CONSCIOUS CHOICE AND CONSTRUCTED IDENTITIES: A STUDY OF WRITTEN CODESWITCHING BETWEEN CRUCIAN AND STANDARD ENGLISH IN ST. CROIX

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1 Abstract

This paper addresses codeswitching in the often neglected genre of non-fiction through an analysis of text in the public domain. The corpus encompasses writing for social purposes, information, entertainment, communication and self-expression in a wide spectrum of media including: graffiti, public signs and notices, online discussion, newspapers and published non-fiction. The data was gathered during intensive fieldwork in St. Croix, May 2010, through archive research as well as reading in public spaces. This paper will evaluate the extent to which codeswitching is present in each format and address how situational factors and subject matter influence language choice.

Analysis shows that because Crucian (the English lexifier Creole spoken in St. Croix) has rarely been written and a standardized orthography has never been devised, Virgin Islands or United States Standard English is the unmarked choice in informational "high status" text. Material written to entertain however uses codeswitching between Standard English and Crucian as a narrative or comic device and is characteristically linked to content. Code choice in online social networking varies as a conscious effort to express identity and establish group affiliation. This construction of identity is also reflected in street level, traditionally "low status" texts which use Crucian as the unmarked choice to reclaim public space. This paper seeks to demonstrate that the unique political and linguistic history of St. Croix affects language choice in the public domain and reflects a tradition of control and rebellion in which people use language as an identity marker and a form of linguistic resistance.

2 Theoretical Framework

Myers-Scotton defines codeswitching as the use of more than one language, dialect, or style of the same language in the course of a single communicative episode. This

description is elaborated within the framework of the markedness model which explains how established expectations in a community, defined as a set of rights and obligations, determine code choice to some extent in any given communicative exchange. Myers-Scotton stresses that codeswitching is a type of skilled performance in which the speaker negotiates multiple identities based on a sense of markedness regarding available linguistic codes for any interaction (Myers-Scotton, 1993). This theory proposes that all speakers have an internalized set of parameters enabling them to recognize the extent to which all language choices are more or less 'marked' in a specific situation. Although Myers-Scotton's model is developed specifically with oral discourse in mind, this paper will examine how contributors to written text in the public domain also use an internalized set of parameters to negotiate identity and meaning through levels of markedness in code choice. This paper also adheres to the notion that codeswitching is not a linguistic inadequacy but a conscious choice which necessitates proficiency and metalinguistic awareness.

Diglossia, as defined by Ferguson (1959), classifies communicative interaction in communities that make complementary use of two distinct formal and informal codes. These diglossic exchanges exist within a context of language conflict whereby one 'high' code is used in situations of high status and the other 'low' code is preferred in more informal circumstances. Although I acknowledge the increasing availability of Spanish to the plurilingual speakers of St. Croix, this paper will focus primarily on the use and differing registers of a Virgin Island Standard English and Crucian (an English lexifier Creole) as they exist in diglossic conflict in the corpus of written non-fiction. This sociolinguistic context of communication in St. Croix is comparable to recent studies in Jamaican Creole and Jamaican Standard English (Hinrichs, 2006) in which Creoles are characterized as functioning alternately with another (generally European) language according to certain status expectations of the communicative episode.

3 Review of the literature

For sheer human interest and drama, the linguistic focus on Caribbean Creole has taken second place to an interest in political history. Linguistic development has likewise been explored through the genesis of national identity, inextricably bound with slavery and following the African Diaspora to the Americas, specifically in the 'deep' creoles of Jamaica in the Caribbean (Beverley, 2004), and Suriname in South America (Huttar et al., 2007). Creolists have often focused on fictional stories by 'folk speakers' to capture a sense of the traditional language as spoken by people living in rural areas. I believe however that there is significant need to concentrate on data that is more reflective of communication in the contemporary public domain. Thus, the

corpus of this study adds to the comparatively small body of research on codeswitching in non-fiction writing and computer mediated communication.

Oral codeswitching in an educational context, encompassing both peer discourse and instructional language, has been the focus of considerable attention in recent years (Moodley, 2007; Wei & Martin, 2009). Although there is currently little research on *written* codeswitching, investigators such as Losey (2009) and Rosowski (2010) are prioritizing the analysis of text based code choice in bilingual education. These studies offer sociolinguistic insights such as how oral codeswitching is regarded as acceptable bilingual talk in the community, yet language variation in the classroom is often deemed inappropriate or unacceptable, and as a deficit or dysfunctional mode of interaction (Wei & Martin, 2009). A brief reference to the ever-increasing literature on classroom codeswitching provides clear evidence of the tensions that exist in an educational context, reflective of language attitudes at a wider community level - based on the premise that school conditioning prompts many of our internalized judgments relating to preferred language choice and thus directly informs Myers-Scotton's parameters of rights and obligation.

Although there are a limited number of studies based on code choice in computer mediated communication, Van Gass (2008) explores the characteristics of Afrikaans-English code switching via internet relay chat that makes creative use of spelling, punctuation and capitalization to simulate the prosodic features of speech as a conscious effort to encode feelings in written text. She also concludes that English is the unmarked choice with variation generally correlating with different functions or topics, functioning as a discourse strategy and contextualization cue. Hinrichs (2006) stresses the importance of personal involvement over that of topic as a trigger for online codeswitching and specifically details contextual cues and discourse markers such as voicing, paraphrase, greetings and religious content that motivates deviation from an unmarked English code. The suggestion of linguistic 'triggers' is further investigated in oral codeswitching between Dutch and English in Broersma (2009) who concludes that variation occurs more frequently next to cognates and proper nouns, and that the extent of codeswitching depends on the frequency of these trigger words in any one communicative episode.

The corpus of this study is wide ranging and includes online chat which appropriates spontaneous discourse, narrative non-fiction, informational text and writing for expressive purposes in a variety of media. I have therefore made reference to a range of studies, in both the fields of written and spoken discourse including code variation and switching. The aim of this paper is to contribute to the often neglected genre of nonfiction using comparative analysis with a specific focus on constructed identities

within Myers-Scotton's markedness model which accounts for this contrastive behavior through consideration of convergence and divergence strategies aimed at constructing positive social identities. In doing so, I refer to the work of Hobbs (2004) and Callahan (2004) in applying oral language frame models to written language.

HISTORY OF ST. CROIX

4 Political history

An analysis of code choice that refers to construction of identity and linguistic resistance in St. Croix would be incomplete without proper acknowledgement of the island's unique history fraught with political rivalry and conflict between indigenous inhabitants, European powers and slaves brought from Africa. The first known Indian inhabitants of the island were fiercely suppressed and largely eliminated by Spanish royal decree after Columbus' first visit in 1493 to the island he named 'Santa Cruz'. Interested predominantly in gold to send back to the homeland, the reports that spread on the sea trading routes of a rich land attracted the Spanish, yet due to conflicts with Indians, bad weather, minimal findings and the presence of the preferred sea port of San Juan, Puerto Rico – interest rapidly decreased, and by 1596 the Virgin Islands were largely uninhabited.

Despite Spanish sovereignty, the Dutch and English settled almost simultaneously on opposing sides of the island in the early 1600s – a situation that inevitably caused conflict between the two European powers vying to control the newly established trade outpost. During this time the lands were surveyed and distributed into plantations and rural populations vastly outnumbered urban settlers. The Spanish, uncomfortable with Dutch and English colonies on their territory, attacked them and again left the island sparsely inhabited until the French captured St. Croix in 1651, to rule during a brief period of disease and ill fortune. The island was then largely forgotten until St. Croix was bought as a private estate by the Governor of St. Kitts and deeded to the Knights of Malta for a short disorganized period until they sold the territory in 1665 to the French West Indian Company. The plantation system thrived for a short time thereafter producing tobacco, cotton, sugar cane and indigo, but drought and sickness ended this brief period of relative prosperity. The French had abandoned the island for nearly 40 years before they sold St. Croix to Denmark in 1733, after which time the plantation system was resurrected with slave labor and the sugar industry flourished.

The Danish were extremely strict with slaves and prospered immensely from their labor, but they also had trade links with the British colonies and found it difficult to maintain slavery after the British outlawed it in 1833. The Danish published a royal

decree in 1847 that promised emancipation, but not for another 12 years. A rebellion followed in which European descended landowners fled to ships in the harbor and the slaves besieged the fort in Frederiksted threatening to burn the town, resulting in an immediate emancipation decree in 1848. Economic hardship led to government imposed compulsory labor laws however and meant that the newly freed workers were still subjugated to long hours and little pay which prompted a second revolt - the Fireburn of 1878 that destroyed much of Frederiksted and many plantations around the island. The Danish government increasingly saw the colony as an economic liability and entered into negotiations to sell the island to the United States in 1865 but the deal was not finalized until 1917 under the threat of German encroachment into the Caribbean. United States citizenship was granted in 1927 and St. Croix now has democratic control over local government appointments and taxes. Since 1954 there have been five attempts to gain increased control but each time a popular referendum has rejected the changes in favor of retaining the current status.

5 Language history

Throughout its turbulent history, speakers of Arawakan languages, Spanish, Dutch, English, French, Danish and numerous African languages have inhabited the island of St. Croix. The question arises therefore as to how English came to be the dominant language, and why the vernacular language spoken in St. Croix is an English-lexifier Creole as opposed to any of the other languages in the island's history. The neighboring and Spanish speaking US territory of Puerto Rico demonstrates that despite rigorous efforts to impose English on island residents under US administration, the current status of an island as a US territory does not necessarily dictate contemporary language use. Although the purpose of this paper is not to offer an investigation into the emergence of a Crucian Creole, an overview can be gleaned from a cursory examination of administrative policy over the course of the island's history.

Before Danish rule in 1733, periods of colonization were characterized by subsequent abandonment during which time no resident population maintained a common language. After the Danish allowed immigrants from other nationalities to move into their colonies, English soon became the lingua franca between the settler populations, and consequently the language of daily conversation and trade. Under the Danish, elementary education became obligatory in 1839, and was provided free for both slave and free residents of the Island with English as the dominant language of public schools after 1850. This did not affect most wealthy Danish-speaking families however as they maintained a strict culture of separation from laborers and slave populations, sending their children to small private schools or employing personal tutors. When the US gained control of the territory in 1917 English was also imposed

as the language of law and national commerce. The Organic Act of 1936 allowed all adult residents to vote if they were citizens of the US and could read in English, further establishing the links between the English language and power on the island. Thus today St. Croix has a plurilingual population who predominantly use United States or Virgin Islands Standard English for high status educational or international communications, and an English lexifier Creole established during the time of the Danish administration as the language of daily contact.

Di Pietro notes that "the identity of Cruzian English is difficult to establish" yet asserts that the base dialect definable as Creole can be placed in opposition to a standard or "high" variety – essentially allowing variation between two linguistic extremes on what might approximate a Creole Continuum following DeCamp's 1971 model. For the purposes of this paper, I will refer to Crucian as an English lexifier *Creole*, yet it is also important to recognize that there are many people (including Crucian speakers) who perceive 'Crucian' not as a separate linguistic code, but a low status variation of Standard English that makes liberal use of urbanized vernacular. Others see Crucian as a *patois* derived from pidgin varieties of English, Portuguese and French spread among West African slaves from the late seventeenth century onward. These perspectives are within the scope of this study as they affect an individual's cultural values and therefore influence the parameters of the rights and obligations set as defined by Myers-Scotton (1993).

6 Methodology

This paper examines data collected in the public domain during intensive short term fieldwork in St. Croix in May 2010 and via non fiction library and online archives. Signs, notices and graffiti mostly in the urban areas of Christiansted and Frederiksted were observed, photographed and recorded throughout this period. Data was gathered from currently circulating and archived newspapers, including: *The Virgin Islands Daily News* and *The St. Croix Avis*, covering the period from April 2010 to May 2010. Although currently out of print, editions of *The Island Melee*, were reviewed in archive collections as they contribute significant data on language use in the high status genre of satirical news publication. Data posted online throughout May 2010 was used in the corpus, specifically from the social networking site *Facebook*, the political forum site *Crucians in Focus* and current affairs domain *De Man Say*. All material obtained online maintains the spelling, symbols and orthographic features of the original contributor and wherever it affects code choice, context is given as to the thread of the conversation or the article published. The lack of a standardized orthography reflects the nature of a people who are extremely creative with language, and for the purposes of this study, I will use the spelling *Crucian* although I

acknowledge that the terms *Cruzian* and *Cruxian* have been used in both academic and social spheres.

The data used in this study encompasses writing for social purposes, for information, entertainment, communication and self-expression in a wide spectrum of registers and mediums. The purpose of this distribution was to permit the examination and comparison of language variation across both medium and content. Excluding *The Island Melee*, all publications, graffiti, signs and online posts were published or observed during May 2010, and subsequently compared with archives of online posts and publications to ensure that the materials selected included characteristic features that are representative of the general nature of language use. For the purposes of this study, I will refer to authors of all text types as *contributors*, recognizing the unique nature of each written text as a contribution to an ongoing public discourse.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

7 Code choice and situational features

Lito Valls (1981) introduces his dictionary of Virgin Islands English Creole with a paraphrase of Emerson's sentiment "speak with the vulgar, think with the wise" to explain how he considers English the language of our head and Creole the language of our heart. His introductory note exposes a prejudice that permeates all forms of writing concerned in this study, namely that the language of thought and intelligence is English and in contrast Creole reflects emotive (and therefore vulgar) sentiments. This was apparent in the data collected from two high status sources *The Virgin Islands Daily News* and *The St. Croix Avis* which both used predominantly United States Standard English (USSE), and reflected local issues with emotive headlines in a more informal register or with the use of a more localized Virgin Islands Standard English (VISE) rather than Crucian. Consider for example, the May 24th issue of *The Virgin Islands Daily News* which ran formal headlines such as *Board requires emergency plan for each school* and *Diageo's construction of rum distillery ahead of schedule* using formal USSE to report articles of educational and commercial interest; both typically high status fields. A comparative USSE informal register was used in headlines for more emotive reports of a local fundraiser: *With woofs and wags, dogs aid Animal Care Center* and street violence *Guns claim kids' lives in both urban, rural areas.* The nominal alliterative use of *woofs and wags* reflects the playful nature of the content, and the emotive reference to *kids' lives* reflects the passionate response of the protective adult community. Minimal use of VISE as seen in the headline *South Africa cruises past Windies in 1st One Day International* seeks to unite communities through a shared identity, and in this particular instance appealing to West Indies supporters by invoking the nickname *Windies*.

The St. Croix Avis also used USSE in the majority of headlines in the two-month corpus, yet the register was notably more informal and there were significantly more examples of VISE. The island-specific nature of *The St. Croix Avis* in comparison to *The Virgin Islands Daily News* may explain the trend towards a more localized code, and in contrast to *The Daily News'* 'Pulitzer prize-winning' proclamation on its title page, *The St. Croix Avis* declares that the paper has been '*Locally owned since 1844'* (albeit opposite a flag of the United States of America). This local pride is evident in the headline of the May 23-24th Issue; *True island grit – Special Olympians compete on STX,* which includes an informal reference to *island grit* alongside the acronym *STX* (St. Croix) to elicit emotive support for local athletes. An article celebrating the founding of Christiansted: *Birthday party – Christiansted abuzz with 275th anniversary events* also uses an informal register with the synonym *birthday* favored over *anniversary* and invoking the VISE descriptive term *abuzz.* In contrast, *The St. Croix Avis* used USSE formal register with the headlines *Protesters decry Paul's comments on civil rights* referring to a protest march in Kentucky and *Nations declare support to Somalia* reporting on a UN sponsored conference in Istanbul; the international nature of both articles perhaps motivating a more formal USSE code choice.

94   Archival research confirmed the predominant use of USSE in both *The Virgin Islands Daily News* and *The St. Croix Avis,* reflecting Valls' sentiment that one must "think with the wise". The executive editor of *The Daily News* reinforced the reason behind the code selection by affirming, "we are a US territory" - a statement which speaks to the political affiliations between high status reporting and the language of power. The editor indicated that there is no official language policy, intimating that the status of the island automatically deems English the matrix language as defined by Myers-Scotton (1993) and therefore the preferred choice in high status journalism. The managing editor of *The St. Croix Avis* reflected this perspective citing the US based Associated Press guidelines yet also recognizing that headlines "will slip into Crucian from time to time" to reflect the language patterns of the readership. One example of such a "slip" can be seen in the headline *Beach Fyah 8* announcing a cultural festival in St. Thomas; the orthography of the word *fyah* (fire) directly referring to the *Fyahburn* (Fireburn) rebellion of 1878 in the marked language of the people and thus aiming to engender solidarity, pride and an increased attendance at the event. The only evidence of Crucian in the corpus of *The Virgin Islands Daily News* issues was one front-page headline announcing a *Quelbe Tramp* to announce a music carnival in St. Thomas; again using the marked choice *quelbe* (the official music of the U.S. Virgin islands) to motivate unity and pride.

Myers-Scotton explains how an unmarked linguistic choice is expected as the medium for any exchange, given the norms of the society regarding the salience of specific situational factors (Myers-Scotton, 1993). The situational factors in the analysis of these two newspapers are political status, target audience, informational purpose and print media which combine to select United States Standard English as the matrix or unmarked language with the marked or embedded language as Virgin Islands Standard English or Crucian. In traditionally high status fields "the unmarked choice is 'safer' - i.e. 'it conveys no surprises' because it indexes an expected interpersonal relationship" (Myers-Scotton, 1993) whereas marked codes are used intentionally for articles of local interest or which elicit a high level of emotional response seeking to create unity. This relationship between expected code (USSE) and marked code (Crucian) is emphasized on display cards in the Frederiksted Fort, used in an exhibition of colonial furniture:

Gentleman's Liquor Box, Ca 1830
"drunk'n man talk wah he t'ink when he sober"

The unmarked USSE code represents a high status informational field, including date and academic abbreviation (ca – circa) and is listed first, followed by Crucian text that voices a popular sentiment, providing the emotive response and thus marked both linguistically by code choice and physically with the use of bold typeface and quotation marks. One might assume that the international demographic and informational context in the museum would predetermine the marked and unmarked code choice, yet these same features were evident in graffiti:

LEXXUS THEE "FREESTYLA" -n- RAPPER

This example of expressive vandalism, found in the Christiansted public library, cannot be said to appeal to an international audience nor claim high informational status, yet the contributor physically marks a code switch with the word "freestyla" in quotation marks. The unconventional spelling also denotes a difference from the subsequent word *rapper*, which is unmarked and written with standard orthography. It appears therefore that despite the low status situational factors relating to this banned form of self-expression, Standard English is still used as an unmarked choice and Crucian represents the marked code. This suggests that situational features alone do not determine code selection but that the written format of any text may predetermine Standard English as the unmarked code in all registers and formats.

8 Code choice as skilled performance

Conscious use of a marked code was evident in all written mediums and highlights choices that Myers-Scotton suggests "emphasize the speaker as a creative actor" (1993). Orthography, punctuation and typeface selection, as seen in the examples previously discussed, can indicate the self-awareness of marked code choice in the written medium to engender emotional response; yet seemingly subconscious context-driven code selection that imitates oral discourse is also a significant factor in published media. Richard A. Schrader Sr. is a self-proclaimed island born author, historian and *griot* whose use of codeswitching in accounts of oral history are well established and exemplify the use of marked choice as an element of skilled performance. Schrader presents his oral histories as "stories" and the collections arguably span the divide between narrative fiction and historical non-fiction, yet their relevance to this corpus of codeswitching in written media is indicative of wider trends in non-fiction and therefore deemed valuable for the purposes of this study. Both collections considered in this study: *Maufe Quelbe and t'ing* (1994) and *Under de Taman Tree* (1996) make liberal use of codeswitching that the author consciously reproduces to authenticate his narrative of the islander "in his own words" (Schrader, 1996).

Each of Schrader's personal accounts is prefaced by a narrative introduction to the context and background of the speaker in a style that reflects the orality of the tale:

> *And what does the old 'West Ender' talk about? Three guesses…you said sports? Politics? Religion? Well not quite…* (Schrader, 1996)

Thus when written codeswitching follows, it is perceived as the authentic speech of the contributor rather that a skilled reproduction on the part of the legitimate author. The majority of the oral histories in each collection use VISE as the matrix language and frequent codeswitching to a marked Crucian in situations of vocal characterization:

> *I took a horse with a big swollen foot and in no time got him in shape and won the race, deh bawl "Oh God! Nookie ah wuk obeah 'pon a hwe" But it was science*
> [Nookie has worked witchcraft upon us]   (Schrader, 1996)

Lars Hinrichs' study of codeswitching between Jamaican Creole and Standard English identifies how Creole can be triggered by representations of voice and character in narratives; specifically to represent stock characters such as the *negative local, robust woman, country bumpkin* and *rude bway* (Hinrichs, 2006). Codeswitching in

Schrader's narrative reconstructions follows this paradigm, see above (country bumpkin) and below (robust woman):

There is silence. Then she speaks: "Ah bet yoh 'tis da chigger foot, yalla

> [I bet you it's that flea-bitten cowardly]

mouth 'Philbert' who gone wid me good fowl… me best laying hen… He toh damn tief…
[Philbert who stole my good chicken … my best laying hen…he's such a thief]

> (Schrader, 1994)

The conscious use of Crucian as a marked code to represent characters extends even to animal voicing in the narrative:

He tugged…But the donkey said "no way, Jose, ah ain goin nowhe today."
> [I'm not going anywhere today] (Schrader, 1994)

Although Schrader's interviewed subjects may have used Crucian as an unmarked choice in their oral discourse, the framework of VISE as the unmarked choice in the printed collection is in part explained by the medium and anticipated problems authors face when they attempt to publish bilingual text. These might include reduced readership and stigmatization by English Speaking markets and even by purist speakers of the marked language (Callahan, 2004). It is also very possible that Schrader's subjects were self-aware of their language choice and used linguistic variation as a narrative device in the re-telling of their own stories. Their language attitudes and awareness are made clear through the contributor's own use of metalanguage. One of Schrader's "speakers" remembers a time when she sang offensive rhymes to the nuns in school, using language variation as a defensive strategy:

with all that strictness, we sometimes manage to fire a few licks at the nuns. And they couldn't fire back, because they didn't know what we were saying…
"Mudda, ah da ah bou   [Mother…(nonsense rhyme)]
Ah gan santapee foh bite you   [I have a centipede to bite you]
Mudda, ah who ah sew foh you?   [Mother, who sewed that for you?]
Tipet in meh leba hole, doan bother meh [I'm not up to it today, don't bother me]
Ah da for lick you"   [struggle with that] (Schrader, 1996)

In a 2004 study of written codeswitching between Spanish and English, Callahan concluded that there is some parity between oral and written codeswitching in regard to discourse function. These findings are corroborated by a 2009 investigation into written codeswitching in the classroom suggesting that there are many similarities between the functions of informal written and oral codeswitching (Losey, 2009). The oral histories presented by Schrader adhere to these findings, with contributors commonly codeswitching to a marked local language for vocative discourse marking. The narratives are also contextualized by self-referential language in which the author foregrounds the orality and immediacy of his "speakers". This is achieved by constructing code variation which emulates oral discourse, the purposes of which refer back to Callahan's findings that the referential function accounts for 60% of the corpus; with the next largest category being vocatives, followed by formulaic expressions, such as set phrases, tags, and exclamations. Callahan's studies into fiction also identify three conditions for the authentic use of two languages: that the writer must 1) select a setting in which an embedded language is naturally used, 2) choose characters who are fluent in both languages, and 3) develop thematic content with which communities can identify (Callahan, 2004). Schrader's oral histories conform to these parameters: his setting *Under de Taman Tree* is the traditional place of storytelling, his bilingual characters – the "village elders" recount tales of daily life, thus presenting a thematic content with which island communities can identify. The marked code is thus entirely justified and yet also somewhat negated by the unmarked Standard English favored for purposes of intelligibly and access by a target audience that is larger than the communities represented.

The Island Melee, [gossip] distributed in St. Croix but now discontinued, uses this same orality of discourse in a satirical newssheet style that parodies standardized journalism with liberal codeswitching, black comedy, surreal humor and ridiculous storylines. It distorts traditional newspaper format, with mockeries of articles, letters pages, classifieds and interviews under the editorial pseudonyms Nom D. Plume and Shirley U. Jest who offer the disclaimer:

> *The contents of this publication not including the advertisement and the meet market is intended for entertainment only. Specifically, tis a joke Mon, a joke!*

The register and use of language exemplified here is indicative of the publication as a whole; using a formal VISE matrix language within which frequent puns, vernacular expressions and direct audience address motivate codeswitching to Crucian. The majority of headlines consciously use formal VISE as a satirical tool to send up the

ridiculous content, for example: *Cupid detained by immigration officials, and motorist uses turn signal -confusion breaks out; traffic stalls.* Frequently the headline photograph undermines the formality of language: *VITran announces new faster service* (photograph of a donkey wearing the company logo) and *New hi-tech traffic signals come to St. Croix* (photograph of a drawing of a cow and the handwritten words *Slo Mon Crosin*). The use of language in *The Island Melee* plays on Myers-Scotton's rules of rights and obligations in force between the speaker and addressee, creating a false sense of context by using the high status language of informational exchange undercut by informality and codeswitching to lampoon current island affairs. Despite the paper's entertainment purposes and its own claim to publish *None of the truth none of the time* this employment of perceived linguistic deception was not positively received by one reader who sent a letter to the editor decrying the paper for being *below any kind of journalism in the very lowest form.*

It is interesting to note how readers' contributions function within the exaggerated construct of linguistic rights and obligation in the context of the satirical publication's write-in island gripe column. The title of the column - *T'ings That Does Burn Meh Ass!* encourages some readers to write in Crucian as an unmarked choice:

> *Da buns does get frosted wen we has to still see dem faces of politicians on dem phone poles an such*
> [I get angry when we have to see politician's faces on phone poles and such]

and:

> *What is wrong with dem folks at Human Services? I live in Peter's Rest but ain't getting' no rest….one of dem employees is trippin'.*
> [what is wrong with those people at Human Services? I live in Peter's Rest but I don't get any rest… one of those employees is mistaken]

Yet the majority of contributors choose to redefine the matrix language as informal VISE, thus marking Crucian as an embedded code:

> *Dear Melee, The thing that does really "bun meh ass" is some of all of them "government" employees who ready to retire because they working five years longer than me, and every single time I ask them something to help me do me government work they does say, "Me'en no." if they working everyday for donkey years, what dey doing? They retiring to "me'en home"?*

The formal opening and reiteration of the column title in quotation marks clearly establishes Crucian as the marked code, yet subsequently integrates a greater degree of Crucian syntax and orthography as the diatribe continues to reflect the passionate nature of the complaint. Other contributors similarly redefine the matrix language by re-wording the Crucian column title within the context of an informal VISE code:

> it really <u>burns my bottom</u> to see how tourists are mistreated, it <u>burns my buns</u> to wrestle with those rows of shopping carts and <u>it really burns my ass</u> to be told that the government is broke.

This redefinition of the matrix language is perhaps due to the lack of a standardized orthography for Crucian that places a higher cognitive demand on the contributor inappropriate to a "gripe column" and also renders the end product overly constructed and hence lacking authenticity. Such variation may also reflect individual interpretation of the rights and obligations set in which speakers do not make identical choices in their own codeswitching practices because they have differing views regarding the relative costs and rewards of one choice over another. (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

The only article in *The Island Melee* that is consistently written with an unmarked Crucian code is the serialized opinion column on the broadcast drama *All Meh Chil'ren Dem* [the television series All My Children], which offers a comic take on the weekly events of the show:

> *Fust, Janet wid she bruk foot self gettin' help from some mon wha had been in de bush*
> [First, Janet with the broken foot, got help from a man who had been in the wilderness]

The low status of the televised daytime drama (as defined in Furguson's Diglossia, 1959) and of the projected character of the "village gossip" who discusses it dictate the code choice as an element of skilled performance by the same authors who present the formal standardized headline articles. The supposed author of the piece, written under another pseudonym "Tis Yoh Business" also notably contributes a headline article in the March 7 edition (1996) concerning the perceived antics of government representatives, entitled *Oh Laaawd, tis All Meh Senators Dem*. The self-referential intertextuality is foregrounded in the title and the first paragraph:

> *Oh Laaaawd. Now Ah noh all yoh custom to heah meh tahlk bout meh*

[Oh Lord! Now I know you are all accustomed to hear me talk about my]

chil'ren dem buh Ah got toh tell all yoh bout all de melee wha had go on
[children but I've got to tell you all about the gossip that has happened]

wit de senytahs dem. Mehson, dem deh ga mo' action den wha de ga pon TV.
[with the senators. Oh man, they have got more action that there is on TV]

The renegotiation of matrix language is clearly contextualized by the 'village gossip' speaker and the framework of the daytime serialized drama analogy – thus inversing the high status language expectations of the satirical headline story. This conscious metalinguistic interplay eloquently reinforces Myers-Scotton's representation of "the speaker as a creative actor" (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

9 Codeswitching to construct identity

Based on analysis of shop signs and public notices predominantly in Christiansted and Frederiksted, I propose that codeswitching is used as a conscious tool to define and negotiate identity in a public domain whose multinational history and current political status exist in the context of continuous and ongoing linguistic conflict. If, as Valls suggests, a diglossic situation exists in which Standard English is the language of the intellect and Creole is the language of the heart, then texts at community and street-level fittingly reflect their emotive low status. Signs for a garage *de pit stop*, club *de playground* and café *me dundos place* all arguably contextualize their language in a Crucian matrix through the initial words and then alter to VISE – perhaps in order to establish local ownership but not to exclude potential customers. This spirited negotiation of linguistic loyalty reflects patterns that also emerged in studies within the South African urban context where codeswitching was often used to accommodate rather than to alienate. "Meeting the addressee halfway with language encompasses an awareness of your own linguistic identity but at the same time offering other languages to indicate a spirit of willingness to accommodate and to respect." (Finlayson & Slabbert, 1997).

Other examples suggest a more exclusive or aggressive appropriation of language in the public space, for example, a sign announcing a new business *soon come* to the community – using an entirely Crucian syntax to encourage local support. A government issued traffic sign from which the letter "t" was removed: *STOP except when turning lef* now adheres to Crucian phonotactics in which "words ending in consonant sounds, like 't' or 've' – the final consonant sound is often dropped" (Sterns, 2008). A public police announcement about drugs is appended with the direct

address *smokers this what you're smoking* and an announcement for a club event called *Beach Fyah* directly invokes rebellious sentiment related to the *Fyahbuun* [Fireburn] of 1878. St Croix's status as a territory of the US Virgin Islands directly impacts the use of codeswitching in a public domain that imposes USSE as the matrix language and therefore forces Crucian into a subordinate position as the marked choice. The re-appropriation of public signs and notices using Crucian as the unmarked choice is in some sense a *dis-identification* with what is expected (Myers-Scotton, 1993) thus – an ideal platform to negotiate national identity at community level which is non-confrontational and can provide safety through anonymity.

Computer mediated communication also provides a platform through which contributors engage in identity negotiation through language use. The social networking site *Facebook* contains various threads of conversation which feature prominent codeswitching between Standard English and Crucian, frequently concerning island food, drink and daily life. A common factor in these online discussion was the nature of participating 'speakers' who were often native to the island yet currently living on the US mainland, as one contributor asserts in referring to St. Croix *it was deh I Bawn.* Two speakers express similar homesick sentiments in a conversational thread referring to St. Croix photography: *doesnt it just make u want to go home, its pity I live in boston*, and *man, yuh makin' me wanting to pay a visit NOW mi son! Pity I live in NYC.* It is perhaps interesting to note that despite the Crucian pride that the latter contributor expresses through her/his comments and linguistic variation, s/he still only wishes to *'pay a visit'* – thus perhaps revealing subconscious loyalty to the United States.

Similar to Hinrichs' 2006 conclusions relating to computer mediated codeswitching between Standard English and Jamaican Creole, this study shows that online 'chat' is significantly different from oral discourse in that it provides a forum for individuals to express linguistic affiliation with a home language on an international platform. Among the factors that motivate chat of this nature is a need to establish identity in a 'minority' oral language that has been adapted to new media and the written code in order to dispel feelings of isolation. In this context "variety is used intentionally, it is meant to emphasize the speaker's bilingual identity" (Mahootian, 2005).

Attitudes towards "expat outcast communities" are highlighted in the study entitled *Multilingualism in St. Croix*; where Di Pietro (1968) observes that: "it was felt that outsiders and even natives who had been 'off-island' for some time could not or should not speak the proper island language". The ownership of language is perhaps more notable in examples of codeswitching in online social networking that includes residents of St. Croix. One conversational thread concerning current affairs and hosted

on a prominent Crucian leader's *Facebook* page involved four participants. One contributor consistently used VISE: *It's stupid to blame a freshmen senator,* thus marking himself as the linguistic "outsider". Two contributors, including the host, used codeswitching throughout:

> PMG: *de beat up a senator last night… <u>ayo</u> watch out* [all of you]
> MCM: *they shoulda wait til next term to <u>buss he a lick</u>* [attack him]

One contributor used Crucian code as the unmarked code:

> *Senator Sanes is ah boss he tear up the man you mean not he geh beat up*
> [...is the boss, he beat up the man you are talking about, he didn't get beaten up]

This example is representative of a lager corpus indicating that codeswitching is largely an individual choice in computer mediated conversation where personal identity is anonymous unless a contributor chooses to share it. Participants select a code that they feel most appropriately represents themselves and thus negotiate an identity which may be accepted by other participants or rejected leading to termination of the dialogue. Contrary to language use in other written media; codeswitching in online social networking appeared to be a more fluid process driven by a continued negotiation of identity with others rather than pre-determined by context or purpose.

10 Code choice as linguistic rebellion

Losey's study into written codeswitching concludes that language variation provides an unsurpassed opportunity for bilingual individuals to fully express themselves (2009). This expressive element can be traced throughout all written mediums, and is exemplified in *Crucians in Focus,* an online political forum whose aim is to monitor the activities of the Virgin Islands government and encourage its readers to post comments with the tag line "Oppression can only survive through silence." All articles are posted in VISE (ranging in formality) yet the discussion forums that follow each article often include codeswitching as contributors become more passionate about the issue. The following example opens in a code that is easily comprehensible to a monolingual VISE speaker yet contains increased frequency of lexical and syntactic distancing from standard forms as the views become more impassioned.

> *De cruzian miseducator have a new supporter, wah deh ass does go*
> [The Crucian 'miseducator' has a new supporter, what on earth is going
> *wrong weh these people, it really have some real foolie people yah*

[on with all these people, there really are a lot of idiotic people]

Contributors often begin comments in the matrix VISE to affirm their intellectual capacity in the same high status language of the article, and then switch to a Crucian code that allows them to personalize and take control of the conversation on local issues.

> *That was well said and you handled yourself professionally. But lawd, Mrs B really throw some blows on you today. I ain't think you was prepared*
> [Mrs. B really beat you down today. I didn't think you were prepared]

Comments in VISE, whilst often being heavily critical, frequently lack the expressive power and overtones of direct action that accompany Crucian comments. Compare, for example:

> VISE: *We will come together to vote out dejongh!*
> Crucian: *me and dem man in deh bush rounding up the mangy wolf pack*
> [me and the wildmen are rounding up the mangy wolfpack]

The literary overtones of the Crucian threat, using imagery and a reference to the local wildmen *in deh bush* convey an eloquent vision of community rebellion against political power which the standardized call to *come together* significantly lacks. This is perhaps explained by the expectations of standardized code in a high status field to be objective and literal, without literary embellishments or aggressive overtones. Like the examples above, the majority of comments posted on this political forum showed conscious variation in written code choice for purposes of expression, empowerment, and to encourage local action in a political context.

The last medium of written communication I will consider in this study is the only outlawed form - graffiti and public vandalism. It is my intention to consider a wide range of writing in the public domain that makes conscious use of codeswitching, and this particular form, albeit illegal, is entirely within the scope of the investigation in that it functions as a means of public expression and communicates identity and group affiliation in conflict with authority and a dominant language matrix. The significant difference between graffiti and other forms of written expression in this study is that graffiti predominantly makes use of Crucian as an unmarked code. Writing often functions to proclaim identity as a territory marker or to announce group affiliation:

> *Gyals 4 life,* [girls for life]   *Sweets Bin Ya* [Sweets has been here]

Santo Gyal [Dominican Girl]   *Chris bin bout* [Chris has been about]

Other examples comment on 'the way things are' and can be categorized as abbreviated social comment in a similar vein as Schrader's oral histories:

Leyroy tief cookie [Leyroy stole a cookie]
Haaz watch me like I'm da shinning star
[Haaz watches me like I'm the shining star]
Lexxus run tins [Lexxus runs things]

The unmarked Crucian code in vandalism is explained in part by Moodley's findings (2007) that although codeswitching is recognized as a valuable language tool for pedagogy it is largely prohibited in the classroom. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that from early contact with written language; Crucians categorize Creole as an outlawed code and Standard English as an acceptable or expected form. Language attitudes nurtured in the classroom in a context of tension between standardization efforts and the need for self-expression reflect national language policy and linguistic conflict in St. Croix as a whole. In both situations, VISE is accepted as the unmarked or matrix language in all written mediums, endorsed by the US government in opposition to the English lexifier Creole (considered inappropriate slang) that pre-dates the American presence on the island. Thus, the educational environment in St. Croix provides a microcosm of how individuals use code choice as a conscious act of linguistic rebellion against local administration. Graffiti seen in the Educational Complex in the Kingshill area of St. Croix perpetuated this context of conflict and aggression, with the examples:

Laugh in ayo face gyals ['Laugh in all your faces' girls]
Trish bin ya 4 U2NV 4 lifa [Trish has been here for you to envy for life]

Although the confrontational message may not be aimed at educational administrators directly – the method of communication and code choice marks a rebellion against school policy and language expectations in the school environment.

Code choice in graffiti functioning as linguistic resistance against administration is perhaps more explicit in examples found in the Christiansted public library. References to the 1878 Fireburn rebellion of Frederiksted, as previously noted in The St. Croix Avis and a club advertisement, appeared in graffiti on the book stacks:

Fyah [Fire]   *Fyah bin ya* [Fire has been here]

The second example notably using the same syntax of a previous identity marker *Sweets bin ya* and therefore possibly reflecting the same level of personal involvement with the historical rebellion as contributors associate with contemporary struggles to assert individuality. If Crucian as an unmarked code is deemed an inappropriate and dysfunctional mode of written communication, it is perhaps appropriate therefore that 'dysfunctional' members of society choose to express themselves in the language of their ancestors in one of the few media open to the use of Crucian as an unmarked code: graffiti - a public medium that is outlawed and condemned by both community leaders and government legislation.

11 Conclusion

This paper addresses the largely neglected subject of codeswitching in non-fiction written discourse between Standard English and Crucian (the English lexifier Creole spoken in St. Croix) and refers to a wide ranging corpus collected in the public domain in May 2010. Using Myers-Scotton's (1993) markedness model as a framework, findings indicate that United States or Virgin Islands Standard English is the unmarked code in the majority of high status print media considered. Newspapers target a localized readership with codeswitching to Crucian in articles of local interest and to celebrate local events or achievements, but otherwise maintain an expected standardized matrix language to elevate status, stress informational content and appeal to an international readership. Such situational features of each text commonly determine the matrix language, yet there is also evidence to suggest that the lack of standardized orthography automatically renders Crucian a marked choice in written communication.

This paper evaluates codeswitching as skilled performance, as exemplified by Schrader's oral histories of the island, which aim to authenticate the voice of the 'speaker' in each tale. Schrader's narrative non-fiction and *The Island Melee* (a satirical newssheet) also use codeswitching from Virgin Islands Standard English to Crucian as a discourse marker to characterize stereotypical voices in the text. Editors of the satirical newssheet and the author of the traditional tales showed metalinguistic awareness throughout and often switched codes based on content and register. *The Island Melee* uses language as a comedic tool, reporting with a formalized matrix code to amplify the ridiculous content of an article, or an unexpected Crucian code to discuss current affairs – a strategy that plays on Myers-Scotton's theory of rights and obligation.

Low status texts made more frequent use of codeswitching as a means to negotiate identity and group affiliation in the public domain. On an international platform, chat groups allow native islanders to connect with others using a shared minority language, and online forums enable political commentators to 'illustrate' their opinions with a

more emotive language than the unmarked standard forms permit. At street level, shop signs use codeswitching to establish local ownership yet also to address the public in a spirit of acceptance and respect. Conversely, public notices and graffiti often appear confrontational, using Crucian as the unmarked choice in a conscious effort to reclaim public space and declare identity. School graffiti illustrates this type of linguistic rebellion in the educational context of St. Croix, reflecting a history of administrative control and popular resistance on the island.

Notes

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