FROM APARTHEID TO INCORPORATION: 
THE EMERGENCE AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF MODERN 
LANGUAGE COMMUNITY IN BARBADOS, WEST INDIES

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Abstract

This article explores the insights that research on the emergence of ideologies of modernity and recent discussions of commensurability can offer for the understanding of the construction and maintenance of sociolinguistic hierarchies in Barbados. It takes as its focus (1) the ways in which the drawing of the boundaries of language communities has been linked to broader ideological and political economic processes that surround and depend on linguistic stratification and (2) specific, interaction-level ways in which sociolinguistic stratification is enacted today. It argues that the inclusion of Barbados in the colonial project of producing the modern speaker was underpinned by ideologies of modern governance and was predicated on the political need to transform the enslaved population into modern subjects. This inclusion defined new terms of exclusion and engendered in the speakers a reflexive distance from their English voice.

Keywords: Language and modernity; Barbadian creole; Sociolinguistic hierarchies; commensurability; Language communities.

We all speak English, we are very English, we pride ourselves on how well we speak English. Dialect is not even our second language. In some Caribbean territories it is different, just consider St. Lucia, they have that, they call it, “patois,” is their second language, but not in Barbados… we have been always very cosmopolitan and civilized and English is our bridge to the civilized world.¹

(Newspaper editor in Barbados, telephone interview with the author, August 21, 1998)

Simply by opening their mouth or putting pen to paper, individuals and populations seem to provide their own measure of the extent to which they had succeeded in deprovincializing themselves.

(Bauman and Briggs 2003: 69)

¹ Bajan has no standardized spelling. My strategy in transcribing oral discourse in this article is guided by the concern to avoid unnecessary exotization of discourse. I represent the excerpts whose phonological properties are not the subject of the analysis in standard spelling while preserving the distinct Bajan syntactic and lexical forms. For excerpts analyzed for their formal properties, I use Rickford’s (1987) adaptation of Cassidy’s phonemic system.
1. Introduction

Although Barbadians use Bajan dialect in everyday interactions and value it in many ways, one’s ability to speak Barbadian English is central for evaluating a person’s education, social position, sophistication, and - at times - suitability to hold even a menial job (Fenigsen 2005). This pervasive register demand creates a pressure on the speakers and imposes non-trivial limitations on social interactions and opportunities for those many Barbadians whose competence in Barbadian English may be perceived by others as problematic. This commitment to English in Barbados entails more than a display of linguistic capital. As my interlocutor, a newspaper editor suggests in the opening quote, for some it involves a claim to linguistic and ideological alignment with Britain, the former colonial center and, through this alignment, to a privileged positioning within global hierarchies of civilization, culture, and modernity (Bauman and Briggs 2003). By incorporating themselves into this locally lived and globally charted imagined language community, Barbadians refuse being provincialized and marginalized. But the privilege comes at a price. The inclusion renders speakers commensurable (Espeland and Stevens 1998; Povinelli 2001) with the standards of authoritative English, exposes them to sorting into first and second-class subjects, and results in a differential access to jobs, networks, educational opportunities and prestige such sorting entails. In this article, I seek to understand the ways in which such sociolinguistic hierarchies emerge, how they are sustained and what they mean to people who are so ranked. First, I ask: What was the influence of colonial language ideologies and policies in shaping inequality in Barbados and in what ways was that influence exercised? How can we understand processes that have led to what Bauman and Briggs term the “cosmopolitan leap” (2003: 3) from ideologically and socially specific provincialities to a purportedly universal order of modernity? Next, I consider the ways language ideologies “produce subjectivities, organize them hierarchically and enlist people to populate these hierarchies” (Briggs 2005: 1). I approach these questions from a perspective informed by research on the emergence of modern language relations in Great Britain (Bauman and Briggs 2003) and by recent discussions of commensurability (Boellstorff 2005; Espeland and Stevens 1998; Povinelli 2001).

1.1. Charting modern subjects

Among recent analyses of the relationship between language inequality, modernity, and globalization, research by Bauman and Briggs (2003) bears on these questions in Barbadian context in important ways. Situating the origins of the present-day language hierarchies in the formative period of modernity of seventeenth century Britain, the time of the annexation of Barbados by the British Crown, Bauman and Briggs credit British philosopher, John Locke, with the constitution of language as a vehicle of modern rationality and political subjectivity; the step they view as foundational for the enduring role of language in relations of inequality (2003: 31-32). The ideological framework developed by Locke attached the right to participate in the public domains of politics, learning, and religion to specific ways of language use. In doing so, it made language central to modern subjectivity and provided tools for regimenting access to public domains within which this subjectivity was to be exercised. The stratifying power of these new linguistic regimes was motivated by Locke’s designing particular registers of
language as exclusively suited for communicative tasks of modernity. To this end, Locke called for language to be purged of any pragmatic ills that might cloud the relationship between words and concepts, the building blocks of modern science, society and political subjectivity. The purified registers were to replace what Locke viewed as an abuse of words with rigors of referential precision, transparency, and contextual autonomy. This new linguistic regime owed its persuasiveness and staying power to its promise of universal accessibility. While as Bauman and Briggs point out, Locke’s own writings envision linguistic and cognitive aptitude as sharply varied along essentialized class, gender, and racial lines, the new linguistic requirements drew legitimacy from the premise of their universal availability: Seemingly, anyone could master the new, purified language, engage in monitoring its use and, in doing so, join the community of modern subjects (Bauman and Briggs 2003). Although the required language skills could be only achieved through participation in the elite networks and educational institutions, due to its apparent inclusiveness, the prescriptive paradigm based on the language of British elite males has convincingly aspired to be viewed as unmoored from its social context and place; that is, as universal and cosmopolitan. By defining modern subjectivity in terms of rationality that could only be achieved through a particular mode of language use, Locke charted an imagined community of modern subjects as potentially inclusive of all those committed to its discursive requirements (see also Cooper and Stoler 1997).

Clearly, language hierarchies in Britain predate Locke’s modernizing vision. In the period 1400-1600, when English became the official language of Great Britain replacing French as the language of nobility, English dialects were already stratified in terms of their prestige, and the east Midlands dialect - increasingly recognized as the authoritative variety used by the court, Chancery, elites, and the literati - was undergoing standardization (Grillo 1989). And, unlike the processes of standardization, Locke’s prescriptivism primarily targeted the rhetorical aspects of language use rather than the formal properties of linguistic system. Yet, arguably, it was Locke’s roadmap for the role of language in the emergent regimes of modernity that created an ideological matrix that enabled the language hierarchies of today’s Barbados. The initial emergence of a linguistic standard created a stratified field of linguistic values and set in motion linguistic censorship. Unlike Locke’s design, however, the stratifying power of that standard only affected those involved in selected domains such as the elite bureaucracy, court, and literary circles. Crucial for the expansion of sociolinguistic hierarchies from “local provincialities” to global, cosmopolitan reach was Locke’s conceptualization of a universal discursive community unified by allegiance to the purportedly universally valid principles of modern discourse he developed.

As Bauman and Briggs point out, Locke’s criteria of precision and rationality have been now appropriated as the rationale for stigmatization of varieties of English other than the Standard (2003: 305). Today, many Barbadians draw on the same criteria to justify the marginalization of Bajan, its prescriptive confinement to regimented contexts and purposes, and the stigmatization of its speakers. By charting modern subjectivity as crystallized through language, by specifying discursive standards and identifying population segments as inherently incapable of meeting these requirements, Locke set in motion stratifying processes that generated the enduring social hierarchies of modernity. These hierarchies owe their durability to the ways in which Locke’s vision established particular modes of language use as essential to multiple domains of modern existence and subjectivity; to the ways in which these linguistic regimes have
been enforced by social institutions responsible for language monitoring and socialization; and to the persuasive power of Locke’s ideological charter that, in a hegemonic fashion, has been co-opting the consent of individuals and populations, including those placed in a subordinate position by that vision’s terms. By molding themselves into the matrix of these hierarchies, the present-day Barbadians continue to heed Locke’s “interpellation”\(^2\) (Althusser 1977). This enduring persuasive power, I argue, has been predicated on redefining the boundaries of speech communities so as to include those seen as being in the need of linguistic discipline and improvement. I view this inclusiveness as just as crucial to these particular modes of stratification as the strategies of exclusion.

1.2. Commensurability (and its perils)

Research concerned with language hierarchies usually focuses on strategies that exclude individuals and populations from membership in communities, roles, and networks (Gal and Irvine 1995). When it is being considered, inclusion tends to be treated in contrast to exclusion. For example, Mehta frames his discussion of liberal strategies of exclusion, from Locke to the nineteenth century, as concerned with “how liberal principles with their attending universal constituency get undermined in such a manner as to politically disenfranchise various people” (1997: 60). I view inclusion and exclusion as being linked more integrally. Rather than treating exclusionary principles and practices as exceptions to inclusion, I see them as predicated on it. Any exclusion can be exercised only under the conditions of inclusion, however tentative. It can only take place when social worlds intersect and overlap. The emergence of “hierarchies of production, power… knowledge” (Cooper and Stoler 1997: 3) and language through and within colonial projects charted and set in motion discourses and practices of exclusion; yet, clearly, they were predicated upon and enabled by the inclusion of those molded into these hierarchies; inclusion that operated at two levels. First, and more obviously, people had to be pulled under the pale of colonial practices, processes, and institutions instrumental to stratification. Next, as Cooper and Stoler point out, for late colonial contexts - and that includes Barbados at the turn of the eighteenth century - inclusion came to involve the emergent field of negotiations over “the universality of citizenship and civil rights” (1997: 2); in other words, of modern subjectivity. This second kind of inclusion entails, I suggest, revisions to the modes of subjugation, that is, shifts in technologies of domination from prioritizing coercion to hegemony in the Gramscian sense of the term.

In what follows, I closely attend to both of these boundary processes, to the ideologies and strategies of inclusion and exclusion, and suggest that the concept of commensurability provides a useful way for thinking about and linking these two processes. Most broadly defined, commensurability obtains when two or more units can be described by a common measure. The lack of such a common measure means that the phenomena in question cannot be either compared or ranked. All social hierarchies, then, assume a degree of commensurability. Language hierarchies assume

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\(^2\) Althusser’s concept of interpellation posits an essential relationship between guilt and subjectivity. He illustrates it with the example of a policeman interpelling someone, “Hey you!” and the turning backward of the guilty subject in response (1977).
commensurability between their component language varieties measured against some linguistic standard. In recent considerations of commensurability in anthropology, the concept has been used in investigations of coexistence of incommensurable social worlds and domains (Boellstorff 2005; Povinelli 2001). Drawing on the work of a philosopher of language, Davidson, and sociologists, Espeland and Stevens, Povinelli translates the concept into a tool for considering how “incommensurate worlds emerge and how (…) they [are] sustained” (Povinelli 2001: 320). While for Davidson the interest of incommensurability lies in the ways communication can span over intercultural chasms of meaning, Espeland and Stevens focus on the commensuration of value across multiple social domains under capitalism and modernity. Emphasizing the transformative power commensuration has “by creating new social categories and backing them with the weight of powerful institutions,” Espeland and Stevens approach commensuration as inherently political, as it “reconstructs relations of authority, creates new political entities, and establishes new interpretive frameworks” (1998: 323). Suggesting that commensuration is “radically inclusive,” they note that for some proponents it is indeed a “technology of inclusion” as it “confers a formal parity in an unequal world”(1998: 324, 331). While insightful, this perspective is incomplete. I suggest that whereas these aspects of commensurability - the transformative power and politicized inclusiveness - provide valuable insights into the fields of inquiry concerned with the emergence and maintenance of stratified language communities of modernity, commensurability also inevitably entails exclusion and inequality. In particular, I argue that it has been precisely the ability to imagine the creole speakers as the users of language varieties commensurable in form with the English standard that has enabled the specific strategies of inclusion and exclusion that, in turn, lead to the emergence of modern language hierarchies. To illustrate, in general linguistics Jerspersen’s conceptualization of linguistic progress instantiates the stratifying power of commensuration. Jerspersen (1920) proposed to measure and rank languages according to a set of criteria that echo Locke’s purifying vision: Precision, rationality, and efficiency. By applying these criteria to linguistic categories such as sounds, words, and grammatical structures across a range of languages, he claimed to be able to measure linguistic effects of social progress and natural selection. The resulting sociolinguistic hierarchy placed “wild tribes” and the Basques at the lowest rung. The stratifying impact of commensuration is also evident in the theorizing of creole languages, notably so in DeCamp’s classical typology of “creole continuum” of the varietal categories of “acrolect,” “mesolect” and “basilect.” The typology incorporates the formal variability of creole varieties into a matrix of commensurable types of varieties distinguished from one another and marked by their formal distance from Standard English. By rendering the varieties commensurable with each other and, ultimately, with Standard English, the typology measures their formal alterity against English and labels that distance in semantically transparent and value-laden ways. While DeCamp did not invest his

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3 The paradigm of creole continuum is considered productive by many creolists as an analytic tool for identifying boundaries between co-existing creole varieties (e.g. Patrick 1998). One of the anonymous reviewers of this paper suggested that, politically, the concept of creole continuum allowed West Indians and Black Americans to “give dignity to their communication systems.” An alternative perspective - the one I am more inclined to adopt - follows Herzfeld who commenting on a related paradigm of “diglossia,” noted the “transference of [elite] evaluative language attitudes into the technical vocabulary” (1987: 112).
typology with evaluative connotations beyond the varietal ranking and labels, the notion that creole languages did not measure up to other language varieties characterized the vision of some other creolists. In that vein, Whinnom claimed that creole languages lacked in “abstract terms,” and, possibly, led to an “intellectual handicap” of their speakers (1971: 109-110). It was John Locke who not quite three centuries earlier identified abstract ideas - as if there were any other - as the foundation of reason, suggesting pointedly that, “brutes abstract not” (1975: 159-60; 2.11.10).

In the ensuing analysis, I argue that the notion of commensurability of Barbadian creole varieties with English was absent from local metalinguistic discourses and policies in Barbadian history under slavery and only emerged at a particular historical juncture when the institution of slavery came to be threatened. By tracing the trajectory of what I view as non-accidental diffusion of this ideology, I suggest that, in spite of intense traffic of people, goods, and information between Barbados and Great Britain, John Locke’s inclusive and stratifying vision remained latent in the colony until the emergence of political economic conditions that called for its import. My approach is twofold. On the one hand, I take as my focus the ways in which the drawing of external and internal boundaries of language communities has been linked to broader political economic processes that surround and depend on stratified language relations; that is, the ways that sociopolitical contexts have framed the production of language relations and factored language into the calculus of social inequalities. On the other hand, by attending to specific, interaction-level ways in which these relations are enacted today, I consider the experience of those Barbadian speakers whose social mobility and self-image hinge on the mastery of what to many is a superposed code; that is, a language that must be learned with effort (Ferguson 1972 [1959]). These practices, I will argue, constitute English as phenomenally and ideologically “alien” (Vološinov 1973; Keane 1999) and engender in the speakers a reflexive distance from their English voice.

By drawing on this twofold strategy, I hope to show that the inclusion of Barbados in the project of producing the modern speaker - oriented toward and judged by the proficiency in linguistic standard - initiated in the early nineteenth century, was predicated on the political need to transform the enslaved population into modern political subjects; and, further, that this transformation, for individuals, has carried a sense of alienation. The inclusion defined new terms for and became a vehicle of exclusion, and rejection became a companion of belonging. The permission to join the English language community that Barbadian elites begrudgingly granted to the subaltern made language use of the marginalized speakers commensurable with the standard and, in doing so, subject to evaluation in its terms. The oranges became apples, but of different variety and, in terms of this newly emerged ideology of communication, of different quality as well.

2. Linguistic apartheid

An access to authoritative language is calibrated by social and political-economic relations (Collins 1988, 1996; Mertz 1996; Mugglestone 1997; Linke 2004). Sometimes forbidden (Errington 1998), sometimes imposed, it is always regulated. In the consolidating polities such as nineteenth-century France, Great Britain or, later, Francoist Spain efforts at the imposition of the language of the elites, or at least its
recognition as a unifying emblem of a modern nation-state, were part of a larger project of political domination (Bourdieu 1991; Grillo 1989; Woolard 1989; Silverstein 2000). In postcolonial settings such as Barbados, language relations have been informed by their histories of colonialism. And, close attention to these settings brings into sharp relief the complexity of colonial scenarios (Cooper and Stoler 1997; Cooper 2005) and the politics of language they involved (Pennycook 1998). It was the fluid dynamics of relations between colonies and their centers; the diverse and specific political contexts of colonialism; and historical transformations of colonial formations that shaped the colonial politics of language. The topic is vast and the limitations of space do not allow me even to begin its discussion. I would like, however, to outline two contrasting scenarios within the British colonial enterprise. The British colonized Barbados at roughly the same time as they were negotiating their way into the Mughal Empire through the East India Company; a small uninhabited island in the Caribbean and a large state with complex politics, economy, and language relations. Barbados went on to become a settler colony, populated by the speakers of British Englishes and by speakers of African languages displaced from their language communities. In Barbados, British never had to command a new language to command the colony. English and, eventually, varieties of English-related creole sufficed as “languages of command” (Cohn 1985). For three centuries, language politics in Barbados focused on the extent and strategies of regimentation of access to English for the enslaved persons. With the demise of the slave order, language policy shifted to the imposition and monitoring of English among the freed slaves and their descendants as they were being ushered into new frameworks of subjugation where the command of English was part of the care package designed for modern(ized) colonial subjects. In India, the British confronted a multitude of unfamiliar languages. They relied on translators while gradually building up a cadre of administrators competent in Persian, initially the crucial language for communication with Indian political and administrative elites, eventually in other Indian languages, classical and vernacular (Cohn 1985; Pennycook 1998).

The linguistic journey of the British in India and the construction of discursive formation that surrounded and, in many ways, surrendered these languages to British colonial and epistemological rule are the subject of Bernard Cohn’s pioneering work (1985). What centrally matters for the present argument, however, is that the British interest in the education of colonial subjects that emerged in the late eighteenth century - when the paradigm of governance was being rethought for the use at home and overseas so as to enlist literacy and education in making governance more effective and penetrating (Anderson 1991; Collins 1988) - was differently configured linguistically for India than it was for Barbados and other West Indian colonies. In the West Indies, the British diagnosed and promoted the need for teaching English. In India, in the midst of debates between the proponents of Anglicism and the advocates of education in native languages, they regimented access to English deemed necessary for clerks, translators and administrators but not the general populace (Pennycook 1998: 74). The victory of anti-Anglicists in India may seem surprising in the light of powerful arguments that identified English with reason and rationality (Pennycook 1998: 79), Locke’s cornerstones of modern subjectivity, instrumental to modern governance. Clearly, many reasons account for the difference. Some were of practical nature specific to India, including funding and staffing, and the presence of literary languages with long traditions that could serve as vehicles of colonial education. Other belonged to ideological domains of colonial discursive formations. Pennycook suggests (1998) that
discourses of Orientalism that advocated the spread of Western knowledge and moral discipline through the vernaculars mainly gained sway thanks to their perceived practicality. But the persuasive force of these positions also drew from what Mehta calls the “liberal strategies of exclusion,” that cast India as inscrutable “chaotic mass” resistant to all logical inquiry” (1997: 73). Could the language of reason and rationality possibly take hold in such a place?

In comparison, Barbados, with its population estimated as not quite 100,000 at the end of the eighteenth century, including about 17 thousand of (English speaking) whites (Beckles 1990); with the majority of black population being locally born and speaking creole and English; and a rather stable colonial social order based on slavery, did not present comparable practical problems for colonial education or English instruction. As I hope to show in the ensuing discussion, discourses of cognitive difference and un-educability of people of African origin and descent that dominated much of the island’s history, took a back seat to Anglicization and civilizing mission with the wane of the slave order that created a demand for modern(ized) colonial subjects. But, another factor that may have played a role in the diverse language policy scenarios in India and Barbados was a different status of local languages toward English. Unlike Hindu or Sanskrit, Bajan creole came to be perceived as commensurable with English yet not measuring up to it. The education of modern colonial subjects required their linguistic re-education.

In Barbados, the policy of incorporation of subordinate sectors of the population into the community of English language was propelled by the white elites’ bid to salvage the social order threatened by the abolition of slavery. For nearly two centuries, colonial elites in Barbados strongly opposed allowing the slaves to learn English. Shifting eventually from English speech to literacy, the reluctance to include slaves in English language community had persisted until Emancipation in 1834 when changed technologies of governance fostered new, more integrative political imagination tied with the emergence of modern political subjectivity of the coloured races” in the “mother country’s” dependencies” (1847 Ideas for Curriculum, cited in Gordon 1963: 58). The “horizontal integration” (Anderson 1991: 24) of new citizenry was to be accomplished by the diffusion of English, in particular, by the teaching of “grammatical knowledge of the English language [seen] as the most important agent of civilization for the colored populations of the colonies” (1847 Ideas for Curriculum, cited in Gordon 1963: 58). These novel political and linguistic regimes imposed on the participants-to-be in the just imagined Barbadian language community an enduring ideology that values a code that must be learned with effort, a superposed code (Ferguson 1972), and monitors and evaluates speakers based on its mastery.

As Mintz pointed out in his seminal essay (1971), the processes of linguistic creolization and language relations in the Caribbean were shaped by the demographic ratios of speakers of African, European, and other languages; the relative statuses and relations between different groups; and the settings within which these groups interacted. For sociolinguistic concerns, Barbadian history can be divided into several periods that are distinct in terms of demographic and sociopolitical relations relevant for the pace of language acquisition and communicative patterns. The demographic characteristics include the ratios of English and, eventually, creole speakers to the speakers of African languages. Sociopolitical factors involve organization of labor and language policy. In the first half of the seventeenth century, prior to the boom of sugar economy, the British settlers brought with them social distinctions and dialects from the
colonial center. Because the settlement pattern did not correspond to the ethnic boundaries in Britain, the original dialectal distinctions were likely not very enduring and, eventually, came to be superceded by new varieties that developed among the native born population (Roberts 1997). In addition to the speakers of several varieties of English, the population of Barbados also included speakers of African languages. Initially very small, the population of Africans quickly grew. It is estimated to have reached about 6,000 slaves, predominantly from Africa rather than native born, by 1640. In spite of the growth, the African population was in the minority: At the same time, the population of Europeans included 18,000 males, and numbers of women and children not captured by the census (Handler and Lange 1978: 15). In that initial period, Africans worked on small farms held by the British settlers and must have interacted fairly frequently with the British indentured servants, acquiring English as a second language. Such interaction patterns and an absence of stable communities speaking a shared African language were not conducive either to the maintenance of African languages or to the emergence of a creole “communal language” and the varieties of English spoken by the slaves in that period were likely idiolectal interlanguages (Roberts 1997: 81).

The assessments of English competence of slaves in that period are conflicting and suggest on the one hand that this competence varied, on the other hand the salience of these assessments for the politics of commensurability and inclusion. Ligon, a surveyor who spent several years in Barbados, reported the lack of English among the majority of slaves as a limiting factor in his efforts to study their life (Ligon 1657). This is contradicted by Godwyn who writing at the same time as Ligon, claimed that slaves, “had arrived to an ability of understanding, and discoursing in English equal with most of our people” (Roberts 1997: 82). Godwyn was an advocate of the conversion of the slaves to Christianity and his comments need to be seen in the context of debates that surrounded the issue. His insistence on the parity of the English skills of the slaves with these of the native speakers suggests, however, a concern with the ideological inclusion of the slaves in the English language community at a level deeper than their ability to use a shared communicative code.

The total number of slaves brought to Barbados from the onset of colonization (1627) until the abolition of the slave trade (1807) can roughly be estimated at about 380,000, with the influx of African slaves unevenly spread throughout that period. While one estimate for the period 1627-1650 sets the number at 29,100 people (Sheridan 1974: 247), with an annual average of 1,265, for the ensuing period from 1651 to the trade's abolition in1807, the number of imported slaves was 354,884 (Handler and Lange 1978: 21), with the annual averages mounting from 2,044 during the period from 1651 to 1672, to 3,755 during the period from 1769 to 1773 (Handler and Lange 1978: 22). With the introduction of sugar cane as the main crop, from the mid-17th century onward the segment of the Barbadian population of African origin grew steadily, reaching 80 percent of the total in the years preceding emancipation (Rickford and Handler 1994). Slave records of Codrington plantations show that in the first decades of the eighteenth century, African-born slaves comprised a considerable 37 percent of the plantations’ slave population (Bennett 1958: 33). In 1740, a chaplain at Codrington plantations reported that the Africans bought during the previous four years
"cannot spake English, and what they act and do in the plantation affairs is more by Signes than Speech" (Bennett 1958: 33). References to the language of African-born slaves in The Barbados Mercury 1783-1819 (Niles 1980: 177) likewise indicate that the knowledge of English was uncommon.

This language situation must have presented practical difficulties in the running of the plantation and other business of everyday life. Nevertheless, the English speaking elites were outspoken in their opposition to linguistic assimilation of Africans. The elites, concerned that a shared language among the slaves would be politically dangerous, were committed to the doctrine of linguistic diversity. In spite of preferences for particular tribal groups, planters viewed purchasing slaves from diverse language backgrounds as crucial to the security of the slave order, on par with the prohibition on handling weapons (Ligon 1657: 46). In 1668 William Willoughby, the Governor of Barbados, wrote, “although the different tongues and animosities” among slaves had inhibited their revolts in the past, “the creolian generations now growing up and increasing may hereafter ‘manipicate’ their masters” (Puckerein 1984: 165). Arguing against the Christianization of slaves, the 1680 address of The Planters’ Committee of Barbados reiterated: “the disproportion of the blacks to whites being great, the whites have no greater security than the diversity of the negroes’ languages, which would be destroyed by conversion in that it would be necessary to teach them all English” (Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh 1972: 356).

Until the end of the eighteenth century, when the fortunes of West Indian sugar declined and the British Crown became increasingly receptive to abolitionist pressures, Barbadian slaves were formally barred from access to the interconnected domains of education, English and Christianity, all of which figured in the elite strategies of difference and inferiority. At best, the white elites were ambivalent about the acquisition of English by slaves. In the absence of other shared communicative codes a degree of competence in this language among some of the slaves, was seen as necessary for running a plantation. A minimal acquisition of English by newly-arrived Africans was one of the outcomes expected of “the seasoning process,” a period of up to three years when new slaves were provided with better living conditions and were given a lighter work load (Bennett 1958: 48-49). The arrangements for their linguistic assimilation were limited, however, to encouraging them “to mix with the other slaves while learning a little English” (Bennett 1958: 48).

The growth in the population of native-born slaves, some native to Barbados for more than one generation, led to the development of English-related creole language varieties (Rickford and Handler 1994). In the first half of the eighteenth century some records describe these varieties as a “broken dialect” of English. The metalinguistic commentaries in the historical sources indicate, however, a perception of a significant communicative gap between the creole speaking slaves and the white speakers of British and Barbadian varieties of English. Arthur Holt, a white Barbadian clergyman appointed by the Society for the Propagation of Gospel in 1728 as a counselor to Thomas Wilkie, a catechist at Codrington, attributed Wilkie’s difficulties in converting slaves to his failure to “adapt his language to [their] broken Dialect” (Bennett 1958: 81). Few decades later, John Hodgson, the plantations’ chaplain (1758-1760) considered the instruction of field Negroes impossible and proposed that religious instruction be

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5 The belief that the enslaved Africans from different tribes lacked a medium of communication ignored multilingualism frequent in West Africa of that time.
limited to domestics, who “being more civilized than the rest, are proportionally more capable of comprehending the plainer principles of our Religion” (Bennett 1958: 84). Hodgson reported “absolutely insuperable” barriers to “communication between the ordinary slaves and an Anglican divine” (Bennett 1958: 85) and cast these barriers not just in terms of linguistic difference but also of cognitive and moral inferiority of the slaves. In a passage that echoes Locke’s prescriptivism and prefigures Bernstein's (1971) distinction between elaborate and restricted codes, he argued that the slaves spoke a language “adapted solely to their immediate wants” and thus “incapable of expressing the concepts of the Christian faith” (Bennett 1958: 85). Hodgson wrote:

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\text{They must be talked to in a Language which they do not understand, they must be talked to upon Subjects, which from their being void of all the Principles to which Application should be made, or filled with such, as render their minds still more inaccessible, cannot take the least Hold of them. (Bennett 1958: 85)}
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According to Hodgson nothing could be done until “a general Change of their Condition, by introducing among them the Regulations, and Advantages of civil Life,” took place (Bennett 1958: 85). In 1768, another Codrington chaplain, Wharton, concluded in accord with Hodgson:

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\text{The Time I trust will come when Persons of all Complexions will embrace one Hope, and one Faith, but I am persuaded that Period is not yet arrived, and in vain will it to be to attempt inculcating the purest & most perfect System of Religion (Bennett 1958: 86)}
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Hodgson's perception of the chasms in language and civil subjectivity as insurmountable presents a contrast with that of Ligon (1657) who, a century earlier, reported his efforts to overcome language difference and his conversations with some of the slaves about principles of music, physics, and religion. Likewise, Hodgson’s perspective contrasts with Godwyn’s claims of linguistic and discursive competence of the slaves, discussed above. The “communal language” of the slaves, creole, came to be considered a dialect of English, commensurable with the standard yet, clearly, inferior.

When the growth of Barbadian-born slave population eventually eroded the doctrine of linguistic diversity, the elites moved their defense of linguistic boundaries to literacy. Although literacy was significant for bookkeeping on plantations and in maintaining communication between the island and the colonial center as well as the inter-island communication, it was not widespread even among the whites (Roberts 1997). According to Roberts (1997), the need to participate in the abolitionist debates at the end of the eighteenth century became an important factor in the increase of literacy among white Barbadians. In Barbadian society, literacy was part of the technologies of slave control such as the pass system. The system, instituted in the late seventeenth century, required slaves to carry a written pass for moving outside their plantation. The ability to write might allow the slaves to forge passes. As I will show below, of no less concern to the elites was the access to information and anti-slavery propaganda disseminated in print and writing.

It is no accident that the majority of commentaries on the language situation among the slaves come from churchmen and missionaries. Barbadian institutional religion was entangled with the politics of language on the island. In contrast to the proliferation of various Christian denominations contending for souls and influence on the African continent during the 19th century (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, vol.1), the
Church of England had a near monopoly in Barbados throughout the island's history, established as the official church of the colony in the 17th century. In the early 17th century, the Roman Catholic Church catered to spiritual needs of the Irish population; however, due to local political measures, the dwindling numbers of Irish, the stigmatizing association of Catholicism with the indentured Irish, and the hostilities between England and Catholic Spain, this denomination ceased to exist in Barbados by the early 19th century (Handler 1974: 154). The Quaker community fared no better, though for importantly different reasons. Whereas in the 1670s and 1680s Quakers were the second largest Christian denomination in Barbados, in 1743 they counted not quite a hundred, and by the early years of the nineteenth century they disappeared entirely from the island (Handler 1974: 179). A significant factor in the disappearance of the Quakers was the elites’ hostility to their efforts to proselytize among the slaves. This hostility culminated in a 1676 law that prohibited Quakers from practicing their religion (Handler 1974: 179) and, eventually, put an end to their activities. A small Sephardic Jewish community reached about 260 persons at its peak in 1681, but by the early nineteenth century decreased to approximately 100. It is not known whether this group had any religious influence outside the Jewish community (Handler 1974: 180). It is not very likely, given the absence of proselytizing doctrine within this religion.

Until the arrival of the Methodists in 1788 and the Moravians in 1765 (Handler 1974: 178), the Church of England had almost a complete monopoly over the allegiance of Barbadian Christians. For about 150 years, however, the Church did not include Africans and their descendants. Barbadian planters actively discouraged those slaves who wanted to become Christians (Godwyn 1680; Ligon 1657). They feared that Christianity would become a legal impediment to holding a person in slavery and that admission to Christianity would turn slaves against their owners. Further, they viewed slaves as incapable of conversion. According to Ligon (1657: 50), planters believed that holding a Christian in slavery was against ecclesiastic and civil law, in spite of repeat rulings of the Church of England that conversion did not emancipate slaves (Puckerein 1984: 167). Although the Anglican Church in England was strongly in favor of the Christianization of slaves and, in 1691, pressured the Barbadian Assembly to approve the Governor's motion for facilitating the baptism of slaves (Puckerein 1984: 167), the baptism records of the Church, though fragmentary, suggest that those efforts were ineffective.

The domination of the Barbadian institutionalized religious scene by the Anglican Church and other Protestant denominations influenced the politics of language in the ways consistent with the Protestant stance on religious subjectivity which reflected the alignments between Reformation, modernity, and Enlightenment (Baumann and Briggs 2003) Notwithstanding the diversity of the ways in which these theologies conceptualized the religious subject, Protestantism called for a direct, learned, and rational individual engagement with sacred and religious discourse, setting Protestant denominations apart from Roman Catholicism. The Roman Catholic doctrine construed the participation of the faithful in the sacrum as mediated by the clergy and not predicated on the agency of lay believers. This doctrinal difference resulted in divergent perspectives on language. While Roman Catholic Church allowed the use of vernacular rather than Latin in religious service only following Vatican II, the council

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6 According to Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh (1972: 383), around 1654 two members of the Barbados Council who converted to Roman Catholicism were expelled from its ranks, and the Council declared that Roman Catholics were not eligible for any “public employment.”
that concluded in 1965, Protestant denominations required the use of vernacular in worship from their inception and, eventually, have come to emphasize the importance of literacy for reading prayer books and scriptures. The proselytizing agendas predicated on linguistic inclusion of the slaves, later on extended to literacy, set the Anglican Church and Protestant missions on a collision course with Barbadian elites. Thomas Wilkie, an Englishmen and a catechist at plantations owned by the Society for the Propagation of Gospel in the first half of the eighteenth century, reported: “The Inhabitants of this Island... are ... against the conversion of the Negroes ... and say it may be of ill consequence to teach them letters” (Bennett 1958: 81). In 1737, another cleric, William Johnson wrote that the planters would not tolerate the religious education of their slaves if this involved teaching them “letters,” which would amount to “putting arms into their Slaves hands, against them Selves” (Bennett 1958: 82). As long as the political economy of the slave order was sound, Barbadian elites were not tolerant of intrusions of modernity, whether religious or educational.

3. Incorporation

Every time the question of language surfaces, in one way or another, it means the need to establish more intimate and secure relationships between the governing groups and the national-popular mass, in other words to re-organize the cultural hegemony. (Gramsci 1985: 183-184).

The elites’ position on the linguistic assimilation of Barbadian slaves started to shift in the decades preceding the Emancipation Act of 1833. For the planters, the abolition of the slave trade by the British in 1806 foretold the imminent rupture of their world and its political paradigms and practices. In 1823, the British government committed itself to the emancipation of slaves. The planters faced changes over which they had little control. Some decided to leave the island (Handler and Lange 1978; Karch 1979). Those who stayed were drawn into shifting practices and discourses of race relations. For example, and in contrast to previous concerns that the conversion of slaves would make them more “perverse and intractable” (1680 letter from The Planters’ Committee of Barbados to the Lords of Trade and Plantations in England, cited in Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh 1972: 356), the elites now incorporated religious instruction of slaves into the emergent vision of governance. In 1803, Moody, a catechist at Codrington Plantations owned by the Society for the Propagation of Gospel, reported that:

The opinion seems [to be] gaining ground that the religious instruction of young Negroes to a certain point will make them not only better Christians but even more profitable slaves than the present race. (Handler 1974: 183)

Planters, however, were still opposed to the instruction of slaves in reading. Governor Seaforth wrote in 1802:

The planters urge that such instruction could be of no avail to a race of men doomed to... slavery, that extending their means of information could only awaken them to a keener sense of

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7 The Act was issued in 1806 to become effective in 1807.
their situation which would... render them more unhappy in themselves and more dangerous to their masters. (Handler 1974: 183)

Seaforth was right. In 1816, half of the island was swept by a slave insurrection led by literate slaves. They acted on the belief that the Barbadian planters were obstructing the British Parliament’s orders to emancipate the slaves. According to the 1818 report of the Barbadian Assembly, the insurrection occurred:

solely and entirely in consequence of the intelligence imparted to the slaves...obtained from the English Newspapers, that their freedom had been granted them in England. (...) These reports first took their rise immediately after the information of the proposed establishments of [slave] Registries in the British Settlements in the West Indies... and in the mistaken idea that the Registry Bill was actually their Manumission...; these hopes were strengthened and kept alive by the promises held out, that a party in England, and particularly Mr. Wilberforce... were exerting themselves to ameliorate their condition, and ultimately effect their emancipation. (Beckles 1990: 83)

The issue of the literacy of the uprising's leaders was also observed by the *London Times*, which noted that the insurrection’s leaders:

availed themselves of this parliamentary interference and the public anxiety it occasioned, to instill into the minds of the slaves generally a belief that they were already freed by the King and Parliament. (Beckles 1990: 83)

The Barbadian Assembly suggested that the leaders “had gained an ascendancy over their fellows by being able to read and write,” a skill that gave them broader access to political information (Beckles 1990: 84). One of the insurgents confessed that Nancy Grig, a slave at Simmons plantation, frequently read English and local papers and apprised other slaves of developments in Haiti and London (Beckles 1990: 84).

In 1823, when a group of clergymen and other whites formed an association for the religious instruction of the slaves, “it was pointedly resolved that instruction should be oral” (Handler 1974: 184). At about the same time, Governor Henry Warde - considered liberal on the slavery issue - wrote a friend:

It would require very little to move the black population to play a second St. Domingo scene... Many, in their kind wishes to convert [the slaves]... to Christianity would have them all taught to read & write. Whenever this takes place (as they will probably read more of Carlisle than of their Bible), I conceive that the fate of the white population is decided... a mass of mankind who have so long been in perfect ignorance should not be enlightened too suddenly. In my opinion they would not become better men but worse by reading unless you could ensure their not reading improper publications. (Handler 1974: 184)

At this time, it was the cultural content accessible through reading that was the bane of the elites. Yet, even as the planters became more accepting of teaching slaves to read, they refused to allow them learn to write. When the education of slaves became a priority at Codrington plantations, and the Society for the Propagation of Gospel ordered in 1828 that all children remain in school until they were at least 12 years old, “writing and arithmetic were specifically excluded from the curriculum out of deference to the fears of the planters” (Bennett 1958: 115).

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8 I am not aware of any specific reasons for excluding arithmetic from the curriculum.
The 1833 Emancipation Act of the British Parliament brought the slave order to a close. At that time, approximately 50 of the island's 400 plantations provided daily instruction for the slaves, often including reading (Handler 1974: 185). By 1834, the Anglican Church increased the number of schools from eight in 1825 to 155. Through the combined efforts of planters and the imperial government seeking to substitute the defunct technologies of rule with strategies of hegemonic incorporation (Gramsci 1985; Williams 1977: 108), emancipation set in motion mass-scale education in Barbados and other West Indian territories.

4. The modern linguistic regime

The same shifts in the politics of language that opened up educational venues to ex-slaves ushered the modern regime of “monoglot Standard” (Silverstein 1996b; see also Sapir 1985: 86-88). At the end of the 19th century, a Tobago inspector of schools,\(^9\) reported:

It is hopeless to expect this rising generation to arrive at... a fair knowledge of the tongue they speak [sic], when they hear from their teachers such phrases as ‘Where did Moses born?’... ‘I eats yam’... ‘I did come yesterday,’ and so on. (Hamshere 1972: 155)

Aside from the claim that the students did not know the language they spoke, the report shows language ideologies in the West Indies to have now converged with those at the center (Crowley 1989, 1996). Privileging the British Standard, they no more defined Bajan Creole as a distinct (however “primitive”) dialect, but rather as this Standard’s corruption. A similar ideological stance was expressed nearly a century later by Hamshere, the researcher who unearthed this material. He comments, “From such uneducated teachers has the ungrammatical idiom of the West Indies spread across the Caribbean” (1972: 155). As Silverstein observed, these ideologies and practices related to them, reflect:

a sociologically differentiated allegiance... to a norm informed by standardization, [by] the imagination and explicit, institutional maintenance of a “standard” register... Manifested and enforced through such institutions as government, schooling, and so on, standardization is a modern and inclusive societal project... One’s... ability to navigate within these various institutions becomes indexically tied to one’s language use. Even outside them, one “voices” one’s very identity in terms of the registers - for example, degree of standardization - that one controls and can deploy. Every speaker has a repertoire of registers that become...indexes of class and related social positioning in modern social formations of inequality. (Silverstein 2000: 121-122)

By assimilating creole to the standard and by subjugating speakers’ performance to a reflexive censure in terms of that standard, the stage was set for the emergence of the linguistic self whose value depends on the mastery of a superposed code.

For many Barbadians, and especially those who have to negotiate in English their white-collar jobs with their public responsibilities and middle-class networks, that reflexive distance to the linguistic performance of oneself and of the others pervades the

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\(^9\) Hamshere does not provide any information about the report’s author and source.
social acoustics of speech. For those insecure in their linguistic abilities, the discord between the linguistic competence acquired within one's linguistic habitus (Bourdieu 1991: 81) and social expectations for the performance of the superposed variety risks muting, embarrassment, and exclusion when they participate in networks inhabited by the English-speaking middle-class (Fenigsen 2003). Although the pressures for English in Barbados are not limited to white-collar jobs, the proliferation of jobs in education, government, tourism, offshore banking, and publishing industry (Freeman 1991) has broadened the linguistically censored domains. True, like many other vernaculars (Rickford 1983; Rickford and Traugott 1985), Bajan is considered by its speakers as a natural way of speaking, an emblem of in-group solidarity superior to English for the expression of humor and intimacy. Yet, as the pressures for the use of English in the presence of "legitimate" speakers (Bourdieu 1991: 50-51) escalate, those who wish successfully to stake their claims to membership in prestigious social networks have constantly to watch their tongues. In the next section, I will argue that in addition to more diffuse sites and circumstances that precariously position Barbadians within the ranks of standardized language community, the very mode of the acquisition of the valued code intensifies the critical remove of the speakers from their own linguistic performance.

5. Lecture hall transmission

In considering the mode of language acquisition as motivating the ways people position themselves toward language, I take as my point of departure Ferguson's remark that - to translate Ferguson into a semiotic framework - the acquisition of the superposed variety involves a different kind of metapragmatic mediation than does "learning one's mother tongue" (1972: 239). While "the grammatical structure of [one's natural language] is learned without explicit discussion of grammatical concepts; the grammar of [the superposed variety] is learned in terms of 'rules' and norms to be imitated" (Ferguson 1972: 239).\(^{10}\)

As in many other classrooms with dialect speaking students (Collins 1988, 1996; Heath 1983; Labov 1972), classroom discourse in a small Barbadian village of Arawak Hill censures gaps between textbook English and the children's habitual speech. Some teachers may acknowledge Bajan in the classroom as the way of talking acceptable for communication outside the classroom and formal contexts, but in pedagogical discourse they treat Bajan usage as incorrect English; commensurable with it, yet lacking in grammar and legitimacy. This pedagogy and its register demand reflect the teachers' understanding of the place of Barbadian Formal Standard English as civil and civilized, prestigious, socially advantageous, and a way of speaking that exports well to the Anglophone world. The structural inequality within this communicative economy makes it contingent on the teacher to try and teach a variety of English instrumental not only to the social success of the students but also to their claims on the membership in the civilized world.

Because this variety of English is, to a degree, alien to the teachers as well, the leakage of Bajan into the instructional discourse of the teachers deprives students of

\(^{10}\) These two metapragmatic modes represent what Silverstein juxtaposes as metapragmatic discourse and metapragmatic function (1993).
sustained exposure to spoken Barbadian Standard English and blurs the intervarietal boundaries targeted by instruction. The teachers teach about Standard English ("correct speech") but model it little. In doing so, they constitute English as an object rather than as a medium of instruction, without acknowledging their own Bajan usage to the students. The first example illustrates this dynamics. The teacher, Mr. Marshall, works with a class of 10 to 11 years olds on "The Death of Hector," a chapter from the West Indian reader. The teacher aims to elicit the English pronunciation of /buckle/ and to ensure that the students understand its semantics. The first task involves overriding Bajan phonological pattern preferential to an open (VCV) syllable structure; the second involves relocating the item into a context more familiar than Trojan armory.

**Example 1**

The interlocutors are Mr. Marshall (WM), the teacher, Farley (F), a student, Marko (M), another student, and three other students, S1, S2, and S3. **HEAVY STRESS** is marked with capital boldface print. **Light stress** is indicated by boldface print only. **Underlining** marks Bajan “leakage” into the teacher’s discourse.

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WM (pointing to the textbook) *Farli, wot daz it seey? Riid dhe pasij.*  
‘Farley, what does it say? Read the passage’

F  
*Dey, dey putin on*  
‘They, they putting on’

WM  
*It didn seey putin on,’ dhey seey, ‘bakin,’ wi won tu stop on dhe wer ‘baklin,’*  
It didn’t say ‘putting on,’ they say ‘buckling,’ we want to stop on the word ‘buckling,’

‘BAkls’  
‘buckles.’

F  
*Bakele*  
Buckle

S1  
*BaKL*  
Buckle

S2  
*No ‘bakele,’ baKL*  
Not ‘buckle,’ buckle

WM  
*yu tok, yu don, you ent seein ‘bakele,’ don yu sii? Yu don seey ‘bakelin’ yor shuuz,*  
you talk, you don’t, you aren’t saying ‘bakele,’ don’t you see? You don’t say ‘bakelin’ your shoes

*wa? BAKling yor shuuz. Wa els Farli?*  
what? Buckling your shoes. What else Farley?

F (silence)

WM  
*Ar yu (unint.) Wel, Farli? Ar yu hevin wan somwer?*  
Are you (unint.) Well, Farley? Are you having one somewhere?

S2  
*BaKL on yor bel*  
Buckle on your belt

WM  
*Farli, du yu won tu tel hau tu yuuz dhis wer, ‘BAklin?’*  
Farley, do you want to tell how to use this word, ‘buckling?’

F (silence)

WM  
*Sii, in dhis sentens seeez, ‘Hiz BAKling on hiz armor’ (pause) yu andesten*  
See, in this sentence it says, ‘He’s buckling on his armor’ (pause) you understand

*wats goin on?*  
what’s going on?

S2  
*BAklin*  
Buckling on

F (very low voice, unint.)

WM  
*Hier dhat? Woz hi duin? ‘Batnin ap?’ lets chek, aa? BAKls arn batnz*
Hear that? What’s he doing? ‘Buttoning up?’ Let’s check, aa? Buckles aren’t buttons.

S3  Iz (selfcorr.) arn dhos parts bakeles?
    Is (selfcorr.) aren’t those parts buckles?

WM  Iz anforchuna dhat ju pipil duu no haav in ar vilej nau a lot of e-e pipil widh
    Is unfortunate that you people do not have in our village now a lot of e-e people
    with
    horsiz or karts, dhe dankitiz Old kartz, Marko?
    horses or carts, the donkey old carts, Marko?

M   Wii yuz tu hev wan
    We used to have one

WM  Marko, ai em not going tu spiik, yer dhe raider
    Marko, I am not going to speak, you’re the rider

M   (excitedly) Bakele, bakele on on, hi pon sadel pon dhe hors
    Buckle, buckle on on, it upon saddle upon the horse

WM  Rait, lets go on, lets go on pliiz, dhe neks wer
    Right, let’s go on, let’s go on please, the next word

At first, Farley skirts phonological challenge by replacing the item with "putin on." Next, assimilating it to Bajan phonology (vowel epenthesis), he produces "bakele." He is corrected by the teacher and two of his classmates. Note that the first correction by a student still varies from English in the double-timed distribution of stress, with the heavy stress placed on the word-final consonant cluster, "baKL" and only a light stress on the vowel, the sole focus of stress in the target form quoted by the teacher. In contrast with the one-syllable English version, this distribution of stress articulates /buckle/ as a two-syllable item. The second student uses the same stress pattern as the first, while embedding her correction in the phrase featuring Bajan negation, "no ‘bakele,’ baKL."

Next, the teacher attempts to integrate the semantic meaning of the item into a familiar context. Student 2 correctly identifies "baKL" as an object on Farley's belt. This, however, goes unnoticed and the semantic gap is only bridged by the invocation of donkey carts and horses which leads to Marko's recognition: "bakele... hi pon sadel pon dhe hors." In assigning it a "semantic position" (Hill 1985: 730) within his Bajan experience, Marko tames that alien word. Suddenly, the Hector's "BAkl" becomes Marko's very own "bakele." However, while Marko now understands the term, in its phonology and in the pronominal "hi" referring to an inanimate object his enunciation is resolutely Bajan. Resigned to the semantic closure that linked the walls of Troy and the village donkey carts, Mr. Marshall gives up on eliciting English phonology.

Any pedagogical process involves engagement with unfamiliar material. Yet, Bajan students and teachers face the additional challenge of grappling with a distinct linguistic system ideologized as the correct form of their own but, to a degree, alien to the educators and the educated. To illustrate, Mr. Marshall’s corrective discourse reveals Bajan syntactic leakage, such as the copula "ent," and null dummy subject. The phonological leakage includes palatal nasal /-in/, where Standard English phonology stipulates a velar nasal /-ing/ (7 instances), word-final consonant cluster reduction (11 instances) and opening up the word-final syllable (1 instance). In the process of linguistic superposition the realm of semantic reference carried by surface-segmentable language forms (Silverstein 1979) travels with relative ease, the phonology lags behind.

In examples 2, 3, and 4, Mrs. Green teaches her class of 13 children (ages 9 to 10) the elements of English syntax. In the first episode, she targets the concord between
the person of the agent and the verb form, notoriously problematic for many Bajan speakers.

**Example 2**

The interlocutors are Mrs. Green (EG), the teacher, two individual students, Peter (P) and Denisha (D), and the students as a collective (S). The target of correction is indicated by boldface print.

The teacher calls on Peter to read aloud the sentence, "The crow flies over the nest," written on the board.

EG  *Riid wot yu sii on dhe boord* (noise from another class). *Sii if yu ken riid it for mi, Piiter.* for me, Peter.

P  (inaud.)

EG  *Noooo, lisen tu yu tok, yu ken tok a lil louder dhen dhat, yu troy nau, go ehed.* No, listen to your talk, you can talk a little louder than that, you try now, go ahead.

P  (inaud.)

D  *(undervoice)* *De krou flaiz over de nest.*

The crow flies over the nest.

EG  *Egeen.* Again.

P  *De krous flaiz over de nes.*

The crows flies over the nest.

EG  *De krous flaiz over de nes. So wot ai seed, dhe ferst thing yu du iz luuk for dhe verb. If yu verb. If you foind dhe verb, it shuud bi iizi.*

find the verb, it should be easy.

S  *De krous flaiz*

The crow flies

EG  *Ol rait?*

All right?

S  *over dhe nest.*

over the nest.

Peter's first two turns are inaudible. Asked to read again, he attributes plural number to the agent, "de krous," and produces a sentence with a discordant form of the agent and the verb. The teacher repairs his error and reminds the class to attend to the verb's form.

In the next example, Mrs. Green works with the children on converting the same sentence into present tense continuative aspect form, requiring the use of copula.

**Example 3**

The interlocutors are Mrs. Green (EG), the teacher, and a student, Denisha (D). The target of correction is indicated by boldface print. Underlining marks Bajan “leakage” into the teacher’s discourse.

EG  *Dats dhe seem sentens, nothing cheenjing, dis dhe seem thing. Denishia?*

That’s the same sentence, nothing changing, this the same thing. Denisha?

D  *De krous de krous ar*
The crows the crows are

EG  
Ai wont wan krou
I want one crow

D  
Dhe krou, dhe krou iz, dhe krou iz flain tu dhe ness.
The crow, the crow is, the crow is flying to the nest.

EG  
Dhat iz roit bat yu meey (unint.) Wi Ol trai nau, Denishia, egeen.
That is right but you may (unint.) Wi all try now, Denisha, again.

D  
Dhe krou iz flain tu dhe ness.
The crow is flying to the nest.

EG  
(to a boy, not audible) Noo, dhe krou iz flain tu dhe ness. Yu wont ‘iz’ end
No, the crow is flying to the nest. You want ‘is’ and
yu wont ‘flain,’ cheenj dhat
you want ‘flying,’ change that
‘flaiz’ tu ‘iz flain.’ Ol dhe adher thingz rimeen dhe seem.
‘flies’ to ‘is flying.’ All the other things remain the same.

Denisha at first uses the appropriate English copula form but in an attempt to avoid the problematic third person noun-verb concord, converts the number of the agent into plural. The teacher insists on the singular form and Denisha provides the correct pattern. Note, that in her corrective discourse, the teacher uses Bajan syntactic paradigm. Even after Denisha repeats her answer some students continue to struggle. For example, a boy corrected by the teacher at the end of the episode had said, "de kroo ar flai." Not only was he confused about the number concord between the agent and the English copula, but neither did he grasp that the pattern calls for the V-ing form.

Denisha, a daughter of one of the teachers, is one of the best students in the class. In general, the most successful students in the school are the children of teachers, preachers, and parents who have other kinds of white-collar jobs. They often have more support at home for their schoolwork and a broader exposure to language registers and discursive styles privileged at school. Their school success gives them more educational opportunities than are available to children such as Farley and Peter who come from the families of plantation workers. Children with white-collar background do better on the Common Entrance Exam that redistributes students to the next level schools based on their scores. The differential language skills and their classroom censorship that often results in the silencing of students whose Bajan is more marked, contribute to the reproduction of language hierarchies based on the assimilating assumption of the commensurability of Bajan and school English, and to the reproduction of the positions that individuals occupy within these hierarchies based on their social background.

Example 4 is a consecutive part of the same exercise. Now the sentence on the board reads, "I see the jar in the window." As the excerpt shows, the children still struggle with English copula.

Example 4

The interlocutors include Mrs. Green (EG), the teacher, and her students (S). The target of correction is indicated by boldface print. Underlining marks Bajan “leakage” into the teacher’s discourse.

EG  
Rait, on dhe skau boord dhe sentens written in wot tens? Present, en ai wont yu
Right, on the school board the sentence written in what tense? Present, and I want you
tu cheenj dhis sentens intu prezent kontinyuus, tuu?
to change this sentence into present continuous, to...

S  

Ai siin
I seeing

EG  

A litl lauder dhen dhat
A little louder than that

S  

(mutually overlapping) aim /am a/ ai iz
I’m /I’m a /I is

EG  

Ai am siing dhe jar in dhe window, bifor wi cheenj it wot woz dhe sentens?
I am seeing the jar in the window, before we change(d) it what was the sentence?

S  

[unint.]

EG  

Yes, ai am siing. Rimember dhat ‘am’ gous widh ‘ai’ so wi kant seey ‘ai iz siing,’
Yes, I am seeing. Remember that ‘am’ goes with ‘I’ so we can’t say ‘I is seeing,’

‘ai am siing.’

‘I am seeing.’

Although children correctly identify the required aspect of the phrase, they initially provide the alternant Bajan paradigm, S + V-ing. When Mrs. Green requests a louder repetition, interpreted by the children as a disguised correction, they provide a disparate set of copula candidates. Because the class now works in unison, the utterances cannot be attributed to individual children; however, one can distinguish a correct, if contracted, English copula form "aim," competing with Bajan "am a," and with "ai iz" form, often found in Bajan discourse. In her recapitulation, the teacher castigates that latter usage, salient to some Barbadian speakers as hypercorrection, contrasting it with the desired English form. Note that in this exchange, too, at one point the teacher uses the Bajan syntactic paradigm. While the above exercises are conducted through spoken exchanges, they privilege paradigm-centered drills rather than some more flexible discursive format.

Now consider example 5, a part of the morning school routine when students recite the pledge of allegiance. In addition to illustrating further language pedagogy in Arawak Hill, the teacher’s metapragmatic comments show that particular ways of language use figure in broader discourses of cosmopolitanism, civilization, and global language community; in other words, in the project of modern subjectivity.

Example 5

The participants include the teacher (VP), and students (S). Underlining marks instances of “cutting words short,” the censored linguistic practice

VP  

Sta dhe atenshn - ay plej alijens
Stand the attention - I pledge allegiance

S  

(recite) ay plej alijens tu mai kantri /Barbee/Barbeedos en tu mai fla tu aphaul en
I pledge allegiance to my country /Barba/Barbados and to my flag to uphold and

 difeg dher
defend their

VP  

Stop - ay won en ens ov dhos wors korporee (loud) ol yu-won is laj (louder)
Stop - I want any ends of those words (in)corpora(ted) (yells) your (talk) is like

‘bihol’ - ‘kantri’ - ‘Barbeeda’ - wer r yu from -- yu don sii yu don repj thingz
‘behold’ - ‘country’ - ‘Barbados’ - where are you from - you don’t see you
do n’t repeat things

dhat ka ind of weel -- (carefully) ay plej alijens
that kind of way - (carefully) I pledge allegiance

S  

Ay plej alijens tu mai kantri Barbeedos en tu mai fla.
I pledge allegiance to my country Barbados and to my flag

Is your pledge to Barbados, we speak English, all civilized world speak it, Where are you from?

You want people laugh at you when you go to England or Canada?

In that exchange, the referential layer of teacher’s discourse demanding that students fully articulate the word-endings is contradicted by the form of her correctives that comprise a higher count of “cutting words short,” (eleven instances, excluding the parody of the students’ speech), than the disciplined discourse (four instances). By describing the rules of English referentially rather than modeling them indexically, Arawak Hill pedagogical discourse presents students with conflicting normative messages. It casts English as an alien, limited purpose variety - the language one learns about instead of learning how to use it - a remote realm, whose “living speech” existence is only faintly reflected through reportive embedding and drills. It is not surprising, then, that for many, English remains an intimidating and differently processed “alien word” (Bakhtin 1981: 293-297).

That alien word carries the weight that is almost too heavy for students’ shoulders. In her final comment to the students, the teacher ties English to Barbadian national identity and to the membership in the civilized world. Many Barbadians, including the newspaper editor cited at the beginning of this article, share this identification of English with the Barbadian nationhood and with the inclusion in the civilized global community (Fenigsen 2003). But to the village children and to Beverly, their teacher, these membership rights are hard to attain. While the teacher’s style may seem harsh, Beverly cares about the students and knows too well the difficulties and stakes involved in acquiring “good English.” Beverly, at the time the only holder of an advanced college degree among her colleagues, has been passed up for a promotion to an assistant principal’s position because, in her words, “she tends to lapse into Bajan a lot.” She added:

...you want [to say] the correct thing [but] as soon as you have someone look at you because what you are saying isn't so awfully correct, you have to think twice-time before your words form certain things (emphasis added).

Another teacher from the same school noted:

Bajan dialect is just ... simply ... the way we came along speaking ... and is not difficult to learn ... and English is to me very difficult subject to learn. (Bajan) you hear people speaking it and you quickly grasp it, but English is quite different, you have to be, you have to be taught English.

As Ferguson suggested (1972[1959]: 239), speakers are not quite "at home" with the superposed variety. Not only is the superposed code perceived as difficult to learn and its performance requires a self-conscious mobilization of linguistic resources, but also its use entails an exposure to censorship and criticism. Bauman and Briggs (2003: 60) wrote,

...Language standardization, whose ideological charter Locke provided by promoting linguistic self-help, pedagogy, and criticism of the errors of others, still helps to extend spatially the ability of individuals to use hybrids and classify others through their speech as well as to place hybrids
beyond the reach of debate and resistance ... Insofar as people speak or inscribe the linguistic forms that are currently designated as rational and cosmopolitan, it is presumed that their thinking and conduct reflect these properties.

The experience and reflections of Barbadian speakers clearly support this assessment.

6. Conclusions, or what do we make of all this?

The first issue I set out to address in this paper was the influence of colonial language ideologies and language policies on language relations in Barbados. Historical records show this influence in the efforts of Anglican Church and Protestant missions to grant slaves an access to the interlinked domains of Christianity and English. During that time, the efforts of religious institutions were motivated by the quest for linguistic medium for religious instruction. Because of the emphasis placed by the Anglicans and other Protestants on the imperative for the faithful to read the Scriptures, formalized in the first Book of Common Prayer, written in English and introduced in Britain in 1549, the Protestant linguistic agenda also included literacy. For several reasons these attempts were neither very successful nor vigorous under slavery. One of these reasons was strong resistance from the local ruling elites, even more effective because the Anglican clergy on the island included members of those elites. Another reason, however, was a disjuncture between the inclusive charter of the Church and discourses of radical alterity of people of African origin and descent that emerged in Barbados in the mid-eighteenth century in response to the epistemological shifts in British racism and to the changing economics of Barbadian slave order (Fenigsen 2000). As I have argued above, these discourses targeted the purported cognitive difference and uneducability of African slaves. After the Emancipation, the influence of colonial language ideologies was exercised, most directly, through programmatic and curricular efforts of the Anglican Church, in Barbados and in Great Britain responsible for public education until the Elementary Education Act of 1870, as well as through the dissemination of normative and evaluative discourses about language, governance, and citizenship. In positing close ties between particular ways of language use and modern subjectivity, these discourses put to work the schemas of inequality devised by Locke.

Barbadian parallel trajectories of political economic transformations and the politics of language document the regimenting role that broader societal processes play in language relations. They also call attention to the complexity of that diverse set of projects, characteristics and relations we call “modernity” and to the need for close analytic attention to the local conditions (wherever “the local” may be) in proposing a relationship between modernity and a particular kind of language relations, such as a language community based on the allegiance to a hegemonic standard (Silverstein 1996a, 2000). The source of language relations in Barbados was the Caribbean plantation. The plantation, due to its grim and visionary mode of labor organization - repetitive, fragmented, subjugated to the regime of the clock; and through the large scale introduction of new orders of “instability in the production of dislocated subjectivities” (Appadurai 1996: 4) has been considered an early (the first half of seventeenth century) experiment in modernity (Mintz 1994: 295). Yet, while these practices resulted in language contact, they did not result either in the ideology of language community or in the introduction of a particular language regime as central to the modern subjectivity a la Locke. It took another century and a half and political
transformations that undermined the old modes of labor and population control, for the
dominant strata to turn to a more inclusive, modern paradigm of nationhood and to the
linguistic incorporation as its semiotic emblem and vehicle. Barbadian case shows that
the “cosmopolitan leap” of modernity as a force motivating transformations in language
relations was propelled by the synergy between the ideologies formulated at the center
and ideologies and political economic processes specific to the colony.

And there is more to be gained by looking back at those times than an
indulgence in an antiquarian fascination with the history of language relations. The past
is also potentially at least a history in Hobsbawn’s and Ranger’s (1983) sense of a
summonable resource for interpreting where we are now, where we are going and who
we imagine ourselves to be (Anderson 1991). Not only has it shaped the continuities
and discontinuities, the enfranchisements and disenfranchisements, the appropriations
and expropriations of today, but it is also the source of ideological and practical
imaginary. This past has etched Barbadian post-colonial linguistic tastes and distastes,
discourses and desires. It is a subterranean source of understandings that may suddenly
surface in the comment of a taxi driver, in the philippic of a bellicose teenager in a
stationery store, in the hastily retrieved from the attic of collective memory comment of
an exasperated teacher seeking to explain, “why we are so British,” to an inquisitive
stranger. Perhaps more than anything else, it has also taught Barbadians the price and
stakes involved in taking over English, the discursive vehicle to modernity. An attempt
to understand how speakers construct and navigate their linguistic universe requires
exploring how the distinctions of linguistic form and value are marked by the memory
and images of social relations perceived as past contexts and crucibles of these forms. In
postcolonial settings, such as Barbados, we have to ask whether and how linguistic
practices and forms are ensnared in the imagery of colonial history, culture, and the self.
We have to ask if, and in what ways, the social functioning of such linguistic categories
as Bajan and Standard English enters the world of postcolonial dilemmas and how
social institutions contribute to the pragmatics of difference. We have to explore if and
how linguistic diversity - a product of past and present political economic relations -
enables speakers to configure not only their daily roles and interactions, but also their
broader alignments within the global world.

The next set of questions that informed this analysis concerned the ways
language ideologies “produce subjectivities, organize them hierarchically and enlist
people to populate these hierarchies” (Briggs 2005: 1). Further, I raised the question of
the experience of Barbadian speakers who live much of their lives in a monitored
linguistic universe. I addressed these questions by attending to the semiotics of the
superposition of English through village school pedagogy. I suggested that because this
pedagogy is mainly conducted through spoken Bajan, it entails a critical disjuncture
between the ways in which English, its target, and Bajan, the instructional vehicle for its
transmission, exist for the students.11 For village children, Bajan - the language of

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11. In more precise semiotic terms, that disjuncture can be described as “nomic calibration.”
Nomic calibration, a concept developed by Michael Silverstein (1993: 52, see also Lucy 1993: 26), refers
to metasemiotic activity stipulating the existence of “mutually disjoint ontic realms” within which the
signaled (E') and the signaling phenomena (E') “are available to experience and conceptualization”
(Silverstein 1993: 52). In nomic calibration, the immediate, phenomenally available semiotic medium,
such as discourse or ritual action, construes metasemiotic objects from a different epistemic realm, such
as mythic ordination or Platonic generalization (Silverstein 1993: 52).
street, home, and much of oral instruction in the classroom - is their linguistic habitus, an unreflexive doxa of communication. In contrast, English is a phenomenally remote entity (Silverstein 1993), whose existence they can only glimpse through discursive fragments embedded in language drills and through written artifacts such as textbooks and dictionaries. At best, they are exposed to a truncated repertoire of English discursive registers and genres. At worst, they confront a grab bag of lexical items and grammatical paradigms (Reisman 1964: 32) that defend their status as an object language and resist jelling into an instrument of communication (Bakhtin 1981: 99). The ideological assimilation of Bajan to English, at best as its dialect, at worst as its broken, corrupt rendition makes Bajan usage commensurable with English, and subject to ranking according to the perceived distance between the actual usage and the prescribed one. The subsystems of language are differentially targeted by the classroom pedagogy. Phonological gaps are censored less severely at school than are morpho-syntactic ones. Further, even within the school setting, there are differences in the degree of linguistic monitoring. The least forgiving are instances of performance related to such domains as nationhood and religion, exemplified by the recitation of the pledge of allegiance. Where the performance of modern subjectivity is at stake, no intervarietal gaps are tolerated. Such a linguistic regime reflects and reproduces sociolinguistic hierarchies resulting in the ranking of the students across multiple educational domains and, eventually, influencing their future opportunities in life. As Bauman and Briggs note, following Locke’s “ideological invention of language” (2003: 300), language became a key site for monitoring the entitlement to a membership in global, cosmopolitan communities of modern subjects. Locke’s project led to the creation of a “broad range of forms of linguistic subordination - structuring social relations by providing... access to education and instituting gate-keeping mechanisms” (2003: 300). The children from Arawak Hill primary school and Beverly, their teacher, collectively implicated in the “metropolitan leap” of Locke’s vision would likely agree.

What, then, are the implications of these hierarchies and pedagogical practices that reproduce them for those subjected to these hierarchies? I suggest that the pedagogy based on the assumption that English is no more than the correct form of what the students speak, constitutes English as phenomenally and ideologically "alien" in the many inflections of the term (Bakhtin 1981;Vološinov (1973). Bakhtin observes that a prose writer can distance himself from the language of his work by treating it as alien to himself. In such cases, "the author does not speak in a given language...but he speaks...through language, a language that has somehow more or less materialized, become objectivized" (1981: 299). That notion of reflexive separation of the speaker from reified discourse opens up an interpretive space for asking not only what the speaker does to the word, but also what does the word do to the speaker. Extending Bakhtin's insight to spoken discourse, I suggest that it is not just language that may become alienated, but so may the speakers struggling with an alien word. And the

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12 Vološinov notes that alien languages, stripped of their speakers and contexts, are acquired through a "lecture-hall transmission" (1973: 74), reified through "written monuments" (1973: 72), filled with "the dictionary word" (1973: 70), and guarded by "attention to correctness" (1973: 70). Foreshadowing the concerns of ethnographers of speaking (Gumperz and Hymes 1964), Vološinov juxtaposes the philological approach with the vastly different linguistic consciousness of the speaker, concerned not “with the abstract system of normatively identical forms of language,” but with the “practical business of living speech” (1973: 70).
experience of my Barbadian interlocutors shows that, as any alien tool, a superposed variety threatens the discourse producers with a refusal to serve.

This, I think, problematizes the position articulated by Franz Fanon and elaborated by others that the alienating functions of colonial language and of other facets of “cultural imperialism” (Diawara 1998; Mazrui and Mazrui 1998; Ngugi 1986) cease through the semantic exorcisms of liberation. The notion that "the natives," by subordinating linguistic forms to their own emancipatory needs "can almost be said to assume responsibility for the language of the occupier" (Fanon 1967), is only part of the story. The other part (perhaps glimpsed in Fanon's caveat, "almost") concerns the speaker-centered aspects of linguistic alienation that situate alienation not only in the meanings conveyable through language, but also in the degree of control over the production and modes of acquisition of the linguistic thesaurus. If we approach linguistic forms as tools for discourse production, such questions as who controls their production and ratification (Bourdieu 1991; Crowley 1989; Silverstein 1996b), how much license and creativity do the speakers feel in using those forms, and how much objectified authority do they attribute to those forms, articulate with the Marxian notion of alienation (1973: 470). Such framework invites attention to phenomena such as the decentering of power to control the production of linguistic artifacts (e.g., grammars, dictionaries, exemplary texts) from the speakers; the subordination of speakers-producers to the linguistic tools; and the objectification of the processes of linguistic standardization so that they appear impersonal and authoritative. The experience of contemporary speakers shows that the participation in the modern project of the superposition of the hegemonic standard comes at a price: Lurking in the framings of modernity, from Marx to Durkheim, Tönnies, and Redfield, alienation - here a linguistic one - is modernity’s phantom companion.

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13 Yet another approach to alienation draws on G. Mead's (1934) work on the self. An informative survey of that direction and of main ethnographic works, either supporting or problematizing its cross-cultural validity can be found in Haiman (1998). That approach views alienation as a product of a divided (modern) self, based on a juxtaposition of a unitary "genuine" self against a multitude of "insincere" ones engendered by the demands of public role-playing (e.g. Lyons 1978). Haiman's (1998) study of "insincere" varieties of speech, one of few treatments of linguistic alienation, draws on that perspective. In particular, Haiman argues that a sweeping array of speech "varieties" such as affectation, sarcasm, ritual language, and politeness, is predicated on "the idea of the speaker as a divided self: More specifically the speaker's self-conscious alienation from the actual referential content of his or her message" (1998: 10). Yet, while juxtaposing a "sincere" linguistic expression with disgenuine social play, Haiman does not offer compelling reasons for accepting the ground rules for the antinomy. The core assumption that alienation inheres those strategic uses of language that keep the referential layer of the utterance at an arm's length assumes a problematic essentializing of personhood. Although a detailed critique of Haiman's position that unreflexively privileges the semantic over pragmatic functions of speech exceeds my present scope, I suggest that the phenomena considered by Haiman, in hinging on the pragmatic, strategic manipulation of authorial responsibility for the semantics of discourse, for Haiman's concern with sincerity would be more adequately addressed in terms of "sincerity" of voicing.
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