

Le Page's theoretical and applied legacy in sociolinguistics and creole studies

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1. Introduction

When Robert Broderick Le Page passed away in 2008, he left behind a rich legacy of contributions – descriptive, theoretical and applied – to sociolinguistics and creole studies.¹ His work is especially familiar and valuable to Caribbeanists, but they reverberate beyond the confines of this geographical area. The *Dictionary of Jamaican English*, which he coauthored with Fred Cassidy in 1967, is an invaluable reference work, not only for Jamaica, but for the several other Anglophone Caribbean varieties (Guyana, Barbados and Trinidad, for instance) with which it shares lexical cognates and phonological and grammatical parallels. His (1960) account of the development of Jamaican Creole was one of the earliest – if not THE earliest – in a series of detailed socio-historical studies that came to define creole studies and (should) make it the envy of sociolinguistics. Le Page was one of the founding fathers of sociolinguistics, along with pioneers like Charles Ferguson and William Labov, and his Acts of Identity theory – honed on data from Belize and St. Lucia – should attract increasing attention as interest in identity as a socio-linguistic construct continues to grow (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 2004).

Although Le Page's applied work is not as well known as his descriptive and theoretical research, it was significant too, being among the earliest to advocate bilingual education, contrastive analysis and other strategies to help creole speaking pupils bridge the gap between their vernacular and standard or mainstream varieties. It was also personally meaningful to me, his (1968) paper exciting my imagination as an undergraduate, and leading me in 1969 to switch from literature to a self-designed major in sociolinguistics. Finally, Le Page played a major facilitative role in Caribbean creolistics and sociolinguistics, serving as co-editor of the

1. This paper is a significantly revised version of a paper presented at the Le Page conference held at Stanford University in July 2007, within the Linguistic Institute of the Linguistic Society of America. I am grateful to the editors of this volume for pushing me to develop and defend my ideas.

two-volume *Creole Studies* books that were among the leading readers in creole studies until Hymes' (1971) *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages* came along. He also helped to train – both at the University (College) of the West Indies, Jamaica, and at the University of York, England – several of the Caribbean scholars who went on to become the leaders in research, teaching and university leadership in the Caribbean.

In this paper, I will provide a more detailed account of Le Page's contributions in each of these areas, along with a critical assessment, in the hope that it will enable us to extend and enrich his rich legacy.

2. Le Page's theoretical legacy

2.1 Sociohistory

First of all, and less generally known or emulated than it should be, Le Page demonstrated the value of careful *socio-historical research* in elucidating current sociolinguistic variation and change in his long (125 pg!) "Historical introduction to Jamaican Creole" in *Creole Language Studies I*, ed. by Le Page and DeCamp in 1960.

Although Le Page's work on this topic has now been extended and to some extent superseded by Kouwenberg (2009), it remains an important pioneering study. Creolists like Philip Baker and Chris Corne (1982), John Singler (1996), and Sarah Roberts (2004, 2005) have followed Le Page in conducting detailed socio-historical research, but most sociolinguists working outside of Caribbean and creole-speaking communities have not. As a result, I believe that many sociolinguistic studies present a relatively "flat" picture of synchronic variation, not sufficiently attuned to diachronic forces and events that might have led community members to display the social attitudes and linguistic behaviors that they do. For the creolist, for whom sociohistorical issues are woven into the central "life cycle" conception of their subject matter,² socio-history is almost unavoidable. But for non-creolist sociolinguists, sociohistory can and often *is* neglected – one reason, perhaps, that "Socio-Historical Linguistics" in the sense of Romaine (1982) has never realized its full potential.

2. Who were the speakers of the different languages that came into contact to form an initial pidgin, and when, where and how – via trade, on colonial plantations – did the contact occur? Under what conditions, did the pidgin "creolize," perhaps by becoming the primary language in its community, and/or acquiring native speakers. And how did the resultant creole go on to extend in social role and expand in "inner" and "outer" form (Hymes 1971) and/or "decreolize" in subsequent decades/centuries?

Let me develop this point a bit further. Even in Romaine's excellent (1982) text on *Sociohistorical Linguistics*, most of the attention is devoted to the linguistic analysis of variation in relative clause marking and its constraints, as attested in texts from Middle Scots and earlier, and discussion of the social and extra-linguistic context is minimal. By contrast, Romaine's also excellent but "creolist" book on urban and rural Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea (1992) has far more socio-historical data and analysis. In a similar vein, the admirable studies of historical morpho-syntax conducted by Anthony Kroch and his students at the University of Pennsylvania are rich in linguistic detail, but much less so on sociohistorical context. Indeed, Kroch and Taylor (1997) simultaneously acknowledge the importance of such context while acknowledging that it is not a primary concern:

Although we are not primarily concerned with the historical and sociolinguistic dynamic that established the Middle English dialects, the sociolinguistic history of population contact and diffusion which underlie them is a matter of considerable interest, and it sheds light on why the dialect different we have uncovered should exist.

They go on to give a one or two-paragraph account of the sociolinguistic history. Perhaps a longer account might not have shed any additional light on the linguistic developments. But a creolist – in the mold of Le Page at least – would be hungry for more.³

2.2 The acts of Identity model

Indisputably, however, Le Page's most valuable theoretical legacy to sociolinguistics and creole studies is the *Acts of Identity* model he pioneered and developed with students and colleagues in his (1974) article, and with Andrée Tabouret-Keller in their (1985) book. The central thesis of principle of this model is that "the individual creates for himself [/herself] the patterns of his [/her] linguistic behavior so as to resemble those of the groups with which from time to time he [/she] wishes to be identified or so as to be unlike those from whom he [/she] wishes to be distinguished." (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985: 181).

3. One area of socio-historical linguistics outside of creole studies that *does* appear to pay more attention to socio-historical context is work on "historical sociolinguistics" and the history of English being conducted by various individuals and groups in Europe, for instance, the work of Terttu Nevalainen (e.g. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg 2003) and her VARIENG group in Helsinki (<http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/index.html>), the historical sociopragmatics research of Andreas Jucker (e.g. 2008, and see <http://es-jucker.uzh.ch/>), and the social history/network research of Susan Fitzmaurice (e.g. 2000, and see <http://www.shf.ac.uk/english/staff/research/sfitzmaurice.html>). I wish to thank Elizabeth Closs Traugott for drawing my attention to this work, while disassociating her from the larger claims being made here.

This central principle is subject to four riders or qualifications, described by Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985: 182): in these terms: “We can only behave according to the behavioral patterns of groups we find it desirable to identify with to the extent that:

- i. we can identify the groups
- ii. we have both adequate access to the groups and ability to analyze their behavioral patterns
- iii. the motivation to join the groups is sufficiently powerful, and is either reinforced or reversed by feedback from the groups
- iv. we have the ability to modify our behavior.”

Without going into the details of the evidence (chiefly from sociolinguistic surveys of Belize and St. Lucia) on which this model is based, I would like to discuss what I consider its principal plusses and minuses.

Plusses of the Acts of Identity model. The first plus of the Acts of Identity model is that it focuses attention on the social forces and socio-psychological factors that motivate sociolinguistic variation, more so than *any* other variationist framework, e.g. Labovian quantitative sociolinguistics (with the exception of Labov’s (1963) study of Martha’s Vineyard). It is thus a truly *socio*-linguistic model, and in privileging the social dimension, could make fruitful contact with social theory in the social sciences, and bring about the socio-cultural linguistics that a number of modern sociolinguists (e.g. Mary Bucholtz at UC Santa Barbara) envision. Deborah Cameron (personal communication, July 1993) criticizes it for seeing language use as reflecting (predetermined) social identity rather than constituting it (who you are and are taken to be depends on the language acts you engage in), but I think the latter perspective is wholly within the spirit and reach of the model. The very fact that the model emphasizes the role of the individual as a creative agent (“the individual *creates* for himself the patterns of his linguistic behavior so as to resemble those of the groups with which from time to time he [/she] wishes to be identified”), projecting various identities through his or her speech acts, places this model in the category of more recent approaches in which the constitutive, agentive role of language is emphasized. In the words of Coupland (2001: 208–209), one of the advocates of this agentive approach:

It is often the case that we can only identify a “contextual type” *by virtue of* the stylistic attributes of FH’s speech. He is the orchestrator of contexts [...] Variation in his speech and in particular his dialect should therefore be said to be not only styled but stylized [...] His styles are not situational reflexes. They are ways of subtly activating multiple simultaneous dimensions of meaning potential. [Emphasis in original.]

A second plus of the Acts of Identity model is that in favoring work with small, often self-selected groups over correlations with broad social categories (class,

race, gender and so on – see Edwards 1983: 309, fn.6), and being open to the distinctive choices of individuals, the model is in tune with the ethnographic ‘communities of practice’ (CofP) approach that a number of sociolinguists (e.g. Eckert 2000, Davies 2005) now consider a fruitful additional or alternative way of accounting for sociolinguistic variation. Mallinson and Child’s (2008) description of two small communities of practice in Texana, Texas (the “church ladies” and “church sitters”) is, to my mind, one of the best exemplars to date of the potential value of the CofP approach, and I think it is squarely in line with the Acts of Identity model, although CofP advocates may not recognize or cite it as such.

Minuses of the Acts of Identity model. One weakness of the model, however, was its statistical reliance on cluster analysis, and the strategy of working entirely from the linguistic data to the social groupings rather than the other way around, or through an intermediate strategy. The idea was “to cluster the children according to similarities in their [linguistic] behavior,” and THEN look for significant correlations between the linguistic clusters and “various cultural and socioeconomic indices” of the children and their families (McEntegart and Le Page 1982: 106). The authors’ decision to approach the analysis in this way, rather than beginning with the social categories was explicitly justified as follows:

The decision to avoid the procedure followed by Labov (1966, 1972a) Trudgill (1974b) and G. Sankoff (1974) of dividing the population according to pre-established socio-economic categories and then sampling each category, was taken for several reasons. In the first place, such a procedure precludes discovering anything about the emergent social structure other than in terms of these ‘imported’ and pre-set categories; in the second place, we did not feel we knew enough about the cultural and economic and ethnic stratification of the two societies to arrange our sample in this way; in the third place, it was part of our aim to discover what social mechanisms were at work, what groups were emerging according to the linguistic symptoms, rather than vice versa. (1982: 107)

Creolists – especially Caribbeanists – might hear in these objections echoes of a similar complaint voiced by David DeCamp in his pioneering (1971: 355) implicational analysis of the Jamaican continuum:

Why [...] have sociolinguists so often correlated their linguistic data to preconceived categories of age, income, education, etc., instead of correlating these non-linguistic variables to the linguistic data? Both the varieties and the defining features of a linear linguistic continuum can be ordered without recourse to the sociolinguistic data, so that these data may then be used to interpret the continuum without circularity of reasoning.

However, while Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985: 112–153), do go on to present clusters of linguistically similar individuals from their fieldwork and data analysis in

Belize (five primary clusters) and St. Lucia (8 clusters, half in interview style and half in informal style), and while they do go on to report and discuss interesting relations between the linguistic clusters and their extra-linguistic correlates,⁴ they also refer to “weaknesses in our method revealed in McEntegart (1980)” that prevent them from treating their findings and hypotheses as “firm results” (147). And while Le Page and Tabouret-Keller said they continue to hold the view that cluster-analysis might provide “a reasonable analogue” for the kinds of multidimensional acts of identity that people might make in everyday life, they end with the observation that: “What we cannot dispute is that owing to faults both in the design and execution of the survey, the statistical results have been meager and inconclusive” (153).

The earlier paper by McEntegart and Le Page (1982), to which Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) also refer, is even more negative. Indeed, it is the most brutally honest and admirable admission of the limitations of the analytical techniques of one’s work I have ever seen, concluding that “the survey was far too ambitious in wishing to take account of all social and psychological factors relating to the linguistic behavior of the children at once” and that “there are severe limitations on the usefulness of cluster analysis in sociolinguistics” (123–124). Not having access to the more detailed report by McEntegart (1980), it is not clear whether the weaknesses admitted are really inherent in the method of cluster analysis itself, or the ways in which it was implemented in the gathering and analysis of data from Le Page’s two research sites.⁵ This is a problem that is worth further study, since it may affect what subsequent researchers attempt.

A second limitation of the Acts of Identity model is that although it provides *in principle* for the existence of limits on what speakers can do, in terms of analyzing

4. For instance, the primary correlate of linguistic groupings in Belize is where each individual lives, followed by father’s occupation, and more weakly, the family’s socio-economic profile (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985: 131). For St. Lucia, associations or correlations are related in more complex ways to sex/gender, school level, crowdedness and location of the home, claims to own domestic goods, degree of political activism claimed in the home and language use claimed for the home (ibid: 145).

5. For instance, the difficulties may have had to do with the *scale* of the project; there are suggestions in McEntegart and Le Page (1982) that they needed a bigger sample, but the 280-student sample in Belize is already much bigger than that used in most sociolinguistic surveys, even though only 164 students were analyzed in detail. The difficulties may also have had to do with the limited amount of speech analyzed from each child (only 400 words in the case of Belize), or the way in which the envelope of variation was drawn. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985: 147–8 discuss the alternative results for St. Lucia obtained by formal versus semantic criteria, and McEntegart’s failure to establish “any truly meaningful cluster” using the semantic criteria that he favored. Finally, the weakness of the results obtained may, as Le Page and Tabouret-Keller suggest (1985: 132) be due primarily to “a general diffuseness of ‘the language of Cayo district’ [Belize] and of [...] a society in a high and rapid state of flux.”

and adopting the language use of groups with which they'd like to be identified (see riders i-iv above), *in practice* sociolinguists working within this model assume a much greater competence than their speakers' performance warrants.⁶ Contrary to this assumption, note the gaps in pronominal competence at both the basilectal (Creole) and acrolectal (Standard) poles revealed by Correction Tests in Cane Walk, Guyana (Rickford 1987a: 163).⁷ Or the case of Steve K in New York City, whose attempts to show that he could produce 100% *r*-ful pronunciations ended in frustration (Labov 1972: 104–105). Or the Hemnesberget (Norway) speakers who heard themselves switching between Ranamål and Bokmål on tape despite *not* wanting to (Blom and Gumperz 1973: 430). Although many of us tend to conceptualize sociolinguistic behavior as entirely a matter of choice and strategy, there are real limits on speaker's performance in practice based on limits to their ability and competence – precisely the kinds of limits Le Page and Tabouret-Keller identified in theory.

A third and final weakness of the model – contrasted with, for instance, the quantitative variationist sociolinguistics of Labov and others (see Bayley 2002), or the implicational/wave model of C.J. Bailey, Bickerton, and DeCamp (see Rickford 2002) – is that it does not pay enough attention to internal linguistic constraints. The key constraints in the four riders above are social and psychological (identification, access, motivation), and although internal constraints might conceivably be included under the fourth rider, involving ability, in practice they are not. There is

6. Responding to this comment, the editors of this volume have noted (personal communication) that:

On the point of over-estimated competence, bear in mind that the act of identity is a psychological act, hence actors might perceive themselves to be competent in whatever variety they are targeting. There are some markers which indicate to speakers that they have 'got it.' It is likely that the linguistic markers that linguists (or even the target group) use as a defining feature of the target variety may not be as important (unconsciously) to speakers for them to perceive themselves as competent in the target variety.

This is an interesting possibility, but it may then be impossible to distinguish between an individual who is trying to imitate or adopt a variety with which he or she identifies, and one who is not. I think we *do* have to recognize the limits on individuals' competence to move around in multi-dimensional linguistic space, while conceding that there may be valuable theoretical payoff to distinguishing between the psychological and physical or actual.

7. The Correction Tests were a part of the Controlled Interviews, conducted after all my Spontaneous Sociolinguistic Interviews in Cane Walk, Guyana were over. While the goal of the latter had been to record samples of informal or spontaneous speech, the goal of the former was to elicit speaker's intuitions about language and the socio-cultural milieu. The Correction Tests included a "Creole to Standard English" component in which respondents were asked to translate creole sentences into the "most" standard English they could produce, and a "Standard to Creole English" component in which they were asked to translate Standard English sentences into the deepest creole they could produce. For examples and further discussion, see Rickford (1987a).

little if any discussion of internal constraints or conditioning on the linguistic variables in Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) – see p. 135, for example. And Edwards (1983), an excellent introduction to the Acts of Identity model that is required reading in my sociolinguistics graduate seminars, consistently rejects internal linguistic in favor of social or socio-psychological explanations, as in this quotation (300):

Rather than looking solely towards a linguistic explanation for the pattern in Table 4 and the other Tables, I take the position that these salient linguistic items form part of the sociocultural milieu of rural and urban Guyana and that individuals and groups of individuals choose to use forms on the basis of their perception of the social value of these forms in the community. In the present case, *ø* habitual marker [as against habitual *doz* or *a*] enjoys widespread social approval in both rural and urban communities.

This particular case is especially relevant since the linguistic constraint against which Edwards was arguing – a restriction against the use of habitual markers in conditional and temporal clauses first formulated by Bickerton (1975: 30–33) – turned out to be supported by all the textual data on Guyanese Creole examined by Rickford (1987b: 126–127). To my mind it takes nothing away from external social and socio-psychological constraints to acknowledge that language is simultaneously influenced by internal, linguistic constraints; and identifying both internal and external constraints is a crucial part of accounting for and predicting sociolinguistic variation, as the Acts of Identity model seeks to do.

3. Le Page's applied work

Robert B. Le Page's (1968) paper, "Problems to be faced in the use of English as the medium of education in four West Indian territories," is rarely cited. But it had a profound influence on my career, inspiring me to switch from Literature to a self-designed major in Sociolinguistics at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in 1969.⁸ Because this paper is relatively unknown, while Le Page's theoretical work

8. As noted in Rickford (1997: 162): "[...] what really helped me to abandon English literature and design my own major in sociolinguistics was a paper by Le Page 1968 which dealt with the high failure rate (70% to 90%) of Caribbean high school students on the English language GCE (General Certificate of Education) "O" level exam set by London and Cambridge Universities. Having worked as a high school teacher in Guyana for one year before setting off for college, I was aware of the problem, and I was convinced by Le Page's arguments that it resulted partly from the fact that teachers could not recognize the differences between local creole and Standard English, nor help students to shift smoothly between the two varieties [...] Armed with Le Page's guidelines [for training English language specialists to help teachers improve their methods] and assisted by a liberal and innovative college environment [at the University of California,

on the Acts of Identity framework is much more widely cited, I'll begin this assessment of Le Page's applied legacy by recapitulating its main points in some detail.

As he explains in an introductory note, Le Page's (1968) paper was inspired by a seven-week tour he had taken of Jamaica, Trinidad, Guyana (then British Guiana), and Belize (then British Honduras), between March and April 1966. Jamaica and Trinidad became independent of Britain in 1962, Guyana did so in 1966, and Belize in 1981, so issues of national development and redefinition were central at the time. The article was also based on Le Page's ten years of teaching and research at the University (College) of the West Indies, especially as Director of the Linguistic Survey of the British West Indies. The list of scholars with whom he had collaborated over this period reads as a veritable "who's who" in early pidgin-creole studies: Beryl Loftman Bailey, Jack Berry, Frederic G. Cassidy, David DeCamp, Morris Goodman, Robert A Hall, Jr., Douglas Taylor, R. Wallace Thompson, Jan Voorhoeve, and "former students" Miss Jean Creary (later D'Costa) and Mervyn Alleyne.⁹

Le Page begins his paper in much the same way that other recent commentators discussing the educational challenges facing students who speak creole and vernacular varieties of English have done (see D. Craig 1999, H. Craig et al 2009, Labov 2006, Rickford and Rickford 2007) – by pointing to the low rates at which such students often succeed in exams in English and other subjects. In the case of the Anglophone Caribbean territories Le Page was considering,¹⁰ the data came from students'

Table 1. Pass rates on London G.C.E. "O" level exams in various subjects, 1962 (adapted from Le Page's 1968: 433 table 1)

Subject	Guyana	Belize	Jamaica	Trinidad	Barbados
English	19.6%	21.0%	19.4%	23.1%	10.7
Language	(2483)	(24)	(661)	(1521)	(150)
English	21.5%	0%	13.0%	12.3%	24.2%
Literature	(1245)	(1)	(79)	(349)	(91)
Pure	24.6%	60.0%	7.4%	17.3%	8.9%
Mathematics	(898)	(5)	(135)	(659)	(45)

Santa Cruz], I combined courses in linguistics, anthropology and other fields, and graduated with a self-designed major in sociolinguistics in 1971."

9. From Romaine (2006), we learn that Le Page also had as students the Nobel prize-winning Caribbean poet and playwright Derek Walcott, and theoretical linguists David Baker and Geoffrey Pullum. Of Walcott, Le Page had this to say in his 1998 biography: "I certainly don't feel that I taught him anything, although he seemed to enjoy reading Anglo-Saxon and Middle English poetry with me" (54).

10. Le Page also introduced comparable data from Cyprus, and for other subjects (Geography, History, French, Biology, Physics and Chemistry) besides the ones listed in Table 1.

performance on the 1962 London University General Certificate of Education “Ordinary” level exams, set and graded in England at the time. Le Page does not dwell on the statistics, but these uniformly low pass rates – or conversely, these uniformly high *failure* rates of 80% or more – clearly represented a problem of enormous proportions, especially since the GCE exams constituted “the passport to a Civil Service job, entry to a training college or to the University [...] like a sluice gate controlling the flow of manpower into the educated roles that should provide the dynamism for the economic and cultural growth of the countries concerned” (432).

Le Page provided a shrewd analysis of the problems to be faced in teaching Standard English to native Creole speakers in the classroom, and in expecting them to perform well on exams that require a high degree of competence in Standard English without preparing them to bridge the gap between these varieties. Neither the children, nor their school teachers, nor their training college and university educators, he felt, were equipped to recognize the systematic phonological, grammatical lexical and semantic differences between Creole speech and “the spoken dialects that underlie the standard usage of the textbooks and of the examiners” (435). And “Instead of being able to keep the two systems separate, [...] the children try to make one composite system out of the vernacular they know in their homes and the model language they are supposedly taught in school; the result naturally satisfies nobody” (*ibid.*). Furthermore, notes Le Page, teaching of language skills is a time-consuming, prescriptive and unproductive task, made worse by the fact that many of the teachers were untrained, and their own competence in the standard was often precarious. Creole speech was often dismissed as “bad talk,” and children were often “inhibited from any kind of creative expression [...] and the prizes go to the best mimics rather than to the most talented” (438).

Le Page’s proposed solutions to these problems included establishing specialist posts in English language teacher training at teacher training colleges in the West Indies, with terms comparable to that of a university lecturer. Such specialists should have

a thorough basic training in linguistics, psychological and sociological aspects of linguistic behavior, the psychology of language learning, the processes of creolization, the principles of contrastive analysis, and the structure of the languages involved in their situation (e.g. Creole English, Creole French, English, Spanish, Maya). They must also be trained in the general principles of education, in the preparation of teaching materials, and in the use of audiovisual aids, radio and television. (440)

And their goals should be to develop trainee-teachers’ competence in educated standard English, to prepare culturally relevant teaching materials that provide

contrastive analysis between the creole and the standard, to provide retaining for existing teachers, and to develop radio and television programs to disseminate new approaches to teaching English and the language arts more widely.

Although now over forty years old, Le Page's diagnosis of the language-related educational challenges facing creole speakers in the Anglophone Caribbean is still relevant, even though attitudes to the creole are not quite as vituperative these days, and many (not all) teachers are more informed and progressive than the ones he encountered and quoted.¹¹ Like other contemporary scholars in sociolinguistics and creole studies (cf. Cassidy 1970, DeCamp 1972), Le Page did not go significantly beyond the diagnostic and programmatic level in dealing with the educational issues. But he would undoubtedly have welcomed the studies of educational policy and practice, the instructional texts, edited collections, teacher guides and other works to help creole and vernacular speakers in the classroom that were produced by subsequent researchers, including Lawrence Carrington (1976), Pauline Christie (2003), Dennis Craig (1980, 1999, 2006), Hubert Devonish (e.g. Devonish and Carpenter 2007), Shondel Nero (2001, 2006), Velma Pollard (1999), Ian Robertson (2006), Hazel Simmons-McDonald (1996, 2006, McDonald et al 1997), and Jeff Siegel (1992, 1999, 2007), among others.¹²

Before leaving the applied area, where I've focused on the 1968 paper that was most personally meaningful to me (see footnote viii), I should mention for completeness some of Le Page's other publications in the area of applied (socio)linguistics, broadly conceived.

Perhaps the one most related to the 1968 paper in its focus was "Caribbean Connections in the Classroom: A pamphlet of guidance for teachers concerned with the language problems of children of Afro-Caribbean descent." Produced in 1981 by the University of York, where Le Page worked from 1964 until he retired in 1988, it was available for 75 pence from the Institute of Linguists Educational Trust [ILEA] in London. It was intended for teachers trying to help Caribbean immigrants and their British-born children overcome linguistic and other barriers to success in British schools, and included a sketch of the pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary of Jamaican (the dominant Anglophone Caribbean variety among immigrants to Britain), with texts, and notes on language variants in other territories. Le Page felt (16–18) that West Indian language was indeed part of the "Language Problem in Britain," in part because of direct interference or transfer from the West Indian vernaculars to Standard English, but even more so because

11. But see Craig (1999) for evidence that negative attitudes and poor pass rates persist.

12. See also Rickford and Rickford (2007, 2010), and *The Reading Road* instructional program for AAVE and Latino-English speaking students in the USA developed by William Labov and the Penn Reading Initiative, which can be downloaded free of charge at <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/pri/>.

of the indirect effect of language stereotyping and prejudice on the basis of the children's dialects,¹³ and because of children's proclivity to use "London Jamaican" as an Act of Identity.¹⁴ His advice to teachers (20 ff) was to try to understand as much as possible about their pupils, their parents and their home language, and he encouraged them to visit and talk with them in their homes. He also expressed the hope (22) that sociolinguistics might be introduced as a high school and exam subject, because

There is probably no discipline which deals more effectively with, and more effectively diffuses, racial or class tensions. [...] To have an effective "language studies and linguistics" programme will involve enlisting the cooperation of all the teachers in the school, because their demand for [...] "correct English" may well be called into question. But [...] the understanding which can come from a "language studies and linguistics" programme may itself be instrumental in providing some of the motivation for children to improve their command of Standard English, and it can help teachers understand that the worst way of achieving good results is by concentrating on "mistakes".

Note also the pedagogical value of the *Dictionary of Jamaican English* (co-authored with Cassidy in 1967, second edition 1980), which was an invaluable predecessor to more general works like Richard Allsopp's *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*, and Jeannette Allsopp's *The Caribbean Multilingual Dictionary*, which were even more deliberately geared towards classroom teachers.

In the category of Applied Linguistics must also be placed Le Page's short (81 pages) but widely read (1964) book: *The National Language Question: Linguistic Problems of Newly Independent States*. In the spirit of other macro-sociolinguistic works of the 1960s that focused on sociolinguistic surveys of newly independent nations and the role of language in national development (cf. Ferguson 1962, 1966, and of course Fishman et al 1968), Le Page's book deftly discussed general considerations in choosing between indigenous, local and international options in the selection of an official or national language, and illustrated it with cases studies of Malaysia (where he had taught for four years), and India. Le Page mentions in his (1998) biography that this book, reprinted in 1967 and 1971, "was to affect my

13. In this sense, Le Page's assessment was similar to that of Justice Joiner in the "Black English" trial in Ann Arbor, Michigan, who in his 1979 ruling against the Ann Arbor, Michigan school district for failing to take the African American Vernacular English vernacular into account, cited potentially negative attitudes of school teachers and district officials towards this variety rather than its structural features as posing the greatest barrier to equal educational opportunity for its speakers.

14. Indeed, Le Page drew substantially on his Acts of Identity theory in this pamphlet – four years before the publication of the (1985) book with Tabouret-Keller that would make it more widely known to the field of Linguistics.

future in quite unforeseen ways, leading as it did to invitations to conferences in the United States and Canada and East Africa and London at which I met my future collaborator from Strasbourg [André Tabouret-Keller] whose interests and resources dovetailed very closely and in a complementary way with my own" (147).

Which indeed brings us to the final work in this category, his (1997) *Vernacular Literacy* book, co-edited with André Tabouret-Keller (as lead editor), Penelope Gardner-Chloros, and Gabrielle Varro. This book, which remains an invaluable reference work, represents a re-evaluation of the famous UNESCO (1953) monograph and its central axioms that "every child of school age should attend school and that every illiterate should be made literate" (6), and that "the best medium for teaching is the mother tongue of the pupil." The first part of the book is made up of four essays dealing with general issues, including political, economic, social, orthographic and pedagogical considerations. The second part includes four more essays that are all case-studies, drawn from Europe, various parts of Africa and Asia, and pidgin and creole-speaking communities. Tabouret-Keller wrote the Conclusion, while Le Page wrote the Introduction, and authored/edited the longest of the essays in the first part, a 59-page essay entitled "Political and economic aspects of vernacular literacy."¹⁵ The essay is a complex work that surveys vernacular literacy in Britain (especially Scotland), Europe (especially among the Basques), India, Africa (including pidgin varieties in Cameroon and Nigeria), and Latin America. A couple of its "tentative conclusions" – less sanguine than the axioms of the UNESCO (1953) report – are worth quoting here:

in many of the countries which we have considered, and in some which we have not, political and ethnic and economic and religious turmoil is at present so great that academic prognoses about literacy are likely to remain academic; and the academic community, with its Unesco and other conferences, resolutions and recommendations, seems frequently to operate in a sealed world.

[...] it is economic motivation which appears the most powerful in affecting vernacular literacy. [...] Literacy is to some extent a by-product of prosperity and this makes it appear to many the only escape route from poverty at least for their children; whether vernacular literacy will provide as effective an escape as literacy in some other language is often a puzzle, so complex is the interplay of conditions. [...]

What is certainly true is that a literate vernacular, replacing a previous language of dominance, is often, as with the Basques, the leading banner around which those seeking a power base focus nascent ethnic identities and nationhood. Yet,

15. Because *Vernacular Literacy* is the outcome of a series of workshops from 1986 to 1992 and its essays draw on the contributions of various participants, each essay is described as "edited" by one or two researchers, but each "editor" must have served as the primary "author" of their essay as well. In the case of "Political and Economic Aspects of Vernacular Literacy," twenty-one other "contributors" are listed, besides Le Page.

in spite of the very considerable efforts made among the Basques, the Welsh, the Irish and the Scots to encode national identity in their languages, labour migration and the economic pull of other languages make their successes seem very limited and temporary while their nationalism and hunger for power becomes more threatening.

One other aspect of Le Page's work that might be considered "applied," but also "theoretical," is the significant role he played in providing fellowship support and training for Caribbean and Third World sociolinguists at York University (see Christie 2008: 138, Romaine 2006: 669), and in making it possible for them in turn to train others. The list of linguists who got their doctorates in Linguistics under Le Page includes the Caribbean creolists Pauline Christie, Hubert Devonish, Walter Edwards, Kean Gibson, Donald Winford and Colville Young. Christie and Edwards in turn became major contributors to the *Acts of Identity* model that was Le Page's theoretical tour de force – Christie as a central field worker and data analyst in the Caribbean communities in which the model was developed (she is co-author of Le Page et al. 1974, and editor of his 2001 festschrift), the latter as a major expositor of and advocate for the model itself, drawing on data both from Guyanese Creole (Edwards 1978) and African American Vernacular English (Edwards 1992).

4. Conclusion: Problems to be faced in building on Le Page's legacy

The 1968 publication of Le Page's that first attracted me to his work and drew me into linguistics had an alluring but antiquarian (verbose) character: "Problems to be faced in the use of English as the Medium of Education in Four West Indian Territories." The notion of "problems to be faced" provides a good conceptual perspective from which to ask how we might *build* on Le Page's theoretical and applied legacy in sociolinguistics and creole studies.

It should first be noted that we are at a period in the history of both subfields in which some of our pioneers are either retiring or passing on – besides Le Page, Richard Allsopp, Frederic Cassidy, Dennis Craig and Dell Hymes have died in recent years. Each of these stalwarts has left a scholarly legacy, but the extent to which these legacies are being developed varies, partly depending on the extent to which these pioneers were survived by colleagues and aficionados interested in continuing that line of work, partly depending on how students are being trained and what they being exposed to in universities in the Caribbean, North America, and elsewhere, and partly depending on the whims of scholarly fashion in academia. For instance, the lexicographical work of Richard Allsopp is being actively carried on by his collaborator and widow, Jeannette Allsopp, and her students at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados, despite problems to be

faced in terms of funding. Dennis Craig's attempts to deal with the challenges of vernacular literacy in the Caribbean are being extended, and in some respects surpassed by the continuing work of Hazel Simmons-McDonald, Ian Robertson, Hubert Devonish and other faculty members and students at the University of the West Indies in Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica. To the extent that each of these areas is developed, those parts of Le Page's legacy that overlap with them are also assured of growth. Indeed, the work of Devonish and his colleagues and students at the Jamaica Language Unit at UWI, Mona, Jamaica is a significant development of an idea that Le Page had only passingly proposed in the 1950s – that Jamaican school children be taught in creole rather than standard English for the first year or two of schooling. Cassidy (1970), citing Le Page's proposal, noted that *Kingston Star* (Jamaica) columnist Vere John condemned it as a "pernicious and insulting idea." Today the idea of initial bilingual instruction in Jamaican Creole as well as English still attracts some criticism in the local media, but it also attracts some praise, and with government support it is being implemented experimentally in several schools (Devonish and Carpenter 2007). Meanwhile, bible translation and experimental TV programs in Jamaican Creole are underway.

On the descriptive and theoretical front, it is more difficult to be sanguine about the development of Le Page's legacy.¹⁶ On the one hand, many sociolinguistics scholars outside of the Caribbean are not familiar enough with Le Page's Acts of Identity model or they have not tried hard enough to integrate it with newer approaches to language and identity or other variationist models. On the other hand, despite the fact that the Le Page/Tabouret-Keller model was developed with Caribbean data and that competing quantitative and implicational/dynamic models were also extensively applied to Caribbean situations in the 1970s and 1980s,¹⁷ variationist approaches are rarely taught or practiced on university campuses in the Caribbean today. Although there has been quite an efflorescence of variationist research on English-based Caribbean varieties over the past decade,¹⁸

16. Except with respect to detailed socio-historical research, where, as noted above, the tradition that Le Page helped to start continues to thrive in creole studies, if not sociolinguistics.

17. The marked linguistic variability which the region displays makes it an ideal laboratory for studies of sociolinguistic variability. For instance, the linguistic span of English-based varieties in Jamaica or Jamaica is broader than that in Norwich or New York or most metropolitan cities where some of the classic sociolinguistic studies were done. And this is not even including places like St. Lucia and Trinidad and Belize where substantial segments of the population speak another language (e.g. French Creole, Spanish, Garifuna) besides (creole or standard) English.

18. See for instance Aceto and Williams (2003), Blake (forthcoming), Deuber (2009), Fenigsen (2002), Gooden (2008), Hackert (2006, 2008), Hinrichs and White-Sustaita (forthcoming), Irvine (2004, 2008), Lacoste (2008), Légliše and Migge (2007), Mair (2009), Meyerhoff and Walker (2007), Patrick (2009), Poplack and Tagliamonte (2001), Rickford (2010), Seymour (2009),

with one or two exceptions (e.g. Irvine 2004, 2008), this has not come from graduates or faculty of Linguistics programs in Caribbean universities, and the work has been broadly quantitative or corpus-based, rather than drawing on the Acts of Identity or Implicational models.

To some extent the neglect of Le Page's Acts of Identity model may be due to the fact that the last major work in this framework (Le Page and Tabouret Keller 1985) was published twenty-five years ago. In this respect, as with work in the implicationalist and continuum frameworks from the 1980s, it may seem to be *passé*. But the theoretical and methodological plusses that each of these variationist approaches offered are real and significant, and neither their age nor the fact that each has minuses of some sort should deter us from attempting to develop them. In the case of the Acts of Identity model, one problem to be faced in this respect is developing our understanding of anthropology and social and cognitive psychology so that we can capitalize on the cultural and sociocultural aspects of sociolinguistic behavior and the concern with individuals as well as groups that Le Page's approach came closest to capturing. Another is understanding whether the difficulties with using cluster analysis and working from the linguistic to the social that Le Page and his colleagues so honestly admitted were a function of the specific ways in which they attempted to implement these approaches, or whether they are more general, perhaps inhering in the approaches themselves. Neither of these problems can be solved without perusing the publications Le Page and his colleagues bequeathed to us – including his (1998) autobiography and the more inaccessible report of Mc Entegart (1980) – and by conducting new research that pushes the model to its limits and beyond. It may also be useful to discuss in detail these and other problems with colleagues like Pauline Christie, Andree Tabouret Keller, and Damian Mc Entegart, who worked closely with Le Page on the Belize and St. Lucia projects, and who may have inside insights to share with us.

Finally, it is worth remembering, in closing, that among the front-runners in sociolinguistics and creole studies, only a few scholars – for instance, Hubert Devonish, William Labov, Jeff Siegel and Walt Wolfram – resemble Robert B. Le Page in combining theoretical, descriptive and applied research at a sustained level over several decades. We should continue to develop the pioneering initiatives and ideas he developed on all three fronts.

Sidnell (1999, 2002), Straw and Patrick (2007), Walker and Meyerhoff (2006), Wassink (2001), and Wassink and Dyer (2004). A number of these projects draw on the ICE-Jamaica corpus that was assembled in collaboration between the University of the West Indies Mona and Freiburg University (on the corpus see Mair 2002 and 2009). This list of recent variationist or sociolinguistic works focuses on Caribbean English-lexicon creoles and vernaculars, but even so, is representative rather than exhaustive. For additional references, see individual articles within edited collections in this list, e.g. Aceto and Williams (2003), and references within each of these works.

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