

Dissertation Defense: Jason Siegel

Monday, December 9th,
2013
9:00am
Ballantine Hall
Room 004

COMMITTEE

Albert Valdman, Co-Chair
French and Italian, Linguistics

Kevin Rottet, Co-Chair
French and Italian

Julie Auger,
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J. Clancy Clements,
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INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Nou oblije pale mo-to: Code-switching between Haitian and Guianese French Creoles and their lexifier in French Guiana

The theories and methodologies developed to analyze intrasentential code-switching were developed to account for switching between clearly distinct languages. They seek to describe the constraints on intrasentential code-switching, essentially trying to account for how languages with very different structures can fit together in a single sentence. In this dissertation, I take a different approach, looking at languages that are much more closely related, namely French, Haitian Creole and Guianese Creole. These languages pose a special challenge because not only do they closely match each other in terms of phonology, but their morphology is frequently similar as well, which can make the identification of switch points highly difficult to ascertain. To test the theories, I start by reviewing a broad swath of literature relevant to code-switching among closely related varieties, including dialect contact and acquisition phenomena, as well as theories of language production and code-switching. I examine the social setting of creoles and their lexifier in contact in French Guiana. I also provide a grammatical sketch of the important differences among the varieties in question. In the major chapter of the dissertation, using the speech of Haitian immigrants in French Guiana as a test case, I look at a variety of possible code-switches that test the major claims of two models of code-switching, to see whether they can account for switches that occur between varieties that are not clearly distinct. I find that the theories as they exist now adequately—but not perfectly—account for code-switching in this circumstance. As a result, I propose a new line of inquiry for sociolinguistic variation using psycholinguistic methods to evaluate whether language-internal variation is code-switching between subgrammars.

