

# Preface

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**Kwéyòl in Postcolonial Saint Lucia: Globalization, language planning, and national development**

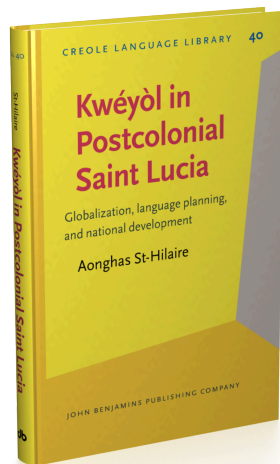
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## Preface

Many of the world's languages are disappearing. Saint Lucia's Kwéyòl is at risk of fading out over the long-term as parents emphasize English over the low status Creole and, as a result, children no longer grow up with an active command of the vernacular. However, the island's French Creole still has some vitality – the vast majority of Saint Lucians have some passive knowledge of it and most speak it, if only to a limited degree. As such, unlike many threatened vernaculars in the world, there is healthy opportunity to turn the situation around in Saint Lucia and bring the rich Kwéyòl back to life as an integral part of community and nation on the island. This book not only aims at explaining the changing fortunes of Kwéyòl vis-à-vis English and French in the context of globalization, language planning actions conceived and implemented on the island, and Saint Lucia's national development trajectory, it also seeks to offer, based on the successes and failures of the pro-Kwéyòl movement and effective language planning implemented elsewhere in the world, perspectives of what is possible for a multicultural, multilingual Saint Lucia firmly grounded in its past and open to and ready to profit from the economic and social leavening effects of globalization.

The first chapter of the book lays out concepts of globalization, language planning, and national development that help elucidate the challenges associated with promoting Kwéyòl on the island. The second chapter provides historical context to the formation of Saint Lucian society and to the denigration of Kwéyòl and the associated Afro-French, Creole culture into the postcolonial period. Creole languages are often treated as a class unto themselves, as somehow different from other languages. This firmly entrenched belief undermines efforts to promote the vernaculars into formal domains of language use. This book deliberately presents the movement to promote Kwéyòl as a national language of Saint Lucia in contrast with larger trends in the postcolonial world – in Asia, Africa, and, of course, the Caribbean and French Creole-speaking world – in an effort to normalize it in relation to other, often very successful movements to elevate native vernaculars as full-fledged official, educational, and mass media languages. The third chapter presents Kwéyòl cultural nationalism within a global trend of decolonization and in counterdistinction to inherited, prejudicial anti-Kwéyòl norms from the colonial period.

The fourth chapter focuses on Saint Lucia as an officially Anglophone country deeply embedded in economic, social, and cultural exchange with the larger English-speaking world in order to provide a partial backdrop as to why the gains from pro-Kwéyòl cultural nationalism have been so modest. However, Saint Lucians skillfully navigate the waters of globalization through alliances with non-English-speaking nations and territories as well, which has some mitigating effect – albeit limited – on the predominance of English locally on the island. The fifth chapter offers insight into the Francophonie and related *Créolophonie* and how Saint Lucia and Kwéyòl benefit from contact with and participation in these pan-cultural movements. Chapters six, seven, and eight deal with Saint Lucian efforts to promote Kwéyòl as a language of government and for democratization, as a medium of formal education and for literacy, and as a way to reach the island-wide population through the mass media, respectively, in the context of larger trends in the postcolonial world.

The success of efforts to promote Kwéyòl as a national language and into different domains of language use on the island is measurable, in part, by changes in people's attitudes toward Kwéyòl in relation to the other major languages spoken and learned on the island and in people's usage of Kwéyòl as well as of English and French. The ninth chapter plots the factors associated with the social elevation of Kwéyòl as well as Saint Lucian observations on the changing status and use of the vernacular since Saint Lucia's attainment of national independence. The tenth chapter paints a picture of the favorably changing status of English, largely to the detriment of Kwéyòl. Chapter eleven explains how French remains important to Saint Lucians, even after more than two centuries since France permanently decamped from the island, and how the language remains closely related to Kwéyòl in the minds of many Saint Lucians. The final chapter relates the impact of globalization on Saint Lucia to language death. It also presents language planning actions put into place in other locales that offer some breadth of contrasting perspective for the Saint Lucian case and that have the potential to inform efforts to further integrate Kwéyòl into Saint Lucia's institutions of social and cultural reproduction in order to keep the language a relevant part of island life.

Throughout, the book relies on narrative data collected from interviews with Saint Lucians involved in the pro-Kwéyòl movement and from members of the general urban and rural population of the island. The Saint Lucian active proponents of Kwéyòl were identified through "snowballing," starting with contacts at the Folk Research Centre. The general Saint Lucian residents were randomly selected using weighted housing maps provided by the Saint Lucian Department of Statistics. The sixty urban residents were selected from Castries – the country's largest city and historic center of Anglophone culture – and the forty rural resident respondents were from Monchy – a village in the north central region

of Gros Islet District, a historically solidly Kwéyòl-speaking region to the north of the island. Most resident interviews were conducted in English; a handful in Monchy, with older residents having limited formal education, were conducted in Kwéyòl.

The narrative data inform the book content where appropriate. In the discussion on U.S. cultural penetration through television, for example, expressed concerns from interviewed activists are presented. In the chapter on Kwéyòl cultural nationalism, narrative activist perspectives richly imbue the text, as they do in the chapters on the use of Kwéyòl in government and for democracy; preparing Kwéyòl for literacy, the schools, and higher education; and Kwéyòl language mass media. Moreover, Kwéyòl proponent perspectives are central to the chapter on the changing status of Kwéyòl and, to a lesser degree, to the chapters on the status of English and French. Perspectives and attitudes conveyed by interviewed residents of Castries and Monchy also elucidate book content. These perspectives and attitudes sharpen the focus of the discussion on efforts to promote Kwéyòl for use by the government and, especially, in the schools. They are also the substance of perceptions of sociolinguistic change since Saint Lucia's attainment of independence from the United Kingdom presented in the book.

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