

# KAPWA AP KENBE DJANM: SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION IN NORTHERN HAITI

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November 13, 2009

# Outline

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- The standardization of Haitian Creole
- Linguistic particularities of Northern Haitian Creole (Capois)
- Variationist sociolinguistics: What? Why?
- The current study
- Speaker awareness of Capois particularities
- Conclusion: Toward a Capois identity?



LINGUISTIC PARTICULARITIES OF  
NORTHERN HAITIAN CREOLE  
(CAPOIS)

# List of variables

VARIABLE	NORTHERN VARIANT	GENERAL (SHC) VARIANT
3 <sup>rd</sup> person sg. pronoun	<i>i / y / li</i>	<i>li / l / ni</i>
possessive construction	e.g. <i>maranm; jay</i>	<i>mari m / mwen; je l / li</i>
‘with’	<i>ake</i>	<i>avèk, avè, ak</i>
‘to go’	<i>ay / èy</i>	<i>ale / al</i>
possessive pronoun	<i>kin/ken + pronoun (e.g. kin an m)</i>	<i>pa + pronoun (e.g. pa m)</i>
1 <sup>st</sup> person sg. pronoun	<i>mwen / m / wen</i>	<i>mwen / m</i>
vowel raising before y	e.g. <i>bagèy</i>	<i>bagay</i>
Syllable final r	e.g. <i>doktèr</i>	<i>doktè</i>
r > w after labial consonant	e.g. <i>pwan</i>	<i>pran</i>
front-rounded vowels	e.g. <i>duri, zyeu, seùr</i>	<i>diri, je, sè</i>
<b>Lexical-onomasiological</b>		
[measure for rice]	<i>gode</i>	<i>mamit</i>
‘to hang, hung’	<i>pann, pandye</i>	<i>kwoke</i>

# THE CURRENT STUDY

# Design

- Corpus of Northern HC, collected in 2007 with 126 subjects
  - 24 speakers used for this study
- Three social factors
  - Origin: urban (Cape Haitian) vs. rural (Thibault)
  - Age: junior (12-18 y.o.) vs. senior (30+)
  - Sex/Gender
- Two interviews of 60-90 minutes each (stylistic variation)
  - pair interview (A) with a local interviewer (local teacher)
  - individual (B) with external interviewer (SHC speaker; “blan” with NHC fluency)
- Two transcriptions
  - Initial transcription performed by a native speaker of NHC
  - Second transcription verified by a native speaker of NHC and a linguist with advanced proficiency in HC

# Typical interview

*K. Eskeu de moun sa konn di w Frednèl kouman yo fè rankontre ?*

Did these two people [Frèdnèl's father and mother] tell you, Frèdnèl, how they got to meet each other?

*F. E pa fasil, paske depi m m piti m pa lev ak papanm.*

That's not easy, because ever since I, I was small, I didn't grow up with my father.

*K. Hm, hm. Kote papa w ?*

Mhm. Where is your father?

*F. Papanm Ozetazini. Li a janm vini.*

My father is in the United States. He never came.

*K. Donk ou pa rekonèt li ou byen ou rekonèt li ?*

So, you wouldn't recognize him or you would recognize him?

*F. Bon m pa rekonèt li paske lè y te pati a m te gen de zan.*

Well, I wouldn't recognize him because he left when I was two years old.

*K. Oke... M aprèy poze nou yon kesyon la pou nou kapab eksplike m yon jounen, rakonte m yon jounen tipik.*

O.K ... I'm going to ask you (all) some questions so that you can explain to me a day, tell me about a typical day.

# Variationist sociolinguistics

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- Looks at how language co-varies with social factors such as age, gender, or other group membership
- Developed in the early 1970s by William Labov and others
- Takes a systematic, scientific, statistical approach to differences in speech patterns
  - Not part of linguistic anthropology nor sociology of language, though both are crucial for understanding the significance of the variation in its social context



# What for?

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- Find systematicity in what at first blush seems random and unpredictable by carefully identifying and controlling both linguistic and social variables
- Find out actual speech patterns versus what people believe speech patterns are
- Understand the influence of certain groups on other groups
  - Change from below (level of consciousness, e.g. 'be like' = 'say') vs. change from above (level of consciousness, e.g. 'between you and I' = 'between you and me')

# Results

- Social factors and overall retention of Capois variants (% retention)

Variable	Interview type	All speakers	ORIGIN		AGE		SEX	
			Rural	Urban	Senior	Junior	Male	Female
(POSS)	A	85	91	81	89	83	82	88
	B	89	92	86	89	92	86	92
(3PRO)	A *	85	91	81	83	87	86	84
	B	88	90	84	86	93	88	88
(ake)	A	56	76	46	61	51	63	53
	B	66	71	61	66	68	64	68

\*A: pair interviews with local interviewer

B: individual interviews with external interviewer

# (POSS)

- Social factors affecting Capois (POSS) in pair interviews

Factors	All speakers			Rural			Urban		
	%	N	p	%	N	p	%	N	p
<b>OVERALL</b>	85	842		91	363		81	479	
<b>AGE</b>			n.s.			n.s.			n.s.
<b>juniors</b>	83	413		88	168		80	245	
<b>seniors</b>	89	429		95	195		83	234	
<b>SEX</b>			n.s.			n.s.			≤ .001
<b>males</b>	82	336		94	161		71	175	
<b>females</b>	88	506		89	202		88	304	
<b>ORIGIN</b>			≤ .001						
<b>rural</b>	91	363							
<b>urban</b>	81	479							

- Construction type and Capois (POSS) in individual interviews
  - a) NP + a + NP: *liv a Asefiy* ‘Asefiy’s book’
  - b) NP + a + PRO: *liv a i > livay* ‘her book’

Factor	All speakers			Rural			Urban		
	%	N	p	%	N	p	%	N	p
CONSTRUCTION			n.s.			n.s.			n.s.
NP + (a) + NP	87	113		87	66		87	47	
NP + (a) + PRO	90	529		93	346		86	183	

# (3PRO)

- Syntactic factors affecting Capois (3PRO) in pair interviews

Factor	All speakers			Rural			Urban			
	%	N	p	%	N	p	%	N	p	
SYNTACTIC CONTEXT			≤ .001				≤ .001			
__ gen (impersonal)	100	165		100	97		100	68		
Se X __ ye	85	95		81	32		87	63		
__ V/Adj/N predicate (subject)	89	1950		95	797		85	1153		
V__ (object)	91	705		91	298		90	407		
Prep__	75	168		74	59		75	109		
Se__ki/focalizer/ contrastive	3	138		8	35		1	103		
__menm 'himself'	5	19		16	6		0	13		

# (3PRO)

- Phonological factors affecting Capois (3PRO) in pair interviews

	All speakers		Rural		Urban		
PRECEDING SEGMENT		≤ .001			≤ .001		≤ .001
Consonant	74	342	82	130	70	212	
Vowel	87	2579	93	1046	83	1533	
Glide	86	194	85	95	86	99	
None	91	58	89	28	93	30	
FOLLOWING SEGMENT		≤ .001			≤ .001		≤ .001
Consonant	91	2428	92	983	89	1445	
Vowel	63	605	87	262	45	343	
Glide	86	177	86	69	86	108	
None	84	73	76	25	89	48	

# Details

- Categorical retention of Capois (3PRO) variants in impersonal constructions
  - (a) *Pafwa i gen nan yo menm ki soti kite kay a paran yo.* ('Sometimes there are some [of them] who leave their parents' home.') (USF6A, 200)
  - (b) *I te g on tifi ki te resit on baay, i pa te ka di.* ('There was a girl who recited something, she couldn't say it [right].') (RJF7A, 239)

- Contexts with the lowest percentage of Capois (3PRO) variants
  - *Se \_\_ki* ‘it’s \_\_ who’, focalizing and contrastive constructions
    - (a) *Moun nan ki gen plis pwèn an, se li ki chen.* (‘The person who has the most points, it’s him/her who’s the dog.’) (RSM15A, 625)
    - (b) *Kouran li, i pa kòrèk menm.* (‘As for electricity, it’s not right at all.’) (USF18A, 288)
  - Preceding consonant, e.g. *I jwenn on ti marinad, li manje.* (‘He finds a little marinade, he [gets to] eat.’) (RSF2A, 107)
  - Following vowel, e.g. *I jwenn ti benefis. Lachte manje pou timounèy.* (‘He finds [makes] a little profit. He buys food for his children.’) (USF18A, 171)



- Instances of *li* (never *l*) in focalizing and contrastive constructions
  - *Kanaval la ki plis fete isi, rara li se Leyogàn.* ('Carnaval is celebrated more here; as for rara, it's in Léogane [that it occurs]') (USF16A, 268)
  - *Men, lòt la li i di denmen l ap vini.* ('But, the other, HE said that he's coming tomorrow') (USM17A, 146)
  - *Nou li nou ka pale pi byen pase yo.* ('We're the ones who can speak better than them') (USM8A , 703)

- Prepositions affecting Capois (3PRO) in pair interviews

Factor	All speakers			Rural			Urban		
	%	N	p	%	N	p	%	N	p
<b>PREPOSITION</b>			≤ .001			≤ .001			≤ .001
<i>ake</i> (local)	100	66		100	27		100	39	
<i>ak, avè, avèk</i> (standard)	76	21		40	5		87	16	
<i>pou</i>	3	28		8	12		0	16	
other	81	53		93	15		76	38	

- In pair interviews, the most natural speech style, urban and rural speakers use (ak) in both its local *ake* and standard forms (*ak*, *avèk*, *avè*). Both *ake* and *avèk*, *avè*, *ak* are used by all speakers, but as soon as *ake* is used, *li* and *l* become ungrammatical. Thus we find *ake y* (rural: N = 27, urban N = 39), but never \**ake l* or \**ake li*.
  - e.g. *Anpi konnya y al ansanm ake y*. ([...] \**ake l*; [...] \**ake li*) ('And then he goes [together] with her.') (RJF7A, 556)
- The preposition *pou* 'for' strongly disfavors the use of the local (3PRO) variant.
  - e.g. *M konn fè manje pou li, m konn benyen y*. ('I usually make food for him, I usually bathe him') (UJF7A, 273)

# (AK)

Stylistic shift from pair [A] to individual [B] interviews for Capois (ake)

- Stylistic shift from A to B interview is only significant for urban juniors and urban female speakers, whose use of the local variant increases from 37% to 59% ( $p \leq .01$ ) and 43% to 62% respectively ( $p \leq .001$ )

	All speakers		ORIGIN**					
			Rural			Urban		
Factors	%	N	%	N	p	%	N	p
OVERALL (A)*	56	499	76	175		46	324	
OVERALL (B)	66	444	71	234		61	210	
AGE ***								
juniors (A)	51	234	76	84	n.s.	37	150	$\leq .01$
juniors (B)	68	150	72	101		59	49	
seniors (A)	61	265	75	91	n.s.	54	174	n.s.
seniors (B)	66	294	70	133		62	161	
SEX								
males (A)	63	156	80	56	n.s.	54	100	n.s.
males (B)	64	185	68	110		60	75	
females (A)	53	343	73	119	n.s.	43	224	$\leq .001$
females (B)	68	259	74	124		62	135	

\*A: pair interviews with local interviewer; B: individual interviews with external interviewer

\*\* The difference between urban and rural is significant ( $p \leq .001$ ) only in pair (A) interviews.

\*\*\* Age is significant ( $p \leq .005$ ) only for urban speakers in pair (A) interviews.

# So what does it all mean?

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- Overwhelming dominance of local variables indicates that the speech of the capital may be gaining ground but is nowhere close to displacing the local variety
- Encroachment of standard is not uniform across the language
- Much of the variation is due not to social factors, but structural issues

# SPEAKER AWARENESS OF CAPOIS PARTICULARITIES (EPILINGUISTIC ASPECTS)

# (ake): Cape Haitian girl

- Shows her awareness of the (ake) variable and points out intonation differences
- Uses standard (ale) variant twice but Capois (POSS) in *tonaliterayo*

T- Par ekzanp, si m ap soti, m di yon moun an al ake m. Yo li se pa konsa yo toujou di ... yo di an al avè m. Lè fin ankò jan yo pale a, tonaliterayo pi wo pase nou.

T-For example, if I'm going out. I tell someone "come with (ake) me". As for them [Port-au-Prince people], that's not how they always say... they say "come with (avè) me". Another thing about the way they speak, their pitch is higher than ours.

# (POSS) by two Cape Haitian boys

- Show awareness of the (POSS) variable and claim a preference for the standard
- Use Capois pronunciation for *Port-au-Prince* and Capois (3PRO) variant

J. Epi Okap la ap di konsa “janm mwen”. <K. M hm.> Pòtopwens “zye mwen”. <K. M hm.> “Janm mwen”... i pa bèl.	And in the Cape Haitian dialect they say “janm mwen” [my eyes]. <K. M hm.> In the Port-au-Prince dialect they say “zye mwen”. <K. M hm.> “Janm mwen”... it’s not nice.
L. i pa bèl. <K. M hm.>	It’s not nice. <K. M hm.>
J. Se zye m. <L. Wi.> Zye m nan bon m ka di se an Fransè yo di y.	It’s zye m, <L.Yes.> Zye m nan is good, I would say that is how they say it in French.



# Graphic representation of Capois

## Texte Jacques Garçon (*Haïti en Marche*)

- Nan kèksyon koutim ake labitid la; mere yon lòt moso?
- Lè yon moun mouri jenn, yo konn di, i mouri alafè delaj. Konsa yon ti demwazel dizwit an mouri. Timoun fin chape wi, I apèn resi bakaloreya a y; i te pare pou leve tèt a fanmi a y. Pèrsonn nan katye ya pa te tande i te malad ni i te fè aksidan; kidon yo di i mouri sibit. Gan tou ki di se zonba [zombi a] y yo pwan osnon yo manje y. Yon fanm yo rele Idalya parèt ake yon terin dite fèy vèr venn vyòlèt, pote bay manman pitit la pou ride y anba sezisman. I menm tou, i mete po fig mi de bò letanp a y fwiksyonnen ake swif a bèf.
- Yon M ape pale ake youn zanman [zanmi a] wen [zanmanm], youn nonm save. L ap etidye tout tan; I pa janm bouke. Man y ape tripote cheva [cheve a] y konmsi pandan i ape mete kònèsans nan kabòch a y, i ape wete cheve yo bwanch pa bwanch; kounouye a, i pwèt fin chòv wi. I di wen, an fwanse : "Un vieillard qui meurt est une bibliothèque qui brûle".

# Rate of occurrence of the local variant

Variable	Corpus A	Corpus B	Garçon Texts
(3SG)	86 %	90 %	85 %
(POSS)	85 %	91 %	88 %
(AVEC)	59 %	70 %	98 %
( <i>ALLER</i> )	47 %	44 %	98 %

# Forms of 1 sg. pronoun

	<b>m</b>	<b>wen</b>	<b>mwēn</b>
Sujet	43	2	4
Complément-predicat		17	1
Complément-préposition		3	
Possessif		3	
Autre			1
Total	43	25	6

# Rural variants

<b>Rural</b>	<b>Standard</b>
twèl	twal
chèy (rural)	chèz
lesklavay	leckalavaj
lafyèb	lafyèv
pozitib	pozitif/v
sib	swiv
tou	twou
moutre	montre
kal	kalm
reyètelman	reyèlman
ride	ede

# Toward a Capois identity?

- Clear evidence of retention of local Capois particularities in spite of growing urbanization and spread of the standardized variety of HC
- Confirmation of the linguistic conservatism of rural population
- Affirmation of Capois identity
  - (a) rural adult speaker

Enben, lang pa granmoun an nou te kulture, se li nou kulture e nou menm nou pa janm di ke yo pa byen pale. E nou menm...kreyòl la granmoun an nou te moutre nou an, se li nou kulture.

Well, the language of our elders used to cherish, that's the one that we cherish and us, we never say that they [our elders] didn't speak well. And us, the Creole that our elders taught us, that's the one we cherish.

- (b) rural speaker who has lived in Port-au-Prince for a dozen years

... Paske pale *pa nou* diferan *avè* moun sa yo. Kite m di *pitit an mwen*, m gen dwa di *pititanm*, *kinanm*, se *kinanm* li ye, *pitanm*. Ou sòt menm kote *avè* m.... moun sa yo di: *pitit mwen*....se nou k pale pi bon kreyòl la. Moun sa yo pa konn pale kreyòl la.... Pale nou an vrèman diferan .... Moun sa yo ap pale *bagay* fè chèlbè, avrèdi ap fè chèlbe, ki chèlbè monchè!.. Moun sa yo ap pale kreyòl, ou a di se fransè y ap pale, y ap pwenti *djòl yo*.

... Because our speech is different from these people. Let me say *pitit an mwen* [my child], I should say *pititanm*, *kinanm* [mine], it's *kinanm*, *pitanm*. You come from the same place as I...these people say *pitit mwen*... we are the ones who speak the best Creole. These people can't speak Creole... Our speech is really different...These people speak in a pretentious manner, in truth they're being pretentious, what pretention, man!...The way these people speak Creole you'd think it's French they're speaking, they round their face [i.e., produce front rounded vowels].

- c) Jacques Garçon, the author of the first literary text that stresses Capois particularities

Notre créole nous différencie des Haïtiens du reste du pays. C'est un héritage de nos bisaïeux africains. S'il a vécu jusqu'à nos jours, il vivra certainement très longtemps encore... Cette variété non-standard restera la signature du Capois.

Our Creole differentiates us from Haitians in the rest of the country. It's a legacy from our African ancestors. If it has survived up to our days, it certainly will still live for a long time... This non-standard variety will remain the trademark of the Capois people.

# Jacques Garçon

- Est-ce que votre représentation des formes capoises répond à l'expression d'une identité locale face à la norme d'origine port-au-princienne?
  - Notre créole nous différencie des Haïtiens du reste du pays. C'est un héritage de nos bisaïeux africains. S'il a vécu jusqu'à nos jours il vivra certainement très longtemps encore.
- Pensez-vous que cette représentation d'une variété non-standard pendra de l'essor?
  - Il n'est pas donné à tout autre Haïtien, de manger, parler, vivre comme le Capois; un capital culturel qu'on tente en vain de minimiser et de ridiculiser. Cette variété non-standard restera la signature du Capois.



# Lessons for social scientists

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- Literacy planning and other social services where language plays a crucial role need to take into account local language variation
- Social factors cannot explain all variation
  - Internal structure of cognitive systems should be considered when looking at variation in other emergent social institutions
- Old habits die hard: The introduction of a standard does not translate into the immediate, uniform adoption of a standard
- Data points are not enough
  - We need to know about beliefs and attitudes about language and other social structures

# Mèsi anpil.

This research was supported in part by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities of the United States and a Mellon Foundation Emeriti Fellowship

