Costa Rican Englishes

The struggle, induced by language attitudes, of an inner circle against an expanding circle variety

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Linguistic Background

- Costa Rica
  - Languages
    - 7 Amerindian (6 live and 1 extinct)
    - 6 transplanted (Diaspora) (English, German, Dutch, among others)
    - 1 sign language
    - 1 official language (Spanish)
Linguistic Background

- **Limón**
  - Language Background
    - English introduced by work-related Diaspora (Late XIX, early XX centuries)
    - Other Languages (Chinese; Amerindian, others) (Commerce and Tourism)
  - Bilingualism
    - From birth and consecutive
Linguistic Background
Background

• **Language Contact**
  – The use of more than one language in the same place at the same time (Thomason, 2001; p. 1)

• **Language Attitudes**
  – Favorable or unfavorable responses to stimuli from varieties of a single language or different languages, or alternatively to their speakers (Hykstedt & Kalaja, 2000)
Previous Studies

• **Limonese Creole**
  – Herzfeld
    • Description (1977; 1980; 2004)
    • Bilingualism (1978b; 1980b; 1983)
    • Identity (1992; 1994)
    • Pragmatics (1991)
    • Languages in contact (1980c)
  – Winkler (1998)
    • Contact Induced Language Changes (Borrowing and Code switching)
Previous Studies

- Previous studies
  - Studies have been directed towards attitudes towards expanding circle varieties compared to attitudes towards mother languages other than English and/or to inner circle varieties.
    - Simms (1990) studied the attitudes of speakers of the inner circle variety towards their mother tongue and found that in general terms their attitudes are positive except among those of low education level and/or low income.
    - Spence (1993) puts forward two scenarios for the future of the inner circle variety. The first one its death and the total shift to Spanish. The second is reverse bilingualism, where Spanish becomes the first language and English the second language. In her study young speakers and professionals tended to use more Spanish, adults both, and the elders English.
Theoretical Background

- Attitudes towards an inner circle variety such that spoken in Limón and an expanding circle variety of English like the one spoken in the rest of Costa Rica has not been studied.
Theoretical Background

• Sociolinguistic Framework of Language Change
  – Lavob (1972)

• Discourse Analysis
  – Hykstedt & Kalaja, 2000
The Present Study

- The context
  - High levels of bilingualism are present.
  - A diglossic situation has been previously documented (Herzfel, 2004; Winkler, 1998; among others)
  - High levels of education in the official language are evident.

Expanding circle variety

Inner Circle Variety

Costa Rican Spanish
The Present Study

• Research Questions

– What is the social perception of the inner circle variety of English in Limón and of the expanding circle variety of the rest of the country? What are the attitudes towards each of these varieties?

– Does this social perception resemble the global tendency towards the preference for traditional inner circle varieties (i.e. American or British English?)
The Present Study

• Participants
  – 109 Costa Ricans
    • 81 females (37 from Limón/ 44 from other parts of the country).
    • 28 males (10 from Limón / 18 from other parts of the country.)
    • Three age groups 15-25 (n = 46); 26-50 (n = 56); 50+ (n = 7)
    • Ethnic groups
      – Afro-Costa Ricans (n = 21)
      – Mixed (n = 9)
      – Non-Afro-Costa Ricans (n = 78) (one person did not answer)
    • Education
      – Higher education (n = 88)
      – Secondary Education (n = 16)
      – Primary Education (n = 4)
      – None (n = 1)
The Present Study

• Profession
  – Services (n = 28)
  – Home (n = 1)
  – Business (n = 3)
  – Education (n = 15)
  – Students (n = 58)
  – Farm (n = 1)
  – N/A (n = 3)

• Languages Spoken
  – Spanish only (n = 30)
  – English and Spanish (n = 77)
  – Spanish and other (n = 1)
  – N/A (n = 1)
The Present Study

• Procedure
  – Participants were given a background questionnaire
    • They were given the choice between English and Spanish as a means to respond.
  – Instrument
  – Participants were asked to respond to one of two essays depicting attitudes towards LC.
The Present Study

- **Data Coding**
  - For the purposes of this presentation, only the results from the quantitative (Questionnaire) study will be shown.
  - Answer to the questions were assigned a letter code.
  - All answers were accounted for.

- **Data Analysis**
  - Cross-tabulations and percentages are used for the first part of the study.
The Present Study

- **Dependent Variables**
  - Language of answer (Spanish/English)
  - Desired to Learn English well (100% [yes] all cases)
  - Type of English to learn
  - Desire to preserve the type of English spoken in Limón
  - Desire to preserve indigenous languages
The Present Study

- **Independent Variables**
  - **Social**
    - Gender
    - Age
    - Ethnic group
    - Education
    - Residence
  - **Linguistic**
    - Languages Spoken
    - Writing skills
    - Language preference
  - **Contextual**
    - Places where languages are spoken
    - People with whom they speak
The Present Study

• Results
  – For the present study Cross-tabulations were computed in order to gather information from the different variables on the situation of both English and Spanish in this population.
  – The variables Age, Gender, and ethnic group were used as the main grouping variables. This was done to account for any generational, gender, and ethnic differences in the answers from a sociolinguistic point of view.
Results

• Language Spoken
Results

- Spanish vs. English
Results

- **Language Preference**

  - **Gender**
    - Total: Spanish: 60%, English: 30%, Both: 10%
    - F: Spanish: 50%, English: 40%, Both: 10%
    - M: Spanish: 60%, English: 30%, Both: 10%

  - **Age**
    - (15-25): Spanish: 60%, English: 30%, Both: 10%
    - (26-50): Spanish: 40%, English: 60%
    - (50+): Spanish: 60%, English: 30%, Both: 10%

  - **Ethnic Group**
    - Afro-CR: Spanish: 50%, English: 50%
    - Mixed: Spanish: 50%, English: 50%
    - Non-Afro-CR: Spanish: 50%, English: 50%
Results

- Desired Variety (to learn)
Results

- **Desire for the Preservation of English**

  ![Graph showing desire for preservation of English by gender.]

  ![Graph showing desire for preservation of English by age.]

  ![Graph showing desire for preservation of English by ethnic group.]

- **Gender**
- **Age**
- **Ethnic Group**
Results

• Desire for the Preservation of Indigenous Languages

[Bar charts showing the desire to preserve Indigenous Languages by gender, age, and ethnic group.]

- Total:
  - Female: 0%
  - Male: 0%

- Age groups:
  - (15-25): 0%
  - (26-50): 0%
  - (50+): 0%

- Ethnic groups:
  - Afro-CR: 0%
  - Mixed: 0%
  - Non-Afro-CR: 0%
Findings

• What is the social perception of the inner circle variety of English in Limón and of the expanding circle variety of the rest of the country? What are the attitudes towards each of these varieties?

  • The inner circle variety is seen as a cultural icon; therefore, people express interest in preserving it.
  • However, the expanding circle variety is taking the role of the lexicalizing variety for speakers of the inner circle variety.
  • There is an evident change in the perception of the inner circle variety across generation. A more positive attitude is present among younger generations.
Findings

• Does this social perception resemble the global tendency towards the preference for traditional inner circle varieties (i.e. American or British English?

  – Yes, it resembles the global tendency towards the preference for traditional inner circle varieties.

  – This, however, seems to be having a revitalizing effect on the use, by its speakers, of the inner circle variety present in Costa Rica.
Findings

- Language domains

**English usage (interlocutors)**

- Afro-CR
- Mixed
- Non-Afro-CR

**English usage (Place)**

- Home
- Street
- Work
- Everywhere
- Work/Home
- N/A

Language domains:

- Relatives
- Friends
- Everybody
- Foreigners/Relatives
- Co-workers
Conclusions

– Simms (1990) studied the attitudes of speakers of the inner circle variety towards their mother tongue and found that in general terms their attitudes are positive except among those of low education level and/or low income.

• This study supports Simms’ (1990) findings in that a general positive attitude towards the inner circle variety is shown among its speakers. It also adds the fact that this positive attitude is also found in the speakers of the expanding circle variety.
Conclusions

– Spence (1993) puts forward two scenarios for the future of the inner circle variety. The first one its death and the total shift to Spanish. The second is reverse bilingualism, where Spanish becomes the first language and English the second language. In her study young speakers and professionals tended to use more Spanish, adults both, and the elders English.

• The findings of this study support the second prediction made by Spence (1993), but I would like to clarify that the total shift towards Spanish may not happen. This because there is a small, but notable, increase in the use this variety due to the economic growth and inclusion of English in the educational curriculum since first grade.
Conclusions

- Relationship of the Language Varieties in Costa Rica

![Diagram showing the relationship between Basilect, Mesolect, and Acrolect with intersecting circles for Expanding circle variety, Inner Circle Variety, and Costa Rican Spanish.](image)
Limitations

• Written data instead of oral data.
• Limited number of participants did not allow for regression analysis that could have permitted the present study to draw stronger conclusions.
Future Research

• Study linguistic phenomena in the responses.
  – The use of articles
  – Inter-sentential referents (zero anaphora, anaphoric expressions)
  – Overt pronoun usage
  – Rhetoric (discourse analysis)
References