

DONALD WINFORD

Teacher Attitudes Toward Language Varieties in a Creole Community

It is only recently that students of West Indian Creole languages began turning their attention to the applications that their work might have to the educational problems of Creole communities in the Caribbean. Most of this attention has been focussed on the former British colonies of the area, where varieties of English, ranging from Creole of various forms to standard dialects, make up the communication matrix. It is now commonly accepted that such communities “face social and educational problems directly attributable to the fact that forms of English Creole speech are the everyday language of the majority of their populations” (Craig 1971: 371).

As in the very similar case of Black American English, the full extent of the task before the linguist who tackles such problems in West Indian communities has only just begun to emerge. Baratz (1970) has offered a fairly comprehensive idea of the training and information that must be provided for the teacher of standard English in particular. These include, for instance,

- (a) Training in linguistics, with emphasis on such specific areas as interference theory, the influence of social factors on language and language learning, foreign language teaching techniques, etc.
- (b) Detailed descriptions of children’s vernacular.
- (c) Information concerning the social and cultural contexts of language use.
- (d) Data on language variation, the factors influencing it and the attitude of people towards it.