

A first approach to Standard English pronunciation in Grenada

Eva Canan Hänsel (University of Münster, Germany)

While there have been descriptions of Standard English phonology in the larger anglophone Caribbean countries, little to nothing is known about Standard English in the small Caribbean nations such as Grenada. In Grenada, an English-based Creole exists side-by-side with Standard English and there is a measure of variation in between these two poles. While the Creole is the main vernacular and is often still stigmatized as 'bad' or 'broken' English, the official language 'English' (i.e. Standard English) is used in formal situations and is often acquired in the education system.

This study provides a first approach to Standard English pronunciation in Grenada by conducting (mostly) auditory analyses of selected variables. The analysis is based on 89 wordlists read by Grenadian students and teachers in September 2015. One set of variables allows studying variation between Standard English and the local Creole: voiceless and voiced *th*, consonant cluster reduction/retention, vowel and nasal in DOWN, and vowel length in FLEECE vs. KIT. Two further variables are included in the analysis to investigate a potential influence from American English: /t/-flapping and rhoticity. In order to determine which variants are considered standard forms in Grenada, the study focuses on the use and avoidance of variants by groups of speakers that are considered to have a good command of Standard English (cf. Irvine 2008). In metalinguistic interviews, several students and teachers reported that they perceived speech in 'town' (i.e. the capital) to be 'better' as compared to speech in the countryside. Many teachers reported that students have difficulty with Standard English pronunciation in class. Therefore, it can be assumed that in the Grenadian education system, Standard English is associated with the language used in town and by teachers rather than in rural areas and by students.

A statistical analysis using logistic and linear regression models unveiled that the location and the status of the speaker had indeed the most salient influence on the realizations of most variables. Teachers in general and speakers from the schools in town showed a dispreference for Creole realizations. However, the analysis revealed that these factors did not have a significant effect on the realizations of the nasal in *town* (a velar nasal was the dominant option across all groups and thus seems to be a standard form), on /t/-flapping (only one instance was found), and on rhoticity (semi-rhoticity was found across all groups). The results of the variables /t/-flapping and rhoticity suggest that an exonormative influence from American English is not relevant.

The findings show that meta-linguistic interviews can provide valuable insights about the local stratification of English. In addition, a second-wave approach that utilizes these locally salient categories is crucial to understanding the constraints and the local meaning of variation and what counts as Standard English in a small speech community.

References

- Irvine, Alison. 2008. Contrast and convergence in Standard Jamaican English: The phonological architecture of the standard in an ideologically bidialectal community. *World Englishes* 27(9). 9-25.