

## Sociolinguistic variation in Northern Haiti

Haitian Creole has a high degree of standardization, with a written norm, Standard Haitian Creole (SHC), based on the speech of Port-au-Prince monolingual speakers. For instance, SHC lacks front rounded vowels and postvocalic /r/, two features characteristic of the speech in Northern Haiti. With the spread of Creole in the schools and the media, SHC is reaching the rest of the country.

In this presentation, after going over some of the relevant linguistic history of SHC, I present the results of a study investigating the speech of 24 speakers of Northern Haitian Creole (NHC, or Capois) using the methodology of variationist sociolinguistics to discover the degree to which variants found in SHC are displacing those that characterize the speech of Cape Haitian. This methodology allows us to evaluate how much influence the standard exerts over the local variety according to certain social variables (including age group, sex, and urban vs. rural home), as well as linguistic variables. Though the results of these studies generally require good knowledge of statistics, this presentation will be for a general audience.

The presentation will focus on three variables, laid out in the table below. The first is the third-person singular pronoun, which is *i* or *y* in NHC. The second is the possessive construction, which in NHC is formed by placing the preposition *a* between the possessed and the possessor. The third is the preposition glossed as ‘with’, or *ake* in NHC. While the latter two variables seem to be differences that speakers of both varieties are aware of, the first is one that apparently is under the radar for all speakers.

Linguistic variable	Capois	Standard Creole	Gloss
(3PRO)	<i><u>i</u> rele m</i> <i>m rele <u>y</u></i>	<i><u>li</u> rele m</i> <i>m rele <u>l</u></i>	‘he/she calls me’ ‘I call him/her’
(POSS)	<i>janm [je a mwèn]</i> <i>tonton a Josèf</i>	<i>je m/ je mwèn</i> <i>tonton Josèf</i>	my eye Joseph’s uncle
(ak)	<i>ake</i>	<i>ak, avè, avèk</i>	‘with’

Our results demonstrate that despite the expansion of the standard, the local forms continue to dominate the speech of Capois speakers. For the last part of the presentation, I suggest how these results may inform other studies outside the linguistic realm, including the study of education and regionalism in the country.

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In this presentation, we show to what degree the national standard variety of Creole, diffused through the media and education, has affected local speech patterns around Cape Haitian. We consider variables that are above or below speakers' threshold of awareness and find that different variables are affected to different degrees.