VIRGIN ISLANDS ENGLISH LEXIFIER CREOLE AND POLITENESS PRACTICES ON THE ISLAND OF ST. CROIX

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ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS (from Heffelfinger 2019)

CELC   Crucian English lexifier Creole

FBA   face-boosting act

FEA   face-enhancing act

FTA   face threatening act

NP   negative politeness

PP   positive politeness

TELC   Thomian English lexifier Creole

VIELC   Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole

/	weak pauses (e.g., commas)
//	strong pauses (e.g., periods)
(.)	brief silence
(..)	prolonged silence > 3ss
…	ellipsis, omitted portion
---	precedes abrupt change of subject or self-correction
( )	description, commentary, or clarification enclosed
(( ))	paralinguistic features enclosed
< >	less intelligible portions enclosed
[]	overlapping speech enclosed
{ }	omitted names and personal information enclosed
Aa	discarded portion
a:	sound lengthening
a::	prolonged sound lengthening
↑	rising intonation
?	interrogation
!	exclamation
CAPS	loudness or emphasis
H	host
G	guest
C	caller
M, F	male, female (subscript at the end of a speaker identification code)

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Abstract

This essay represents a multi-faceted overview of recent research on Virgin Islands English

lexifier Creole. It summarizes and analyzes scholarly work on the historical development of

Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole, its linguistic features, and its status in society. Particular

attention is paid to two areas: language policy, especially as it relates to education, and

pragmatics, specifically with regard to politeness strategies in St. Croix.

Introduction: historical and linguistic background

With a population of about 106,000 according to the 2010 census, the United States Virgin

Islands (USVI) consist of the islands of St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John, which are

approximately 108 to 124 miles from the Puerto Rico. These islands have a Deaf population of

approximately 110 to 200, and a literacy rate of 90-95%. St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John are

plurilingual societies. Susana De Jesús (2010, in LeCompte Zambrana et al. 2012: 45; Simounet,

2013) reports that on St. Croix:

> a wide range of lects of both Crucian English lexifier Creole and Virgin Islands Standard
>
> English are *each* spoken by over 50 % of the population. Additionally, a wide range of
>
> lects of other English lexifier Creoles (Jamaican, Kittitian, Antiguan, Trinidadian, St.
>
> Thomian, etc.), French lexifier Creoles (St Lucian, Dominican, Haitian, etc.), Caribbean
>
> Spanish (Puerto Rican, Viequense, Dominican, etc.), and United States Standard English

are *each* spoken by over 25 % of the population. As elsewhere in the Caribbean and beyond, a wide variety of other languages are also spoken on St. Croix today.

Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole (VIELC) emerged along with the other colonial era creoles of the Afro-Atlantic, due to the intense contact that arose at that time between speakers of African, European, Indigenous and other languages at the time. Many of the phonological, grammatical, syntactic and pragmatic features of VIELC are very similar to those found in the typologically and genetically related languages of the Atlantic coast of West Africa, but most of the words come from English. For this reason, we refer to VIELC and the many Afro-Atlantic varieties related to it as English lexifier Creoles (LeCompte et al., 2012; Smollet, 2011b).

According to Highfield (1992), prior to the Spanish landing in St. Croix in 1493, Amerindians had been living on the islands of the Caribbean for thousands of years. They left some artifacts and pictographic evidence of their existence, but unfortunately there are few written records of their languages. Smollet (2011b) reports that by the 17th century, the east side of St. Croix (Christiansted) had been settled by the Dutch and a few French, and the west side (Fredericksted) by the English. In 1645, the Dutch governor of St. Croix killed the English governor causing a fight that led to many Dutch and French people leaving the island.

Later on in the same century, the Spanish gained control of the island, and subsequently, the French seized control. From 1657 to 1660, the Dutch established a post and church on St. Thomas, and in 1665 the French West India Company controlled St. Croix. From 1665 to 1666, the Danish West India and Guinea Company settled on St. Thomas, and the French, English, and Dutch joined them. In addition to Denmark and France, several other European nations had West Indian Companies. Their function was to direct the slave trade and the consequent exploitation of the European colonies in the Caribbean. By 1673, African slaves were brought to St. Thomas,

and in 1683 Danes joined the English on St. John. By the end of the 17th century, the French abandoned St. Croix, and in 1718, the British ceded the island of St. John to the Danes. Finally, in 1917, the Virgin Islands were transferred to the United States (De Jesús, 2010).

According to Highfield (1996), some Virgin Islanders believe that the times before the transfer of the islands to the United States were "the good old days," when life under Danish rule was supposedly "milder and more humane". However, Highfield argues that the Danes exploited human labor, indentured and enslaved, just as cruelly as other European colonizers. They participated in a local West Indian slave trade in which slaves were exported from St. Thomas to the western islands of the Caribbean and to St. John and St. Croix, which was becoming a major sugar producer.

During the 17th century, St. Thomas and St. John were Danish colonies. However, their population was mainly Dutch. St. Croix, on the other hand, was mostly populated by English, Irish and Scots. In the 18th century the Danish extended their dominion to St. Croix. Throughout most of the colonial history of the USVI, English has been the preferred language of trade and business, while Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole has been the language used by the majority of the population in daily life. In 1777, the Moravian missionary Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp stated in his *History of the mission of the evangelical brethren on the Caribbean islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John* (as cited in Smollet (2011b; *The Danish West Indies-Sources of History*, n.d.):

> English, German, Danish, Dutch, French, Spanish, and Creole are spoken in these islands. English and High German are the languages with which one can get by everywhere. Creole is spoken by the Negroes, as well as by everyone who has to communicate with them. (1987, Highfield & Barac, Translation, sections1.3.3 & 1.4.9).

With regard to the enslaved Africans' ability to learn languages in their written and spoken form, Oldendorp wrote:

> There are among the Negroes, especially the baptized ones various individuals who can read. In addition, some have learned how to write. Since this is for the most part an entirely non-essential skill and since their good memories suffice to compensate for the lack of such abilities in any event, their efforts are not encouraged in this area. Moreover, their masters look unkindly upon such skills, fearing their possible misuse. (1987, Highfield & Barac, Translation, sections 1.3.3 & 1.4.9).

This statement by Oldendorp powerfully reveals that European colonizers were aware that enslaved Africans were very capable of learning many languages and becoming literate in them and highlights the fear on the part of the colonizers that such learning could lead to their loss of power over the enslaved.

Although standard English is the official language of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and it is used for education, mass media, and government, Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole is the language of national identity (Eberhard, D.M., Simons, G. & Fenning, C.D, *Ethnologue*, 2019). It is widely spoken, vigorous and has two main varieties, Thomian English lexifier Creole, spoken in St. Thomas and Crucian English lexifier Creole, spoken is St. Croix. Negerhollands, a Dutch lexifier Creole previously used on St. Thomas and St. John, was spoken until 1987, the year when its last speaker died. As reported by *Ethnologue,* Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole is spoken not only on St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John, but also on other islands of the Caribbean such as Saba, St. Martin, St. Eustatius, and the British Virgin Islands. In 2013, there were 83,600 speakers of VIELC in all countries, and 59,400 speakers in the Virgin Islands.

Highfield (1992) comments that Spanish has played a major role in the history of the USVI as well as in the enrichment of lexicon of VIELC. Early Spanish explorers first planted the "seed" of Spanish in the islands when they gave many of them Spanish names. Later on, it was the close proximity of the Virgin Islands to Puerto Rico, especially, Vieques and Culebra, that contributed to an increase in the influence of Spanish. Trade and shipping among the islands and human migrations in both directions have played important roles. From the late 19th century onward, Spanish influence has been on the increase, due to migrations, the spread of mass media, and the diffusion of musical traditions from Puerto Rico. It has been estimated that by the 1970s, 35% of the population in St. Croix were Spanish speakers.

Linguistic features of Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole

Pronunciation of VIELC is quite similar to that of other creole languages used in the English-speaking Caribbean and Afro-Atlantic. The following are some phonological features prevalent in VIELC:

/Θ/→/t/ stopping	*thing→ting, three→tree*
/ð/→/d/ stopping	*this→dis*
non rhotic /r/	*water→watah*
/n/→/ ŋ/ final nasal velarization	*down town→dung tung*
/k/, /g/→/kʲ/,/gʲ/ palatalization	*car→cyar, girl→gyul*
/b/→/bʷ/ labialization	*boy→bʷoy*
/t/, /d/ final consonant cluster reduction	*left hand→lef han*
Metathesis	*ask→aks, film, flim*

Table 1. Some phonological features of VIELC (Sources: Vergne, 2017; Smollet, 2011b)

The lexicon of VI English lexifier Creole comes mostly from English, however, as mentioned before, there are influences from a variety of African, European, and Amerindian languages. The following are some examples of commonly used words.

Language of origin	Examples with English definitions
Negerhollands and African languages	*buckra-(white man), kallaloo-(native soup), jumbie-(ghost), pistarckle-(boisterous, stupidness), zamba-(simple bed)*
Taíno, Arawak, Carib (also used in English)	*Guava, iguana, hammock*
French and French lexifier Creole	*Melee-(gossip), j'ouvert-(beginning of carnival)*
Spanish	*coki- (Puerto Rican frog "coqui"), fraico-(refresco)*

Table 2. Some lexical features of VIELC (Sources: Vergne, 2017; Smollet, 2011b; Nero, 2000)

Table 3 shows the different forms of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person pronouns that Virgin Islanders commonly use. These are quite similar to forms found in other English lexifier creoles of the Caribbean and the rest of the Afro-Atlantic (Gonzalez Cotto et al., 2014):

	Subject, singular	Object, singular	Possessive, singular	Subject, plural	Object, plural	Possessive, plural
1st person	Ah, I, me, meh	Me, meh	Me, meh, mines, mines own, my	We, ahwe, allawe	We, ahwe, allawe	We, ahwe, allawe, we own, our, ours
2nd person	Yo, yoh, yuh, you	Yo, yoh, ya, yuh, you	Yo, yoh, ya, yuh, you, yor, yours	Yo, yoh, ya, yuh, you, ayo, ahyo	Yo, yoh, yuh, ya, you, ayo, ahyo	Yo, yoh, yuh, ya, you, yor, yours
3rd person	E, (s), he	E, (s)he, em,um, him/her	E, (s)he, his/her, (s)he own, his/hers own	Deh, dey, dem	Dem	Dem, dey

Table 3. Pronominal system of VIELC (Sources: Vergne, 2017; Smollet, 2011b; Nero, 2000)

Some morphosyntactic features of VIELC compared by Smollet (2011b) and Vergne (2017) with those of Standard English (SE) include those listed in Table 2, which are also found in most of the English lexifier Creoles of the Caribbean and the rest of the Afro-Atlantic:

Feature contrasted with SE:	Example:
SE *to be* or copula is omitted	*ah hungry* "I am hungry"
3rd person *is* used with the first person	*ah is a man* "I am a man"
1st person pronoun sometimes omitted	*wa loney* "I was lonely"
been used as a past marker	*ah bin too fat* "I was too fat"
3rd person present suffix *-s* omitted	*he laugh* "He laughs"
past unmarked on verbs	*when I hear it* "when I heard it"
plural suffix *-s* omitted	*tri guava* "three guavas"
dem plural marker	*sista dem.* "the sisters"

Table 4. Some morphosyntactic features of VIELC (Smollet, 2011b; Vergne, 2017; Nero, 2000)

The written texts below exemplify some additional distinctive features of VIELC:

Text 1:

It don' mek no damn sense…I tyad a people assuming that because I could speak and write formal English that somehow I gat to be from somewhere else. Wha happen? Cruzans too schupid to be able to command the english language? Das wha u tellin me? Dat because I could talk English that I must be from someplace else?

Bona fide. Brudda man. Bahn ya. People dem bahn ya, etc., etc

(Source: http://crucianinfocus.com//.message-to-gov-dejongh-re-stx-administrator)

Text 2 (conversation between Thomian, Crucian and Tortolan):

Thomian 1: Ok, we are aware that Cruzian people are crazy. :D That being said, we also know they speak noticeably different from the folks on the other two Virgin Islands.

Crucian 1: You think we talk bad :laugh: Funny cause I think the same way bout ahyo. When ahyo say "Dallars" *Dollars and ova here.

Thomian 2: wha ah wan to know is why alyou crushian dem have to say dey deh, for example "gyal the bwoy ova dey deh..." St. thomas now we would say "He ova dey." tortola would say "The boi ova yonda some place, try mek he comeback in two-two's..."

Tortolian 1: Which Tolian u know say dah lolololol cause I know it tain me. Dis is wha a Tolian would say "I tink he ova deh"

OR "He ain ova deh mehson" OR "Gah be ova deh"

(Source: http://www.caribplanet.com/community/archive/index.php/t-27794.html)

The status of Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole

As reported by *Ethnologue*, Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole VIELC is a widely used creole language that it is spoken by people of different generations and acquired as a first language. The language is used informally by all generations for face to face communication. It is also rated as being in a sustainable state, meaning that, despite changed circumstances, it continues to be used.

Most Virgin Islanders view VIELC English lexifier Creole as "broken English" or "bad English" in contrast to Standard English which is considered the language of prestige. Some

people of high social and economic status look down on their Creole and consider it the language of the poor and uneducated. Many times parents and teachers pressure their children to learn Standard English instead of VIELC. This is illustrated in the following conversation quoted by Smollet (2011b); *"My question was 'do you remember speaking Creole at home? His response was, 'In my house? My mother was an educated woman.'* This is a clear example of how negative the attitude toward VIELC can be among the general population. However, an increasing number of native Virgin Islanders are embracing the language and taking pride in their home language because they feel it marks them as insiders, rather than outsiders (Smollet, 2011b).

Code switching and mixing varieties is quite common among Virgin Islanders who travel back and forth from the Virgin Islands to the United States. They use the word "yanking," to refer to people who "speak in an imitative way of stateside Americans [Yankees]" (D'Arpa, 2015; Smollet, 2011b). In speech as well as in writing their choice of variety depends on who their audience is. If they are at work, many opt to use Standard American English (SAE), but if at home or among friends, they prefer to use VIELC. Sabino et al. (2003) state, as quoted by D'Arpa (2015), that "members of this speech community are much like speakers everywhere in that they have 'multi-systemic repertoires' that affect but are also affected by daily use of language in social situations" (p. 80). Thanks to close ties inside the communities and a strong social network, VIELC's non-standard syntactic structures and particular lexicon is passed from one generation to the next.

Sabino's et al. study (2003) investigated the choices Virgin Islanders make when pluralizing nouns. The study was premised on the hypothesis that Thomians choose the language to use and the self- image to project based on their understanding of the competence of

the listener to understand their message. Sabino et.al. reviewed local broadcast television shows that ranged from formal to informal. The plural markers they studied included the marker *dem* after the noun, the Standard English plural marker /-s/, and the noun stem. Their research revealed that Thomian speakers displayed a well-developed ability to code-switch, and that the audience had a greater influence on speech than did the type of speech act. As their discourse became more formal, speakers increased the Standard English /-s/ plural marking of definite nouns at a substantially higher rate than they did for indefinite nouns (p.81).

As does Sabino, D'Arpa cites Robert Di Pietro's study of multilingual communities of St. Croix. According to Di Pietro, (as cited by D'Arpa, 2015, p. 82) "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". Di Pietro observed that "in non-occupational and informal contexts between Natives and Continentals, Crucians make an effort to approximate Standard English. However, Thomians feel that a Native's attempt to speak Standard English or speak like a Continental in the wrong social context can inspire derogatory expressions like *"she was yankin"* (p. 82). Di Pietro concluded that bilingual education in English and Spanish and the reinforcement by the media of both languages will cause the Crucian language to be used less and lead to "the demise of diglossia and the spread of bilingualism" (p.82).

D'Arpa refers to the work of Alma Simounet (2005) with regard to language contact in St. Croix. According to Simounet, Crucian English lexifier Creole is a non-standardized language variety of creole origin that is undergoing a shift. Simounet also argues that Spanish in St. Croix is in danger of being lost in favor of English. Simounet's study centers on how religious institutions, such as Pentecostal churches, play an important role in preserving the Spanish language within the migrant community from Puerto Rico. Simounet documented a

considerable amount of code-switching between Crucian English and Puerto Rican Spanish among children who reported that they preferred to speak Crucian among themselves (p.83). Moreover, her adolescent informants informed her that they preferred to be considered Crucians who speak Spanish. In school, they preferred to speak Crucian to "feel part of the group".

D'Arpa (2015) conducted a mini-study to determine how St. Thomians adjust their pronunciation when speaking to visitors in comparison to how they speak to people they perceive as fellow St. Thomians. D'Arpa tried to record spontaneous speech to check for the variability of the phoneme /ɛ/, and the word chosen for the study was *"here."* Of all respondents, regardless of place of origin, "65% of the subjects produced a St. Thomian pronunciation [hɛ] of the token *"here"* when speaking to the interviewer perceived as a local St. Thomian. Equally, 65% of all the respondents (though not all the same 65%) pronounced *'here'* with a St. Thomian pronunciation [hɛ] when speaking to the visitor" (p. 92). According to D'Arpa, 13% of the subjects changed from a more standardized form to a creole form when answering a follow-up question from the interviewer perceived as a visitor.

D'Arpa (2015) also reported that when the data were separated for those who identified themselves as St. Thomian, "70% of St. Thomians used an authentic St. Thomian pronunciation of [hɛ] when responding to a person perceived to be local. The remaining 30% of St. Thomians pronounced some other variation when speaking to a perceived local". The variations included "[hɪr], [hr], [heə]" (p.92-93). D' Arpa's study revealed that of all St. Thomians interviewed, "60% produced the St. Thomian vowel pronunciation [hɛ] when responding to the perceived visitor; this represents 10% fewer occurrences of the same pronunciation as compared to that spoken to a fellow native" (p. 93). The correlation of audience/listener showed that "60% of the speakers changed their pronunciation between speaking to the local and speaking to the visitor,

while in 40% of the instances the St. Thomian respondent seemed to make no change in speech, regardless of the listener. Only 30% of St. Thomian speakers shifted toward the Standard when speaking to the visitor" (p. 93). It may be that the pronunciation /hɛ/ functions as a marker of identity, and this may explain the discrepancy between Sabino et al. (2003) and D'Arpa's results, in terms of the importance of accommodating the listener.

Language, attitudes and education in the U.S. Virgin Islands

In the Virgin Islands, Standard American English is the language taught in the classrooms. Smollet (2011b) states (quoting from the *Resource Guide to the Culture of the U. S. Virgin Islands*, *1973-1974 [draft copy]*), "in the past some teachers have caused their students to be ashamed of the way they speak at home. To do this, and to constantly correct them, is to ensure that they will "clam up" and become virtually inarticulate. Instead, Virgin Islanders should be respected for their bilingual ability" (slide, 39). Additionally, Smollet affirms that Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole should not be considered a poor version of Standard American English, just as stateside Americans wouldn't feel pleased if SAE was considered a poor version of British English. VIELC is a legitimate language that is related to English, but separate since it is a direct descendant of West African languages (slide, 39).

Regarding St. Croix, Torres Santiago (2009) states that receiving education in one's own mother tongue is effective for language learning because one's native language is linked to one's identity and community. According to Torres Santiago, authorities suggest that children be taught in their home language during their first two to five years of school, and then the transition into the official language instruction can begin. It is thought that after this period of

instruction in the child's native tongue, the child will have developed the cognitive skills

necessary for engaging in the learning of the dominant language (Standard English). Also, the

child will have developed a sense of self and identity that will make the learning of a second

language more meaningful. McCourtie (1998) (as cited in Torres Santiago, 2009, p. 30) suggests

that:

1. The resources of both languages (mother tongue and standard) be utilized in the
   learning process;

2. The mother tongue be used initially to facilitate students' transition into the standard;

3. More teachers be trained in bilingual education, and;

4. The teachers who are bilingual in the mother tongue as well as English be assigned to
   teach at the early primary level.

Also, Siegel (2006) (cited in Torres Santiago, 2009, p.30) lists the following benefits of

integrating the vernacular in early instruction:

1. It is easier to learn to write and read in one's mother tongue and then transfer these
   skills to the standard language.

2. Using the vernacular facilitates the level of self-expression needed for cognitive
   development.

3. The teacher will become aware of the complexed nature of the students' mother
   tongue and, therefore, develop a positive attitude towards it.

4. Using the vernacular can increase motivation for learning and self-esteem.

Other researchers cited by Torres Santiago (p. 31) differ in their opinions. McWhorter (1997)

questions the effectiveness of using the vernacular as a tool for second language acquisition. He

believes there is no evidence that using the vernacular will help a student acquire a second language. Gupta (1997), feels that using the mother tongue will promote ethnic separation.

In St. Croix, as on other Caribbean islands, the use of creole language in schools is not well regarded. Educators tend to have a very negative attitude toward the use of Crucian in schools. To demonstrate this, Torres Santiago reports (2009, p. 37) that a professor from the University of the Virgin Islands once stated online that the performance of students in writing was very low because in school they were allowed to use Creole for writing. Torres Santiago affirms that most people in St. Croix are not aware that the use of the vernacular in the classroom would not have a negative effect on the students' performance in English and, on the contrary, could promote learning it. However, schools continue to insist on promoting Standard English over the use of Crucian in the classroom.

Torres Santiago (2009, p.38) mentions two basic beliefs that lead parents and teachers to reject the use of Crucian in the classroom:

1. That learning in Crucian will take away time from the learning of SE, and

2. That using the Creole will interfere with their learning of SE

Crucian is greatly stigmatized by the community in general. Torres Santiago (2009) remembers that once a Crucian told her that "Crucian is not a language." Meanwhile, the students in St. Croix continue suffering the consequences of a lack of sound language planning in schools, and their poor performance on tests is blamed instead on parents and teachers. Although students are routinely pressured to learn and speak SE, they continue graduating from high school with a low mastery of basic English skills. Torres Santiago believes that there is covert resistance to SE, since Crucian youth tend to avoid it, but in contrast, they are always ready to

speak Crucian at home, with friends, and in their communities. This demonstrates that Crucian has considerable covert prestige. Unfortunately, according to Torres Santiago, this stigmatizing of Crucian has created feelings of inferiority among students in schools and in society. She believes that recognizing students' home language as a legitimate language could help them develop the skills that they need to succeed academically and professionally.

In spite of the evidence available that points to the fact that using Crucian as a language of instruction can be a beneficial strategy for learning SE, many Crucian teachers refuse to embrace it. They insist on avoiding and discouraging the use of Crucian for fear that it will interfere with the proper learning of Standard English. Sadly, Crucian is dismissed as the language of the uneducated. Educators persist in propagating the idea that if students continue speaking Crucian, this will lessen both their possibilities of being admitted to universities in the United States as well as their ability to be understood by U.S. students.

Torres Santiago reports on a 2006 study by Amezaga, Cruz and Sosa which investigated language attitudes prevalent among Crucian teachers. They found that teachers express significant ambivalence regarding the Crucian language because teachers are willing to use it in informal contexts with their students, but not in the classroom (p. 41). Torres Santiago suggests teachers should become familiar with different codes and make an effort to avoid being judgmental about different language varieties. Appreciation of Crucian and its integration in the classroom could lead to a smoother transition to the learning of the standard forms.

There have been some experimental bilingual education programs in St. Croix; however, none have been implemented on a large scale. There is a lot of apprehension about integrating students' home language into formal education, due to it having a low status in the community. The primary goal of the Department of Education in St. Croix is to ensure that students acquire

the necessary skills for oral and written communication in the Standard English from the very early grades until the twelfth grade. Crucian is not included in the curriculum because it is considered to be a language with no educational utility and, therefore, not useful for achieving the local and national standards imposed on the schools.

According to Torres Santiago (2009), multilingualism should be considered seriously in the schools in St. Croix (p. 43). Citing Hamers and Blanc (2000, p. 92), Torres Santiago lists some of the benefits of multilingual instruction for Crucian students in terms of:

1. advantages in verbal and non-verbal tasks
2. advanced metalinguistic abilities
3. verbal creativity
4. awareness of the arbitrariness of language and the relations between words, referent and meanings
5. perception of linguistic ambiguity

Because negative attitudes toward the Crucian language have caused many Crucian students to develop a sense of inferiority, they lose the confidence and self-esteem necessary for their future academic success.

Torres Santiago (2009) suggests that teachers and policy makers "create programs that integrate Crucian Creole into the curriculum and reject negative attitudes and linguistic ignorance." (p. 45) It is of utmost importance that schools start selecting books and other materials that promote Crucian culture and language positively in order to equip students with strong cultural values and positive attitudes toward school.

There have been a few initiatives which have attempted to integrate VIELC into the educational system. According to Smollet (2011b), these include: Karen Ellis's book *Domino* for

primary schools (1978), a compilation of 60 traditional children's songs, proverbs and culture

from the Virgin Islands, Joseph Lisowski's *In the Mother Tongue* for high school (1988), and

more recently Robin Stern's *Say it in Crucian,* a complete guide to VIELC as used by today's

young people that includes phrases, the basic linguistics of VIELC, stories, retold fairytales, and

other interesting material related to Crucian history and culture (slide 40) . *Say it in Crucian* is

appropriate for students at the university level. Students who have participated in these projects

have reported that they were delighted to be able to use their mother tongue in the classroom and

that learning was much more meaningful to them when they used their home language.

Pragmatics and politeness in the U.S. Virgin Islands

As we all know, language is essential for human communication and social interaction.

To study language, it is necessary to pay attention to the context in which such interaction takes

place. According to Heffelfinger (2017), context has been defined as "any relevant features of

dynamic setting or environment in which a linguistic unit is systematically used" (p. 1).

Pragmatics is the study of the use and meaning of language in context. This relatively new

academic field started to grow as a discipline when schools of language philosophy shifted their

attention to the concrete aspect of language instead of its abstract usage (Heffelfinger, 2017, p. 1-

2). Pragmatics is the study of how messages transmitted through a sentence go beyond the mere

sum of the meaning of the parts of that sentence. For example, any specific sentence may carry a

different meaning when used in different contexts, when used by different people or on different

occasions. In addition, sentences that are structurally different may convey the same meaning.

There is a difference between the structure and the intention of a sentence, and this results in

varied reactions from the audience. According to Heffelfinger, pragmatics draws attention to the

function of language for creating meaning, "transforming reality and acting upon the world in various ways".

Exchanges between two persons involve verbal and nonverbal strategies that mobilize phonological, grammatical, lexical, gestural and other resources. Pragmatics studies how speakers formulate and deploy appropriate speech acts (requests, apologies, greetings, etc.) in specific contexts. One area that has received much attention from specialists in pragmatics is politeness, which is prototypically utilized to promote cooperation and harmonious relations between interlocutors.

According to Meyerhoff (2006), politeness may be defined as "the actions taken by competent speakers in a community in order to attend to possible social or interpersonal disturbance" (p. 82). Politeness is a socio-cultural phenomenon that was not widely studied until the 1970's, when Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson published their first edition of *Politeness: Some Universals in language usage* (1987 in Heffelfinger, 2019). Brown and Levinson (1987) believe the study of politeness across cultures is of great importance to the socio-linguistic field because "patterns of message construction, or 'ways of putting things', or simply language usage, are part of the very stuff that social relationships are made of…" (p.55), or in other words, are a central part of social relations.

Brown and Levinson adopted into their theoretical framework the concept of face which derives from the work of Erving Goffman. In the words of Goffman (1967), face is "the positive value a person claims for himself…" and "an image of self- delineated in terms of social attributes…" (p. 5). Face contributes to the construction of self, and in turn, they influence each other (Heffelfinger, 2019, p.5; Simounet de Geigel, 1990). Brown and Levinson propose that politeness strategies are used to diminish face threatening acts, caused by speech acts such as

requests, commands, disagreements, among others, and define face threatening acts as "those acts that by their nature run contrary to the *face wants* of the addressee and/or of the speaker…by a verbal or non-verbal communication" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 65; Heffelfinger, 2019, p.5)

As stated by Brown and Levinson, there is a positive face and a negative face. Positive face represents our desire to be liked by and have a connection with others, to have their approval and empathy, while negative face corresponds to our need for autonomy, independence, and be "unimpeded by others" (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Meyerhoff, 2006; Simounet de Geigel, 1990). Our "*face wants* are the desire to protect our *positive* and *negative face*" (Meyerhoff, 2006, p. 84, Brown & Levinson, 1987 in Heffelfinger, 2019), and these wants together with the politeness strategies we use, are determined "by our socio-cultural patterns, values and belief systems" and "social and contextual variables" (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 5).

The strategy used to create solidarity and friendliness between addresser and addressee is called positive politeness. On the other hand, the strategy used to avoid offence by showing deference and respect is called negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Meyerhoff, 2006; Heffelfinger, 2019). The striving for creating a connection with others (positive face), and the want for avoiding imposition from others and have a sense of autonomy (negative face), are "actively negotiated, co-constructed and reconstructed through discursive practices as part of a speaker's constant effort to create meaning" (Heffelfinger, 2019, p.31). Speakers constantly engage in face threatening acts (FTA). For instance, actions such as complaining, using aggressive language and making interruptions are threats to positive face. Threats to negative face, however, occur when speakers order, request, use expressions of envy, among other speech acts.

Brown and Levinson propose five strategies that speakers engage in when they believe they have to commit a face threatening act. Speakers can: "(i) go *bald on record*, (ii) use *positive politeness* strategies, (iii) use *negative politeness*, [or] (iv) go *off-record* or not do the *FTA"* (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 31; Brown & Levinson, 1987). To go bald on record means that the speaker does not "soften" his or her utterance by the use of any politeness strategy. In this case no redressive action is taken to minimize damage to addressee's face. This type of FTA usually happens between parties in which there is an unequal relationship where the speaker holds more power over addressee (Heffelfinger, 2019, p.32; Meyerhoff, 2006).

When speakers use positive politeness they go *on record*, but use redress to minimize the threat to *face*. As speakers use this strategy, "they show attention to and concern for the other's *face*" (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 32). Therefore, positive politeness strategies are characterized by a desire to avoid offence, highlighting friendliness, solidarity and empathy (Meyerhoff, 2006; Heffelfinger, 2019) and include the following (H represents the hearer and S represents the speaker): (i) *notice, attend to H (his interests, wants, needs, goods),* (ii) *exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H),* (iii) *intensify interest to H,* (iv) *use in-group identity markers,* (v) *seek agreement,* (vi) *avoid disagreement,* (vii) *presuppose/raise/assert common ground,* (viii) *joke,* (ix) *assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants,* (x) *offer, promise,* (xi) *be optimistic,* (xii) *include both S and H in the activity,* (xiii) *give or (ask for) reasons,* (xiv) *assume or assert reciprocity,* (xv) *give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)* (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 101-129).

On the other hand, through negative politeness strategies speakers "attempt to comply with the other's negative face wants by showing deference, respect, formality and distance" (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 32). These include the following: (i) *be conventionally indirect*, (ii)

question, hedge, (iii) *be pessimistic*, (iv) *minimize the imposition,* (v) *give deference*, (vi)
apologize, (vii) *impersonalize S and H*, (viii) *state the FTA as a general rule*, (ix) *nominalize*, (x)
go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 129-210).

If speakers choose to go *off-record*, the strategies they can use are: (i) *give hints*, (ii) *give
association clues*, (iii) *presuppose*, (iv) *understate*, (v) *overstate*, (vi) *use tautologies*, (vii) *use
contradictions*, (viii) *be ironic*, (ix) *use metaphors*, (x) *use rhetorical questions*, (xi) *be
ambiguous*, (xii) *be vague*, (xiii) *over generalize*, (xiv) *displace H*, (xv) *be incomplete, use
ellipsis* (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 211-227).

Proponents of postcolonial pragmatics, Eric Anchimbe and Richard Janney (2010)
present a culturally relevant approach to the study of pragmatic behavior in postcolonial
communities around the world. They discuss Brown and Levinson's concepts of *politeness* and
face, discourse markers, speech acts, social roles, verbal strategies across languages and naming
and name avoidance as applied to postcolonial societies. According to the authors, their
approach to the study of pragmatics seeks to focus attention on the variant features and cultural
significance of postcolonial pragmatic practices. Their approach is a useful one for the study of
politeness in colonial and neo-colonial societies, such as those of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

A study on politeness in St. Croix

As part of her doctoral dissertation, Heffelfinger (2019) conducted a study in which she
collected, analyzed and then compared conversational data from radio stations on the islands of
St. Eustatius, St. Croix and Barbados. For St. Croix she recorded two conversations from the
station *WSTX (970 AM),* two from *WDHP- The Reef (1620 AM / 103.5 FM)* and one from *Isle*

95 (95.1 FM). The conversations took place on different days of the week and at different times. The three conversations dealt with current affairs related to politics, the arts, and education, among others. Depending on the topic covered, the tone of the conversations ranged from casual and friendly to quite tense. The format of the shows was either interview or call-in. The interviews were rather formal and call-in shows spontaneous and casual. (Heffelfinger, 2019, p.86)

In her study there were 20 males and 13 females. Most of the hosts and callers were male. In both interview shows, the interviewees were women. Women mostly participated in conversations about family and education, while men expressed themselves on topics related to agriculture and political matters. According to Heffelfinger (2019) there were no marked differences related to age. However, older speakers, both male and female, seemed inclined to listen to shows on political matters. The young adult audience preferred listening to FM stations, whereas, the older public preferred AM stations. Most speakers were in the age range of 35-64 (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 157-158), and were members of the Crucian community who were well acquainted with their addressees (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 87).

According to Heffelfinger (2019), speakers in St. Croix used the same positive politeness (PP) strategies as the speakers she recorded in St. Eustatius. However, in her study, Crucians utilized a greater variety of negative politeness (NP) strategies in comparison to Statians. Heffelfinger presents a number of excerpts of conversations to illustrate the politeness strategies used by the speakers.

Positive politeness strategies such as greetings and leave-takings are, in the Eastern Caribbean context, "face-boosting acts (FBA), also known as, face-enhancing acts (FEA)"

(Heffelfinger, 2019, p.16) Many of these strategies consisted of exaggerated praise, as demonstrated in the following excerpt (the letter 'M' at the end of a speaker identifier code indicates a male speaker, while the letter 'F' at the end of a speaker identifier code indicates a female speaker):

> (61) *C1-01* (example numbering and coding from the original Heffelfinger 2019)
>
> H1$_M$: So today / you know / we have the wonderful↑ / you know / {GF's full name}↑ //
>
> G$_F$: ((chuckles))
>
> H1$_M$: We'd like to say that she's an act--- art activist↑ / teacher↑ / you know / so we're gonna go ahead and have a <u>very nice conversation</u> today uh: pertaining to that matter↑ … Let's try to stay focused on the topics we're talking about today / so we can get the MOST out of this <u>wonderful experience</u> of having <u>a guest with so much knowledge</u> uh::--- you know / here // So I'd like to turn over the uh microphone to the two people we have in the studio↑ …

The excerpt above features some of the positive politeness (PP) strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson that "*attend to the addressee's interests, wants, needs, and goods,* and *exaggerate interest, approval, or empathy*" (Heffelfinger, 2019. p. 88). These are evident in the phrases "a very nice conversation" and "a guest with so much knowledge" (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 88). Also, in that same conversation, hyperbolic modifiers (e.g. "wonderful experience") were used that have the effect of a FBA/FEA, and pay attention to the addressee's positive *face*. Both strategies were commonly used by men as well as women (Heffelfinger, 2019, p.89).

In another exchange between the host (male) and a caller (male), the host "engages in PP not only through his lexical choices, but also by his use of paralinguistic features (emphatic stress, loud volume, and chuckles) which…*intensifies interest to his addressee"* (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 89). In the same conversation "the address term 'beloved' is used, which acts as an *in-group marker* and conveys solidarity and endearment" (Heffelfinger, 2019, p.89).

Many Crucians customarily codeswitch from Standard English to Crucian English lexifier Creole and vice versa, and use popular sayings. This way they mark *in-group membership* (Heffelfinger, 2019, p.90), as in the example below:

> (62) C2-01 (example numbering and coding from the original Heffelfinger 2019)
>
> H$_M$: And when--- <u>WHEN dem ting decide that</u> / "HEY / I ain't goin' no
>
> MORE" / <u>it's like a mule in the middle of the ROAD!</u> //

> (64) C6-01 (example numbering and coding from the original Heffelfinger 2019)
>
> C$_M$ (to audience and H$_M$): Start out simply! // <u>Grow your own little chives</u> //
>
> Chives is very easy to grow // … It would make a difference when--- you
>
> know / {H's first name} / they say <u>"one one coco full a basket"</u> //

In one of Heffelfinger's excerpts (63) the host tries to apologize and "offer an explanation" since there was a technical difficulty in the studio. He does this by switching to CELC and adding a simile. This in turn "has the effect of communicating solidarity and empathy to the audience" (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 90). Brown and Levinson (1987) classify figurative language as an off-record strategy, but in this case it is clearly used as a PP strategy. According

to Heffelfinger (2019), in excerpt (64) the expression "one one coco full a basket" is a popular saying in CELC that means "little by little" and "little chives" is an affectionate expression that draws speakers closer. These are both examples in which idioms mark in-group identity (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 90).

As recounted by Heffelfinger (2019), speakers used a variety of PP markers to minimize the effect of a *bald on-record* FTA. In one of the exchanges recorded by Heffelfinger between a male host and a female caller, the conversation became charged with many interruptions, disagreement and even sarcasm. There was little redressing to speakers' *face* (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 94). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), sarcasm is considered impolite and an *off-record* strategy. However, Heffelfinger (2019) states "in this case, the host combines his sarcastic remarks with the *bald-on-record* FTA 'I ain't goin'there with you!' which expresses overt disagreement" (p.94). The moderator also "chuckles" at times, which according to Heffelfinger, "implies that he wants to avoid controversy with his addressee" (p.94), therefore, becoming a PP paralinguistic strategy. By the end of the conversation, the host engages in PP fully by using exaggeration, jokes, in-group markers, and agreement for the purpose of ending the call pleasantly. In a subsequent conversation the same person calls and uses the term "beloved" repeatedly, "thereby asserting common ground and marking in-group membership" (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 95). Interestingly, for Crucian speakers, having disagreements or confrontations "does not interfere with their sense of bonding and solidarity as members of the same community" (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 95).

Another commonly used strategy was to include both the speaker and the addressee. In another excerpt recorded by Heffelfinger, a speaker utters the following words: "I want us/uh the viewing audience and the listening audience/ let's start thinking about the ag fair as the

biggest art contest and competition in all the V.I. //…" (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 97). As explained

by Heffelfinger (2019), the host uses the first person plural pronoun to communicate a sense of

unity between him and his audience.

Additionally, speakers used the strategy of giving gifts. As stated by Heffelfinger (2019),

this strategy "included greetings and leave-takings (often considered a social requirement but

also a strategy to promote solidarity and bonding), well wishes, expressions of gratitude" (p.98).

The author also noticed "the incorporation of blessings *as part of greetings and leave taking*

routines" (p. 98). According to Heffelfinger (2019), "among the least common PP strategies

were *making offers and promises* and *being optimistic"* (p. 96).

Heffelfinger (2019) also reports on the negative politeness strategies used by the hosts and

callers in her study. She found that conventional indirectness is one of the preferred mechanisms

used by speakers. Conventional indirectness was accomplished by "the use of a variety of modal

verbs, interrogation and conditional forms" (p. 99), as illustrated below.

(74) *C5-01* (example numbering and coding from the original Heffelfinger 2019)

H1$_M$: You know / <u>I'd like to</u> share another story with you…

(75) *C1-01* (example numbering and coding from the original Heffelfinger 2019)

H2$_M$ (to G$_F$): <u>Can you</u> get into <u>some</u> deeper detail for the audience that

they wasn't previously in that conversation? … <u>Can you</u> go into <u>some</u>

detail? //

As stated by Heffelfinger (2019), when speech acts are used to achieve politeness strategies, they

"acquire a different locutionary and illocutionary force" (p. 99). According to Austin (1962) and

as cited by Heffelfinger (2019), "*locutionary force* refers to the basic linguistic structure and literal

meaning of a word or group of words, whereas, *illocutionary force* refers to the actual intention of the utterance" (p.2). Therefore, the actual intention of the morpho-syntactic structures underlined in excerpts (74) and (75) is completely different from their literal meaning.

Also, in example (75) Heffelfinger (2019) illustrates the use of the indeterminate quantifier "some", considered to be a *hedge*. A *hedge* diminishes the threat of a request by not being too direct or specific. Heffelfinger (2019) states that 'adverbs such as…"really", "possibly", "maybe"…and discourse markers such as "well" and "like"' (p. 99) are a few examples of *hedges* speakers in St. Croix commonly use. The sample below from excerpt (76) illustrates their use of *hedges*.

(76) *C3-01* (example numbering and coding from the original Heffelfinger 2019)

H1$_M$ (to fellow hosts): We didn't hear from the brothers! //

- H2$_F$: Yeah! // Y'all <u>kinda</u>

dead / I ain't gon' lie! //

…

H1$_M$: ((hoarse, deep voice)) Hey dudes / you guys can call in! // ((normal voice)) I mean / because / you know / when it comes to <u>like</u> child--- children / and then you talk about being responsible for your child and / you know / that <u>kinda</u> stuff / <u>well</u>… they don't <u>really</u> call in much //

Heffelfinger also presents examples of Crucian speakers' use of expressions to minimize imposition. According to Heffelfinger (2019) a speaker minimizes imposition when using expressions that '"indicate small size or short time", for example, "a little bit", "just", "only", among others' (p. 100). In another excerpt a female caller uses "just" and "lil' thing" several times during the conversation. From her examination of all of her data, Heffelfinger (2019) concludes

that minimizing imposition as an NP strategy is widely used in St. Croix by people of all ages and genders.

Additionally, Heffelfinger described speakers' tendency of giving deference and offering apologies as an NP strategy. For the purpose of being deferential, speakers used "respectful forms of address such as 'title and last name', 'title and full name', 'job title' (eg. "doctor"), 'job title and last name', 'job title and full name' and 'sir'" (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 101). As reported by Heffelfinger (2019), "participants employed deference regardless of gender, but it was infrequent among younger speakers" (p. 102). When offering apologies, speakers' intention was to minimize the *face* threat to the hearer, but at times, they also served the purpose of saving the speaker's own face. In one of the conversations sampled by the author, the host apologizes for a computer malfunction that caused the conversation to be interrupted. The host obviously did not have any control over the computer mishap, therefore, he saved his own face (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 102). The author also provides some examples of additional NP strategies, such as offering apologies, impersonalization, nominalization, and stating an FTA as a general rule (Heffelfinger, 2019, p. 102-104).

Brief study of politeness in St. Croix in radio discourse

I conducted a limited study in which I recorded and analyzed a conversation between two hosts and a caller on radio station WSTX 970 AM St. Croix. My objective was to examine participants' use of politeness strategies in spontaneous conversation on a radio call-in show, and begin to answer to the following questions: (i) Are politeness strategies as described by Brown and Levinson frequently used by Crucians in the context of a radio interaction?, and (ii) Would I

find in my sample some of the same politeness strategies reported by Heffelfinger (2019) in her study?

Previous to my study, in consultation with Cristal Heffelfinger, I downloaded the Audacity digital audio editor and recording application software, which was of great help in improving sound quality, minimizing interference and facilitating the editing process. She also helped me to identify various radio stations on the island of St. Croix. After reviewing the shows available on April 22, 2020 I decided to record approximately one hour of conversation on a morning broadcast on WSTX 970 AM.

In the radio conversation that I recorded, two male radio show hosts are talking about the novel COVID-19 virus, commenting about the various symptoms people with the disease experience, and how different COVID-19 is from influenza.   They receive a call-in from a person (male) who disagrees with some of the statements they are making. Below, I present an excerpt from the conversation that illustrates some prevalent politeness strategies used by speakers in St. Croix in the context of a radio conversation:

Excerpt (1)

H1$_M$: Good morning/ caller! //

C$_M$: Good morning//

H1$_M$: Yes/yes/hello//

C$_M$: Hello//

C_{M:} uhm/Did you say that this virus is not like the flu?//Actually/ do they say that

anymore?/and I don't think they can say that anymore because all over places they've

been saying it's exactly like the flu…

H1_M (to H2_M): Yes/well/You wanna comment that?//(the caller had referenced

specifically what H2 had said about COVID-19 disease)

H2_{M:} Yeah/I'm gonna say I'm not in a position// I'm not a virologist/so you know/but

what I do ↑ know is that genetically they can/they can DISTINGUISH COVID-19 from

the flu virus/so it's/it's a distinct/uh:: entity//

C_{M:}   I--I--I know…//

(caller continues his argument)

H2_{M:} No/I'm just gonna say that your comments are---are there/and I'm not really going

to particularly comment on that//

In excerpt (1) the caller (male) goes bald on record on expressing his disagreement with the host

regarding the nature of the novel Coronavirus disease. I believe that this caller's statement could

be interpreted as an FTA to both negative and positive face since it clearly threatens the hosts'

desire to have their wants, feelings and opinions approved and shared by others, but also could

be perceived as an imposition of his viewpoint on the hosts. According to Brown and Levinson

(1987) "there is an overlap (in the classification of FTA's), because some FTA's intrinsically

threaten both negative and positive face" (p. 67). There is little redress in the caller's

affirmation, but still, he starts his statement with the "paralinguistic feature 'uhm' "

(Heffelfinger, 2019, p.99), which counts as a prosodic hedge (Brown & Levinson, 1987), a negative politeness strategy, since it conveys tentativeness or hesitation.

Host 1 opts to avoid confronting the caller with another FTA, and instead requests that Host 2 respond to the caller's question, which constitutes a FTA to Host 2's negative face, since he is ordering Host 2 to confront the caller instead. Host 1 uses negative politeness to redress this FTA by means of a hedge ('yes' with a rising intonation), a discourse marker ("well") (Heffelfinger, 2019, p.37) and a question ("You wanna comment that?"). This last device is an example of the NP strategy of conventional indirectness, because it has a different illocutionary force (ordering) than that normally associated with a question (asking). The overall effect of these NP strategies is to soften the request by conveying hesitation and indirectness.

Host 2 then goes on to disagree with the caller, which can be seen as a FTA to the caller's positive face. Host 2 starts by redressing this FTA by using the positive politeness strategy of levelling the field between himself and the caller by denying any expert positioning on the subject which might exclude the caller, and asserting common ground with the caller instead when he says "I'm not in a position// I'm not a virologist". In response, the caller also asserts common ground when he responds to Host 2 with "I know", a positive politeness expression of sympathy.

Later in the conversation, Host 2 remains firm in his disagreement with caller, yet by means of a positive politeness strategy designed to avoid disagreement with the caller Host 2 says: "I'm just gonna say that your comments are/are there/and I'm not really going to particularly comment on that". Additionally, H2 uses the adverb "just" in his statement, which minimizes imposition, as well as the hedges "really" and "particularly" all of which serve as negative politeness tools.

Excerpt (2)

H2 (to caller): The <u>only</u> comment I would have is that---<u>uh</u> you say that it's a lot like the

flu---<u>uh</u> but---<u>uh</u>--- but the medical practitioners that are dealing with this thing---I've not

really heard people saying or describing it as a lot like the flu/so you know---<u>uhm</u>

C_{M:}   <u>Right/but if you go---if you go</u>/on

the CDC (Center for Disease Control) website and you look up what they have there on

the flu/everything they talk about with COVID-19/you have them with the flu…<u>I'm not</u>

<u>saying they're exactly the same thing</u>/<u>but they're very much alike</u>…<u>I just</u>…

H1_{M:} All right (H1 interrupts)

(caller continues his argument)

H1_{M:} Ok/<u>we'll love to check that out</u>//ok/<u>man</u>/thank you for the call-in// (.)

H1_M: <u>Well</u>(.)One thing I could say…/ <u>It might have some flu like symptoms</u>/ but it's

<u>mo::re serious than the flu</u>/<u>It's like the flu taken to the tenth power</u>

In excerpt (2) although Host 2 reiterates his disagreement with the caller, he uses some redress

by minimizing imposition, through the use of the adverb "only" at the beginning of his utterance,

and by use of a prosodic hedge, "uhh" several times, both NP strategies.

The caller interrupts H2 (*FTA* to Host 2's positive *face*) and restates his disagreement, but

with some mitigation by saying, "I'm not saying they're exactly the same thing/but they're very

much alike…I just…" which can be seen as an instance of the positive politeness strategy of

asserting common ground with H2.

Then Host 1 interrupts the caller, but Host 1 mitigates this FTA to the caller's negative face with the positive politeness strategy of offers and promises: "All Right. Ok/we'll love to check that out". This is a positive politeness strategy "that demonstrates S (speaker's) good intentions in satisfying H (hearer's) positive face wants" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.125). Host 1 also uses the positive politeness strategies of exaggerating interest to addressee when he uses the word "love" to exaggerate his interest in hearing what the caller has to say, as well as when he uses the pronoun form 'we' to include the addressee in the same group as the speaker. Another positive politeness strategy used by Host 1 here is that of in-group markers, evident when Host 1 addresses the caller as "Ok/man". Once again, Host 1 uses the discourse marker "well" at the beginning of his statement, which as mentioned before, conveys hesitation or tentativeness, a negative politeness strategy.

After the conversation with caller has ended, Host 1 repeats his disagreement with caller, but mitigates this FTA to the caller's positive face (excluding the caller from the in-group) and negative face (imposing another point of view on the caller) by using the positive politeness strategy of asserting common ground with the caller by saying, "It might have some flu like symptoms/". This sentence can also be interpreted as an instance of the positive politeness strategy of attend to the caller's interests, wants, needs and goods. But this statement functions as well as a potential FTA to Host 2's positive and negative faces, because it initially could be interpreted as at least in partial disagreement with Host 2. To redress this potential FTA, Host 1 restates his agreement with H2 using the positive politeness strategy of exaggeration when he says "but it's mo::re serious than the flu/It's like the flu taken to the tenth power".

When comparing my findings with those of Heffelfinger (2019) I found that in my sample there are eight positive politeness strategies that speakers used that were also found in

Heffelfinger's samples from St. Croix. These were: (i) exaggerating interest in addressee, (ii) seeking agreement, (iii) avoiding disagreement, including its use as a device for ending current controversy, (iv) asserting in-group membership (through markers), (v) asserting common ground, (vi) including both, the speaker and the addressee, (vii) attending to the addressee's interests, wants, needs and goods and (viii) offers and promises. In Heffelfinger's excerpts, the instances of seeking agreement, avoiding disagreement and asserting common ground were characterized by short morpho-syntactic structures and in-group marker lexicon such as "you know that", "we'll see" and "beloved" (in-group marker).   In my sample, with the exception of the short expression, "I know", most of the examples of these strategies consisted of longer sentences that conveyed the intention of avoiding disagreement, seeking agreement and asserting common ground.

Another positive politeness strategy found in Heffelfinger's work that also occurred in my sample was in-group markers. Among the in-group markers found in Heffelfinger's work, are address terms such as "beloved", "darling" and "my dear", and various idioms (eg. "little chives"). In my sample there is only one such in-group marker used, the short expression "ok/man" which is typically used among men. Offers and promises are another positive politeness strategy found in both Heffelfinger's sample ("so we'll have her on at a later moment") and my own ("We'll love to check that out"). Both of these instances share the contraction of "we will" denoting that something is "offered" or "promised" for the future and both use the pronoun 'we' to convey that the caller belongs to the same group as the speaker. Only two politeness strategies that were present in Heffelfinger's samples were absent in my limited sample: (i) giving gifts, and (ii) being optimistic.

There were three negative politeness strategies present in both, Heffelfinger's sample and my sample. These were: (i) conventional indirectness, (ii) hedges (adverbs, discourse markers, paralinguistic features) and, (iii) minimizing imposition. Conventional indirectness strategies were characterized in Heffelfinger's samples by modal verbs and conditional forms, such as "Can you?", "I'd like to", and in my sample by interrogative forms such as, "you wanna comment that?" Hedges were prevalent in my sample as well as Heffelfinger's. They consisted of adverbs, (e.g. "really"), discourse markers, (e.g. "well"), and paralinguistic features such as "uhm" and "uh". Minimizing imposition occurred in both samples in the form of adjectives and adverbs such as "only" and "just". Negative politeness strategies not evident in my sample were: (i) giving deference, (ii) offering apologies, (iii) impersonalization, (iv) nominalization, (v) FTA as a general rule, and (vi) not indebting H (hearer).

My findings for the most part concur with those of Heffelfinger (2019). Positive politeness strategies were predominant in my sample, in addition to face enhancing/boosting acts. Positive politeness tools involved the use of a variety of paralinguistic, morphosyntactic, lexical and discursive devices which were used to promote bonding and in-group solidarity.

Conclusion

As we gain greater understanding of Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole's syntactic, phonological, lexical and pragmatic richness, it becomes easier to abandon inherited biases and realize that it is of utmost importance to work with the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands toward maintaining their ancestral creole languages. The stigmatization of Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole has fueled social divisions in the U.S. Virgin Islands, which are evident in language attitudes toward VIELC, especially in formal contexts. This stigmatization is

especially evident in the classroom, where it has become responsible not only for feelings of inferiority among the population, but also for deficiencies in reading and writing skills among many U.S. Virgin Islands high school graduates, who experience difficulties in reaching their academic and professional goals.

There is a pressing need for radical changes in the educational system, in terms of policy, teacher training, curriculum and materials, all of which should embrace and promote Virgin Islands culture and language. Only then will the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands adopt more positive attitudes toward Virgin Islands English lexifier Creole, which could transform them into a culturally and linguistically empowered community of speakers. There are already glimmers of hope, because more and more people are embracing the language and working toward promoting it. A growing number of scholars, researchers, and community leaders are becoming involved in campaigns designed to increase awareness among the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands of the value of VIELC, so that they can successfully embrace both their creole language and the standard language and thus both appreciate and benefit from the advantages of living in a multilingual society.

My findings in my limited study of politeness on St. Croix yielded results that generally confirm those arrived at by Heffelfinger (2019). To conclude, I concur with Heffelfinger (p. 357) that it is crucial that in our academic study of politeness in the Eastern Caribbean we take into account their multiplicity of languages, cultures, and identities and acknowledge the importance of creole languages in our academic endeavors.

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