"Yo no hablo haitiano, hablo patuá": The Construction and Enregisterment of Linguistic Difference in Haitian Dominican Migration Contexts

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"Yo no hablo haitiano, hablo patuá": A construção e o *enregisterment* da diferença linguística em contextos migratórios dominico-haitianos

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Abstract

This qualitative case study analyzes how inhabitants of transnational communities in rural Dominican Republic, known as *bateyes*, construct linguistic diversity arising from the coexistence of Spanish and Haitian Creole within the context of migration dynamics. The research was conducted in August 2022 with 11 bilingual Spanish-Creole inhabitants of 12 bateyes in the Dominican Republic. The data were analyzed using discourse analysis and linguistic ideology theories. Special attention was given to registers (i. e. named forms of Spanish and Haitian Creole ideologically linked to specific kinds of speakers and communicative contexts) that exist within the batey, and how these were evaluated by speakers. The findings reveal a contrast between how batey residents construct linguistic diversity and how academic and folk metalinguistic discourse see it. The latter describe a Haitianized register of Spanish associated with Haitian-born and Haitian-descended speakers, as opposed to the "pure" Spanish of Dominicans without ties to Haiti, while also mentioning a vague Dominicanized Creole. Batey inhabitants, on the other hand, perceive ethnic variation in Spanish as irrelevant and emphasize a specific Creole register known as *patuá* which is attributed to second-generation immigrants and seen as a deficient form of Haitian Creole. These results suggest that while participants challenge negative attitudes toward Haitian Creole prevalent in the country, they, nonetheless, uphold ideologies that devalue migrant varieties in favor of the native standard. This is the first study to provide

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insights into how batey inhabitants perceive and ideologically enregister linguistic differences in their transnational setting.

Keywords: *bateyes*, language ideologies, indexicalities, enregisterment, Haitian Creole, Dominican Spanish, *patuá*

Resumen

Este estudio de caso cualitativo analiza cómo los habitantes de comunidades transnacionales de zonas rurales de la República Dominicana, conocidas como *bateyes*, construyen la diversidad lingüística derivada de la coexistencia del español y el criollo haitiano dentro de las dinámicas migratorias. La investigación se llevó a cabo en agosto de 2022 con 11 habitantes bilingües (español y criollo) de 12 *bateyes* de la República Dominicana. Los datos fueron estudiados a partir del análisis del discurso y las teorías sobre ideologías lingüísticas. Se prestó especial atención a los registros (formas nombradas del español y del criollo haitiano ideológicamente vinculadas a ciertos tipos de hablantes y contextos comunicativos) que existen dentro del *batey*, y a cómo estos son evaluados por los hablantes. Los resultados revelan un contraste entre cómo los residentes bateyes construyen la diversidad lingüística y cómo son descritos por los discursos metalingüísticos académicos y populares. Estos últimos describen un registro haitianizado del español, asociado con hablantes nacidos en Haití o de ascendencia haitiana, en oposición al español "puro" de los dominicanos sin vínculos con Haití y mencionan un difuso criollo dominicanizado. Los habitantes de los *bateyes*, por su parte, consideran irrelevante la variación étnica en el español y destacan un registro específico del criollo conocido como *patuá*, atribuido a inmigrantes de segunda generación y considerado una forma deficiente del criollo haitiano. Estos resultados sugieren que, aunque los participantes desafían las actitudes negativas hacia el criollo haitiano prevalentes en el país, aún sostienen ideologías que devalúan las variedades migrantes en favor del estándar nativo. Este es el primer estudio que ofrece una visión sobre cómo los habitantes de bateyes perciben y registran ideológicamente las diferencias lingüísticas en su contexto transnacional.

Palabras clave: *bateyes*, ideologías lingüísticas, indexicalidades, registro ideológico, criollo haitiano, español dominicano, *patuá*

Résumé

Cette étude de cas qualitative analyse comment les habitants des communautés transnationales en milieu rural de la République dominicaine, connues sous le nom de bateyes, construisent la diversité linguistique résultant de la coexistence de l'espagnol et du créole haïtien dans le contexte des dynamiques migratoires. La recherche a été menée en août 2022 auprès de 11 habitants bilingues espagnol-créole de 12 bateyes de la République dominicaine. Les données ont été analysées à l'aide de l'analyse du discours et des théories sur les idéologies linguistiques. Une attention particulière a été accordée aux registres (c'est-à-dire des formes nommées de l'espagnol et du créole haïtien, idéologiquement associées à des types spécifiques de locuteurs et de contextes communicatifs) présents dans les bateyes, ainsi qu'à la manière dont ils sont évalués par les locuteurs. Les résultats révèlent un contraste entre la manière dont les habitants des bateyes construisent la diversité linguistique et la manière dont elle est perçue par les discours métalinguistiques académiques et populaires. Ces derniers décrivent un registre espagnol haïtianisé associé aux locuteurs nés en Haïti ou de descendance haïtienne, en opposition à l'espagnol « pur » des Dominicains sans lien avec Haïti, tout en évoquant un créole dominicanisé flou. Les habitants des bateyes, quant à eux, considèrent la variation ethnique de l'espagnol comme non pertinente et mettent l'accent sur un registre spécifique du créole appelé *patuá*, attribué aux immigrants de deuxième génération et perçu comme une forme déficiente du créole haïtien. Ces résultats suggèrent que, bien que les participants remettent en question les attitudes négatives envers le créole haïtien dominantes dans le pays, ils perpétuent néanmoins

des idéologies qui dévalorisent les variétés migrantes au profit de la norme autochtone. Il s'agit de la première étude offrant un aperçu de la manière dont les habitants des bateyes perçoivent et enregistrent idéologiquement les différences linguistiques dans leur contexte transnational.

Mots-clés : *bateyes*, idéologies linguistiques, indexicalités, enregistrement idéologique, créole haïtien, espagnol dominicain, *patuá*

Resumo

Este estudo de caso qualitativo analisa como os habitantes de comunidades transnacionais em áreas rurais da República Dominicana, conhecidas como bateyes, constroem a diversidade linguística decorrente da convivência entre o espanhol e o crioulo haitiano no contexto das dinâmicas migratórias. A pesquisa foi realizada em agosto de 2022 com 11 habitantes bilíngues espanhol-crioulo de 12 bateyes na República Dominicana. Os dados foram analisados por meio da análise do discurso e de teorias sobre ideologias linguísticas. Foi dada atenção especial aos registros (ou seja, formas nomeadas do espanhol e do crioulo haitiano associadas ideologicamente a certos tipos de falantes e contextos comunicativos) existentes nos bateyes, e à forma como esses registros são avaliados pelos falantes. Os resultados revelam um contraste entre como os moradores dos bateyes constroem a diversidade linguística e como ela é vista pelos discursos metalinguísticos acadêmicos e populares. Estes últimos descrevem um registro espanhol haitianizado associado a falantes nascidos no Haiti ou descendentes de haitianos, em oposição ao espanhol "puro" de dominicanos sem vínculos com o Haiti, além de mencionarem um crioulo vago dominicanizado. Os habitantes dos bateyes, por outro lado, consideram a variação étnica no espanhol irrelevante e destacam um registro específico do crioulo conhecido como *patuá*, atribuído a imigrantes de segunda geração e visto como uma forma deficiente do crioulo haitiano. Esses resultados sugerem que, embora os participantes desafiem as atitudes negativas em relação ao crioulo haitiano predominantes no país, ainda assim mantêm ideologias que desvalorizam as variedades migrantes em favor do padrão nativo. Este é o primeiro estudo a oferecer uma visão sobre como os habitantes dos bateyes percebem e registram ideologicamente as diferenças linguísticas em seu contexto transnacional.

Palavras-chave: *bateyes*, ideologias linguísticas, indexicalidades, registro ideológico, crioulo haitiano, espanhol dominicano, *patuá*

Introduction

The island known as Hispaniola is home to two distinct nation-states with different linguistic situations: French- and Creole-speaking Haiti in the west and the Spanish-speaking Dominican Republic (DR) in the east. While there has always been mobility and exchange between the two countries, the sugar cane industry has served as a primary driver of immigration from Haiti to the DR since the late 19th century, when the modernization of the sugar industry created a significant demand for labor. Under the Trujillo regime (1930–1961), official contracts were established between the two countries to send Haitian workers to the Dominican sugar plantations during the cane-cutting season or *zafra*. Between 1952 and 1986, 15 000 to 20 000 cane cutters arrived in the DR each year (Zecca Castel, 2021, p. 880), returning to Haiti at the end of the season.

To accommodate the Haitian workers, the Dominican Government built barracks near the plantations, where workers lived under harsh conditions (i.e., without electricity, running water, or sanitary facilities). Although originally intended as temporary establishments, some of these places evolved into permanent settlements because some workers could not afford to return to Haiti or simply chose not to do it after the zafra. Some of them started families with Haitian or Dominican women, resulting in the emergence of new communities where a fixed Dominican Haitian population coexisted with a temporary, mobile population from Haiti. These transnational communities were known as *bateyes*.

While the sugar cane industry was nationalized after Trujillo's death in 1961, corruption and market fluctuations led to a significant crisis in the mid-1980s (Zecca Castel, 2021), resulting in the reprivatization of the sugar cane sector. Although cane cutting had always been a poorly paid, physically challenging, and dangerous job, the neoliberal framework that characterized the sugar cane industry after privatization further deteriorated the working conditions for cane cutters. This made living conditions in the bateyes even worse than before. These were characterized by varying degrees of geographical and social isolation, poverty, and transnational orientation, with many inhabitants maintaining family ties to Haiti (Kieslinger et al., 2024).

Although circular migration has virtually ceased since then due to the ongoing crisis in Haiti which compels cane cutters to remain permanently in the DR, the bateyes continue to serve as points of contact for newcomers. Now, migration from Haiti to the DR is predominantly informal and undocumented, which makes migrants particularly vulnerable. Challenges related to legal issues have also intensified since the 2013 Dominican Supreme Court decision to strip all descendants of non-residents born since 1929 from the nationality they had obtained under *ius soli*, leaving many *batey* inhabitants stateless (Jansen, 2021; Lamb & Dundes, 2017).

The Ideology of *Antihaitianismo*

Apart from being stateless, *batey* inhabitants face significant challenges that arise from the broader ideological and legal context in the country. Dominican identity discourse construes *Dominicanness* in opposition to *Haitianness* (Ortiz López, 2018), Indeed, within these discourses, the DR is depicted as a monolingual country, with a predominantly white population, a Hispanic cultural tradition, a strong orientation towards Catholicism, and a "pure" Dominican Spanish. Haiti, in contrast, is associated with Creole (often described as a language of "mixed" African and French origin in contrast to the "pure" Dominican Spanish), the practice of Vodou, and an African-descendant population (Jansen, 2021; Ortiz López, 2018). Due to long-standing historical developments, Haitians and Haitian cultural expressions are largely stigmatized in the DR within an ideological framework known as *antihaitianismo* [Anti-Haitianism] (Lamb & Dundes, 2017). In this context, characteristics

ideologically associated with Haitianness, such as dark skin and Haitian Creole language, are often treated as markers of shame (Bullock & Toribio, 2014; Jansen, 2021; Medford, 2024).

Spanish-Haitian Creole Language Contact in the Dominican Republic

Language contact between Haitian Creole and Dominican Spanish primarily occurs in settings where migration is a central demographic factor: the urban context, the border region, and the agricultural sector, especially the *bateyes* (Ortiz López, 2018). Ortiz López (2015) notes that two new varieties have emerged from this contact: *criollo dominicanizado* [*Dominicanized Creole*] and *español haitianizado* [*Haitianized Spanish*] (p. 25). The latter is presented as a distinct speech form characteristic of speakers with family ties to Haiti, including Haitians, Haitian-Dominicans, and the border population referred to as *arrayanos*. The latter have incorporated typical features of Spanish produced by native speakers of Haitian Creole and their discourse stands in contrast to the "unmixed" Spanish attributed to Dominican speakers who lack such connections.

The notion of Haitianized Spanish, spoken not only by Haitians but also by Dominican-born individuals of Haitian descent, aligns with popular beliefs about linguistic variation in the DR (Bullock & Toribio, 2008, p. 176; 2014, p. 88). However, Bullock and Toribio's (2008) attempts to corroborate this folk belief with empirical evidence have been unsuccessful, as they have not been able to identify a distinct Haitianized variety of Spanish among speakers in the border region. Instead, they have found that "the linguistic traits that Dominicans stigmatize as 'Haitianized' properties are features of the speech of rural, uneducated cibaeños of all racial designations" (Bullock & Toribio, 2008, p. 195). The variety referred to as Dominicanized Creole is mentioned only briefly by Ortiz López (2018) and is not further described, either in sociolinguistic or structural terms.

The few linguistic studies on the *bateyes* have focused primarily on Creole, rather than on Spanish. Jansen (2013) and Govain (2015) examine the structural aspects of Creole as spoken by descendants of Haitian immigrants in the bateyes La Lechería and La Bombita. They identified features that deviate from the Creole spoken in Haiti and can largely be attributed to the influence of Spanish and language attrition. Medford (2024), on the other hand, analyzes language ideologies related to Creole in Los Robles, which she characterized as an "ex-batey," revealing a significant tendency towards linguistic insecurity among third and fourth generation Haitian Dominicans who maintain Creole. There appear to be no studies examining the perception or linguistic features of varieties of Spanish spoken in the bateyes, or Haitian Dominican language contact in urban contexts.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on the notion of language ideologies, within a framework of discourse analysis. Language ideologies can be defined as "morally and politically loaded representations of the nature, structure, and use of languages in a social world" (Woolard, 2021, p. 1). They are generally linked to larger social processes, such as the construction and hierarchization of social groups, and operate through metalinguistic discourse and ordered indexicalities.

According to Silverstein (2003), Johnstone (2006), and Spitzmüller (2013), *indexicality* is the ability of linguistic entities to indicate or point to social categories. These authors distinguish different levels of indexicality based on the degree of ideological charge: First-order indexicality refers to the empirical relationship that can be established by external observers. Second-order indexicality encompasses the ideological relationship established by members of the speaker group from an internal perspective. Meanwhile, third-order indexicality denotes an ideological relationship established from an external perspective,

characterized by a high degree of emblematicity. For example, "pelejil" functioned as a shibboleth to identify Haitian speakers (Bullock & Toribio, 2014, p. 86). The semiotic process by which an index moves from first to second or third order and becomes a part of a linguistic community's metalinguistic representations is called *enregisterment* (Agha 2007), whereas the set of features that index a specific social group or context for specific speakers is referred to as *register* (Agha, 2007).

Although registers roughly correspond to folk-linguistic categories such as "languages" or "dialects", using the notion of register as an analytical tool allows for an emphasis on the ideological dimension of such linguistic entities as cultural artifacts (Agha, 2007, p. 168; Johnstone, 2006, p. 79). Since registers, as language ideological constructs, often encompass features of second and third-order indexicality, their attributed characteristics may vary from what can be empirically observed on the level of first-order indexicality.

According to Agha (2007), registers come into being and become empirically observable through various metalinguistic activities. Prominent among these is the enactment of specific personae through the use of enregistered features, which reveals their socio-indexical values. Still, Johnstone (2016) emphasizes the "fleeting, idiosyncratic, and changeable" nature of indexical links (p. 660). An enregistered feature may index different identities, and there are always multiple possibilities for interpreting and registering features in new ways, rendering registers ultimately "open cultural systems" (Agha, 2007, p. 158). New features can be enregistered spontaneously during interactions (Johnstone, 2016). While registers are generally tied to specific socio-historical contexts and groups, multiple or even competing models of registers can exist within the same community (Agha, 2007, p. 178).

Besides enactment, metalinguistic discourse is another site where registers are produced, when speakers explicitly articulate their perceptions of how language resources are categorized into "languages" or "dialects" and how these categories relate to social groups. Discursive practices through which registers are produced, often simultaneously with the groups to which they are linked (Johnstone, 2006, p. 79), include using language or dialect labels, describing typical or exemplary speakers, and assessing the social value of a register through metalinguistic predicates (Agha, 2007, pp. 150–151). These practices can be examined through critical discourse analysis (CDA; Fairclough, 1997; Van Dijk, 2015), which provides a valuable framework for exploring the interplay between metalinguistic representations, social differentiation, and the broader socio-political and cultural context. CDA involves a close examination of language use in texts to uncover ideologies, including an analysis of lexical choices, such as in predications, or pronouns, particularly in the construction of in- and out-groups through the juxtaposition of "us" versus "them."

Two overarching ideologies in contemporary metalinguistic discourse are particularly significant: the ideology of the national language, which posits that the national language is a central element defining the "essence" of a nation and distinguishing it from others (Jansen et al., 2021); and the ideology of the native standard, which asserts that there is a single correct form of the national language, epitomized by the educated native speaker (Lippi-Green, 1997). The natively spoken national language functions as a "prestige register" (Agha, 2007), representing the "baseline norms, relative to which other registers appear deviant or defective" (Agha, 2007, p. 147). This occurs because of values generally assigned to national standard languages, such as correctness, purity, and authenticity (Jansen et al., 2021).

Method

The data for this qualitative case study is based on interviews conducted by the author in August 2022 with inhabitants of 12 bateyes. Although an initial attempt was made to use a sociolinguistic

questionnaire, designed to gather demographic information as well as details about language use, including questions about the languages spoken by the respondents, the contexts in which they use these languages, and their levels of proficiency, it quickly became clear that many participants were unfamiliar with discussing language issues or had other concerns. Therefore, it was easier to engage in informal conversations with them and address language experiences as part of their broader migration challenges (e.g., discrimination or legal issues). These conversations were held with the eleven individuals who seemed the most motivated to engage in discussions about language and exhibited a well-developed metalinguistic awareness. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded to identify relevant categories that provided insight into participants' language ideologies.

The individuals included two Dominicans with only distant Haitian ancestry and no close Haitian-born relatives, two Haitian-born immigrants, and seven Haitian Dominicans born in the DR to at least one Haitian parent. They resided in bateyes near Santo Domingo (La Ceiba, Mata, Mamón, Reventón) and in the Consuelo region (Batey 41, Batey Nuevo, Esperanza) and exhibited different profiles according to the typology proposed in Kieslinger et al. (2024). For instance, four of them came from La Ceiba and Batey 41, where sugar cane production has ceased and where livelihoods have shifted to other forms of labor, which aligns with Kieslinger et al.'s (2024) concept of "reoriented bateyes" and Medford's (2024) notion of "ex-bateyes" (p. 534) Importantly, Medford's observation regarding the disruption of contact with Haitian Creole in so-called "ex-bateyes" (Medford, 2024, p. 534) did not apply, as ongoing Haitian Dominican contact influences all types of bateyes, including the reoriented ones. Other forms of labor came from a poultry processing plant in La Ceiba that continually attracts new laborers from Haiti, and Haitians are also present in the urban environment of Batey 41, which has become a neighborhood of Consuelo. The other study sites remained traditional sugar cane bateyes, although reorientation trends are emerging. Table 1 provides an overview of the basic features of the participants.

Table 1 Basic Features of Interviewees

Occupation	Gender	Nationality	Age	Place of residence
Educationalist	male	Dominican	53	La Ceiba
Farmer	female	Haitian Dominican	42	La Ceiba
Agricultural worker	male	Haitian Dominican	56	La Ceiba
Temporary worker	male	Batey	29	Batey 41
Cane cutter	male	Haitian (immigrated at the age of 14)	71	Batey nuevo
Student	female	Haitian Dominican	25 approx.*	Batey nuevo
Foreman in the sugar cane plantation (*capataz*)	male	Dominican	60 approx.	Ulloa
Agricultural worker	male	Haitian Dominican	60 approx.	Reventón
Social worker	female	Haitian Dominican	32	Esperanza
Student	female	Haitian Dominican (with 6 years of migration experience in Haiti)	42	Mata Mamón
Cane cutter	male	Haitian (immigrated 25 years before)	50	Batey nuevo

Note: *Some participants from Batey Nuevo were hesitant to specify their ages because they feared it would give us "magical power" over them. In those cases, we provide estimated ages.

All participants were bilingual in Spanish and Creole, with varying degrees of competence in either. Many of them had travelled to Haiti or even lived there for some time while maintaining relationships with family members on the western side of the island. While most of the participants affirmed to have learned Creole from family members, the two Dominicans claimed to have acquired Haitian Creole through interactions within the community: "con ellos" [with them] (Interview 1). The Haitian Dominican participants, in particular, highlighted their strong emotional ties to both nationalities, cultures and languages.

Results

The participants refer to three distinct registers, epitomized by the linguistic labels *español/dominicano; creole/haitiano*, and *patuá*. The following sections present an analysis of how each of these registers is discursively constructed in the interviews, focusing on social indexicalities, evaluations, and enregistered features. While the enregisterment of Spanish and Haitian Creole under the national epithets "dominicano" and "haitiano", which is widespread in the bateyes (Jansen, 2021), reflects the significance of national differences in the construction of linguistic identities, the indexicalities and characteristics of the register known as patuá are more complex.

Spanish/Dominicano

Spanish is not frequently mentioned in our interviews, perhaps because its use is perceived as natural in the country. While there is a consensus that Haitians learn Spanish at a remarkable speed, several participants mention that they speak it differently from Dominicans. This difference is primarily attributed to phonetic variations (accent), as well as a lack of concordance in verb forms – features that have been enregistered as emblems of Haitianized speech since the 19th century (Jansen, 2015) and that continue to be significant in Dominican language ideologies:

Int.: ¿Hablan el español de manera diferente o hablan igual?
Part.: No, lógicamente lo hablan diferente porque ya tienen, ellos aprenden el hablar, el hablar, pero el acento no.
Int.: ¿Tienen acento?
Part: Sí, siguen con su acento, el acento haitiano, por lo tanto, cuando usted lo escucha hablar, sabe que está hablando un haitiano. [...] entonces ellos no, como dicen, yo no te conjugan los verbos, no te pueden decir yo como, sino yo comer, tú comer, te dicen. [...] Porque no tienen, entonces, pero no hay manera de aprender a conjugar esos verbos porque ellos no lo tienen, no está aquí cifrado [pointing to his head]. Exacto. Entonces, la forma de hablar, tú ves un haitiano aquí, que tiene 60 años y tú vas, tú lo has escuchado ahorita, 60 años y tú vas, tú oyes el acento, y el acento es creol puro.
Int.: Y nunca lo pierdes.
Part.: No, no pierde su acento jamás, no hay manera, oye, no hay manera de perder, toda su vida aquí y no hay manera de perderlo. (Interview 1)

Int.: Do they speak Spanish differently, or do they speak the same?
Part.: No, logically they speak it differently because they learn to speak, but the accent remains.
Int.: Do they have an accent?
Part.: Yes, they maintain their Haitian accent, so when you hear them speak, you know they are Haitian. [...] So they don't, as they say, conjugate verbs correctly; they can't say yo como (I eat), but rather yo comer, tú comer. [...] Because they don't have it; there's no way for them to learn to conjugate those verbs because they don't have it; it's not stored here [pointing to his head]. Exactly. So, the way of speaking – if you see a Haitian here who has [lived here for] 60 years and you go, you just heard him, he has [lived here for] 60 years, and you hear the accent, and the accent is pure Creole.
Int.: And you never lose it.
Part.: No, they never lose their accent; there's no way, you know, there's no way to lose it, their whole life here, and there's no way to lose it. (Interview 1)

By stating that the social group identified as haitianos is unequivocally recognizable through their speech, the participant refers to the existence of enregistered features that connect language to national origin. These features are interpreted as transfers from Haitian Creole, or even as "pure Creole", portraying the Spanish spoken by Haitians as "mixed", in line with the notion of Haitianized Spanish. Furthermore, the participant constructs

Haitian-born speakers as a monolithic out-group through the generic expression "un haitiano" and the pronoun "ellos". By referencing the cognitive basis of linguistic difference alongside totalizing expressions of time and manner (*e.g.,* "no hay manera," "jamás," "toda su vida") and recurring negation structures, he creates an unbridgeable divide between Dominican-born and Haitian-born speakers, suggesting that the latter can never become "full" Spanish speakers. This aligns with dominant ideologies of "native-speakerism" (Lippi-Green, 1997).

However, unlike essentialist ideologies prevalent in the DR that define identity in terms of "race" and genetic inheritance (Jansen, 2021), the participant highlights that it is not "blood", but birth and socialization that makes a person Dominican:

> es que usted está enraizado ahí, ahí usted nació, ahí usted ha vivido, ahí usted ha desarrollado su vida, todo lo que usted adquirió ahí, ya usted no va, ya usted no está en el vudú, no está en el gagá, no está en nada de eso, sino usted está aquí. Por lo tanto, toda la cultura, su idioma y todo es de aquí, por lo tanto, esos sí tienen acento totalmente dominicano, ¿ves que son dominicanos? Eso sí, a pesar de que muchos de ellos, o la gran mayoría, te habla creol, ¿por qué te habla creol? Porque como dijimos, son descendientes [de] haitianos, bueno, y sus padres saben hablar haitiano, hablar creole, ellos aprenden, pero son dominicanos. (Interviewee 1)

> *It's that you are rooted there; that's where you were born, where you have lived, where you have developed your life. Everything you acquired there, you don't go there anymore. You are no longer involved in vodú, or in gagá, or any of that, but you are here now. Therefore, all the culture, your language, everything is from here, which is why they have a completely Dominican accent. Do you see that they are Dominicans? Despite the fact that many of them, or the vast majority, speak Creole, why do they speak Creole? Because, as we mentioned, they are descendants of Haitians, and their parents know how to speak Haitian, how to speak Creole. They learn it, but they are Dominicans. (Interviewee 1)*

In this extract, the boundaries between linguistic groups are drawn based on place of birth and language socialization rather than descent, which contrasts with Ortiz López's (2015, p. 25) attribution of "Haitianized Spanish" to both Haitian immigrants and their Dominican-born offspring. While the concessive conjunction "pero" implicitly refers to ideologies documented in other contexts in the DR (Bullock & Toribio, 2014; Jansen, 2021; Medford, 2024), which suggest that having Haitian parents and speaking Creole are incompatible with being Dominican, the participant explicitly rejects this viewpoint. Nevertheless, he reinforces dichotomous constructions of Dominicans and Haitians, as evidenced by the contrastive use of "dominicano" versus "haitiano"; deictic expressions like "aquí" in contrast to "allá" which is systematically used without an antecedent in this and other interviews to refer to Haiti; and references to emblematic elements of Haitian culture, such as "vodú" and "gagá."

The following statement from another participant further confirms that two distinct registers are attributed to Creole and are indexically linked to Haitian and Dominican-born speakers. Meanwhile, variation within Dominican Spanish, epitomized by different enregistered variants of the phoneme /r/ (Bullock & Toribio, 2008, pp. 176ff; Jansen, 2015), is portrayed as reflecting regional rather than racial or national origins:

> Part.: Entonces, tú puedes distinguir una persona que habla creole. O sea, tú puedes saber por la forma como habla, si es de Haití o de República Dominicana. También puedes distinguir el español de los dominicanos y dominico-haitianos de los bateyes. O sea, ellos hablan español como cualquier persona de la región. Sí, hablan el español como cualquier persona de la región. De hecho, en República Dominicana, dependiendo de la región de donde sales, tú puedes hablar con diferentes acentos. Por ejemplo, la gente del Cibao habla mucho con la i. Amoi, el amoi y todo eso con la I. Sin embargo, las personas de otras regiones hablan más con la L, mi amol. Otros con la R, mi amor. O sea, más pronunciado. Entonces, así mismo, el dominicano de ascendencia <sic> haitiana que se críe o nazca en cualquiera de esas regiones va a aprender a hablar así.
> Int.: Va a adoptar el dialecto de la región.
> Part.: Sí, claro, claro. Hablan el español como cualquier otro. (Interview 9)

> *Part.: So, you can distinguish a person who speaks* creole. *In other words, you can tell by how they speak whether they are from Haiti or the Dominican Republic. You can also distinguish the Spanish spoken by Dominicans and Dominican-Haitians in the* bateyes. *They speak Spanish just like anyone else from the region. Yes, they speak Spanish like anyone else from the region. In fact, in the Dominican Republic, depending on the region you're from, you can speak with different accents. For example, people from Cibao often use the i sound. They say* amoi, el amoi, *and all that with the i. However, people from other regions pronounce it more with an l sound, saying* mi amol. *Others use an r, saying* mi amor. *In other words, it's more pronounced. Likewise, Dominicans of Haitian descent, whether raised or born in any of those regions, will learn to speak that way.*
> *Int.: They will adopt the dialect of the region.*
> *Part.: Yes, of course, of course. They speak Spanish like anyone else. (Interview 9)*

By repeatedly stating that Haitian-descended speakers speak Spanish like "any other person" from the same region, the participant again emphasizes the importance of place of birth and socialization in language variation over descent. Although this does not inherently rule out the existence of first-order indexicals for speakers of Haitian ancestry, this statement aligns completely with Bullock's findings about the absence of any distinct features in Dominican-born speakers of Haitian descent. They also coincide with the observations during our fieldwork, as we found no evidence of the typical features of L2 production among Haitians in the speech of second and third-generation migrants.

While participants both acknowledge that first-generation immigrants speak Spanish differently from Dominican-born speakers and identify some enregistered features, they do not recognize the Spanish as spoken by Haitian-born speakers as a separate register in terms of a named entity. Instead, they view it as a form of dominicano, albeit an incorrect one, as evidenced by statements such as "Ellos [los haitianos] no saben hablar el dominicano bien." ("They [the Haitians] do not speak dominicano well.")

Patuá vs. Creole/Haitiano

All participants distinguish between two forms of Haitian Creole: creole and patuá. Given the frequency and consistency of references in the interviews, there can be no doubt that they are clearly recognized within the batey context as socially meaningful speech forms, ideologically linked with two different social identities. While creole is presented as the variety spoken in Haiti or by Haitians, patuá is identified as belonging to second-generation immigrants in the DR and considered a dialect of creole, which means it can also serve as a general term for all variants of Haitian Creole.[1]

The two registers differ not only in their association with different speaker groups and national spheres but also in the normative and aesthetic evaluations that participants assign to them. This distinction is most evident in spatial and social deixis: patuá is systematically associated with proximity deixis ("nosotros," "aquí/acá"), while creole is linked to distance deixis ("ellos," "allá"). One participant even characterizes patuá as creole "aplatana'o"[2], highlighting its roots in local Dominican culture. The strong association of creole with Haiti also explains why many Haitian Dominican participants claim to speak patuá rather than creole:

> Part.: Yo no hablo creole.
> Int: ¿Qué es lo que tú hablas?
> Part: Patuá.
> Int.: ¿Y qué viene siendo el patuá?
> Part: No, o sea, el idioma que hablamos, o sea, lo que decimos es creole, es patuá. Pero el creole de verdad es más fino. Yo no lo sé hablar bien, pero es más fino.
> Int: ¿Pero quiénes hablan el creole fino?
> Part: Bueno, hay una haitianita que vino de Haití, ella no está aquí y yo le escuché hablando eso y yo me quedé así: Mira, un creole bello, así, como mira. Yo porque no sé cómo explicártelo, pero mira, un creole bonito, bonito.
> Int: ¿Te gusta más?

1 In the English translations of the quotes from the corpus, we use *creole* when participants refer to the prestige register as opposed to *patuá*, and *Creole* when they refer to Haitian Creole in general terms.

2 From *aplatanado*, a local Spanish expression derived from *plátano* [banana] which refers to someone who is not from the DR but who has adopted Dominican cultural traits.

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Part: Ay, me encanta.
Int: Ok. Pero, ¿qué tan diferente es del patuá y cuáles son las diferencias?
Part: O sea, como que hay gente como que lo hablan más bonito. La voz, no sé, porque yo vi una muchacha hablando eso y yo, mira, me quedé así. Sí. [...] Yo mismo no sé cómo explicarte eso, pero que yo me hallo que hay mucha diferencia. Mucha diferencia. Así es. Digo yo que lo que nosotros hablamos, yo me hallo que eso es como patuá, pero hay un creole, el creole de verdad es más bonito. (Interview 4)

Part: I don't speak creole*.*
Int: What do you speak?
Part: Patuá.
Int: And what is patuá?
Part: Well, the language we speak – what we say is creole*, is* patuá*. But the real* creole *is more refined. I don't know how to speak it well, but it is more refined.*
Int: But who speaks the refined creole*?*
Part: Well, there's a Haitian woman who came from Haiti; she isn't here, and I heard her speaking it, and I was like, wow, what beautiful creole*! You see, I don't know how to explain it, but it's nice, really nice.*
Int: Do you like it more?
Part: Oh, I love it.
Int: Okay. But how different is it from patuá*, and what are the differences?*
Part: Well, some people speak it more beautifully. The voice, I don't know; I saw a girl speaking it, and I was like, wow. Yes. [...] I don't even know how to explain it, but I find that there's a big difference. A big difference. That's how it is. I mean, what we speak, I think of it as patuá*, but there's a* creole*; the real* creole *is more beautiful. (Interview 4)*

This and other statements such as "el creole de verdad", "el verdadero creole", o "la [sic] idioma madre" suggest that creole is perceived as more authentic. It is also associated with refinement ("fino," "refinado"), courtesy ("cortesía de la palabra"), ease ("ligero," "fluido," "flojo"), and correctness ("correcto"). In this context, speaking creole is referred to as "hablar creole bien" or "bien de bien," while speaking patuá is described as speaking in a jerky and coarse manner ("machacado," "crudo").

The perception of Haitian Dominicans as deficient Creole speakers is a recurring theme in the interviews. Second-generation immigrants report that they feel compelled to meet the Haitian native standard but struggle to do so due to their limited knowledge of the language:

hay palabras en creole que no las sabemos. No las sabemos y dominamos más el español [...]. Pero sí hablamos el creole, aunque no tan fino como quisiéramos y no tan fino como un migrante haitiano, pero sí tratamos de hacer nuestro mayor esfuerzo porque nos interesa. (Interview 9)

There are words in Creole that we don't know. We don't know them, and we are more proficient in Spanish [...]. But we do speak Creole, although not as refined as we would like and not as refined as a Haitian migrant. However, we do our best because we are interested in doing that. (Interview 9)

Against this backdrop, some participants describe their attempts at "refining" their speech by interacting with Haitians, who teach them the "correct" forms:

Sí, pero al ser que ellos son estudiantes de allá, y hablan más refinado, refinado es la palabra, yo no puedo refinar como ellos lo refinan. Ellos me enseñan. Eso no se dice así. Se dice así. Palabras como esas que uno lo dice, pero palabras, hay palabras que uno no las dice tal como va. (Interview 5)

Yes, but since they are students from there and their speech is more refined – "refined" is the word – I can't refine my speech as they do. They teach me. "That's not how it's said. It's said like this." There are words that one uses, but there are also words that one doesn't say exactly as they are supposed to.

The normative assessment of patuá by Haitian-born speakers that the participant enacts in this excerpt ("Eso no se dice así. Se dice así.") illustrates the fixed and prescriptive nature of the prestige register and highlights the role of Haitian-born speakers as experts. In comparison to these speakers, Dominican-born bilinguals appear as deficient speakers.

The Social Indexicalities of Patuá Enregisterment

Below we will breakdown the indexicalities and characteristics of the register known as patuá.

Patuá as a Rural Haitian Dialect

Some participants believe that the differences between creole and patuá reflect variations within Haiti itself, which have been carried into the DR through immigration. A significant distinction in this context is the rural-urban dichotomy, with patuá being associated with rurality:

> Part: Y un derivado del creole también que se habla aquí es el patuá. Muchositos hablan del patuá, que el patuá es como más crudo que el creole. Ya de los haitianos que vienen, no tan de la urbe, sino de campos remotos de Haití. Entonces, ya ese patuá es un dialecto.
> Int: Un dialecto del creole. Del creole.
> Part: Exacto, obviamente, lo hablan en la zona rural. Con ese tenemos mayores inconvenientes. Porque cuando llega un patuá aquí, ¿sabe cómo le llamamos? Congo.
> Int: Ah, los congos.
> Part: Congo. Que no sabemos si es por el origen del Congo africano. No sabemos, eso no lo hemos estudiado. Pero realmente se les llama congo porque no dominan absolutamente nada del idioma español. Pero tampoco creole ni francés. (Interview 1)
>
> *Part: And a derivative of* creole *spoken here is* patuá*. Many people talk about* patuá*, which is considered to be rougher than* creole*. It's spoken by Haitians who come not from urban areas but from remote fields in Haiti. So, that* patuá *is a dialect.*
> *Int: A dialect of* creole*.*
> *Part: Exactly. Obviously, it is spoken in rural areas. With that, we have major inconveniences. Because when a* patuá *(speaker) arrives here, do you know what we call them?* Congo*.*
> *Int: Ah, the* congos*.*
> *Part:* Congo*. We don't know if it's named after the origin from the African Congo. We haven't studied that. But they're really called* congo *because they don't master the Spanish language at all. Nor Creole or French. (Interview 1)*

Patuá is described in this excerpt as indexical of rural speakers from remote areas in Haiti and the emblematic figure of the *congo*, a term commonly used in the DR to refer to Haitian agricultural workers who occupy the lowest rung of the social ladder. Individuals who speak patuá are not only defined by their speech (with "un patuá" meaning someone who speaks patuá) but also portrayed as problematic speakers who create inconveniences. In the last lines of the previous quotation, they are even depicted as non-speakers, as the participant states that they do not know any Spanish, (Standard) Creole, or French only the "dialect" patuá, implying that this is not a "real" language.

Patuá as an Informal Register

More than rurality, participants cite informality, lack of education, and low social status as socio-indexical meanings of the patuá register. In contrast, Standard Creole is associated with literacy, education, and high prestige. Below is an example.

> Pero yo entiendo que patuá es un dialecto. Porque si tú tienes, por ejemplo, yo he tenido la oportunidad de ir a donde la gente habla el creole fino. Yo he tenido oportunidad de escuchar a los diplomáticos hablando creol. Y he escuchado a la gente de los bateyes hablar el creol. Son dos cosas diferentes. Son totalmente distintos de la región de donde tú vienes. El creole es totalmente distinto. ¿Tú sabes por qué? Porque ellos tuvieron la oportunidad de ir a la escuela. De estudiar. De estudiar. Pero regularmente, el creole que no es fino, como dicen ustedes, el patuá, y la gente que habla creole, migrantes principalmente, no lo escribe. Solamente lo habla porque su mamá lo hablaba. Pero no te cogen un lápiz para escribir. No lo saben escribir. [...] porque el que viene, el que viene que no lo escribe, por eso es que la gente dice, tú hablas un creole distinto. (Interview 4)
>
> *But I understand that* patuá *is a dialect. If you have the opportunity, for example, to go where people speak refined creole, I have had the chance to listen to diplomats speaking Creole. I've heard people from the* bateyes *speaking Creole. They are two different things. They are totally distinct from the region you come from. The Creole is completely different. Do you know why? Because they had the opportunity to go to school. To study. To study. But generally, the Creole that is not refined, as you say,* patuá*, and the people who speak creole, mainly migrants, do not write it. They only speak it because their mothers spoke it. But they won't take a pencil to write it. They don't know how to write it. [...] Because those who come, who don't write it, that's why people say, you speak a different Creole. (Interview 4)*

Reinforced by lexical choices that emphasize difference and incompatibility ("diferente", "distinto"), in this excerpt, patuá is characterized as a

deviation from the prestige register through various dichotomies: dialecto [dialect] vs. language, Haiti as the place where refined Creole is spoken vs. the DR, educated Haitians ("los diplomáticos," "ellos") vs. batey inhabitants, and orality vs. scriptuality ("ellos tuvieron la oportunidad de ir a la escuela" vs. "no lo saben escribir").

Also, the lack of familiarity with formal written culture arising from having learned the language solely in oral contexts is cited as a factor contributing to linguistic insecurity and experiences of language shaming:

> Por ejemplo, *silvople*. Yo tengo una duda con esto, si es *silvople*, si es *silpople*.[3] Porque solo lo aprendí de oído. No lo sé escribir, por eso no sé. Si se dice así, cuando lo digo, a veces se ríen, a veces se ríen de mí. (Interview 9)
>
> *For example,* silvople. *I'm unsure about this expression, if it's* silvople *or* silpople. *Because I only learned it by ear. I don't know how to spell it, so I'm not sure. When I say it, sometimes they laugh; sometimes they laugh at me. (Interview 9)*

This statement reflects the prevailing perception that the written standard is the only legitimate form of expression, a view that, according to Agha (2007, p. 167), is shared even by speakers who lack fluency in it.

One Haitian participant explains the deviation of patuá from Creole not only to the patuá speakers' lack of education but also to their age and language change over time:

> Hay unos que hablan un patuá que viene siendo un dialecto del creole y hay otros que hablan creole, pero ya las cosas han cambiado tanto, que antes tu decías una palabra de una forma y ahora la dices de otra, los jóvenes ahora tú les preguntas *¿kouman ou ye?* Ellos te entienden, pero te responden con más facilidad cuando les preguntas *¿sa kap fè?* Que viene siendo un ¿qué es lo que haces? Ya los jóvenes actualmente, los teeneger, adolescentes y todo eso, no es el *¿kouman ou ye?* que ellos preguntan, es una expresión más bien fresca y lo que llamamos lenguaje de calle, [...], usted llega allá y lleva un creole más formal. (Interview 5)
>
> *There are some who speak a* patuá *that is considered a dialect of Creole, and others who speak creole. However, things have changed so much that whereas you used to say a word one way, now you say it another. When you ask young people,* ¿kouman ou ye? *they understand you, but they respond more easily when you ask them,* ¿sa kap fè? *which means What are you doing? Nowadays, the youth, teenagers and adolescents, don't ask* ¿kouman ou ye? *anymore; they use a fresher expression that we call street language. [...] When you go there, you use a more formal Creole. (Interview 5)*

In this excerpt, Patuá is presented as a form of slang primarily used by youth in informal contexts in the DR. The difference between the two registers is illustrated by two Creole expressions for "how are you?," typically associated with a formal and an informal register in Haitian Creole yet presented here as lexical alternatives that differentiate creole from patuá. The participant, who left Haiti 50 years ago, attributes his difficulties in understanding patuá to the changes the language has undergone in the DR. This means that he not only sees the more formal Creole spoken in Haiti ("allá") as fixed and immutable but also holds prevalent views about standard languages.

Patuá as a "Mixed" Register of Bilingual Speakers

Another recurring notion is that the perceived deficiency of patuá in comparison to creole stems from the fact that Dominican Haitians, unlike "real" Creole speakers, are not exposed to the language throughout their lives:

> Nuestra lengua no está tan floja, tan ligera, tan ligera, tan fluida, como la de un migrante haitiano que nació, creció, estudió hablando creole. Nosotros y nosotras solo aprendimos, estudiamos, crecimos hablando español. Entonces, es igual como el que está aprendiendo a hablar inglés. No va a hablar inglés igual que un nativo, que un americano nativo. Entonces, eso es lo que pasa con nosotros. No lo hablamos tan fino, las palabras no las pronunciamos igual como ellos. Se nota, se nota que nosotros no somos haitianos. Se nota de que no tuvimos esa crianza en creole. Por eso digo de muy fino. (Interview 9)

3 The participant refers here to the Haitian expression for 'please', which is *silvouplè* in standard Haitian Creole (Valdman 2007).

Our language is not as loose, light, or fluid as that of a Haitian migrant who was born, raised, and educated speaking Creole. We only learned, studied, and grew up speaking Spanish. It's similar to someone learning to speak English; they won't speak English the same way as a native speaker, like an American. So, that's what happens with us. We don't speak it as fluently; we don't pronounce the words the same way they do. It's evident; it's clear that we are not Haitians. It's clear that we did not have that upbringing in Creole. That's why I say very refined. (Interview 9)

This excerpt reveals the ideology of nativeness, which posits that only those who undergo the complete process of informal and formal monolingual language acquisition can be deemed "real" speakers (Jansen et al., 2021; Lippi-Green, 1997). The national language ideology is also evident, as language proficiency is linked not only to socialization but also to national origins (e.g., "un americano nativo", "se nota que nosotros no somos haitianos"). Personal deixis ("nosotros/as," "ellos") constructs a distinction between an in-group and an out-group, identifying Haitian-descended speakers, by their socialization in Spanish, with Dominicans while juxtaposing them against Haitians, which is contrary to academic and prevailing Dominican categorizations.

At a later point in the interview, the participant refers to language mixing- epitomized by the portmanteau term *creñol,* which serves as an alternative register label for patuá- as a significant factor that distinguishes the speech of Haitian Dominicans from "pure" Creole attributed to Haitians:

El creole lo aprendí escuchando, escuchando a las personas en la comunidad, hablándolo. Y, por ejemplo, nosotros, los dominicanos de ascendencia haitiana, no tanto hablamos creole, hablamos creñol, que es un creole mezclado con español. Por ejemplo, cuando no sabía, como se decían algunas cosas, por ejemplo, por mencionar algo, *nevera*, yo creyendo que estaba diciendo nevera en creol, decía *nevela* [nevɛl:a], sin embargo, en creole *nevel* [nevɛl],[4] no significa nada. En creole *nevera* se dice *frijidè*, pero con mi afán de saber creole, de aprender el creole, pues yo le decía así, al igual que otras palabras que lo pronunciaba supuestamente con un acento creole, ya para mí eso era creole. (Interview 9)

I learned Creole by listening, listening to people in the community and speaking it. For example, we, Dominicans of Haitian descent, don't really speak Creole; we speak creñol*, which is a Creole mixed with Spanish. For instance, when I didn't know how to say certain things, I used to say* nevela *[nevɛl:a], thinking I was saying refrigerator in Creole. However, in Creole,* nevel *[nevɛl] means nothing. In Creole, refrigerator is said as* frijidè*, but in my eagerness to learn Creole, I would say it that way, just like other words that I supposedly pronounced with a Creole accent; to me, that was Creole. (Interview 9)*

The flexible use of a bilingual repertoire described here, which allows for the incorporation of phonetically adapted Spanish words into Creole utterances, was frequently observed during our fieldwork and has been noted in other contexts where Creole is spoken within a Spanish-speaking environment (Govain, 2015; Jansen, 2013). The participant characterizes this practice as a misconception, reflecting internalized notions of native-speakerism and ideologies of authenticity and purity associated with national prestige registers which reinforce the idea that patuá is not "real" Creole.

The connection between notions of "hablar bien/fino" with national origin and the ideal of nativeness is evident in the following excerpt from an interview with a Haitian participant:

Part: mi lengua es haitiano pero (es) seguro que voy a aprenderlo [el dominicano] bien pa que yo no soy Haití ahora, es verdad, si yo toy aquí, toy de aquí ahora, yo tengo que hablar dominicano aunque no estoy hablando fino pero [unintelligible].
[...]
Int: ¿Qué significa hablarlo fino?
Part: Hablando fino, pero hablando fino, pero dominicano hablando fino, pero cómo que es una lengua

4 It is likely that the two forms [nevɛl:a] and [nevɛl] should be interpreted as an adapted loanword, with and without the postponed demonstrative *la*. The substitution of /r/ with /l/ aligns with common patterns in Haitian Creole-Spanish contact situations (Jansen, 2013), and is also an enregistered feature of "Haitian" speech (Jansen, 2015). Notably, the same example is provided by one of Medford's participants (2024, p. 543), possibly reflecting a degree of collectively shared enregisterment.

[unintelligible], hablando fino igual con dominicano, ¿tú comprendes? Es así.
Int: Pero usted habla un creole fino también.
Part: Sí, claro porque ese es mi lengua, mi lengua tengo que hablarlo fino. Así también hay muchos dominicanos le gusta hablar haitiano pero no puede, está hablando chin chin, pero no pueden igual como nosotros, no.

Part: My language is Haitian, but I'm sure I'm going to learn it [Dominican Spanish] well because I'm not in Haiti, that's true. If I'm here, I'm from here now, I have to speak Dominican even if I'm not speaking it in a refined manner, but [unintelligible].
[...]
Int: What does it mean to speak it in a refined manner?
Part: Speaking it in a refined manner, but speaking it in a refined manner, Dominicans speak in a refined manner, but since it's a language [unintelligible]. Speaking it in a refined manner is the same as like a Dominican, you understand? That's how it is.
Int: But you also speak refined Creole.
Part: Yes, of course, because that is my language; I have to speak it in a refined manner. Many Dominicans like to speak Haitian but can't do it, they speak a little, but they can't do it like we do, no.

It becomes evident, once again, that "fino" refers to the native standard language, assumed to be naturally mastered by national speakers. This aligns with indexicalities typically – and normatively – attributed to national languages. The normative dimension is highlighted when perfect mastery of the national language is described as a moral obligation ("mi lengua tengo que hablarlo fino"), while non-nationals (Dominicans) are perceived as inherently unable to achieve this. Such perceptions reinforce the notion that good and authentic Creole belongs exclusively to Haitian-born speakers.

Enregistered Features of Patuá

When asked to provide examples of how patuá differs from creole, many participants found it difficult to identify specific features. One participant suggests that the distinction between creole and patuá can roughly be equated with dialectal differences in Spanish, illustrating the distinction by the lexical difference between *bokit* [bucket] and *kin*, a "relatively large plastic water vessel" (Valdman, 2007, n. p.):

Part: Bueno, eh, por ejemplo, eh, la gente de, de la zona del norte de aquí, ¿verdad? Hablan con la i, y la gente del sur, hablan con la r. Ajá. Es diferente. Entonces, cuando una gente del norte, pronuncia una palabra en patuá, [...] no suenan, los consonantes no suenan iguales. Por ejemplo, eh, si yo necesito una cubeta, en la zona del norte, lo voy a decir en patuá, eh, si yo necesito una cubeta, yo le digo a la niña, *chache yon bokit* (..) ¿Ve? (..) Pero, si en la zona del sur, dicen, yo digo, *chache yon kin pou mwen.* [...] Otra palabra. *Mwen bezwen yon kin*. Yo necesito un quín. Entonces, es diferente al norte. Entonces, la del sur, es verdadero. Sí.
Int: ¿Y por qué la del sur es verdadero?
Part: Sí, porque está más propenso a la capital. A la capital. Exacto. Entonces, al ser una persona más civilizada y más estudiada que la del norte. Exactamente. Entonces, hablan el verdadero creole. (Interview 3)

Part: Well, um, for example, um, the people from the northern part here, right? They pronounce with an i, and the people from the south speak with an r. It's different. So, when someone from the north pronounces a word in patuá*, [...] the consonants don't sound the same. For example, um, if I need a bucket, in the northern area, I would say it in patuá, um, if I need a bucket, I tell the girl,* chache yon bokit *(..) You see? (..) But in the southern area, they say, I would say,* chache oun kin pou mwen. *[...] Another word.* Mwen bezwen yon kin. *I need a quín. So, it's different from the north. In the south, it's the real one. Yes.*
Int: And why is the southern one the real one?
Part: Yes, because it is closer to the capital. To the capital. Exactly. So, a person from the south is more civilized and more educated than those from the north. Exactly. Therefore, they speak the real Creole. (Interview 3)

Typically, bokit and kin are considered near synonyms in Haitian Creole, rather than dialectal variants. However, in this context, they are reinterpreted as emblems of two regional dialects with distinct social implications: bokit not only represents the capital's variant, regarded as more prestigious, but also the speech of the educated compared to the rural population, reflecting the social indexicalities discussed earlier.

Another participant mentions different possessive constructions as a feature that distinguishes patuá from creole:

Yo no le puedo explicar mucho, pero sí hay muchas personas aquí que hablan el creole, eh, diferente. Que

yo misma hablo creole, y no lo entiendo muy bien. Que lo hablan como, eh, como, eh, como, eh, como eso son la gente que, de no, que hablan como, eh, *kay a m*, que eso es como mi casa, que lo hablan distinto. [...] *kay a m*, en vez que *lakay*. En mi casa hay como *kay a m, lakay a m, lakay a m*. Eso es como si fuera mi casa, eh, creo, pero yo lo conozco (...) *kay mwen*. Porque ya, ya, ajá, porque ya como que creole aplatana'o. Bueno, ya hay distintas formas de hablar en creole aquí. Distintas formas. (Interview 6)

I can't explain much, but there are many people here who speak Creole, um, differently. I myself speak creole*, and I don't understand it very well. They speak it like, um, like, um, like, um, like those are the people who, you know, speak like, um,* kay a m*, which means my house, and they say it differently. [...]* kay a m*, instead of* lakay. *In my house, it's like* kay a m*,* lakay a m*,* lakay a m. *That's like saying my house, um, I think, but I know it (...)* kay mwen*. Because, well, yes, uh-huh, because like creole aplatana'o. Well, there are different ways of speaking Creole here. Different forms. (Interview 6)*

In Haiti, the simple juxtaposition of the noun and the possessive marker (e.g., *kay mwen* [my house]) is used in the capital Port-au-Prince and its surrounding areas, while the more complex possessive construction that includes a relic of the French preposition *à* (as in *kay a mwen* or *kay a m*, where *m* is the short form of the possessive *mwen*) is used in the north of the country. Additionally, kay [house] and *lakay* [home] are near synonyms in Haitian Creole (Valdman, 2007). The participant seems to interpret the complex possessive construction as a feature of creole as opposed to patuá simply because she is unfamiliar with it, having learned *kay mwen* as the ordinary construction. Interestingly, this reverses the first-order indexicalities that can be observed in Haiti, where the complex construction is more likely to be regarded as a deviation from the standard norm of Port-au-Prince and may carry connotations of rurality.

Finally, another participant emphasizes that the distinction between creole and patuá concerns the pronunciation of certain words ("en la letra," as the participant puts it), illustrating this with the example of the word *joumou* [squash]:

INT: ¿Y cómo usted le dijo a la auyama? ¿Yomú? ¿Yomú? ¿Cómo? (..)
PART: ¿Yomú? ¿Yomú? Yo no digo [jomu], yo digo [ʲʃomu]. Normal. Yo digo [ʲʃomu]. Pero para usted y para ella, alguien más, dice [jomu], porque utilizan la jota, [jomu]. Pero para mí la jota y para el creole se dice [ʲʃi, ʲʃi], que es una letra, [ʲʃi] ¿verdad? Entonces, si yo, el dominicano, para el dominicano dice [jo] pero para el creole dice [ʲʃo], [ʲʃo]. [...] Hay que decir [ʲʃomu]. [ʲʃomu], [ʲʃomu]. Como suave. Exacto. Y eso es creole. Eso es creole. Y su patuá es como dicen los dominicanos. Fíjate, mira, si yo digo [jomu], [jomu], [jomu], [jomu], es muy diferente a que yo digo [ʲʃomu], [ʲʃomu]. Es el patuá realmente, yomú, yomú. (.) Eso es realmente patuá. Pero son, vienen siendo las mismas cosas, pero las pequeñas diferencias es la letra.

INT: And how do you say auyama? Yomú? Yomú? *How? (...)*
PART: Yomú? Yomú? *I don't say [jomu], I say [ʲʃomu]. That's normal. I say [ʲʃomu]. But for you and for her, or another person says [jomu] because they use the y sound, [jomu]. But for me the y sound, and in Creole, it's [ʲʃi, ʲʃi], which is a letter, [ʲʃi], right? So, if I, the Dominican, for the Dominican it's [jo], the Dominican says [jo], but in Creole, it's [ʲʃo], [ʲʃo]. [...] You have to say [ʲʃomu]. [ʲʃomu], [ʲʃomu]. Like soft. Exactly. And that is* creole*. That is* creole*. And your* patuá *is how the Dominicans say it. Look, if I say [jomu], [jomu], [jomu], [jomu], it is very different from saying [ʲʃomu], [ʲʃomu]. That is really patuá, yomú, yomú. (...) That is really* patuá*. But they are essentially the same things; the small differences lie in the letters.*

Joumou begins with the voiced postalveolar fricative /ʒ/ in Haitian Creole. In varieties influenced by Spanish, this segment is often substituted with the voiced palatal approximant /j/ (Govain, 2015, p. 100). The participant mentions this common substitution as one of the features that distinguishes the prestige register, which is attributed to Haitians and claimed as the variety he himself uses, from patuá, which is associated with Dominican speakers. Interestingly, he does not produce the postalveolar fricative as expected in the Haitian native standard; instead, he realizes an intermediate sound between /ʒ/ and the similar Spanish phoneme /tʃ/, specifically an unvoiced postalveolar fricative with slight affrication ([ʲʃ]). This allows him to present himself as someone familiar with the norms of both creole

and patuá, positioning himself apart from average Dominicans, who may not understand these subtleties. The participant's linguistic ideologies and behavior are thus markedly different from mainstream ideologies and practices in the DR, given that Dominicans tend to associate Creole only with the Haitian population, perceive it as monolithic and often conceal their knowledge of the language rather than ostentatiously demonstrate special expertise.

In summary, the limited references to specific features that purportedly distinguish patuá from creole do not present a coherent inventory of collectively enregistered characteristics, despite the commonly shared perception of patuá as a deviant form of Haitian Creole. Except for the last participant, our impression during the interviews was that when asked about differences between creole and patuá, speakers spontaneously attributed socio-indexical meanings to variation within Creole, interpreting different variables as indexes of different registers. This mirrors a tendency observed in other contexts, where speakers confronted with two linguistic alternatives tend to interpret one as "correct" and the other as "incorrect" (Johnstone 2016, p. 639). Such spontaneous enregisterment of non-standard or unexpected features has been explored in previous research (Johnstone, 2011, 2016).

Nevertheless, the perception that second-generation immigrants' use of Haitian Creole differs from that of first-generation immigrants is consistent with empirical evidence, as indicated by previous research (Jansen, 2013; Govain, 2015) and our observations during fieldwork.

Discussion and Conclusions

As the results show, the dichotomy between dominicano [Spanish] and haitiano [Haitian Creole], the two national prestige registers of the island, is highly relevant within the transnational context of the bateyes. Furthermore, participants occasionally reference regional, not ethnic, variation within Dominican Spanish, as well as creole and patuá as two distinct registers of Haitian Creole. These registers index two different types of speakers: The stereotypical creole speaker is born in Haiti, acquires the language from early childhood, and subsequently becomes literate in Creole. In contrast, the stereotypical patuá speaker is a bilingual Dominican descendant of Haitian parents, with little to no exposure to literacy in Haitian Creole. Although the socio-indexical values attributed to patuá fluctuate between rurality, illiteracy/orality, informality, and a mixture with Spanish, they share the common trait of constructing patuá in opposition to the national prestige register, which is imagined as urban, literate, formal, and pure, and considered as the "real" or "authentic" form of the language.

Although there is a consensus that patuá is significantly different from creole, there is a lack of shared understanding or even metalinguistic awareness regarding the enregistered features that distinguish them. This phenomenon may have been fostered by linguistic insecurity among Dominican-born speakers (Medford, 2024), which complicates the assessment of features against the standard norm. It may also stem from a lack of communicative spaces for the circulation of stereotyped speech that is common in other contexts, where the media serve as a catalyst for enregisterment. Nevertheless, the persistent use of patuá as a linguistic label throughout our corpus, along with the stable evaluative predications attributed to this speech form and its superregional significance across different bateyes in both the Santo Domingo and the Consuelo regions, underscore the importance of *patuá* as a highly relevant metalinguistic construct, justifying its consideration as a register.

These findings expand Medford's study (2024) on Los Robles, where participants referred to their variety of Haitian Creole as patuá and described it as less pure, less refined, or less correct than that of Haitian-born speakers. Our study adds to this by demonstrating that the register known as patuá exists within a broader batey context. The

findings also contradict Medford's study in at least two ways. First, Medford's participants identified active bateyes as the places where "authentic" Creole could be found, perpetuating the ideology that these areas were inhabited exclusively by Haitians. In contrast, for the participants in our study—most of whom lived in or near active bateyes and were familiar with the language situation there—patuá is associated with the bateyes, while Creole is directly linked to Haiti. Second, Medford's participants referenced active bateyes as the places where "authentic" creole could be found, reproducing the ideology that those were inhabited exclusively by Haitians. In the meantime, the participants in our study associated creole directly with Haiti.

Notably, the evaluations of Haitian Creole by our participants present a form of counter-discourse against hegemonic anti-Haitian metalinguistic narratives prevalent in Dominican society. For instance, in Bullock and Toribio's (2014) study in the border region, participants characterized the language as "feo" [ugly] or "extraño" [strange] (pp. 93–94). Such characterization starkly contrasts the positive descriptions observed in our interviews that portray Haitian Creole as refined and beautiful. However, while it is true that Haitian culture and language are valued more in the bateyes than in mainstream Dominican society, this appreciation primarily pertains to the prestige register, not to patuá. Socially exclusionary language ideologies, such as the national standard ideology and native-speakerism which establish and legitimize hierarchies among different registers and their speakers, are still prevalent also in the batey context.

The perception that second-generation immigrants' use of Haitian Creole differs from that of first-generation immigrants has an empirical basis in first-order indexicalities, as indicated by previous research (Govain, 2015; Jansen, 2013) and by our observations during fieldwork. In contrast, the perception that Haitian-born speakers speak Spanish differently from Dominican-born speakers does not seem to hold since none of the participants asserts the existence of a specific form of Spanish used by speakers of Haitian descent, and no features attributable to the influence of Haitian Creole are found in the Spanish spoken by second-generation immigrants. This is consistent with previous research conducted in the border region (Bullock & Toribio, 2008). The emic understanding that the fundamental boundary between speaker groups lies between those born and socialized in the DR and those born and socialized in Haiti, rather than between speakers with and without Haitian descent, appears to accurately reflect first-order indexicalities.

The differences in register categorizations between the batey population on the one hand and mainstream Dominican society academic discourse on the other, illustrate the prevalence of distinct language ideological constructions across various societal contexts in the DR: While mainstream perspectives reflect nationalist and nativist traditions in constructing Dominican identity—ultimately rooted in colonial ideologies associated with racial determinism—the perspectives of batey inhabitants highlight their daily struggle to be accepted and recognized as Dominicans, a need that has become even more crucial since the 2013 court decision.

Our findings show that exploring linguistic practices from different perspectives through the notion of register can foster a critical understanding of how language ideologies operate in various ways within society, including within the practice of linguistic research. Medford's (2024) assumption that "real" or "authentic" Creole can primarily be found in actives bateyes, due to ongoing transmigration and the constant arrival of Haitian-born speakers, ultimately reflects the prevalent ideology that associates national native origin and monolingualism with "authentic" language mastery. This assumption also mirrors widespread beliefs that characterize bateyes as

"primarily Haitian communities" (Ortiz López & Medford, 2023, p. 17) and as "Creole-speaking language islands" (Ortiz López & Medford, 2023, p. 34), while neglecting the complex demographic and migration dynamics, including mobility between different types of bateyes and the potential reshaping of linguistic resources through the migration experience.

Similarly, the assertion of the existence of Haitianized Spanish as a distinct and stable variety used by both Haitian-born and Haitian-descended speakers, but not by Dominicans without Haitian ancestry (Ortiz López, 2015), may ultimately arise from an unexamined acceptance, rooted in nativist ideologies, of prevalent constructions of ethnic groups within the Dominican context. In anti-Haitian discourses and other cultural practices, such as Dominican immigration legislation, the Haitian "others" are framed in a manner that prioritizes descent and "race" over place of birth and socialization. While it is true that these biases are often unconscious, and research as a socially embedded practice can never be entirely free of biases (Jansen et al., 2021), it is our responsibility as critical sociolinguists to scrutinize our ideological predispositions as thoroughly as possible. Despite, only a small number of participants being included in this study, drawn from a limited number of bateyes, future research with a larger database could enhance our understanding of language ideological work and enregisterment in transnational contexts within the Dominican Republic.

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