Beyond "Sea, Sun, and Fun": Exploring the Viability of Jamaican Creole Heritage Language Education in Toronto

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Abstract: Given heightened racial tensions as well as steadily increasing globalization and migration, the time is ripe to explore how space can be made for speakers of racialized vernaculars and languages through heritage language education. This study contributes to the limited research in this area by exploring the attitudes of individuals of Jamaican heritage in Toronto toward Jamaican Creole heritage language education and the implications of such attitudes for program offerings and design. By means of a survey and semi-structured interviews, findings showed that while valuing the language and its transmission, attitudes toward formal Jamaican Creole heritage language education were largely dismissive. Rather, greater value was placed on heritage and language education via social and community-based approaches. This study gives voice to the Jamaican community in Toronto and shows that a "one-size-fits-all approach" to heritage language education and transmission, particularly for stigmatized and non-standardized languages, is untenable.

Keywords: creoles, ethnicity, heritage language, language attitudes, migration

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Toronto is home to the largest number of immigrants in Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2016) and, specifically, to the majority (71%) of the Jamaican immigrant population in Canada. As calls for racial and linguistic justice in education ring out (e.g., García et al., 2021; Nero, 2006; Von Esch et al., 2020), discussions and consideration of the role of minority and racialized languages in heritage language education (HLE) in cities like Toronto are pertinent – particularly those that invite the voice of such migrant communities into the conversation. With the island of Jamaica being the main birth country of the black population in Canada, and Jamaican Creole (JamC) being among the top mother-tongue languages spoken among the black population (Statistics Canada, 2019), innovative and collaborative approaches to heritage language learning and maintenance among the Jamaican migrant community and wider diaspora must be considered, as these issues sit at the heart of the intersection of race and migration. In recent years, Jamaican linguists have begun developing JamC language courses for learners in the diaspora – a key example being the beginner and intermediate JamC courses that have been offered at a leading higher education institution in Toronto in collaboration with the Jamaica Language Unit (2009). Such opportunities, however, are limited to those enrolled in degree programs, and whether they cater to heritage speakers or those with no heritage connection is often unclear.

Despite the size and cultural influence of the Jamaican community in Toronto, very little work has been done by way of research or policy for heritage speakers of JamC or other minority languages and vernaculars spoken by the black community. This study seeks to

explore the attitudes of individuals with Jamaican heritage resident in Toronto toward JamC HLE in order to gain insight into possible approaches to HLE for vernacular and non-standardized languages in the diaspora. Undoubtably, creoles represent a unique case for HLE, often without widely accepted orthographic systems by speakers and the baggage of colonialism and slavery that often cast such varieties in a sub-par light, particularly in the realm of education, where their belonging is highly contested. Yet the current climate calls for the reopening of dialogues addressing HLE for racialized and non-standard language varieties – the heritage languages of numerous individuals who call Canada home.

Literature

Defining heritage languages

The terms "heritage language" and "heritage language learner" largely lack conceptual consensus, with definitions varying across academic disciplines as well as across political, national, and social arenas (Wiley & Valdés, 2000). Heritage languages have been referred to as one's "mother tongue," "immigrant language," or "native language" and in some contexts have been used synonymously with the terms "Indigenous" or "Aboriginal" languages (Cummins 1991; Fettes, 1998). Valdés (2001) provides perhaps the most widely cited definition of the heritage language learner: an individual growing up in a home where a language other than English (where English is the majority language) is spoken and who is able to speak or at least understand the language. Such a definition is more linguistic in nature, as it highlights some amount of language proficiency as a prerequisite. However, from a more sociolinguistic perspective, language competence does not play such a requisite role (Rothman, 2009), as heritage language learners can be defined as those with cultural connections or ancestral ties to the language being learned. Heritage learners are by no means

a homogenous group, as learners often have varied levels of proficiency and motivations for learning their heritage language. The matter is further complicated when considering the wide array of languages that represent diverse contexts, histories, and typologies that are generally grouped under the term “heritage language” (Bale, 2010) and whether speakers of some languages consider their language to be a heritage language and themselves to be heritage speakers. Within the context of the present study, a heritage language is defined as any language outside of the official languages of a country and the heritage language learner as a member of the diverse group of individuals connected to the heritage language and culture by virtue of ethnicity or relational ties. They will therefore have varied levels of linguistic proficiency and language exposure.

Creoles as heritage languages

Though underrepresented in HLE literature, English-lexified creole languages are the mother tongue of a large and ever-growing percentage of immigrants in North America (Clachar, 2005) and present a unique and rich context for furthering our understanding of heritage language maintenance patterns in the English-speaking diaspora. Creole languages find their genesis in prolonged contact situations between groups of people who do not share the same language yet have a need to communicate with each other (Siegel, 2010). When such contact situations are sustained across generations and the contact language becomes the native tongue, a creole is formed (Salmon & Menjívar, 2017). In the case of the Caribbean, creole languages were created out of the harsh realities of the Atlantic slave trade, which involved the capture and transport of millions of enslaved individuals from the African west coast to the plantations of the West Indies (Helms-Park et al., 2016; Patrick, 1999). Creole languages constitute a mixture of a superstrate language, which provides much of the lexicon, and one or more substrate languages, which provide the grammatical base (Siegel, 2008,

2010). In Caribbean creoles, the lexifier language represents the language of power and dominance at the time of contact, while the substrate represents the languages of the conquered people. JamC, the language of focus in the present study, is a product of British English as the lexifier and a combination of Akan, Bantu, and Kwa, the languages of the slaves which formed the substrate grammatical base (Patrick, 1999). DeCamp (1971) was the first to conceptualize Caribbean language use along what he termed the "creole continuum." Within this framework, the lexifier language and the creole represent end-point lects along a continuum, with speech varieties closer to the lexifier language being referred to as the acrolect, those closer to the creole as the basilect, and the varieties in between as the mesolect. In the context of Jamaica, pure and exclusive usage of either the basilect or the acrolect is not the norm. Rather, many speakers tend to move between varieties depending on the context and their own language proficiency.

In having a large portion of the lexicon contributed by European languages, Caribbean creoles are often seen as illegitimate, bastardized, or broken forms of the lexifier language, without a grammatical structure of their own (Youssef, 2010). Moreover, basilectal varieties in particular have been associated with lower social class and lower levels of education (Nero & Stevens, 2018). As a result, the inclusion of creoles in language education has been fiercely protested primarily through arguments of "ghettoization" (Snow, 1990) and "interference" (Thomas, 1990). From such standpoints, the inclusion of creole language instruction in education actively deprives students of learning opportunities that ultimately lead to greater socio-economic advantages and causes negative linguistic transfer, thus affecting the successful learning of standard languages such as English (Youssef, 2010). Creoles are nonetheless widely accepted by linguists as separate and independent languages (Mühlhäusler, 1997) with systematic grammatical systems. Furthermore, outcomes from the

Jamaica Language Unit's Bilingual Education Project, which piloted the teaching of JamC in primary schools, showed that upon receiving explicit JamC language instruction, Jamaican students showed marked improvements in English language performance (Carpenter & Devonish, 2010). There is good reason, then, to accept that JamC is a complex language in its own right and that students can benefit from its instruction.

While HLE provisions for minority languages in Canada with distinct boundaries from English, standardized orthography, and associated literary and academic texts is generally more clear-cut and more widely researched, a discussion of HLE offerings for heritage language speakers of JamC and other English-lexified creoles is both unique and complex. Blurred linguistic boundaries, standard language ideology (Lippi-Green, 1997), experiences of discrimination, and the tensions between language use and migrants' goals and motivations complicate the discussion. These factors are further compounded by the fact that unlike many other immigrant groups in Toronto, Jamaicans, regardless of their language proficiency, identify as native speakers of English – one of the official languages of Canada.

The challenges attending the immigrant experience of Afro-Caribbean immigrants in North America has been well documented in the literature. Pressures to assimilate to a new culture and to attain a "better life," and first experiences of racism having moved from a context of being the ethnic majority (Winer, 2006), come to bear on attitudes to education and, more specifically, heritage language maintenance efforts. Within Caribbean communities, educational attainment is held in high regard and is seen as the route to social mobility and success (Mitchell & Bryan, 2007). This is particularly poignant for Jamaican immigrants to North America for whom greater educational and professional opportunities serve as the dominant pull factors (Morrison & Bryan, 2014). However, in the North American context, Caribbean–creole-speaking students have tended to be overrepresented in

ESL and special education classes due to misunderstandings of their linguistic differences (Clachar, 2005), a factor likely to dissuade migrant parents from encouraging the use of JamC.

The impact of migrant concerns on attitudes to HLE is not unique to the Jamaican community and has been reported among other racialized language groups in Toronto. In a study of Bangla heritage language maintenance in Toronto, Subhan (2007) found that many parents displayed negative and dismissive attitudes toward formal Bangla HLE and that second-generation speakers used their heritage language only for brief and functional interactions with relatives. Parents reported that migrant concerns such as adjusting to life in Canada and ensuring that their children did well in school were more pressing than HLE. While the Jamaican community in Toronto shares similar migrant concerns with other immigrant groups in the diaspora, previously mentioned factors unique to creole languages and creole-speaking contexts make the discussion of JamC HLE provisions unique and complex.

Despite these factors, which on the surface would appear to dismiss the idea of JamC HLE, Jamaican culture and language are largely maintained by the Jamaican community and hold a prominent and celebrated position in Toronto popular culture. Heritage speakers often use the language to affirm their identity (Nero, 2006), and many non-heritage speakers adopt and adapt facets of the creole in their speech. In an article entitled "Di Soun in di city," published in Canada's national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, Bascaramurty (2017) reported,

> Caribbean culture has become so influential in the city that bits of the patois language[1] and the accent that goes with it have filtered down to much of the rest of the population, including Drake, creating...a very distinctly suburban Toronto sound. South Asians in Mississauga respond to questions with "ahlie" as an affirmation or to state skepticism. Croatians in Malvern will say "from time" in reference to something that happened long ago. Somalis in Rexdale will greet each other with "a wah gwan?" rather than asking "what's up."

Based on interviews reported in the article, many seem to welcome the idea of the wide usage of Jamaican creole in Toronto by non-eritage speakers, while others find the adoption of a language spoken by a people group that historically was discriminated against to be problematic.

Taken together, the discussion of JamC HLE provision in the diaspora is a complex one. Nevertheless, the very complexity of the discussion lends itself to further exploration, which, as Canagrajah (2013) posits, does not assume dichotomous understandings of attitudes to heritage language maintenance in the diaspora but rather considers the complexity of attitudes and recognizes more novel and hybrid forms of language use that serve to maintain heritage speaker agency, in-group solidarity, and cultural transmission.

Research on Jamaican Creole as a heritage language in the diaspora

While Toronto is home to a large and growing Jamaican immigrant population, when compared to cities in the United States and England, Toronto represents a younger Jamaican immigrant context, having its first large wave of Jamaican immigration in the 1970s, some 10 years after cities in the United States and 20 years after the first post–World War II influx to England (Foner, 2009; Hinrichs, 2014). There is little research on HLE for racialized and minoritized languages in Canada. However, a genealogical analysis on Canadian Heritage Language Policy (HLP) and its intersection with anti-black racism advocacy by Bale and Kawaguchi (2020) has highlighted a history of exclusion of black heritage language programs from HLP funding over the years, despite calls from anti–black-racism advocates to reconceptualize more narrow definitions of "heritage language" to allow space for racialized languages and the black community. The authors highlight the specific case of a direct rejection of funding for heritage language programs for students of West Indian descent

"whose language is one of the two official languages but whose cultural heritage is unique" (Toronto Board of Education, as cited in Bale & Kawaguchi, 2020, p. 15). Such a rejection would then indicate that creoles, dialects, and other "non-standard" language varieties and their speakers do not fit the bill for HLE, despite their unique cultures and heritage. To date, there has not been much change in the status of HLE for the languages and dialects of the black community in Canada, and there remains a significant dearth of research allowing room for the voice of these communities concerning the transmission of their languages. A key aim of this study is to contribute to filling this gap and to offer a voice to these communities within research contexts. Before describing the specific focus of our study, it is worth identifying what we know from other countries and cities with large Jamaican migrant communities regarding the views and attitudes of individuals of Jamaican descent toward their language and its transmission through heritage language programs and how this contributed to our own research presented here.

The United States

Though Jamaican communities in the North American diaspora are large and highly visible in various facets of urban culture, very little work has been done on JamC as a heritage language. This gap may be owing in part to problematic methodology, wherein Caribbean immigrants are often grouped along with and considered as "African Americans," though they often do not identify as such or speak the languages or varieties often associated with this group in research (e.g., African American Vernacular English) (Blake & Shousterman, 2010). One notable exception is seen in Arrieta's (2010) investigation of second-generation immigrant students' perceptions of their heritage languages and their attitudes toward bilingualism. The study included native speakers of JamC, Haitian Creole, and Brazilian Portuguese enrolled in an English language-learning program at their local high

school in Florida. All participants reported having positive views of their heritage language and were motivated to continue speaking the language to communicate with family and friends. Brazilian and Haitian participants reported a preference for speaking their heritage languages at home, but not at school due to derision from other students concerning their accents. In contrast, Jamaican students reported an overall preference for JamC compared to English, indicating that they enjoyed speaking their language both at home and at school, as they were often praised by peers because of their heritage language. Unlike the other participants, who felt that studying both their culture and language would be the best route to bilingualism, Jamaican respondents, despite reporting very positive attitudes toward JamC, indicated that focusing on learning Jamaican culture and spending time with other Jamaicans would be the best route to bilingualism rather than formal language instruction.

Great Britain

When compared to North America, a larger amount of research has been carried out on JamC in Britain (Hinrichs, 2014). Over the years, the language has gained popularity, particularly with urban youth, and according to Sebba (1993) in his seminal work *London Jamaican*, it has presented the strongest appeal for British-born youth compared to any other Caribbean language variety. While lacking in perceived instrumental value in Britain, JamC has been found to serve largely integrative purposes, with speakers embracing the creole as a form of cultural identity (Sebba, 1993). In speaking to language maintenance and a place for JamC in language education, Sebba posits that, paradoxically, the perceived illegitimate nature of JamC is one factor that has secured the continued proliferation of the language across immigrant generations in Britain, and that while other language groups work tirelessly to prevent language attrition, Jamaicans in London transmit their language to the upcoming generations with ease. This view of “effortless transmission” could explain dismissive

attitudes toward formal HLE, as from a language maintenance viewpoint, formal HLE would likely be perceived as unnecessary. Such a view is not unique to the British context and is consistent with findings from Arrieta's (2010) research.

According to Mair (2003), another factor securing the place of JamC in Britain has been the transformation of the creole into "Black British English" – a multicultural symbolic code used by British-born Afro-Caribbean speakers of varied ethnicities living in the city of London. Consistent with predictions from Hewitt (1986), the wide usage of the code which represents a simplified version of JamC has resulted in the development of a "multi-racial vernacular" with covert prestige. According to Mair, since coming to hold more "secure social positions" (p. 234) in some cultural domains more recently, speakers of Black British English have become more willing to share their language with other ethnicities. Similar findings showing heritage language maintenance through language variation and transformation have been reported by Canagarajah (2013), who found that in addition to the use of code-switching and emblematic usage, Sri Lankan Tamil is maintained as a heritage language by second-generation speakers in London, Toronto, and California in hybrid forms through language mixing with other spoken varieties in the cities.

The present study

This study forms part of a larger mixed-methods project that investigated attitudes towards JamC and its instruction and also explored how such attitudes were impacted by an immigrant's ethnic orientation, age, and immigrant generation. Inferential tests exploring the role of age, immigrant generation, and ethnic orientation emerged as statistically non-significant, likely due in part to the relatively small sample size, and therefore will not be the focus of this article. Rather, the present study will focus on the findings from the

questionnaire and interview data concerning attitudes toward JamC HLE provision. Our methodology therefore addresses the following overarching research question: What are the attitudes of Jamaican heritage speakers in Toronto toward Jamaican Creole heritage language education?

Methods

Sample

The population of focus included adult speakers in the city of Toronto with JamC as a heritage or native language and who were either first-, second-, or third-generation Jamaican immigrants. The study sample consisted of 43 individuals living in the city of Toronto who were native or heritage speakers of JamC between the ages of 18 and 65. Participants were included based on their proximity to Jamaican heritage by means of relational ties through marriage or common-law relationships. The National Census groupings adopted by the Government of Canada were used to define the generational groups: first-generation immigrants were those who were born in Jamaica and then moved to Canada after the age of 17; second-generation immigrants included those born in Canada, with at least one parent having been born and raised in Jamaica; and third-generation immigrants were those born in Canada, with both parents having been born in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Questionnaire

Participants completed an online questionnaire that addressed attitudes toward Jamaican ethnicity, language, and HLE in the city of Toronto. Two participants from the older age groups completed a hard-copy version of the questionnaire, as this proved more accessible for them. In its original formulation, the ethnic orientation questionnaire was used

as the key source of data in Keefe and Padilla's (1987) three-year longitudinal study of Chicano identity in California. The questionnaire was delivered as a three-hour structured interview consisting of 185 items under the themes of "language familiarity and usage," "cultural heritage," ethnic pride and identity, ethnic interaction, and "interethnic distance." The instrument was later reduced and adapted for sociolinguistic studies in the city of Toronto which focused primarily on the impact of heritage speakers' ethnic orientation on their linguistic behaviour (Hoffman, 2010; Hoffman & Walker, 2010; Nagy, et al., 2014). Hoffman and Walker (2010) investigated the role played by ethnic orientation in sociolinguistic variation in Canadian English as spoken by the Chinese and Italian communities in Toronto. This specific adaptation of the ethnic orientation instrument was chosen, as it was used in the same geographic context (i.e., Toronto) and the instrument was found to be a reliable scale of ethnic orientation (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.905$). Moreover, Hoffman and Walker's study was aligned more with the present study as it was directly tied to the relationship between ethnic orientation and language. To meet the needs of the present study, we adjusted the questionnaire. The section on discrimination was replaced with a section addressing attitudes toward JamC language instruction, not due to irrelevance but because it was beyond the scope of the study and could be tapped in the more in-depth interviews. The questionnaire therefore contained two main sections that were scored separately: ethnic orientation and attitudes toward the teaching of JamC as a heritage language in Toronto.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were carried out in person with eight of the participants, who opted in through the initial questionnaire and were available at the time of interviewing. Sociolinguistic research on creoles has found language attitudes of speakers to be complex, paradoxical, and multi-layered (Labov, 1984; Wassink, 1999), with such attitudes being

mediated largely by overt and covert prestige (Rickford, 1983). The semi-structured interview was therefore selected to tap such nuanced views of JamC and Jamaican HLE which may not have been uncovered in the questionnaire alone. Question items were adapted from Wassink's (1999) language-attitude interview, developed for a language-attitude study in Gordon Town, Jamaica. Wassink set out to investigate respondents' views of JamC in terms of the kind of linguistic entity it represented, perceptions of speakers, and domains of usage at both the overt and covert levels. The interview instrument was divided into descriptive and attitude questions, with the latter category being used to derive an attitude score. Only attitude questions were used and adapted in the present study, and responses were coded and analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis. The interview schedule included guiding questions soliciting responses concerning views on JamC, its speakers, the instrumentality of the language, and formal teaching of JamC as a heritage language in the city of Toronto.

Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded using NVivo 12. Given the dearth of research exploring attitudes toward HLE for creole or non-standardized languages, an inductive data-driven approach was taken to developing a codebook to be applied to the interview transcripts, as opposed to a more deductive, theory-driven approach based on previous research (Boyatzis, 1998). Interview data were divided into four main categories: the worthwhile nature of JamC HLE in Toronto, the teachability of JamC, benefits of learning JamC, and recommended approaches to teaching JamC. Each of these categories was then broken down into sub-categories/codes for further analysis, with the final codebook consisting of 17 codes across the four main categories. Intra-coder reliability was checked by means of recoding the interview transcripts using the same codebook at two different time

points. Once all transcripts were coded, thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to identify and analyze emerging themes.

Results

Attitudes toward JamC HLE

Results showed that most participants not only valued knowing JamC and being part of the vibrant speech community in Toronto but also believed that it would be possible to teach the language. However, attitudes toward the provision of formal classroom JamC heritage language programs in Toronto were largely dismissive, with most respondents failing to see such programs as worthwhile for individuals with Jamaican heritage. Rather, participants placed greater value on social and community-based approaches to language transmission. Four main themes emerged from the qualitative and quantitative data that provided insight into the attitudes toward JamC HLE held by heritage speakers: the "teachability" of the language, the value of teaching the language in Toronto, the benefits of learning the language in Toronto, and recommended approaches for language instruction.

The "teachability" of JamC

Opinions concerning the "teachability" of JamC in Toronto were mixed, with most participants believing that JamC could be taught. Those who believed JamC could be taught to heritage learners generally reasoned that this would be the case based on similarities between English and JamC. One participant commented that one would certainly be able to teach the language to learners in Toronto as it was simply a "chopped" version of English, while others qualified their responses by adding that only some aspects of the language (e.g., vocabulary) could be taught. Other important features such as the accent and the "flavour" of

the language, in their opinion, could not be taught. Janie, a second-generation speaker, commented,

> I think that you can teach it...the basics...the fundamentals, but it's almost like something where you have to have a flavour to it...you can't teach the flavour part of it...you know what I mean? [laughs]. I mean you can teach someone to say "wa gwaan? [what's going on/what's new?]," but they're not gonna say it properly you know.

Those participants who believed it was not possible to teach JamC as a heritage language in Toronto named challenges such as a lack of a standardized and structured system and the lack of English translation equivalents as hindrances to teaching.

The value of teaching JamC in Toronto

The prominence and influence of Jamaican culture and the desire of non-heritage speakers to access Jamaican culture emerged as main themes in responses concerning the value of JamC HLE in Toronto. Individuals generally valued JamC, and the majority (58%) said it would be important to them that their children be able to speak the language. Nonetheless, participants were less convinced that formal HLE would be the way to do so, as only 25% said they would encourage their children to attend an HLE program and only 19% of survey respondents indicated that it would be a worthwhile venture in Toronto. When further prompted, interviewees often qualified their responses based on who they considered the language learner to be. For those without Jamaican heritage, the prospect of Jamaican language education seemed more worthwhile. However, for those of Jamaican descent, greater value was placed on social and community-based transmission rather than on language instruction. Bettina, a first-generation immigrant, felt strongly that language transmission was the responsibility of the Jamaican community, and more specifically the Jamaican parent:

> Just as how you have the other nationalities that speak to their children in their dialect. So I believe that is what they (Jamaicans) should be doing. People who have Jamaican descent...speak to your kids in the Jamaican dialect for them to

understand.

Participants who believed that JamC language education would be worthwhile in the context of Toronto based their response largely on the influence of Jamaican culture in the city and the desire of those without Jamaican heritage to engage with the culture (e.g., music, food) and language. Respondents often spoke about those without Jamaican heritage – those who would be considered as second language learners who would benefit from learning the language by gaining greater access to the culture:

> Joy (first generation): People here [Toronto] listen to Jamaican music and it's like they have to listen four, five, six, times to understand what is being said unlike if they knew a little bit of Jamaican.
>
> Abbey (second generation): For me personally, I think there are persons out there that don't have the background of being Jamaican wanting to learn. I've had persons come to me saying "oh how do you speak Jamaican?"...so, I believe that it would be beneficial because persons out there that really want to learn.

Benefits of learning JamC in Toronto

In addressing the benefits of learning JamC as a heritage language in Toronto, participants named the cultural knowledge and participation in the Jamaican speech community as key benefits. However, some interviewees felt that the benefits of knowing JamC were dependent on one's location. For these speakers, while acknowledging the benefit of cultural knowledge, learning and knowing JamC would not be particularly useful outside of Jamaica. This finding was corroborated in the survey data, wherein the majority of respondents (71%) did not feel that learning JamC as a heritage language would contribute to the achievement of their life goals in Canada. Such beliefs are illustrated in the excepts below:

Maria (second generation): Well, the only benefit I see is for persons who are actually going to the country to pursue a career or to go to school for something...for persons living here [Toronto] I don't see how [it could be beneficial].

Abbey (second generation): I just don't see when it would come in handy for someone to need to know unless you were visiting Jamaica and needed to know what they were talking about.... I don't see any point in teaching it.

Outside of the achievement of goals in Canada, comments concerning the benefits of JamC generally alluded to the ability to be part of the lively speech community and express things that one wouldn't be able to in English as the main advantages. One participant commented,

Joy (first generation): I find it very exciting when it's a Jamaican [speaking] to a Jamaican in another country and you don't expect it and you go into your own little creole space [laughter] ...it's such a sweet accent, it's very catchy.... Sometimes there are certain things you cannot say in English.... You have to use the Jamaican language.

Recommended approaches for language instruction

Though few individuals believed that JamC HLE would be a worthwhile venture, participants offered opinions on how the language should be transmitted and/or taught to second language learners or those without Jamaican heritage. Three themes that emerged were communicative language teaching, a mixture of both communicative and form-focused instruction, and, in some cases, a sole focus on culture and heritage. Communicative approaches were operationalized as those that emphasized teaching language in context, with emphasis on useful and communicative phrases, while form-focused approaches were those that focused on teaching the structural components of the language such as what the participants referred to as grammar and syntax. Though pointing to the value of structure, no participant felt that an entirely form-focused approach would be appropriate; rather, most

participants recommended a combination of communicative and form-focused approaches that contextualized language learning:

> Maria (second generation): I always think there is value to structure...but I think the other (communicative) aspect is necessary because you get to apply it in the context, and you get a better understanding.
>
> Sarita (first generation): It would make sense to teach the grammar part of it so that people have the basics...teach in context and the communication part of it...[you would teach] when you would use certain words and watch certain shows just so that you can get an idea of how actual real Jamaicans use certain words and phrases.

Still, other participants felt strongly that a JamC HLE program should focus solely on the history and culture of the island, and such views were generally grounded in the belief that JamC did not have its own internal linguistic structure that could be taught. Randy, a second-generation speaker, was one participant who expressed such views:

> Well it can't be grammar, there's no grammar. I would say base it more on history, knowing the roots. I am not really concerned about the language 'cause it's easy to pick up things here and there, it's mostly the heritage.

Overall, participants were generally dismissive of JamC for heritage language learners and showed preference for familial and cultural language transmission. An unexpected finding, however, was the openness to Jamaican language education for non-heritage language learners in the city of Toronto.

Discussion

Attitudes toward JamC HL instruction in Toronto

Individuals in our study largely reported valuing the ability to speak and understand JamC, with most participants indicating that it was important to them that their children be able to speak the language. However, attitudes toward formal JamC HLE were far less

positive and to some extent even dismissive. Instead, greater value was placed on more familial and social approaches to language transmission.

Language ideology

The ambivalent attitudes toward JamC and its instruction are consistent with findings from Wassink's (1999) study on JamC language attitudes. Wassink found that while respondents desired that their children be able to understand the language and so preserve and appreciate their cultural heritage, most did not feel that the Jamaican language should be included in education. Questions that solicited personal feelings toward the language tapped covert language attitudes that were largely positive, while questions focused on language learning and usage were often met with negative responses. For participants, the use of stigmatized language varieties, more than feelings toward them, had a higher likelihood of reflecting negatively on an individual. Consistently, some first-generation speakers, while expressing positive feelings toward the use of JamC with their friends and family, did not believe that the language had any internal structure that could be taught and tended to try to distance themselves from the language to maintain a more English-speaking profile. One poignant example emerged in an interview with Sarita, a first-generation immigrant who spoke mainly in JamC during her interview. Despite Sarita's fluent use of JamC, she made a point of claiming a lack of proficiency in the language and of drawing a distinction between herself and speakers in Jamaica who were "difficult to understand." While findings from Wassink provide insight into the likely role of standard language ideology in attitudes toward JamC HLE, the study took place in Jamaica and so is limited in its applicability to diaspora contexts, where individuals face pressures unique to the immigrant experience that come to bear on attitudes toward HLE.

Migrant goals and motivation

Integrative and instrumental motivation were found to also play a role in attitudes toward JamC HLE in Toronto. Instrumentality speaks to the perceived utility or pragmatic value of a language in the life of an individual (Csizer & Dörnyei, 2005) and has been found to have significant bearing on attitudes toward learning and maintaining one's heritage language (Cho, 2000; Lao, 2004; Park & Sarkar, 2007). Though the majority of participants perceived JamC to be of low instrumental value for their lives in Canada, results showed that proficiency in JamC was valued largely for the purpose of social and cultural integration, not only in relation to the Jamaican community but also with the wider popular culture of Toronto. Similar sentiments were expressed during interviews from Arrieta's (2010) study, in which Jamaican students were the only group to express that they were not derided but instead praised by their peers for being able to speak their heritage language. The Jamaican students were also the only participants, however, who did not see any utility in formal instruction in the heritage language but rather placed value on speaking the language with family and friends.

Similar findings have also been reported for racialized heritage languages such as Sri Lankan Tamil (Canagarajah, 2013) and Bangla (Subhan, 2007) in Toronto, where preference is shown for community and cultural transmission of language rather than HLE and where attitudes toward HLE are linked to the social and economic pressures that attend migrating to Canada. In Subhan's (2007) study, Bangladeshi parents in Toronto tended to be very dismissive of Bangla HLE for their children and were more concerned with what they felt were the more pressing concerns of integrating into Canadian society and ensuring that their children were well cared for, working hard, and doing well in school. Instead of participating in HLE programs available in the city, parents believed that children could "pick up" the language at home. Second-generation speakers valued attending cultural events and festivals

in the city rather than trying to gain more than functional language skills through learning the language formally. For both the Jamaican and Bangladeshi communities, the perceived limited instrumentality of heritage language proficiency in the diaspora meant that HLE was ranked of lesser importance when compared to the more pressing migrant needs of cultural adaptation, the development of English language proficiency, and educational attainment for socio-economic mobility. Though they are similar, what sets the groups apart beyond a shared migrant experience is the fact that, unlike Bangla and other minority languages spoken in Toronto, JamC lacks an accepted standardized orthography and is widely viewed as a broken form of English with less economic status and power, thus adding fuel to the fire of dismissive attitudes toward HLE. Findings showing dismissive attitudes toward JamC HLE and preference for community transmission of the heritage language are unsurprising in one sense, due to well-known issues such as standard language ideology, perceived instrumentality, and issues with standardization. However, findings from more recent work on heritage languages in Toronto (e.g., Canagarajah, 2013; Kramer, 2021) highlighting the complexity of attitudes toward heritage language maintenance and acknowledging heritage speaker agency provide a deeper and a more nuanced understanding of attitudes toward JamC HLE.

In a study of Sri Lankan Tamil heritage language learners in Toronto, California, and London, Canagarajah (2013) found that while second-generation immigrants identified as being more dominant speakers of English, they still displayed positive views of their ethnic identity and used more hybrid forms of their linguistic repertoire to foster community belonging and identity. Key linguistic practices among second-generation speakers included code-switching, the performative and ritualistic use of Tamil, the use of "Tamilized" English, and the maintenance of receptive language proficiency in Tamil. Heritage speakers in the

study viewed their use of "bits and pieces" of Tamil as proficient use of their heritage language and felt that they were able to engage with their ethnic community despite limited productive proficiency in a traditional sense. Instead of simply framing speakers' limited heritage language proficiency as a deficit, Canagarajah argues that heritage language maintenance for many language groups may need to be reconceptualized in a way that acknowledges speaker agency as well as the more symbolic and hybrid usage of heritage languages, which allow heritage learners to "shuttle between mobile identities." Kramer (2021) makes similar recommendations based on findings from a study of Macedonian heritage language speakers in Toronto. Kramer proposes that rather than conceptualizing limited heritage language proficiency as loss and a failure on the part of the linguistic community to transmit their language in the English-speaking diaspora, heritage language use should be viewed more positively as symbolic language use, wherein speakers are encouraged to "recognize the value in each small piece of language retention and its power to connect people across generations...even when they do not fully control the heritage language" (p. 41). While celebrating traditional heritage language programs, both Canagarajah and Kramer call for language programs suited to the needs of varied heritage communities in diaspora cities that equip learners with the skills they need and desire to move between and/or bring together their linguistic identities and communities.

While acknowledging the role of standard language ideology and the tensions of migrant goals and motivations in dismissive attitudes toward JamC HLE, findings showing the community's preference for familial and community language transmission can be understood in a more positive light that recognizes the agency of heritage language learners and the complexity of attitudes toward language maintenance. Familial and community transmission of the language allows second-generation speakers the agency to maintain in-

group belonging within the Jamaican community through the symbolic and performative use of language and to engage with what they describe as a vibrant and lively speech community. At the same time, JamC heritage speakers are able to integrate with the wider culture of Toronto – using their linguistic repertoire in creative and hybrid ways in a city where they feel that their culture and language have significant social currency.

Jamaican Creole for non–heritage language learners

An unanticipated theme that emerged in the interview data was that formal language education was seen as a more viable option for those without Jamaican heritage**,** who would be considered as second or foreign language learners. Speakers frequently spoke to the great demand in the city from those wanting access to the culture and made recommendations for approaches to teaching such learners, who, unlike heritage speakers, generally would not have the opportunity to learn the language from family members or from speakers in various Jamaican community organizations in the city.

JamC language maintenance and transformation in Britain may provide some insight into the willingness of the Jamaican community to share their language with non-heritage learners in Toronto. As in the case of Britain, JamC has gained greater cultural significance and social currency over the years in the city of Toronto, as seen in participants' proud comments concerning the "perks" of being able to speak JamC in Toronto and the influence of Jamaican culture on the city. Consistent with this, youth from varied ethnic backgrounds in Toronto can be heard using Jamaican vocabulary and phrases (e.g., "man dem(s)," "ting," "yute," "dun know"), sometimes traditionally but perhaps more often in novel ways that represent a slightly different code from that spoken in the Caribbean and that carries covert prestige among youth. Considering such factors, it is possible that JamC language

maintenance in Toronto is following a similar trajectory as observed in Britain years before, where, once afforded greater social and cultural standing, speakers of Black British English became more willing to share their language with speakers from other ethnic groups. There may be a caveat, however: Jamaican participants generally felt that not all aspects of the language could be taught, particularly the accent and what some participants referred to as "the flavour" of the language, which, as one speaker put it, allows Jamaican speakers to go into their "creole bubble." In reserving social and community transmission of the language for heritage learners and formal HLE for non-heritage learners, heritage speakers are able to maintain and enjoy greater community access and in-group belonging, while non–heritage-language learners are able to gain instrumental access to cultural artefacts (e.g., music and slang) through more formal language education. Such an approach will likely allow the Jamaican community to maintain in-group solidarity and some level of autonomy over how their language is shared, while enjoying the celebration and proliferation of their language and culture in the city of Toronto. Still, much cultural sensitivity and collaboration with both Jamaican linguists and the Jamaican community in Toronto will be necessary in discussions concerning the creation of JamC language courses for non-heritage speakers in the diaspora.

Limitations

It is of utmost importance to outline some methodological limitations of our study that may have affected the outcomes and thus limit the strength of the conclusions. The wider study solely investigated the nature of the relationship between attitudes toward JamC HLE and the predictor variables of ethnic orientation, age, and immigrant generation, while other variables such as education level, gender, and experiences of discrimination, which may well have had an impact on such attitudes, were not explored. Nevertheless, the focus on the

selected variables was chosen based on previous research and add to the work of ongoing sociolinguistic projects in the city of Toronto focusing on these variables. Considering this limitation, as immigration rates from Jamaica to Canada continue to grow, replication studies using larger samples, as well as research involving other variables not considered in the present study, will be necessary in informing heritage language course planning.

Conclusion and implications

In exploring attitudes toward JamC HLE in Toronto, the study adds to the growing body of heritage language research focused on language attitudes, maintenance, and change in the multilingual city of Toronto (e.g., Hinrichs, 2014; Hoffman & Walker, 2010; Nagy et al., 2014) and aims to add to the limited body of work exploring HLE for racialized and minoritized languages and groups. Study results showed that while individuals of Jamaican heritage in Toronto had largely positive attitudes toward JamC, attitudes toward JamC HLE were somewhat dismissive. Knowledge of JamC was valued for integrative and social purposes and held in positive regard. However, low perceived instrumentality coupled with beliefs based on a lack of understanding of the structural principles of the language appear to contribute to the dismissive attitudes toward formal Jamaican HLE, a finding that extends beyond JamC to most creole heritage languages.

This does not mean a complete dismissal of HLE but rather the widening of mainstream conceptualizations of heritage languages and education. In the case of the Jamaican community, language programming for heritage learners will need to be situated within cultural learning programs that equip learners with the symbolic language skills to enable them to engage with their community and, as Canagarajah (2013) put it, be able to "shuttle" between their linguistic and cultural identities in the city of Toronto. Such an

approach is more likely to support instead of undermine Jamaican parents' aspirations for their children living in the diaspora.

The findings are hopeful for HLE in JamC and similar language varieties; however, innovation, dialogue, and collaboration will be required to create equitable and sustainable programs for cultural and language education which go beyond superficial "sun and fun" understandings of the Caribbean (Winer, 2006, p. 114) and which meet the needs of learners in the diaspora.

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Note

[to be set]

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1 Though “Caribbean culture” is referenced in the *Globe and Mail* extract, the “patois language” being discussed is Jamaican Creole.