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**Second Person Plural Pronouns in Transatlantic Varieties of English and English-related Contact Varieties: Classification, Function, and Use**

This research project seeks to explore linguistic and cultural links and continuities between the West African coastal region, the Caribbean and parts of the Americas which have been shaped by the presence of an African Diaspora community – especially in the South of the United States of America. Linguistic influences of West African substrates on Caribbean Anglo Creoles have been described at length, for instance, in areas of grammar. Structural similarities between Caribbean and West African contact varieties are due not only to the contact situation, but also to reciprocal influences: Krio, i.e. the contact variety spoken in Sierra Leone, has for historical reasons been influenced by speakers of Jamaican Creole. Krio, in turn, has shaped contact varieties along the West African coast, i.e. Anglo-Pidgins in Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroon. The historical connection between the African Diaspora in the Caribbean and the African American population in the Southern States of the United States is documented in the paths of the Atlantic slave trade. Gullah, an Anglo-Creole spoken on the Sea Islands of South Carolina shows a high degree of similarities to Caribbean Anglo-Creoles. The cultural and linguistic influences and transformative dynamics between the triangle West Africa, Caribbean, and the American South might be seen as a primary example of early globalization.

The topic of the research project deals with the pronominal system of Atlantic Anglo-Creoles, especially the classification and the analysis of function and use of the 2nd person plural pronoun in these varieties (*unu* or a form of *allyuh*) as well as in the English spoken in the American South (*y'all*). The pronominal system of Atlantic contact varieties is particularly interesting: the presence of the second person plural pronoun, for example, adds a complexity that its superstrate English has abandoned (in its standard form) since the Early Modern Period. The existence of the 2PL in Anglo-Creoles has been noted as a typological feature in current research (Baker & Huber 2000), but has not led to any deeper analysis of function and use of these forms. The fact that a number of nonstandard varieties of English has a 2 PL form demonstrates that the lack of a differentiation between the 2nd person singular and plural in Standard English marks the deviation of an implicit norm and need.

The existence of the 2 PL in these varieties of English and English-related contact varieties leads to the question of the function of this pronoun. In the varieties relevant to the research project, it is neither an obligatory plural pronoun nor a true “polite pronoun” which, in many European languages is used. Here, the differentiation between so-called tu/vous (T/V) forms marks features like solidarity, distance, and power. The function of plurality in the pronominal address in varieties of English is, however, much less clear, and has so far been investigated only in selected environments for pronouns used in Caribbean Creoles (*unu* or a variant of *allyuh*). The question of their classification, function, and use is therefore a conspicuous research lacuna.

Research on *y'all*, the 2PL form which is seen as a typical characteristic of the English of the American South has been so far mostly reduced to the question of grammatical number. Descriptions of the etymology of *y'all* reveal that until the early 20th century, the form was associated mainly with African American speakers in the South. Both in Atlantic Anglo-Creoles (West Africa and the Caribbean), and in US

Southern English, one may assume that the function of the 2 PL form has changed due to a number of influences.

The fact that Atlantic contact varieties and the English of the American South all use a 2 PL form with an unclear (neither plural nor politeness) function leads to the following working hypotheses:

- The category of number of addressees (singular or plural) is misleading in the analysis of the meaning of the additional plural form. Rather, categories of membership and the indexicality of the pronoun with regard to ingroup/outgroup identity need to be considered here.
- The investigation of politeness in pronominal address needs to be expanded to include other strategic uses of this choice of address. While it is not suggested that all Atlantic varieties use the additional pronoun for the same function in their pronominal address, it is suggested that they all use it for the negotiation of face in their interactions.
- Beyond the significance which the results of my empirical investigation on 2PL in transatlantic varieties of English will have in the field of sociolinguistics, contact linguistics, pragmatics and cognitive linguistics, it is hoped that the study will make a contribution to a better understanding of respect systems and their significance for historical and contemporary relations in the Atlantic world.