The necessity of such an approach is demonstrated in particular by the novel *La mazurka perdue des femmes-couresse* by Méline Céco. Long passages of this novel practice an “écriture en alternance.” (Ludwig 2015) This inclusion of the linguistic potential inherent in the contrast and conflict between French and Creole is particularly effective here.

As I have emphasized before, this leads to a ‘new (Creole) philology’ that combines linguistic, literary, and cultural investigation; this discipline therefore

transcends the concept of the 'Creole philology' ("philologie creole") proposed by Jules Faine (1937). The online publication of the periodical *Études Créoles* (*Laboratoire Parole Langage*, University of Aix-en-Provence) is committed to such an interdisciplinary approach (Kriegel/Véronique 2015). Ludwig (2015) also adopted this approach in his compendium of literature in the Creole world.

8 Comprehensive Models and Linguistic Ecology

A basic task of Caribbean investigation in particular is to formulate theories which encourage the intertwining and fusion of disciplines, while explicitly expanding existing theories at the same time. The necessity of formulating epistemological and hermeneutic syntheses is especially striking in Caribbean studies. Important in the field of linguistics are publications which investigate basic processes such as hybridization (cf. Aboh 2015), or the question of the relation between creolization and universal grammar (cf. Aboh/DeGraff 2015). State of the art models regarding thus processes of creolisation and development, in which key words such as language contact and linguistic ecology play a central role, are also considered to cross frontiers and set trends. Our research-group and myself are trying to contribute to the field by proposing a model of linguistic ecology that refers in philosophical terms to Husserl's term of foundation (cf. Ludwig/Mühlhäusler/Pagel 2017).

Conclusion: The Current Relevance of Linguistic and Cultural Caribbean Studies

The Caribbean is a particularly relevant field of contemporary research. This can be said initially for inner-Caribbean studies. Many Caribbean societies are subject to deep-seated and difficult processes of change, in which the connection between language and society proves to be of central importance. This demands linguistic expertise, not only for an understanding and analysis of the processes currently taking place but also quite specifically in the area of educational politics and the demands for solutions to current problems. Indeed, linguistic expertise is crucial even for approaches that confront the differences in literacy and oral competence. A particularly relevant example is the development of education in Haiti after the earthquake in 2010 (cf. DeGraff 2010).

The questions raised by Kamau Brathwaite (1971, 1974), Orlando Patterson (1975), Ulf Hannerz (1987, 1996), and Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant (1989) – which concern the definition of linguistic and social creolization and the respective relation of the two processes – have not lost any

of their relevance on a general epistemic level. This is true above all for language and communication. The Caribbean offers unique insight into general concepts and processes in linguistic genealogy; in universality and the singularity of language; in language mixture, syntax, and pragmatics in various contact processes; and not least in the linguistic transmission from the “old” to the “new” world (cf. Mufwene 2015; Ludwig 2017).

References

- Aboh, Enoch O. (2015). *The Emergence of Hybrid Grammars: Language Contact and Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Aboh, Enoch O. / DeGraff, Michel (2015). “A null theory of creolization based on universal grammar”. In: Roberts, Ian (ed.). *Handbook of Universal Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique (1987). *1000 proverbes créoles de la Caraïbe francophone*. Paris: Éditions caribéennes.
- Bickerton, Derek / Escalante, Aquiles (1970). “Palenquero: A Spanish-based Creole of Northern Colombia”. In: *Lingua*, no. 24, p. 254–267.
- Bernabé, Jean / Chamoiseau, Patrick / Confiant, Raphaël (1989). *Éloge de la créolité*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Bollée, Annegret (2012). “Étymologies créoles. Contributions du Dictionnaire étymologique des créoles français d’Amérique (DECA)”. In: Thibault, André (ed.). *Le français dans les Antilles: études linguistiques*. Paris: L’Harmattan, p. 31–50.
- Brathwaite, Kamau (1971). *The development of creole society in Jamaica, 1770–1820*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Brathwaite, Kamau (1974). *Contradictory omens: Cultural diversity and integration in the Caribbean*. Mona: Savacou Publications.
- Céco, Méline (2013). *La mazurka perdue des femmes-couresse*. Paris, Montreal: Éditions Écriture.
- Chauveau, Jean-Paul (2015). “Sur le lexique des français populaires maintenu dans les créoles antillais”. In: Thibault, André (ed.). *Du français aux créoles. Phonétique, lexicologie et dialectologie antillaises*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, p. 27–65.
- Colot, Serge / Ludwig, Ralph (2013a). “Guadeloupe Creole structure dataset”. In: <http://pics-online.info/contributions/50> (last consulted 1 July 2017).
- Colot, Serge / Ludwig, Ralph (2013b). “Guadeloupean Creole and Martinican Creole”. In: Michaelis, Susanne / Maurer, Philippe / Haspelmath, Martin / Huber, Magnus (ed.). *The Survey of Pidgin and Creole Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, II, p. 205–219.
- Corre, Armand (1890). *Nos créoles*. Paris: Albert Savine.
- DeGraff, Michel (2010). “Language barrier: Creole is the language of Haiti, and the education system needs to reflect that”. In: *Boston Globe*, 16 June. http://archive.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2010/06/16/language_barrier_in_haiti/ (last consulted 1 July 2017).
- De Granda, Germán (1968). “La tipología ‘criolla’ de los hablas del área lingüística hispanica”. In: *Thesaurus*, no. 23, p. 193–205.

- Deising, Jelena (work in progress). *Die Sprachökologie von Puerto Rico*. [Doctoral thesis, University of Halle].
- Du Tertre, Jean-Baptiste (1667–1671). *Histoire générale des Antilles habitées par les Français*. [Vol. 1: 1667; vol. 2: 1667; vol. 3: 1671]. Paris: Thomas Lolly.
- Faine, Jules (1937 [1936]). *Philologie créole. Études historiques et étymologiques sur la langue créole d'Haïti*. Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie de L'État.
- Hannerz, Ulf (1987). "The World in Creolization". In: *Africa*, no. 57, p. 546–559.
- Hannerz, Ulf (1996). *Transnational connections: Culture, people, places*. London: Routledge.
- Jansen, Silke (2012). "La formation du français régional et des créoles antillais: l'apport du taïno". In: Thibault, André (ed.). *Le français dans les Antilles: études linguistiques*. Paris: L'Harmattan, p. 101–138.
- Klimenkowa, Alla (2017). *Sprachkontakt und lexikalische Innovation in der karibischen Kontaktzone: die Beispiele bozal, cimarrón und criollo*. Hamburg: Buske Verlag.
- Kriegel, Sibylle / Véronique, Daniel (2015). "Études créoles – des approches multiples ancrées dans les disciplines, dans le temps et dans l'espace". In: *Études Créoles*, vol. xxxiii, no. 1, http://www.lpl-aix.fr/~fulltext/Etudes_Creoles/kriegel.pdf (last consulted 4 October 2016).
- Ludwig, Ralph (2015). "Littératures des mondes créoles – des débuts aux questionnements actuels". In: *Études Créoles*, vol. xxxiii, no. 1, http://www.lpl-aix.fr/~fulltext/Etudes_Creoles/ludwig.pdf (last consulted 4 October 2016).
- Ludwig, Ralph (2017). "Diachronies française et créole: rapports épistémiques". In: Ayres-Bennett, Wendy / Carlier, Anne / Glikman, Julie / Rainsford, Thomas / Siouffi, Gilles / Skupien-Dekens, Carine (ed.). *Nouvelles voies d'accès au changement linguistique*. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Ludwig, Ralph / Montbrand, Danièle / Pouillet, Hector / Telchid, Sylviane (2013 [1990]). *Dictionnaire Créole/Français*. [Revised Edition]. Chevagny-sur-Guye: Orphie.
- Ludwig, Ralph / Mühlhäusler, Peter / Pagel, Steve (ed.) (2017). *Linguistic ecology and language contact*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ludwig, Ralph / Telchid, Sylviane / Bruneau-Ludwig, Florence (2001). *Corpus créole. Textes oraux dominicains, guadeloupéens, guyanais, haïtiens, mauriciens et seychellois: enregistrements, transcriptions et traductions*. [En collaboration avec Stefan Pfänder et Didier de Robillard]. Hamburg: Buske Verlag.
- McWhorter, John H. (1998). "Identifying the Creole Prototype: Vindicating a Typological Class". In: *Language*, no. 74, p. 788–818.
- McWhorter, John H. (2005). *Defining creole*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Michaelis, Susanne / Maurer, Philippe / Haspelmath, Martin / Huber, Magnus (ed.) (2013a). *The Survey of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, vol. I–IV. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Michaelis, Susanne / Maurer, Philippe / Haspelmath, Martin / Huber, Magnus (ed.) (2013b). *Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures Online*. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, <http://apics-online.info> (last consulted 4 October 2016).
- Mufwene, Salikoko S. (2001). *The ecology of language evolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mufwene, Salikoko S. (2008). *Language evolution: Contact, competition and change*. London: Continuum.

- Oexmelin, Alexandre Olivier (1699 [1678]). *Histoire des aventuriers flibustiers qui se sont signalez dans les Indes, contenant ce qu'ils ont fait de remarquable depuis vingt années, avec la vie, les moeurs & les coutumes des boucaniers, des habitans de S. Domingue & de la Tortue [...]*. Paris: Jacques le Febvre.
- Patterson, Orlando (1975). "Context and choice in ethnic allegiance: A theoretical framework and Caribbean case study". In: Glazer, Nathan / Moynihan, Daniel P. (ed.). *Ethnicity. Theory and experience*. Cambridge, London: Cambridge University Press, p. 305–349.
- Schwegler, Armin (2013). "Palenquero". In: Michaelis, Susanne / Maurer, Philippe / Haspelmath, Martin / Huber, Magnus (ed.). *The Survey of Pidgin and Creole Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, II, p. 182–192.
- Thibault, André (ed.) (2012). *Le français dans les Antilles: études linguistiques*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Thibault, André (ed.) (2015). *Du français aux créoles. Phonétique, lexicologie et dialectologie antillaises*. Paris: Classiques Garnier.
- Valdman, Albert (2015). *Haitian Creole. Structure, variation, status, origin*. Sheffield: Equinox.