

The Influence of Spanish Lexicon on Limonese Creole: Negative Implications

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Abstract

After working in the construction of the railroad that communicates Limón with San José, many Afro-Caribbean people who had arrived during the 1870's, especially from Jamaica, stayed and established themselves in Limón. In the 20th century, some Costa Rican Spanish speakers started to migrate to Limón; as a result, their Spanish language influenced Limonese Creole and made speakers start substituting some English lexicon, root morphemes, and word order for the Spanish one. As time has passed, more Costa Rican Spanish elements have been incorporated and mixed into the English Creole. In addition, many of the inhabitants of Limón who spoke Limonese Creole moved to San José and adopted Spanish. Depending on the event or situation, Limonese use either Costa Rican Spanish, Limonese Creole, or code-switch between both of them. The chief purpose of this research is to investigate and analyze the influence of Costa Rican Spanish lexicon on Limonese Creole and how this English variety has been affected by its Costa Rican Spanish influence.

Key words: Limonese Creole, Jamaican Creole, subordinate group, migration, lexicon, code switching, diglossia

Resumen

Después de trabajar en la construcción del ferrocarril que comunica Limón con San José, muchas personas afro-caribeñas que habían llegado sobre todo de Jamaica durante los años de la década que arranca en 1870, se quedaron y se establecieron en Limón. En el siglo XX, costarricenses hispano-hablantes comenzaron a emigrar a Limón; como resultado,

el español empezó a influenciar el criollo limonense y provocó que los hablantes empezaran a sustituir el léxico, las raíces morfémicas y el orden de las palabras del inglés por los elementos correspondientes del español. Con el paso del tiempo, más elementos del español costarricense se han ido incorporando y mezclando con el criollo inglés. Además, muchos de los habitantes de Limón que hablaban criollo limonense se trasladaron a San José y adoptaron el español. Dependiendo del evento o la situación, el limonense utiliza el español costarricense, el criollo limonense o una mezcla de ambos. El principal propósito de esta investigación fue investigar y analizar la influencia del léxico español costarricense en el criollo limonense y cómo esta variedad del inglés se ha visto afectada por el español costarricense.

Palabras claves: criollo limonense, criollo jamaiquino, grupo subordinado, migración, léxico, cambio de código lingüístico, diglosia

Limonese Creole: Historical Background

Each group of newcomers arrives in a new land expecting to achieve its dreams or simply to have a new life. This is the case of Limonese people and their Limonese creole variety. Limonese Creole (LC) is a second-generation English-based creole descended from Jamaican Creole (JC). For several decades before and after the turn of the last century, more than 10,000 Afro-Caribbeans, mostly from Jamaica, immigrated to Limón, Costa Rica, to construct a railway that connected this province with the capital, San José. After the completion of the railroad, most of the Jamaicans stayed in Limón to work for the United Fruit Company (Laporte qtd. in Obeng and Winkler, Herzfeld 1). When these Jamaicans came to Catholic Spanish-speaking Costa Rica, they brought with them not only their families, but also much of their social infrastructure, including their schools, Protestant churches, and social clubs in which English and JC were spoken. For more than 60 years, the Afro-Limonese maintained a mostly separate society; thus, the local creole flourished and over time began to develop distinctly from JC (Obeng and Winkler 1). Establishing themselves in a new land, made them organize their community and start thinking about the way to keep and perpetuate their roots and traditions.

The arrival of newcomers brought variability in the usage of the English language. Herzfeld indicates that “part of the evidence that leads one to believe that the JC speakers, who planted the roots for LC to develop, came mostly from the mesolect ranks, rather than the basilect” (Tense and Aspect 193). This may be due to the fact that an American company was hiring them and there were

many positions that required literacy (Obeng and Winkler 3). This necessity to use a more standardized form of the English language made Limonese speakers establish some traditional schools of English (TES). In these schools, children were taught different subjects such as mathematics, English, history, and literature among others. Teachers really cared about their students' knowledge and education. In this way, children were able to write, read, and understand English perfectly. However, when the government decided to introduce the Spanish schools, the education for those children changed. Quince Duncan mentions that "white Spanish teachers have affected Limonese children negatively. Although they have opened the doors to knowledge about the world, their Limonese identity has been violently destroyed. Costa Rican educational system does not perceive Limonese cultural identity worthy enough to be studied and preserved" (3). This view about Limonese culture has affected the language as well. "Children and teenagers started rejecting their English variety to adopt a new one that would enable them to have a better communication with the white people" (5). Consequently, little by little, Limonese speakers incorporated Spanish words into their variety and some of the English ones were gradually replaced.

Besides, this gradual Spanish intromission into Limonese creole is the result of the imposition of a variety that prevails throughout the country. Herzfeld remarks that "the superordinate language of the Continuum in LC is not the Standard (SE in this case) but a third language, Spanish, the official language of the country (Tense and Aspect 173). Therefore, it is not strange or absurd to perceive the variety of the majority, Spanish, trying to impose its lexicon upon the variety of the minority, Limonese creole.

Creole Speakers in Central America and Costa Rica

According to Herzfeld, most of the speakers of creole languages in Central America live in Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Panama, and speak Spanish and creole simultaneously (*El multilingüismo y la identidad de los afro-limonenses de Costa Rica* 2). The main reason for this use of both varieties has occurred since the twentieth century. Central American governments started pushing Creole speakers to speak Spanish, a variety mostly used by the majority of speakers in all Central America, to fit into the Hispanic culture.

When people in a country speak different languages and come into contact with each other, most of the time the language spoken by the minority group declines. Consequently, their native language is given up and adapted to the one used by the majority's linguistic group, which establishes its language as the official variety for national communication. A clear example of this phenomenon is shown by Limonese creole, a variety spoken in Costa Rica. This country has gone through a socio-historical process of transformation in the last 100 years; this has provoked a remarkable impact upon the various ethnic groups that perceive the preservation of their native variety as a constant fight against external governmental actions to impose Spanish as the official language in their land.

Costa Rican Spanish and English Creole: How Did They Come in Contact and How Has Spanish Taken Over?

According to Portilla, even though in the Atlantic region of Costa Rica the presence of the English language was already felt from the second half of the 17th century (Lefever qtd. in Portilla), the first African descent families who spoke creole English did not settled in Costa Rica until the beginning of the 19th century (Palmer qtd. in Portilla). They arrived from the Nicaraguan Mosquitia, and from Bocas del Toro (Panama), which was still a part of Costa Rica in 1827. Furthermore, in 1872 other people of African descent, especially Jamaicans, who also spoke creole English, started to migrate to Limón to work in the construction of the Atlantic railroad. By 1927, 18,003 Jamaicans lived in Limón (Portilla).

According to Anita Herzfeld (2011), there is a variety of social and linguistic reasons that have been crucial in the influence of Costa Rican Spanish on Limonese Creole. The first reason is that in the last fifty years, Spanish has been replaced by English as the language of daily communication by many Afro-Limonese people language of prestige, since there have been more and more Spanish speaking schools, while the English speaking ones diminished or disappeared. Finally, since Limón is now only two and a half hours away from the Central Valley, the communication by car between both regions has increased significantly. Because of this, Limonese creole is going through a process of incorporating the grammar of Costa Rican Spanish. Herzfeld points out that even though many Limonese families have not used creole since the 1980's, Limonese creole is still a live language. Currently, however, the Afro-Costa Rican children who used to have the opportunity to attend private or church sponsored British English lessons and were taught predominantly by Jamaican teachers, who also used to speak and teach Standard English based on Limonese creole, have a very limited access to those lessons. Although many of those children can speak Limonese creole, Spanish-speaking children are the ones who mainly attend public schools; these schools used to be attended in the great majority by Afro-Limonese children (Una evaluación de la vitalidad lingüística del inglés criollo de Limón: su vigencia o su desplazamiento 109).

According to Herzfeld (2011), teenagers who speak Limonese creole communicate amongst themselves in both Spanish and Limonese Creole; they borrow many Spanish terms to accomplish this. They do this to talk about their high school or "college" work. Additionally, Herzfeld comments that topics, which are work, news, public service, or legal-terminology related, are easier to talk about in Spanish. This is especially true for young adults. Moreover, the great majority of young Afro-Limonese prefer their "significant others" to speak to them in Spanish. Herzfeld asserts that they feel that Spanish is "sweeter" and "more romantic." On the other hand, when the Afro-Limonese are telling jokes, having a "verbal" quarrel, or using "bad words," they prefer to use Limonese Creole (Una evaluación de la vitalidad lingüística del inglés criollo de Limón: su vigencia o su desplazamiento 109). Henceforth, even though people of African lineage brought creole English to Costa Rica's Atlantic region, Costa Rican Spanish has

surpassed creole English as a communication tool, mostly because of practical reasons.

Limonese Creole Today

The United Fruit Company abandoned its operations in Limón in 1942. Since then, the English language started to lose its status in this province. Also, an education law forced Limonese children to learn Spanish while they attended Spanish schools. After 1948, there was an increasing migration of Spanish speakers to this province; this situation contributed to the rise of the cultural and linguistic contact between Spanish speakers and the Afro-Caribbeans. As a result of this contact and the Costa Rican government's imposition to use Spanish as a first language, there was a need for Limonese people to learn Spanish.

According to some Costa Rican population census data conducted in Limón in 1927 and 2000 (qtd. by Zimmer, *El español hablado* 35), there was a change in population during the 20th century (see table 1). A great majority of Limón inhabitants are Hispanic and a few of them are Afro-Caribbeans. This phenomenon has greatly influenced the use of Limonese Creole in this province; the replacement of Limonese creole by Spanish in order to have an effective communication with the other community members has affected the lexicon and morphosyntax of this variety. Since Spanish is Costa Rica's official language, Limonese creole speakers have borrowed some Spanish lexicon and root morphemes as well as its word order when speaking creole.

Table 1
Changes in Limón Populations during the 20th Century

	Afro-Caribbean People	Hispanic People	Other Cultures
1927	57%	31%	12%
1950	33%	55%	12%
2000	16%	75%	9%

Zimmer, Tanja. *El español hablado por los afrocostarricenses: estudio lingüístico y sociolingüístico*. Diss. Der Universität zu Köln, Philosophische Fakultät, 2007. 35. PDF file.

Today, Limonese Creole, according to Zimmer, is in a changing process, in which more and more Spanish elements are being incorporated and mixed into it (*El español hablado* 4). This situation makes young people from Limón only use their Creole variety in family reunions or with close friends; on the contrary, they speak Spanish in official situations, government office procedures, and interactions at school.

Portilla also mentions in his article *Intercambios léxicos entre el español y el inglés criollo de Limón*, that the number of people who spoke creole English started to diminish as time passed. In 1950, 37% of the total inhabitants of Limón descended from Africans. Nonetheless, in 2000 only 16% of the people who lived in Limón were of African background (Portilla). Many of the inhabitants of Limón who spoke Limonese creole moved to the Central Valley and adopted Spanish as their language of communication.

From the moment the Costa Rican government prohibited the use of English in Limón's schools and established some programs to teach English as a second language, many older people started using Limonese creole while middle-age people began using both languages. Due to this mixture of languages, Limonese speakers frequently tend to use "code-switching"; however, they use more Spanish in order to facilitate communication (Zimmer *El español hablado* 4).

Justification of the Study

For a long time, Limonese Creole has been considered by some other English speakers as a broken variety that violates Standard English rules. This misconception has provoked a rejection towards this variety and its use in public speech. Among the main speakers who reject its use, indian Afro-Limonese inhabitants are the best examples. Some of them do not want to keep any relationship with the variety their parents and grandparents use at home. On the contrary, they perceive it as a negative trace of their culture and believe that it must be forgotten or replaced by Standard English.

Certainly, Limonese Creole used amongst Limón inhabitants has been threatened by many external influences, being Spanish one of the most influencing forces, affecting the Creole lexicon. This aspect has been reinforced by the fact that Afro-Limonese speakers go through a diglossia since they have Spanish as the dominant variety, British or American English for Sunday school and service, and Limonese Creole for family conversations and friends' gatherings. This linguistic panorama has forced them to handle all the mentioned varieties or to choose which ones to use.

This choice has not been easy since society and peers force speakers, especially teenagers, to choose Spanish and Standard American English as the main varieties to learn and speak. This phenomenon has provoked speakers to use Limonese Creole in few contexts and caused a type of code-mixing. Consequently, speakers use both varieties interchangeably, Spanish and Limonese Creole, in their everyday speech.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The main purpose of this research is to investigate and analyze the influence of Costa Rican Spanish lexicon upon Limonese Creole, and how this

mixture has affected the latter. Some samples of the Spanish phrases they use to replace their Creole ones will be collected to provide evidence to support the theory. Also, the main reasons why Afro-Limonese English speakers have replaced their native words by the usage of Spanish ones, as well as the particular Spanish lexical items will be addressed. Another relevant aspect of this study is to identify the context and type of conversation that encourages Limonese speakers to mix Spanish and Limonese Creole. Finally, it will be proven that this phenomenon has brought some negative implications to Limonese Creole, since it loses lexicon, semantic connotations, and Creole words are replaced.

Taking into account that Spanish is being used more frequently among Limonese Creole speakers, and its lexical items are replacing native Creole words, some questions arise:

- Why are Limonese Creole speakers replacing native Creole words?
- Which phrases do speakers replace?
- Which Spanish lexical items do they replace the most in Creole?
- Are native Limonese Creole speakers doing something to stop this phenomenon and go back to their native words as the main representative of their linguistic legacy?

Methodology: Participants and Data Gathering Instrument

As part of the methodology used to complete this investigation, the researchers conducted a comprehensive literature review of Limón Creole, its history, and the influence of Spanish words upon this variety. The study of Spanish influence upon Limonese Creole was divided into two stages: the first step developed a credible theoretical framework about the topic in research and the development of an instrument for data collection. This instrument was used to obtain linguistic information from Limonese speakers and their insertion of Spanish words to replace their counterpart in Limonese Creole. This tool helped collect samples and possible contexts in which Spanish words are used in everyday speech. A second stage covered the collection of information provided by informants (corpus). This was used to mention particular Limonese cultural traces, list Spanish words or phrases, and find out what negative implications the replacement brings to Limonese Creole. This was intended to show the contexts in which speakers usually use these phrases.

Once this information has been collected, it will be analyzed and organized in a phraseological glossary with clear and accurate information for each of the phrases or words. The data collection process will help expand the syntactic and semantic level of those words and the context in which they are used. Finally, it is expected to set if those phrases are used by the informants in their everyday speech; in this way, the linguistic data can be disseminated through articles and language courses.

Analysis of the Results

The following analysis pretend to provide a description of the number of interviewees and the procedure that was followed to conduct the interview. A total number of fourteen Limonese informants, men and women, were interviewed orally; some of them were students whose age ranges around 19 years old and some young adults' age ranges around twenty-three. The variability in the age of the informants allowed having a wider view of the replacement of English words by Spanish ones. They were asked several questions about Limonese people's cultural traces, the reasons why some of them are replacing English words by the usage of Spanish ones, the changes in the English grammar when these words are used, and the negative implications of this replacement in Limonese Creole. These answers led the researchers to an analysis of a phenomenon that has been affecting Limonese Creole variety for a long time.

It is noteworthy that some of the informants are not aware of the usage or insertion of Spanish words in Limonese Creole or they do not perceive it as a negative aspect. For this reason, when they were asked about it, they do not understand or deny the fact that Spanish words are part of their lexicon. The fact that code-switching is affecting their creole variety is strange for them. For this reason, some of the interviewees did not consider Spanish as a threat to their variety. On the contrary, they saw it as a normal and regular part of their usage of creole variety since they are only replacing phrases rather than full sentences. They perceived Limonese Creole or Standard English as the variety they use the most at home or with friends and do not see a few Spanish words as a threat to their variety. Consequently, Limonese Creole becomes part of their parents' legacy: "It's our personal culture. My parents and my grandparents only talk in that idiom," as one of the informants said. Some of them got used to the insertion of Spanish words in their English variety. One of them said, "Our mother talks to us in English, but we don't use it that much." She finished by saying, "Sí, lo comemos." What she meant was that they are able to speak creole English. However, some of the informants consider that the variety has changed and a type of code-mixing is taking place in Limonese Creole. They even believed that children or the younger generations are not using the mixture of English and Spanish or are not using English at all, since their constant replacement of English words by Spanish one becomes frequent in their daily speech.

In regards to the fact that Limonese Creole speakers replace creole words by Spanish ones, some possible reasons for this phenomenon came out. Some of the informants replied that they do it when they do not remember the English word. Therefore, it becomes easier to replace it with the Spanish equivalent than to remember the creole variety that is used in Limón. Another relevant issue is that many of the people who visit San José to go shopping or see a friend, especially Limonese women, tend to avoid speaking Limonese Creole in public places. They feel ashamed to be criticized or considered illiterate in English because they do not use the variety most of Costa Rican people tend to use, American English. Unfortunately, this linguistic behavior makes them hide their origin and dialect

in order to be accepted in the community. Besides, one informant said, “People tend to speak Spanish or Standard English when they go to San José; it makes their close friends that speak Limonese Creole keep apart from them since they perceive certain rejection towards the creole variety.” This phenomenon is not exclusive when they go to San José; it also happens when they come to study in Heredia. One informant said, “I don’t use Limonese Creole because my friends in Heredia do not understand.” This is clearly seen when they are studying a major that requires the student to learn English. If Limonese speakers’ phonology reflects their origin, professors will make them use the “correct and acceptable” variety, American English, to pass the courses and use the foreign language correctly. An aspect that must be mentioned is the fact that Limonese Creole is sometimes used as a secret code. One of the informants mentioned, “Sometimes we make jokes with some words.” That is, when they do not want somebody to understand what they are saying, they speak to each other in creole. “If it is a secret, we will speak in Limonese Creole.” Limonese Creole speakers are conscious about others’ ignorance about their variety and the lack of interest some others show to learn and understand it. Aside from that, he noted that he and his friends make up words. A significant example is the word “salsa.” “Salsa” means pretty; he made up a sentence: “You look salsa.” This mixture of varieties, creole and Spanish, has developed speakers’ creativity to give a different meaning to the words. The informant says that it is up to each individual if he loses his dialect and linguistic identity. He remarked, “It depends; that is a personal decision. It is part of my culture and I want to continue with it. But if somebody doesn’t want to continue with it, you can’t do anything.” He also pointed out that it is vital to make children aware of the importance of their linguistic identity. He stated this because he said that they have a notable group of white people in his town that encourage others to speak Spanish, so children speak more Spanish than English.

The following corpus was taken from a series of interviews that both researchers did to black speakers whose native variety is Limonese Creole. It was done in a friendly and relaxed environment while they were sharing with their families or making some errands. All the sentences provided on the leftmost column were said by the interviewees and recorded by the interviewers. Consequently, their reliability is completely assured. When we inquired about the Spanish words or phrases, they use substitute creole words such as:

Spanish word or phrases	English correspondence
I go to the “centro”.	I go downtown.
I’m going in the “taxi” (Spanish pronunciation).	I’m going in the taxi.
I need to carry my “mochila”.	I need to carry my backpack.
I want to eat a “casado/casao”.	I want to eat meat, rice and beans, salad and sweet plantain.

Let's eat "pinto".

"Yo" will visit my sister.

"Usted" like some juice.

My mother go to "San José" (Spanish pronunciation).

Don't forget to buy "tortillas" (Spanish pronunciation) and "natilla".

"Voy llegando", keep there.

They have "corrida de toros" in December.

You can come to the "carnaval"; it's funny.

The problem with "La municipalidad" is complicated.

Yes, I remember the "Mundial".

"Se llama" Black Star Line restaurant.

Yes, I am "bachiller".

My son is "becado".

He said he will start a "maestría".

No, I am "promedio".

I have a child about "diez" months.

We have a "comparsa" named "Excelentes".

You can have a "bistek".

I told my daughter: "Dígale hola a la muchacha".

I said "siempre" Brazil champion.

You can go "a" Black Star Line.

I have to go; I need to make "comida".

Take the "cubiertos".

Give the platos, vasos, tazas, please!

Bring me the palanganas.

Hey you! "Venga"

I need a "tortilla" (Spanish pronunciation)

Andrés "ya voy llegando," keep waiting for me.

Hey boy, bring the "bola".

Hey, give me a "burra."

Let's eat rice and beans with red pepper and cilantro.

I will visit my sister.

You like some juice.

My mother goes to downtown San José.

Don't forget to buy tortillas (English pronunciation) and sour cream.

I'm coming, stay there.

They have bullfights in December.

You can come to the carnaval; it's fun.

The problem with the city hall is complicated.

Yes, I remember the Soccer World Cup.

The name of the restaurant is Black Start Line.

Yes, I'm a high school graduate.

My son has a scholarship.

He said he would start a master's program.

No, I am average.

I have a child who is about ten months old.

We have a "street dancing group" named "Excelentes".

You can have a steak.

I told my daughter: "Say hello to the lady".

I always said it; Brazil would be the champion.

You can go to Black Star Line.

I have to go; I need to prepare some food.

Take the cutlery.

Give me the dishes, please!

Bring me the tubs.

Hey you! Come.

I need a tortilla.

Andrés, I'm almost there, keep waiting for me.

Hey boy, bring the ball.

Hey, give me some gallo pinto.

Certainly, these words or phrases are used in ordinary conversations as part of their variety, since they do not affect the meaning or connotation of the sentence, nor the speaker's intention and message. The relevance of the data

provided is that those are updated words that Limonese speakers are using nowadays. Some other linguists have done researches about Limonese Creole lately; however, these data was provided by speakers that mix up the two varieties in a natural way, giving as a result the insertion of certain Spanish words into Limonese Creole.

Another significant feature related to the research is the negative implications the replacement of English words has in Limonese Creole. Some of the informants consider that the English variety is suffering a code-mixing. It refers to “a situation in which a speaker uses a mixture of distinct language varieties as discourse proceeds. This occurs quite commonly in everyday speech with regards to levels of style when speakers mix formal and informal styles” (Akmajian et al. 305). This code-mixture is commonly used with friends or family members, or when they visit San José or any other province whose inhabitants speak Spanish. Some of the informants said that this mixture only involves words or phrases; they never replace complete sentences. Consequently, the English variety is not being affected negatively, nor is it losing relevance among native speakers. However, the usage of those Spanish phrases makes some informants believe that inserting Spanish words “confuses everything.” A female informant commented that it is important to teach children the difference between creole and Spanish, so they will not mix them as grownups do. Parents should push their children to be skillful in both varieties in any context or conversation. This informant also pointed out that children and teenagers speak Spanish with their friends. In fact, many of these young people do not want to speak creole. They feel ashamed of being heard by others whose English variety is following the acceptable standard phonological rules. Furthermore, they do not know how to express themselves in that variety. Unfortunately, this makes them not to perceive the variety as part of their linguistic identity. This rejection towards learning the variety has encouraged a perception amongst the majority of speakers: this replacement is becoming part of their variety and people should start seeing it as a natural process in the development of the creole.

The ongoing loss in the daily use of the English variety is mentioned by some informants. They insisted that many Limonese inhabitants do not speak creole fluently; that is why, the continuing and more frequent usage of Spanish words or phrases in the English variety is affecting it negatively since those speakers are using Spanish in their everyday conversations at home, with friends, and outside the province. Besides, others considered that many Limonese people do not have a formal education in English; this reduces their capacity to speak the language and handle a vast lexicon when they are speaking English. It is also mentioned that people in Limon only used to speak creole English in their conversations; however, it has been replaced by more Spanish words, phrases, and sentences. This perception by some of Limonese speakers is quite contradictory since Costa Rican government is promoting a program to make Costa Rican students to become bilingual. In the past, Limonese speakers were monolingual or bilingual and they spoke both languages. This progressive change was remarked by Portilla and Herzfeld who mentioned some reasons such as immigration to

the Central Valley, Spanish prestige, the short distance between Limón and San José and the topic the speaker is dealing with to replace English words by Spanish lexical items. However, some of the results the researchers found are updated and reflect Costa Rican reality nowadays. Limonese speakers are inserting more Spanish words because they are influenced by the media that is promoting the mixture of both languages, English and Spanish, amongst all Costa Rican speakers. This way, they visualize their variety as part of their parents' past and do not identify with creole and its learning. Another remarkable reason is that many young Limonese speakers prefer learning Standard American English than Limonese variety. This last variety is used worldwide and accepted as a norm to get a job or a scholarship, to communicate with foreigners and to travel abroad. The fact now is not the discrimination against the Limonese variety; the focal point is the practicability in learning a variety, Standard English, or both, English and Spanish, to be used in different contexts.

Finally, not all the informants saw this replacement of English words by Spanish ones as a simple and irrelevant phenomenon. Some of the informants visualized this constant usage of Spanish in the English variety as a way of losing their roots and identity. They believed that this phenomenon is making them forget their culture and not to be conscious about their ethnicity as a black community. Their English variety transmits and represents their real identity and this is the way children and youngsters learn about their origin and cultural background.

Conclusions

Keeping a language or variety free from any external interference is unrealistic and unlikely. The continuous interaction speakers have in their daily activities makes them insert or replace some foreign words in their variety. This is common and natural since a language is in constant flux and it evolves through time. English is not the exception to the rule; it has adopted some borrowings from French, Spanish, Latin, German and some other languages. That is why, it is common to hear a type of code-mixing in most speakers' everyday speech. However, when the usage of some foreign words is a frequent practice in a variety, and it is the result of some mechanisms that can affect the variety negatively, some conclusions should be mentioned.

First, some of the Limonese speakers see the replacement of English words by Spanish ones as a natural phenomenon that is not affecting their English variety. They use Spanish words in any conversation with their family members, friends, and acquaintances, when they forget a word or phrase and do not want to spend time remembering the corresponding creole English word. They see it as a matter of practicability in the language use since they are not replacing entire sentences, just a few words. This linguistic attitude encourages speakers to insert Spanish words in their speech unconsciously, not matter the moment or the listener. This is not particular of Limonese speakers since Costa Rican

Spanish speakers use code-mixing when they go to restaurants, chat with their friends and use secret codes. Second, some of the informants remarked that the usage of Spanish lexicon is visualized as a tool when they need to use the word immediately. This is certainly negative since this linguistic attitude makes people forget a particular creole word that is part of their lexicon and semantics. Limonese lexicon carries idiosyncratic traces that reveal particularities such as food, culture, names, greetings and nicknames of the variety. It involves a particular connotation that is not implied in Standard English. Speakers identify the lexical item with a particular tradition of family trace. Definitely, Limonese speakers must try to preserve it as a legacy of their culture and roots and avoid overusing foreign words when they have their own lexical items.

Third, to visit a place where the variety is different from the one the visitor uses does not restrain a speaker to use his native variety. This certainly happens to Limonese speakers when they move to another province in Costa Rica, especially San José. They tend to switch to Spanish to accommodate to the listener and to communicate with the group. On the contrary, they should show others that their creole variety carries distinctive phonological traces that make it unique and they are proud of it. Linguistic accommodation is common among speakers who want to handle the same code to communicate. This accommodation can force people to modify his native variety, way of expressing ideas and perception of his language or dialect. However, when it forces people to avoid or forget their own variety, the accommodation has negative implications.

Fourth, to change from a bilingual society to a monolingual one is a phenomenon that has affected many societies around the world. To illustrate this, Limonese people are a clear example of this radical change. One of the interviewees mentioned that “Limonese speakers tended to speak Limonese Creole at home, British English at the mass, and Spanish outside Limón or when they had to interact with Spanish speakers as part of their diglossia.” However, nowadays many speakers, especially teenagers, young adults and children, understand Limonese creole, but are incapable to speak it. They are not aware of the negative implications this linguistic attitudes bring to their life. They can diminish the possibilities to get a job or a scholarship to study abroad since English is the language that most employers or universities require to their candidates. Others tend to learn Spanish in primary school as their native variety rather than Limonese Creole. Some of them do not even speak Limonese Creole or British English as their parents used to. They prefer to learn American Standard English in institutes or high schools. Unfortunately, elders who attended traditional English schools when they were children, are the only ones that keep speaking Limonese Creole at home, with their friends or outsiders who are interested on the variety. They avoid inserting any Spanish lexical item since they do not feel identified with the Spanish variety the way they do it with their native one.

Finally, the replacement of native language lexical items in Limonese Creole should be seen as a relevant phenomenon that is affecting some other varieties around the world. Limonese speakers of this particular variety need to be committed to preserve their lexicon as part of their linguistic traces and cultural

roots. Any time they substitute an English word for a Spanish one, their variety is affected since they are losing identity and idiosyncratic characteristics. Their lexicon is quite related to their culture, view of life and social traces that should be preserved. If these aspects are ignored by the speakers because of their lack of usage of the language, the variety itself will gradually disappear. The only way to preserve a variety is to keep its lexicon alive as a proof of the cultural and linguistic traces that represent a group.

Glossary of some linguistic terminology

Creole: When a Pidgin develops beyond its role as a trade language and becomes the first language of a social community, it is described as a creole, a pidgin language which has become the native language of a group of speakers, being used for all or many of their daily communicative needs. Usually, the sentence structures and vocabulary range of a creole are far more complex than those of a pidgin language. Creoles are usually classified according to the language from which most of their vocabulary comes, e.g. English-based, French-based, Portuguese-based, and Swahili-based creoles. Examples of English-based creoles are Jamaican Creole, Hawaiian Creole and Krio in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

Code-mixing: A mixing of two codes (see code1) or languages, usually without a change of topic. This is quite common in bilingual or multilingual communities and is often a mark of solidarity, e.g. between bilingual friends or colleagues in an informal situation. Code-mixing can involve various levels of language, e.g. phonology, morphology, grammatical structures or lexical items. Bilingual or multilingual speakers, for example, may think that one of their languages, e.g. English, has more appropriate lexical items for something they want to express in a particular situation and they incorporate these into the grammatical structure of the other language.

Code-switching: A change by a speaker (or writer) from one language or language variety to another one. Code-switching can take place in a conversation when one speaker uses one language and the other speaker answers in a different language. A person may start speaking one language and then change to another one in the middle of their speech, or sometimes even in the middle of a sentence.

Dialect: A process through which dialect differences become reduced, for example when people speaking different dialects move to a new area and the variety spoken in that place after a time becomes a more common variety with fewer features associated with the specific dialects of those who migrated there. Dialect levelling has been a major process in the formation of both American and other varieties of English such as New Zealand English.

Diglossia: This term is used to describe a situation in which two very different varieties of language co-exist in a speech community, each with a distinct range of social functions. Also, it is the widespread existence within a society of sharply divergent formal and informal varieties of a language each

used in different social contexts or for performing different functions, as the existence of Katharevusa and Demotic in modern Greece.

Idiosyncratic trace: It is an unusual feature of a person that makes it particular. A characteristic, habit, mannerism, or the like, that is peculiar to an individual.

Lexicon: A lexicon is the knowledge that a native speaker has about a language. This includes information about the form and meanings of words and phrases, lexical categorization, the appropriate usage of words and phrases, relationships between words and phrases, and categories of words and phrases.

Linguistic accommodation: The process by which participants in a conversation adjust their accent, diction, or other aspects of language according to the speech style of the other participant.

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Annex

Questionnaire No.1 (Informants)

Informant's name: _____

Age: _____

Geographical area: _____

The following instrument will be used to collect information about Costa Rican Spanish words Limonese speakers use to replace Limonese Creole in their everyday conversations with family members and friends. Also, some possible reasons to explain this replacement will be given. The collected information will provide enough findings to support the idea that this phenomenon is bringing a negative connotation to the creole variety.

I. Cultural traces

- What does Limonese creole dialect represent to you?
-

- Has the variety changed recently? Why?
-

- Are Limonese Creole speakers replacing creole words by using Spanish ones? Why?
-

II. Spanish Phrases

- Which are the Spanish phrases you use the most to substitute creole words?
-

- Do those words keep the same meaning creole words have?
-

- Are those Spanish words following Spanish grammatical rules when they are marked for number or tense?
-

III. Negative implications

- How is the insertion of Spanish lexicon affecting Limonese Creole variety?
-

- Are Limonese Creole speakers losing their dialect and linguistic identity?
-

- Is this phenomenon reflecting speakers' rejection towards the variety?
-

¡Thanks for your priceless help to this project!

