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The Impact of the 1980-81 Literacy Campaign on the English Kriol Language Spoken on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua

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**THE IMPACT OF THE 1980-81 LITERACY CAMPAIGN
ON THE ENGLISH KRIOL LANGUAGE
SPOKEN ON THE ATLANTIC COAST OF NICARAGUA**

By

Barbara J. Tasker-Mueller

Accepted in Partial Completion
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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MASTER'S THESIS

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Barbara J. Tasker-Mueller

June 13, 2015

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A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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Abstract

In my thesis I argue that the post-revolutionary Literacy Campaign (1980-81) was truly a watershed-moment in the cultural and political life of the people on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. Its impact was felt not only on the Kriol language but also on the Costeño (people of the Coast) identity when it was shown to be necessary to translate the initial literacy materials from Spanish into English and it created a wider sense of empowerment and legitimacy among the Costeños as a group. I examine the work being done by the Linguistic Research and Revitalization Institute (IPILC) and the dilemmas faced in claiming and implementing the linguistic rights that were granted under the 1987 Law of Autonomy for the Caribbean Coast Regions. The problems I discuss in this case are not unique to Nicaragua's Creoles, nor to Black diaspora cultures, they are merely part of larger issues which affect all minoritized groups who seek to assert the legitimacy of their languages and cultures within hegemonic discourses around cultural difference.

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Introduction

There are two language ideologies in contest with one another among speakers of Nicaraguan Kriol¹ English. The hegemonic language ideology, associated with the state (i.e., Spanish) and with a larger global discourse (i.e., Standard English), views Kriol as an inferior form, while the counter-hegemonic language ideology promoted by those engaged in the Literacy Program on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, asserts the importance and value of Kriol as a language, and continues to work toward the reversal of language shift among ethnic Creole people of Nicaragua.

The definition of a language or linguistic ideology I use in my paper is taken from Irvine and Gal who state that “the significance of linguistic differentiation is embedded in the politics of a region and its observers...and the ideas with which participants and observers frame their understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them” (2000:35). A language ideology concerns the way that people conceive of links between linguistic forms and social phenomena and concerns the way that these linguistic forms, which can include whole languages, can index the social identities and the broader cultural images of people and their activities (Irvine and Gal 2000:37). Keane points out (2007:16) that language ideologies do not just reflect on language as it is given but that people act on the basis of those reflections. They try to change or preserve certain ways of speaking and criticize or emulate other speakers. As will be seen in the following chapters, in Nicaragua the concept of language ideology helps address such questions as the formation of national language policies or debates

¹ For purposes of my thesis when referring specifically to the case of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, I will use *Creole* to refer to the people and *Kriol* to refer to their language. However, the standard “*Creole*” spelling is used frequently in the linguistic literature when referring to the language in general, therefore, I will also follow that standard when speaking about the language in a wider context.

about what makes “good English.” In Nicaragua, as in other places, linguistic ideologies participate in the broader semiotics of difference that includes such things as race, clothing, and speech habits.

I begin by citing some examples which, I feel, support the claim of empowerment and legitimacy that I make as a basis for my thesis. The first example is the remarkable achievement inherent in the establishment of not one, but two universities on the Caribbean Coast² where previously there were none. The idea for creating a university came about during an organizational meeting of young Caribbean Coast leaders in 1978 which was attended by most of the region’s college graduates (Dennis and Herlihy 2003). A major topic of discussion at this meeting was the idealistic dream of a regional university. Most Costeños had little access to higher education because their only option was to travel to Managua to the universities of Hispanic Nicaragua. It was not until the 1980s, after the revolution, that the dream of a university in Anglophone Nicaragua could be realized. The University of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua (URACCAN) was founded in the early 1990s, and in 1995 was recognized by the Nicaraguan National Council of Universities (CNU), which is the body that regulates higher education. A year later, the university began receiving government funding and it continues to compete with the older, more established universities in Hispanic Nicaragua to obtain an equitable share of national funding.

² In a strictly geographical sense, the “Atlantic Coast” is a misnomer since it is neither a uniquely coastal region nor does it border the Atlantic Ocean. It would be more accurate to call the region the “Caribbean Coast”. “Atlantic Coast” can be used to show its juxtaposition to the Pacific Ocean side of the country which is Hispanic, and “Caribbean Coast” can be used to designate the location of towns or where people call their cultural home. The people themselves use both terms at different times as can be seen in the name of the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua (URACCAN) and then in the names of the autonomous regions themselves: Autonomous Region of the South Atlantic (R.A.A.S.) and the Autonomous Region of the North Atlantic (R.A.A.N.) In my paper, I will be using both terms at different times but they will refer to the same region.

URACCAN has three campuses on the Atlantic Coast, each designed to serve the cultural and linguistic needs of the different Indigenous groups³ on the Coast and to emphasize the region's multicultural heritage. Indeed, its mission statement states that it was "established to address the unique social and economic needs of the Caribbean Coast. It aims to promote "equality in diversity" by encouraging equitable and sustainable development while fostering cultural pluralism and strengthening the cultural identity of the local peoples" (URACCAN:4).

Also in 1995, the Moravians⁴ opened their own university, the Bluefields Indian and Caribbean University (BICU) which has several campuses throughout the Atlantic Coast region of Nicaragua. BICU is privately funded and provides a second option for higher education. On their website the mission statement declares it to be "a university of national and international prestige characterized by excellence and to offer to Nicaraguans professions and appropriate technical high scientific and technological knowledge, identity, self-esteem, social sensitivity, capable of promoting multi-ethnic culture, creators of sustainable development and strengthening the autonomy process

³ In this thesis, I am using the word Indigenous as an ethnonym. When I use Creole or Black in this way, referring to Creole culture or Black history, I follow the convention of capitalizing the ethnonym. It is conventional in the scholarly discourse in which I am taking part to not capitalize the term "indigenous". Because I am using it as an ethnonym, however, I have chosen to capitalize it throughout this thesis.

⁴ Considered to be the oldest Protestant denomination, the Moravian Church had its beginnings in 1457, 60 years before the Reformation began in Germany with Luther, in what is now part of the Czech Republic. The Moravian Brethren wrote hundreds of hymns and published the first hymnal in the language of the people in 1505. They were also famous for the high-quality education they provided for the children of farmers and craftsmen and their schools were among the first for common people in Europe emphasizing education for men and women with a view that learning should be more like play than work, a concept which influenced Maria Montessori. In the mid 1700s they began sending out their first missionaries to non-European people including those in East Africa, the Caribbean, South America, and to Native Americans during the colonial period. In the United States they eventually established themselves in Pennsylvania where they continue with their work to this day. As part of their ongoing mission effort, they have played a key role in providing written languages and grammars for many peoples of the world, including the Miskitu people in the Atlantic area of Nicaragua where they established themselves in the mid 1800s.
(moravianseminary.edu)

with emphasis on indigenous peoples and ethnic communities of the Autonomous Regions of Nicaragua” (BICU). It’s vision is “to train professionals and technicians with academic, scientific and technological knowledge, to be able to promote and defend the process of regional autonomy excellence, to have respect for human dignity, gender equality, protection and conservation of the environment as being central to the overall development of the multi-ethnic society of the Autonomous Regions of Nicaragua” (BICU).

The materials for the Literacy Campaign were translated not only into Standard English but also into the Miskito language for the use of the largest of the Indigenous groups on the Atlantic Coast. The Moravian missionaries had previously done the orthography work on the Miskito language and the Literacy Campaign promoted pride, a sense of legitimacy, and an understanding of cultural rights and privileges. This same sense of empowerment has extended to the Creoles and to the other, smaller Indigenous groups on the coast (the Rama and the Mayangna) so that they can also learn to read, write, and in some cases, recover their own languages. The Rama language was almost extinct but is slowly being revitalized and the Mayangna people (also known as Sumu⁵) are recovering their language.

I spoke with a group of Creoles that were shipping out⁶ and wanted to show them that Kriol serves them more than taking you to the wharf. They told me they were hired because they speak English. I said you have it wrong. You were hired because you speak an educated Kriol. The tourists don't care whether the waiter speaks a Queen Elizabeth English, they are satisfied if

⁵ Sumu is a derogatory Miskito word meaning uncivilized indians and was used to describe indigenous people who were not Miskito. It was pointed out to me that their preferred name for themselves is Mayangna.

⁶ One traditional source of jobs for Creoles because of their English language ability, especially the young men, has been working on cruise ships. It is not only a source of remittances to send home, it also provides a nest egg with which they can fulfill a dream of building their own houses.

they have a Jamaican accent. So regardless of what you think of your English, you are hired because of your Kriol. So it serve for more than taking you to the wharf. (Guillermo McLean)

These were the words of Professor Guillermo McLean, the recently retired director of the Linguistic Research and Revitalization Institute (IPILC), a department of URACCAN, in Bluefields, Nicaragua during an interview in 2014. This very succinct statement of the sociolinguistic situation on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua describes the basis of the linguistic ideological process which Fishman (2001) calls Reversing Language Shift (RLS) which I seek to explore in my thesis.

As Fishman explains in his work (1991, 2001):

RLS is concerned with the recovery, recreation and retention of a complete way of life, including non-linguistic as well as linguistic features. All cultures and the social identities that they foster—even those of well-established and seemingly unthreatened dominant societies—are partially continuations and partially innovations relative to their own pasts. When both continuations and innovations are under local self-regulation they fuse together into a seemingly seamless authentic whole. RLS is the linguistic part of the pursuit of ethnocultural self-regulation which democracies and international bodies are increasingly recognizing as a basic right for indigenous... populations. (2001:452)

Fishman points out (2001:453) that, “the opponents of RLS efforts (like the group McLean addressed) continually argue that most major reward systems are linked to the dominant language use and its mastery.” Their claim is that:

it is more rewarding to link local populations linguistically with the widest economic and social system to which they can gain access and that language policies succeed when and only when they correspond to labor-market considerations”. They stress that those languages that are most ‘useful’ are those that yield the greatest ‘social advancement’ and that the minority language won’t do it” (Fishman 2001:453).

But, as Fishman argues, the economic reward aspect is not the only one that defines the minority individual and their social identity. He says that:

Societally weaker languages always need more than mere economic rationales. It is not labor-market access but economic power which is disproportionately in the hands of the dominant culture and that is a problem that will rarely be overcome on linguistic grounds alone. As a result, even bilingualism of the minority culture usually does not lead to any redistribution of economic power, and, that being the case, the maintenance of identity and cultural intactness becomes all the more important for community problem solving, health, education, and cultural creativity (2001:453).

It was this sense of sociolinguistic and cultural integrity I wanted to explore that led me to study and spend from April to June, 2014 living with a Creole family in Bluefields. They welcomed me into their family circle and were comfortable enough with me to share their own opinions in informal conversations about language usage. As is the case with most Creoles, they are multilingual: Kriol, Standard English, and Spanish. I conducted semi-structured interviews, using open-ended questions and participant-observation fieldwork, with several people who are in positions of authority and have had intimate experience with the linguistic and educational history of the Atlantic Coast as well as being involved in the 1980-81 Literacy Campaign. They all provided informed consent and all but one of the interviews were recorded. I present those interviews showing different perspectives regarding the work being done regarding RLS and on the prestige value of the Kriol language in Nicaragua.

In order to begin to see the ideologies connected with language, we must back up and look at the broader context within which language ideology operates; for that reason, in Chapter One of my thesis I present a brief history of Nicaragua to appreciate its language development within the context of that history and its impact on the language ideology that is evident on the Atlantic Coast today. With this historical

backdrop in mind, in Chapter Two I discuss further details of the nature of Kriol languages generally in order to fully understand their implications to the cultural identity of the peoples who speak them. Then I explore the multifaceted identity the Creole people have of themselves which, I feel, is manifested in the complex and ambivalent relationship they have with the language they use among themselves and with non-Creoles, and this will be shown in the interviews which I conducted during my field work. Chapter Three will continue with further history in the development of the post-Revolution Literacy Crusade and its impact on the Atlantic Coast. I present some pertinent educational theories regarding the teaching of language and show how these theories impacted the Literacy Campaign launched by the post-Revolutionary government in Nicaragua in 1980. With all the historical, linguistic and cultural background of the preceding chapters in mind, I discuss the counter-hegemonic work and the motivation for it being done now to legitimize English Kriol and the other indigenous languages spoken on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua despite the hegemonic pressure of Standard English as well as Spanish. In the Conclusion, I return to Fishman's RLS concept to assess the implications for the future of those languages in Nicaragua in the face of the growing influence of globalization.

Chapter One: A Brief History of Nicaragua

The political history of Nicaragua is a complicated and multi-phasic one with many influences coming to bear on the nation-state and its relationship to its multi-ethnic population. Therefore, in this chapter I lay out brief historical descriptions of those phases in order to grasp the importance of their influences on the Creole people of the Atlantic Coast of the country. I have drawn on the work of several researchers (Black 1981, Von Oertzen 1985; Shapiro 1987; Gordon 1987,1998; Freeland 1988,1993; Holm 1989; Sollis 1989; Merrill 1993; MacAulay 1998; Baracco 2005; Carmack et al. 2007; Gritzner 2010; Staten 2010; Encyclopedia Brittanica) to put the pieces together in order to make as complete a picture as possible. However, due to its complexity, many of the historical details are beyond the scope of this paper, therefore I would refer the reader to the work of the aforementioned authors.

Unlike other Central American countries, Nicaragua experienced the simultaneous occupation of two colonial powers, Spain and England, each with their own systems of domination, exploitation and settlement patterns and their own reasons for colonialism (Sollis 1989:483) as explained in the following paragraphs.

The first Spaniards entered the region of what would become known as Nicaragua in 1523. Their area of interest was the portion on the Pacific Ocean side which included a wide, fertile valley with huge freshwater lakes and a series of volcanos and volcanic lagoons (Merrill 1993, Gritzner 2010). The objectives of the Spanish model of imperialism in Nicaragua (as is similar to their history in Mexico and Peru among others) were those of total, and usually forcible, replacement of existing civilizations (e.g., the Nicarao, the Chorotega, and the Chontales) and the appropriation of land, labor and

resources (Baracco 2005:108, Carmack et al. 2007). The Spanish conquest was a disaster for the Indigenous population of Nicaragua's Pacific region. Within three decades an estimated Indian population of one million plummeted to a few tens of thousands, as approximately half the Indigenous people died of contagious Old World diseases, and most of the rest were sold into slavery in other New World Spanish colonies and many were killed in outright warfare (Hale 1987:35, Merrill 1993, Carmack et al. 2007, Gritzner 2010:39, Staten 2010, Encyclopedia Britannica). As a result, a Mestizo, Spanish-speaking, Catholic culture evolved on the Pacific side of the country.

British buccaneers arrived on the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast in the 1560s and began a long history of British imperialism which, as found elsewhere, took on a mercantilist form. Its main interests focused on extractive industries that were facilitated by friendly relations with the local Indigenous population, most notably the Miskitu Indians who were and still remain the largest of the Indigenous groups (Baracco 2005:107). However, there were, and still are, two smaller Indigenous groups living on the Atlantic Coast, the Mayangna and the Rama.

The English established footholds along the Caribbean Coast of Central America during the seventeenth century to block Spanish expansion in the Central American isthmus and to protect Jamaica, then newly acquired by the English (Sollis 1989:484). Britain set the pattern of their imperialism in 1687 by forming a strategic alliance against the Spanish with the Miskitu Indians of the Coast by recognizing a Miskitu as "King of Mosquitia", as that area of the Atlantic coast came to be known. Von Oertzen (1985) and Holm (1989) note that the Miskitu Indians supported the British against the Spanish, and served as excellent business partners, providing goods and Indigenous slaves for

the Jamaican market. Smaller Indigenous tribes of the region, which included the Mayangna and the Rama as well as seven or eight other tribes that became extinct between 1502 and 1950 (e.g., the Kukras, Prinsus and others), were easily dominated by the armed and more numerous Miskitu (Von Oertzen 1985:5). Through this alliance, the Miskitu gained hegemony over the other Indian groups (Freeland 1993:72) and this began a period of “indirect British rule” over the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua which lasted for over 200 years (Shapiro 1987:68, Baracco 2005:108). As a result, the Caribbean coast has had a different history and this is reflected in the language demography of the two regions and in the prestige attitudes seen today (Freeland 1988:80; Hornberger 1999). Indeed, it is the nature of the rivalry that persisted between Spain and England for 200 years that is at the root of much contemporary conflict and antagonism between the Caribbean Coast peoples and the “Spanish”, as the Spanish-speaking Mestizos are still called by the Costeños (people of the coast).

During the 1700s, major changes in inter-ethnic relations among the Indigenous peoples and the Black population, who were brought there by the British from Jamaica as slaves, began to establish themselves in the ethnic hierarchy (Sollis 1989:484). Miscegenation between African, Amerindian and British peoples was common on the Mosquito Coast in the eighteenth century. Though the offspring of female Amerindian and African slaves ordinarily remained slaves, European masters freed some of the offspring of such unions (Gordon 1998:35). This group established small communities in Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon and Corn Island on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. They were the ancestors of the present day Creoles and they came to form a small mixed-blood elite within the Black population (Gordon 1998:37).

The mutual dependence between the Miskitu and the English effectively came to an end when English settlers were forced to leave the Mosquito Coast under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles signed by Britain and Spain in 1787, ending French and Spanish hostilities against Great Britain in the American Revolutionary War.

By the 1820s the term Creole had come into common usage as a description for “the entire free English Kriol-speaking non-white population born in the Americas and living in the Mosquitia” (Gordon 1998: 39). Then, after slave emancipation in 1834, this group was augmented by freed, escaped, and emancipated slaves from other parts of the Caribbean (Freeland 1993:72; Sollis 1989:484). The Black community began to flourish in the absence of any direct colonial control since the English had left. They consolidated economic and political control over the Mosquito Coast, taking over the positions that English settlers had once occupied as commercial intermediaries with the Miskitu, Mayangna and Rama communities and as political advisors to the Miskitu King. The Miskitu king retained nominal control, but the real power lay with his Creole advisory council (Rossbach and Wunderich 1985).

Creole history has been closely tied with that of the Miskitu. They are associated with the history of Anglo imperialism, first through slavery, and then through their favored status on the return of the British authorities to the Mosquitia during the 1820s (Baracco 2005:112). A Creole culture was established based on the language and culture preserved by the slave community as well as assimilated through close contact with the English (Sollis 1989:485). The Black population spoke English, even though with a partially African grammatical structure (Gordon 1987:137, Sollis 1989:485) so we begin to see the genesis of the linguistic ideology that still persists today that I discuss

further in Chapter Three. The Black population maintained English values and practices and they considered themselves, and were considered by others, to be British subjects and, as guardians of English civilization on the coast, to be the rightful leaders of the Mosquitia (Gordon 1987:137, 1998:113). Baracco states (2005:113) that the Creoles' English language and emulation of Anglo-American culture were essential for their high status within the racial hierarchy of the Mosquitia. Just like the Miskitu who had had close economic ties with the British before them, the Creoles believed that their Anglo culture made them superior to other non-white groups and entitled them to occupy a leading position in Coastal affairs and they used their Anglo culture to distinguish themselves from Spanish Nicaraguans. This was a process which became more important with the increasing presence of the Nicaraguan nation-state.

Another process which contributed to the upward shift in status of the Creole people was the arrival of the Moravian missionaries from Germany⁷ in 1849 (World Council of Churches) who began evangelizing the Creoles and later the Miskitu and other Indians (Mayangna and Rama). They initiated the first formal study and transcription of Miskito into written language (Shapiro 1987:68). Norwood and Zeledon state (1985:17) that "by the end of the nineteenth century, a large part of the Moravian religious practices were carried out in Miskito; the first edition of a Miskito hymnbook and liturgy was published in 1893 and a Miskito translation of the New Testament in 1905." The Moravians established private schools in Bluefields and Puerto Cabezas and were the only educational institutions on the Coast at the time (Shapiro 1987:70). They offered primary and secondary level instruction in English to the English-speaking, primarily

⁷ The Moravians turned over the leadership and administration of the Nicaraguan church to the American Moravian church in 1916. It was not until 1972 that it was nativized.

Creole populations of these towns thereby giving the Creoles literacy and strengthening their links with English-based culture.

When public schools were established in the 1890s on the Atlantic Coast⁸, instruction in these schools was in Spanish, a language imposed on the coastal populations by the central government in Managua. English and Miskito were prohibited as languages of instruction in the public schools by the Nicaraguan governments until the time of the Sandinista Revolution in 1979. As the Moravian Church became one of the more stable and powerful institutions on the coast, Creoles gained considerable authority, especially among the Miskitu (Shapiro 1987:70). In the work of the Moravian Church with the Miskito language we can see further development of the linguistic ideology that still exists on the Atlantic Coast. This was made even more evident in the politics surrounding the establishment of the Literacy Campaign in 1979.

Under United States pressure using the Monroe Doctrine⁹, Britain signed the Treaty of Managua in 1860 thus withdrawing as the “protectors” of Mosquitia and creating a Mosquito Reserve which granted powers of local self-government to the Miskitu monarchy (CIDCA 1985:13). By this time, the U.S. government saw Nicaragua as a potential site for an interoceanic canal¹⁰, and U.S. multinational corporations increasingly penetrated the Atlantic Coast economy seeking to exploit lumber reserves

⁸ In my research I was unable to discover an exact date for this, however it seems a likely time for two reasons. President Zelaya incorporated the Atlantic Coast region into the rest of the nation-state in 1894 and one of his policies was to build schools and encourage education throughout the country.

⁹ The Monroe Doctrine was a US foreign policy regarding Latin American countries in 1823. It stated that further efforts by European nations to colonize land or interfere with states in North or South America would be viewed as acts of aggression, requiring U.S. intervention.

¹⁰ Nicaragua was one of the two possible locations for the building of an intercontinental canal to join the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Panama eventually won that distinction. Now that the traffic through that canal has reached its maximum capabilities, there are recent serious negotiations regarding a second canal, again using Nicaragua as the location.

(softwoods and hardwoods), rubber and bananas, and to set up mining operations (gold, silver, copper, zinc and platinum) (Shapiro 1987:68; Sollis 1989:490) thereby establishing economic enclaves¹¹ to extract that coast's valuable natural resources. These Anglophone enclaves gave Creoles further opportunities for advancement. With heavy labor needs being met by Mestizo migrants from the Pacific coast, casual Miskitu and Mayangna wage-laborers, and unskilled Black labor imported from the anglophone Caribbean, the Creoles with their English literacy skills became the clerks and middle managers. Thus, by the 1890s, Creoles were firmly in the ascendancy in the church, in the Mosquito Reserve, and in the enclave labor hierarchy. However, their authority was not entirely their own because, like the Miskitu before them, it was exercised only as mediators of British or North American power (Freeland 1993:73). By 1890, U.S. investments in the region had grown to \$10 million and as much as 90% of the region's commerce was controlled by U.S. firms (CIDCA 1985:14, Gordon 1987:42).

Creole influence in local government ended when the national government of President Zelaya (1893-1909) decided to unify the Nicaraguan State economically and culturally with the "Reincorporation" of the Mosquitia into Nicaragua as an attempt to modernize the Nicaraguan economy (Sollis 1989:486; Freeland 1993:74). Unlike the Miskitu population, Creoles reacted violently against the Reincorporación (which Creoles refer to as the Overthrow). Nicaraguan troops initially managed to suppress rioting in Bluefields and the rebellion was finally ended by the U.S. government which sent 400 Marines to assist the Nicaraguans in restoring order (Sollis 1989:487; Baracco

¹¹ An enclave economy is defined as an economic system in which an export based industry dominated by international or non-local capital extracts resources or products from another country. It was widely employed as a term to describe post-colonial dependency relations in the developing world, especially in Latin America.

2005:114). Spanish-speaking Mestizos replaced Creoles in government and economic administration, and a policy of cultural Hispanicization imposed Spanish over English as the region's official language, outlawing teaching in other languages.

By the end of the 1890s, the Creole community, which had risen to a position of economic and political dominance in mid-century, had seen its position eclipsed first socially and economically by North Americans and then politically by Mestizo Nicaraguans. The Moravian schools that had successfully spread literacy in Miskito and English had to close because they were unable to teach in Spanish (Freeland (1988:26)

Corruption practiced by Mestizo officials, the monopolistic concessions, the undermining of the authority of the Moravian church and Anglo-American culture and institutions in general, and an over-reliance on coercion due to the administrative weakness of the Nicaraguan state, all created a sense similar to that of colonial subjugation rather than of national belonging. In the eyes of many Creoles, the Mosquito Reserve, renamed as the department of Zelaya, had become an internal colony of the Nicaraguan state (Freeland 1988:26).

In summary, then, we can see that before the Reincorporación, the dominant, ethnic and Indigenous groups on the Mosquito Coast were firstly the Miskitu and then, with the ascendance of U.S. imperialism, the Creoles. Creole resistance to the Reincorporación/Overthrow took several forms. Civil organizations were established and became a focus for Creole culture and politics. Economic resistance was evident in their reluctance to provide labor in the new U.S. monopoly industries and in the formation of union organizations. Creoles also played a part in the U.S.-backed Conservative rebellion which ousted Zelaya in 1909 (Baracco 2005:115). Gordon points out (1998:75) that

Creole support for the rebellion represented a significant step towards becoming more involved with national politics in their attempts to address their grievances. Mestizos remained in the minority on the Atlantic Coast well into the twentieth century (Gordon 1998:75).

In contrast to Spanish colonialism, which was based on coercive imposition of direct rule and domination, Anglo-American imperialism dominated through gaining active consent for its rule (Baracco 2005:116). Anglo-American culture, industry, institutions and language were empowering and helped to create distinctive group identities, assisting in the organization, arming, and economic viability that was necessary to resist the colonizing efforts of Mestizos from the Pacific. Consequently, when Costeños wanted to distance themselves from Spanish Nicaraguans, they tended to emphasize their Anglo-American affinities. Baracco writes (2005:116) that these Anglo-American affinities and ethnic militancy were mutually reinforcing. Whenever the Mestizo national state became too overbearing and threatened the integrity of the institutions established by the British and U.S. imperialism, Costeños reacted militantly to show their affinities toward those institutions and the Anglo world in general.

Having recognized the opportunities on the Atlantic Coast, U.S. multinational companies (e.g., Bragman's Bluff Lumber Company, Louisiana Nicaraguan Lumber Company, Cuyamel Fruit Company, Standard Fruit Company, the Bluefields Steamship Company, Tonapah Mining Company of Nevada, and Thomas Ritter Mining Company from Pittsburg) had taken control of the economy there by the beginning of the twentieth century. Although the Reincorporación led to increased taxes imposed by Nicaraguan authorities and land expropriations by Mestizo immigrants, the real power on the Coast

was in the hands of the U.S. companies (Baracco 2005:111). The “Monroe Doctrine” of 1823 had warned European powers to stay out of Latin America, including Central America, which had a particular importance to the United States because of its proximity. The United States intervened in Nicaragua repeatedly to protect U.S. economic interests. In 1912 U.S. marines landed once again to maintain a pro-American government and this occupation lasted until 1925 (Black 1981:8, Sollis 1989:487, George Mason University). However, the continued U.S. presence in the region offered Costeños employment, wages in dollars, and access to imported consumer goods from company stores (Baracco 2005:111).

In 1916, during the First World War, the responsibility for the Nicaraguan Moravian Church passed from Germany to the United States and American missionaries arrived to supervise the church (World Council of Churches). Education and health projects were started with U.S. money just at the moment when U.S. banana, logging, and mining companies were at their most prosperous (Sollis 1989:494).

During the first two decades of the twentieth century the Atlantic Coast’s economy continued to boom, but by the 1920s this period was drawing to a close due to a combination of factors: the banana industry was in crisis due to the thin coastal soils beginning to lose their fertility, there was a fall in demand for the exports of lumber, rubber and gold, and the Great Depression was approaching. Gordon writes (1987:139) that economic depression hit the rural areas of the Coast first and hardest. Most Blacks abandoned the countryside for the urban areas of the Coast, ultimately migrating in large numbers to Managua and the United States in search of better economic conditions. Within the urban setting, they made use of the educational

opportunities available, particularly in the Moravian schools, and increasingly occupied the more prestigious positions as professional people, skilled artisans and office workers. At the same time they withdrew from the ranks of unskilled wage and agricultural labor which they considered to be the work of mestizo peasants and the Indigenous masses (Gordon 1987:139). Sollis argues (1989:489), however, that the greatest threat to the short-term viability of U.S. enterprises was the growing political uncertainty in Nicaragua.

The U.S. Marines intervened again in the Nicaraguan civil war of 1926-27 to prevent the victory of the side that was supported by revolutionary Mexico, then perceived to be the beachhead of bolshevism in the Americas (MacAulay 1998:8). General Augusto César Sandino refused to accept American arbitration of the conflict and led his troops in a successful guerrilla campaign against the Marines with support from Mexican and other Latin American anti-imperialists (MacAulay 1998, George Mason University). Sandino argued that he would continue the war until American troops left Nicaragua which they finally did in 1933 (MacAulay 1998, University of Idaho). Six years of combat by a handful of workers and campesinos (peasants) made a significant contribution to that victory and Sandino's success in eluding capture by the U.S. forces and the Nicaraguan National Guard attracted widespread sympathy for him throughout the hemisphere. He gained most of his support from the rural areas and, although he had only about 300 men, his guerrilla war caused significant damage in the Caribbean coast and mining regions. Sandino's two major goals were the end of U.S. occupation and the establishment of a constitutional government free of foreign domination (University of Idaho). Following the withdrawal of the Marines in January 1933 and the inauguration of

Sacasa as president, Sandino was invited to meet with Anastasio Somoza Garcia, then the head of the National Guard, for an apparent peace conference but was abducted and murdered instead by National Guardsmen. During the 34-year period of U.S.-backed Somoza dictatorships, and ever since, 'Sandinismo' has become the rallying cry for freedom, self-determination and non-intervention, not only for Nicaragua but for liberation movements across Latin America (MacAulay 1998, biography.com).

The Somoza dynasty (1936-1979: Anastasio Somoza Garcia, followed by his eldest son, Luis Somoza Debayle, and then his youngest son Anastasio Somoza Debayle) undertook a new and more consistent drive for Hispanic nationalization, imposing Spanish as the medium of instruction throughout the school system, with few concessions to the multilingual, multicultural nature of the region (Freeland 1993:74). Many U.S. companies that had suspended operations in Nicaragua because of Sandino's activities returned after his death and after the Somoza dictatorship took formal power in 1937. Mining companies and lumber interests were attracted both by the rich natural resources and the freedom allowed to exploit them. The Somoza regime established a colonial type of administration on the Atlantic Coast that concerned itself mainly with law and order. It dealt effectively with crime and labor disputes to guarantee stable conditions for the mining and logging companies (Sollis 1989:490).

The Somoza administration required no investments in restocking or reforestation, in environmental protection, or in infrastructure and productive activity that would provide long-term employment (Sollis 1989:491). As a result, the extractive nature of the Atlantic Coast enterprises had a negative long-term impact on the local population.

During the Somoza years, there was no unified state-run secondary education system on the Atlantic Coast and the secondary schools in Bluefields were run either by Catholic Missionary orders from the United States or by the Moravian Church (Sollis 1989:495). Even though there was no common curriculum, schools emphasized the teaching of U.S. history and geography and there was an almost total lack of teaching of Nicaraguan history and geography—especially that of the Atlantic Coast. U.S. values with their anti-communist ideology were so pervasive on the Atlantic Coast that after the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Puerto Cabezas (on the coast north of Bluefields) was used to stage the Bay of Pigs invasion with no popular protest (Sollis 1989:495). The Atlantic Coast peoples looked towards the U.S. because there was little to tie them to the rest of Nicaragua. There was no real interest on the Pacific Coast in knowing about the eastern seaboard. Secondary schools on the Pacific Coast neglected to teach about the Atlantic Coast and opportunities to visit were limited by difficult travel conditions between the two coasts (Sollis 1989:496). The few Atlantic Coast people in the capital of Managua, which is on the Pacific coast, were the handful of students who were studying at the university, the Atlantic Coast baseball team and some staff at the international hotels (and at the American-Nicaraguan school—a U.S. State Department school where I worked for two years before the revolution) who were hired because they spoke English.

To illustrate the degree of animosity and tension between the people of the two coasts, I recount a personal memory from December, 1977 while living in Managua. My first husband was a Creole from Bluefields working in Managua. He helped arrange for a Creole choir from Bluefields to come to Managua to present a pre-Christmas concert

of “The Messiah”. The concert was well attended, well done and enjoyed by all. After it was over, he accompanied the choir members to the airport to see them off on their return to Bluefields. At the airport they were all harassed and mistreated by the National Guard wanting to know what they were doing in Managua. My husband tried to explain in an effort to smooth out the situation so the choir could be on their way home. As a result, he was put in jail overnight, arriving home in the morning disheveled and distressed at the treatment of his Creole friends.

Constant attempts by Pacific Coast Nicaragua to integrate the Atlantic Coast into a Nicaraguan nation-state ruled by Pacific Coast Mestizos, who spoke Spanish and were mostly Roman Catholic, were met by equally constant resistance from different groups of Costeños who spoke English and were mostly Protestant, to what they perceived as annexation. This historic resistance was at the root of the conflict with the 1979 Sandinista Revolution which was a product of the Pacific Coast Mestizo political culture (Shapiro 1987:70, Gordon 1998:249). The Sandinista victory of July, 1979 was celebrated throughout Spanish-speaking Nicaragua as the long-sought-after liberation from an oppressive and tyrannical dictatorship. On the Atlantic Coast, however, the revolutionary triumph was greeted less with enthusiasm than with apprehension and uncertainty. The actual fighting that led to Somoza’s overthrow was confined to the Pacific side of Nicaragua, and few Creole or Indigenous Nicaraguans participated in the armed insurrection (Shapiro 1987:70, Gordon 1998:249). The long-term consequences of Anglo affinities amongst Costeños, which has been a common theme from Zelaya to the Sandinistas, was to instill a deep mistrust in Mestizo discourse regarding their status as national subjects (Baracco 2005: 117). Creoles were constructed by the government

both as a possible threat to national unity and as part of a more inclusive *mestizaje* (Freeland 1999:217), a term which refers to cultural, racial and economic assimilation. The ethnic rivalries between the Mestizos and the Creole people continue to persist even to the present time.

Creole expectation was that the revolution had been fought to give power back to the people. In Bluefields the people considered that they had the right to govern, but the Sandinistas—perpetuating historical and structural relationships—allowed the formation of a municipal junta mainly with members from the Mestizo community (Gordon 1987:147). Instead of guaranteeing the participation of Creoles in positions of responsibility, it became practice to appoint Mestizos and by 1983, 80% of state institutions were run by Pacific or Atlantic Coast Mestizos. Sollis argues (1989:499) that the revolution failed to live up to Creole expectations, only repeating the same power relations associated with the previous regime. The immediate result was a loss of enthusiasm and subsequent skepticism about revolutionary programs (Sollis 1989:499).

The political fact of the revolution, juxtaposed with its economic and social policies, started to produce contradictory results (Sollis 1989:501). Sollis (1989), Gordon (1998) and Baracco (2005) give detailed accounts of the first post-revolutionary months which would be beyond the extent of this paper. Suffice it to say, however, that the revolution had managed to alienate the main national and regional powers on the Atlantic Coast, namely the U.S. companies and the churches, and was unable to mobilize the mass support it needed to introduce further change (Sollis 1989:501). Despite the revolution, the Atlantic Coast peoples still looked towards its Caribbean and Anglo-U.S. past rather than towards the national capital. At a time when loyalty to the new regime and the

creation of a new unified revolutionary Nicaragua was given great significance, this was considered a serious threat. As shall be discussed further in Chapter Three, this made the proposed Literacy Campaign a political issue rather than a pedagogical one and was fraught with difficulties. The Sandinistas treated most church-based groups, such as the Moravians and the Catholics, as suspect because of their assumed anti-Sandinista attitudes. Indeed, the Moravians had to be persuaded to support the Literacy Campaign because they were sure that it was Communist propaganda (personal communication). At the same time, the inability of most Sandinista and government officials to speak Miskito or English meant there was no means of communicating directly with the Costeño population to inform them of Sandinista intentions and priorities. Moreover, ethnocentrism on the part of some Sandinista cadres and the racism of others contributed significantly to the distancing of the Atlantic Coast peoples from the revolution (Sollis 1989:505).

Chapter Two: Kriol Language and Creole Identity

Nicaragua's 500,000 (9% of the total) Creole people are the third largest of the six ethnic groups comprising the Costeño ("people of the coast") population (CIA World Fact Book). They are chiefly concentrated in the southern part of the Atlantic Coast which has been constituted since 1987 as the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (R.A.A.S) and they speak an English-based Kriol, known to linguists as Mosquito Coast Creole (Holm 1983:95, Bartens 2009:299), and to the Creole people simply as "English". This usage of the term and the modern Creole identity of which it is a sign are a product of the Creole people's slow rise and rapid fall in the ethnic hierarchy of the Coast, itself determined by the shifting patterns of Atlantic Coast history discussed in the previous chapter.

John Holm provides (1978) an extensive listing of literature mentioning Miskito Coast Creole (MCC), as it is known, tracing it back to 1681. He himself has also done an extensive linguistic study of MCC, providing an exhaustive description of the development of MCC on the eastern coast of Nicaragua from the 1570s. This includes a history of the trajectories of arrival of the Amerindians around 1640 and the African slaves during the 1700s, as well as their interaction which resulted in the development of MCC.

MCC (Miskito Coast Creole) is reported to be the first language of the majority of Creoles, and a first or second language for some other ethnic groups living on the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua. It is used in homes, Creole neighborhoods, churches, and some workplaces. It is the first language which all Creole children learn to speak (Decker and Keener 1998:11). There is considerable national pressure to conform and

to join the rest of the Spanish-speaking people of the country, but if there have been concessions on the part of the government toward the recognition of the linguistic needs of the Creole people, the response has been to encourage a more standard form of English. The increasing emigration of Spanish speakers to the Coast since the revolution and immigration of Creoles to Managua on the Pacific Coast for better employment opportunities has made language use choices more of a daily concern for many Creoles (Decker and Keener 1998:11). In their conclusion of the situation in 1971, Jones and Glean (1971:61) were hopeful that an increased sense of the value of bilingualism might support maintenance of MCC in the future. The evaluation of Decker and Keener in 1998 (1998:11), however, was that unless there is some united effort and institutional support of Kriol language maintenance and development, they may lose their language. It is the present institutional effort and support that will be discussed in the next chapter.

A. Creole Language

Pidgins and Creoles are found today on every continent (Todd 1974 1990, Holm 1989, Muysken and Smith 1994). As mentioned previously, references to their existence go back to the Middle Ages and it is likely that they have often arisen when people speaking mutually unintelligible languages have come into contact (Todd 1974, Holm 1989) and they have been given both popular and scholarly attention. Popularly, they are thought to be inferior, haphazard, broken, bastardized versions of older, longer-established languages. In academic circles attempts have been made to remove the

stigma frequently attached to them by pointing out that there is no such thing as a primitive or inferior language (Todd 1974:1).

A Pidgin is a marginal language which arises to fulfill certain restricted communication needs among people who have no common language (Todd 1984:3, Holm 1989). In the initial stages of contact, the communication is often limited to transactions where a detailed exchange of ideas is not required and where a small vocabulary, drawn almost exclusively from one language, suffices. The syntactic structure of the Pidgin is less complex and less flexible than the structures of the languages which were in contact, and though many Pidgin features clearly reflect usages in the contact languages, others are unique to the Pidgin. A Creole arises when a Pidgin becomes the mother tongue of a speech community (Crystal 1980, Todd 1984:4, Holm 2000). This occurs when the simple structure that characterized the Pidgin is carried over into the Creole, but since a Creole, as a mother tongue, must be capable of expressing the whole range of human experience, the lexicon is expanded and a more elaborate syntactic system evolves.

Todd argues (1974:3) that a Creole can develop from a Pidgin in two ways. Speakers of a Pidgin may be put in a position where they can no longer communicate in their mother tongues. This happened on a large scale in the Caribbean region during the course of the slave trade. Slaves from the same areas were deliberately separated to reduce the risk of plotting, and so the only language common to them was the variety of European tongue they had acquired on the African coast, or on board ship, or while working on plantations. Children born into this situation then learned the Pidgin as a first language and thus a Creole came into being as those children expanded their linguistic

needs and, thereby, the complexity of the language. But a Creole is not always the result of people being deprived of their mother tongue. A Pidgin can become so useful as a community lingua franca that it may be expanded and used even by people who share a mother tongue. Parents, for example, may use a Pidgin so extensively throughout the day, in the market, at church, on public transport, that it becomes normal for them to use it at home as well. In this way, children can acquire it as one of their first languages. This second type of creolization, he argues, can probably occur only in multilingual areas where an auxiliary language is essential to progress (Todd 1974:3). The emergence of such a language as a permanent form is not merely the result of languages coming into contact and influencing each other, rather it is the birth of a new language, one with the potential to develop and spread, as happens with a Creole, or to disappear if the need for the communication which brought it into existence should cease to be operative, as is the case with a Pidgin (Todd 1974:11).

Another more recent theory (Mufwene 1994, 2001) on Creole language development considers the economic environment in which the language develops. According to this theory, Pidgins are a type of language that develops in one kind of trade or economic arrangement between kinds of population groups, and Creoles develop in an environment of slavery. This does not involve any process of reduction and expansion of linguistic forms.

The language from which the Pidgin/Creole acquires most of its vocabulary is referred to as the superstrate or lexifier language; in the case of Nicaraguan Creole, that would be English. The other languages that provide grammar and syntax and have had less influence are called the substrate languages, which would be African languages for

the Creole people of Nicaragua (Gordon 1987:137) as would seem probable from their trajectories during the years of their enslavement. It is also possible that the Indigenous Miskito language, and perhaps Spanish, have had some influence in the process.

After the formation of a Creole language there may be further processes of change. It has been observed that when a Creole exists in proximity to its superstrate language, it may go through a process called decreolization during which the Creole adopts increasingly more features of the superstrate language. In this process of decreolization it is possible for a range of speech forms to develop which is referred to in the literature as a post-creolization continuum¹². In this continuum the form closest to the superstrate is called the acrolect, the form most different from the superstrate is called the basilect, and the multitude of forms in between are called the mesolects. Decker (2005:5) provides an example from Belizean Creole to illustrate this phenomenon:

Basilect: Di flai dehn mi-di bait laas nait.

Mesolect: Di flies dem mi bitin las nite.

Acrolect: Di mosquitos were bitin las night.

Standard English: The mosquitos were biting last night.

This range of Kriol exists in Nicaragua as well, as illustrated my own experience. I lived in Nicaragua from 1976 to 1978 with my first husband who was Nicaraguan. He spoke Standard English, English Kriol, and Spanish and most of our friends spoke these languages as well. Since I do not speak Kriol and they habitually spoke it when conversing with me one on one, these friends would routinely speak a dialect of Kriol

¹² Originally described, but not named, by Hugo Schuchardt in 1883 in his *Kreolische Studien* (Kriol Studies). The term was coined by David DeCamp in 1971 and popularized by Derek Bickerton in 1975. Please see in References: DeCamp (1971) Bickerton (1975) and Schuchardt (1979).

which was not difficult for me to understand (i.e., the acrolect). In small groups the Kriol would begin to be a little less understandable (the mesolect) and as the group would get larger and the discussion more animated I would be completely unable to follow the conversation. They had, I assert, shifted to the basilect. The only thing I did understand in these situations was that they were “talking story” and telling jokes.

Nero writes (2006:5) that in the case of the anglophone Caribbean, the important issue is that of the development of a creole continuum which ranges from a strict Creole (basilect) to Creole English (mesolect) to a local standardized form of English (acrolect). He argues that this is because the majority of the Caribbean population today are descendants of transplanted and enslaved peoples whose original ethnic languages were largely eradicated during their enslavement. Thus, the Creole English that has developed and is spoken in the region is, for most, the only language they can claim to be their own and is the primary one used. It is publicly labeled as English due to the stigmatization of creolized varieties. The perception in the mind of the Caribbean native, he says, is that English is their only language, however different it may be in terms of structure, lexicon, pronunciation, and usage from a standard variety of English as spoken in the United States or England. This perception precludes the English-speaking Caribbean native from thinking of himself or herself as bilingual or of English as their second language, a perception which has implications for placement and assessment in schools (Winer 2006; Pratt-Johnson 2006) which I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

The linguistic situation on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua is a complex one in that it is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual area of the country with the inherent problems those

bring to education as, for instance, which language to teach and which culture is dominant and how to strike an equitable balance among them. In addition, there is an added ideological and political aspect brought to the educational system by the 1979-1981 revolution and the subsequent establishment of the Literacy Campaign which shows a particularly interesting case of interaction between hegemonic state policy and grassroots initiatives in indigenous language maintenance. Shapiro (1987), Freeland (1999) and Hornberger (1999) trace the important history of the Literacy Campaign showing how education and literacy play a role as functional domains offering space for Indigenous languages and, therefore, for speakers of those languages. This contributes to the empowerment of, and opens the door to opportunity for, people who have otherwise been minoritized¹³ by their societies. Freeland (1999) particularly argues that the language issues in Nicaragua were inseparable from the wider revolutionary conflict and locates the literacy campaigns within state and Atlantic Coast discourses.

A second linguistic phenomenon that I want to mention is called non-accommodation. It occurs in some language contact situations and is indicative of the language attitudes that develop in such cases. My first husband and I travelled occasionally from Managua on the Pacific side which is predominantly Hispanic, to the Atlantic/Caribbean side of the country where the culture, language, and people are predominantly Creole. There is also a Spanish-speaking population there but it was not

¹³ a term which reflects an understanding of “minority” status as that which is socially constructed in specific societal contexts (Benitez 2010:131). *Minoritized*, unlike minority, emphasizes the process of *minoritizing* and insists that the relative prestige of languages and cultures and the conditions of their contact are constituted in social relations of ruling in both national and international arenas (Mukherjee et al. 2006:1)

as large then as it is now. On one occasion, my husband was talking with a Spanish-speaking shop keeper about arrangements for over-night accommodations. The conversation was the standard one expected under the circumstances, except for one difference. My husband was speaking English and the other man was speaking Spanish. I thought the situation very interesting and when we returned to Managua I remarked on it to my then sister-in-law. Her comment was: “ [Də panjas dɛm, dai doŋ wa: spik iŋglif]”. (Gloss: The Spanish speakers won’t speak English even though they understand it. It is their way of maintaining their cultural identity under the pressure of the Creole culture on the Caribbean side of the country.) One of my interviewees also recounted a recent similar situation during an informal conversation we had. Here again we see an example of the linguistic ideology that exists within the larger national hegemony, not just with that which exists between Kriol and Standard English.

B. Creole Identity

The Nicaraguan people have emerged from the mixture of three different racial populations: Indigenous, European and African. The mixed nature of her population is a fact of which Nicaragua is proud, and will defend as a cornerstone of her people’s identity (Ramirez 1981:221).

Bourdieu (1994) argues that an actors’ history of participation in different fields or social settings endows them with certain tastes, dispositions, and rules for the carrying out of their everyday practices or what he calls a habitus. He says that a person’s habitus is not just a product of their own interactions with others but also a byproduct of the often unseen role played by states and institutions in the teaching of language as we shall see in the next chapter.

The noted educational theorist, Etienne Wenger, points out (1998:125-6) that different social settings figure in the construction of several communities of practice which he states are characterized by practices and relationships, such as enduring inter-personal relationships; shared ways of engaging in doing things together; overlapping descriptions by participants about who belongs; shared knowledge about what others can do and how they can contribute; mutually defining identities; an ability to assess the appropriateness of others actions; certain styles recognized as displaying membership; and a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world. As we saw in the preceding chapter on history, all of these aforementioned practices and relationships are evident in the language ideologies that exist in Nicaragua today.

Wenger goes on to say (1998:253) that “communities of practice are organizational assets because they are the social fabric of the learning of organizations and that an organization’s ability to deepen and renew its learning depends on encouraging, or at least not impeding, the formation, development, and transformation of communities of practice, whether old or new.” He holds that learning is an inherently social process and that it cannot be separated from the social context in which it happens.

On the other hand, Wenger argues (1998:175) that communities of practice can also be narrow. He says that:

the understanding inherent in shared practice is not necessarily one that gives members broad access to the histories or relations with other practices that shape their own practice. Competence (in the COP) can become so transparent, locally ingrained, and socially efficacious that it becomes so insular that no other viewpoint can even register. In this way, a community of practice can become an obstacle to learning by entrapping us in its very power to sustain our identity.

In other words, we can become so wrapped up in our own community of practice

that we fail to appreciate that other communities of practice are just as viable and important as our own and are worth learning about whether we agree with their precepts or not. It would seem to me that, at the very least, learning about other languages and cultures as communities of practice (which includes the perspective of both the minority and dominant worldviews) would contribute more in alleviating cultural biases, antagonisms, and ethnocentrism than any other educational program we could establish. This does not mean that we need to give up or negate our own culture in the process but just to more fully understand that the “other” is also of value and not to be denigrated nor dismissed. As examples of the benefits that can be gained from more attention being paid to this learning, I would suggest that the advent of Black Studies and Women’s Studies programs at universities during the 1970s contributed to some of the progress that has been made toward a greater understanding of these particular communities of practice.

Wenger continues (1998:271-2) that once educational communities of practice are truly functional and connected to the world in meaningful ways, teaching events can be designed around them as resources to their practices and as opportunities to open up their learning more broadly. He says that there is a profound difference between viewing educational design as the source of learning and viewing it as a resource to a learning community:

The first requirement of educational design is to offer opportunities for engagement. Learners must be able to invest themselves in communities of practice in the process of approaching a subject matter. Unlike in a classroom, where everyone is learning the same thing, participants in a community of practice contribute in a variety of interdependent ways that become material for building an identity. What they learn is what allows them to contribute in the enterprise of the community and to engage with others around that enterprise. In fact, this is how most learning takes place outside

of school, where it is true not only of adults, but also of children: we are all engaged in the pursuit of a socially meaningful enterprise, and our learning is in the service of that engagement. Our communities of practice then become resources for organizing our learning as well as contexts in which to manifest our learning through an identity of participation. What is crucial about this kind of engagement as an educational experience is that identity and learning serve each other. (1998:271)

The following discussion, I believe, will illustrate this concept of the relationship between identity and education in the venue of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. In the next chapter I will examine it further in relation to language education in the schools on the Atlantic Coast of the country and the counter-hegemonic work being done to assist the RLS process with Kriol.

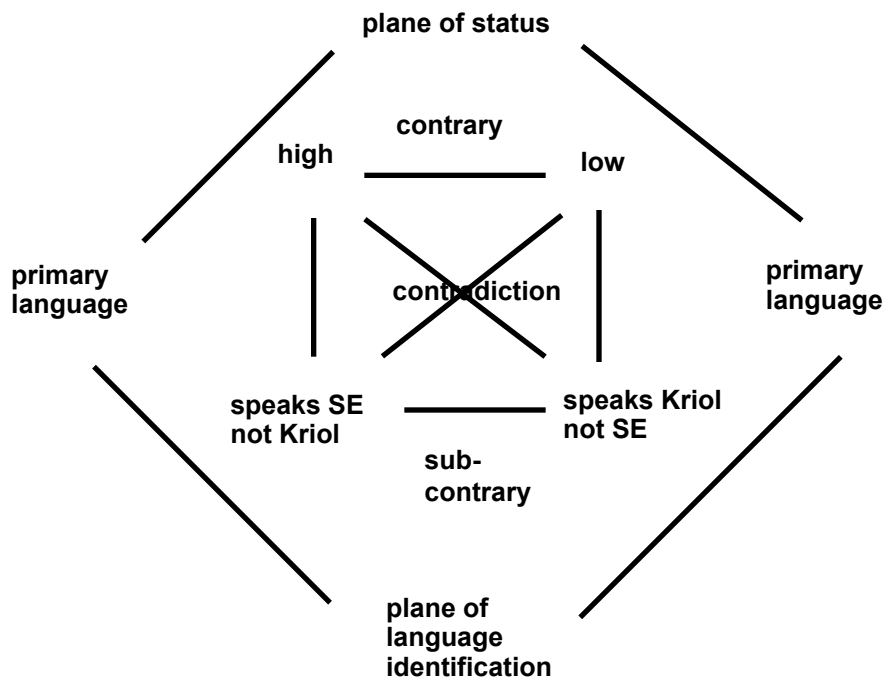
In his analysis of identity and politics in Nicaragua, Gordon states (1998:190) that “a key aspect of the formation of the Creole identity lies in group boundary formation that is implicit in the everyday marking of difference from members of other groups and similarity to other Creoles”. He discovered in his research that there existed in Creole common sense a historically produced complex of phenotypic, cultural, social, and economic elements that were used by both themselves and by others as markers to identify themselves as Creoles--members of a social unit distinct from other Nicaraguan racial and ethnic groups. However, Gordon argues that “these traits were by no means unitary or internally consistent, but reflected the multiple and often contradictory character of Creole common sense in general” (190). To further clarify this point, the following is a brief discussion of Gordon’s definition and analysis of ‘common sense’ and how it may be reflected in the attitudes held by the Creoles regarding the status of their language.

Gordon writes (1998:189) that his concept of 'political common sense' is derived from Gramsci who states (in Forgacs 1988:328, 333) that it is "an historically produced repertoire of political practices and ideas which agents draw upon in the generation of political attitudes which are reflected in their activities". Gramsci writes (Forgacs: 421) that "everyone has a number of 'conceptions of the world' which often tend to be in contradiction with one another and therefore form an incoherent whole. Many of these conceptions are imposed and absorbed passively from the outside, or from the past, and are accepted and lived uncritically". It is this concept which Gramsci calls 'common sense', many elements of which contribute to people's subordination by making situations of inequality and oppression appear to them as natural and unchangeable.

Gordon argues then (1998:199) that "Creole political common sense was a complex amalgam of ideas and practices that sprang from the specifics of Creole history and culture, Creole class and sociopolitical positions, and the hegemonic ideas of non-Creole ruling elites." Both Creole populism (i.e., speaking Creole and embracing Creole culture) and Anglo ideology (i.e., speaking Standard English and embracing English culture) existed as ideal types within Creole political common sense. In summary, he says (261) that "the genesis of Creole identity was not primordial or monogenic; there is no single set of Creole cultural traits or a single Creole identity." Their identity formation, including their ambivalent feelings about their language as expressed by my interviewees, "was and is a multifaceted process mediated by the shifting relations of power, the specifics of the community's history, and its social memory" (261). He argues that the residues of these positions, issues, practices, and discourses are important components of contemporary Creole common sense.

Gordon states (1998:190) that the Creole identity is constituted by three central markers: language, kinship, and racial phenotype. The most important of these markers of identity for both Creole and non-Creole Nicaraguans is the Miskito Coast Creole as a first language (Gordon 1998:190). Miskito Coast Creole exhibits a post-Creole continuum, and most Creole people can and do move easily between the basilect (farthest from Standard English), the mesolect, and even the acrolect (closest to Standard English) levels of the language. Gordon (1990) argues that the acrolect has a high status value for Creoles because it is associated with British and North American English. The basilect form of Miskito Coast Creole, he says, is publicly denigrated by many Creoles, but its use is recognized as the highest expression of group solidarity and is the principal way by which Creoles distinguish themselves as a group even from Standard English speakers. A structural representation of this identity marker is seen below in Figure 1 showing the perceived linguistic status of Standard English vs. Kriol.

Figure 1: Greimas square showing language status



Although the ability to speak Kriol English and a “Black” phenotype (even though all would claim that they are racially mixed) are the determinant markers in the construction of Creole identity from outside the group (especially by the Mestizos), group membership is also determined in a large part by kinship relations (Gordon 1998:191). They imagine the group as a web of interrelated families who are rooted in each of three geographical areas (Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon, and Corn Island). All of these families are understood to be connected and Creoles are people who are members of these families or could otherwise demonstrate relatedness to historically Creole families.

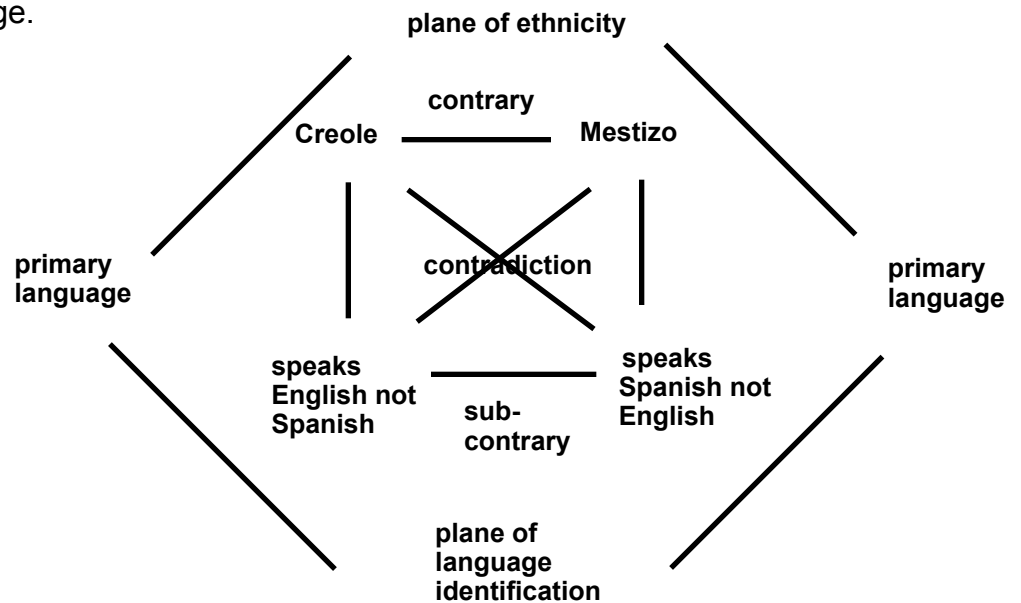
Religion also plays a central role in Creole social life and identity (Gordon 1998:191). Historically, Creole Protestantism, primarily membership in the Moravian Church, was a key oppositional symbol to Mestizo Catholicism, and it conferred high status through its association with “Anglo” culture.

Other cultural features in Creole common sense which are used at different moments by Creoles to differentiate themselves from other Nicaraguan racial-cultural groups include Creole clothing, housing styles, and distinctive cuisine. Apart from these racial, cultural, and linguistic categories, there are also socioeconomic indices of group identity in that Creoles continue to see themselves as the “civilized” elite of the Atlantic Coast’s racial-cultural hierarchy. Gordon argues that they take pride in the urban “middle-class” status they feel characterizes them as a group, even though by most other standards, they are poor--but genteel, high-class and refined, poor (1987:143, 1998:192). As an example, when they leave home whether to go to work or to shop or visit friends they habitually will dress up, clean and pressed, and the women will take extra care with their

hairdos as if it were a special occasion. Hence, they are more ‘civilized’ than the Indigenous and Mestizo people who share the Atlantic Coast with them.

To demonstrate a structural perspective of the Creole identity, Figure 2 below shows the relationship between ethnicity and the primary language spoken. It also raises the question of whether a secondary spoken language might be the language of the other ethnic group, which is, in fact, the case for the majority of the Creoles, but not always for the Mestizos.

Figure 2: Greimas square comparing ethnicity and language.



N.B. In this semiotic square, “English” can refer to what it represents in the individual’s mind as English: either English Kriol or Standard English.

Processes of racial and cultural identity formation create meaning beyond that associated with the drawing of boundaries and delimitation of groups. They are also fundamentally about the negotiation of position or status; hence, they involve the assignation of value to identities in national sociocultural orders. Gordon writes that “Creoles have historically inhabited three transnational identities simultaneously, with

the popularity and salience of each varying historically and that these three can be identified by the names that Creoles have called themselves” (1998:192). Thus, we can turn to a Saussurean dyadic concept for analysis of a culturally significant sign system.

The first identity he discusses (1998:193) is that of a Creole Black Caribbean diasporic identity which they signify by calling themselves “Blacks”. (However, I have learned that in recent years their preferred autonym is “Afro-descendants” to signify the extent to which they are mixed ethnically and phenotypically.) It is also signified by their production, appropriation, and identification with Afro-Caribbean and U.S. Black music, their collective memory of racial abuse and violence, and their association with Black diasporic political figures and movements (i.e., the UNIA--Universal Negro Improvement Association, Kwame Nkrumah¹⁴, and Martin Luther King, Jr.). Creole social memory of the group’s origins continually names Jamaica and other areas in the Afro-Caribbean as a source of the group’s ancestors, and Creole recognition of their condition of economic exploitation similar to the colonial and neocolonial positions of other Blacks, form the basis of a class component of Black Caribbean diasporic identity (Gordon 1998:193).

The second identity is that of a Creole Anglo diasporic identity which is signified by calling themselves “Creole” (193), a name which historically connoted an affiliation with the British. Anglo diasporic identity is also made evident by Creole appropriation of and identification with metropolitan¹⁵ English and Anglo missionary Protestantism, and in general by their assertions of the Anglo roots of their culture. Their social memory names England as a key origin source of the Creole people. The Creole’s relatively

¹⁴ Ghanaian nationalist leader who led the Gold Coast’s drive for independence from Britain and presided over its emergence as the new nation of Ghana in 1957.

¹⁵ of or belonging to the home territories of a country, as opposed to overseas territories.

advantaged economic position in comparison with the other Coast groups and the historical association of this privilege with Anglo capital is the basis of the class component of Anglo diasporic identity.

The third identity Gordon discusses (193) is that of an Indigenous one and is signified by calling themselves “Costeños”. Creoles were the people “Indigenous” to the territory located in the southeastern part of Nicaragua. From the Creole perspective, they were Indigenous in the sense that they were the ruling native population before the arrival of the colonizing Mestizo Nicaraguan nation in 1894 when the eastern half of the country was incorporated into the western half. In addition to its regional reference, the name “Costeño” denotes Creole affiliation with Indigenous Indian groups on the Coast, particularly the Miskitu, Rama, and Mayangna. It further symbolizes Creole claims to their continuity of inhabitation from before the establishment of Nicaraguan national claims to their region. Costeño Indigenous identity is also transnational in that by the mid-1970s it was used by Creoles to identify themselves with the international “Fourth World” movement and make common cause as an oppressed minority together with the Coast’s Indigenous groups and with the spirit behind the international Indigenous movements for the rights of Indigenous peoples. Affiliation with the international Indigenous movement was an important objective in the formation of the Southern Indigenous Creole Community (SICC), a powerful social movement in the 1970s that was originally organized around issues of cultural politics and local power (Gordon 1998:194).

By the time of the Sandinista triumph in 1980, Mestizo-run Somocista enterprises had largely replaced North American capital, a corrupt Mestizo bureaucracy had

cornered both political and economic power, and Mestizo migration into the region had demographically overwhelmed all other groups (Freeland 1993:74).

Creoles now occupied a precarious middle position in the ethnic hierarchy (i.e., Mestizo-Creole-Miskito and other Indigenous groups) of the Coast. Freeland points out (1993:74) that they engaged only reluctantly in the agricultural labor and commercial activities associated with the Indian groups and Mestizo peasantry and continued to aspire to the professional, clerical and artisan positions associated with their traditional status. She says that Creoles did, indeed, hold a disproportionately high share of such jobs through their judicious use of the educational opportunities, especially those afforded by the Protestant schools. There was also a significant group of Creole intellectuals and professionals who were often educated in the United States and others who migrated, internally from rural areas to Bluefields (the largest city on the coast) or to Managua (the Nicaraguan capital), and externally to the United States. Most Creole families had at least one member sending remittances from the U.S. and could, therefore, afford the imported foodstuffs, household articles and clothing which are essential signs of their material culture and generally associated with an upper-class life-style in the rest of Nicaragua.

Freeland argues (1993:75) that Creoles were clearly subordinated, however, to the Mestizos who held the leading posts in government, business, and the professions. Nevertheless, the Creoles still perceived themselves as the natural elite of the Atlantic Coast, regarding the Mestizos as inferior, poorly educated usurpers. In a modern version of the old Anglo-Hispanic rivalry, they aligned themselves with the “Anglo” culture of Britain and the United States, in opposition to the dominant “Hispanic” culture.

In other words, Freeland maintains, “the Creole identity had become a highly ambiguous articulation between a class (upper) and an ethnic position (Mestizo-Creole-Indigenous) grounded in an idealized memory of their former status as an economic and cultural elite, favored by the now absent English-speaking colonizers”(1993:75). She says (1993:75-76) that unlike the Indigenous Indian cultural identity which was attached to land, the Creole cultural identity was attached to a place in a particular socioeconomic hierarchy dependent on a specific set of economic conditions.

Atlantic Coast animosity for “the Spanish,” as the Hispanic Nicaraguans are still referred to by most Costeños, reaches far back into the Nicaraguan past as we have seen. Shapiro argues (1987:70) that the British successes in gaining a military alliance with the Miskitu against the Spanish during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries continue to affect coastal perceptions. He goes on to assert that while much had been done in the early to mid 1980s to promote understanding between Atlantic and Pacific Nicaragua, this “anti-Spanish” tradition, combined with an equally long history of condescension and disrespect shown by Spanish-speaking Nicaragua toward the peoples of the Atlantic Coast, remains a serious obstacle to Sandinista political and educational interaction with the peoples of the Atlantic Coast (Shapiro 1987:70). During my field work in Bluefields during April to June 2014, through informal conversations, radio talk shows and TV news, I found that this continues to be an obstacle.

Chapter Three: Language Education in Nicaragua and the Literacy Campaign

I believe that a brief look at the history of the spread of the English language and its use in education will give us a clearer understanding of the linguistic ideology that exists in Nicaragua today. Therefore, in this chapter I discuss that history as well as pertinent educational theories regarding the teaching of language showing how these theories impacted the 1980-81 Literacy Campaign launched by the Post-Revolutionary government in Nicaragua.

A. Language Education

The 20th century witnessed an unprecedented spread of the English language worldwide. Nero states (2006:1) that this proliferation can be attributed to a combination of historical, political, social, economic, cultural, and technological factors and can be traced to two primary phenomena. The first of these was the migration of English-speaking peoples from the United Kingdom to the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The second was the encounters of English-speaking Europeans with Indigenous populations in places like the United States, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia. In the latter cases, the majority of these encounters were in exploitive conditions, most notably, slavery and genocide. The abolition of slavery or similar conditions (i.e., indentured labor) gave way to equally exploitive sociopolitical and economic arrangements, namely: colonialism, neocolonialism, and globalization. In all of these various systems, the underlying common factor is an uneven distribution of power between the groups that are in contact with each other (Nero 2006:3). The result is the emergence of new varieties of English and related language systems, multiple linguistic

identities, challenges to the construct of the native speaker, and the need for a critical reexamination of the nature and goals of English language teaching and learning.

During the 1960s and 1970s, it was assumed by most Caribbean educators and the general public that the road to educational and, therefore, political and economic success of an individual was tied to that person's ability to command a high level of formal Standard English (Winer 2006:107). To ensure greater student success in schools became closely linked to the argument that achievements, even locally, were dependent on the understanding of written texts and information as well as opportunities for education and business dealings with contexts outside the region.

Winer argues (2006:107) that educators in the Caribbean have, by and large, accepted that *bidialectalism* in local English Kriol and local Standard English, is an important goal in the school system, rather than being viewed as having unequal prestige values. However, it became apparent to me during my field interviews with educators and in informal conversations in Bluefields that there remains a dichotomy of opinion regarding this issue and are evidence of the linguistic ideologies that remain pervasive on the Atlantic Coast.

Guillermo McLean is the recently retired Director of the Linguistic Research and Revitalization Institute (IPILC), a department of the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua (URACCAN), but he says that he hasn't retired from research. His early career was as an English teacher and he has a specialty in second language acquisition. He was also the leader of the Creole team which was charged with translating the literacy materials from Spanish into English for the 1980-81 Literacy Campaign after the revolution.

Professor McLean:

In the case of the Creoles, even though there is a great majority, especially among the Creole teachers in the bilingual program who are in favor of the use of the Kriol language in the classroom, there is an influential minority who have a different opinion. They say things like 'Kriol won't take you beyond the wharf', and 'Kriol block up all kind of doors and we need English'. Most of these people have no linguistic training of course and they don't understand that it's beyond the use of the language, per se. It is question of respecting the conceptual world of the children because when they come to school they don't come speaking "bad" English but come speaking a perfect Kriol.

Silvano Hodgson, the new director of the Linguistic Research Institute (IPILC)

also reiterated the attitudes of the community:

We want to put Kriol in the classroom. There is a program on the radio in Bluefields talking about Kriol as a language. They have a lot of calls from people asking "Why are you talking about this?" It is explained that Kriol is a language, but people say that it is much better to learn English, you don't need Kriol. But you need to speak each language at different times with different people. No language around the world is better than another. People say they don't want Kriol because it is an ugly language, because it historically is a pidgin language, which to me doesn't make any sense.

Another of my interviewees, Miss Trina Clair, also spoke about the attitudes of the community and about her own feelings regarding the issue of Kriol vs. Standard English in education. She attended the Moravian school during her 'growing-up years', has been the Executive Assistant at IPILC for five years, and is presently in the university level English classes. She believes that "the little English given at school is not as much as learned at home. They give the basics at school but are expected to practice more at home." Her mother taught them a lot and there were English books which their mother used to help them to learn more and her mother is continuing to do that with the grandchildren. "In school, the teacher speaks Kriol so the children can understand, and special classes are given to learn Spanish and English." She finds it a little hard to read Kriol but says that:

if you know to read English it isn't that hard. Just with certain words you have a little jam in knowing how to pronounce it or deciphering what exactly the word is and comparing it to the proper English word to find out exactly what is being said.

If we travel out of Nicaragua, people speak 'proper' English, they don't understand our 'bad' English. Kriol is for us here in our community. It is a dialect to make it more easier for us to communicate instead of trying to use what we call here 'big words'. Maybe the words are the same as in Kriol but in a short way. With Kriol you can't travel out.

I don't know about this Kriol business. To give it in class I don't know, maybe it's good for the students them to learn it. You know how to read and write it in case you go somewhere and you have to explain what it is about. But to say to have it as if you go anywhere and that's what you supposed to use as your language to communicate with the next people, I don't think it proper to do it. You have it as a third language but a third language in case you go out and meet someone else from home you could use it. But if you are in a work or in an office you need to use your proper English, not your Kriol. But you keep your Kriol, that you wouldn't let it go for nothing because if I travel anywhere and I meet up with somebody I know who speaks your language you feel so good you talk to them. You feel like at home when you travel about.

Since the late 1970s, perceptions and treatment of Caribbean English Creole (CEC)-speaking students have undergone some positive changes but are still hampered by a discouraging lack of progress (Winer 2006:105). Though many linguists and policymakers have encouraged the simultaneous acceptance of CEC and the better teaching of Standard English, its endorsement by teachers and support by parents has often lagged far behind. The reasons for this are to some extent linguistic, but primarily, as in most educational situations, social and political (Winer 2006:105). Later in this chapter I will discuss how this is particularly evident on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua with the example of the Literacy Campaign launched by the Sandinista government after the 1979-1980 Revolution which rid the country of an exploitive dictatorship.

Siegel (2006) has categorized programs specifically designed to respond to teaching Creole speakers within these social and political linguistic situations. In *instrumental* programs, the vernacular is used only as a medium of instruction to teach initial literacy and to transition into Standard English. In *accommodation* programs, the vernacular is accepted for use in the classroom but not used as a medium of instruction nor as a goal of literacy competence. In language *awareness* programs, the vernacular is a specific area of study, usually within a larger context of understanding language diversity. Furthermore, in awareness programs, vernacular-speaking students do not have to be treated any differently from other students. All students can learn about different varieties of language, study literature written in different varieties, and examine the features of their own varieties in comparison to others. The same curriculum is used for all, and no one group is singled out. Consequently, all students can benefit from learning about the diversity of language and how their home language compares to those of other students and to the standard (Siegel 2006:51). According to Siegel (1999:515), “the goals of all three types of programs are usually the same: additive bilingualism or bidialectalism—helping students to acquire the standard language while maintaining their own way of speaking and thus their linguistic self-respect.”

Winer (2006) outlines eight principles of best practice for teaching Caribbean students or language learners in general, based on research and practice in a number of classrooms and school boards which have actively attempted to treat students with Caribbean backgrounds in a positive and productive manner. She writes (2006:113) that these guiding principles are meant to serve only as starting or reference points for language education within any specific situation, though she was writing from the

perspective of teaching Creole-speaking students in North America as well as the Caribbean. I mention two of these principles as being particularly relevant to the situation on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. The first is to use appropriate language proficiency testing. This includes assessing proficiency in both Creole and Standard English. She says that English-only assessments must be designed and interpreted with great caution. Related to this, it is important to ensure that reading texts, oral or written, do not contain culturally unfamiliar, infrequent, or politically-charged topics or vocabulary. As we shall see in the next section on the Literacy Campaign, this was an issue that created considerable angst on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. The second principle she discusses is that of using a Language Awareness Approach. This involves making language variation a part of the school language arts curriculum, including regional and class dialects, giving Caribbean students' language particular support in terms of legitimacy and variation as well as emphasizing the appropriateness of different language varieties for different situations. This is the approach used in the counter-hegemonic work I found being done at IPILC during my field work as indicated in some of my interviews which I present later in this chapter,

Winer concludes (2006:113) by stating that a classroom that allows discrimination against language, whether by tests or peer ridicule, is not good for anyone and that a classroom that values diversity in language as well as other areas is good for everyone. Awareness of variation in language should be based on the linguistic dexterity that students already have, and should develop to include better understanding of both Standard and Creole languages. Cummins writes (2001:19) that "to reject a child's language in the school is to reject the child. When the message, implicit or explicit,

communicated to children is ‘Leave your language and culture at the schoolhouse door’, children also leave a central part of who they are—their identities—at the door. When they feel this rejection, they are much less likely to participate actively and confidently in classroom instruction”.

Migge, Léglise, and Bartens (2010:16) state that Nicaragua has adopted instrumental programs. However, my assessment of what I discovered during my field work is that in the Caribbean Basin area of Nicaragua there is a diversity of opinion regarding the efficacy of the program. The linguistic program most evident lies somewhere between that of instrumental and awareness, with both sides of the continuum being represented by different interviewees.

B. The Literacy Campaign

The Literacy Campaign launched by the Sandinista Government after the 1979-80 revolution was always considered a political process first and an educational one second (Miller 1985:25). Father Fernando Cardenal, the Jesuit director of the program and former philosophy professor at the Catholic University in Managua, liked to quote Brazilian educator Paulo Freire when speaking about the difference between the two emphases: “This type of National Literacy Crusade is not a pedagogical program with political implications, but rather, it is a political project with pedagogical implications.” (Quoted in Miller 1985:25)

Freire’s view of literacy was not hemmed in by narrow economic definitions of growth or occupational sectors but rather touched every aspect of life and involved people in critical discussion and action (Miller 1985:9). Freire considered literacy to be not just the

reading of words or the repeating of information. For him, it was a conscious act of liberation--reading the world in order to transform it (Freire 1970). In October, 1979, he was invited to advise on the literacy campaign. Important elements of his pedagogical and methodological approach were taken up and adapted to the specific circumstances in Nicaragua. "The ideas and spirit of his experience, together with lessons that had been learned from a literacy campaign in Cuba, converted it into a political and pedagogical whole in the which the organization, mobilization, and participation of an entire people interacted to great effect" (Arrien 2006:3). The Literacy Campaign was also marked by the "Principal Education Project for Latin America and the Caribbean" which was promoted by UNESCO and adopted at the end of 1979 by the Regional Conference of the Latin American Education and Planning Ministers in Mexico (Hanemann 2006:3).

A massive 52,180 young brigadistas and teachers moved to the countryside for five months to join the People's Literacy Army (EPA). Another contingent—as many as 95,000 people's literacy workers were teaching people to read and write in the workplace, in urban as well as rural areas (Arrien 2006:10). Altogether more than one-fifth of the population participated directly in the campaign, and through family and friends, almost the entire nation was affected by its efforts (Hanemann 2006:8). One of the most important results of the campaign was the interaction between urban and rural populations. Living together with the rural population had a deep impact on young people and allowed them to gain new insights into the socio-economic and cultural realities of their country as seen in their letters and notes recorded by Cardenal and Miller (1980:23-26). Almost all registered shock at the dreadful health and nutritional

conditions of the rural population and this political consciousness affected the development of an entire generation (Miller 1985). However, their participation as volunteer teachers helped them make the transition from the violence of the revolution to the challenge of a transformation of the country (Cardenal and Miller 1980:8).

The revolution had a very profound effect on the political and educational fabric of the Atlantic Coast region (Shapiro 1987:71). Within the first 18 months after the revolution, the Sandinistas took two decisive steps in shaping their Atlantic Coast educational policy. First the new government brought to the Atlantic Coast its National Literacy Crusade. In March 1980, a national effort was launched in Spanish to raise the staggeringly low literacy rate inherited from the Somoza years. UNESCO reports a 50% overall illiteracy rate during those years, with 39% on the Pacific Coast and 72% on the Atlantic Coast (Hanemann 2006:4). In October of that year, a parallel *Cruzada de Alfabetización en Lenguas* was initiated in the English, Miskito, and Mayangna/Sumu languages spoken on the Atlantic Coast. This three-language literacy campaign, which was the first recognition by any Nicaraguan central government of the need for native language education on the Atlantic Coast, proved a decisive event in terms of both political and educational relations between the Miskitu and Creole communities and the Sandinistas (Shapiro 1987:71).

Secondly, in December 1980 the Nicaraguan Council of State passed a bilingual education law (Bilingual Education Decree #571), which “obliges the Minister of Education to plan, organize, coordinate, and evaluate the teaching of pre-primary and the first four grades of primary school in Miskito and English in the areas where native and Creole communities are found on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua”. At the same

time, this law required that Spanish must be introduced gradually (Ministry of Education 1984).

Shapiro (1987:74) writes that one fear that confronted the organizers and administrators of the programs in both Miskito and English was that of creating a “transitional” bilingual program which either openly or covertly would use the native language as a “bridge” merely to facilitate what eventually becomes the almost exclusive learning of the dominant language. As explained by Norwood and Zeledón (1985:8):

In a transitional system, the first school years are conducted almost exclusively in the student’s native language, and Spanish is taught as a second language. Eventually, the native language is replaced by Spanish....No intent is made at developing the student’s capacity in his or her native language....In other words, the student “develops” only in Spanish, his or her capacity in the native language remains in a state of underdevelopment.

However, the original instruction of the government was that the “English” campaign should be in Kriol. Guillermo McLean was at that time the English Literacy Campaign Coordinator and spoke about the issue in his interview with me:

At that time, we didn’t have any notion (to use Kriol or Standard English) so what we did was to use common sense and built up the cartillas (short books or manuals used for the lessons) to serve the purpose but it was not a Kriol cartilla and also because the people didn’t want to receive literacy work in Kriol, which is a contradiction because the teachers were Creole but the cartillas were in English. Anyway,we struggled through that and we succeeded in teaching the people how to read, but actually English-based.

The Autonomy Law, first implemented under the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) government in 1987, sought to address these issues and to redress the injustices created by centuries of foreign and internal colonialism. The autonomy process created the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (R.A.A.N) where the

population is comprised mostly of Indigenous people (i.e., Miskitu, and Mayangna) with their own cultures and languages, and the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (R.A.A.S) where the population is comprised of Afro-descendent and Rama people who speak Kriol.

Figure 3: Map of Nicaragua



nicatips.com/nicaragua-maps

The ambiguity of the Creole cultural identity is also reflected in the state and status of their language (Freeland 1993:76). Creoles have a complex approach to language, bound up with their aspirations of status and recognition in the region and with the triple Creole identity outlined above (Gordon 1998:193). To be a first language speaker and daily user of Mosquito Coast Creole (MCC) was the most important marker of in-group

membership, and of Creole identity for Nicaraguan outsiders. Standard English (SE) was equally highly, though differently, valued, as the foundation of the Creoles' former political ascendancy and their current economic status. After the 1894 incorporation, Creoles fought to maintain their English-medium schools against Hispanicisation policies.

Freeland writes (1999:220) that by the time of the Revolution in 1979, however, this battle was almost lost; state-imposed Spanish-medium education had so eroded the Kriol continuum that speakers of SE were a dwindling, aging minority, mainly graduates of the Moravian High School or educated abroad. Creoles recognized the importance of good Spanish skills to their social status, but Spanish never replaced SE as the prestige language. Instead, SE was reduced to a tenuous, idealized presence, associated with 'high culture', but by the 1960s it was maintained only in the Protestant church schools, especially in the Moravian School, which treated Kriol as 'bad' or 'broken' English. This dual evaluation was widely internalized by the Creole population prior to the revolution, and I found, through my interviews and in informal conversations, that it continues to be.

In whichever of their names, Creoles call both their languages 'English', thereby making not so much a linguistic statement but as a declaration of cultural allegiance and opposition to the dominant, Spanish-speaking culture (Freeland 1999:221). They therefore demanded literacy not in their Kriol vernacular, but in SE, as a first step to reinstating English-based education.

During the first year of the revolution (1979-80) all the Coast's minorities made broad claims for recognition of their cultures. Freeland describes (1999:221) how the Indigenous mass-organization MISURASATA (Miskiito, Sumu/Mayangna, Rama, and

Sandinistas in Unity) organized a boycott of the Sandinistas' Spanish-language National Literacy Crusade and succeeded in opening a space for the development of materials in Miskito, Mayangna, and English. MISURASATA then went on to coordinate the literacy campaign in Miskito and Mayangna, a decision that had a significant empowering effect on the people of the Atlantic Coast in which they gained ground for their languages and for themselves within a limited space offered them by the state.

Freeland (1999) goes on to document her own involvement with the Creole team assigned to translate the Spanish materials into English with culturally more appropriate language. The Spanish materials were designed on Freirian principles, with adaptations approved by Freire. Where his original methods envisaged localized campaigns, the Nicaraguan *cartillas* aimed to strike common chords across regional and cultural differences (Black and Bevan 1980:64). Rather than eliciting single words expressing locally significant concepts, as in Freire's original approach, the manuals provided 'key phrases' connected to a post-revolutionary situation where complex ideas about the meaning of the revolution needed to be consolidated (Black and Bevan 1980:64).

The declared aim of assigning materials development to Costeño teams was "to obtain a direct participation of the Costeño element, and to guarantee that the materials produced reflect not only the national reality but also that of the Coast, responding in this way to the real needs of the region" (MED 1980:H-2). But the compromise the teams were forced to make between single words and the key phrases connected to the post-revolutionary situation undermined the Freirian principles it was meant to serve. Freeland says (1999:223) that the role offered to Costeño teams effectively resembled that of missionary translators, for whom "translation was always a matter of reducing the

native language and culture to accessible objects for subjects of divine and imperial intervention” (Rafael 1993:211). The critical difference was that these translators were not from the dominant culture, but minority members charged with making the hegemonic discourse accessible to their own people. This task located them within a kind of “unequal power relationship involved in the transfer of texts across cultures” (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999:7).

Freeland writes (1999:227) that the rapid negotiation of the literacy campaigns in native languages during 1980-81, the Law on Education in Indigenous Languages of the Atlantic Coast in 1980, and the prominent role given to Costeños in coordinating their campaigns and preparing their materials all demonstrate that Indigenous/Ethnic minority voices were heard. Despite the economic ruin that followed the insurrection, centuries-old distrust of Atlantic Coast separatism, and the extreme vulnerability of the revolution to external and internal threat, the Sandinista government did let Indigenous/Ethnic minority initiatives lead national educational policy to an extent unprecedented in Latin America (Freeland 1999:227). Paradoxically, the very rapidity of their response prevented the campaigns developing into the expression of Costeño cultures they might have been. Had they not become a litmus test of government commitment to Indigenous/Ethnic demands, a longer-term approach might have been possible, supporting the creation of culturally appropriate materials directly codifying local experiences. From the Costeño perspective, however, she states that this strategy turned the campaigns into a top-down affair which undermined the Freirian principles they purported to champion, thus reducing Costeños to linguistic translators of a revolutionary message, rather than codifiers of their own social experience. Hence, she

argues (1999:227), “the literacy campaigns gave the grassroots a voice, but mediated and muffled it.”

The materials for the Literacy Campaign were also translated into the Miskito language for the use of the largest of the Indigenous groups on the coast. As mentioned above in the section on the history of Nicaragua, the Moravian missionaries had previously done the orthography work on their language. The Literacy Campaign legitimized that work and gave the Miskito people more pride in their own culture and the ability to understand that they deserve their own cultural rights and privileges.

This same sense of empowerment has extended to the other, smaller Indigenous groups on the coast so that they can also learn to read, write, and in some cases, recover their own languages. The Rama language was almost extinct but is slowly being revitalized and the Sumu/Mayanga people are recovering their language.

During my interview with Silvano Hodgson, he revealed that he was a Rama Indian and spoke very eloquently about his experiences:

Rama should be our first language but by history the Rama language has been disappeared for many years but with research it has helped the people them to get back their language as a right as identity. Our language is so important, our language make us to feel good, our language always make us to feel better in life. When I went to school I went speaking Rama Kriol and learned Spanish in the classroom as a second language. I never knew nothin' of our original Rama language. Now after many years, I know a little Rama.

Standard English is learned in secondary school. I believe that Kriol helps to learn Standard English because Kriol is part of English. (There are)...plenty words in English that you could understand in Kriol. Kriol is a very helpful language in that you can better understand English. The Creole need to work more to create a program in all the classrooms that speak Kriol in the communities that speak Kriol. English is an international language so Kriol is helpful for people who go out of the country speaking Kriol. It is helpful as a step toward Standard English.

People have come to understand that they have a right to their own language. Students at university aren't obligated to speak Spanish. They can say that they have their own language, so if you don't understand me, you have to pay for a translator. Before the Literacy Campaign, we were pressured to speak Spanish, not our own language. I felt that they took away my rights as a human being, of a part of me, with nothing in return.

I found that the Literacy Campaign had a profound effect on two of my interviewees who had participated in the work. They were young people at the time and are now in positions of authority on the Atlantic Coast. I would like to suggest that this effect must have been felt on the Coast by more of the Creoles than these two and that the Campaign was a significant moment in the lives of the people of the coast.

The first of my interviewees was Mr. Alan Budier who has been the Director of the Moravian School in Bluefields for 12 years. His father was a Moravian pastor so they moved around the area quite a bit. His first language was Kriol, however his mother was an avid reader and even though she never realized her academic dreams, she encouraged her children to read. His Godmother taught him basic spelling and reading. He grew up speaking Kriol with friends, but with adults they were required to speak Standard English. His complete interview can be found in the Appendix but here is what he had to say about his experience with the Literacy Campaign:

I participated in the interview process for the Literacy Campaign. Most of the process was done in Spanish but in some cases it was done in basic English (Kriol). I worked in Old Bank (one of the barrios in Bluefields) and we visited each house. It was difficult for both those who were participating and those who were learning because we were trying to teach Standard English but others were accustomed to only Kriol. We were not prepared and are not even now to take such a responsibility to teach Kriol. That is a challenge by itself. It is one thing to speak it but another thing to write it with the linguistic aspect of it. It was interesting because there were things that we had to explain in Spanish but we did it in Kriol. It was an interesting combination which at that time I was not conscious of what I was saying but I realize now that it was not only a Literacy Campaign where you learn ABC, but also an opportunity to focus on maintaining Kriol, but then to spell in English and also

learn Spanish. It worked as a three in one which I didn't realize at that moment, but now after reflection, I realize it was an opportunity for both those who were being taught and those of us who were teaching. It created a natural opportunity to learn from each other.

I feel that the Literacy Campaign was just a program whose priority was for the government to have people read and write. But it wasn't intentionally geared to the objective of maintaining Kriol while still learning Standard English. I believe that not even the people who were directing the LC were really conscious about it. It was a revolutionary moment when they said 'Let's reach out and give the people the right to read and write.' The philosophical aspect wasn't really set out there until now we can look back and say yes, it has changed because now you have learned to read and write and you maintain your Kriol. But you realize that because of the economic situation you have to make an emphasis on learning more SE to aspire for job opportunities.

The second of my interviews I present is that of Miss Nubia Ordoñez who is the Secretary of Education for Bluefields. She was not only involved in the Literacy Campaign but also was in one of the early groups of students to take advantage of the graduate studies in bilingual education developed by Professor McLean at URACCAN. She grew up in Pearl Lagoon which is a small Creole community located on the other side of the bay from Bluefields and her first language was Kriol. Her complete interview can also be found in the Appendix.

I was involved in the National Literacy Campaign when I was still in (secondary) school. It was my first active participation in something that big and that important. I had to leave my family and my community to do something for and with the government. I began first with the National Campaign then my participation had to do with preparing the brigadistas (young people) who were going to go out to do the campaign in the native languages. I was still a student so not involved in the translating of the materials from Spanish to English but started after that was done. I worked in the Pearl Lagoon basin in the training portion of the campaign, but not the interviewing. That was the work I was doing when the opportunity came (via scholarship money) and encouragement from my principal to go to study further in Managua. So I didn't work in the campaign any further.

I believe that the Literacy Campaign gave me the opportunity to help the country and to understand what was really happening to the people in the

country. I come from Pearl Lagoon where life is simple. Leaving my home town to go and work where I could see the big cultural differences and could see that, despite the limitations that we had in materials and instruction, I could see that I had more than they had. It opened up my understanding so I became more aware of what was happening in the country and as a young person making decisions to work towards changes, believing that we could do it. It wasn't a campaign just to learn to read and write, but really gave us an opportunity to understand what was happening and how we needed to work for people and for a lot of team work. It was a big lesson. It also made us aware of how different we all are from the other people we are working with and helped us to learn to understand each other, as well as to understand and to accept ourselves.

In this context, URACCAN was established in 1995 and constituted an important component of a new strategy for regional development. The encouraging situation I found during my field work was that of the institutional support and work being done at URACCAN for language maintenance not only for Kriol but also for the other Indigenous languages on the Coast (i.e., Miskito, Rama, and Mayangna). IPILC is part of URACCAN which is part of an intercultural Indigenous university network in Latin America called the National Council of Universities (CNU). Professor McLean is a strong advocate of the view that URACCAN is a political project rather than an academic one. He gave up better jobs and put his PhD work aside to build up URACCAN. "Politics has to be part of the process of creating a university. You can't have a university without an ideology, can't assume commitment without an ideology, otherwise it becomes a vacuum." He went on to reiterate the view of Freire who stated that "this type of Literacy Crusade is not a pedagogical program with political implications, but rather, it is a political project with pedagogical implications". Both Professor McLean and Mr. Hodgson spoke of the current efforts being done at IPILC which is clearly an example of a linguistic awareness program.

Professor McLean:

The work being done at IPILC with the Kriol language is that of helping to recover a lost identity. The same value is being given to the Creoles as to the Miskitus or Sumus in revindicating their languages. These were and still are very proud people and are proud of this work. But in the last few years we have had the help of a linguist from Finland, Arja Koskinen, and a lady from Belize by the name of Silvana Woods, who have been instrumental in producing the few materials that we have for the literacy phase, so to speak, for the reading of the Creole children. (For a more detailed discussion of these two projects, please see Koskinen 2010 and Freeland 2004)

Mr. Hodgson also discussed his involvement and the current status of the projects:

I worked as a teacher on the Finnish project in 2005 (with Arja Koskinen) to help create a Kriol dictionary. People from different communities who spoke slightly different dialects came together to work on the dictionary. (We)... never talked about a Standard Kriol, just to be able to write Kriol. IPILC built a bilingual program to prepare teachers to teach Kriol in different ways so that teachers can know how to write Kriol and how to teach it. In this program, teachers come to Bluefields to take the course in Kriol language. Many teachers now get together to make some different books in Kriol to help in the classroom on how to teach Kriol. IPILC gave workshops on how to use the textbooks in the program. There is a sense that the program needs more help--needs more follow up, more attention to the schools, visit the communities and the teachers. Work has also been done with the indigenous languages.

IPILC is working closely with the Ministry of Education and URACCAN to help to make a higher level of study in bilingual education. This includes Kriol, English, Miskito. Professor McLean helped to set up a Master's program in multilingual education. Almost two years ago I was one of the students (with) Professor McLean to finish a Master's degree in multilingual education. Each student did their research on the various dialects used in the area in order to have a better understanding (of the multilingual issues) so we can be more sure and to feel that we can do something for our region. We give thanks to IPILC and URACCAN that has always helped all of us to do a lot of things and tried to build the program for Kriol like other languages around the world. I think we need to be doing more but I don't know what could be done now.

Figure 4: Examples of the Kriol orthographic work being done at IPILC

- a. Gloss: Space free of discrimination and violence based on gender and intolerance.

—Seen on the wall of the library at IPILC



- b. Kriol iz wi langwij—mek wi rait it! Gloss: Creole is our language—let's write it!

—from a brochure promoting the bicultural-bilingual program at IPILC

Mr. Budier also discussed his views on the issue from a slightly different perspective and his very heartfelt, practical reasons for those views which, I feel, indicate a more linguistic instrumental program.

At school the children are encouraged, as a right, to speak out in whatever language they choose. The majority of our kids find it easier to switch from Kriol to Spanish than from Kriol to Standard English. Eventually I am hoping that this is a learning experience where the students realize that they are learning 3 languages where one of these is an important part of their identity and the rest are tools to hold onto to help one to compete. I believe that the Moravian School has the advantage over the other schools by starting Standard English teaching in the Primary School.

I believe that children have a right to be listened to. I don't correct the children right at the moment because they wouldn't view that as a help, but rather as an interruption. I let them speak Kriol until the current problem is solved, then I encourage them to speak Standard English. I tell them that they have a right to speak Kriol but try to be conscious of improving their Standard English because it will be better for them when they are communicating with people who don't understand Kriol. So I tell them to maintain their Kriol, but think about how to improve their Standard English.

In the early 80s learning Standard English was an intentional program and teachers were always correcting you, so it was a survival thing to aspire for a job working on the tourist ships. But with the advent of the call center¹⁶ in Managua three years ago, it has become more than survival, it is a requirement, a daily thing to be on the phone several hours a day. I tell them to maintain your Kriol but try to get better in your communication in Standard English.

Where I have a problem is when the focus is only on the learning of Kriol. I think that in so many of these mega-projects that are being talked about for the Atlantic Coast, such as the Canal project¹⁷, most of the communication will be in SE so we must intentionally prepare our kids to strengthen SE but also maintain our identity. If we fail to do that, then we'll be having people coming from the Pacific coast for the top office jobs and we will be doing the lower ones. If we can't aspire for higher office jobs it will be a setback. But if we can combine the three of them, we will also be in the process of strengthening our culture. (In the case of the canal project)... that will be a huge change, everything will be affected. This is where we need to make sure of our identity as Black and as Creole and that we don't lose it in the process. We don't want to confuse it by having prosperity, financially, but then bankrupt culturally. That is my fear. I think we need to prepare our kids in such a way that they have the opportunity to maintain, to strengthen, and to seek for higher academic preparation in order to compete in the future.

In addition to the interviews, I also attended two teachers' meetings. The first was a workshop for the Teacher Delegates from each town in the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (R.A.A.S.) to plan the educational objectives for the next seven years to present

¹⁶ Another source of jobs for Creoles is the call centers in Managua which has become the home of a number of Business Process Outsourcing locations to provide nearshore support for large US companies, including Capital One, Target, Kohl's, Sprint and Walmart. Not all those credit card customer service calls go to India! They provide bilingual contact services for companies focused on consumers and business support options. Over the past decade, thousands of bilingual Nicaraguans have cashed in on their language skills by getting desk jobs in what has quickly become one of the most desirable and fastest-growing industries in Nicaragua: call centers, or "contact centers" have expanded from phone to online support. The outsourcing of U.S. customer-service jobs to near-shore countries such as Nicaragua has led to a boon in office jobs in Nicaragua, employing more than 4,500 young people in recent years. The call centers have provided more than just steady work; the higher salaries have created the beginnings of a new and independent middle class in a country with an enormous gap between the few rich and majority poor.

¹⁷ Nicaragua was one of the two possible locations for the building of an intercontinental canal in the early twentieth century to join the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Panama eventually won that distinction. Now that the traffic through that canal has reached its maximum capabilities, there are recent serious negotiations regarding a second canal, again using Nicaragua as the location.

to the Regional Education Department. They studied the previous ten-year plan (Bluefields RACS 2014) and made recommendations or changes if needed. This comprehensive plan includes such areas as bicultural-bilingual teacher training, accountability and progress assessment. There were about 30 people total, and they separated into groups of 4 or 5 to discuss their ideas.

I was able to have a very good conversation with a delegate from Bluefields. She said that the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (R.A.A.N.) has a similar process but a different working program because the “cultural realities of each region are different”. Since the ethnic mix is different, the cultural priorities are different. The hope in the future is to make a documented plan that will encompass both areas to make a Caribbean Plan. These plans get presented at the national level which then inserts them into the national education program. I found this a very encouraging example of the sort of grass-roots work being done by the people on the coast in their efforts to maintain their cultural integrity separate from the hegemonic pressure of the national government.

The second meeting I attended was for teachers from around the area who came to make the final presentation of their Kriol projects in their work of teaching the Kriol language. They have all gone through the bilingual program about how to read and write Kriol so that they can teach it. They need more training to help the Creole children and need more help in learning to read and write Kriol themselves. They didn't have access to this learning before and one delegate said that they need more learning with the writing of Kriol.

Professor McLean was there to facilitate this second meeting together with Dr. Jon Amastae, a renowned Creolist from the University of Texas who comes to Nicaragua frequently to consult with Professor McLean in his work at IPILC. Professor McLean spoke to them of the rights of the Creole people to their language just like the Miskitu and Mayangna (Sumu) people. He charged the teachers to carry on the work of the Kriol language by team work and community research: “Don’t let it die—follow up and make a commitment to carry on. Bet on the future and be leading characters in the process.” He repeated what he said to me in his interview regarding the need for more research as to what the teachers already know empirically about the value of using Kriol in the classroom. He also repeated what he said to me regarding URACCAN and IPILC being political projects rather than academic ones in the context of the autonomy process (please see the entire interview in the Appendix).

There were about 25 teachers in attendance, some of who were the same ones as had attended the planning workshop mentioned earlier. Each of them presented the orthographic work they are doing in learning how to read and write Kriol so they can take that knowledge back to their classrooms. The mentors, Professor McLean and Dr. Amastae, helped them to complete their work in small groups. There is a computer program some of them use to do the work. They feel that writing the language will counter the central assumption in the Creole community that Kriol is not a proper language and is not worthy to be taught in schools. Writing will give the Creole culture the concreteness and visibility that have been seen to confer authority on other cultures such as Miskito.

I was also an observer in two English classes at the Moravian School, 8th grade and 11th grade, remaining as invisible as I could in the back of the room. There were about thirty students in each and the language of instruction was Standard English—no Kriol! as they were reminded by the teacher. Both teachers were welcoming and very pleasant, and in both classes the students were quiet and attentive to their work, no discipline necessary. In both, one of the students had to read the instructions for the exercise aloud to the class, thus providing pronunciation practice. And in both classes the teacher would stroll quietly around the room checking progress and answering questions while they were doing their assignments.

The 8th grade had an exercise in reading comprehension. The teacher wrote a paragraph on the board which they had to copy in their books. Then she asked a few of them to explain what the passage was about and specific questions about it which they all had to answer. Then they had a written exercise in matching phrases pertaining to the paragraph. The 11th grade class was a grammar class identifying common and proper nouns, one student had to provide aloud a definition of each. As in the 8th grade class, instructions for the exercise were read aloud by a student, they wrote their answers quietly and attentively, then they each went up to the board to write one of the nouns in the correct category.

However, I did discover an interesting diversity between the Moravian school, which is a private school, and the Dinamarca school, which is a public school. At the Moravian school the language of instruction in both the primary and the secondary schools is Spanish except for the English classes which begin in the primary school. When I interviewed Miss Massie Cox, the Director of the Dinamarca Primary School, she told

me that the language of instruction is Kriol, with Spanish being taught as a subject in primary school and Standard English as a subject in secondary school. The teachers teach in Kriol since that is the first language of the children that come to the school and some of the children are mixed Mestizo and Creole so everyone benefits from the bilingual program. They don't have a Kriol program per se because there isn't enough written material in Kriol and it is difficult enough to get the materials they need for the bilingual curriculum they have without adding anything extra. (Please see my notes on this interview in the Appendix.) Another significant point I learned later was that the teachers attending the meetings mentioned above were all from the public schools, including the Dinamarca School, and they were all actively engaged in more personal education in order to be able carry the Kriol ideology to their classrooms, no teachers from the Moravian School were taking part in this work although they had been invited.

Thus, through this example of attendance at these meetings, we have another example of the differing perspectives and language ideologies that educators on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua are working hard to resolve in a more constructive manner.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

Spain never achieved dominance on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua as we learned in Chapter One. The legacy it left was of a different nature—that of the first of the two hegemonic linguistic ideologies regarding Spanish and the Indigenous languages that exist there today. As we saw, there was a constant shifting of relationships between the ethnic groups of the Coast, triggered by the interventions of Britain and other external agencies (such as the U.S.) and of the Nicaraguan state. Different interventions privileged different groups, altering relations between them all, and giving rise to the complex inter-ethnic divisions which characterize Costeño society today. The first shift in relationships was the Miskitu rise to dominance, the second was the Creole ascendance and Miskitu decline. With the absence of direct colonial oppression from England, Creole people were able to consolidate political and economic control on the Coast which lasted until the Reincorporation in 1894. The manifestation of the Creole's power during this period of their history was their dominant position in the political and linguistic structure of the Miskitu kingdom. The third shift in relationships was heralded by the hegemony of the Nicaraguan state and the influx of the Mestizo elites. In these three shifts, having developed a structural and linguistic advantage over the other dominated people, the members of the privileged group tended to view themselves as culturally nearest to the whites and clearly superior to the rest. While the actions of the imperial powers predisposed the major changes in the ethnic hierarchy, the historical picture of inter-ethnic relations helps to demonstrate how the dominated peoples were able to actively shape the changing historical landscape.

In Chapter Two we begin to understand the essence of Creole languages in general and how a people's cultural history can form the image they have of themselves. However, we are reminded (or warned?) by Wenger (1998:175) that "a community of practice can become an obstacle to learning by entrapping us in its very power to sustain our identity". Even though he may have had the minoritized community of practice in mind, I think that the obstacle to learning remains more with the dominant culture and its seeming inability to accept that theirs is not the only perspective worthy of assimilating and sustaining.

Also in Chapter Two, Gordon's discussion of the many aspects of the identity that the Creoles have of themselves enables us to gain some understanding of how this has contributed to the many aspects of the language they use among themselves and with others.

In Chapter Three we see that, as a building block of the political program of the Sandinista Revolution, the Literacy Campaign cannot be perceived without its very particular historical, political and social context, nationally in general and then more specifically its effect on the Atlantic Coast. In pre-revolutionary Nicaragua a comprehensive conception of adult literacy and education did not exist. Somocism was not interested in promoting massive literacy for political reasons. Literacy would have empowered people for democratic participation which would have been anathema to such a dictatorship. It would have given the poor and disenfranchised the tools to analyze and question the unequal power relationships and economic conditions under which they lived (Cardenal and Miller 1980:4). Economic reasons aside, the exploitation model of the Somoza dynasty was based on uneducated agricultural workers

(Hanemann 2006:2). The goals of the Literacy Campaign were of a socio-political, strategic and educational nature: (a) to eradicate illiteracy; (b) to encourage an integration and understanding between Nicaraguans of different classes and backgrounds; (c) to increase political awareness; (d) to nurture attitudes and skills related to creativity, production, co-operation, discipline and analytical thinking; (e) to support national cohesion and consensus; and (f) to strengthen the channels for economic and political participation (Cardenal and Miller 1980:6). The 1980 Literacy Campaign was an important milestone in the history of education in Nicaragua, closely associated with and inseparable from the force of a revolutionary, popular political project (Freeland 1999, Arrien 2006). UNESCO awarded the Crusade the 1980 Nadezka Kruskaya prize. In general, the NGOs¹⁸ that, from 1990s onwards, initiated and developed their socio-humanist and human-development activities in the spirit of the 1980s, nearly all were promoting literacy and basic education activities for population groups as yet marginalized from education (Arrien 2006:4). Many of the early reader materials utilized explicitly political motifs as reported by Freeland (1999). Whether or not new readers embraced those ideas, the literacy campaign dramatically improved rates of functional literacy in adults, reducing illiteracy from 50% to 15%. UNESCO Institute for Statistics reports adult literacy in 2005 to be 78%. Subsequent literacy campaigns in 1982, 1986, 1987, 1995, 2000 and 2006 have not had the success nor the impact of the 1980 campaign as was clearly stated by two of my

¹⁸ Such as CEDEHCA (the Center for Human, Civil and Autonomous Rights), a community development NGO that focuses on education, human and autonomy rights. They work only on the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua and in the framework of the autonomy process. Another is FADCANIC (the Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua) which designs and mobilizes funds for innovative projects and programs that contribute effectively to the implementation of the process of autonomy of the multiethnic communities of the Caribbean Coast.

interviewees in response to a direct question. Silvano Hodgson said that the more recent Literacy Campaign in 2007 failed because no one in the government paid any attention to it and followed up. There were so many changes in government and they each had their own political educational agendas. Trina Clair said, in response to a question about the 1980-81 Literacy Campaign, that she had no real knowledge of it except that “it was a program to help the people who don’t know to read and write, but not as to how far they reach, how they managed it or how much people they helped. It is still going on maybe not as it was in that time but they say they are working on it and want to keep working on it. The people in power speak Spanish and don’t care about the English speaking people on the coast, and still don’t.”

Even though no work has yet been done on the long-term repercussions of the literacy campaigns, particularly with respect to their effectiveness as agents of permanent social transformation, the generation involved in the 1980 literacy campaign had experiences that are still having a perceptible impact on their every day lives as was reported by those of my interviewees who were intimately involved with the Campaign. Hanemann states (2006:11) that many of the young brigadistas decided to make a career as teachers and many have developed a potential for taking social action for future change as can be seen by the development of the NGOs mentioned above.

The roots of the encouraging linguistic situation on the Atlantic Coast lie in the literacy teaching in indigenous languages that are spoken on the Coast, introduced as part of the global process of the 1980 Literacy Campaign, and in the introduction of bilingual education at pre-school and primary levels (up to fourth grade) in 1983 (Arrien 2006:24). The autonomous status given to regions of the Caribbean Coast in 1987, and

later decree laws such as Decree Law 571 of 1980, the Law on Education in Languages of the Atlantic Coast, encourage “teaching in native languages from pre-school to fourth grade primary inclusive”. This decree law was reaffirmed in 1990, and the General Law for Basic and Middle Education of 1997-98 establishes in its Chapter II, Article 9, that “intercultural education in their mother tongue is a right of the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast”. At the same time, indigenous mother tongue usage is included in applying justice and in other administrative processes of the Indigenous Communities. This legal consolidation, together with the institutional development of the Status of Autonomy and the regional elections to public positions, has had a very large impact on the education sector of the Caribbean Coast and its processes, which has materialized in the Regional Autonomous Education System (SEAR) and its corresponding Action Plan which I discussed in Chapter Three. The Campaign inspired the National Consultation on Education to define the purposes, objectives and principles of the new education, which constituted the bases of the principle articles on education laid down in the Political Constitution of 1987, which was reformed in 1995 and remains in force to this day (Arrien 2006:11).

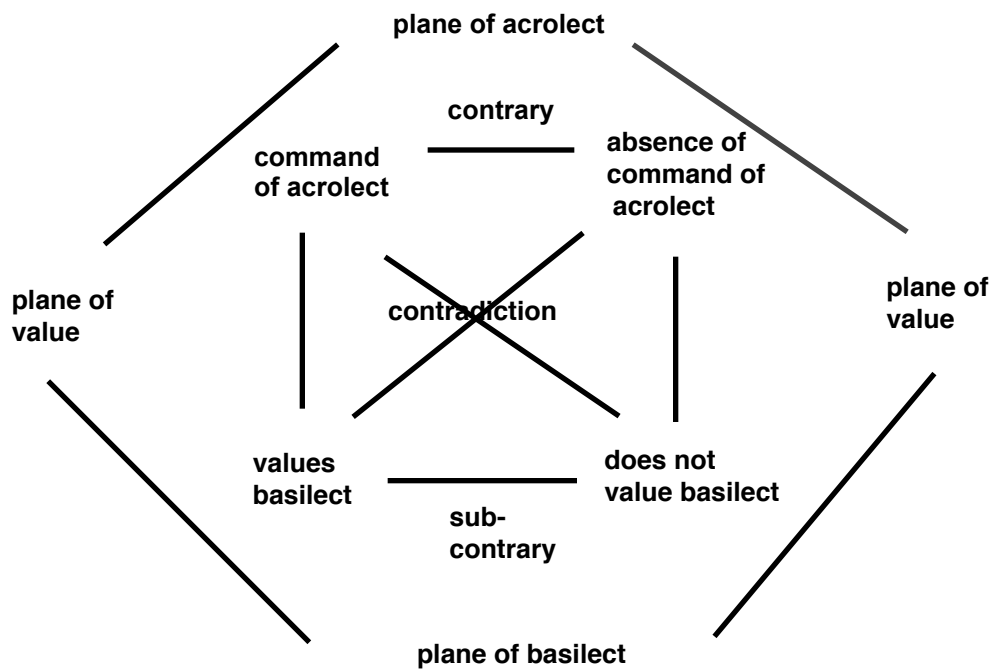
We also learned in Chapter Three about the emergence of the second hegemonic linguistic ideology on the Atlantic Coast regarding Standard English and English Kriol. I refer again to the concept of Reversing Language Shift (RLS) with which I began this paper, a concept which describes much of the linguistic ideology inherent in the work being done at IPILC. Fishman argues that “RLS promises greater self-regulation of one’s home, family, neighborhood and community, on the one hand, and of one’s own history and culture, on the other hand” (2001:459) and that RLS is a “corner in which

one's own traditionally interpreted language, customs, beliefs, holidays, stories, foods, sanctities can continue to prevail" (2001:459). RLS is a promise "that appeals to all those who realize that notwithstanding all of the mis-touted benefits of globalization, the world is all too much with us and in us" (2001:459). In other words, one's language is where one's heart can continue to be expressed. To emphasize this point, I reiterate the statements of two of my interviewees: "but you keep your Kriol because if you travel and meet up with somebody who speaks your language you feel so good you talk to them, you feel like at home when you travel about" (Trina Clair); and again "our language is so important, it makes us to feel good and makes us to feel better in life" (Silvano Hodgson). However, the challenge for the future is succinctly stated in another of my interviews: "This is where we need to make sure of our identity as Black and as Creole and that we don't lose it in the process. We don't want to confuse the prosperity while bankrupting our culture" (Alan Budier).

The big challenge facing educators on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua and is being faced daily by those working at IPILC, is the relationship Creoles have between the difference in command of the acrolect and the value that they give to the basilect level of Kriol. I found this dichotomy when speaking with those I interviewed and with those with whom I had informal conversations during my field work. Here I reiterate Gordon's statement presented in Chapter Two that "the basilectal form is publicly denigrated by many Creoles but its use is recognized as the highest expression of group solidarity and is the principal way by which Creoles distinguish themselves as a group even from Standard English speakers." As we can see in the structural representation of this in Figure 5 below, command of the acrolect is complimentary with valuing the basilect and

contradicts not valuing the basilect, while an absence of command of the acrolect is complimentary with not valuing the basilect and contradicts valuing the basilect. A comparison of this figure with Figure 1 presented earlier illustrates Gramsci's concept of 'common sense', many elements of which contribute to people's subordination by making situations of inequality and oppression appear to them as natural and unchangeable (Forgacs 1988).

Figure 5: Greimas square showing command of acrolect.



In his developmental interdependence hypothesis, Cummins argues (2000) that literacy skills and knowledge may be transferred from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2) through a common understanding proficiency (CUP). According to this hypothesis, content may profitably be studied in either language. There is transfer of knowledge and learning processes across languages and the development

of L1 literacy entails concrete benefits for students' acquisition of subsequent languages (1993:55). Siegel (1999) also cites studies showing that children who learn literacy in their home language (L1) in the primary grades do better academically when presented with the need to learn the more standard language or dialect (L2) than those children who are faced with learning to read and write using L2 as soon as they begin school. Attainment of fluent bilingual skills enhances aspects of children's linguistic and cognitive growth which leads to greater levels of metalinguistic awareness, an important value in the face of rapidly increasing globalization.

Finally, I would like to point out that the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua is not the only venue where this controversial issue of Creole language usage in education is found. Siegel (1999) has written extensively on the inequities and obstacles faced by speakers of Creoles and 'non-standard' or minority dialects in formal education in Australia and Africa. Migge, Léglise, and Bartens (2010) have compiled several studies documenting work in Hawaii as well as in other areas of the Caribbean basin. Fenigsen (2003, 2007) has also done extensive work in Barbados on the language ideologies existing there that are similar to those on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. The arguments on both sides of the issue regarding the use of Creole language in education in these aforementioned studies are the same as those in Nicaragua and they all agree that more research and materials are needed to provide a more positive outcome.

Professor McLean said that "at this point we have not resolved the issue of using English as a second language which would be the correct thing to do. I don't feel there is a contradiction in using Kriol in the classroom while teaching Standard English as a second language. Personally, I think it can be done simultaneously." The question then

remains, “Why can’t it be done simultaneously?” since the evidence cited above would seem to indicate that it can and should be. The answer is, I feel, is that the one issue that still remains an obstacle on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua as a legacy from its past and is reflected in its linguistic ideology (as it does in many countries, including the U.S.), is that of ethnic and cultural antagonisms and inequities. I feel that the work being done by the dedicated people at IPILC is an important positive step forward in the struggle for equality not only in their small part of the world but is also an example for other oppressed minorities in their quest for international justice. In an era of globalization, and when the pace of global change is as rapid as it is today, a society that has access to and makes full use of its multilingual and multicultural resources has the advantage in its ability to play an important social and economic role on the world stage. The challenge for educators such as those at IPILC is to help shape the development of their national identity in such a way that the rights of all citizens (including the school children) are respected, and that the cultural, linguistic, and economic resources of the nation are maximized.

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Appendix: The complete interviews

1. Professor Guillermo McLean is the recently retired Director of the Linguistic Research and Revitalization Institute (IPILC):

At that time, we didn't have any notion (to use Creole or Standard English) so what we did was, as we Creoles say, we used common sense and by using common sense we built up a cartilla to serve the purpose but it was not a Kriol cartilla and also because the people didn't want to receive literacy work in Kriol, which is a contradiction because the teachers were Creole but the cartillas were basically in Standard English. Anyway, we struggled through that and we succeeded in teaching the people how to read, but actually English-based. But in the last few years we have had the help of a linguist from Finland, Arja Koskinen, and a lady from Belize by the name of Silvana Woods, who have been instrumental in producing the few materials that we have for the literacy phase, so to speak, for the reading of the Creole children.

The work being done at IPILC with the Creole language is that of helping to recover a lost identity. The same value is being given to the Creoles as to the Miskitos or Sumus in revindicating their languages. These were and still are very proud people and are proud of this work. In the case of the Creoles, even though there is a great majority, especially among the Creole teachers in the bilingual program who are in favor of the use of the Creole language in the classroom, there is an influential minority who have a different opinion. They say things like 'Creole won't take you beyond the wharf', and 'Creole block up all kind of doors and we need English'. But these people have no linguistic training of course and they don't understand that it goes beyond the use of the language, per se. It is question of respecting the conceptual world of the children because they come to school not speaking "bad" English but speaking a perfect Creole.

I even had a talk the other day, not the other day, about two years ago, with a group of these guys who go ship out. It is very common in my home town, especially Creoles, to go ship out. They go and work on ships. Everything is free for them, they have a place to sleep, they have food, so they can save their salary plus tips and so on, so in a year or so they raise enough money to build their house in Bluefields for their family or their wives, which is a Creole dream, so to speak. A couple of those Creoles were saying, "You see, we were hired because we speak English." I said, "You have it wrong. You were hired because you speak educated Creole. But putting that aside, do you think that a tourist would care whether his waiter or waitress would have a Queen Elizabeth conversation? They would probably be more satisfied if they had a Jamaican accent. So regardless of what you think of your English, you are hired because of your Kriol. So it serve for more than taking you to the wharf."

At this point we have not resolved the issue of using English as a second language which would be the correct thing to do. I don't feel there is a contradiction in using Creole in the classroom while teaching Standard English as a second language. Personally, I think it can be done simultaneously. Teachers complain about the lack of enough materials. We need to substantiate the successful use of Creole in the classroom. Teachers observe this but don't have anything to prove it--it's all empirical. We need to do research as a way to empower the use of the language in the classroom. I think a majority support the use of Creole in the classroom, but a minority still thinks it holds them back. We need more materials and more research to persuade people, especially the parents, of the value of using Creole to teach language. They say 'I like my Creole because it's sweet. But not in the classroom!' It's kept hidden and under the pillow.

It is easier to understand the state of the arts of Creole now if we understand the political environment or conflicts at the time. We need to contextualize the issue of teaching of Creole language in the classroom in the political arena regarding the autonomy process. The advancements that we achieve in education, in health, in economic development depend on the advances or the lack of them in the autonomy process because one thing is implicit in the other. The biggest damnation felt on the coast is to have the political parties present in the autonomy process. Having the political party assume the central role in the major decisions suppresses the possibility of having the real talented people in the different fields because job appointments in government positions are not based on merit but on political trust. This is another tough problem because it affects issues such as education.

2. Silvano Hodgson is the new Director of IPILC. He is a Rama Indian and grew up in Rama Cay (a small island enclave off the coast of Bluefields). He said his first language should have been Rama but it was Rama Creole, that dialect spoken on Rama Cay:

Rama should be our first language but by history the Rama language has been disappeared for many years but by help of people how you doing now making researches to help the people them to get back their language as a right as identity. Our language is so important, our language make us to feel good, our language always make us to feel better in life. In the future, we will try to get back our Rama language.

When I went to school I went speaking Rama Kriol and learned Spanish in the classroom as a second language. I never knew nothin' of our original Rama language. Now after many years, I know a little Rama. Standard English is learned in secondary school. I believe that Kriol helps to learn Standard English because Kriol is part of English. (There are)... plenty

words in English that you could understand in Kriol. Kriol is a very helpful language in that you can better understand English. The Creole need to work more to create a program in all the classrooms that speak Kriol in the communities that speak Kriol. English is an international language so Kriol is helpful for people who go out of the country speaking Kriol. It is helpful as a step toward Standard English.

English language is a subject in the classroom for all students at secondary school as well as in university. There is no program in Kriol. The new model for education is that the children can speak Kriol, or English, Rama, or Spanish. In Bluefields the students have to learn to read and write in English or Spanish. Kriol is not taught in the classroom. However, the teacher will say we are having an English class, but the teacher speaks Kriol not English. They teach only to write English, but speak in Kriol.

Rama Kriol is a dialect of Caribbean Creole. Writing Kriol was a challenge because the dialects are slightly different.

I worked as a teacher on the Finnish project in 2005 (with Arja Koskinen) to help create a Kriol dictionary. People from different communities who spoke slightly different dialects came together to work on the dictionary. (We)...never talked about a Standard Kriol, just to be able to write Kriol. IPILC built a bilingual program to prepare teachers to teach Kriol in different ways so that teachers can know how to write Kriol and how to teach it. In this program, teachers come to Bluefields to take the course in Kriol language. Many teachers now get together to make some different books in Kriol to help in the classroom on how to teach Kriol. IPILC gave workshops on how to use the textbooks in the program. There is a sense that the program needs more help--needs more follow up, more attention to the schools, visit the communities and the teachers. Work has also been done with the indigenous languages.

IPILC is working closely with the Ministry of Education and URACCAN to help to make a higher level of study in bilingual education. This includes Kriol, English, Miskito. Professor McLean helped to set up a Master's program in multilingual education. Almost two years ago I was one of the students (with Professor McLean) to finish a Master's degree in multilingual education. Each student did their research on the various dialects used in the area in order to have a better understanding (of the multilingual issues) so we can be more sure and to feel that we can do something for our region. We give thanks to IPILC and URACCAN that has always helped all of us to do a lot of things and tried to build the program for Kriol like other languages around the world. I think we need to be doing more but I don't know what could be done now.

We want to put Kriol in the classroom. There is a program on the radio in Bluefields talking about Kriol as a language. They have a lot of calls from

people asking “Why are you talking about this?” It is explained that Kriol is a language, but people say that it is much better to learn English, you don't need Kriol. But you need to speak each language at different times with different people. No language around the world is better than another. People say they don't want Kriol because it is an ugly language, because it historically is a pidgin language, which to me doesn't make any sense.

By the regional autonomy laws of education, each region has the right to speak their own language and to teach in their own language.

People have come to understand that they have a right to their own language. Students at university aren't obligated to speak Spanish. They can say that they have their own language, so if you don't understand me, you have to pay for a translator. Before the Literacy Campaign, we were pressured to speak Spanish, not our own language.

He said that the more recent Literacy Campaign in 2007 failed because no one in the government paid any attention to it and followed up. There were so many changes in government and they each had their own political educational agendas.

3. Mr. Alan Budier, the Director of the the Moravian School:

I participated in the interview process for the Literacy Campaign. Most of the process was done in Spanish but in some cases it was done in basic English (Kriol). I worked in Old Bank (one of the barrios in Bluefields) and we visited each house. It was difficult for both those who were participating and those who were learning because we were trying to teach Standard English but others were accustomed to only Kriol. We were not prepared and are not even now to take such a responsibility to teach Kriol. That is a challenge by itself. It is one thing to speak it but another thing to write it with the linguistic aspect of it. It was interesting because there were things that we had to explain in Spanish but we did it in Kriol. It was an interesting combination which at that time I was not conscious of what I was saying but I realize now that it was not only a Literacy Campaign where you learn ABC, but also an opportunity to focus on maintaining Kriol, but then to spell in English and also learn Spanish. It worked as a three in one which I didn't realize at that moment, but now after reflection, I realize it was an opportunity for both those who were being taught and those of us who were teaching. It created a natural opportunity to learn from each other.

I feel that the Literacy Campaign was just a program whose priority was for the government to have people read and write. But it wasn't intentionally geared to the objective of maintaining Kriol while still learning Standard English. I believe that not even the people who were directing the LC were

really conscious about it. It was a revolutionary moment when they said 'Let's reach out and give the people the right to read and write.' The philosophical aspect wasn't really set out there until now we can look back and say yes, it has changed because now you have learned to read and write and you maintain your Kriol. But you realize that because of the economic situation you have to make an emphasis on learning more SE to aspire for job opportunities. And also the competition from the Pacific side where in practically every neighborhood (in Managua) you will see a sign on a house: "Se enseña Ingles" (We teach English here). Little kids are being taught English.

Many are participating in the job opportunities especially at the Call Center. Some come back because they don't make it because they need more SE. I tell them that they need to learn SE more but I remind them at the same time to not lose your identity. Don't misinterpret the rejection and get to hate your Kriol. Hold on to your identity but recognize that the company requires SE and work on that. My fear is that the kids go to Managua and come back speaking Spanish. I presume that maybe they just get tired of speaking English every day and want to prove that they have been in Managua and they want to communicate in Spanish. So as alumni, they come around the school speaking Spanish or with the teachers in SE, but when they are at home or on their own with friends they will speak Kriol. I have observed that the contextual situation will determine which language will be used. I don't feel that the Kriol language will disappear because even in Managua, in the Creole neighborhoods, Kriol is always there.

To the question of whether there was an attitude change toward Kriol since the Literacy Campaign he replied:

I think so from the point of view of survival and the economic situation. For me to survive and have better job opportunity I need to learn Standard English. But it's good to know my Kriol as a way of identity. But to strengthen my identity, I need another tool which in this case is Standard English to strengthen what I already have and combine the two to see a positive result.

At school the children are encouraged, as a right, to speak out in whatever language they choose. The majority of our kids find it easier to switch from Kriol to Spanish than from Kriol to Standard English. Eventually I am hoping that this is a learning experience where the students realize that they are learning 3 languages where one of these is an important part of their identity and the rest are tools to hold onto to help one to compete. I believe that the Moravian School has the advantage over the other schools by starting Standard English teaching in the Primary School.

I believe that children have a right to be listened to. I don't correct the children right at the moment because they wouldn't view that as a help, but rather as

an interruption. I let them speak Kriol until the current problem is solved, then I encourage them to speak Standard English. I tell them that they have a right to speak Kriol but try to be conscious of improving their Standard English because it will be better for them when they are communicating with people who don't understand Kriol. So I tell them to maintain their Kriol, but think about how to improve their Standard English.

In answer to the question about whether the children understand the reasons for the differences between the Kriol and Standard English, he said that he really didn't think so.

In the early 80s learning Standard English was an intentional program and teachers were always correcting you, so it was a survival thing to aspire for a job working on the tourist ships. But with the advent of the call center in Managua three years ago, it has become more than survival, it is a requirement, a daily thing to be on the phone several hours a day. I tell them to maintain your Kriol but try to get better in your communication in Standard English.

Where I have a problem is when the focus is only on the learning of Kriol. I think that in so many of these mega-projects that are being talked about for the Atlantic Coast, such as the Canal project, most of the communication will be in SE so we must intentionally prepare our kids to strengthen SE but also maintain our identity. If we fail to do that, then we'll be having people coming from the Pacific coast for the top office jobs and we will be doing the lower ones. If we can't aspire for higher office jobs it will be a setback. But if we can combine the three of them, we will also be in the process of strengthening our culture. (In the case of the canal project)... that will be a huge change, everything will be affected. This is where we need to make sure of our identity as Black and as Creole and that we don't lose it in the process. We don't want to confuse the prosperity while bankrupting our culture. That is my fear. We need to prepare our kids in such a way that they have the opportunity to maintain, to strengthen, and to seek higher academic preparation in order to compete in the future.

4. Miss Nubia Ordoñez is the Secretary of Education for Bluefields:

When I began my studies in primary school (which was prior to the 1979-81 revolution) at that time the Anglican and Moravian Missions were still in charge of education. I began school at the Anglican Mission where the language of instruction was Spanish (per governmental decree). However, I had access to books in English in primary school and I remember reading at home and at church using the hymnal and the Book of Common Prayer and I think that helped with the English language. It was not in the curriculum in primary school but I remember the teacher gave us little lessons in English

because she believed it was important. When I reached secondary we used to get an English class and at that level we would speak English. We were not recognized as Kriol speakers but as Spanish speakers. In secondary the lessons were prepared as if we were Spanish speakers and weren't taught English to our level. But because of our Kriol, I believe we had some advantages that were not taken into account.

I was involved in the National Literacy Campaign when I was still in (secondary) school. It was my first active participation in something that big and that important. I had to leave my family and my community to do something for and with the government. I began first with the National Campaign then my participation had to do with preparing the young people (brigadistas) who were going to go out to do the campaign in the native languages. I was still a student so not involved in the translating of the materials from Spanish to English but started after that was done. I worked in the Pearl Lagoon basin in the training portion of the campaign, but not the interviewing. That was the work I was doing when the opportunity came (via scholarship money) and encouragement from my principal to go to study further in Managua. So I didn't work in the campaign any further.

I believe that the Literacy Campaign gave me the opportunity to help the country and to understand what was really happening to the people in the country. I come from Pearl Lagoon where life is simple. Leaving my home town to go and work where I could see the big cultural differences and could see that, despite the limitations that we had in materials and instruction, I could see that I had more than they had. It opened up my understanding so I became more aware of what was happening in the country and as a young person making decisions to work towards changes, believing that we could do it. It wasn't a campaign just to learn to read and write, but really gave us an opportunity to understand what was happening and how we needed to work for people and for a lot of team work. It was a big lesson. It also made us aware of how different we all are from the other people we are working with and helped us to learn to understand each other, as well as to understand and to accept ourselves.

IPILC is part of URACCAN and was one of the first institutes created when the university was established in 1995. I was a professor and then academic dean of mathematics at URACCAN. In 2000 I became a coordinator with IPILC. My knowledge of intercultural bilingual education was acquired by participating in different international events and discussions and working with IPILC. After that I began working in the field of education.

I was first a teacher-delegate to the Ministry of Education (MINED) for the Pearl Lagoon Basin and later began working as part of the intercultural bilingual staff for MINED. The work had to do with the training of the teachers and preparing the materials. Working with the staff I came to understand more

about intercultural bilingual education and because of my work with IPILC, I was more aware about it and interested in bilingual education. After that I did a Master's degree and my thesis topic had to do with culture and how these different cultural products (language, for example) affect one's identity. In my case, I focused on the Creole identity, others in the program focused on their own indigenous identities. I believe that more research is needed around intercultural, bilingual education.

My interest had to do with my experiences as a student. When I left my small isolated community to study at the university in Managua, it was my first culture shock. When I came back to work, I was more aware and had the interest and opportunity to ask questions and to discuss them. So when I went to work with IPILC, I had this background and was already working in the field of intercultural bilingual education.

I feel that my experiences at IPILC and in intercultural bilingual education has helped me in my job (as Secretary of Education for Bluefields) and prepared me to be with the different groups and gave me the facility to communicate with the different cultural groups. I not only speak Kriol, Spanish, and English but can feel how they feel and can understand how they live. Even though I am a Creole woman and identify myself as a Creole woman, I have a strong indigenous presence in my family. There are things when you go right down, you realize that it comes from your indigenous background. It's like a mixture.

5. Miss Trina Clair has been the Executive Assistant at IPILC for five years and is presently in the university level English class:

The present teacher is stricter than the previous one so the Spanish speakers have to work harder for their grades even though they have had English in primary and secondary school but don't think they need to put their mind to it and still depend on the teacher to translate into Spanish. The Creoles do better because they have used it. We had to learn Spanish so I feel that the Spanish speakers should have to learn English.

We here on the coast have to learn Spanish, not if we want to but we have to because everything is in Spanish because it is the national language. English is given as a special class. They give the Spanish people a special class to make it easier for them to learn. It's not the same English as they give us Creoles--we go direct with the right way to learn it.

If we travel out of Nicaragua, people speak 'proper' English, they don't understand our 'bad' English. Kriol is for us here in our community. It is a dialect to make it more easier for us to communicate instead of trying to use what we call here 'big words'. Maybe the words are the same as in Kriol but in a short way. With Kriol you can't travel out.

She says that the Miskito, Ulwa¹⁹, and the Garifuna²⁰ are trying to learn their own language...

so if we get together each one now we can't understand each other. But if we use "proper" English, everyone can understand. Your own language is to use at home and proper English is to use outside. You know both of them but you know when to use each one, but I didn't really understand that when I went to school.

I don't know about this Kriol business. To give it in class I don't know, maybe it's good for the students them to learn it. You know how to read and write it in case you go somewhere one of these days and you get it and you could read it and you could explain what it is about. But to say to have it as if you go anywhere and that's what you supposed to use as your language to communicate with the next people, I don't think it that proper to do it. You have it as a third language but a third language in case you go out and meet someone else from home then you could use it. But if you are in a work or in an office you need to use your proper English. Use your proper English not your Kriol. But you keep your Kriol, that you wouldn't let it go for nothing because if you travel anywhere and meet up with somebody I know who speaks your language you feel so good you talk to them. You feel like at home when you travel about.

In response to a question about the 1980-81 Literacy Campaign, she said that she has no real knowledge of it

except that it was a program to help the people who don't know to read and write, but not as to how far they reach, how they managed it or how much people they helped. It is still going on maybe not as it was in that time but they say they are working on it and want to keep working on it. The people in power speak Spanish and don't care about the English speaking people on the coast, and still don't. But the same black people that are being discriminated against are the same ones that are called on when help is needed to translate with the tourists who are coming from outside the country.

6. Unfortunately, I had a recording malfunction during the final interview I want to present, so I am relying on my notes for the interview I had with Miss Massie Cox who is the Principal of the Dinamarca Primary School. She is a Creole woman and grew up in Bonanza, a small town in the northern Caribbean region

¹⁹ One of the subgroups of the Sumu.

²⁰ Another of the Indigenous cultural groups on the coast.

where one of the gold mines is located. Her first language was Creole and she learned Spanish in primary school. She didn't learn Standard English until she went to secondary school at the Catholic school in Bluefields. When I commented on how good her English was, she smiled and said that she has to make an effort. The Dinamarca School is a public school that opened in 1991 when the building was donated by the Danish government after the 1988 hurricane that destroyed Bluefields. There is a primary and a secondary school. Spanish is taught as a subject in primary school and Standard English as a subject in secondary school. The teachers teach in Kriol since that is the first language of the children that come to the school. Some of the children are mixed Mestizo and Creole so everyone benefits from the bilingual program. They don't have a Kriol program, per se. There isn't enough written material in Kriol and it is difficult enough to get the materials they need for the bilingual curriculum they have without adding anything extra.