

## Effectiveness of grammaticality judgment as a tool for investigating perception grammar in creole languages

Grammatical variation and change occurs not only in production but also in perception (Janson 1983: 24). However, the variation in perception grammar is more difficult to capture than that in production grammar, especially in the case of non-standard language with extensive variation. Grammaticality judgment survey which is often employed in the study of standardized languages is not considered to be very effective when it comes to the examination of the grammar of non-standard languages with extensive variation. The present paper argues that grammaticality judgment can be an effective tool to investigate grammatical variation of creole languages when designed appropriately. The empirical base for this study is the examination of the aspect marker *stay* in Hawai'i Creole, an English-based creole spoken in the islands of Hawai'i.

In Hawai'i Creole, *stay* is used as an aspectual marker. Compared with other syntactic features, *stay* rarely occurs in current HC speech. Therefore, it is difficult to examine variable characteristics of *stay* with multivariate analysis using Varbrul program. Although *stay* is rarely used in the production data, HC speakers' ability to interpret *stay* still seems to be available.

The present study analyzed grammaticality judgment survey questionnaire conducted with twenty HC speakers stratified by age and gender who were born and raised in the island of Kaua'i in 2005. Compared with the other islands, the island of Kaua'i is reportedly where the least "decreolized" and therefore the most basilectal varieties are found (Romaine 1994). In the survey with fifty one sentences, the speakers were asked to read and listen to the recorded HC sentences and to decide the grammaticality by selecting one of the scaled description ratings on 6-point scale. The scaling descriptions are characterized with speakers' own usage as well as speakers' familiarity with other speakers' usage.

Stimuli sentences used in the survey are sensitive to the following unsolved questions regarding the grammatical variation of *stay*. (1) How do HC speakers interpret 3 variants of progressive marker *stay*? More specifically, are there any semantic differences across the variants as claimed by Velupillai (2003)? (2) How do HC speakers comprehend *stay* + bare verb construction which is ambiguous between progressive and perfect aspect? (3) Are the Pidgin speakers sensitive to the permanent and nonpermanent distinction of adjectival predicate as claimed in Sakoda & Siegel (2003). (4) Do HC speakers judge the combination of *wen* + *stay* as in "He wen ste eat. (He was eating)" as grammatical?

Results show that the design of grammaticality judgment employing a 6 point scale is effective enough to elicit speaker's grammatical perception/interpretation on the target grammatical complexity in HC. Results indicate that the current HC speakers in the island of Kauai (1) do not distinguish the 3 variants of progressive marker *stay* claimed by Velupilai (2003), (2) accept use of *stay* in progressive and perfective context similarly, (3) are sensitive to the permanent and nonpermanent distinction of adjectival predicate, and (4) tend to reject the combination of *wen* + *stay*. Results also imply that the age and gender of the speakers are not relevant to their interpretation.

## References

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