

Transnational Endangered Language Communities and the Garifuna Nation

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In this paper I examine the Garifuna case as an example of the most recent stage of LPP research – the transnational endangered language speech community. The Language Policy Statement and Language Preservation Plan of the Garifuna Nation are a pair of documents that lay out a set of language planning goals for five disparate speech communities with vastly different social and economic pressures despite a common language and culture. I show how the documents manage to lay out a framework of goals that are relevant to the language community as a whole, with room for individual variation on the part of each of the communities in the five different countries. I also look at the Belizean context in particular with regard to the more local facets of language maintenance. The paper uses the Garifuna case to show some of the goals and challenges in transnational language planning and takes a first look at how local social and economic factors will affect how a transnational language policy can trickle down and be carried out at the grassroots level in the communities that make up the Garifuna Nation.

Introduction

The Garifuna language is spoken by Garinagu in over fifty communities in Honduras, Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua and the United States. In many of these communities today Garifuna is slowly losing ground to the national languages of Spanish and English. Although the nature and extent of language shift in each of the communities is different, in the Garifuna speech community as a whole, language shift to the dominant regional languages is leading to less use of the language by children and may eventually lead to language death. Recognition of this fact by members of the Garifuna community led to the Language Policy Statement and Language Preservation Plan of the Garifuna Nation – a document that lays out a set of language planning goals for this transnational endangered language community.

In this paper I use the Garifuna case to exemplify some of the goals and challenges present in transnational language planning and to take a first look at how local social and economic factors may affect how a

transnational language policy can trickle down and be carried out at the grassroots level. First, I consider language planning in the Garifuna Nation, and how the Language Policy Statement and Language Preservation Plan manage to lay out a framework of goals that are relevant to the language community as a whole, with all of its individual variety. Second, I seek to answer the question posed by Ricento (2000), that is, how are individuals' language choices influenced by policy and how are policy decisions influenced by individuals? To answer this question I look beyond the unified plan of the Garifuna Nation to the circumstances of individuals within the Nation. Specifically I look at the Belizean context and the factors that appear to be promoting or hindering the use of Garifuna in Belize. My primary sources for the first are the Language Policy Statement and Language Preservation Plan themselves as well as the work of Geneva Langworthy (2002). For the second, I draw on previous research, census documents and local resources as well as my own experience and observations as a resident of Hopkins Village for two years between 1999 and 2001.

A New Phase in LPP Research

I consider the investigation of the transnational endangered language community as a new vector for language planning research because 1) it is a relatively recent combination of two existing areas of research, and 2) the object of investigation itself is new. In the first point, I refer to the combination of language planning and policy research with work in language preservation, revitalization, and maintenance. Beginning with Haugen's initial description, quoted below, there followed a series of different phases in the field of LPP research.

By language planning I understand the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogenous speech community. In this practical application of linguistic knowledge we are proceeding beyond descriptive linguistics into an area where judgment must be exercised in the form of choices among available linguistic forms (Haugen 1959: 8).

In 1972 Fishman defined language planning as "organized efforts to find solutions to language problems in society" (1972: 186). His definition, while not exclusive of Haugen's, was clearly more general and less focused on the corpus planning-type activities that Haugen lists. More than twenty years later Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson define language planning in terms of linguistic human rights, as a "broad, overarching term for decisions on rights and access to languages and on the roles and functions of particular languages and varieties of language in a given policy (1995: 434). From this definition, and the focus of linguistic human

rights research on the languages of minority groups, it is only a small step to the rights of endangered language speakers and the policies that promote language revitalization and maintenance. As Hornberger (1998: 439) writes, "there is accumulating evidence that language policy and language education can serve as vehicles for promoting the vitality, versatility, and stability of [indigenous and immigrant] languages.

Grenoble & Whaley (2006) credit three major factors contributing to the increase in language revitalization efforts over the past fifty years. The first is the current rate of decline of linguistic diversity, and the consequent fact that significant portions of the world's communities are faced with the imminent loss of their languages. The second is the major "socio-historical shift" towards recognizing the rights of minorities within nation-states and the rethinking of human rights at the basic level to include such things as choice of language. They cite as illustration Article 5 of UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which states "All persons should therefore be able to express themselves and to create and disseminate their work in the language of their choice, and particularly in their mother tongue; all persons should be entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity (2)."

The third factor in the increase of language revitalization efforts according to Grenoble & Whaley is "globalization." They broadly define the concept in terms of economic and political integration – processes that have led to the elimination of barriers between nations and "a greatly enhanced ability for information, money, people, goods, and services to move between regions" (2006: 3). They go on to say that while most discussions of globalization have concentrated on modernization and assimilation (the pejorative McDonalds-ization effect), a less examined effect of globalization is the backlash it has triggered that has caused some people to assert their unique cultural identity as a reaction against "modernizing" forces within nations. This assertion of cultural identity and the resulting covert prestige of the language associated with that culture is clearly a major factor in grassroots language revitalization and maintenance efforts.

There is a further effect of globalization that strengthens the ties between LPP research and language revitalization efforts. In addition to the assertion of cultural identity as a reaction against globalization, globalization has allowed language communities that cross national borders to communicate with each other in ways that were not previously imagined. Increased technology, increased communication, and increased possibility for travel – all results of "globalization" – have made it possible for people who live in poor communities and who previously may not have had much contact with people speaking their language (even in the next village, let alone across the border) to communicate with each other.

An example of this comes from López (1997) who writes about the

grand opening of the Bolivian Guarani Literacy and Guarization Campaign that took place in January of 1992. The opening was a kick-off to a large-scale grassroots campaign for literacy in Guarani, and included 6000 participants from different communities in Bolivia as well as from Argentina and Paraguay. In describing the event, López writes, "As one old lady mentioned, the majority of them did not really know that there were so many Guaranis in Bolivia and many of them were not aware that there were also Guarani communities in Argentina and Paraguay" (342).

Early language planning research in the post-colonial, post-World War II era focused on multi-lingual communities and on the creation of language policies within nation-states (as discussed in Ricento 2000). In contrast, transnational endangered language communities are monolingual instead of multilingual (in the sense that the community in question shares one language, although of course individuals within the community are very often multilingual), and transnational language policies are not created by nation-states but by language communities that transcend borders. The Garifuna language community exemplifies exactly this type of transnational endangered language community.

Garifuna History and Background

The Garifuna language is spoken by the Garifuna people, also known as *Black Caribs* or by the plural *Garinagu* (Cayetano 1993), who currently reside along the Caribbean coast of Central America, with communities in Belize, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua. The immigrant Garifuna population in the United States is almost as large as that in Central America and is concentrated in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. Population estimates for Garifuna worldwide vary from 100,000 to 450,000, but the latest census data in Belize and Honduras, where the largest Garifuna communities reside, give the figures of 12,000 and 98,000 respectively for those countries. As a very rough estimate there are about 75,000 Garifuna today who learned Garifuna as a first language (Belize Central Statistics Office 2000). This figure includes children in Belize and Honduras today who still learn Garifuna as a first language, although they must learn either Spanish or English as soon as they get to school.

Garifuna has a unique language contact history, even in the Caribbean, where extensive language contact is the norm. The history of the Garifuna begins with the Arawak, Amerindians from the South American continent who migrated to the island of St. Vincent (Yurumei, in Garifuna) in the Lesser Antilles sometime around 600 A.D. (Escure 2005: 37, citing from Breton 1666, Taylor 1951 and Young 1795). Three or four centuries later the Arawak were followed by Carib Indians, also from the Amazonian basin, and by the time Europeans arrived in the New World the two groups had intermarried and were speaking a lan-

guage with Arawak grammatical structure and a mixture of Carib and Arawak vocabulary. By some accounts, the women's vocabulary was Arawak and the men's Carib; some vestiges of so-called men's and women's speech have persisted to this day. The descendants of the Carib-Arawak union are known as *Yellow Carib* or *Red Carib*.

The first Africans are widely believed to have reached St. Vincent in 1635, on two slave ships which shipwrecked somewhere off the coast of the island (although see Gonzalez 1988 for a more detailed account of the history of the African component of the Garifuna). It is not clear at what point these Africans mixed with the Carib-Arawak population that was already living on the island but there is some evidence that the two populations lived side by side on St. Vincent, relatively peaceably, and that during this time men from the African community intermarried with Carib-Arawak women. The Caribs on St. Vincent also welcomed marooned slaves from other nearby islands. The offspring of the Carib-Arawak-African union were known as *Black Carib*, or *Charaibes Noires*, *Karib Negros*, *Garif*, or *Morenos* according to various texts (Escure 2005: 37), and are now known as *Garifuna* or *Garinagu*.

The Black Caribs in St. Vincent were involved in hostilities between the French and the English throughout the eighteenth century, and were mostly allied with the French. During this time the French and the Caribs together fought to oust the British from the island, and control of the island alternated between the French and British colonial powers, even after it officially became a British colony in 1763 by the Treaty of Paris. In 1795 the British killed the Carib chief Chatoyer, and Carib surrender soon followed. In 1797 the British deported about 5000 Garifuna from St. Vincent to the island of Roatan, off the coast of Honduras. The Caribs who were deported to Honduras were, by this time, a group of people of mixed Carib-Arawak-African heritage (Monsalve 1997) with African features and few if any Amerindian physical features, who spoke an Arawakan language with extensive borrowing from Carib and French, but with very little evidence of African grammatical or lexical influence.

From Roatan, throughout the 19th century, groups of Garinagu moved up along the Honduran coast to Belize and eastward along the coast as far south as Bluefields, Nicaragua. In most of these settlements they came into contact with English-speaking slaves, former slaves, and former slave-owners, which accounts for the high numbers of English speaking Garinagu even in Spanish-speaking Central America. The largest migration to Belize came in 1832 after a failed rebellion in Honduras, and this date is still celebrated in Garifuna oral tradition in Belize (Gonzalez 1988: 58). The Garifuna community today consists of a group of disparate communities stretching from Bluefields, Nicaragua in the south to Chicago, New York and Los Angeles, USA in the north and includes communities in Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize.

Language Policy Statement and Language Preservation Plan of the Garifuna Nation

Despite its geographical breadth this transnational community shares a common language and a sense of their “distinct and immutable heritage” (Gonzalez 1988: 8) that includes a common conceptualization of St. Vincent as their ethnic homeland as well as certain cultural practices. Most Garifuna are Catholic (a vestige of their strong French ties on St. Vincent) and also practice Garifuna rituals that are a mixture of African and Amerindian traditions. A repertoire of music and dance is common throughout the community and consists of drumming, call-and-response singing and a number of traditional dances, the most celebrated of which is *punta* (Greene 2002). The multi-day process that turns the bitter cassava root into crisp cassava bread, or *ereba*, is also shared among the communities, and is an important part of Garifuna culture.

Langworthy (2002: 42) writes of the Garifuna that “family ties are not restricted by national boundaries either” although this mostly refers to the fact that most Garifuna in Central America have many relatives in the United States; there are far fewer families who have close relatives spread out among the various Central American countries (with the exception of some young people who, if their Spanish is good enough, may leave Belize to study in universities and agricultural schools in Guatemala). Nonetheless there is communication at least among leaders in the various Garifuna communities (particularly between Belize and Honduras), and in 1997 discussion among these leaders led to a call for a unified language policy that would supplement and support previous localized language renewal efforts. A committee was formed to prepare a draft statement which was presented for adoption by the National Garifuna Council (NGC) of Belize and is now available on the NGC website. The draft language policy was translated into Spanish by ODECO (Organización de Desarrollo Etnico Comunitario), the Garifuna organization based in Honduras, and then taken to the annual meeting of CABO/ONECA (Organización Negra Centroamericana), an organization of black people in Central America, where it was “discussed, modified, and then ratified” as the Language Policy Statement of the Garifuna Nation and the Garifuna National Language Preservation Plan (Langworthy 2002: 44).

The Language Policy Statement of the Garifuna Nation (LPSGN) reads like a textbook list of possible language planning goals. Hornberger’s (2006) framework of LPP goals summarizes the work of a number of previous researchers and categorizes potential language planning goals in terms of six possible cells. Figure 1 reproduces this framework and shows that almost every single goal is addressed in the LPSGN. The only two goals that are not explicitly addressed are Religious (an acquisition-planning goal), and Nationalization (a status-planning goal), both for very simple reasons. First, acquisition planning

in the religious sphere is not a goal of the LPSGN because in the Garifuna Nation religion is one sphere where the language is not losing ground.¹ This is unsurprising given that the Garifuna rituals related to death and ancestors are inextricable from the Garifuna words used to describe them – presumably the language would only lose ground in this sphere when the rituals are no longer being practiced. Second, while other kinds of status-planning are goals of the LPSGN, by definition a transnational language community does not seek nationalization, unless it were to seek national language status in all the countries where it is spoken, an impractical goal given the small size of the Garifuna community in each of those countries.

Figure 1
List of language planning goals in the Language Policy Statement of the Garifuna Nation

	Form	Function
Status	Officialization*	Revival*
	Nationalization	Maintenance*
	Standardization of status*	Spread*
	Proscription*	Interlingual communication*
Acquisition	Group*	Reacquisition*
	Education/School*	Maintenance*
	Literary*	Shift*
	Religious (*)	Second language literacy*
	Mass Media* Work*	
Corpus	Standardization of corpus*	Modernization*
	Graphization*	Renovation*

Source: adapted from Hornberger (2006: 29)

What becomes apparent when looking at the document is that the LPSGN includes the needs and goals of each of the five (six, including the U.S.) communities in the Garifuna Nation, and does not distinguish

¹ The use of Garifuna in two Belizean communities is described by Wright (1986). She writes that in the domain she calls “ritual” or “temple” Garifuna is exclusively used, although she points out that in periods of rest during rituals English and Creole are often also used. Wright goes on to discuss the use of Garifuna in institutionally organized religions and notes that although English is the official language of the Catholic church in Belize, the Catholic church had at that time recently adopted the position that “local languages and symbolisms should be respected and incorporated into the liturgy of the church” at that Garifuna music, and more importantly for language, Garifuna hymns, were starting to be incorporated into masses. This continues to be the case today, and in my experience all of the hymns sung in Garifuna Catholic churches in Belize are sung in Garifuna, which for some people also requires reading them from a Garifuna hymnal.

between the needs of individual communities and the needs of the entire Nation. The six different communities have different goals for language planning which can be broadly divided into three categories – language revitalization, reversal of language shift, and language rights. The three categories overlap, and there are features of each type of language planning goal present in the goals of the individual communities. Under this categorization St. Vincent, Nicaragua, and the US fall into the first category, Belize and Guatemala into the second, and Honduras into the third.

In St. Vincent, where the last living speaker of Garifuna died in 1932 (Taylor 1951), the goal is for Garifuna to re-learn their language and culture, and there has been a recent effort to reach out to Garifuna in Belize for help in this. In Nicaragua, where only a few elderly speakers remain, the goal is basic language instruction (Langworthy 2002: 42). In these two communities language revitalization is the primary goal. The US is a slightly different case. The Garifuna language in the US appears to be more vital than in either of these communities, especially since Garifuna is valued, at the very least, as a heritage language to be learned by children and used during summer vacations with grandparents in Central America, which is more than is true in the first two cases. However, the Garifuna community in the US consists of a large and somewhat disparate immigrant community living in big cities and is not so different from other immigrant groups from Central America and the Caribbean. If past experience of immigrants to the US is any guide, the language seems destined to be lost within a few generations, and therefore it is included in the first category.

In Guatemala and Belize the goals are best categorized as attempts to reverse language shift. The Garifuna community in the town of Livingston, Guatemala is much smaller than those in Belize or Honduras. The community is somewhat isolated and by most accounts the community and the language are both thriving. However, increased tourism in the area has led to increased heterogeneity and inevitably to increased language shift toward use of English and Spanish (Langworthy 2002: 43). The goal of the community here is to slow down the rate of language shift. A more extreme case is that of the Belizean community, spread out over 4 villages as well as the town of Dangriga and in smaller numbers in other parts of the country. The Garifuna in Belize are a relatively active and unified community and much of the initiative for unified language planning efforts have come from the Belizean NGC (National Garifuna Council), including the drafted Language Policy Statement of the Garifuna Nation. The goals of the NGC are ambitious and include the development of documentation, orthography and instructional materials. The community, however, is in the process of large-scale language shift to Belizean Creole and English, and a primary goal is the reversal of language shift.

The Garifuna community in Honduras is the largest of the six com-

munities, and the language there is thriving. Unfortunately, the community is not. Of the six Garifuna communities in the diaspora the community in Honduras is the most economically and socially marginalized in their own country. The Minorities at Risk Project at the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management lists the Garifuna of Honduras as a "moderately organized ethnic group who face widespread social exclusion" (MARP 2005: 1); they are the only Garifuna minority listed in the database of 284 "politically active ethnic groups." Mostly they have organized around land rights issues, leading up to and following a 1998 repeal of Constitutional Article 107, which had previously forbidden purchase of coastal lands (where most of the Garifuna live) by foreigners.

In terms of language planning goals, basic literacy and education are a major concern. Honduras has 56-60% literacy countrywide, but among the Garifuna there is only 5-15% literacy in Spanish and 1-5% literacy in Garifuna (Gordon 2005). The Garifuna in Honduras seek culturally and linguistically appropriate education for their children, a goal which is included in the stated goals of CABO/ONECA, an organization of black people in Central America that was formed with a Honduran Garifuna at its head. When it was formed the organization promised to work toward respect for entitlement to traditional territories, greater representation in elective posts, an end to job discrimination, and *official recognition of their right to bilingual education* in English or Garifuna and Spanish (Center for IDCM 2005: 2, italics mine).

Thus we can see that a language policy such as that of the Garifuna Nation that is intended to unify a disparate language community does so by taking into account the needs of the various groups that make up the larger community and treating them as one set of goals within one language planning framework. The policy does not specify that, for instance, there is a need for basic language instruction in St. Vincent and a need for a unified orthography in Belize and a need for bilingual education in Honduras. Rather, it states all of these needs as goals for the "Garifuna Nation" in a single, unified document.

As Langworthy (2002: 45) writes, the Language Policy Statement of the Garifuna Nation provided a legal framework by which Garifuna organizations and communities could request recognition, resources, and support from national governments and international NGOs. Indeed the policy makes reference to the United Nations Draft on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the NGC website emphasizes that in 2001 UNESCO proclaimed Garifuna Language, Music and Dance a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. It is clear that the Garifuna are trying to increase their global visibility and associate themselves with other indigenous groups in order to achieve recognition and support for their goals.

Langworthy notes that there are both advantages and disadvantages

to the fact that the Garifuna language community is discontinuous and crosses political borders. Communication is still difficult between the communities. Many Garifuna people do not have access to email or the Internet, technologies that have made communication much easier for Garifuna leaders who do have access to them. Travel between the communities, while quicker and cheaper than it has previously been, is still expensive and time-consuming for most people. This makes it difficult for teachers and language activists in the various countries to share materials and methodologies. On the other hand, she writes of the different communities that each has “something special to offer” (Langworthy 2002: 46). Simply speaking, the biggest challenge facing transnational language planners is that each community has different needs, but the biggest advantage they have is that each community has different strengths, thus increasing the communal resources.

Language Maintenance at the Local Level

Why do individuals opt to use (or cease to use) particular languages and varieties for specified functions in different domains, and how do those choices influence – and how are they influenced by – institutional language policy decision-making (local to national and supranational) (Ricento 2000: 208)?

The critical question that I seek to answer is Ricento’s, quoted above. That is, how are individuals’ language choices influenced by policy, and how are policy decisions influenced by individuals? To answer the question we must look beyond the unified plan of the Garifuna Nation to the circumstances of individuals within the Nation and the factors that promote or hinder language use in the smaller communities. As Langworthy writes, “with the implementation of the Language Policy and the Language Preservation Plan ... it was assumed they would have a sort of ‘trickle-down’ effect” (2002: 45). She goes on to write about problems with the logistics of communicating the policy and plan to the larger community. I will not talk about the specifics of the “trickle-down” effect of the policy, but rather in the following section I will introduce some of the social factors relevant to language maintenance in one of the Garifuna Nation countries: the Garifuna community in Belize.

Successful language planning in the Garifuna Nation will rely on a set of language attitudes that will promote the use of Garifuna in the various communities of the Garifuna Nation. This is related to Fishman’s argument that “RLS (reversing language shift) cannot be successful without intergenerational language transmission. Nothing can substitute for the rebuilding of society at the level of... everyday, informal life” (cited in Hornberger 1998: 442). People’s attitudes toward language and language choice are inextricable from the economic and social factors in the com-

munity and the language contact situation. It is impossible at this point to fully describe the situation in Belize in terms of all of the relevant factors, and language planning efforts for the Garifuna in Belize are in too nascent a stage to see how individual language choices are influenced by “institutional language policy decision-making,” but in this section I will present an overview of the sociolinguistic placement of the Garifuna in Belize and what are and will be some of the crucial factors affecting language maintenance at the local level.

Belize – Background

Belize is the only English-speaking country in Central America, and the *lingua franca* is an English Creole similar to those spoken in other English-speaking parts of the Caribbean. Creole, as a *lingua franca* in Belize, unites a racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse society, whose ethnic groups have very distinct histories and traditions. The national, socio-cultural identity of Belizeans is important to keep in mind as a background for discussing the Garifuna in Belize.

Figure 2
Map of Belize



Source: CIA: The World Factbook

Table 1 shows the breakdown by ethnicity and by urban and rural populations from the 2000 Belize census. The largest portion of the urban population is the Creoles – ex-slaves who intermingled with the British settlers. This group traditionally made up the largest portion of Belizean society and continues to play the most prominent role in the culture and politics of Belize. They have been outnumbered in the country as a whole, however, by the Mestizo population of mixed Spanish and Maya blood. The Mestizo community in Belize is actually made up of two distinct groups, a fact which is not reflected in the census statistics below. The original Mestizo community in Belize descended from the refugees from the Caste War of the Yucatan in the mid-19th century and mostly resides in three districts in the northern and western parts of Belize: the Orange Walk, Corozal, and Cayo districts. The more recent influx of immigrants from Guatemala, El Salvador, and other Central American countries constitute the second Mestizo group. This group lives in other parts of the country as well as in the aforementioned districts. While the two groups share a language, religion, and culture, they are distinguished in the minds of many Belizeans based on the fact that the first group is generally considered to be Belizean, while the second is not. This distinction arises also from socioeconomic differences between the two groups, since the latter are usually migrant workers who come to work in the citrus and banana plantations or political or economic refugees from Central America who are not as well off as the original Mestizo settlers. The Mestizo population in Belize continues to grow in actual numbers and as a proportion of the population: In the 1991 census Mestizos accounted for 43.6 % of the total population compared to 48.7% in 2000, whereas the Creoles accounted for 29.8% of the total population in 1991, compared to 24.9 % in 2000.

Table 1
Percent Population for Country Total, Urban/Rural distinction and Ethnicity²

	TOTAL	Mestizo	Creole	Garifuna	Ketchi Maya	Mopan Maya	Yucatec Maya
Country	232,111	48.7	24.9	6.1	5.3	3.9	1.4
Urban	105,263	43.0	36.1	10.2	1.0	0.9	0.4
Rural	126,848	53.4	15.6	2.6	8.9	6.3	2.2

Source: 2000 Census – Major Findings (Belize Central Statistics Office 2000)

Major Findings

Garifuna are the third most populous ethnic group in Belize and are mostly concentrated in the district of Stann Creek, as shown in Table 2.

² Cayo District has two towns: San Ignacio and Belmopan, and Belize District has the only city - Belize City.

Despite the great diversity in Belize and although most ethnicities are represented in each of the six towns that are the cultural and economic center of the six districts, each town is known for its majority ethnicity and most villages are relatively homogenous. Thus the Garifuna population in Stann Creek outside of the town of Dangriga is concentrated in the three fairly homogenous villages of Hopkins, Seine Bight, and Georgetown. Table 3 shows the ethnic breakdown of the population of Stann Creek from both the 1991 and 2000 censuses.

Factors Preventing Language Maintenance

Although the town of Dangriga is considered a Garifuna town and the 1991 census showed the population of Dangriga to be more than 50% Garifuna, there is hardly any Garifuna spoken in the town. Older Dangrigans still understand the language, but very little Garifuna is spoken in Garifuna homes in Dangriga; even less is spoken outside the home. Bonner (2001) documents these facts and writes about the factors that have prevented the maintenance of Garifuna in the town of Dangriga. To summarize Bonner, the reasons for local children and young adults being ‘shame fi talk Garifuna’ in Dangriga are (i) its lack of usefulness, (ii) the marginal status of the language to outsiders, (iii) the lack of self-respect that Garifuna speakers have, and (iv) the higher status of Belizean Creole as a sign of “Belizean-ness.”

Table 2
Garifuna population in Belize by district

TOTAL population	14,061
Stann Creek	53.9 %
Belize	24.8 %
Toledo	10.9 %
Cayo	5.3 %
Orange Walk	2.6 %
Corozal	2.4 %

Source: 2000 Census – Major Findings (Belize Central Statistics Office 2000)

Table 3
Percent Population for Stann Creek District, 2000 and 1991 data

	TOTAL	Mestizo	Creole	Garifuna	Ketchi Maya	Mopan Maya	Other Maya
1991	17,477	23.7	25.1	36.2	1.1	6.8	0.1
2000	24,443	30.2	21.3	31.0	2.6	9.2	0.1 (‘Yucatec’)

Source: 2000 Census – Major Findings, 1991 Census Abstract

The quote below speaks to the second and third reasons listed above, and, although it does not specifically mention language, to the idea that to speak Garifuna (which in this case is synonymous with being from the village) is rural, and therefore backward and not prestigious. The Garifuna singer, Aziatic, does not specifically mention the use of his native language, but the social bias against rural people and values is clear from the lyrics:

City people think they betta then town people. Town people think they betta then village people. Village people shame fi say where they come from. When I mi small we mi shame fi say where we come from.... When I mi five or six we move to Dangriga...because I come from a village they used to tease me there. Gon' to Holy Ghost school, they used to beat me there, 'cos they said we used to kick sea grape for football..(Aziatic, Belizean artist from Hopkins Village, from the song People 2001)

The first and fourth reasons, which deal with language shift from Garifuna to Belizean Creole, are factors that affect Garifuna speakers in every community since every Garifuna community has extensive language contact with at least one other language. In Belize, the Garinagu are in contact³ with native speakers of both Mopan and Ketchi Maya, but the lingua franca that unites these groups, and indeed all Belizeans, is Creole. This fact may play the biggest role in language shift from Garifuna to Creole as Garifuna see themselves as Belizeans first and Garifuna second.

Contact with Belizean Creole. As early as 1977, Kernan et al. wrote of the growing prestige of Creole in the Belizean community. Although they looked at a relatively homogenous Creole population in Belize City, their observations hold for the Garifuna community in Belize even now, almost 30 years later. They write that the language “enjoy[s] a certain inherent prestige based on [its] association with socioeconomic success and cultural pride,” and this seems to be the case even today. For Garifuna people in Hopkins the Garifuna language enjoys its own overt prestige as a marker of Garifuna identity, but for those who spend any time outside of the village (which is most), Belizean Creole still holds prestige in terms of their national, Belizean, identity. Recent fears over the increase in immigration from Spanish-speaking Central America may serve to increase the use of Creole among the Garifuna even further, as the use of Creole serves to identify them clearly as Belizeans and separate from the unpopular Spanish-speaking immigrants.

Bonner (2001: 82) comments on the anti-“Spanish”⁴ prejudice in Belize

³ That is, speakers of the languages have contact with one another. This does not mean that the languages are in contact, however, as there are few if any bilinguals of Garifuna and Mopan or Ketchi.

⁴ “Spanish” is the Creole term for all Spanish-speaking people, including Belizean Mestizos, migrant workers, and recent immigrants from Central America.

– a prejudice that is a result of both “colonial-era competition between the British and Spanish empires and a more recent history of competition between English Creole speakers and Spanish speakers over scarce economic resources.” There is a fear in Belize as a whole, reflected in Dangriga, of “cultural, economic, and political domination by Spanish-speaking ‘aliens,’” and the situation is not helped by the fact that the Guatemalan government only very recently gave up claims to Belize as a part of Guatemala, nor by increasing immigration to Belize from other Central American countries such that today “Belize’s refugee population relative to the native population is among the highest in the world” (Palacio 1993: 5). The result of this type of Belize for Belizeans sentiment may be an increase in the use of Creole by non-Creole indigenous Belizeans such as the Garifuna and the Maya.

Contact with AAVE and American English. A second language contact situation that must be considered is the relationship with American English and African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) that comes from the high numbers of Belizeans of working age living in the US as well as the influence of American television. Black Belizeans are focused toward America in a way that the Mestizo population of Belize is not. In Orange Walk, Corozal and Cayo, you may walk into any family home and find the TV turned to a *telenovela* on a channel from Mexico or Guatemala. In a Creole or Garifuna home, you are far more likely to find the TV turned to a channel from the US and most likely to stations which feature African-American actors, such as the WB. The Black population of Belize, including both Creoles and Garifuna, associates more with the Black American population when they are in the US as well. Many Garifuna make frequent trips to the US for work and for travel, where they spend more time with Black Americans and other African descendants of the Caribbean than with Spanish-speaking Central Americans. So far, however, there does not seem to be large-scale shift toward American English mainly for the reason that although Belizeans may style-shift from Creole to American English, speaking Creole in Belize is still a strong marker of the Belizean identity. Even Belizeans in the US will usually use Creole when they are with family and friends.

In 1977, Kernan et al. wrote, “The direction of the acculturation of young Belizeans [referring mostly to young, Creole Belizeans] in terms of language, dress, and attitude is toward Black America. *The most popular music in Belize is the soul music of the United States*” (47). Although young Black Belizeans still listen to R&B and hip-hop music from the United States, reggae and soca from Jamaica and other parts of the English-speaking Caribbean are growing in popularity. More important for the Garifuna, a new style of music known as *punta rock* has been popular in the region since the early 1990’s (MARP 2005, see also Greene 2002 for a discussion of the history of *punta rock* and its creator, Pen Cayetano). *Punta rock* is based on traditional Garifuna beats and usually has

Garifuna, Spanish and Creole lyrics; it is arguably the most popular form of music in Belize today. In fact, I would argue that the growth of punta has had a noticeable affect on the prestige of Garifuna for Garifuna children. In the past 15 years there have been a number of Garifuna artists who have made a living as punta rock-stars, and Garifuna children are very aware of the Garifuna music scene and have been participating in it. With a few notable exceptions the punta rock scene in Belize is almost exclusively the domain of young men under 25 from Dangriga and Hopkins.

The factors that favor language shift in the Garifuna community in Belize are in no way unique to this community. Economic forces favor a shift to English or Creole due to job requirements outside of Garifuna villages. In addition, a sense of Belizean identity and pride enforces the use of Creole in Belize, which is practically the only language through which the various ethnic groups in Belize can use to communicate. The “language shame” that Bonner (2001) describes in Dangriga is a strong force in favor of language shift, a fact that has also been pointed out by McCarty and colleagues in their work among indigenous youth in the US (McCarty, Romero & Zepeda 2006). In opposition to these forces, underscoring Garifuna identity, pride, and the utility of the language are all part of the underlying goals of the LPSGN.

Dialectal Variation. Outside of the impact of language contact and language shift, one factor that could potentially affect the successful implementation of the Language Policy Statement and Language Preservation Plan is dialectal variation within the Garifuna Nation. The standing question in language preservation research as to whether dialectal variation must be pushed under the rug in favor of standardization in order to promote language revitalization often puts language preservation research at odds with the received knowledge methods in sociolinguistic studies.

There is little study of dialectal variation in Garifuna. Most non-native linguists who have done extensive work on Garifuna (Escure 2005; Munro 1998; Taylor 1951) have worked with few native informants; native linguists such as Belizean E. Roy Cayetano and Honduran Salvador Suazo have presumably relied on their own judgments. Each one of these linguists mentions dialectal variation in relation to some feature (including but not limited to gender assignment of nouns, variation in the pronunciation of [r], variation in final nasalized vowels, and lexical variation) in such words as *dügü* (Belize, Honduras) ~ *wálagayo* (Nicaragua) used in an important religious ceremony (Langworthy 2002: 42); however, as of yet the extent and the details of dialectal variation have not been explored. The issue of variation has come up already in the attempts to create a common orthography for Garifuna: Speakers in Spanish-speaking parts of the Nation and speakers in English-speaking parts of the Nation have different ideas about some of the letters and dia-

critics that should be used in the basically English- or Spanish-based orthography. However, dialectal variation has not prevented a unified approach to language planning and policy, and there is no real reason to think that it should or that the communities that make up the Garifuna Nation should dis-unite in their common language planning goals in the face of widespread language shift.

Factors in Favor of Language Maintenance

Hopkins village is a Garifuna village of about 1000 people, founded in 1939 (Escure 2005: 38). The village is less than 20 miles south of the town of Dangriga in the coastal area of the rural Stann Creek district. It is often pointed out by Garinagu in Belize as one of the places where children still learn Garifuna as a first language, and people who live in Hopkins are proud of this fact. They compare themselves with pride to Dangriga, where children are not learning Garifuna at all. The fact that Garifuna has been maintained in Hopkins, where it has been lost in apparently similar communities, makes Hopkins an ideal location to examine the forces that favor language maintenance in a Belizean Garifuna community, with an eye to understanding how the LPSGN may be successfully implemented at the local level.

Like the rest of Belize the village has a very high proportionate number of children: The village elementary school has almost three hundred students, and this only includes children between the ages of 5 and 13. A large number of these children are being raised by grandmothers while their parents work outside the village: in the tourist areas on the cayes off the coast of Belize; in other Belizean towns where they work as police officers or members of the Belize Defense Force (BDF); or in the United States, where they work as home health aides and other blue-collar jobs. This social situation has interesting implications for language maintenance, and I believe that transmission of language from grandparents to grandchildren is one of the factors in favor of language maintenance in Hopkins. It remains to be seen whether this will continue to be the case, as Hopkins is not unique within Belize in having a large number of children raised by grandmothers. It may be that, while the rate of language shift may be slowed down in Hopkins, given time it will go the same way as Dangriga has.

Another factor to consider is the relative ease with which different communities in Belize can communicate with each other, and the effect that communication between the different ethnic groups has and will have on language maintenance. Before the 1930's Belize's land communication network was negligible. Unpaved roads connecting the towns in the northern part of the country were built in the 1930's, so that by 1940 one could travel from the Mexican border to Belize City and westward to the Guatemalan border in the Cayo district. The Northern Highway (to Mexico) and the Western Highway (to Guatemala) were paved at a time

when there were still not even dirt roads connecting the villages and towns in the southern part of the country. By 1999 the Southern Highway, which connects Dangriga to Punta Gorda in the Toledo District was still a two-lane dirt road with “a number of inadequate wooden bridges, and without adequate drainage, [that]...was all but impassable for much of the rainy season from May to November” (Kocks Consulting Engineers 1993, cited in Ravindranath 2000: 73). The same was true of the connector roads leading from the Southern Highway to the Garifuna villages of Hopkins (4 miles), Georgetown (2 miles) and Seine Bight (19 miles).

In 2000 the Government of Belize committed to paving the unpaved roads, and as of 2004 almost all of the Southern Highway was paved except for a few miles in the southernmost part of the country. The connector road to Hopkins had also been paved, and work had begun on the road to Seine Bight. The result of this is that it is now possible to get from Hopkins to the town of Dangriga in less than half of the time that it used to take. Commuting to Dangriga and even to the capital of Belmopan by bus is now a feasible option for some people. There are two possible effects of this development on language maintenance. One is, of course, that increased communication with the town will lead to increased use of Creole by people living in Hopkins and further language shift away from Garifuna. However another possibility that does not seem overly optimistic is that people from Hopkins who were living outside of the village for economic reasons will be able to commute from Hopkins and thereby raise their children in a Garifuna-speaking environment, leading to an increase in the use of the language.

A related factor is the increased tourism to traditional Garifuna areas in Belize. Both Hopkins and Seine Bight are situated on the beach, a quick boat ride to the coastal reef and within sight of the Maya Mountains to the west, both prime tourist destinations. While tourism is not generally considered to be a force in favor of language maintenance, in this case it may be. Assuming that residents of Hopkins continue to use their native language while in the village, the fact that tourism allows people to stay in the village and get good-paying jobs instead of emigrating to Belize City and the cayes may lead, again, to an increase in the number of children learning and using the language. Langworthy makes this same point, writing that “[o]ppportunity for income without leaving the village could help maintain a vital community in which young people can stay and raise their families, increasing the prospect for Garifuna language maintenance” (2006: 465).

Previously, the relative isolation of Hopkins Village and its ethnic homogeneity (in contrast to Garifuna towns such as Dangriga) may have been the strongest forces in favor of language maintenance. However, as

the isolation of the village decreases with improved transportation networks and increased tourism and as the sale of more lands around Hopkins⁵ leads to an increase in the number of non-Garifuna-speaking residents, other forces may have to replace these in order to maintain successful transmission and maintenance of Garifuna in the village. The prior existence of a language policy statement and goals for language preservation may prove to be useful in this regard if villages such as Hopkins can find ways to tailor the LPSGN’s aims to their own community. It is hoped that they will be able to draw on the strength of the fact that although language shift is occurring in Hopkins, Garifuna remains a relatively healthy language in this community. By drawing on this advantage they may be able to assist Garifuna communities where language shift has progressed much further in carrying out the goals of the LPSGN in revitalizing and preserving their native language.

Conclusion

The Language Policy Statement of the Garifuna Nation and the Language Preservation Plan are a unified set of goals for the Garifuna Nation that do not distinguish between the needs of individual communities and the needs of the transnational Garifuna community as a whole. In any language planning situation there are multiple players that need to be considered; for transnational language planners this challenge is multiplied by the fact that the various players are more distant from each other, cross national borders, and therefore may have even more disparate needs. This challenge is clearly one that is faced by the Garifuna Nation. On the other hand, the biggest advantage of transnational language planning is that each community has different strengths, thus increasing the communal resources. Garifuna language activists should remain aware of these various strengths, and aware of the local within the Garifuna nation. It has been suggested, for instance, that children from St. Vincent could come to Hopkins in Belize for “Garifuna language camp” in the summer. This is just one example of how local communities could draw on each other’s strengths. The great task of creating a unified document, for a unified community, has been accomplished, and it is now the task of the leaders in the Garifuna community to make sure that the policy and plan do trickle-down to the rest of the community. It remains to be seen how sociolinguistic factors will affect how the plan is carried out at the local level but it is clear that we are witnessing a new stage in language planning in the efforts of indigenous language community activists that know no national boundaries.

⁵ See Langworthy (2006) for a discussion of the relationship between Garifuna land use (and the sale of traditionally Garinagu lands in Belize and Honduras) and language maintenance.

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