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Abstract

Although the majority of Haitians are monolingual in Haitian Creole, French has remained the dominant language on the island. Historically, French also has been the privileged language in education, which does not match up with most Haitians' linguistic reality. In this paper, I analyze education reform in Haiti by first developing a framework for understanding linguistic human rights and the relationship between language and power. This section draws upon the theories of Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson, and Bourdieu. I then look at how the development of creole languages impacts how they are perceived. Lastly, I examine three previous education reform projects in Haiti (education during the US Occupation, the Haitian Pilot Project, and the Bernard Education Reform) with respect to linguistic human rights. Ultimately, I conclude that while Haiti has made progress toward recognizing the linguistic human rights of its citizens, including the right to education in one's first language, reform efforts have been hindered by inconsistency and political instability.

Introduction

The education system plays a vital role in deciding what language(s) are worthy of being formally transmitted to students. In post-colonial and multilingual contexts, these systems can reveal tensions between the dominant language and the right to basic education in one's first language. Haiti is one such country that has struggled with what language in which to educate students. Negative attitudes toward Haitian Creole, vast power disparities between French and Creole speakers, and low rates of literacy in both languages are a common reality for the Haitian people. Additionally, limited educational funding and infrastructure has made long-term education reform in the country difficult. These factors contribute to a lack of available language education, particularly in Creole, which is in direct violation of Haitians' linguistic human rights. My analysis sets out to explore the relationship between language and power, examine how language development impacts perception, and look at past reform efforts in relationship to linguistic human rights. Throughout this paper, I will be focusing particular attention on the ways in which the Haitian education system might protect the rights of Creole speakers while also opening markets currently dominated by the French-speaking minority.

Linguistic Human Rights

Linguistic human rights (LHRs) are based upon the idea that everyone, no matter where they live, has the right to use and identify with their first language. These rights should be recognized and respected whether one speaks a minority or a majority language. Currently, only speakers of the world's official languages, or languages that hold power within a country's government, enjoy all linguistic human rights (Phillipson et al. 2). As the result of limitations to their linguistic rights, linguistic minorities are at risk of having their other human rights restricted or violated. Some concerns include limited access to education in their first language, unequal

political representation, and biased legal proceedings (2). Additionally, linguistic minorities are limited in their ability to form and maintain social identities in their first language, which can negatively impact relationships within families and speech communities.

Negative attitudes toward linguistic minorities are largely based on two myths: that monolingualism is desirable for economic growth, and that monolingualism is important for a state's national integrity (Phillipson et al. 4-6). The first myth is based on the perceived relationship between monolingual Western countries and increased development. If this relationship exists, it follows that multilingual countries should try to move toward a monolingual system if they want to access this economic prosperity (4). However, most countries, including wealthy Western countries, are multilingual, even if national mythology might claim otherwise. There is no relationship between multilingualism and decreased economic development, which makes this belief untrue.

The second myth stems from the fact that minority languages act as a means of identification for a minority group. By granting minority groups the right to use their languages and maintain their cultures and traditions, the dominant population fears that linguistic minorities will eventually want political independence (4-5). However, the very existence of linguistic minorities is not what causes tension within nation states. Rather, discrimination and forced assimilation are what divide countries along linguistic lines. If linguistic minorities were to have their rights properly recognized, different speech communities should have little issue existing within the same nation state

In multilingual areas, linguistic human rights related to education are two-fold. First, linguistic minorities have the right, at a minimum, to basic education through the medium of one's first language (Phillipson et al. 2). In practice, first-language education includes the right

for linguistic minorities to develop their own schools and curriculums. Second, speakers of minority languages have the right to learn their country's official language (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 71). In theory, the first language education provides linguistic minorities connection to their culture and family, while the second-language education provides them with access to the privileges enjoyed by the linguistic majority.

The wording of majority/minority language is potentially confusing. Haitian Creole is the most commonly spoken language in Haiti, which makes it the *majority* language within the country's borders. With this knowledge, one might wonder why Haitian Creole has not been adopted as the primary language of education in Haiti. We must also consider how a language is positioned globally. Outside of Haiti, few people speak and use Haitian Creole on a daily basis, which makes it a *minority* language internationally (adapted from "Education in a Multilingual World" 13). By contrast, French is widely spoken and understood. In countries that were former colonies of France or Belgium, French is still often used as a second language. French is also a popular choice for people studying a foreign language in non-francophone communities. These factors make French a majority language globally. While French is not a majority language in Haiti number-wise, it is the dominant language in terms of power.

Language and Power

The issue of linguistic human rights, including the designation of majority/minority language, is deeply connected to how language represents and reproduces systems of power (Phillipson et al. 3). A language will have more or less symbolic power based on the amount of social capital possessed by its speakers. Languages that fit the definition of "standard" usually possess the most symbolic power. A standard language, as defined by Holmes and Wilson, is a language that is written and gone through some amount of codification (82). Standard languages

are used in formal markets such as government and education, as well as in a variety of informal markets. Few world languages fit this definition of standard, and it is important to remember that characteristics related to standardization do not create a *structurally* superior language. Rather, the context in which the language is used reflects systems of *symbolic* power. A standard language “has no particular linguistic merits...It is simply the dialect of those who are politically powerful and socially prestigious” (Holmes and Wilson 83). How a language is used will become important later when looking at the development of creole languages.

Linguistic exchanges do not occur in a vacuum. According to Bourdieu’s theory of language, linguistic exchanges take place in different markets, or contexts. A person’s language and manner of speaking, which is part of their dispositions, or a series of practices acquired during early childhood, will have more or less symbolic capital based upon the market in which the exchange takes place. Therefore, “differences in terms of accent, grammar, and vocabulary...are indices of the social positions of speakers and reflections of the quantities of linguistic capital (and other capital) they possess” (Thompson 18). As such, linguistic exchanges both express and reproduce the power structures present in society.

Languages rarely match up with a state’s socially-created, administrative boundaries (Bourdieu 48). Although not all countries have an official language, the dominant language, or the language used in official markets such as political and educational settings, serves a similar purpose to an official language. This state language becomes “the theoretical norm against which all linguistic practices are objectively measured” (Bourdieu 45). In Haiti, French has historically held this dominant position while Haitian Creole has largely been regarded as the language of rural, working class Haitians. As a result, French holds greater linguistic capital in almost all formal markets in Haiti.

A person's language (their "linguistic products") hold different values depending on the context (the "linguistic market"). In Haiti, the greater one's French ability, the more symbolic power they will possess. Bilingualism in French and Haitian Creole, too, is highly valued as these individuals can act as a bridge between different linguistic markets. However, according to DeGraff, 95% of Haitians are monolingual in Creole only (Qtd. by Hebblethwaite 256). This reality is not reflected in the systems of symbolic power in Haiti. The power held by the small percentage of French speakers gives legitimacy to the belief that French should remain the dominant language (Thompson 23). In Haiti, this power differential has led Creole speakers to internalize the norms of French speakers. They see their language as not being good enough, which has created a society where speaking French is the only way to access certain markets.

Language in Education

Institutions play a critical role in reaffirming these structures of symbolic power. "The position which the educational system gives to different languages...is such an important issue because this institution has the monopoly in the large-scale production of producers/consumers" (Bourdieu 57). Producers are those who create linguistic utterances, and consumers are those who receive and interpret these utterances. Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson categorize the school as the primary tool of assimilation into the dominant language and culture (71). In creating a public education system, those in power decide what language(s) are worthy of being formally transmitted to students. School administrators then impose these ideas upon students by teaching them a standardized version of the language and discouraging the use of minority languages or dialects in the classroom.

Additionally, established education systems create a society that requires individuals to complete their education to have access to certain labor markets. In this way, the education

system devalues minority languages and gives greater symbolic power to the state language (Bourdieu 49). In Haiti, French has held the privileged position in education since the mandate of “free and compulsory primary education” in the 1805 Constitution of Haiti (Salmi 164). This policy of French-dominant education has not necessarily impacted the use of Haitian Creole in informal markets, but it has impacted how Haitians perceive their first language. Parents fear by not privileging French in informal markets such as the home, their children will be denied access to certain formal markets later.

Education in Haiti. As discussed earlier, one of the tenants of linguistic human rights is the right to basic education in one’s first language, which makes education in Haiti an issue of linguistic rights. Despite previous education reforms, the majority of Haitians do not have access to basic education in Creole, or access to any educational institutions at all. In 1982, 65.3% of Haitians over the age 15 were illiterate, and estimates today still place the rate of illiteracy around 60% (Hadjadj 27). Although French is the primary language of secondary education in Haiti, most teachers are not bilingual and do not have sufficient French skills to teach their students a standard version of the language (Hebblethwaite 261). Additionally, in 2000, 74% of teachers in Haiti did not have qualifications to teach nor teacher training (Hadjadj 19). Therefore, the issue of linguistic rights in education is not exclusive to students; lack of available resources and training in Creole also impacts educators.

Haitians historically have been denied the right to develop their own school systems and curriculums, which is another important part of the system of linguistic human rights in education. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Haiti’s education system has faced imposition from religious groups, international aid organizations, and wealthy countries such as the United States. The impact of this imposition is two-fold. First, Haitians have been unable to develop an

education system that considers their unique culture and language needs. Second, when faced with embargos, such as the one the US employed following a 1991 military coup, Haiti's education system suffers as a result of the loss of funding (Hadjadj 24). This current reality limits Creole-speaking Haitians in their ability to enjoy all of their human rights, which makes an understanding of language use in the Haitian education system all the more critical.

Enrichment-oriented versus necessary linguistic rights. There is tension between efforts to protect minority languages in education and efforts to promote major world languages in the name of fostering global communication. In the case of Haiti, the product of this tension appears in the belief that a primarily Creole-based education system will hinder rural Haitians' social mobility while the wealthy minority will maintain access to private French education, and therefore French-dominant markets (Hebblethwaite 266). Differentiating between enrichment-oriented and necessary linguistic human rights is one potential response to this tension. Enrichment-oriented linguistic rights focus on individuals who want to learn a foreign language, or a language that is not commonly spoken in their community (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 103). While learning another language might be important for personal or professional reasons, these individuals can sufficiently maintain their first language identities. For example, as an English speaker in the United States, I am learning French as a foreign language. I am not at risk of losing my English ability because I am learning French in school, which makes my language education an example of an enrichment-oriented right.

However, necessary linguistic rights refer to speakers of minority languages who live in bilingual or multilingual communities. For these individuals, their first language and the country's official language exist as important parts of their linguistic repertoire. Because school is how most individuals receive formal language education, the education system has a duty to

teach both the first and second language. If the minority first language is not actively taught and encouraged, the dominant second language can replace it through a process called subtractive bilingualism. Conversely, additive bilingualism describes an education context where the second language is taught without negative impact to the first language (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 101-102). The situation in Haiti is one of necessary linguistic human rights, with Creole as the first language of most Haitians and French as one of the country's official languages. By recognizing the importance of both Haitian Creole and French in the linguistic repertoire of Haitians, institutions can protect Creole speakers by focusing on additive bilingualism in education.

Creole Languages

Pidgins

One of the reasons Haiti has struggled to implement education reform is because of the negative attitudes toward creole languages, both by the people who use these varieties and by speakers of other languages. "Creole" describes the way in which the language developed, not the language's legitimacy as a method of communication or as a system of group identification. A creole language begins as a pidgin, which is a code that develops between groups who do not share a common first language. In the fifteenth and sixteenth century, pidgins often arose from European colonization of Africa and Asia (Jenkins 11). In the Caribbean, pidgins began to develop as Europeans, beginning with the Spanish, created settlements and colonized the islands. As the Spanish, and later French and British, developed plantations and interacted with the people they had enslaved, pidgins developed for transactional purposes. Although pidgins share several linguistic features such as a limited vocabulary and minimal grammatical redundancy, the defining factor of a pidgin is how the code is used. During the early stages of development, a

pidgin does not act as anyone's first language. Instead, each group maintains their first language and uses the pidgin only when interacting outside of their speech communities.

Holm suggests that pidgins form as the result of unequal power between groups, as it takes extreme factors to disrupt the normal transmission of language (69). Pidgins often form as the result of colonialism and slavery. For example, on Caribbean plantations in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, slave owners often separated slaves who spoke the same languages to limit communication within groups. Therefore, pidgins developed so slaves could not only communicate with the landowner but also communicate with each other (Holmes and Wilson 89). Generally, as pidgins develop, the prestige language supplies more of the pidgin's vocabulary, while the vernacular or minority language influences the grammar (91). In the Caribbean, for example, French, Spanish, English or Dutch often supplied the vocabulary of pidgins. These influences can still be seen in the creole languages spoken in this region today.

Creolization

Pidgins often have a short lifespan. They die out when the function for which they are used disappears. In multilingual areas where a pidgin acts as a lingua franca, though, it may be used for an increasing number of functions over time (Jenkins 11). As a pidgin expands in its code and usage, parents transmit this code to their offspring. As these children acquire the pidgin as their first language, the code shifts to become a creole language. This process is known as creolization or nativization (Holm 7). Another important difference is while a pidgin is not used to express group identity (Holmes and Wilson 90), creole languages often communicate group identity, particularly in post-colonial states. Another example of a creole language can be found in the formerly colonized West African country of Cameroon. Here, Cameroonian Pidgin English is commonplace in the anglophone regions of the country. One scholar describes it as

“the only language in Cameroon which expresses Cameroonian reality without provoking vertical or horizontal hostilities” (Alobwede 181). Both Cameroonian Pidgin English and Haitian Creole illustrate how groups can take aspects of the former colonial language and make it their own.

As mentioned before, the defining factors of creole languages are sociolinguistic, not linguistic. According to Holm, even with the linguistic features common to some creole language, a language cannot be categorized as a creole without placing it in its sociolinguistic context. Even when comparing the structural features of Atlantic creoles, “there is little agreement that these [features] could be used to determine whether a language is a creole” (68). As such, the linguistic features of creoles do not distinguish them from other natural languages.

As with pidgins, outsiders tend to perceive creole languages negatively (Holmes and Wilson 98). Not all speakers of creole languages share these negative opinions, but several factors might lead them to reject the identities associated with their language. As speakers of a minority language, creole language users often do not have access to the same rights as speakers of a majority language. As is the case with Haiti, this symbolic dominance can cause Creole speakers to misrecognize French as a linguistically superior language (Thompson 21-22). Without specific protection of their linguistic human rights, speakers of creole languages may find themselves rejecting their creole-based identities and assimilating to identities associated with the majority language.

Development of Haitian Creole

Understanding how creole languages develop will help us better understand the development of Haitian Creole. Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, Arawak and Taino tribes occupied Hispaniola, the island today divided between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. When

Christopher Columbus arrived on the island in 1492, there were around one million Amerindians populating the island. Tragically, the Spanish killed the majority of the native populations with disease and forced labor in just two generations, which fueled the demand for slave labor from West Africa (Coupeau 15). As early as 1502, the Spanish began importing slaves from Guinea, Dahomey (present-day Benin), and Senegal to supplement their labor force (16). The French and the British, also vying for control of the Caribbean, soon created small settlements on Hispaniola and the surrounding islands. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, French pirates were prolific in the area, often outnumbering the Spanish settlers. In 1664, King Louis XIV officially laid claim to the western half of Hispaniola (Holm 87), and in 1697, the Treaty of Ryswick, divided the island (Coupeau 17). The eastern section became the Spanish-ruled colony of San Domingo, while the western half became the French-ruled colony of Saint-Domingue.

It was on this historical stage that Haitian Creole likely began developing, although the exact origins of the language are unclear. Linguists have several theories on how Haitian Creole developed. The language may have been influenced by French, English, and African buccaneers who operated in the Caribbean at the time (Holm 86). Other scholars argue that the structure of Haitian Creole developed in Africa from a pidgin spoken between Portuguese traders and African slaves who were eventually imported to the Caribbean (Lindley 9-10). Once in Haiti, French would have slowly replaced the Portuguese lexicon.

The most likely case, though, is that as individuals speaking non-related African languages were brought to Saint-Domingue, Haitian pidgin and then Creole developed out of a communication need between French plantation owners and their slaves. French influenced the lexicon, while the African languages influenced the grammar and pronunciation (Lindley 11-12). It is hard to say for certain which African languages influenced Haitian Creole, but Singler

suggests that Mande and Kwa language groups had the greatest impact on the development of the language (qtd. by Holm 87). Coupeau also writes that “two voodoo songs preserved by Moreau de Saint-Méry and Drouin de Bercy were in the Kikongo tongue” (10), which could indicate that this language also influenced the development of Haitian Creole.

ENGLISH	STANDARD FRENCH	COLLOQUIAL FRENCH	HAITIAN CREOLE
I talk	je parle	je parle [parl]	m pale
you talk	tu parles	tu parles [parl]	ou pale
he talks	il parle	il parle [parl]	li pale
we talk	nous parlons	on parle [parl]	nu pale
you (pl.) talk	vous parlez	vous parlez [parle]	nu pale
they talk	ils parlent	ils parlent [parl]	yo pale

A chart showing the linguistic relation between French and Haitian Creole. Here, we can see the grammatical simplification that occurred as Haitian Creole developed. For example, *nu pale* in Haitian Creole can mean “we talk” or “you (pl.) talk” (*nous parlons* and *vous parlez* in French). Instead of the pronoun or the verb marking who is talking, the speaker relies on the context of the conversation.

From *Linguistic Simplicity and Complexity: Why Do Languages Undress?* (McWhorter 32)

Creole and Haitian Independence

By 1789, there were over half a million slaves in Saint-Domingue (Girard 20). As the slave population grew, the number of French speakers decreased while the number of Creole speakers increased. As the result of complicated racial and colonial factors, nationalism grew among Creole slaves (slaves who had been born in Saint-Domingue) and the *Affranchis* (freed people of color) (Coupeau 18-19). For these groups, Saint-Domingue was the only place they could call home, unlike the wealthy white plantation owners who could return to France. The Creole slaves and the *Affranchis* believed “that the colony belonged to them more than to the

whites because they would not leave after they made their fortunes” (21). This belief led to a series of small uprisings, precursors of the revolution to come.

The *Affranchis*, despite being a class above the African- and Creole-born slaves in Saint-Domingue, still could not hold political power in the colony. To voice their frustration, the *Affranchis* formed an alliance with the slaves in an attempt to abolish slavery in Saint-Domingue, which would disrupt the foundation of the colonial government (Coupeau 21). This movement was further fueled by the French Revolution (1789-1799), which led to the National Assembly granting free, property-owning men of color the right to vote in 1791. In 1792, this group was granted French citizenship, which worried the white plantation owners in Saint-Domingue (21). Because they were so greatly outnumbered by the slaves and *Affranchis* on the island, a large-scale uprising could prove fatal to the colonial government. With France preoccupied with their own war and increasing tensions on Saint-Domingue, the Haitian Revolution officially began on August 22, 1791.

Understanding the relationships between racial groups in pre- and post-revolutionary Haiti is vital for understanding the class structures that still exist today. The Haitians fighting the French had two common goals: the abolition of slavery on the island, and the dissolution of the colonial government. These goals brought together the different racial and ethnic groups on Saint-Domingue. After the Republic of Haiti was established on January 1, 1804, the mixed-race *Affranchis* quickly filled the positions left behind by the French. This group took ownership of the most desirable plots of land for farming. They then took residence in Haiti’s urban areas, acting as “absentee landlords” to the former slaves, most of darker skin tone, they employed to farm their land (Coupeau 42). Because many members of today’s Haitian elite can trace their origins back to this privileged mixed-race class, this power structure is still relevant, and the

divide between urban and rural Haitians will play an important role when considering education planning and reform.

Language and Education in Early Haiti. Although Haitian troops used primarily Creole when communicating within their group, French played an important role as a written language. Haitian Creole had no common orthography, so French acted as the default language for written orders between troops (Lindley 14). The vast majority of Haitians, including the political leaders of the new republic, were illiterate. Therefore, these leaders turned to literate secretaries who had received their education in France when drafting Haiti's constitution and laws. Again, the use of French for these documents was largely based on practical concerns, but Lindley also acknowledges that the leaders of Haiti may have recognized the symbolic power of French as the language of their former colonial rulers:

Most of the slaves at the time of the Revolution had spent their lives in a society in which the language of their owners was the prestigious alternative and used by anyone who held authority or was considered competent...Perhaps the former slaves felt the psychological need to prove that they, as leaders of the new republic, were the equals in social and political stature to their former rulers and the rulers of other nations (Lindley 14-15).

French's covert power as a former colonial language, paired with its overt power as the language of international diplomacy at the time, are contributing factors to the Haitians' preference for the language. It will also lay the foundation for the use of French as the primary language of education.

In the nation's early days, Haiti struggled to establish itself as the result of forced war reparations to France and lack of international recognition. "This social and economic quarantine...had profound effects on the aspirations and hopes for a sound public educational

system” (Prou 31). Development of an education system also suffered as the result of internal political turmoil. In 1806, after the overthrow of Haiti’s first leader, Dessalines, the country split into two rival states. The western and southern part of the country became a republic ruled by Aléxandre Pétion, and the northern part of the country became a kingdom ruled by King Henri Christophe. Both leaders developed public education systems in their respective parts of the country, but these schools were mostly aimed at the French-speaking urban elites. However, some political leaders did advocate for additional education in Haitian Creole. Étienne Gérin was one such individual who supported Creole-based education for rural children in the south of Haiti. He even created a Creole grammar for this purpose (Lindley 84). Pétion ignored Gérin’s idea, though, and formal education continued primarily in French.

Until 1860, education in Haiti remained relatively unchanged until the signing of the *Concordat* between the Haitian government and the Vatican. This agreement acted as the Vatican’s official recognition of Haiti as a legitimate state (Coupeau 62-63). It also allowed the Catholic Church to take over almost all aspects of Haitian education (Prou 31). The Church developed private schools in the country’s urban areas and filled them with Catholic teachers from France. “These instructors set about the task, consciously or unconsciously, of reinforcing a linguistic and educational status quo—the glorification of all things French” (Lindley 87). This Catholic, French-based education strengthened the symbolic power of French in Haiti. It also helped establish Haiti’s large private school network, which the Haitian government would struggle with in the following century when trying to implement education reform.

Legal Recognition of French and Haitian Creole in Haiti

Legal recognition of a language plays an important role in either reaffirming or shifting systems of symbolic power. Prior to 1918, Haiti had no official language recognized in its

constitution (Howe 292). Even without official status, though, French had risen to dominance in Haiti through its use in formal markets: education, government, and administration. French was first given official status during the twenty-year American occupation of Haiti. This occupation began in 1915 under the guise of creating greater political stability in Haiti and gave the United States the opportunity to extend its influence over the country (Coupeau 71). On June 12, 1918, a new constitution, drafted by then-Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt and written in French, was ratified and adopted by the government. Article 24 of this new constitution established French as the official language of Haiti, and the only language acceptable for government and administrative matters.

Even though French had previously been the dominant language in Haiti, the US government hoped to create greater stability in the country by designating French as the official language. They believed that a monolingual French system would create a stronger nation state (Bourdieu 46-47), but this practice backfired somewhat. During the US occupation, pro-Creole sentiment increased among educated, mixed-raced Haitians who had historically held the privileged positions in Haitian society. Treated the same as black Haitians under the American regime, these Haitians used Creole to develop resistance groups such as the *Union patriotique* (Lindley 88). Such groups underscore how minority language speakers can deploy and refashion language to construct new identities and exist independently of the dominant group. Though the occupation ultimately ended in 1934 after a series of strikes and uprisings, questions about language practices remained relevant, especially in rural areas with high numbers of Creole speakers.

Until 1964, French remained the only language mentioned in Haiti's constitution. The 1964 Constitution, which declared François Duvalier "President for Life," was the first

constitution to include a provision for Creole speakers. While this document maintained French as the official language of Haiti, it also recognized that Creole could be used in certain situations to “protect the moral interests of citizens who did not know French well enough” (Art. 35).

Article 35 represented a growing understanding that not all Haitians could speak and understand French to an extent that they could receive sufficient legal protection under a French-dominant system. In the language of Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, the amendment acted as “covert toleration” of Creole speakers (79-80). While this article provided measures to prevent discrimination on the basis of language use, the wording of the amendment was vague and allowed for interpretation by legal officials. Article 35 allowed for the use of Haitian Creole in some formal markets under specific circumstances, but it did not actively promote the use of the language or even recognize it as being an official language of the country.

Article 5 of Haiti’s 1987 Constitution states that Creole is the only common language that unites all Haitians, making it the country’s national language. A national language primarily functions as a symbol of national unity. An official language, by contrast, is “primarily utilitarian rather than symbolic” (Holmes and Wilson 107) and is the language typically used in formal contexts. Article 5 also designates both Creole and French as the official languages of the Republic. These designations are significant. Creole’s status as Haiti’s national language acts as an indicator of how the language influences the social identities of Haitians, while its status as an official language provides the foundation for a society where Creole and French might coexist in formal markets.

Additionally, the 1987 Constitution also contains provisions to protect the other human rights of Creole speakers. Article 24, Section 3 describes how when a person is arrested, the reason for arrest must be provided in both Creole and French. Furthermore, Article 40 mandates

that all written and televised materials relating to the government, including laws, decrees, and international agreements, must be available in Creole and French. These articles all represent a move toward “overt permission” of Haitian Creole (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 79-80). Again, the government is not necessarily promoting the use of Haitian Creole, and legislation only works when it is embraced by a majority of the population. However, they did recognize the language’s importance, though, both as a marker of national identity and as a tool to protect Creole speakers’ basic rights to legal protection and freedom of information.

Creole as a Political Language

With the designation of Haitian Creole as one of the official languages of Haiti, Creole saw increasing popularity as a political language. In 1991, in what Howe describes as “a linguistic revolution” (294) President Jean-Bertrand Aristide delivered his inauguration speech in Creole. In this event, Aristide employed what Bourdieu refers to as a “strategy of condescension” (68). By addressing his audience in Haitian Creole, Aristide symbolically ruptured the power relationship between French and Creole. As Howe notes, Aristide was a well-educated man and “his fluency in French...erases any doubts that he uses Creole for lack of competency” (294). He was only able to destabilize this hierarchy because of his social status: a status that he had, in part, because of his ability to speak French.

Aristide also used this relationship to his advantage in November 1995 following the murder of his deputy Jean-Hubert Feuillé. It was widely believed that former president Prosper Avril had ordered Feuillé’s murder, and that the CIA had known in advance and done nothing to stop it (Girard 166). At the funeral, Aristide wanted to direct Haitians’ anger at the foreign community but feared losing international aid. As a result, during his eulogy, Aristide participated in “multilingual deception” (167). During the French portions of his speech, he

maintained a reconciliatory tone, but in the Creole sections, he called upon Haitians to “carry out vigilante operations against the upper class” (167). As none of the members of the international community present at the funeral could understand Creole, they assumed the Creole sections of the eulogy were a direct translation of the French sections. Therefore, we see Aristide use his multilingualism to bring Creole into a formal context and connect with the Haitian majority. His speech had real-world impact, too. In the following months, ten people died as the result of violence and unrest throughout the country.

As Howe states, passing decrees does not bring automatic change (295). Revisions to Haiti’s constitution shows efforts by the government to integrate Creole language into official policies, but ultimately, French maintains its privileged position in Haitian society. Aristide’s speeches represent an important step toward making politics accessible to the masses, which is a right that is often diminished in minority language contexts. It also demonstrates how one can use multilingualism to create multiple messages in a singular context. Overall, the situation for the majority of Haitians remained unchanged. Language-related legislation is sometimes developed simply for a country to give the appearance of protecting their linguistic minorities (Phillipson et al. 5). As we will see when looking at education reforms in Haiti, legislation changes little without action on the part of those in power.

Education Reform Efforts

To explore how Haiti’s education system might be reshaped to sufficiently protect the rights of Creole speakers, it is important to understand past education reforms. In the next section, I will be examining the development, goals, and outcomes of three education projects or reforms that were implemented in Haiti during the twentieth century. In examining these reforms, I consider the following factors:

1. Who was responsible for initiating the reform?
2. What did the reform set out to accomplish?
3. What was the reform's long-term impact?
4. Did the education reform protect the linguistic rights of Haitian Creole speakers?

By placing these reforms within their historical and linguistic context, we can gain an understanding of the specific programs that worked to increase the availability of basic education and Creole-based instruction. Also, by understanding how these reforms might be improved, we can see how education reform could look in twenty-first century Haiti.

Education and the US Occupation

The US occupation brought the first major education reform to Haiti. Two American men, John Russell and George Freeman, were responsible for managing the reform under Haiti's Department of Agriculture. The reform's priority was to establish vocational programs in Haiti's rural areas. However, even in a country with an illiteracy rate of 95%, the new programs did not focus any attention on basic literacy. Russell even went as far as to suggest that "literacy had little to do with democracy" and removed literacy from the reform's priorities (Angulo 5). Additionally, these programs also existed at the detriment of Haiti's public schools. The US government reduced funding to traditional primary and secondary institutions to channel funds to the vocational programs. The following chart illustrates how the US military allocated educational funds between 1928-1929. Although the Service Technique schools (vocational schools developed by the US) received more funding than Haiti's National School System, only around 10% of eligible students enrolled in the Service Technique Program.

Table 1
U.S. Military Occupation Government
Budget Allocations 1928–1929

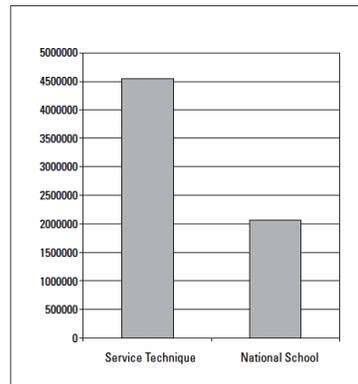
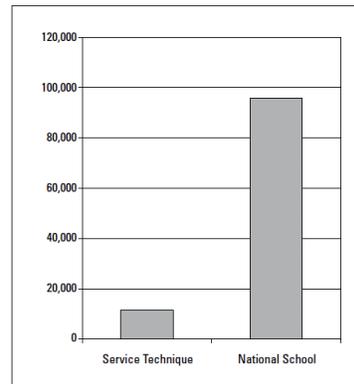


Table 2
Haitian Student Population
Distribution 1928–1929



From “Education During the American Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934” (Angulo 7)

The new schools were not just unpopular; rural Haitians opposed their very existence. Urban schools were exempt from the new vocational curriculum, which “codified the *de facto* social apartheid between *lekòl lavil* (urban schools) and *lekòl andeyò* (rural schools)” (Prou 33). Vocational education absolutely has a place in Haiti’s school system and can contribute greatly to Haiti’s development. However, the reform failed to address the educational disparities already present in Haiti’s public-school system. Let us return to Bourdieu’s idea that education acts as a gateway to formal markets. The classical, French-based schools in Haiti’s urban areas continued to exist even with the addition of vocational schools. Angulo notes that for many Haitians, these schools represented “pathways to higher learning and social mobility.” Even though few Haitians would ever receive this kind of education, “it held an important place in the Haitian conception of education, democracy, and social progress” (7). By rejecting the notion that rural Haitians had the right to access the same curriculum available in Haiti’s public schools, the US government further limited their ability to access formal markets outside of agriculture.

Linguistic human rights during the occupation. The reform also had little regard for the linguistic human rights of Haitians. As discussed earlier, the leaders of the US occupation

designated French as the official language of Haiti. Even with this legislation, language was not a matter of concern in these new vocational schools. Freeman, the man responsible for developing the program's curriculum, was not an educator or a linguist. He was a scientist, and his primary concerns rest with American investments in Haiti's agricultural system (Angulo 5). The British Minister to Haiti noted that many of Freeman's teachers did not know any French and conducted their teaching in English, a language to which few Haitians had ever been exposed (8). The program did not offer any kind of English education, either. Therefore, even if a large percentage of students had enrolled in the vocational program, the language barrier would have greatly impacted their ability to learn.

The occupation also diminished Haitians' ability to educate their own people. One of the causes of rising conflict between Haitians and the American occupiers was the pay difference between National School System and Service Technique teachers. The Haitian educators at the National Schools received a salary of approximately \$4 to \$6 a month. Meanwhile, the American educators at the Service Technique schools received anywhere from \$40 to \$60 a month (Angulo 8). This pay difference provides additional evidence that the US did not desire to reform the Haitian education system. The vocational programs mostly served as a way for the US to take advantage of a marginalized population and extend their economic and cultural influence across all areas of Haiti. Although the use of Creole or French was not outright banned in these programs, the English-based curriculum acted as a covert denial of Haitians' linguistic rights. As a result of all these factors, Haitians rejected the vocational program, and wide scale student protests broke out in October 1929 that contributed to the end of the US occupation.

Haitian Pilot Project

Ten years after the end of the US occupation, education reform became relevant once again as a response to disease, poverty, and illiteracy present in Haiti's rural areas. Haiti's president Dumarsais Estimé devised the Haitian Pilot Project as one solution to these problems. In 1947, he proposed the project to UNESCO, which was the organization ultimately responsible for developing the logistics of the project. The Haitian government then chose Marbial, a rural community in southern Haiti, as the location for the project's first phase. In addition to primary education, the Haitian Pilot Project included plans for health and agricultural education. It also included increased medical services and the establishment of small industries in the region ("The Re-Birth of a Valley" 2). When beginning the project, UNESCO undertook a survey of the Marbial Valley, asserting that their work "must be based on a thorough knowledge of the physical environment and the people for whom it was destined" (2-3). In doing so, UNESCO hoped the project could become self-sufficient in five years and expand to other parts of the island.

The article produced by UNESCO regarding the project's progress starts with a blanket statement designating Creole as "the language of country peasants" while in urban areas, individuals spoke French with "a pleasant lyrical accent" ("The Re-Birth of a Valley" 2). These statements only consider formal linguistic markets. Although French dominated in government and education, Creole was more widely used in informal markets, even among upper-class Haitians who preferred using French as a symbol of their social status. Additionally, even though this project offered a wider range of programs than those developed during the US occupation, the Pilot Project did not remedy the two-school system that divided urban and rural education.

The Pilot Project did address a critical need for basic education, particularly for adults. One of the barriers to literacy in Haiti was the lack of available reading materials in Haitian Creole, which was a product of the language not having a codified grammar. With the standard alphabet and grammatical system developed by linguist Robert Hall, the program helped to create Haitian Creole-based educational materials (“The Re-Birth of a Valley” 4). Once literate in Creole, some of the Haitians in the program began to study French (3), which illustrates how first-language education can be used as a foundation for second language learning. We will see a similar practice adopted on a larger scale during the Bernard Reform thirty years later.

In 1949, a report produced by UNESCO recommended the continued use of Haitian Creole in adult education programs (Lindley 91-92). Haiti was never able to fully implement UNESCO’s recommendation, though, and the project lost momentum when Estimé was overthrown in 1950. This report shows a shift, at least in the perspective of outsiders, in the belief that French was the only language appropriate for education in Haiti. It also reflected increasingly common theories on how to incorporate minority languages in educational programs. The publication “The Use of Vernacular Languages¹ in Education,” produced by UNESCO in 1953, advocates for early education in a child’s first language (68). However, this belief is based mostly on practical concerns rather than concerns for one’s linguistic human rights. The committee recognized that when an individual is literate in their first language, it is easier for them to become literate in a second language, which ultimately “saves money and effort” (12). However, only incorporating Haitian Creole in basic or early education is not enough to reshape Haiti’s education system. Creole can and should be integrated at all levels of

¹ The document defines a vernacular language as any “language which is a mother tongue of a group which is socially or politically dominated by another group speaking a different language” (46). According to this definition, Haitian Creole would be considered a vernacular language.

education, as it is through this continued education that an additive bilingual environment can be created.

Bernard Reform

In 1979, the Haitian government attempted to majorly reform Haiti's education system through the Bernard Education Reform. This reform acted as a response to the lack of adequate schools and high rates of failure on the *Baccalauréat* exam (Prou 29), as well as low rates of literacy throughout the country. As seen during the Haitian Pilot Project, Haiti's large rural areas suffered the most from the country's lack of educational resources; despite having 70% of the population at the time of the reform, rural areas had fewer students enrolled than Haiti's urban areas (35). Additionally, much of the education available in the rural areas was still vocation-based, which prevented this population from accessing markets dominated by the French-based public and private institutions in urban areas.

Education reform also worked to the advantage of President Jean-Claude Duvalier, son of François Duvalier, to strengthen Haiti's international positioning. He hoped by reforming Haiti's education system, the country could once again receive the international aid that had been discontinued in an attempt to overthrow his father during the previous decade (Coupeau 98). Education reform would also allow Duvalier to deliver on his campaign promise of "increased national development through basic universal education" (Prou 38). By introducing education reform, Duvalier believed he could maintain absolute power and quell any lingering social unrest.

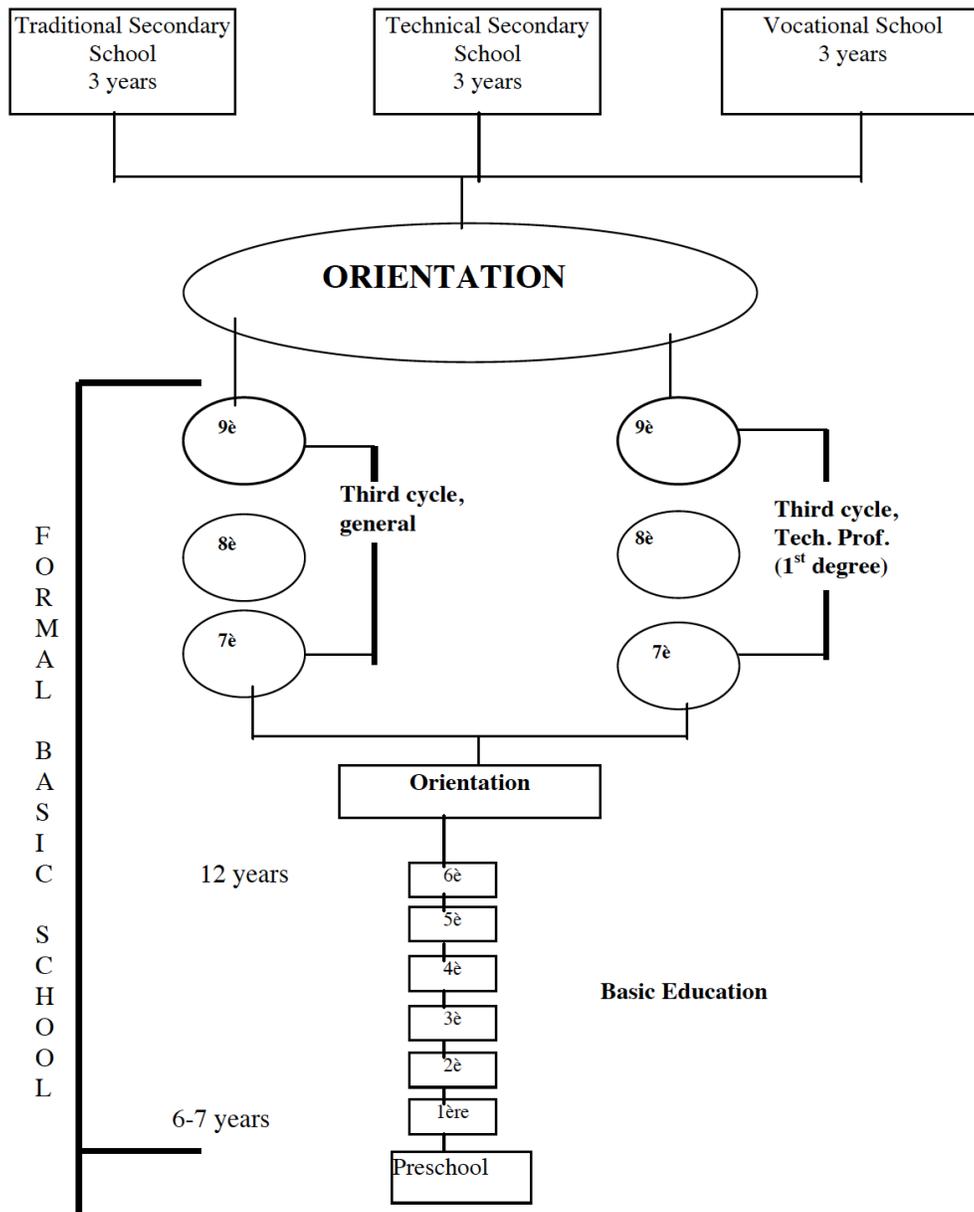
The reform had five main goals, including the establishment of basic education for all school-age children by 2000, the restructuring of primary and secondary education, and the adaptation of school programs to students' realities as a "catalyst for social and economic

development” (Prou 39). The largest element of reform was the introduction of Creole-based instruction in elementary schools. For the first four years of school, students would be taught primarily in Creole. During this time, classes would focus on developing literacy in Creole while introducing French as a subject of study (Hebblethwaite 264, Prou 45). From Year 5 onward, school would continue primarily in French, but theoretically, the foundation in Creole would make the transition smoother.

To begin this reform, the Haitian government created a national pedagogical institute, *L’Institut Pédagogique National* (IPN), in 1972. From 1972 to 1976, IPN introduced a trial elementary program that used Haitian Creole rather than French as the medium of instruction (Prou 38). The IPN also began to revise school curriculum and instruction materials, which included creating textbooks and teaching manuals in Creole (39). Creating these materials included standardizing the language’s orthography. From the late 1950s until 1975, Haitian Creole had two primary orthographies: the McConnell-Laubach system, which was based on the International Phonetic Alphabet, and the Faublas-Pressoir system, which was based on French spellings (Lindley 75). The IPN combined these two systems to create a new orthography, and in 1979, this new system was formally adopted by the government. Today, the IPN orthography is still used when producing written materials in Creole (76).

The Haitian government also established a national education department, *Département de l’Éducation Nationale* (DEN), which was tasked with creating a curriculum that could reunify the urban and rural school districts. Education in Haiti’s rural areas had remained largely vocation-based since the US occupation. Under the DEN, all Haitian schools, whether public or private, urban or rural, would share a common curriculum in an attempt to reduce enrollment disparities and create greater social mobility. The DEN still recognized the importance of

vocational education, though, and incorporated a vocational path into secondary education (Year 10, 11, and 12 in the new system). The potential educational paths created by the DEN are illustrated in the chart below:



From “Education for All in Haiti Over the Last 20 Years: Assessment and Perspectives” (Hadjadj 26)

The singular primary curriculum allowed for all students to receive the same type of education, regardless of physical location. Following primary education, students could then decide if they wanted to pursue a traditional, French-based education or complete technical or vocational training. Theoretically, this practice would not only open up formal markets previously limited to the urban elite but also ensure that other roles critical for society were filled with trained workers.

Long-term impact of the Bernard Reform. Despite the introduction of Creole-based instruction in primary schools, under the Bernard Reform the ultimate goal of education remained the same: developing communicative competence and literacy in French. Beginning in Year 5, education would take place primarily in French with Creole remaining a subject of education. According to Hebblethwaite, by introducing French after several years of Creole-based instruction, supporters of the reform hoped to “better integrate Haitian students with their own culture and history through Creole while also opening perspectives on the outside world through French” (265). This comment reflects the larger perspective on the relationship between majority and minority languages. As different speech communities intersect as a result of global movement and technology, the risk of diminishing necessary linguistic rights also increases. Minority language education may be reduced in favor of education in a major global language. For example, in the last thirty years, there has been an increase in the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF), or English has the language of communication between individuals who do not share a common first language. And while learning these majority languages is valuable, and necessary for some, these programs should not exist at the detriment of the world’s minority languages.

We have already established that education in Haiti is a matter of necessary linguistic rights, and part of recognizing this right is developing programs that actively promote the use of the language in contexts historically dominated by the majority language. Linguistic minorities have the right to education in their first language, and if possible, this instruction should continue beyond primary school (Phillipson et. al 2, Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 101-102). Although the Bernard Reform marked an important step toward Creole-based education, it stops short of truly protecting the linguistic human rights of Haitians by maintaining competence in French as the primary goal of Creole-based instruction. With the content created by the IPN and materials produced by Haitian scholars and writers, there are sufficient Creole-based educational materials for the language to be used in secondary and tertiary education (See Hebblethwaite 284-285 for a comprehensive list). As French plays an important role as a part of the national identity of Haitians, it should be taught as a second language, but not used as the primary medium of instruction.

The Bernard Reform also received mixed reception because of the widespread, ingrained attitudes toward French as the language of power. The French-based education system, in place for over a century and a half, was not going to be restructured in a matter of a decade. Educators' attitudes toward Creole-based education impacted student outcomes. Officials reported that when educators had a positive attitude toward Haitian Creole and implemented the measures of the Bernard Reform, their students learned to read and write Creole well. These skills made the transition to French-based education after Year 4 easier. However, if educators did not agree with the reform, their students often did not reach a high level of Creole literacy. Therefore, they struggled in the later years of primary education (Prou 58). Ongoing reform may become easier with time. Theoretically, as larger numbers of Haitians educated in Creole enter the workforce,

the systems of symbolic power in these linguistic markets will also shift. This process may take years, though, and it relies on the education system to adopt Haitian Creole at all levels of schooling.

Another issue the reform sought to address was the high dropout rate among students. By incorporating Creole instruction and literacy in the first four years of education, reformers hoped to increase school retention rates. However, if a student still eventually left school, they would be functionally literate in Creole. The Bernard Reform did not greatly impact these dropout rates. In 1990, over ten years since the start of the reform, only 42.6% of students who entered in Year 1 remained enrolled in school after Year 6 (Hadjadj 20). And even though overall enrollment in primary school increased, this increase in enrollment did not necessarily transfer to the later years of primary education (17). In 1996, students enrolled in Year 1 accounted for over 30% of the students in primary education, while enrollment in Year 6 only accounted for 8% of total enrollment, which is actually a decrease from 12% in 1980 (19). While adopting Haitian Creole at all levels of education would likely improve these dropout rates, it is important to note that retention rates are not just a matter of curriculum or language of instruction. They are also a matter of public health and infrastructure, both of which are continuing challenges in Haiti.

Finally, education reform also depends on stable funding and government support. Like previous reforms, the efforts of the Bernard Reform suffered as the result of government instability. In 1982, three years after the start of the program, the DEN stopped all reform activities as the result of political instability following the fall of President Jean-Claude Duvalier (Prou 51). Although the reform resumed in 1986, the IPN dissolved in 1991 as a result of the coup d'état against President Aristide (40). During the Bernard Reform, Haiti also had thirty-two ministers of education (51). All of these factors made consistent reform difficult and created

space for the private schools in Haiti's urban areas to reject the new curriculum. These private institutions continued to offer French-based education that would prepare students to eventually complete their studies abroad, which further reinforced the idea that Creole-based institutions could not compete on the global market. The Bernard Reform, while symbolically important for Haiti, was not supported long enough to create lasting protections for speakers of Haitian Creole.

Challenges towards Continuing Reform

In the twenty-first century, the impact of the Bernard Reform is scattered. In subsequent reform efforts, the focus seems to have shifted away from language and toward other concerns. For example, in a 2009 report produced by the Haitian Institute of Statistics and Informatics (IHSI) on Haiti's progress toward the Millennium Development Goals on education, the only mention of language is a short line stating that the Bernard Reform established Creole as the language of instruction (24). Other education reforms mentioned in the report, such as one in 1997 and one in 2008, focused on increasing access to education and training teachers (24-25). While these are necessary changes, language is inextricably linked to all areas of education. The ability to increase education access and train teachers comes from incorporating Haitian Creole at all levels of education.

It is now important to address some of the practical challenges toward continuing reform. Education in Haiti has undergone many changes since colonial rule, but there are ways in which the current system reflects the absence of radical reform. Education reform is a costly and daunting task, and it requires public health resources, solid infrastructure, and sustained economic development over time. Increased education and literacy for all ages will positively impact these areas, but additional work is needed for reforms to take root and exist over longer periods of time.

One challenge is related to political instability. As shown in the Bernard Reform, long-term changes are not possible without a stable political system. In the twenty-first century, Haiti has seen a coup d'état and arrests of several high-level political officials. In the last year and a half, there has been widespread violence and protests following allegations that President Jovenel Moïse had misappropriated two billion USD from an oil deal with Venezuela (Cossin). Between September and November 2019, the violence became so bad that the country's public services, businesses, and schools closed down (House Committee on Foreign Affairs). Additionally, Haiti has consistently ranked as one of the most politically corrupt countries in the world. According to Transparency International, in 2019 Haiti ranked 168 out of 180 on the Corruption Perceptions Index. As such, education reform, or even the development of a stable education system, has been nearly impossible in the last few years.

Another challenge comes from the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake. The 7.0-magnitude earthquake, which occurred on January 12, 2010, killed 250,000 people and displaced one million more. Ten years later, the country continues to suffer economically and structurally. Although international aid organizations pledged money to help rebuild Haiti following the earthquake, in 2012, 500,000 Haitians were still living in "temporary" shelters outside of Port-au-Prince (Kahn and Pierre). A cholera outbreak and food shortages following the earthquake also negatively impacted public health. Ultimately, education in any form cannot exist if Haitians are not able to meet their basic needs.

A final challenge relates to the many international aid efforts, which, though well-intentioned, stem from a colonial mindset. Girard argues that the steady flow of foreign aid has convinced too many Haitians that "outsiders will be the ones in charge of Haiti's recovery" (11). The Haitian Pilot Project and the education reform during the US occupation were spearheaded

by UNESCO and the United States, respectively. While these reforms addressed needs in terms of general education, they had little respect for the linguistic human rights of Haitians. The Bernard Reform, while conducted by the Haitian government, also suffered as a result of mistrust stemming from these previous reform efforts. Many lower-income Haitians feared that policymakers did not have their best interest at heart, which made implementing the linguistic measures of the reform challenging (Prou 58). While international aid can be helpful, and at times necessary, this funding should act as an investment rather than a pass to interfere with existing systems. Haitians understand their country's needs the best, and with international investment, they have the opportunity to rethink the education system in a way that respects linguistic human rights.

Conclusion

I will be ending with three additional areas I would like to explore in my future research on this topic. First, I want to examine education systems and reforms in other Caribbean countries. This language situation is not unique to Haiti; other Caribbean countries, including Jamaica, Bonaire, and Curaçao, have had to negotiate education systems that incorporate a creole language and a former colonial language. By seeing how these countries understand the rights their minority language users. I could see how effective language planning in Haiti might look. I would also like to conduct interviews with individuals who completed school in the Haitian education system. In doing so, I could gain a better understanding of the linguistic situation at specific educational institutions and see how reforms have impacted rural, urban, public, and private schools in different ways. Finally, I want to engage with texts that demonstrate language use in Haiti in informal market such as the home, as so much of my project now focuses on formal markets.

Education in Haiti is a complicated issue: one that is deeply connected to the country's colonial history and the relationship between language and power. As my analysis has examined, language-related legislation and education reform show a positive trend toward recognizing the linguistic human rights of Haitian Creole speakers. However, more work is needed to be done to make universal education, a goal first laid out in the 1805 Constitution, a reality for all Haitians. Any education reform must exist alongside efforts to reduce the widespread poverty and hunger present in the country. Additional steps toward creating an equitable education system might include the development of public-school infrastructure, the creation of Creole-based curriculum, and the establishment of additional teacher training programs. While French plays an important role in Haiti's history and should continue to be taught as a second language, it is Haitian Creole that should provide the majority of instruction as this is the language that best represents Haiti's linguistic reality.

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