

CONTACT LANGUAGES

Critical Concepts in Language Studies

*Edited by
John Holm and
Susanne Michaelis*

Volume I

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CONTENTS

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THE FIRST SYSTEMATIC SURVEY OF THE WORLD'S PIDGINS AND CREOLES

Hugo Schuchardt, 1882–1885

Glenn G. Gilbert

Source: M. Sebba and L. Todd (eds), *Papers from the New York Creole Conference, 24–27 September 1983*, University of York, Department of Language, 1984, pp. 131–40.

HEADNOTE

Schuchardt first became interested in creoles because the predictable sound changes that they might have undergone had been disrupted by language contact. This article traces the earlier part of his career as he mapped out the world's pidgins and creoles by writing to hundreds of colonial administrators, missionaries and other educated people living in areas he considered likely to produce such languages, requesting texts or other evidence of their existence. This information became the basis of some 40 articles and reviews on pidgins and creoles totalling almost 700 pages which he published between 1880 and 1914.

This paper discusses the methods, geographical spread, and information obtained by Schuchardt in his attempt to gain a larger, more specific, and better balanced data base for a general study of the process and outcomes of pidginization/creolization. Information on the survey was obtained by the writer from Schuchardt's papers in Graz in January 1983. The paper discusses the geographic location of his correspondents and summarizes the nature of the data supplied. Suggestions are offered for future work with these materials.

One of the most interesting finds at Graz was a small notebook, compiled for the period January 1882 to September 1885, in which Schuchardt wrote down the names and locations of his correspondents in the pidgin/creole project. The date of the initial inquiry was recorded, together with the date that a reply, if any, was received. Unfortunately, no copy of Schuchardt's own letters was kept.

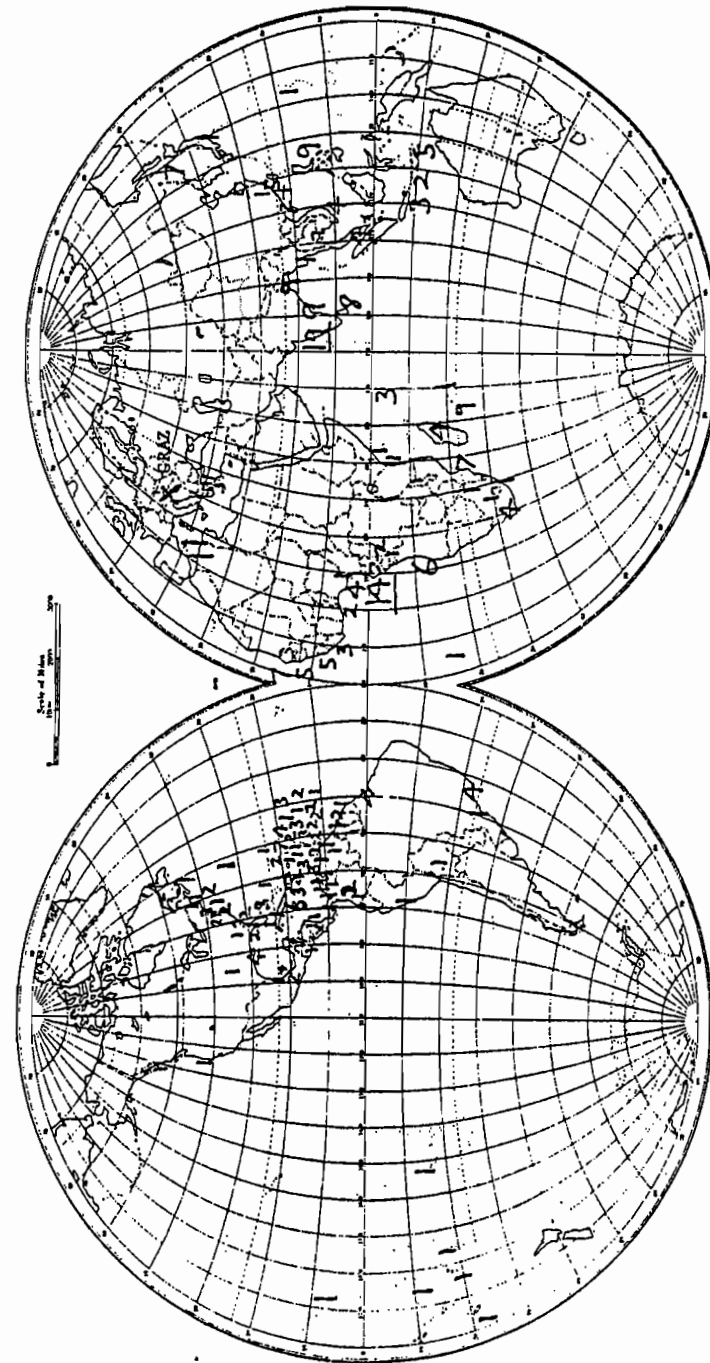
Map 1 indicates the specific geographical areas to which the initial 343 inquiries were directed. Map 2 displays the locations from which replies were received. The notebook lists 124 replies, which adds up to a success rate of about 36%. Map 2 of course gives no indication of the quality or value of the responses, which ranged from polite answers of little consequence, through honest attempts to answer Schuchardt's questions, to letters containing detailed information with texts, many unpublished. Map 2 also does not take prolonged correspondence into account, some of which extended over many years into the twentieth century, as for example the exchange of letters with Rufino Cuervo in Bogotá; J. J. Audain, the Honorary Consul of Liberia in Haiti; Charles Leland in Philadelphia; and Albert S. Gatschet in Washington, D. C.

It has also become apparent that not all replies were listed in the notebook. An independent tally of letters received from the Caribbean and adjacent continental coasts shows 63 replies, instead of the 43 listed in the notebook, an increase of over 44%. Assuming a similar increase for the rest of the world, the figures would be inflated accordingly.

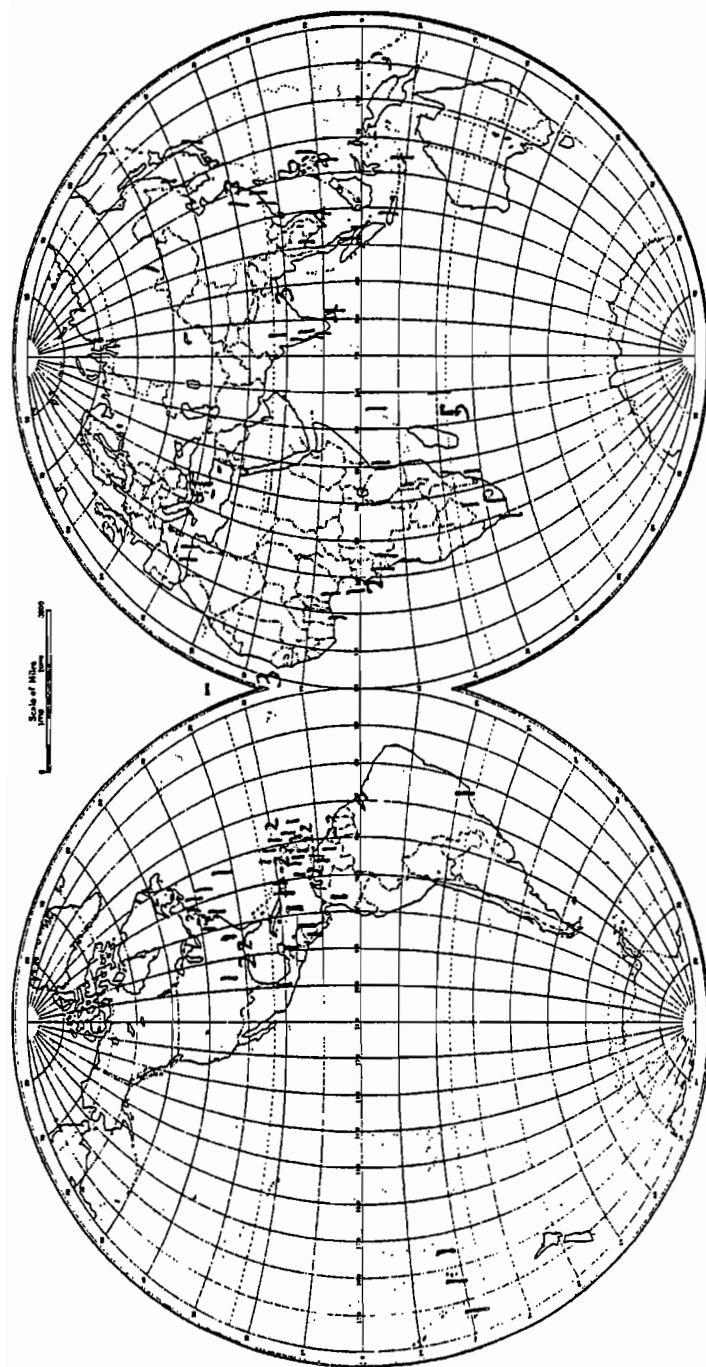
Inquiries were directed to educated people in many walks of life whom Schuchardt considered to be in a position to answer his questions: missionaries and clergymen (especially the Herrnhuter or Moravian Brethren), governors and their staffs, travellers and explorers, journalists, physicians, businessmen, educators, anthropologists, and linguists. As to the value of the replies, if we restrict ourselves to the English-based Atlantic Creoles in the New World, the following may be noted:

With regard to United States Black English, only printed texts were available, such as the fiction and folklore of Joel Chandler Harris (1881, 1884), Charles C. Jones (1888), and J. A. Macon (1883); William Frances Allen's 1867 introduction to *Slave Songs of the United States*; and James A. Harrison's pioneering but unsightful article 'Negro English' in the 1884 issue of *Anglia*. Nevertheless, this was sufficient for Schuchardt to conclude (*Creole Studies X*, 1892-1893; my translation, ms. p. 8 & 13) that Black English, and especially Gullah, were partially decreolized varieties of the same general kind of English Creole that stretched south through the Caribbean to the northern coast of South America.

The restriction to printed texts was true of Jamaica as well. Here, he depended on Henry G. Murray's *Tom Kittle's Wake* (1877), Thomas Russell's *The Etymology of Jamaica Grammar* (1868), and other published sources.



Map 1 Schuchardt: Survey by correspondence of the world's pidgins & creoles, 1882-1885. Specific geographical areas to which the initial 343 inquiries were directed. From a notebook found among Schuchardt's papers at Graz, Jan. 1983. Numbers show the quantity of addressees living in the same general area; the underlined numbers consist of 2 digits; all others are 1 digit.



Map 2 Schuchardt: Survey by correspondence of the world's pidgins & creoles, 1882–1885. Specific locations from which replies were received. (Schuchardt's notebook indicates 124 replies as of Sept. 1885, which adds up to a success rate of about 36%. An independent tally of letters received from the Caribbean and adjacent continental coasts shows 63 replies, instead of the 43 listed in the notebook, an increase of over 44%. Assuming a similar increase for the rest of the world, the figures would be inflated accordingly.)

FIRST SURVEY OF THE WORLD'S PIDGINS AND CREOLES

Elsewhere in the Caribbean, it was the Moravian Brethren missionaries who proved to be the best correspondents, supplying both printed texts and manuscript material especially gathered (or copied) for the project. Very soon, it became clear that English Creole in the Caribbean was far from uniform. In 1883, Schuchardt sent his correspondent on Tobago, the Rev. H. F. Utz of the Moravian Mission, a list of 50 syntactic, morphological, and lexical items from Jamaican Creole to find out to what extent, if at all, they were in use in the English Creole of Tobago. Utz was familiar with about half of them.

In the examples which follow, the items on the left were supplied by Schuchardt, as were the glosses. Comments are by Utz. Glosses and comments were translated into English by the writer, and material in square brackets has been added by the writer. 'Hancock, ms.' refers to the 50 sample sentences in Ian Hancock, 'A Preliminary Classification of the Anglophone Atlantic Creoles, with Syntactic Data from 23 Representative Dialects' (forthcoming).

- 1) A *da* listen to you 'I am listening to you'; this *da* is completely unknown to me. [punctual progressive aspect; cf. Hancock, ms., item #9]
- 2) A *ben* talk you 'I have told you'; Yes. *ben* is pronounced *bin* [anterior marker; cf. Hancock, ms., item #13]
- 3) A *sha'n* go 'I shall not go'; Yes. [negated future; cf. Hancock, ms., item #25]
- 4) A *we* go. Here in Tobago it doesn't mean 'I shall go', but rather 'Let us go'. [future marker; cf. Hancock, ms., item #24]
- 5) A *we* (or) Me *we* ('I shall') tell *ono* ('you') de trute. In this context *we* would mean 'will'; *ono* I have not heard. [future marker; second person plural pronominal form; cf. Hancock, items #24, #17, #20]
- 6) We house bun 'Our house burnt'; Yes. [first person plural possessive pronominal form; not in Hancock, ms.]
- 7) De horse *an dem* hard fe ketch ['The horses are hard to catch.'] Yes. [noun plural with *dem*; cf. Hancock, item #29]
- 8) De bud *an dem* fat fe toroo ['The birds are fat for true.'] I would consider *an dem* as a kind of plural.
- 9) *Week days*: Here on Tobago there are whole families with the names: Cudjo, Quacco—Quamina, Cuffie, Quashie . . . Mimba [survival of African day names on Tobago]
- 10) *duppe* 'a spirit'. Yes.
- 11) *big-eye* 'greedy'. Yes.
- 12) *ga-ga* 'rum'. No, we say *boose*.

In 1882 and 1883, Utz sent Schuchardt 7 letters enclosing texts in French and English Creole, with commentaries in German. Besides the historically

interesting remarks on Schuchardt's list of Jamaicanisms, there are word lists and proverbs; 26 pages in all. (Reinecke *et al.*'s Bibliography [1975] reports no printed sources at all for either French or English Creole on Tobago prior to 1955. As of 1973, a total of 4 sources is listed.)

In 1882 Schuchardt received materials sent from Antigua by the Moravian missionary, the Rev. G. M. Westerby: 4 pages of proverbs in Antigua English Creole, with translations in Standard English; a 2-page text in Antiguan English Creole preaching style entitled 'Negro Sermon on the Origin of White Men'; and 4 pages of text and dialogues in St. Croix English Creole. (Reinecke *et al.* lists two printed Anancy stories from Antigua from 1880 and folklore from the 1920s and 1930s, etc. For Virgin Islands English Creole, aside from a letter printed in 1842, there is apparently nothing prior to the 1930s.)

From Montserrat, James S. Hollings, who was presumably not a clergyman, enclosed in a letter from November 1884 ten pages of texts, including 2 Anancy stories, 2 other stories, and 28 proverbs. (Reinecke *et al.* has as its only entry for Montserrat 28 folktales collected in 1936 by Elsie Clews Parsons.)

From Guyana, the Moravian missionary F. P. Luigi Josa, sent 2 letters in 1882, unfortunately only with enclosed printed material (such as Michael McTurk's Essays and Fables in Verse [1881] and Charles Dance's Chapters from a Guyanese Log-Book [1887]). The lack of supplementary manuscript data from Guyana may have been responsible for Schuchardt's mistaken notion that Dutch Creole never really took root there and thus could not have survived into the 19th century, which contradicts the reports of a number of observers on the scene.

The Moravian missionary in Paramaribo, Suriname, Jonathan Kersten, was Schuchardt's most prolific correspondent for information on the Atlantic Creoles. From 1882 to 1884 he sent 9 letters, with 31 separate printed items and 20 pages of manuscript texts including poems, fables and stories (many written by a native Surinamer, Daniel J. J. veraar), proverbs, dialogues, word lists, song lyrics, and a 1-page sample translation of the Story of the Apostles. Even more important was a hand-written copy of C. L. Schumann's 1778 one hundred twenty-seven page manuscript, *Saramaccanisch deutsches Wörter Buch*. It was Schumann's manuscript dictionary that formed the basis for Schuchardt's 1914 monograph, *Die Sprache der Saramakkaneger in Surinam*.

From Bluefields on the Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua, a letter of 1882 from the Moravian missionary C. A. Martin pointed out the presence of English Creole on the Caribbean coast of Central America, a fact which Schuchardt may not have been aware of. Martin supplied a few sample sentences (reproduced in *Creole Studies* X, 1892-1893; my translation, ms. p. 16) such as: *Me no know*, glossed by Martin as 'ich weiss nicht'; and *Me no sabe*, glossed as 'ich verstehe nicht'. Hoping to obtain more information on this kind of English Creole, Schuchardt wrote later in the year to the

D^r. HUGO SCHUCHARDT
C. M. OF THE IMP. ACAD.
GRAZ
Elisabethstr. 6.

Graz (Austria)
20. 15. Okt. '83.

Dear Sir,

I beg your pardon for in-
forming you with a request.
With a view to a scientific
publication I am preparing, I
wished to know, if there is spoken
in Portorico Honduras by Indians,
negroes or half-castes any english
or spanish jargon like those which
are in use in the West India islands,
or if at least there is to be found
occasionally, a broken english such
as it is also the case on the
Mosquito Coast (for ex. *Me no
know, Me no sabe, Tan here te me
come back, n-ile a time for I don't
know, Stand here till it come back, in
the present time etc.*). Would you

Figure 1

...then be kind enough to furnish me some specimens of such a lingo, and to give me some general informations about the distribution of the Spanish and the English languages in your colony?

I should be greatly obliged to you and glad to prove you my thankfulness.

Yours very truly

Dr. Hugo Schuchardt
Professor at the University
of Graz.

Figure 1 (cont'd)

Austrian Consul in Belize, A. S. Kindred. Figure 1 is a reproduction of Schuchardt's letter and of the Consul's reply. This letter is unique since it is the *only* one written by Schuchardt for the 1882-1885 pidgin/creole project that has been found up to now. It was preserved fortuitously since the Consul penned his reply on the back of the inquiry. Surprisingly, both the initial inquiry and response are in English. Schuchardt asks about the geographic and social distribution of English and Spanish 'jargons' (i.e., pidgins and creoles with English or Spanish lexical base) and about the use of non-jargon English and Spanish in Belize.

(Reinecke *et al.*'s *Bibliography* records travellers' mention of English along the Central American coast from reports of 1842, 1850, and 1883; but no real folkloristic, ethnographic, or linguistic observations were made until well into the 20th century.)

The language spoken by the Negroes in British Honduras is Patois English of the kind spoken in the English West India Islands, & upon the Mosquit Coast.

There are also many inhabitants, labourers & others, who are either natives of Mexico, or their descendants; and these speak either Spanish or Patois Maya, or a mixture of the two.

A. S. Kindred

1 Feb, 31/3/85

Figure 1 (cont'd)

The Consul's mention of 'Patois English' is noteworthy. Usually, when Schuchardt inquired about the existence of 'patois' he was misunderstood in the Caribbean to mean only Romance-based Creoles. Later, he switched to the term 'jargon' so that the existence of an English-based Creole in various islands and coastal towns would be accurately reported, if one was indeed present. In his private correspondence with linguists and other knowledgeable people, however, Schuchardt tended to avoid both 'patois' and 'jargon', and, regardless of lexical base, use only the term 'Creole', which he conceived of in an all-embracing, generic sense.

Suggestions for further work with these materials

The first question that must be asked concerns the priority of Schuchardt's information obtained through correspondence and the extent to which it increases our knowledge of the evolution of pidgins/creoles. What light does the new diachronic information thrown on suggestions of Creole universals and of predetermined developmental patterns for these languages? What

information did Schuchardt choose to use and how did it affect his thinking (e.g., the conflicting reports about Dutch Creole in Guyana). A search of the Herrnhut Moravian Mission Archives and of selected private letter collections may yet turn up letters written by Schuchardt which would clarify his ideas better than the extant published material.

Schuchardt was chiefly concerned with language structure, as a preliminary to the study of the language repertory of the speech community and social attitudes and functions of pidgins/creoles. His attempt to interview 'experts' at the scene by means of large-scale postal surveys offers a unique historical insight into the inception and development of the science of creolistics. His survey suggests that current work on these languages is neither 'all new', nor is it necessary to 'reinvent the wheel'. Knowledge is progressing upward, to be sure, but it is more of a spiral than a straight line.

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